SEARCHING FOR IDENTITIES: A MEETING OF TEXT AND MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE BYZANTINE LIFE COURSE CE 1204-1453

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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January 2022

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers the first examination of the Life Course in the late Byzantine period (1204-1453). The past decade of scholarship has demonstrated that representations of every stage of life – infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity, and old age – can be found in Byzantine texts and visual culture. However, few scholars have examined representations of ageing across the Life Course, though social scientists have demonstrated that it is the transitions from one life-stage to the next that essentially define the process of growing up and growing old. By examining Byzantine authors' and artisans' portrayals of ageing across the Life Course, we may come to understand the importance of age as a component of both identity and of the structure of Byzantine society at large.

This study takes as its chronological point of departure the year of the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204 and ends with the Ottoman conquest of 1453. This late period of Byzantine history, due in part to the altered nature of the source material after 1204, remains underrepresented in existing scholarship of ageing and the family. Nevertheless, in this thesis I demonstrate that the late Byzantine period offers a rich array of evidence, including biographical literature, visual portrayals of the life-stages, and burial archaeology, from which we can understand how the Byzantines constructed the Life Course during a rapidly fluctuating and dynamic period of the empire's history.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*
MM I/II	F. Miklosich, J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graecae Medii Aevi Sacra et Profana*, 2 vols. (1860-1862, repr. (digital), New York, 2012.)
ODB	A. P. Kazhdan et al., eds., *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1991).
PG	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*
REB	*Revue des Études Byzantines*
Regestes	V. Laurent, ed., *Les Regestes des Actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. I/4, *de 1208 à 1309* (Paris, 1971); J. Darrouzès, ed., vol. I/5, *de 1310 à 1376* (Paris, 1977), vol. I/6, *de 1377 à 1410* (Paris, 1979).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I examine the Life Course in the late Byzantine empire between the Latin conquest of
Constantinople in 1204 and the Ottoman conquest of 1453. The term *Life Course* refers to the social
construction of ageing, or 'a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts
over time.'[1] All individuals are born, grow old, and die, but how they experience passing through the
stages of life, and what roles and activities they perform in each life-stage, depend on their society's
preconceived model of the Life Course. The Life Course is thus distinct from the *lifecycle*, which
denotes the series of biological changes in the life of an organism (chiefly in regard to reproduction).[2]
Within the sociohistorical constraints of place and time, the trajectory of an individual life is shaped
by several factors, among which scholars of ancient Rome have emphasised the importance of gender,
social status, and personal agency.[3] In her doctoral investigation of the middle Byzantine Life Course
(518-1204 CE), Eve Davies also stressed the role of gender and status as aspects of identity that
shaped the course of ageing,[4] just as they shaped the structure of Byzantine society at large.[5] Most
recently, Byzantine identities have been examined through the lens of intersectionality, which posits
that different categories of identity – including race, gender, and sexuality (but not age) – overlap to
produce unique effects on the lived realities of historical figures and/or their constructions by authors.[6]
While intersectionality is not the methodological approach I adopt in my study, Life Course theory is,
by its nature, intersectional. To date, there exists no study of ageing in late Byzantium. This thesis

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[1] J. Z. Giele and G. H. Elder Jr., 'Life Course Research: Development of a Field', in *Methods of Life Course Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, eds. J. Z. Giele, G. H. Elder Jr. (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1998), 5-27, 22.
[2] G. H. Elder Jr., M. K. Johnson, and R. Crosnoe, 'The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory', *Handbook of the Life Course*, eds. J. T. Mortimer and M. J. Shanahan (New York, 2003), 3-19, 4-5.
[3] M. Harlow and R. Laurence, *Growing Up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome: A Life Course Approach* (London and New York, 2002), 3.
[4] E. Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status: A Three-Dimensional Life Course Perspective of the Byzantine Family', in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, eds. L. Brubaker and S. Tougher (Farnham, 2013), 153-176.
[5] L. James, 'Men, Women, Eunuchs: Gender, Sex, and Power', in *A Social History of Byzantium*, ed. J. Haldon (Chichester, 2009), 31-50, 31.
[6] R. Betancourt, *Byzantine Intersectionality* (Princeton, 2020), 2.

addresses that gap, examining how constructions and perceptions of the Life Course, from the moment of conception to death and the afterlife, developed during the late Byzantine period.

