

## EFI RAGIA

### **“Εντεύξεις” and the “political” party: gatherings, friendships and social profiles in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium”<sup>1</sup>**

(Paper delivered at the *International Medieval Congress* at Leeds, 1-4 July 2013)

The postdoctoral research titled “*Electronic Database on the Social History of Byzantium from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Sources, Problems and Approaches*”, which is funded by the European Social Fund, is being conducted in the National Hellenic Research Foundation since April 2012. The program aims at defining distinct social groups, at distinguishing the genuine byzantine elements of social differentiation and, at interpreting them in accordance with byzantine social perception. The present contribution will focus on issues of definitions and self-definitions of two well known groups of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the “politikon” and the “stratitikon” groups<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was written as part of the postdoctoral research project entitled “Electronic Database on the Social History of Byzantium from the 6th to the 12th Centuries: Sources, Problems and Approaches”, which was implemented within the framework of the Action «Supporting Postdoctoral Researchers» of the Operational Program "Education and Lifelong Learning" (Management Agency: General Secretariat for Research and Technology), and is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Greek State. The program was realized at the IBR/IHR/NHRF from April 2012 through March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> G. Ostrogorsky saw in the “politikon” and the stratitikon the aristocracy of Constantinople and the group of the stratitikoι, who originated in the provinces. Both were included in what Ostrogorsky used to call “feudal” aristocracy. After Lemerle, Byzance, 258, the «πολιτικόν γένος» is constituted by the people of Constantinople and the senate. For Lemerle the struggle outlined in the sources between the “politikon” and the “stratitikon” reveals that the progressive forces of the byzantine society in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. are to be identified with the “politikon”, guild members included, and that Alexios I Komnenos returned to a conservatism that was catastrophic for the future of the empire. A. Kazhdan revised both these views, by suggesting that the final prevalence of this “feudal” aristocracy led to economic expansion. M. Angold considers that the legacy of Basil II was a heavy task for his successors, who strove to maintain their position by relying heavily on the forces of Constantinople. J.-Cl. Cheynet proved that there can be no division of the aristocratic families in those originating in

It is considered that the *politikon* came to the forefront of the historical scene of Byzantium only in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Byzantines are hardly original. The term *politikon* is an old term denoting in most cases the political sector of the administration. Its meaning does not change in Byzantium. “*Politikon*” still signifies whatever belongs to the city, the *polis*. According to the Lexicon of Hesychios “πολιτικός” means “civil, with some craft”, *ἀστεῖος, μετά τινος τέχνης*. Hesychios added another detail: “*politikos*” is the one who lives in the city (*ὁ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἀναστρεφόμενος*). In Suda *ἀστεῖος* itself has a completely different connotation, signifying the prudent (*εὐσύνητος*), the presentable (*εὐπρόσωπος*) most probably in the meaning of affable, the charming (*χαρίεις*), but also the good and the ludicrous (*καλός, γελοιώδης*), thus shifting the quality from the city (the *ἄστυ*) to the people<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, the “*politikon*” in traditional Greek thinking is not juxtaposed to the “*stratitikon*”, but to the “*agroikikon*” (*ἀγροικικόν*), meaning “to what becomes the countryside”, because the people of the countryside lack any of the qualities of the city people. Thus the countryman, *ἄγροικος* in Greek, is a person thoughtless (*ἄφρων*), difficult (*δύσκολος*), tough (*σκληρός*) and ignorant or uneducated (*ἀπαιδευτος*)<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, according to Strabo, the “*politikos*” is somebody who has received education and has been brought up as a free person<sup>5</sup>. Generally, one could say that “*politikos*” is a person with good manners, pleasant and sociable, affable and easy to be approached, to be spoken to, and as the byzantine sources would say, “*περὶ τὰς ἐντεύξεις εὐπρόσιτος*” or “*εὐπροσήγορος*” (easy to meet with or talk to)<sup>6</sup>.

---

Constantinople and those originating in the provinces. All families tended to give dignitaries to both the civil and the military sector, and all possessed land outside Constantinople.

<sup>3</sup> Magdalino, Byzantine courtier, 141-143; idem, Snobbery, 70-71. Magdalino argues how the quality of “*ἀστεῖος*”, “civil”, by extension “*politikos*”, befits courtiers and court life.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the definition in Basilika 2.2.160.3: *Ἡ πολιτικὴ φιλία τῆς ἀγροικικῆς οὐ τότῳ, ἀλλὰ τῷ γένει διενήνοχεν. Δύναται γὰρ τις καὶ φροντιστῆς εἶναι καὶ μὴ συναριθμεῖσθαι τοῖς πολιτικοῖς, ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ οἰκοῦντος ἐν ἀγρῷ καὶ διοικοῦντος αὐτόν* (= Digesta 50.16.166).

<sup>5</sup> Die Fragmenta Griechischer Historiker, ed. F. Jacoby, Brill-Leiden 1923-1958, 2.1.3 (2a, 91f). Cf. Magdalino, Byzantine courtier, 144-145; idem, Snobbery, 67-68; Kazhdan-Constable, People and power, 60. Teachers worked mostly in cities because it was easier to find students. See Roueché, Rhetoric, 28-30.

<sup>6</sup> Ἁγίου Πέτρου ἐπισκόπου Ἄργους βίος καὶ λόγοι. Εἰσαγωγή, Κείμενον, Μετάφρασις, Σχόλια. Ἀθήνα, ed. K.Th. Kyriakopoulos, Ἐκδοσις Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Ἀργολίδος, 1976, 6.82-83. Cf. John Damascenus, Sacra parallela, PG 95, 1244.28: *Εὐπροσήγορον ἐν ταῖς ἐντεύξεσιν, γλυκὺν ἐν ταῖς ὁμιλίαις. Μὴ νομίζωμεν ψιλὸν εἶναι καὶ εὐτελὲς τὸ κατόρθωμα τοῦτο, γίνεσθαι εὐπροσήγορον καὶ φιλοπροσήγορον*.

