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A GENERATION GAP OR POLITICAL ENMITY?
EMPEROR MANUEL KOMNENOS, BYZANTINE
INTELLECTUALS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DOMINATION
IN TWELFTH CENTURY BYZANTIUM

The paper analyses the political tendencies of the first half of the long reign of Emperor Manuel Komnenos, and his relationship with the members of the educated elite. It is argued that Manuel Komnenos made a conscious effort to free himself from the influence of the prominent intellectuals with whom he could not establish satisfying cooperation or from whom he was unable to command sufficient political obedience, since there was a significant generational difference between them, which also led to a political differentiation between the men of the old regime, and Manuel, and his surroundings.

More than decade and a half into the reign of Manuel Komnenos a mysterious conspiracy came to light, master-minded by a person from the emperor's closest circle and one of the Empire's most senior bureaucrats, Theodore Stypeiotes, who had been awarded the prestigious function of "bearer of the imperial ink-case" (ἐπὶ τοῦ καυκλίου), and had married into the ruling Comnenian family. Neither Stypeiotes' biography, which is almost unknown apart from that single famous episode, nor his personal closeness with Emperor Manuel Komnenos offer a reasonable explanation of his motives or explain the background and the causes of the alleged rebellion against the ruler by whom he had been generously rewarded. Not much in general can be deduced from the brief mention of this palace *coup d'état* by the Byzantine historians. What is, however, sufficiently clear from the reports by both John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates is that Stypeiotes' fall should be placed within the broader social milieu of mid-twelfth century Byzantium. In other words, the destiny of Theodore Stypeiotes was intertwined with the fate of many educated men of his time, testifying primarily to the conscious, if not planned measures of Emperor Manuel Komnenos to 'cleanse' his surroundings of the personalities he suspected, for whatever reason, or in whose loyalty he had reason to doubt.

For the purpose of this article, of more importance is the *age* of the anonymous candidate who should have replaced Manuel Komnenos: Theodore Styppiotēs was accused of planning to install someone older on the imperial throne, and John Kinnamos even alludes to the elections of the elders in the old democracies.¹ However, Manuel was by no means in the flush of youth when the alleged conspiracy, headed by Styppiotēs, took place: he was forty years old, and he had been on the imperial throne, however much his position could have once been disputed, for sixteen years. The main argument of the conspirators for overthrowing the emperor therefore sounds absurd if we try to understand it literally. Even if the forty-year old emperor may have been perceived by some as young (or too young), the chief problem that still remained was the question of his eventual substitute: in the *purple* line of the Komnenoi, which claimed for itself imperial exclusivity, there was no one much older than Manuel, nobody who could conform to the depicted category of the *elders*. It must be said, however, that we know nothing about the emperor's uncle, the sebastokrator Isaac [II] after 1152, and we can only presume that politically he was not very active after that date, if alive at all by the time of the alleged conspiracy, at the beginning of 1159.² Leaving him aside, the emperor's main adversary within the family of the Komnenoi was undoubtedly his second cousin, and the son of the aforementioned Isaac, Andronikos. But Andronikos was the same age as Manuel, and the same would have applied to Manuel's elder brother, the sebastokrator Isaac [III], providing that he too was alive in 1159, since his death cannot be dated with accuracy.³

The numerous ambiguities in the circumstances surrounding this alleged attempt to replace "young" Manuel with somebody older testify, on the other hand, to the underlying tensions present during the reign of Manuel Komnenos, which were particularly evident in the first half of his long government. The controversial decision by the dying emperor, John II Komnenos, to choose his youngest son Manuel to be emperor was, without doubt, at the core of this and similar disputes in the Empire during Manuel's rule, just as it must also have been the main motivation behind Manuel's life-long struggle to prove that he *was* the one chosen, even predestined to rule, and that his rule was lawful and legitimate, in that way casting off the shadow of illegitimacy that haunted him all his life. As Paul Magdalino has shown, it was not without reason that Manuel was suspicious of his brother, or some of his father's closest and most influential friends: both his elder brother Isaac and his father's closest companion, John Axouch, were far less enthusiastic about the change on the throne than it would seem from the speeches, encomia or poems written in the second half of Manuel's reign.⁴

¹ Ioannis Cinnami Epitome, ed. A. Meineke, Bonn 1836. (hereafter, Cinnamus), 184, 19–185, 1; Nicetae Choniatae Historia, ed. J. L. van Dieten, Berolini et Novi Eboraci 1975 (hereafter, Choniates), 110, 20–113, 74.

² I follow the dating of the events and brilliant analysis of Otto Kresten, Zum Sturz des Theodoros Styppiotēs, JÖB 27 (1978) 49–103 (hereafter, Kresten, Styppiotēs).

³ He was alive in 1153, cf. Cinnamus, 127, 15–18.

⁴ P. Magdalino, Isaac sebastokrator (III), John Axouch, and a case of mistaken identity, BMGS 11 (1987) 207–214. *Idem*, The empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180, Cambridge 1993 (hereafter,

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Theodore Styppiotēs, as one of the most senior bureaucrats in the Empire, was not without connections in the highest layer of Byzantine society, which were during the reigns of John II and Manuel Komnenoi always displayed by one's proximity or close ties with the rhetoricians whose praises were very much sought after, having become a necessary part of one's public image, and confirmation of one's accompanying wealth and might. Like the vast majority of intellectuals of his time, Styppiotēs was also in close contact and, it appears, under the influence of Theodore Prodromos, the greatest poet of John II's time, and doubtlessly the single most influential author in the first half of Komnenian rule. Styppiotēs was conceivably a little younger than Prodromos, sufficiently to be called his pupil, but evidently not enough for Prodromos to place a stronger accent on their age difference.⁵ While Prodromos was at the pinnacle of his career in John II's last years, remaining always, however, only a *rhetor*, Styppiotēs was, like many other members of the learned elite from the generations after Prodromos, primarily seeking a position either in the imperial or patriarchal bureaucracy, as the most secure way of climbing the ladders of power in the emperor's surroundings.⁶

The destiny of Theodore Prodromos after Manuel's accession symbolizes the unwillingness of the young emperor to place his trust in the old associates of his father, his uncertainty as regards their complete obedience, and even the awkwardness that he might have felt towards the most prominent intellectuals of his father's time. Few suggestions can be put forward as the reasons for Manuel's cautiousness towards the most influential rhetoricians 'inherited' from his father:

- a) Generational difference;
- b) Political attitudes of the intellectuals;

c) Manuel's anxiety or even fear of his brother Isaac, and Isaac's influence in Constantinople (Isaac was in the capital when their father, John II, died in Cilicia⁷), as well as the young emperor's suspicion of the other members of the Komnenian clan, most notably his uncle, the sebastokrator Isaac [II], and sister-in law, the

Magdalino, Manuel), 218–219. R. Browning's conspiracy theory about Emperor John II's poisoning is too far fetched, although in his analysis of the ways in which the emperor's death was depicted in some Byzantine rhetorical texts, an echo of the controversial nomination of Manuel as the successor could be more relevant than the real circumstances of his father's hunting accident, *R. Browning*, *The Death of John II Komnenus*, *Byzantion* 31–1 (1961) 229–236.

⁵ *W. Hörandner*, *Theodoros Prodromos. Historische Gedichte*, Wien 1974 (hereafter, *Hörandner*, *Prodromos*), LXXI, 1–4; See also LXXII and LXIII.