By studying the late Byzantine Life Course, we learn that artisans and writers – including hagiographers, historians, and (auto)biographers – of this period treated age as a key component of identity that influenced what society expected of an individual across her/his lifetime. However, in constructions of the female Life Course, age is conflated with marital status, so that our sources often present women passing almost agelessly through a series of age-graded roles: from maiden, to wife, to mother, to widow. In contrast, divisions in the male Life Course are often indicated by chronological or biological markers of age, such as beard growth in puberty, while marital status – a social marker of age – is less important. It is therefore clear that our (mostly male) authors and artisans conceptualised women's life-stage largely in terms of their relationships with men; thus, the impact of gender on representations of ageing cannot be overstated. Moreover, by applying Life Course theory to hitherto underexploited genres of evidence, including iconography, burials, and liturgical treatises, I will argue that Christian beliefs about the formation of the human body and soul heavily influenced Byzantine perceptions of the Life Course. The product of this influence is what Roberta Gilchrist has termed an 'extended' Life Course model that exceeded the body's creation in the womb and its decay in death.[7] Striking parallels between the Byzantines' representations and rituals of birth and death indicate that they conceived of the Life Course not in linear terms, but as encompassing a stage of rebirth in the afterlife.

The social-scientific Life Course theory has been applied to the study of ancient and medieval civilisations within the past two decades.[8] As a theoretical orientation, the Life Course investigates the relationship between an individual's life trajectory and the sociohistorical context in which she/he lived.[9] Ageing has certain universal biological features, but each society has its own way of dividing

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[7] R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge, 2012), 19.
[8] See above, n. 2-3; L. Aberici and M. Harlow, 'Age and Innocence: Female Transitions to Adulthood in Late Antiquity', *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007): 193-203; Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*.
[9] Elder Jr., Johnson, and Crosnoe, 'Development of Life Course Theory', 3-4.

life into stages and structuring the transitions from one life-stage to the next. This is because human lives are subject to 'social clocks': systems of cultural norms and expectations about the appropriate age for undertaking major life events, which are superimposed onto the biological timetable of human ageing.[10] Marriage is an example of a life event whose timing is dictated more by culture than biology. In late Byzantium, the legal age of marriage was intended to coincide with puberty and was therefore fixed at 15 for boys and 13 for girls.[11] Conversely, in today's United Kingdom, puberty occurs on average at 12 for boys and 11 for girls, but for both sexes the legal age of consent is 16 and the age of marriage is 18 everywhere outside Scotland.[12] Byzantine marriage law thus consciously aligned biological and social ageing by upholding the age-gap between the sexes in attaining sexual maturity, whereas modern UK legal customs render this gender difference socially obsolete.

Life Course theory is a useful analytical tool for historians because the way a society constructs the life-stages directly impacts on social organisation. The term 'child', for example, designates not only a fixed period within the lifecycle, but also a set of defined roles in the family and society; these roles can be understood as 'age-graded'.[13] Garland argues in his study of ageing in ancient Greece that 'changes in systems of age-classification inevitably reflect changes in society as a whole, whereas their preservation… signifies a deliberate and conscious attempt to resist change'.[14] The question of continuity and change is central to the historiography of late Byzantium, which has