These are undoubtedly qualities that are cultivated by education. The Byzantines, following Aristotle, sometimes even attributed to the “έντεύξεις” (translated as meetings/rendezvous) philosophical content<sup>7</sup>.

The way the Byzantines thought about the “politikon” and the “stratitikon” groups, is revealed to us mostly –but not exclusively- because of the administrative changes in the empire. Administrative necessity commanded that the “politikon” mingled with the “stratitikon” firstly in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is mostly in the Novels of Justinian that the “politikon” is brought together with the “stratitikon” in the same context, in order to justify the emperor’s decision to confer both political and military competences to one person. I have selected perhaps the most characteristic passage I found in them to present here, which comes from Novel 26 on the praetor of Thrace. It goes like this:

*“Because the barbarian invasions need no moderate resistance, it must be allowed to the man who is able to lead with these laws, to administer all these issues, because there is great difference between order and disorder. It is obvious to everybody that the military, if they are on their own, are more audacious than they ought to. And the political, if they are not mixed with the military, are less than mediocre (καταδεέστερον ἔσται τοῦ μετρίου), but if they both unite in one, then this will be most perfect and self-sufficient both for war and for peace”<sup>8</sup>.*

A concise comment on this passage would underscore the apprehension for the military and the contempt for the politikon on the part of the government. However, a moral element underlying this passage is apparent. Naturally the governments at all times were vigilant about the power trusted in the hands of the military. The scorn revealed in the Novel for the politikon might well be attributed to phenomena of corruption observed by Justinian in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. But it is all more complex than it seems. Thus, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, John Damascenus wrote “many are those who accept guileful acts, and call charming the ridiculous, and the foul-spoken political”<sup>9</sup>. One century later, patriarch Nicephorus explains in one of his treatises how the iconoclasts incited against the orthodox the military, who were “sheperds of goats,

---

<sup>7</sup> Suidae Lexicon, ed. E. Bekker, Berlin 1854, E.1468: “Έντευξις: έντυχία. φησίν ὁ Ἄριστοτέλης, ὡς ἔστιν ἡ διαλεκτικὴ φιλοσοφία πρὸς γυμνασίαν, καὶ πρὸς τὰς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν έντευξεις. Cf. Magdalino, Snobbery, 70.

<sup>8</sup> Corpus Iuris Civilis vol. III: Novellae, ed. R. Schöll-G. Kroll, Berlin 1904, repr. Germany 1972., 204.25-35

<sup>9</sup> John Damascenus, Sacra parallela, PG 96, 424.27: Πολλοί εἰσι τὰς πονηρὰς πράξεις ἀποδεχόμενοι, καὶ χαρίεντα μὲν τὸν εὐτράπελον λέγοντες, τὸν δὲ αἰσχρολόγον πολιτικόν.

*oxen and pigs, directing to dung those who were taxed through dung*<sup>10</sup>. But these disdainful comments on the mores of the “politikon” and the “stratitikon” come from a representative of the ancient aristocracy of the East, and from an agent of the political aristocracy of Constantinople<sup>11</sup>. The opinions that one “party” –if we can call it that- maintained for the other will begin to unravel with more clarity as the struggle for power becomes more bitter with time.

In the historiographical record the “politikon” is distinguished from the “stratitikon”. In the middle byzantine times the term “politikon” is restricted primarily to anything that belongs to Constantinople –simply because the term “city” is attributed to few other settlements. For example, its people are called “πολιτικὸν πλῆθος”. But also, everything that has to do with political government, is characterized “politikon”, i.e. economy, justice, administration and so on, which are often found in the same context with, but separated from, the religious element –religious life, canon law,

---

<sup>10</sup> Nicephori Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Refutatio et Eversio Definitionis Synodalis Anni 815, ed. J. Featherstone, Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 33, Turnhout 1997, 23.1-6: *Τὶ δ' ἂν τις εἴποι ὅπως τὸ στρατιωτικὸν ἅπαν κατὰ τοῦ ὀρθοδόξου μέρους ἐξέμηνεν, καὶ τούτου μάλιστα ὅσον κατὰ τὴν βασιλίδα ἔκ τε τῶν αἰπολίων καὶ βουκολίων καὶ τῆς συοφορβίας κακῶς συνέλεξεν, καὶ ἐπὶ κοπριᾷ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς κοπρίας τελουμένους διήγεν, ὥσπερ μηχανάς τινας καὶ πολέμια ὄργανα κατὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὀπλίσας;* In this case the comment is undoubtedly accentuated because of the support of army to the iconoclast emperors and of their reaction to the restoration of icon veneration. Comments of this kind are particularly common in the byzantine literature at this time. Cf. The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatios the Deacon (BHG 1698), ed. St. Euthymiades, BBOM 4, Birmingham 1998, 100.5-10: *...ἰδοῦ τι σμῆνος σφηκῶν, ἀνδρῶν φημι θυμολέοντων καὶ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου στρατολογίας καὶ λέσχης, τοῦ πάλαι τὸ σκῆπτρον οὐκ εὐαγῶς ἰθύναντος θρέμματα, ὡς ἔκ πινων κακοδοξίας σίμβλων ἀπαναστὰν πρὸς τὸ λεχθὲν ἱερὸν ἐφίστανται τέμενος τοῖς κατὰ πόλεμον ἀμυντηρίοις ὄπλοις φραξάμενον.*