⁶ A significant change in the status of the rhetoricians, which cannot be elucidated here in detail, occurred during the time of the Komnenoi: from the reign of Alexios I, when writing imperial encomia was more of a side job than the obligation of a person with an established position (Theophylaktos' example confirms this situation), through John II's reign when *professional rhetoricians* like Prodromos took precedence, until Manuel's time when a strict hierarchy of the intellectual elite was established within the ranks of the Great Church, see *V. Stanković*, *Komnini u Carigradu* (1057–1185). *Evolucija jedne vladarske porodice*, Beograd 2006 (hereafter, *Stanković*, *Komnini*) 223 sq.

⁷ Cf. the *epitaph* of Eirene — Berta by Basil, the archbishop of Ochrid, *Fontes rerum byzantinorum* I–II, ed. *W. Regel*, Petropoli 1892, 1917 (hereafter *Regel*, *Fontes*) 316–317.

sebastokratorissa Eirene, who had a tremendous influence on men of learning and thus could provoke open dissent against his government.

d) Manuel's feeling that his takeover of power could be understood as his usurpation of the throne, and his consequent distrust in his father's closest associates, including the intellectuals from John II's surroundings.

It is not an easy task to document the situation of the first years after Manuel's accession. Nevertheless, some evidence of the differences in attitudes between the emperor and the rhetoricians does survive, which points to the causes of Manuel's distrust in the learned elite, whose members were at the same time the main creators of the imperial ideology, and the promoters of the emperor's public image. However scarce, the material from the first decade and half of Manuel's reign reveals the rhetoricians' inability to comprehend entirely the new situation in the Empire, and the emperor's wishes and attitudes, to adapt to them, and act accordingly when praising the young ruler.⁸

Theodore Prodromos is the obvious starting point of any analysis that focuses on the period of the translation of imperial power from John II to Manuel Komnenos. Prodromos was the author closest to the emperor John II and the imperial family, hence the attitudes expressed in his poems as well as the details from his personal life — however circumstantial they may be — have a great value for inferring the great political and social consequences of the turmoil of the years 1142 and 1143. During the last ten years of John II's reign, Prodromos was the *speaker* of the emperor and the imperial family, pronouncing all the noteworthy events from the emperor's most intimate circle: from praising the great victories John II had won, to the announcements of the births of the Comnenian princes, the celebration of their betrothals, and *epitaphs* to the members of the ruling *genos*. His numerous poems that mirrored the official imperial ideology — which is much more than plain propaganda — offer a contemporary perception of the *purple line* of the Komnenoi, both from the imperial perspective and from the viewpoint of the receivers of the projected images, the Byzantines from the higher social strata. Following closely the dynastic policy of *his emperor*, John II Komnenos, Theodore Prodromos presented the official hierarchy of the dynasty: John II's oldest son, *basileus* Alexios, was placed beside his father while clearly separated from the three younger brothers, three *sebastokratores*, who, in their turn, usually formed a compact unity, with a nevertheless apparent distinction among them as well.⁹

Prodromos's poem written not long before 1142 (*Hörandner*, Prodromos, XIII) is the best illustration of the internal hierarchy of the emperor's sons. It was written at the time when, on one hand, the course of the dynasty had still not taken a dramatic turn with the tragic events of 1142, while, on the other, all four sons of Emperor John II had already reached maturity, and, especially in the case of Manuel, had proven themselves as warriors and leaders in the military campaigns of the previous years. Theodore Prodromos had only a little earlier praised young Manuel for

⁸ Stanković, Komnini, 179–222.

⁹ Hörandner, Prodromos X a, 22–24; X b, 20–24; X c, 22–24.

the victories and bravery in the battles around Neokaisareia, which made his military prowess famous in the capital, in the poem devoted to the triumphant return of Emperor John II from the tiring and long-lasting campaign.¹⁰ In both these examples, however, one may discern a certain discomfort in the poet regarding Manuel's age, and primarily, his *last* place in the hierarchy of the emperor's sons, since he was only *presenting* the events, even if in the most favorable way, not inventing them. Although Prodromos could not have even entertained the thought in 1140 or 1142 that Manuel would eventually become his father's successor, and was therefore spared the troubles of explaining Manuel's miraculous accession to the throne while proving his loyalty to the new ruler — something that his friend, Michael Italikos, had to cope with late in 1143¹¹ — he did feel the awkwardness of Manuel's position as the *last* among the emperor's sons. In the chronologically earlier poem (*Hörandner*, Prodromos, XIX, 142–143), when addressing Manuel directly, Prodromos exclaims (using one of his favorite poetical devices, the χαῖρε formula¹²):

Χαῖρε, πορφυρογέννητε σεβαστοκράτορ τρίτε,
οὐκ ἐν ὑφέσει τῆς τιμῆς, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἡλικίας.

In a similar way, he called Manuel ἡ ζηλωτὴ νεότης just a little later (*Hörandner*, Prodromos, XIII, 39), stressing only Manuel's young age among all the four brothers.¹³

More than this sporadic and inconclusive evidence of Prodromos' somewhat uncomfortable relationship with Manuel, two circumstances offer more decisive indications that a peculiar uneasiness, if not distrust, must have existed between them.

First, Theodore Prodromos was never on intimate terms with Manuel, nor did he ever belong to his closest circle, which is evident from his works, among which not a single piece was dedicated to Manuel *personally*, regardless of whether before or after his accession.¹⁴ The only exemption, which in fact proves their personal dis-

¹⁰ Ibid. XIX, especially XIX, 73–81; XIX, 142–151.

¹¹ Michel Italikos, ed. *P. Gautier*, Paris 1972 (hereafter, Italikos) no. 44. See Italikos' desperate attempts to use Manuel's youth as a positive motif, depicting his accession as the ultimate *rejuvenation* of the capital and the Empire.

¹² The χαῖρε formula was very frequently used in Comnenian rhetoric, especially by Theodore Prodromos and Manganeios. For their inspiration see *C. A. Trypanis*, *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica*, Wien 1968, I. The Akathistos Hymn, pass. Cf. *P. Roilos*, *Amphoteroglossia: The role of rhetoric in the medieval Greek learned novel*, *Die Roman der Komnenenzeit*, edd. *P. A. Agapitos — D. R. Reinsch*, Frankfurt am Main 2000, 109–126, especially 120–123.

¹³ No clearer comprehension of Prodromos' attitudes can be obtained from his poem on the arrival of Manuel's bride in Constantinople, *Hörandner*, Prodromos, XX. Manuel is just described once as John II's *beloved child* (XX, 10), and then as *a new branch of the sacred purple*, and *an ornament of the sebastocracy* (sic!), (XX, 25–26). What distinguishes this poem from the others is that neither John II nor Manuel were present at the occasion, since they were away on the campaign during which the two older brothers, Alexios and Andronikos, would die in the summer of 1142, and the third brother, Isaac, would be entrusted with the transportation of their bodies to the capital, thus leaving Manuel alone with his father. There is no doubt that the tragic events did not occur at the time when Prodromos wrote this poem, or that, at least, the news had still not reached Constantinople, cf. *Hörandner*, Prodromos, 322. For Manuel's *last place* among the brothers, see also Italikos, no. 44/ 284, 5–20.