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[10] B. L. Neugarten and N. Datan, 'Sociological Perspectives on the Life Cycle', in *Life-span Developmental Psychology: Personality and Socialization*, eds. P. B. Baltes & K. W. Schaie (New York, 1973), 53–69, 62.
[11] Constantine Harmenopoulos, *Constantini Harmenopuli Manuele Legum Sive Hexabiblos*, ed. G. E. Heimbach (Leipzig, 1851), IV. 4. 2; Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, eds. M. Potles and G. A. Rhalles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν Θείων καὶ Ἱερῶν Κανόνων τῶν τε Ἁγίων καὶ Πανευφήμων Ἀποστόλων, καὶ τῶν Ἱερῶν Οἰκουμενικῶν καὶ Τοπικῶν Συνόδων, καὶ τῶν κατὰ Μέρος Ἁγίων Πατέρων*, vol. 6 (Athens: 1859), 31-518; partial trans. P. D. Viscuso, *Sexuality, Marriage and Celibacy in Byzantine Law: Selections from a Fourteenth-Century Encyclopaedia of Canon Law and Theology, the Alphabetical Collection of Matthew Blastares* (Brookline, MA, 2008), Γ. 2 (153/91-92).
[12] 'Stages of Puberty', NHS website. Accessed: 04/01/2021 via https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/stages-of-puberty-what-happens-to-boys-and-girls/.
[13] Neugarten and Datan, 'Sociological Perspectives', 59.
[14] R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Life: From Conception to Old Age* (Ithaca, 1990), 8.

grown significantly in the past two decades, as scholarly attentions shift toward the late empire's social and cultural history rather than its political decline.[15]

Before moving on to discuss the state of existing scholarship of ageing and the family in Byzantium, the chronological and geographical scopes of this study require further explanation. In explaining why her thesis excluded the late Byzantine period, Davies stated that after 1204, 'source material becomes too scant… to ascertain a reliable understanding of Life Course constructions. The Palaiologan evidence (produced after the reoccupation of Constantinople 1261-1453) is deserving of an altogether separate enquiry'.[16] Temporarily leaving aside the question of sources (on this, see part 1.2 below), it should be noted that the late Byzantine Life Course took shape in a historical context significantly altered from earlier periods. Even after the 1261 reconquest, the socioeconomic and political fabric of the empire was markedly changed from its pre-1204 form. Former Byzantine territories were in the hands of Latins, Bulgarians, and Serbs, while the Ottoman advance formed a historical backdrop across the 14th to 15th centuries.[17] Internally, the Church dealt increasingly in civic affairs, including the judicial sphere, while monastics adopted leading roles in major political and religious controversies, namely that of a union between the Orthodox and Catholic churches.[18] Lay

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[15] The social history of late Byzantium, specifically in regard to the family and the position of women in society, has been elucidated especially by the works of Alice-Mary Talbot (see below, n. 41, 43, 51, 73, 75-76), Ruth Macrides (n. 44), and Angeliki Laiou (n. 19, 21-22).

[16] E. Davies, *From Womb to Tomb: The Byzantine Life Course AD 518-1204* (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), 3. For Davies' key findings from hagiography, see 'Age, Gender and Status'.

[17] The political history of the late Byzantine period is surveyed by D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1993).

[18] On the clergy's role in the judicial sphere, see S. Troianos, 'Byzantine Canon Law from the Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries', in *The History of the Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500* (2012), 170-214, esp. 185, 192-198. On the relationship between the church and state, and the religious controversies, see J. L. Boojamra, *The Church and Social Reform: The Policies of Patriarch Athanasios of Constantinopl*e (New York, 1993), esp. 5-10; J. Meyendorff, 'Society and Cultural Problems in the Fourteenth Century: Religious Problems', in *XIVe Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Rapports I. Bucharest 6-12 September 1971*, eds. M. Berza & E. Stanescu (Bucharest, 1974); repr. in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm: Historical, Theological, and Social Problems* (London, 1974), VIII, 51-65.

and especially ecclesiastic and monastic landowners' powers increased in the countryside,[19] and the climate of instability prompted new developments in visual culture.[20]

At the level of everyday life, scholars – focusing largely on the aristocracy – have identified the mid-to-late 11th to 12th centuries as a period of change to the traditional family structure, as the role women and extended blood relations in the family acquired greater importance, and a peaked interest in ancestry was attested by the adoption of patronyms.[21] Meanwhile, it has been shown that the nuclear family structure remained dominant amongst the rural peasantry in the late period (13th to 15th centuries),[22] while our understanding of late Byzantine urban and elite families is comparatively limited.[23] As Life Course constructions interact closely with the organisation of the family unit, it is important to consider how any changes in one could effect changes in the other (on this, see chapter 7.2).