<sup>11</sup> John Damascenus descended from an influential Christian family of Arabic origin, known in the sources as the Mansur family. Initially in the service of the Chaliphate, he was forced to become a monk due to slander instigated by the Byzantine emperor. John became the principal apologist of icon veneration; in a work attributed to him, the *Sacra parallela*, he allows glimpses of a society of the eastern dynasts that is not much different than the one described by Kekaumenos in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. See briefly ODB, 1063-1064; Kazhdan, *Literature (650-850)*, 75 f. On patriarch Nikephoros see ODB, 1477; Kazhdan, *Literature (650-850)*, 211-214. An asecretis and son of an asecretis, Nikephoros, born in Constantinople, became patriarch in 806 directly from laity. Also see Cheynet, *Aristocratie*, 289.

people of the Church, etc.<sup>12</sup>. The “stratitikon”, on the other hand, only very late, and rarely, is found in the sources on its own, without its constitutional counter-equivalent, the politikon. In the sources, the politikon and the “stratitikon” are distinguished in several components: the political law, the political regiment, the political archons or lineage (γένος), the political catalogue, as opposed to the military regiment, archons or lineage and catalogue. These divisions are maintained in the codifications after the 6<sup>th</sup> c., to which the distinction between the military and the political houses (οἴκοι) is added.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> c. the central government becomes sensitive to the tendency of the landed magnates to increase their estates. The censure on the military is filtered through the magnifying glass of the state’s struggle against the powerful. The opinion nurtured by the central government about the “stratitikoι” is explicitly expressed in Novel 5 of emperor Constantine VII, who called them “*corrupt, remiss in their duty, without any war experience, less noble than ants, more rapacious than wolves, who ripped off the money of the empire’s subjects because they could not tax the enemy*”<sup>13</sup>. It is not mere chance that a letter of Theodore of Cyzicus<sup>14</sup>, written allegedly on behalf of the emperor Romanus II and addressed to Michael Maleinos comes from roughly a decade later. In this letter, the emperor expresses his admiration to Michael, because he has forsaken the way of living of his closest relatives, “*who only concern themselves with thriving on, and prospering through, their own sword in life, and who*

---

<sup>12</sup> In the *Politica* of Aristotle the “politikon” falls in two parts, the “hoplitikon” (ὀπλιτικόν) and the “bouleutikon” (βουλευτικόν), meaning the military constitutional elements and the elements which belong to the political government.

<sup>13</sup> N. Svoronos, *Les nouvelles des empereurs Macédoniennes concernant la terre et les stratitotes*, éd. posthume P. Gounaridis, Athènes 1994, no 5.125-128. The idea appears to come from Chrysostom, see PG 50, 447: *Ποίαν οὖν ἔτι ζητεῖς ὑπερβολὴν κακίας, ὅταν καὶ ὄνων ἀναισθητότεροι, καὶ βοῶν ἀλογώτεροι, καὶ χελιδόνος καὶ τρυγόνος ἀγνωμονέστεροι, καὶ μυρμηκῶν ἀσυνετώτεροι, καὶ λίθων ἀναισθητότεροι, καὶ ὄφρων ἴσοι φαινόμεθα;*

<sup>14</sup> Theodore, metropolitan of Cyzicus, was a close friend and advisor of emperor Constantine VII. Nothing much is known about him, except that his brother was a magistros, which places him in the inner power circle around the emperor at this time. He was an enemy of patriarch Polyeuktos and he was exiled, to be reinstated shortly after, probably in the reign of Romanus II. See ODB, 2043-2044; Kazhdan, *Literature (850-1000)*, 170-171. The two collections of letters of Theodore, previously published by Sp. Lambros and J. Darrouzès, have been recently re-edited by Maria Tzantzi-Papagianni in the CFHB series.

*might hurry to appropriate all that belongs to their neighbours*<sup>15</sup>. The same idea is expressed also by the author of the Life of Michael Maleinos: “οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐξ οὐκείων ἀποροῦντες πλεονεκτημάτων ἐγκαλλωπίζεσθαι, ἐπὶ τὸν ἕξωθεν νόθον καταφεύγουσι κόσμον, προγόνων ἀρχὰς καὶ πλοῦτον καὶ δυναστείαν ἐπιφημίζοντες, ἅπερ οὐ κόσμον προξενεῖ καὶ λαμπρότητα, ἀλλ' ἀδοξίαν κατηγορεῖ καὶ φαυλότητα”<sup>16</sup>.

At the same time the historical record condemned the previous emperors for not recording the events before Constantine VII, because they “*were not comrades of reason but indulged in country life*” (ἀγροικίας γεγόνασι κατεντρύφημα)<sup>17</sup>. The allusion concerns the emperor Romanus Lekapenus, but against the background of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. it is much more than a topos. By using brutal force, the military were able to increase their landed wealth; their actions are consistent with, and partly explained by, their lack of education and refinement. While Romanus Lekapenus simply called them “powerful” (δυνατοί), thus creating perhaps the most conspicuous social group of Byzantine History, Constantine VII, by relying on ancient sources, attributed to them cultural qualities befitting country people. In this way the allegations against Romanus Lecapenus of ignorance, barbarism, even of not having been acquainted with the Roman ways, became allegations against an entire social group called in the sources “το στρατιωτικόν”<sup>18</sup>. Constantine VII to the contrary was applauded for

<sup>15</sup> Theodori Metropolitae Cyzici Epistulae, ed. Maria Tzantzi-Papagianni, CFHB 48, Berlin 2012, no 7.40-44: Ὁ δὲ λέγων μὴ σπεύδειν ἐμὲ ἐπὶ τῇ μαχαίρᾳ μου εὐλογηθῆναι, θαυμάζω πῶς ὑπερεῖδες τοὺς ἐγγυτάτω σοι γένει προσήκοντας ἅπαντας ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκείας μαχαίρας σπουδάζοντας λαβεῖν τὸ εὐδόκιμον καὶ ἀπὸ ταύτης κατὰ τὸν βίον προκόπτοντας, ἴσως δὲ καὶ πάντων τῶν γειτόνων ἴδια ποιεῖσθαι τιθεμένους σπουδῆν. See Sevchenko, Re-reading, 178-179.