¹⁴ Even the two *Ptochoprodromic* poems dedicated to Manuel (*Poèmes Prodromiques en grec vulgaire*, edd. *D. — C. Hesseling — H. Pernot*, Amsterdam 1910, III–IV) — if Theodore Prodromos, as it

tance, is the poem edited by A. Maiuri in which Prodromos begs Manuel to take him into his favor, imploring the emperor to actually reinstall him to the position of the first *rhetor* in the capital, which he occupied during the emperor father's reign.¹⁵ The surviving corpus of Prodromos' works confirms the information from his *petition* that he was not 'employed', i.e. that the emperor had not commissioned anything from him for three years. Actually, six years were to pass from Manuel's accession before Theodore Prodromos received an opportunity to once again (and it was literally to be for the last time!) publicly praise the emperor: at the end of 1149, and at the very beginning of the next year, Prodromos had composed one epic fifteen-syllable poem (*Hörandner*, Prodromos, XXX) on the occasion of Manuel's triumphant return to Constantinople, and a series of Christmas and Epiphany hymns for the *demes*, celebrating the same successes, namely the recovery of Corfu from the Normans, and the campaign against the Serbian *župan* Uroš II (*Hörandner*, Prodromos, XXXI–XXXIII). Prodromos had tried, eager to satisfy the emperor, to do his best in praising Manuel, coining new expressions and images, seemingly compatible to the image and personal taste of the new hero. He combined the description of the events, presenting here and there an interesting detail or an appropriate word play, with a direct eulogy of the emperor that in a somewhat absurd way underlined his tender relationship with Manuel by pointing to the poet's excessive zeal during the writing, and his anxiety regarding the consequences his work would produce.

But, Prodromos could change neither his poetical approach and techniques, nor his age. His hymns at Christmas, and especially at Epiphany, echo too often his previous, similar works for John II, even bearing in mind the relatively narrow choice of the possible motifs, and allusions for such occasions. His long poem XXX shows more clearly his inability to adapt to the new trends in Byzantine political poetry, and to the taste of the new, young ruler. His word-play with the name of the Serbian *župan* Uroš II would have been more than sufficient one decade earlier, but in 1149 a more obvious rhetoric was needed, the allusions that were connected more closely with the contemporary circumstances than with citations from the classics took precedence, as could easily be observed from the poems written by his younger colleague (and an admirer, it would be learned afterward) Anonymous, or 'Prodromos' Manganeios, which describe the same events.¹⁶ While Prodromos chose the Homeric epithet *ouresitrofos* (οὔρεσιτρόφος) as his main pun on Uroš, Manganeios

seems today, really was their author (cf. *M. Alexiou*, Ploys of Performance: Games and Play in the Ptochoprodromic Poems, DOP 53 (1999) 91–109; *P. A. Agapitos*, Poets and Painters: Theodoros Prodromos' Dedicatory Verses of His Novel to An Anonymous Caesar, JÖB 50 (2000) 174–185) — could hardly be understood as evidence of his closeness with Emperor Manuel, since we know too little about the circumstances under which they were written, and only possibly presented to the emperor. Be that as it may, their political insignificance, as well as stylistic, and other similarities with the poem in 'vulgar' Greek that Prodromos had written for Manuel's father, John II (edd. *Hesseling* — *Pernot*, I), confirm Prodromos' inability (if not unwillingness) to change the mode he was writing in.

¹⁵ *A. Maiuri*, Una nuova poesia di Teodoro Prodromo in greco vulgare, BZ 23 (1914) 397–407. Cf. *W. Hörandner*, Zur Frage der Metrik früher volkssprachlicher Texte. Kann Theodoros Prodromos der Verfasser volkssprachlicher Gedichte sein?, JÖB 32/2 (1982) 375–381.

¹⁶ Cf. *V. Stanković*, Srbi u poeziji Teodora Prodroma i Anonima Manganskog, ZRVI 43 (2006) 437–450.

blatantly opted for the obvious: he ridiculed the Serbian ruler as being homonymous with urine, and — as one's name also defines one's character — urinating out of fear of Manuel.¹⁷ The professional paths of Theodore Prodromos and Manganeios met only then, at the end of 1149, offering the unique opportunity to study their stylistic, social, and also generational difference. Manganeios became the official encomiast of the emperor Manuel exactly at the time when, after several years of his rule, Manuel felt the need for such self-promotion, retaining at the same time his distrust of the former champions of rhetoric, Theodore Prodromos, Michael Italikos, and Nikephoros Basilakes, as well. From 1147 'Anonymous' Manganeios became a sort of *Prodromos* of Manuel's reign: from then on, he followed the path of the emperor's successes for more than a decade, glorifying his victories, and in the same degree his personality, thus creating the *image of Manuel*, which was in a considerable measure a response to Theodore Prodromos' *image of John II*. But his status within the Byzantine elite and his personal relationship with the sebastokratorissa Eirene testify to the change that became apparent with the establishment of the new regime of Manuel Komnenos, even if the emperor was not personally the instigator of the social changes that were occurring. Manganeios was originally a member of the sebastokratorissa's household (*oikos*), and he became Manuel's favorite encomiast only after the death of the sebastokrator Andronikos and Manuel's accession, maintaining, however, close personal relations with Andronikos' widow, the sebastokratorissa Eirene until the end of her life.¹⁸

The personal, and not only professional dependence of the rhetoricians on their patrons is best confirmed in the case of Manganeios himself, but the social circumstances that stood at the base of such a relationship are of more significance, since they demonstrate the importance and the strength of some Comnenian households other than the emperor's. During the first half of John II's reign, his mother, ex-Empress Eirene Doukaina, was the instigator of many literary endeavours and the patroness of a particular literary retinue, but neither she, nor her daughter Anna and her son-in-law Nikephoros Bryennios, had established a separate *oikos* within the impe-

¹⁷ Manganeios, no. 26 (Recueil des historiens des croisades, Historiens grecs II, ed. E. Miller, Paris 1881, 762). Prodromos' choice, it must be admitted, had a peculiar ring to it: dramatising the emperor's chase of the Serbian ruler, he often compares Manuel with a lion, which is a common feature of Byzantine rhetoric, but he selects the Homeric adjective ὄρεσιτρόφος (changing it to οὐρεσιτρόφος for phonic reasons) for Uroš, whom he describes as *the pig* οὐρεσιτρόφος [*i.e. that dwells in the mountains*], even though that epithet, in Homer (and consequently in Byzantine scholarship, cf. e.g. Constantini Manassis Breviarum Chronicum, ed. O. Lampsidis, Athens 1996, ll. 4656, 5648) was reserved exactly for the *lion*, see Ilias, XII, 299 (λέων ὄρεσιτρόφος). Whether this was Prodromos' subtle *Kaiserkritik* is hard to say, and especially, if that was the case, whether that could be one of the reasons for the emperor's displeasure, which is obvious from the fact that Prodromos was never again given an opportunity to write an imperial encomium. In the poem written in 'vulgar' Greek (edd. Hesselung — Pernot, II/ 47, 102), Prodromos uses the epithet ὄρεσιτρόφος, thus emphasizing more strongly his conscious and peculiar use of the οὐρεσιτρόφος in the official encomium of the emperor. In connection with the expression *the [wild] pig* οὐρεσιτρόφος, cf. Lexicon zur byzantinischen Gräzität, 5. Faszikel, ed. E. Trapp et al., Wien 2005, s. v. [1163]; the noun οὐρητής, used by Manganeios for Uroš II should have found its place there, as well.

¹⁸ Manganeios was equally close, or equally in the service of both Eirene and Manuel as late as 1153, as I hope to show in the forthcoming article "Deconstructing a poem, constructing the sense? A study on the Mangana corpus".

rial family. One more generation of the Komnenoi was necessary, the one to which the sons of Emperor John II belonged, for the decentralization of dynastic power, and the diffusion of Comnenian influence on the educated elite. The attempt by John II's brother, the sebastokrator Isaac [II], in the previous generation to detach his household from the control of the emperor, who was the head of the *genos*, ended with only half a success, since he failed to keep the rhetoricians who were evidently close to him, like Theodore Prodromos, exclusively in his service.¹⁹ In the generation of John II's sons, the most influential family center, as far as intellectuals and intellectual production is concerned, was undoubtedly the *oikos* of the sebastokrator Andronikos and his wife Eirene.