As my thesis is concerned with how Life Course representations developed over time, it focuses on the cultural rather than political remit of late Byzantium, whose borders were in flux during the final two-and-a-half centuries of its existence. Even as parts of the Mediterranean fell out of Byzantine rule, Greek communities living in those regions under foreign governance retained cultural affinities with the empire, especially through their Orthodox faith.[24] Hence, while my analysis draws

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[19] A. E. Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1977), 3-6, 142-158; E. A. Laiou and C. Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), 173-176, 225-227.

[20] For a recent survey of the relationship between late Byzantium's political and socioeconomic context and its visual culture, see A. Mattiello and M. Rossi, eds., *Late Byzantium Reconsidered: The Arts of the Palaiologan Era in the Mediterranean* (London, New York, 2019).

[21] A. P. Kazhdan and A. W. Epstein [A. J. Wharton], *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkely, 1985), 99-104; A. Laiou, 'The Role of Women in Byzantine Society', *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), 233-260, 251-252; *idem*, 'Family Structure and the Transmission of Property', in *Social History of Byzantium*, 51-75, 54-56. On the rarity of surnames and family names before the 11th-12th centuries, see C. Ludwig, 'Social Mobility in Byzantium? Family Ties in the Middle Byzantine Period', in *Approaches*, 233-245. For a recent critical discussion of these developments and the modern historiography, See N. Leidholm, *Elite Byzantine Kinship, ca.950-1204: Blood, Reputation, and the Genos* (Leeds, 2019), esp. 8-11, 84-86, 166-167.

[22] Laiou, 'Family Structure', 59; F. Kondyli, 'Changes in the Structure of the late Byzantine Family', in *Byzantine Family*, 371-393, 373-376.

[23] Laiou, 'Family Structure', 59.

[24] Sources from these areas include the monastic *typika*, church iconography and burial archaeology. The latter two source-types have been the subject of investigations related to the themes of gender and the family in later medieval Byzantium. Sharon Gerstel's recent study of the late Byzantine rural village draws on archaeological and artistic evidence of Greek communities of the Peloponnese and Crete under both Byzantine and foreign rule:

mostly on material from Constantinople and Thessaloniki, the empire's second city, I also examine

sources from Latin Greece, Cyprus, and Turkish Anatolia.

Did perceptions and expectations of the Life Course change in response to the shifting

political, religious, and socioeconomic landscape of the eastern Mediterranean across the 13th to 15th

centuries – to times of displacement, civil upheaval, and the threat of foreign invasion (physical in

regard to the Ottoman expansion, and ideological in regard to the pressing issue of a union between

the Eastern and Western churches)? Or do they reflect continuity with the past? And why?

We will see that, ultimately, our sources present the spheres of family and private life as a

locus for stability rather than transformation in the late period. While the political borders of an empire

can – and did – fluctuate rapidly, cultural attitudes are often slower to change. Davies found that,

despite a few important changes, constructions of the Byzantine Life Course remained remarkably

stable across the 6th to 12th centuries.[25] Life Course constructions of the 13th to 15th centuries also show

significant continuity with those of earlier periods. As Byzantine biographers were essentially more

concerned with crafting models of behaviour for emulation than 'realistic' portraits of their subjects'

lives, their works reinforced normative expectations about the roles of women, men, and children in

the family and society that remained largely stable over time. This trend attests to the resilience of

familial and social ideals to times of change, but perhaps also their importance as bases for the

preservation of traditional beliefs and values that were increasingly perceived to be under threat from

outside forces.