<sup>16</sup> L. Petit, Vie de Saint Michel Maléinos, suivie du traité ascétique de Basile Maléinos, ROC 7, 1902, 550.

<sup>17</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon magister, Georgius Monachus. Ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonnæ 1836, 4.5-6; Theophanis Continuati Liber V. Vita Basilii Imperatoris, ed. I. Ševčenko, CFHB 42, Berlin –Boston 2011, 5\*; idem, Rereading, 176; J. Darrouzès, Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle, AOC 6, Paris 1960, 60; Lemerle, Ουμανισμός, 429 note 7.

<sup>18</sup> See for example: Theodori Cyzici Epistulae, B no 1.8-9, 5.20-21, 7.8-12; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio, ed. G. Moravcsik-J. H. Jenkins, CFHB 1, Washington D.C. 1967, 13.149-152, and comments: Theodori Cyzici Epistulae, 4\*-6\*; Darrouzès, Épistoliers, 57; Ostrogorsky, Aristocracy, 29-30; Dagon, Nés dans la pourpre, 140. The ability of the military i.e. of countrymen to master all sorts of animals, as well as their physical strength, are recurring themes in literary texts from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the late 11<sup>th</sup> c. at least. One remembers for example the talent of Michael II and of Basil I with horses, Basil's strength and Leo V's imposing physical appearance which indicated prowess and potency.

“*adjusting action to the political things*” by appointing the best teachers to the supreme schools of Constantinople and inviting their students to his own table, making them “*ὁμοδιαίτους καὶ ὁμοτραπέζους*”<sup>19</sup>. Indeed the anonymous writer of the first book of Theophanes Continuatus in essence connected education and training with the motives underlying political actions<sup>20</sup>. Thus in the 10<sup>th</sup> c., when education, a virtue of the city-people par excellence, is boosted at the top of social recognition and its representatives are awarded with the privilege of dining with the emperor, the “stratitotikoi”, marked for their greed, their insolence and their ignorance, are pushed further away from the inner power circles around the emperor. The revolts against emperor Basil II certainly did not help improving the sketched profile of the military. The legacy of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. clearly echoes in the words of the emperor Michael VI about Isaac Komnenos: “...*he collected the money of the people and reduced his authority to a simple case not of glory, but of greed*”<sup>21</sup>.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> c. it appears that many are aware of the deep rift between the “politikoi” and the “stratitotikoi” and the authors have recorded many aspects of this conflict. The positions close to the emperors were filled by persons recruited mostly –if not exclusively- from the “politikon” and the military were kept at arm’s length or even further. Thus the “politicians” were making decisions regarding foreign and economic policy, decided on war and on the course of action on each and every issue, and most usually not to the benefit of the military<sup>22</sup>. Of all writers, Michael Psellos exalted

---

This prototype is taken to the extreme in Digenes Akrites, which mirrors the habits and beliefs of the eastern aristocracy of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> c. See Kazhdan, *Literature (850-1000)*, 146-147; Magdalino, *Honour*, 190-191.

<sup>19</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, 446.3-18. Ševčenko, *Rereading*, 168-169, 172; Darrouzès, *Épistoliers*, 59-60; Kazhdan, *Literature (850-1000)*, 134. Darrouzès maintains that lay and church officials were recruited from this milieu. The tradition of teachers and students dining with the emperor, however, was initiated by Leon VI as part of the celebration of Epiphany and is described in *De Cerimoniis I*, 130-136. See Dennis, *Imperial panygeric*, 136-137. However, there is reason to believe that there is truth to the story and that Constantine VII was a true patron of education. See Lemerle, *Ουμανισμός*, 243-244.

<sup>20</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, 21.19-22: καὶ γὰρ ταύτην μόνην εἶποιμι ἂν ἐγὼ εἶναι ἀληθινωτάτην παιδείαν τε καὶ γυμνασίαν πρὸς τὰς πολιτικὰς πράξεις, τὴν ἐναργεστάτην αἰτίαν καὶ τὸ μὴ τήνδε ἀλλὰ τήνδε ἐπικεκαλυμμένην καταφορὰν...

<sup>21</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chronographia 2*, 180.6-18: ...τὰ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν συλλέξαντα χρήματα, καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐσχηκότα οὐκ εὐκλείας, ἀλλ’ ἀπληστίας ὑπόθεσιν.

<sup>22</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia 1*, 248.2-16. Psellos here describes the hierarchy of empresses Zoe and Theodora for the year 1042: first came the bodyguards, then followed the ministers

the “politikoi” the most; his Chronography contains an entire theoretical construction with political and cultural nuances<sup>23</sup>. For Psellos, the “politikon” is primarily an “ethos” (ἦθος), which characterizes life itself within society<sup>24</sup>. The lack of this quality in a person signifies that he is not meant for this life, by extension that he should be a monk beyond and away constituted society, or worse, that he is meant for the afterlife<sup>25</sup>. Psellos awarded the quality of “politikos” to John Xiphilinos and to Constantine Leichoudes. In his opinion, Xiphilinos was a ready wit and by mingling rhetoric with the law he was in a position to be accurate and clear when handling anything that might come up<sup>26</sup>. For Leichoudes, Psellos notes that he “*mixed the political and noble conviction with priestly life*”<sup>27</sup>. His virtues made him a model politikos, for the magnificence of his office was combined with modesty and amiability<sup>28</sup>.

---

(οἱ διαχειριζόμενοι τὰ καθήκοντα, holders of the higher offices<sup>22</sup>), more bodyguards, and finally the top members of the senate and those distinguished from that corps according to their hierarchical ranking (second and third classes of the senate).