Thus we come to the second point: Emperor Manuel's thin connections with the intellectual elite and, at the same time, the rhetoricians' close personal ties with other members of the imperial family.

While Theodore Prodromos, as the most influential and most popular scholar in the emperor John II's vicinity, had a ramified network of patrons among the emperor's relatives, Manuel, much like his two older brothers, Alexios and Isaac, never felt the necessity to maintain close relations with the Byzantine intellectuals. Among the sons of Emperor John II only the sebastokrator Andronikos, helped by the support of his wife Eirene, showed particular interest in the rhetoricians' company, and, as a means of promoting his own family line and confirming his high position, felt a need for their constant praise. Both Theodore Prodromos and Michael Italikos confirmed their closeness to the sebastokrator Andronikos and his wife in the poems and the monody, which they respectively wrote for, or about Andronikos and his family. Italikos' monody on the death of Andronikos is a clear example of the spirit of the time during the reign of John II,²⁰ marked by the hierarchy among the emperor's sons on the one hand, and by the real influence of the late sebastokrator on educated men on the other. Although Italikos toys with the idea that Andronikos was the heir to the throne after the death of his brother, *basileus* Alexios, this motif is incorporated into a broader description of the tragedy that had befallen the emperor John II Komnenos, to whom the monody is dedicated, and intertwined with other ideas whose goal was to stress the measure of the emperor's loss after the deaths of two Comnenian princes.²¹ If Italikos' monody was ever delivered, it must have happened under the strange circumstances of the late summer or early autumn of 1142, at the time when no one could have suspected that Emperor John II would die in the course of the next months, and so the question of John II's *actual* heir was never raised by the future metropolitan of Philippopolis. Italikos was in no danger of being misunderstood or misinterpreted, since he was only following the *official* political course in stating that after the death of *basileus* Alexios, his brother Andronikos became their father's successor, which actually bore no real political weight once Andro-

¹⁹ Ultimately, Isaac was surrounded only by his closest personal clients, *L. Petit*, Typikon du monastère de la Kosmosotira près d'Ænos (1152), IRAIK 13 (1908) 17–77, especially, 23 sq; 61–62; 69–70.

²⁰ Italikos, no. 11.

²¹ Cf. Stanković, Komnini, 261–262.

nikos too was dead. Italikos was cautious not to make the slightest suggestion as to who became John II's heir after Andronikos's death, Isaac or Manuel, and could therefore be regarded by the latter as a rhetorician suitable to compose the *basilikos logos* to mark Manuel's first imperial entry in the capital.²² Although he was then, presumably, in a better position than his friend Theodore Prodromos, that *basilikos logos* remained the only piece that Italikos had ever composed for the new emperor. From his praise of Emperor Manuel their generational difference is quite obvious,²³ and regardless of whether he was elected as metropolitan of Philippopolis prior to Manuel's arrival in Constantinople, or the appointment was the result of his demonstrated loyalty to the young emperor, it is clear that his encomiastic skills were not considered important or even helpful enough in Manuel's subsequent ideological struggle for prevalence within the imperial family.

The case of Theodore Prodromos was somewhat different. His position in Constantinople, and more importantly his close ties with the emperor's closest relatives were sufficient for Manuel to keep the poet out of his favor for more than six years. Prodromos' poem praising the birth of the sebastokrator Andronikos' second son, Alexios, written not long after March 30, 1142,²⁴ is much more explicit in pointing out the *special* position of the sebastokrator Andronikos among the sons of John II, and Andronikos' or his wife's aspirations towards ascendancy within the entire Komnenian *genos*. Without doubt, Andronikos was in comparison with his brothers most alike their father John II, especially as regards his strong family and *fatherly* position, which resembled much the fatherly ideal, formulated in full strength exactly during the reign of John II.²⁵ Prodromos' toying with the idea that the weight of the entire Empire rested upon the shoulders of the newborn Alexios was at best only the reflection of the ambition of the baby Alexios' father (or mother), and it certainly does not accurately depict the state of affairs between the deaths of the *basileus* Alexios and the sebastokrator Andronikos. It is, nevertheless, a clear indication of Prodromos' connections with the *oikos* of the sebastokrator Andronikos, the house into which yet another grandson of Emperor John II was born. Prodromos' allusions were particularly dangerous — or they could have been perceived as such among Manuel's supporters — because they reflected the *reality* of the imperial family, since Andronikos was the only son of the emperor John II Komnenos who had a real family, and more importantly he was the only son of John II who had sons of his own, and was therefore successful in continuing the purple — dynastic — line of the Komnenoi. If anything, that circumstance contributed to the *special* position that the

²² Italikos, no. 44, although, as Paul Gautier rightly noted, we cannot be certain if his logos was ever delivered.

²³ Cf. *ibid.* 276–279; 281, 21 sq; 284, 5–20; 287, 9–22.

²⁴ I follow the dating of Alexios' birth proposed by *O. Lampsides*, *Zur Sebastokratorissa Eirene*, *JÖB* 34 (1984) 91–107. It is evident from the poem that both Andronikos and his older brother Alexios were alive, although they were at the campaign with their father, which complies perfectly with the events of 1142.

²⁵ Cf. *Stanković*, *Komnini*, 148–175, where further references.

sebastokrator Andronikos and his wife Eirene attained in the Comnenian family, and in the Comnenian society of their time, which was particularly heir — sensitive.

We cannot speculate whether in the lines of Prodnromos' poem Emperor John II's intentions were also mirrored or not, but its entire tone suggests plainly enough that Andronikos' position among his brothers was sufficiently different to generate murmuring in the capital as an echo, which Prodnromos modeled into a strong political statement. Prodnromos refrained from similar political allusions in the long, consolatory poem written for the sebastokratorissa Eirene after Andronikos' death, and opted for a more general although very intimate tone, but his real ties with the late sebastokrator's family, which made him suspicious to Manuel, could not have been annulled only with the one politically neutral expression of comfort to Andronikos' widow.

Taking power into his own hands was a process for Manuel, and it was a long lasting one, and his father's decision to choose him as the successor remained the ideological center-point throughout his reign, even after the emperor's focus had shifted from the apology of the takeover of power in 1143 to the problem of securing his own succession in the 1150's and 1160's. Manuel's obsession with his legitimacy must have been a reflection of the existing opposition that he felt he had to conquer, and fight during his entire long reign. The comparison of Manuel with his father that had triggered the fight in the emperor's camp a few years after he had succeeded John II, showed the existing divisions between the men of his father, headed by John Axouch, and Manuel's devoted, staunchest supporters, with his cousin Andronikos being the most prominent among the second.²⁶ The rhetoricians' insistence on Manuel's rivalry with his father in the encomia from the first half of his rule was the one consequence of that division from the beginning of his reign. It was subsequently replaced with a much stronger comparison with the grandfather, Alexios I, in Manuel's later years, especially in the works of Eustathios of Thessalonica. One is tempted to establish a connection between Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*, in which Alexios I Komnenos was portrayed as an ideal hero, and the much more prominent role that the founder of the Comnenian dynasty attained in the later encomia on Manuel, especially after D. R. Reinsch showed how the *problematic* passages of the *Alexiad* were replaced after the careful reading, either at the end of Manuel's reign or immediately afterwards.²⁷ Because of the divisions from the beginning of Manuel's reign, the emperor was reluctant to accept the services of the rhetoricians who were strongly connected with his father, and his father's men. Like Theodore Prodnromos, his friend, Michael Italikos, was also distanced from Manuel both by a generational difference, and by his close relations with the most influential men from Emperor John II's circle, especially with John Axouch, whom Italikos praised as being second only to the emperor John II, and to whose support he had obviously owed his appointment as *teacher of the gospel*.²⁸ The same can be said of

²⁶ Cinnamus, 127, 15–128, 23, and the analyses by P. Magdalino (as in note 4).