Yet, despite their adherence to social and textual conventions, Byzantine biographers did not

refrain from using the turbulent periods and events through which their subjects lived as a means of

signifying personal virtue and (moral) strength. In our sources, we find saintly children and families

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S. Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in late Byzantium: Art, Archaeology and Ethnography* (New York, 2016). Possible links between variances in weaning practices and Greek and Frankish communities in Frankish-ruled Greece have been identified by C. Bourbou and S. J. Garvie-Lock, 'Breastfeeding and Weaning Patterns in Byzantine Times: Evidence from Human Remains and Written Sources', in *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium*, eds. A. Papaconstantinou and A-M. Talbot (Washington 2009), 65-84, 80-82.
[25] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 263-264.

whose miraculous escapes from Turkish or Frankish capture act as evidence of their God-favoured status.[26] The late Byzantine historical climate thus had a clear impact on constructions of the Life Course and the cultural ideals they encapsulated. We will also see that hagiographical Life Course constructions tended to emphasise the monastic destiny of the saint from youth in this period.[27] The dedication and devotion of the individual to God at an early stage of life was perceived as an important marker of sanctity and, accordingly, constituted a religious ideal in late Byzantium.

(1.1) Previous scholarship

As my thesis resumes chronologically where Davies' middle Byzantine Life Course study left off, it is beneficial to situate my research aims in the context of her findings. However, first it is necessary to review the state of existing research on ageing and the family in Byzantium, to identify the key questions and methodological trends shaping the field. Although the study of the Byzantine Life

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[26] *Life of Philotheos of Athos*, eds. R. P. H. Greenfield and A-M. Talbot, trans. S. McGrath, *Holy Men of Mount Athos* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), II. 2-6; *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*, ed. N.A. Bees, 'Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν Ἱστορίαν τῶν Μονῶν τῶν Μετεώρων', *Βυζαντίς* 1 (1909): 237-260, 240; Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, ed. H.-V. Beyer, *Kallistos I Patriarch von Konstantinopel, Leben und Wirken unseres unter den Heiligen weilenden Vaters Gregorios' des Sinaïten*/ Каллист I, патриарх Константинопольский, Житие и деятельность иже во святых отца нашего Григория Синаита (Yekaterinburg, 2006), 106-227, IV.

[27] The saint enters a monastery in childhood or youth in the following texts: Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios I*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Zitija dvuh Vselenskih patriarhov XIV v., svv. Afanasija I i Isidora I', in *Zapiski-istoriko-filologicheskogo fakul'teta Imperatorskago S.-Peterburgskago Universiteta*, 76 (St. Petersburg, 1905), 1-51, III (4-5); Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel of Thessaloniki*, ed. L. Syndika-Laourda, 'ΕΓΚΩΜΙΟΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΝ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ', *Makedonika* 4 (1960), 352-370, 355; Philotheos Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ Μαρούλη* (*Life of Germanos Maroules*), ed. D. G. Tsamis, *ΦΙΛΟΘΕΟΥ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΠΟΥΛΕΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΚΚΙΝΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΕΡΓΑ*, vol. 1, (Thessaloniki, 1985), VIII. 6-7; Philotheos Kokkinos, *Life of Gregory Palamas*, ed. Tsamis, *ΑΓΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΕΡΓΑ*; trans. N. Russel, *Gregory Palamas: The Hesychast Controversy and the Debate with Islam* (Liverpool, 2020), 52-210, XIV. 1; *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, VI; *Life of Makarios Makres*, ed. A. Argyriou, *Macaire Makrès et la Polémique contre l'Islam: Édition Princeps de l'Éloge de Macaire Makrès et deses deux Oeuvres Anti-Islamiques Précédée d'une Étude Critique* (Città del Vaticano, 1986), 185-236, XIV. 15-16; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, ed. and trans. Greenfield and Talbot, *Holy Men of Mount Athos*, III; *Life of Niphon of Athos*, ed. and trans. Greenfield and Talbot, *Holy Men of Mount Athos*, I. 1; *Life of Philotheos of Athos*, II. 6; Philotheos Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα τοῦ νέου* (*Life of Sabas the Younger*), ed. Tsamis, *ΑΓΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΕΡΓΑ*, VI; Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Saint Romylos of Vidin*, ed. F. Halkin, 'Un Ermite des Balkans au XlVe Siècle, La Vie Grecque Inedite de St. Romylos', *Byzantion* 31 (1961): 116-45; trans. M. Bartusis, K. B. Nasser and A. E. Laiou, 'Days and Deeds of a Hesychast Saint: A Translation of the Greek Life of Saint Romylos', *Études Byzantines* 9. 1 (1982): 24-47, III. 1-4. The 14th-century Saint Matrona of Chios also left home to become a nun as a young woman: Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς ὁσίας καί θεοφόρου μητρὸς ἡμῶν Ματρόνης*, in *Νέος Λειμωνάριον* (Athens, 1819), 379-383, 380.