<sup>23</sup> See Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 213-214; idem, *Argument*, 161. Pace Kaldellis, the “politicos” is a man educated enough to serve the state with his culture but “discerning and morally flexible”, a “work of art”.

<sup>24</sup> This is obvious in Psellos’ discourse on the soul and life, comprised in his Chronography, see Michele Psello, *Imperatori di Bisanzio (Cronografia)*. Introduzione di Dario Del Corno, testo critico a cura di Salvatore Impellizzeri, commento di Ugo Criscuolo, Traduzione di Silvia Ronchey, Fondazione di Lorenzo Valla 1984, 2, 160-162: *εἰ μὲν γὰρ τὴν μέσσην στάσα ζωὴν μεγαλοπαθείας τε καὶ πολυπαθείας, ὥσπερ ἐν κύκλῳ τὸ ἀκριβὲς κέντρον αἰρεῖτο, τὸν πολιτικὸν ἀπεργάζεται ἄνθρωπον, οὔτε θεία τις ἀκριβῶς γενομένη ἢ νοερά οὔτε φιλοσώματος καὶ πολυπαθής*:

<sup>25</sup> Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 209-212; idem, *Argument*, 158-166. The author sees in this passage a suggestion that a “politikos” should not be morally perfect.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 2, 126.4-18; Lemerle, *Gouvernement*, 203-206. Psellos’ praise of Xiphilinos is not as expanded as that of Leichoudes, undoubtedly because Xiphilinos supported the accusations against him. See J. Gouillard, *La religion des philosophes*, 315-324; Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 207. On John Xiphilinos see ODB, 1054.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 2, 262.6-7: *...πολιτικὸν καὶ γενναῖον φρόνημα ἱερατικῶ βίῳ κατακεράσας...*; Lemerle, *Gouvernement*, 202-203.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 2, 262.17-21; Kaldellis, *Argument*, 162. A holder of the Mangana pronouia under Constantine IX, Leicoudes returned to the court when he was called to participate in the embassy to Isaac Komnenos in 1057. He succeeded patriarch Michael Keroullarios to the patriarchal throne in 1059.

The value attributed to the “politikon” feature in Psellos is even more apparent when it is lacking. The classic example for its absence is found in the narrative about the protosyngellos Leon Strabospondylos, for whom Psellos says that he “*was not capable for a civilized conversation (μήτε πρὸς τὰς ἐντεύξεις ἐπιπήδειον εἶναι) neither for anything else that qualifies a political man*” and adds with vitriolic irony that “*his hand was more eloquent than his tongue*”<sup>29</sup>. Apparently, Leon was not a “politikos” (τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ἥθους ἐστέρητο), because he was not agreeable, his character was rather rough and ill-mannered (τὸ τραχὺ τοῦ ἥθους) and above all, he had no patience for rhetoric digressions, he therefore avoided unnecessary meetings (πᾶσαν ἀποστρεφόμενος ἐντευξιν)<sup>30</sup>.

Psellos undoubtedly counted himself among those with “*political mores*” (πολιτικώτερον τὸ ἥθος), but who, in his interpretation and much to his distress, never reached the highest offices because the emperors always chose somebody who appeared more consistent (τοὺς ἥττον ἀγχιστρόφους) and solemn (σεμνοί)<sup>31</sup>. Even

<sup>29</sup> Michael Psellos, Chronographia 2, 158.9-11, 16-17. On Leon Paraspondylos or Strabospondylos, see ODB, 1586. Leon was a cleric descending from the family of Spondyloi, which produced a dux of Antioch in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. According to Psellos, Leon failed in being recognized under Constantine IX, but he greatly coveted an influential position at court, until he finally became chief advisor of empress Theodora, position which he maintained until the ascend to the throne of Isaac Komnenos (1057). Apparently, the removal of Leon from office was one of the main demands of the rebels.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Psellos, Chronographia 2, 160.3-9: τοῦ γὰρ πολιτικοῦ ἥθους, ὡς ἔφην, ἐστέρητο· ὄθεν οὔτε χαριέστατος ὤν, οὔτε τοῖς προσιοῦσι δεξιῶς ὁμιλῶν, ἀλλ’ ἀεὶ καὶ πᾶσι τὸ τραχὺ τοῦ ἥθους ἐπιδεικνύμενος, καὶ πᾶσαν ἀποστρεφόμενος ἐντευξιν, καὶ εἰ μὴ τις εἴποι τὸ ἄρθρον τῆς ὑποθέσεως, ἀλλὰ τι καὶ προοιμιάσαιτο, βαρυθυμῶν καὶ δεινοπαθῶν ἀπεχθῆς σύμπασιν ὤππο, καὶ οὐδεὶς προσιέναι ἐβούλετο, ὅτι μὴ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη. See Kaldellis, Argument, 155-158. For the author the attack on Leon is in reality an attack on the religious aspect of byzantine politics because Leon was a cleric.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Psellos, Chronographia 2, 158.11-15: οἱ γὰρ τοὶ βασιλεῖς τῷ καλλίονι μέρει προσνέμουσι τοὺς ἥττον ἀγχιστρόφους, εἰ σεμνοὶ εἶεν, ἢ τοὺς εὐστρόφους τὴν γλῶτταν καὶ τελεωτάτους τὴν παιδείαν, εἰ πολιτικώτερον τὸ ἥθος κατακληρώσαντο. The most common translation of the word would be “serious”, “solemn” or “respected”, for this reason also the word “σεμνεῖον” in most cases means “monastery”. The “σεμνός” quality is also attributed to people with office, but only by extension (they are respected because of their office). See Suda, Σ.227: Σεμνόν· ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀξιωματικοῦ λέγουσιν· ἔσθ’ ὅτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὑπερηφάνου τιθέασιν. Cf. Suda, Σ.223, and also the very interesting K.1252: Κεκομψευμένος· σεμνός, ἢ ἀστεῖος, ἢ ἐκκαλώπιστος. But cf. the observations of Lemerle, Byzance, 261-263; idem, Gouvernement,

though he admired some of the qualities of the emperors, he never awarded to any of them the attribute of “politikos”, probably because none of them was perfect enough to fit into the theoretical frame he had in mind. He acknowledged that the military targeted at abolishing the “*political succession*” (πολιτικὴν διαδοχὴν)<sup>32</sup>, that they wanted to disrupt the ascension to the throne of people coming from the “politikon”, such as Monomachos and Michael VI Bringas.