²⁷ D. R. Reinsch, *Zum Text der Alexias Anna Komnenes*, JÖB 40 (1990) 233–268, especially 245–247.

²⁸ Italikos, nos. 37, 39; cf. Ibid. 41–44.

Nikephoros Basilakes, and in a lesser degree of John Tzetzes, while the former was also on excellent terms with, by the end of John II's reign, the all-powerful John Axouch.²⁹

* * *

When we analyze the rhetorical production during Manuel's reign, which in general was very abundant, two periods stand out for the scarcity of rhetorical works:

1) 1144–1147/9.

2) 1155–1170.

The first break in the rhetorical and rhetoricians' activity supports the already expressed opinion that the young emperor had little influence on the educated men, and that he generally mistrusted his father's associates.³⁰ Manuel had evidently felt the necessity to distance himself from the *rhetors* whose political profile was high under John II, and he found a suitable encomiast only in the person of Anonymous Manganeios. Manganeios' double connection, to the sebastokratorissa Eirene and Emperor Manuel, remains nevertheless exceptional: he was the only political writer we know of, who belonged personally to some Comnenian *oikos*, and the only one who spent many years in such a double allegiance. He acted as a cushion between the sebastokratorissa Eirene and Emperor Manuel, oscillating between them, and evidently being faithful to both patrons at the same time.³¹ The value of that fact is immense for assessing Manuel's influence or the lack of it, on the intellectual elite, or even his interest in their praises in the first years after his accession. Although the emperor could have chosen any of the 'stars' of the rhetorical *theatra* from John II's time, he decided to promote a client of his brother Andronikos and his wife Eirene as the poet laureate. Manuel's decision was an attempt at emancipation from his father's shadow, and the circumstance that Manganeios was a faithful client of a rival *oikos* — once rival it must be admitted — had no significance for his decision. It was

²⁹ Nicephori Basilacae Orationes et epistolae, ed. A. Garzya, Leipzig 1984, nos. 3, 5 (hereafter, Basilaces). The corrections made by D. R. Reinsch in his review of Garzya's edition (BZ 80 (1987) 84–91) are indispensable for the correct reading of Basilakes' works; Ioannis Tzetzae Epistulae, ed. P. A. M. Leone, Leipzig 1972, no. 46. Nikephoros Basilakes was something of an innovator among Byzantine intellectuals as regards the Comnenian ideology, which can be observed at its best in his *logos* to the son of the first sebastokrator Isaac, Adrian / John Komnenos (Basilaces, no. 2), cf. Stanković, Komnini, 80–82.

³⁰ The analysis of the *rhetoric* of imperial charters led to a similar conclusion, cf. Ch. Gastgeber, Die rhetorische Ausgestaltung der kaiserlichen Auslandsschreibens der Komnenenzeit an die Päpste (Dölger–Wirth, Reg. 1320a, 1320 b und 1348), Römische historische Mitteilungen 40 (1998) 197–235.

³¹ Our knowledge of the principles, on which the functioning of the peculiar Comnenian system of patronage rested, remains still very limited. For the most part, we are only aware of the connections that existed between the patrons and educated men, but we can assess neither the true nature of those connections nor explain the networks that existed among the rhetoricians themselves, on the one hand, and between men of the pen and the patrons, on the other. Cf. M. Mullet, Aristocracy and Patronage in the literary circles of Comnenian Constantinople, The Byzantine aristocracy IX–XIII centuries, ed. M. Angold, Oxford 1984, 173–201; Magdalino, Manuel, 434 sq; 454 sq; M. Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry from Pisidas to Geometres, Wien 2003 (for the earlier period), 34–45; Stanković, Komnini, 223 sq.

to be the only such example under Manuel: the emperor's grip on the intellectuals, and intellectual thought in general became stronger as time went on, and no space was left for obedience to anyone else but the emperor. There are no parallels to the case of Manganeios, who with his lack of any position in the imperial or the hierarchy of the Great Church resembled his predecessor, Theodore Prodromos, more than his contemporaries and the rhetoricians of the later generations. He stood in the shadow of Prodromos also by his choice of poetry instead of prose, which became more dominant, and thus remained the last political poet of the Comnenian period.

His contemporary, Michael ὁ τοῦ Θεσσαλονίκης, was already proof of the ongoing change in Constantinople: as the protégé of a metropolitan of Thessalonica he held distinguished positions in the hierarchy of the Great Church, while writing exclusively prose encomia for Emperor Manuel. Of particular importance is his oration from the tenth year of Manuel's reign, 1153, not so much for its historical content or rhetorical features but more for Michael's strange, and it seems, careless mention of Manuel's older brother Isaac in the context of Manuel's accession in 1143. The theme of Manuel as the one chosen or even predestined for the imperial crown had not in its essence been touched upon in the rhetorical pieces for an entire decade of his reign. Manuel's main encomiast, Manganeios, was careful enough not to risk being misunderstood on this sensitive subject, choosing rather to avoid allusions about the circumstances of Manuel's elevation. Although the comparison of Manuel, the last son, with David — otherwise self-evident — had been implicit in the praises already before he became emperor, it was only Michael *the Rhetor* who bothered to enter into details in explaining Manuel's accession to the throne in his *logos* from 1153. According to him, Manuel was chosen by *his father* as the successor *despite the fact* that John II had another son, *who was both older and not unworthy* of the crown.³² We do not know anything about Manuel's reaction to or his eventual dissatisfaction with the sudden emergence of his brother Isaac as a candidate for their father's crown in 1143 (even if only in the rhetorical encomia) but Michael did not have much opportunity to correct his eventual lapse: he had a chance to compose only one more encomium for Manuel.³³ On that occasion he was very careful to avoid completely the subject of Manuel's accession and the circumstances surrounding it, focusing his praise on the image of the emperor as the sun, and stressing Manuel's almost superhuman abilities. Only three years after the *logos* of 1153, Michael *the Rhetor* would be removed from office and convicted in the process against the titular patriarch of Antioch, Soterichos Panteugenos, together with the brothers Basilakes, other 'survivors' from the previous regime.

³² *Regel*, Fontes, 151–152. The only other allusion to the challenge that Isaac (could) posed to Manuel is found in the epitaph of Eirene — Berta by Basil of Ochrid, *ibid.* 316–317; cf. Choniates' version, Choniates, 52, 9–17; 80, 2–11.

³³ *Regel*, Fontes, IX. The date of its composition depends on dating Manuel's reinstatement of Uroš II in Serbia, but it is safe to place it in the period between the end of 1154 and the end of 1155, cf. *S. Pirivatrić*, *Odmjetnik Teodora Prodroma. Iz istorije vizantijsko-ugarsko-srpskih odnosa u XII veku*, Papers of the Third Yugoslav Byzantine Studies Conference, Beograd-Kruševac 2002, 327–333.