Course is in its infancy, the past decade has produced the first major studies of Byzantine childhood and adolescence, which reflect a growing historiographical interest in age as a determinant of identity.

Since the study of childhood emerged as a field of historical enquiry, medievalists – being primarily concerned with the impact of culture on ageing – have adopted anthropological and sociological methods for understanding life-stage and life-stage transitions. Especially influential was the work of Arnold van Gennep, who asserted in his *Rites of Passage* (1960) that the life of an individual in any society is formed of 'a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another';[28] this is very close to the definition of the Life Course. Van Gennep made a distinction between 'physical' and 'social puberty' – the latter referring to the ritual customs used to mark the transition from youth to maturity by a given society – and showed that the relationship between biological and social ageing varied across cultures.[29] In her seminal study *Growing Up in Medieval London* (1995), Hanawalt, influenced by the work of prominent Life Course theorist Glen Elder Jr.,[30] built on this theory by arguing that the correspondence between social and biological ageing is also influenced by gender, socioeconomic status, and historical period.[31] Thus, girls of medieval London who married soon after physical puberty experienced a shortened period of social puberty, whereas institutions such as apprenticeship enforced a prolonged social construction of adolescence upon boys of the merchant and artisanal classes. As the fixed period of apprenticeship contracts lengthened over time, so did the adolescence of the male Londoner.[32]

Hanawalt was also influenced by Elder's assertion that any life-stage can only be understood fully when considered in relation to its adjacent life-stage(s).[33] In medieval England, the activities and environments of childhood contrasted with those of adolescence and adulthood, indicating that change

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[28] A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee (London and New York, 1960, repr. 2004), 2-3.
[29] *Ibid.*, 65-68.
[30] G. Elder, Jr., 'Adolescence in the Life Cycle: An Introduction', in *Adolescence in the Life Cycle*, eds. S. E. Dragastin and G. H. Elder, Jr. (Washington, D.C., 1975), 1-13.
[31] B. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (New York and Oxford, 1993).
[32] *Ibid.*, 10, 111, 203.
[33] *Ibid.*, 11.

was essential in formulating the experience of growing up.[34] Thus, even before Life Course studies of the Middle Ages emerged, historians recognised that gender, status, and temporality were vital to constructing the life-stages. It should also be noted that early studies of medieval childhood used individual biography to highlight the social practices and institutions that shaped the course of ageing. The story of one child's baptism, for example, could exemplify how the spiritual bond between godchild and godparent impacted on children's later lives with respect to financial support, education, and apprenticeship.[35] This blending of qualitative and quantitative data proved useful for the historical study of ageing and the family, and is characteristic of the Life Course approach.

The first major study of the late Byzantine family emerged with Laiou-Thomadakis' *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire* (1977), based on the *praktika*: inventories listing the property and members of peasant households on the monastic estates of Mount Athos. Laiou employed concepts from social anthropology and demography to explore how the peasant household evolved across its members' lifecycles.[36] As family members were born, reproduced, and died, the household structure changed on a cyclical basis. Household structure was affected by the age, sex, and marital status of the head of household; thus, extended households were often headed by older men and widowed women, whereas younger widows largely lived in nuclear households.[37] Laiou also demonstrated the impact of historical time on the peasant household. During the first half of the 14th century, local fluctuations in the average household size were caused by peasants emigrating from parts of Macedonia affected by Turkish and Catalan incursions.[38] In this period of instability, the peasant population as a whole was declining and becoming poorer as the power of monastic estates grew.[39] Laiou thus illustrated the interaction between historical forces, individual lifecycles, and the socioeconomic unit of the family. However, in terms of the Life Course, the *praktika*'s utility is

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[34] *Ibid.*, 109-128.
[35] *Ibid.*, 51.
[36] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 81-85.
[37] *Ibid.*, 83-85, 89-92.
[38] *Ibid.*, 233-241.
[39] *Ibid.*, 206

limited because they provide no ages for the peasant household members they recorded. Laiou used

marital status to categorise the Macedonian peasantry into three age generations, which is problematic

since it is not known when peasants married. For this reason, although I had originally planned on

analysing the *praktika* in my thesis, in the end I used them only as supplementary evidence for specific

Life Course transitions, such as marriage.