It has been alluded to before that the sharp division between the “politikon” and the “stratitikon” groups was deeply rooted in the consciousness of other writers as well (i.e. Michael Attaleiates and Bryennios, traces of it also found in Skylitzes<sup>33</sup>). The “spokesman” for the military, however, was Kekaumenos. Kekaumenos was a member of the aristocracy of the East, a military who recorded daily practices, customs and behaviors, in a work to which the title “Strategikon” is attributed. The content of this treatise, which is addressed to his children, contains counsels for private and public persons. Kekaumenos’ work appears to be much closer to the reality of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. and for this reason it is of extreme value for the ongoing research.

The profile of the politikoi, as outlined by Kekaumenos, does not compliment them at all. Kekaumenos advises against participating in banquets, because “*there is too much chatty nonsense*” (βαττολογία καὶ φλυαρία) and because allegations on conspiracy might ensue, even though, abstaining from such events, leaves one open to accusations of being “*unsociable and aloof*” (ὡς ἀκοινωνήτου καὶ φειδωλοῦ)<sup>34</sup>. One

---

214-215. On the concept of solemnity in Byzantium see Kazhdan-Constable, *People and power*, 61-62.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 2, 184.3-4; Lemerle, *Byzance*, 258, 290. This is the passage in which clearly Psellos shows that he means a “party”, a political faction with specific agenda, which supported the emperors who sprang from it. However, the “politikon” in Psellos’ *Chronographia* is also used to denote the people of the city, in particular the higher guild representatives, but also the mob of the city. By noting that the army of the theme of Macedonia was “full of abuses like the politikoi”, Psellos again reproves the military as he compares them with the mob of the city.

<sup>33</sup> See Kazhdan, *Αλλαγές*, 168 f.

<sup>34</sup> Cecaumeno, *Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo* (Στρατηγικόν), ed. M. D. Spadaro, *Hellenica* 2, Alessandria 1998, ch. I.3. Also see Galatariotou, *Perceived worlds*, 314-315, 318. The existing translations choose “miser” for “φειδωλός”, however, this does not fit the concept of the text, where money is not mentioned at all. Rather, “φειδωλός” can be translated as “aloof” to signify a person introverted and not socially open, even though the

should also not visit higher officials too often, because he might make himself unwelcome<sup>35</sup>. If one is a man of letters, he should be “οἰκονομικός καὶ πολιτικός”, meaning, not “*like a mime and an entertainer, but politikos, able to teach a whole city how to do good and suspend its evil*”<sup>36</sup>. Kekaumenos is not the only author who appears to be including in the politikon group people of the lower social strata that worked for entertainment, in fact, one would hardly escape noticing the similarities of his opinion to the definitions in the Lexica<sup>37</sup>. However, “*mime and entertainer*” is an expression loaded with irony, Kekaumenos therefore mocks the “politikoi” for their ability to put on faces adjusting to every situation –exactly like mimes. Concerning participation in banquets, one could make the connection with Psellos’ account on the revolt of Leon Tornikes: he was suspected of treason because he was frequenting the house of the emperor’s sister<sup>38</sup>, so Kekaumenos’ advice to be cautious when it came to befriending somebody might carry some truth. On the other hand, Kekaumenos attributes to the *ideal* “politikos” person the quality –admittedly much more useful to society- of “οἰκονομικός”, meaning the ability to address in the best possible way all problems<sup>39</sup>.

This contrasts sharply with the qualification of the “politikoi” as mimes. Kekaumenos says in another chapter “*do not wish to be a politikos, for you cannot be both a general and a mime*”, and he goes on to explain how certain people were awarded supreme military command just by being cordial. “*They have achieved this not by the book, but despite their value. He who speaks and laughs in a disorderly manner is*

---

traditional byzantine interpretation of the word (as in Suda, Φ.250) contains the concept of the lack of generosity.

<sup>35</sup> Kekaumenos, ch. I.4.

<sup>36</sup> Kekaumenos, ch. I.8: “Ἔσο οἰκονομικός καὶ πολιτικός. Οὐ λέγω δὲ πολιτικός οἶον μῆμος καὶ παιγνιώτης, ἀλλὰ πολιτικός, λέγω, διδάξαι δυνάμενος πόλιν ὀλόκληρον ἀγαθοεργεῖν καὶ ἀναστεῖλαι ἐξ αὐτῆς κακόν, ... Cf. Magdalino, Honour, 202.

<sup>37</sup> «Γελοιώδης», the one who makes people laugh, can be associated with entertainers.

<sup>38</sup> Psellus Chronographia 2, 36-38.

<sup>39</sup> On “oikonomia” see ODB, 1516-1517. Also see Lemerle, Prolégomènes, 7. The author has noted the contradiction in Kekaumenos’ text regarding the content attributed to the “politikos”. Kekaumenos also advises against hosting friends in one’s house and is generally considered to have a low appreciation of friendship. See Magdalino, Honour, 210-211, 215-216. I tend to agree with Magdalino, who sees in Kekaumenos’ text only socially vertical ties recognized by the author.