The mention of his brother Isaac, by Michael the *Rhetor* in the oration from 1153, caught Emperor Manuel in a very sensitive position. After ten years in power, Manuel had hoped that his problems with the succession would finally be solved until his wife, Empress Eirene — Bertha, gave birth to a girl instead of the expected son in March of that year. The emperor's hopes for the birth of the heir were doubtlessly high, as can be deduced from the allusions in the contemporary poem[s] by Manganeios, however subtle and inconspicuous they may appear to us.³⁴ With the birth of the daughter Maria came yet another disappointment for Manuel, now aged 35 — though Manganeios tried to conceal this fact in the poem written soon after her birth³⁵ — since it additionally weakened the emperor's position as the leader of the Comnenian family. Almost as a reaction to that 'failure' of Manuel's came the problematic negotiations of his cousin Andronikos, Manuel's only real ally within the imperial family during the first decade of his reign, with the Hungarian king, regardless of whether Andronikos had really already then claimed the imperial crown for himself or not.³⁶ Either way, it was the first real attempt to deny Manuel the position of the absolute leader of the *genos*, and it was confirmation *per se* of the emperor's precarious position, to which his lack of a *real family* significantly contributed. It seems as if Manuel needed new confirmation of his ascendancy within the Comnenian family after a decade on the throne, and that he had hoped to obtain it with the birth of an heir. Or to put it otherwise, Manuel seems to have realized that after the birth of Maria the opposition was gaining ground, and that he had to establish his authority more forcefully, which always implied firmer control of the course the official imperial ideology would take.

After Maria's birth, only Anonymous Manganeios continued apparently undistracted with his encomia on Manuel for the next six years, in a similar vein and in a similar style as he had earlier, although not as often as earlier, while at the same time repeatedly petitioning the emperor for an *adelphaton* in the Mangana monastery.³⁷ Michael the *Rhetor* disappeared soon afterwards from the emperor's closest circle, only to appear in 1156 in the first great controversies of Manuel's reign, among those condemned for the heresy of Soterichos Panteugenos, together with another

³⁴ Manganeios, no. 19, Theodori Prodromi, *De Manganis*, ed. S. Bernardinello, Padova 1972 (hereafter, *De Manganis*), V, 120–121. Manuel was always very cautious when it came to openly proclaiming his hopes regarding the birth of a son, without doubt in a significant measure, superstitiously afraid for the future of his imperial house, which is reflected in the Choniates' story about the Patriarch's curse that conveys the atmosphere created about the question of Manuel's heir, regardless of the historical truthfulness of the story itself, Choniates, 80, 24–31.

³⁵ Manganeios no. 30, *De Manganis*, III.

³⁶ As it would appear from one allusion by Manganeios (no. 7, ed. I. Rácz, *Bizánci Költemények Mánuel császár Magyar hadjáratairól*, Budapest 1941) and Kinnamos' presentation of events (Cinnamus, 126, 10–14), but not from Manuel's mild reaction, which can hardly be viewed as a punishment, especially not for rebellion.

³⁷ It seems as if Manganeios was assuming the position of the emperor's 'correspondent' from the campaigns since his works from this period focus on Manuel's Balkan offensive from 1153/4, and the great campaign in the East that resulted in the submission, with as symbolic a ceremony as could be produced, of Raymond of Antioch in 1159. See also J. Anderson — E. Jeffreys, *The Decoration of the Sevastokratorissa's Tent, Byzantion* 64–1 (1994) 8–19.

colleague who fell from, if he ever had been in, the emperor's favour, Nikephoros Basilakes.³⁸ It is tempting to interpret the condemnation of Michael *the Rhetor* and Nikephoros Basilakes as the emperor's conscious policy to get rid of the intellectuals in whose loyalty he had reasons to doubt. In other words, it is conceivable that Manuel used the opportunity of the Panteugenos' controversy to topple the highly positioned rhetoricians who did not completely realize the emperor's political platform or the political path the emperor felt necessary to pursue: no dissent could be tolerated, and no one else but Manuel could even be imagined as a candidate for the throne, regardless of whether at present (i.e. in the 1150's) or in 1143. Emperor Manuel was, it appears suddenly, starting to claim exclusivity as regards imperial aspirations, and did not allow even the slightest allusion to the dynasty of the Komnenoi being able to have taken another course in 1143 — and on that idea he would insist with more and more vigor and conviction until the end of his life.

Manuel's tolerance of slightly unorthodox attitudes expressed in the rhetorical works diminished as his anxiety over his imperial succession grew stronger. It is hard to discern from the somewhat distorted picture that we possess owing to the histories written after Manuel's death, that tend to be regarded as 'more objective', in what measure the educated men were really subversive in their allusions, and how much can be ascribed to Manuel's growing suspicion in the loyalty of both his political associates and the men of learning. The two processes may have existed simultaneously or maybe even caused each other. Exactly at the time when Manuel was starting to stress his role as *epistemonarches* and protector of the true faith, he begun to free himself from the intellectuals who or whose work he had for one reason or another considered subversive.³⁹ The emperor used every opportunity for that goal during the next few years: in 1156 Michael *the Rhetor* and Nikephoros Basilakes were dismissed from their high positions, and less than three years later, in the first months of 1159, as a convenient consequence of the obscure 'rebellion' of Theodore Styppeiotēs, Michael Glykas was thrown in the dungeons, and supposedly blinded.⁴⁰

³⁸ J. Gouillard, *Le synodikon de l'Orthodoxie: édition et commentaire*, TM 2 (1967) 1–316, here, 71–73. Les régestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople, vol. I, Fasc. II–III, edd V. Grumel — J. Darrouzès, Paris 1982, nos. 1038, 1039*; 1041–1043.

³⁹ Three aspects of the phenomenon of Manuel as an ἐπιστημονάρχης should be referred to here: 1) Official use of this epithet for Manuel as early as 1147, confirmed also in the reign of Isaac II Angelos, G. A. Ralles — A. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, V, Athens 1855, 309; 311; 314; 2) Anna Komnene's use of this *terminus technicus* in her description of Emperor Alexios in the *Alexiad*, Annae Comnenae Alexias, edd. D. R. Reinsch — A. Kambylis, Berolini et Novi Eboraci 2001. Pars prior: Prolegomena et textus, 96 (III, 4, 3); 3) The choice of the epithet *epistemonarches* for Manuel in the works of the rhetoricians who were closest to him: a) Anonymous Manganeios in 1154/5 (no. 7, ed. I. Rácz, as in note 36, II, 360), and b) Eustathius of Thessalonike (*Regel*, Fontes, no. 2/18, 9–10 (=Eustathii Thessalonicensis Opera minora magnam partem inedita, ed. P. Wirth, Berolini et Novi Eboraci 2000, Λόγος Δ). Cf. P. Magdalino, *The Pen of the Aunt: Echoes of the Mid-Twelfth Century in the Alexiad*, Anna Komnene and Her Times, ed. Th. Gouma — Peterson, New York — London 2000, 15–45, here 31–33.

⁴⁰ Cf. Kresten, *Styppeiotēs*, Exkurs 5, 90–95. Glykas, anyway, could not conform to the demands of the new political sensitivity that the second period of Manuel's reign required, which also applies to some other rhetoricians, like Constantine Manasses and in particular Euthimios Malakes, cf. Stanković, *Komnini*, 246–251.

Combined with his activities, attitudes and general concern with his dominance in the ruling family, in a significant measure Emperor Manuel Komnenos thus caused the second break in rhetorical production, either by the proscription of the intellectuals he did not deem to be loyal or by not allowing others, like Michael tou Anhialou or Enthimios Malakes⁴¹ to acquire a stronger influence or bigger role in formulating imperial ideology. The duration of the second period of relative silence of rhetoric under Manuel Komnenos would be more difficult to explain were it not for the argument that this paper has endeavoured to demonstrate: only with the arrival of the new generation, Manuel's peers, was rhetorical production resumed, although naturally on somewhat different bases and with an entirely different scope. From then onwards, the rhetoricians focused on the only source of political power, Emperor Manuel Komnenos himself. The end of the second 'barren' phase of rhetoric under Manuel is chronologically close to the 'Father is greater than I' dispute, from which the emperor emerged as the ultimate *teacher of the true faith*. It comes as no surprise that the emperor's public image formulated in his later years was completely in keeping with the *role* of the *Good Shepherd* that Manuel had assumed after the 'Father is greater than I' controversy, announced already in the Synodikon of Orthodoxy, only to be strengthened by his opulent intitulation in front of the decisions from the synod of 1166, which he had carved in stone and placed in the church of St. Sophia.⁴² After the synod of 1166, Emperor Manuel was more than ever in need of clear and direct support and, in the same degree, of the appropriate praises to accompany his policy of complete domination, since his position was still highly vulnerable: the question of his succession was becoming an obsession for the emperor, even after the plan with the Hungarian prince Bela — Alexios. In the year 1167, Manuel already had to face the revolt of Alexios Axouch, the son of the once all-powerful John Axouch, the companion of his father, John II.⁴³ Axouch's rebellion was a clear indication that a strong opposition still existed, and it explains, along with other circumstances, Manuel's obsessive need to secure the undisputed succession for his son, Alexios, and to seal it with the official oath of all the highest dignitaries only eighteen months after the birth of the so keenly awaited heir in September 1169.⁴⁴

The rhetoricians' reactions to the birth of Emperor Manuel's son reflect particularly well the position of the educated men in the 1160's, in the transitional period between the dominance of the members of the older generation and the full establishment of the new generation as one capable of following the policy of the emperor and skilful in articulating it into a magnificent ideal. Their restraint and almost com-

⁴¹ See Malakes' dissatisfaction with his position, expressed openly in his *logos* from 1161, *Noctes Petropolitanae*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, St Petersburg 1913 (hereafter, *Noctes*), 162, 31–165, 11.

⁴² C. Mango, *The Conciliar Edict of 1166*, DOP 17 (1963) 315–333; J. Darrouzès, *Listes synodales et notitiae*, REB 28 (1970) 57–96, Appendice, 95–96.

⁴³ Cinnamus, 265, 15–270, 1; Choniates, 143, 65–146, 29; cf. J. — Cl. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)*, Paris 19962, nos. 147, 148.

⁴⁴ I. Medvedev, *Ἡ συνοδικὴ ἀπόφασις τῆς 24 Μαρτίου 1171 ὡς νόμος γιὰ τὴ διαδοχὴ στὸ θρόνο τοῦ Βυζαντίου*, *Το Βυζάντιο κατὰ τον 12ο αἰώνα*, ed. N. Oikonomides, Atina 1991, 229–239.

plete silence on such an occasion, which promised a long awaited reprieve to Emperor Manuel, show both the lack of a dominant personality among the intellectuals, and their unwillingness to jump too far ahead of events and presume what kind of *rhetorical and ideological* reaction the emperor himself would find the most suitable to celebrate the birth of the little Alexios. The lack of an official view of that single, most important event of Manuel's reign up to that point, reflects the lack of such a *rhetor* in the emperor's vicinity: magister Skizinos was otherwise unknown, while the other rhetoricians who were sporadically active in praising the emperor in preceding years chose to remain silent, including Euthimios Malakes, one of the Manuel's most frequent encomiasts with a particular inclination towards allusions about the problem of the emperor's successor.⁴⁵

It was only with the rise of Eustathios of Thessalonica in the peculiar hierarchy of the rhetoricians that the emperor Manuel Komnenos found *his* political ideologist, a man superbly educated, willing and able to create an image of the ideal ruler, significantly more elaborated, and ideologically advanced in comparison with the ideal of the Comnenian emperor, already formulated in full strength during his father's reign. Eustathios combined a magnificent education and evident literary talent with the political tendencies of Manuel's later years, managing to formulate the *absolute imperial ideal* based on the political agenda of the emperor himself, by enhancing his imperial virtues and adding a significant *biblical* nuance to Manuel's portrait. None of his colleagues and contemporaries even came close to Eustathios' magnificent image of Manuel, distinguished both by its ideas, and complicated syntax, which Eustathios consciously used as a means of distinction from other rhetoricians.⁴⁶ In his depiction of the emperor, Eustathios combined all the existing motifs of the Comnenian ideology (emperor-warrior, birth in the purple), stressing those which were of particular significance for Manuel: the legitimacy of his rule confirmed and sanctified by God's — not his father's (i.e. human) — choice, and the emperor's likeness to Christ, revealed in his activities in the church, which he guided as the leader of the chosen people (λαὸς περιούσιος). Eustathios's insistence on the god-like character of Emperor Manuel Komnenos remains a distinct feature of his encomia to Manuel, from the chronologically earliest oration of 1168, in which the emperor is not only called — not so unusually — God's co-ruler (συμβασιλεύς), but also God on Earth (ἐπίγειος θεός), to his characterisation of Manuel as equal to the

⁴⁵ Especially *Regel*, *Fontes*, IV (=Λόγος N, ed. *Wirth*); See also Eustathios' funeral oration, *Eustathii metropolitae Thessalonicensis Opuscula*, ed. *T. L. F. Tafel*, Frankfurt 1832 (reprinted, Amsterdam 1964), 196–214, especially 204, 10–205, 72; See *Stanković*, *Komnini*, 198–222; 247–250, for complete bibliography.

⁴⁶ Eustathios could have followed his teacher / relative Nicholas *o Kataphloron* in this matter, see *M. Loukaki*, *Τυμβωροῦχοι καὶ σκυλευτὲς νεκρῶν. Οι απόψεις του Νικολάου Καταφλώρον για τη ρητορική και τους ρήτορες στην Κωνσταντινούπολη του 12ου αιώνα*, Σύμμεικτα 14 (2001) 143–166. Eustathios was, on the other hand, a role model for the next generation of the educated elite (Greogorios Antiochos, Michael Choniates), which preferred his more complicated style to the middle-level style current in Manuel's earlier years, but existing also in his later years. See also, *P. Magdalino*, *Eustathios and Thessalonica*, Φιλέλλην. Studies in honour of Robert Browning, ed. *C. Constantinides et al.*, Venice 1996, 225–238, especially, 233–234.

apostles (ἰσαπόστολος) in the later encomium.⁴⁷ In other words, Eustathios of Thessalonica echoed in his works, in the best possible way, the spirit of the time characterized by a sensitive use of the very significant epitheta, all of which bore a vastly religious connotation. The tendency was already evident in Nikephoros Basilakes' encomia on the emperor John II, and it had reached its pinnacle in the most important historiographical work of the Comnenian epoch — actually the only complete history *from* the Comnenian period — the Alexiad of Anna Komnene, in which the *ideology* of Alexios (regardless of whether positive or negative) was of the same importance, if not taking precedence over the narration of historical events. Eustathios succeeded in doing for Manuel what Anna Komnene did for his grandfather, Alexios I: he had shaped the image of the *ideal emperor* to conform to the personality and political aspirations of Manuel, repeating or echoing — the only one to do so among his contemporaries — Anna Komnene's terms (ἐπιστημονάρχης) and ideas (ἰσαπόστολος) in praise of *his* emperor, Manuel Komnenos.

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In comparison with the dispersion of political power among various Comnenian *oikoi* in the first decade of his reign, Manuel's later years⁴⁸ present, therefore, a considerably different picture regarding the emperor's undisputed dominance within the family circle of the Komnenoi, which was reflected also in his *rhetorical image*.