*himself scorned and accused of being undisciplined*<sup>40</sup>. If a general fails, then the most insignificant mistake will become known to everybody. As an example Kekaumenos sets the case of the praepositus Basil Pediadites<sup>41</sup>, who had been sent to Sicily under Michael IV and had managed to lose all territorial gains of Maniakes. The emperor wrote to him “*my majesty was informed that you did well playing tavli*”<sup>42</sup>. Thus a leisure activity was marked as inappropriate when on campaign, and the shame brought to Pediadites was assessed as being such, that it was recorded in Kekaumenos’ treatise for eternity.

In general, the “politikoi” in Kekaumenos’ treatise is a group whose honesty is open to discussion, its abilities to concentrate on, and handle important tasks is at least questionable, and these traits may on occasion combine with a hidden agenda, with the purpose of deceiving and misleading somebody in order to achieve their targets. What Kekaumenos had in mind is probably not far from what Psellos admits in his Chronography. In an effort to persuade Isaac Komnenos into laying arms down, he presented the imperial office as the peak of a successful career of a public employee—mind that Psellos was particularly proud of this achievement<sup>43</sup>. In contrast to the “politikoi”, someone serving in the military sector of the empire is, after Kekaumenos, obliged to be solemn, to take seriously whatever task is assigned to him, to look glorious and magnificent to others, to excel in speech and in dressing and even in the way of walking, and most importantly in his deeds. But when one has withdrawn to his estates, he should be modest, humble and simple. This, then, is one part of the profile of the “stratitikoï”, which relates to their mores (ἦθος)<sup>44</sup>. In Psellos’

---

<sup>40</sup> Kekaumenos, ch. II.23: *Μὴ θέλε εἶναι πολιτικός· οὐ γὰρ δύνασαι στρατηγὸς καὶ μῆμος τυγχάνειν. Εἰ δὲ καὶ τινες οὕτως στρατηγοῦσιν, ἀλλ’ οὐ κατάλογον, παραξίαν δε. Ὁ γὰρ ἀτάκτως ὁμιλῶν καὶ γελῶν ὡς ἄτακτος καταφρονεῖται καὶ ψέγεται. Cf. Kazhdan-Constable, People and power, 62.*

<sup>41</sup> On Basil Pediadites see Cheynet, Pouvoir, 257, 310. The eunuch Basil Pediadites was sent to Italy as katepano of Sicily. Better known descendent of this family is the homonymous metropolitan of Corfu (1201-1219), who left some writings. See ODB 1614-1615.

<sup>42</sup> Kekaumenos, ch. II.23. See Lemerle, Prolégomènes, 65-66.

<sup>43</sup> Lemerle, Byzance, 256-257; Galatariotou, Perceived worlds, 307; Kaldellis, Argument, 167-168.

<sup>44</sup> Education is not included in this profile, but it is not excluded either. To the contrary, Kekaumenos considers that one might as well choose a career in the civil sector, whereby an education is a prerequisite for becoming an ideal “politikos”. For Kekaumenos it appears that when a professional choice has been reached, then the effort for excellence might begin, either in the political, or in the military sector. See Magdalino, Honour, 201. After Roueché,

Chronographia a clear military profile resembling that of Kekaumenos is the profile of Basil II. That emperor combined personal asceticism with power and a profound concern for the state affairs. But Psellos does not praise this model, because reason and persuasion have no place in it, it is therefore incomplete<sup>45</sup>. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> c. other sources complement the profile of the military by projecting to society their valor, nobility, and wealth<sup>46</sup>.

In the sources of the 12<sup>th</sup> c. there is no word about the “politikon” and the “stratitikon”. I have located only three references of the “politikoi” that are of some significance, of which two relate to the people of the city of Thessalonica<sup>47</sup>, and one which refers to the educated in rhetoric and philosophy<sup>48</sup>.

---

Rhetoric, 33 f., 37, Kekaumenos was well educated even though he never reached the higher level. Cf. Galatariotou, Perceived worlds, 325-328; Browning, Literacy, 40-44. Basic level education could be combined with “profound knowledge” in a particular field, in Kekaumenos’ case in strategy. The military of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> c. were definitely not illiterate.

<sup>45</sup> The profile of Basil II, See however Kaldellis, Argument, 51 f., 166. Taking into consideration that from this profile education and refinement are missing, I do not share the author’s opinion that it forms the other end of the two opposite profiles of Psellos. For Psellos, the “politikos” is a perfect person, but neither Basil II, nor Isaakios I, ever reached that level.

<sup>46</sup> Their wealth, power, the social esteem they enjoyed for their accomplishments in the battlefields, their claim to ancient and glorious ancestries, were some of the reasons of envy of the military. See for example Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum, ed. I. Thurn, CFHB V, Berlin-New York 1973, 293.68-294.74: *ἔδει σε, ὦ ἄνθρωπε, ἔφη, “τὸ ἀστάθμητον λογισάμενον τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τύχης μὴ προσονεΐδίζεῖν, μηδ’ ἐπεμβαίνειν ἀνθρώπῳ ταῖς ἐξ αὐτῆς ἐπιηρείαις ἠναγκασμένῳ, ἀλλ’ οἰκτεῖρεν μᾶλλον καὶ ἐλεεῖν τὸν δυστυχοῦντα ἐμέ, πατέρα μὲν ἐσχηκότα κουροπαλάτην, πάππον καίσαρα, θεῖον βασιλέα, δοῦκα δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν γεγονότα καὶ τοῖς ἀνωτάτω συναριθμηθέντα, νυνὶ δὲ ἐσχάτοις κακοῖς ὑποβεβλημένον καὶ ἀκληρήμασι.”* The imaginary dialog between Leon Phokas and Constantine Charon is placed by Skylitzes in 971, when Bardas Phokas, the son of Leon, rebelled against Ioannes Tzimiskes. On the inherent concept of *tyche*, which controls human destiny, see ODB, 2131.