One may wonder, however, whether it is possible that it took almost two decades for Manuel to seize absolute power in his hands, to obtain complete domination in the Comnenian clan, and to defeat the rival factions, both politically and ideologically. I would suggest two ways of looking at that phenomenon:

Firstly, it seems that the family of the Komnenoi was much more heterogeneous, and that the distribution of the power was significantly more horizontal than usually perceived — the reigns of Alexios I and John II including — because the vast majority of our information is focused on, and directed to the emperor and his closest circle. Different family traditions, which existed at the beginning of Manuel's reign that had as a consequence the diffusion of political influence among various Comnenian *oikoi*, were subsequently replaced by Manuel's total control, at least his attempt at absolute control over the entire family, since he was aware that his greatest (if not only) rivals could only spring from the almighty Comnenian clan. After more than a decade of his rule, Manuel succeeded in placing his personality at the center of the policy and the ideology of the Empire, since his family was too weak to be perceived as the focal point and the power base of imperial might. However, his success was to be only temporary, and it would become clear already in the last

⁴⁷ Especially *Regel*, Fontes, IV (=Λόγος N, ed. *Wirth*); See also Eustathios' funeral oration, Eustathii metropolitae Thessalonicensis Opuscula, ed. *T. L. F. Tafel*, Frankfurt 1832 (reprinted, Amsterdam 1964), 196–214, especially 204, 10–205, 72; See *Stanković*, Komnini, 198–222; 247–250, for complete bibliography.

⁴⁸ Cf. Magdalino, Manuel, 286 sq; 454 sq.

years of his reign and immediately after his death that the suppressed political ambitions of the strongest Comnenian *oikoi* opened the path for the smaller family branches of the Comnenian clan to develop and gain both strength and influence. Manuel did manage to overwhelm the strongest and at the time of his accession, the most powerful and dangerous rival family *oikoi*, whose leaders were his closest relatives, sharing with him not only the same ambition but in a significant measure the same *right* to the imperial throne, but that enabled the smaller, less significant lines of the Comnenian clan to aspire for greater power, once Manuel had annulled the distinction between the *purple line* of the Komnenoi and the *others*, on which his father had vigorously insisted in his *dynastic* policy.

Secondly, we must bear in mind the means the emperor had at his disposal to force, if necessary, the members of his family, which housed the most dangerous and influential rivals and contenders for the throne, into allegiance. As Ihor Ševčenko concluded in his brilliant overview of the question of possible Byzantine totalitarianism, the Byzantine emperors, unlike modern-day dictators, lacked adequate means to control their adversaries, and to keep them in check.⁴⁹ Manuel used what opportunities there were in the late 1150's and 1160's to absolutely dominate Byzantine political and cultural life. Owing to the premature deaths of his two older brothers, and the mild reaction from the third brother, Isaac, Manuel had the chance to gain prevalence already in 1143, but his battles were not won until the late 1150's. Similarly to his grandfather, Alexios I Komnenos, who assumed undisputed power only after the deaths of his mother, Anna Dalassene, and his older brother, the sebastokrator Isaac, at the beginning of the 12th century, it was not until after the almost simultaneous disappearance of his aunt, Anna Komnene, sister-in-law, the sebastokratorissa Eirene, his brother Isaac, and uncle Isaac [John II's brother], together with their closest clients from the intellectual elite that Manuel freed himself from family influences and/or control.

Влада Станковић

ГЕНЕРАЦИЈСКИ ЈАЗ ИЛИ ПОЛИТИЧКО ПИТАЊЕ? ЦАР МАНОЈЛО КОМНИН, ВИЗАНТИЈСКИ ИНТЕЛЕКТУАЛЦИ И БОРБА ЗА ПРЕВЛАСТ У ВИЗАНТИЈИ ДВАНАЕСТОГ ВЕКА

Изненадни долазак на царски престо младог Манојла Комнина 1143. године, довео је до значајних потреса у кругу византијске елите, подједнако политичке и културне, неприпремљене за низ бурних промена које су се одиграле у последњој години владавине Манојловог оца, цара Јована II Комнина (1118–1143). Поставши сасвим неочекивано очев наследник на царском престолу након породичне трагеди-

⁴⁹ I. Ševčenko, Was there totalitarianism in Byzantium? Constantinople's control over its Asiatic hinterland in the early ninth century, Constantinople and its hinterland, edd. C. Mango — G. Dagron, Aldershot 1995, 95–105.

је Комнина обележене смрћу два најстарија сина Јована Комнина, наследника и очевог сацара Алексија и севастократора Андроника, Манојло се нашао у осетљивој ситуацији, окружен конкурентима и опонентима из најближег породичног круга и очевим поузданим, вишедеценијским сарадницима, имајући, с друге стране, уз себе само неколицину оданих савезника међу којима се издвајао његов вршњак и брат од стрица Андроник (каснији цар 1183–1185). Свестан проблематичности, стварне и идеолошке, свог положаја и наслеђа, Манојло Комнин је био врло опрезан према свим сарадницима свог оца Јована Комнина и, посебно, према ученим реторима који су били по свом положају блиски а по годинама вршњаци Јована Комнина. Иако је и сам био хваљен као сјајни ратник и очев саборац од најугледнијих учењака, Михаила Италика и Теодора Продрома, још пре него што је постао василевс, Манојло је након освајања власти постао сумњичав у њихову оданост и подозреив према блиским везама које су бројни престонички ретори имали са осталим представницима царске породице. Тако су изван милости новог цара остали сви прваци реторике из времена Јована Комнина, недовољно лично повезани са младим Манојлом и политички исувише крути да у потпуности разумеју новонасталу ситуацију и потребу младог василевса да сопствену идеологију изгради великим делом на другачијим основама од оних на које су је исти ретори поставили у доба и по обличју његовог оца Јована Комнина.

Водећи се идејом да сви некадашњи сарадници Јована Комнина могу представљати опасност за изграђивање сопствене власти и ауторитета, Манојло Комнин се трудио да ограничи утицај некадашњих интелектуалних првака и да их, у најбољем случају, у потпуности уклони са политичке сцене. У ту сврху цар се служио различитим средствима, од непружања прилике реторима да остваре или потврде блискост са новом влашћу својим делима и похвалама — као што је био случај са Теодором Продромом, Јованом Цецесом и касније Евтимијем Малакисом, што су посведочили у својим саставима / молбама упућеним Манојлу — до непосредне осуде због наводних јеретичких ставова (Михаило Солунски, браћа Васиلاكис) или превратничких намера (Михаило Глика). Као што је и своје политичке савезнике проналазио искључиво у припадницима оних породичних грана Комнинског клана са којима Јован Комнин или није имао добре односе (Андроник је био син Исака, рођеног брата цара Јована Комнина и његовог највећег противника) или су припадали следећем нараштају који се владавине по којног цара није ни сећао (попут Манојлових братанаца Јована и Алексија, синова његовог брата Андроника, који су одвојени од мајке стасали у царевом окружењу и били његови најближи сарадници), тако је и своје клијенте из реда учењака бирао по истом критеријуму. Од мноштва литерата који су у време његовог оца обигравали око бројних покровитеља из царске породице, једино се Аноним („Продром“) Мангански изборио за цареву наклоност у првој половини његове владавине, да би тек Евстатије Солунски, у последњој деценији Манојловог живота, постао званични *царски ретор*, заслужан за стварање величанствене идеологије која је требало да Манојла издвоји колико од оца толико и од осталих царева и смртника и уздигне до висине царског идеала оличеног у првом, равноапостолном цару Константину Великом.