<sup>47</sup> Eustazio di Tessalonica. La espugnazione di Tessalonica, ed. S. Kyriakidis, Testi e Monumenti 5, Palermo 1961, ch. 37.31, 121.29.

<sup>48</sup> Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikes, lettres et discours. Introduction, texte, analyses, traduction et notes par J. Darrouzès, Paris 1970, 281.4-18. In this oration on the death of Anna Komnena Tornikes explains how under Alexios I Komnenos teachers and philosophers spread their knowledge for free, a practice continued by his daughter. It is meant, and actually spelled out, that Anna Komnena “gathered together” (*συναγαγοῦσα*) the most distinguished scholars.

To conclude this brief analysis of a huge subject I would once again call your attention to the significance of the social and political clashes of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. The profiles of the “politikoi” and the “stratitotikoi” groups are outlined with clarity and consistency in the sources of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. However, it is the “stratitotikon” that has always been in an advantageous position, because it took higher offices, titles, money, even genealogies, for granted. The “politikon” group to the contrary, only temporarily claimed an elevated social standing, either because of the talents of its members, either because of their offices. Their assertions in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. lay on cultural foundations, specifically on their education and training, intelligence and intellectual superiority combined with social graces and their abilities to socialize with ease - *πρὸς τὰς ἐντεύξεις ἐπιτήδειον εἶναι*, as Psellos would say<sup>49</sup>. In my appreciation their claims –and the observed rivalry between the two groups- would not have evolved had the state also not constructed for itself, particularly in the 10<sup>th</sup> c., specific profiles for separate groups. These profiles in the long run affected the social standing and appreciation of each group, but in the 10<sup>th</sup> c. they facilitated the state’s task to implement its policies, justify its decisions and neutralize the opposition, with the purpose of consolidating its own authority and rule in the empire. To make it even clearer, the profiles that each group maintained for the other are only stabilized, take their definitive form, and acquire their significance in the context of the competition for access to power of the 10<sup>th</sup>.

---

<sup>49</sup> On a different kind of elitism see Magdalino, Snobbery, 66.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

BROWNING R., Literacy in the Byzantine World, *BMGS* 4, 1978, 39-54 (: idem, *History, Language and Literacy in the Byzantine World*, VR Northampton 1989, no 7)

CHEYNET J.-Cl., L'aristocratie byzantine (VIIIe-XIIIe s.), *Journal des Savants*, 2000, 281-322.

CHEYNET J.-Cl., Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210), *Byzantina Sorbonensia* 9, Paris 1990.

DAGRON G., Nés dans la pourpre, *TM* 12, 1994, 105-142.

GALATARIOTOU C., Open Space/Closed space: the Perceived Worlds of Kekaumenos and Digenes Akrites, in: MULLET MARGARET - SMYTHE D. (ed.), *Alexios I Komnenos, I: Papers of the second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, 14-16 April 1989*, *BTT* 4.1, Holywood 1996, 302-328.

GOUILLARD R., La religion des philosophes, *TM* 6, 1976, 305-324.

KAZHDAN A. – CONSTABLE G., *People and Power in Byzantium: an Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*, Berkeley 1991.

KAZHDAN A. – EPSTEIN A. Αλλαγές στον Βυζαντινό πολιτισμό, μτφ. Α. Παππάς – Δ. Τσουγκαράκης, Αθήνα 1997.

KAZHDAN A., *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)*, in collaboration with Lee E. Sherry and Christine Angelidi, *NHRF/IBR Research Series 2*, Athens 1999.

KAZHDAN A., *A History of Byzantine Literature (850-1000)*, ed. Christine Angelidi, *NHRF/IBR Research Series 4*, Athens 2006.

KAZHDAN A. – S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, New York 1984.

KAZHDAN A. – MCCORMICK M., *The Social World of the Byzantine Court*, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire, 167-197.

KAZHDAN A. – RONCHEY S., *L'aristocrazia bizantina dal principio dell'XI alla fine del XII secolo*, Palermo 1997.

LEMERLE P., *Byzance au tournant de son destin*, in: IDEM, *Cinq Études sur le XIe Siècle Byzantin*, Paris 1977, 249-312.

LEMERLE P., *Le gouvernement des philosophes : L'enseignement, les écoles, la culture*, in : idem, *Cinq Études sur le XIe Siècle Byzantin*, Paris 1977, 193-248.

LEMERLE P., *Prolégomènes à une édition critique et commentée des Conseils et Récits de Kekaumenos*, Bruxelles 1960.

LEMERLE P., Ο πρώτος βυζαντινός ουμανισμός. Σημειώσεις και παρατηρήσεις για την εκπαίδευση και την παιδεία στο Βυζάντιο από τις αρχές ως το 10ο αιώνα, μτφρ. Μαρία Νυσταζοπούλου-Πελεκίδου, Αθήνα 1985.

MAGDALINO P., Byzantine Snobbery, in: *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IXth to XIIIth Centuries*, ed. M. Angold, *BAR 221*, Oxford 1984, 58-78.

MAGDALINO P., Honour among Rhomaioi : the Framework of social values in the world of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos, *BMGS* 13, 1989, 183-218.

MAGDALINO P., In Search for the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choirosphaktes and Constantine Manasses, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire, 141-165.

*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. KAZHDAN, New York – Oxford 1991.

Ostrogorsky G., Observations on the Aristocracy in Byzantium, *DOP* 25, 1971, 3-32.

ROUECHÉ C., The Rhetoric of Kekaumenos, in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. E. Jeffreys, *Society for the promotion of Byzantine Studies, Publications* 11, 23-38

I. ŠEVČENKO, Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in: *Byzantine diplomacy*, eds. J. Shepard, S. Franklin, Aldershot 1992, 167-195

G. DENNIS, Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. MAGUIRE, 131-140.

A. Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia*, Leiden 1999.

A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The transformations of Greek identity and the Reception of Classical Tradition*, New York 2007.