The past decade of research has witnessed an increased interest in the family and reinforced its

status as the core structural unit of Byzantine society, which bound different generations through ties

of familial obligation, and even shaped perceptions of holiness and monasticism after the era of

Christianisation.[40] Byzantinists have predominantly focused on children rather than, for example, the

place of women or the elderly in the family.[41] The pioneering *Images of Children in Byzantium* (2008)

by Hennessy, and *Becoming Byzantine* (2009), edited by Papaconstantinou and Talbot, identified

childhood as a distinct category of Byzantine society. Previously, scholars had analysed the place of

children in specific contexts – the natal family,[42] monastic community,[43] and networks of spiritual

kinship[44] – but rarely attempted to define childhood as a life-stage. Early research on Byzantine youth

raised critical questions about the modes of representing age and the role of marital status in defining

the life-stages. Hennessy, studying childhood through the lens of visual culture, showed that Byzantine

artisans used a range of visual topoi to convey distinct stages of youth.[45] She also observed the impact

of gender on iconographic portrayals of youth. Whereas artisans clearly distinguished an adolescent

life-stage when portraying males, they were not interested in depicting a life-stage between girlhood

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[40] See the collected studies in Brubaker and Tougher, *Byzantine Family*.
[41] Thus far, old age has been examined in two works: A-M. Talbot, 'Old Age in Byzantium', *BZ* 77. 1 (1984): 267-278; C. Gilleard, 'Old age in Byzantine Society', *Ageing & Society* 27 (2007): 623-642. On existing research into the family, see Brubaker's preface to *Byzantine Family*, xx-xxi.
[42] E. Patlagean, 'L'Enfant et son Avenir dans la Famille Byzantine (IVe-XIIe Siècles)', *Annales de Démographie Historique, Enfant et Sociétés* (1973): 85-93.
[43] A-M. Talbot, 'The Byzantine Family and the Monastery', *DOP* 44 (1990): 119-129.
[44] R. Macrides, 'The Byzantine Godfather', *BMGS* 11 (1987): 139-162; 'Substitute Parents and their Children in Byzantium', in *Adoption et Fosterage*, ed. M. Corbier (Paris, 2000), 1-11. Both reprinted in Macrides, *Kinship and Justice in Byzantium, 11-15th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1999).
[45] C. Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2008), 47-59.

and womanhood. This problematic aspect of Byzantine images gives us the impression that girls transitioned quickly into women upon puberty.[46]

Gender reappeared as a key issue in the first study of Byzantine adolescence, *Coming of Age in Byzantium* (2018), edited by Ariantzi. Brubaker noted that female adolescence is poorly represented in Byzantine iconography, but identified marriage as the factor that determined whether females were portrayed as girls or women.[47] Literature-based studies in this volume focused predominantly on characterisations of male adolescence, though Melichar demonstrated that some middle and late Byzantine writers associated young women with specific emotions, behaviours, and concerns.[48] Whether Byzantine writers distinguished an adolescent period within the female Life Course thus remains a question requiring further study. Recent research has also demonstrated the importance of interdisciplinarity to the study of life-stage. Pitarakis' chapter on the material culture of childhood in *Becoming Byzantine* combined evidence from literature, epigraphy, iconography, archaeology, and modern folk traditions to examine longstanding cultural practices related to ageing. Ritual customs depicted in Byzantine images, such as the offering of beverages to mothers after childbirth, formed part of cultural traditions that had their roots in antiquity and remain visible in modern Greek and Turkish culture.[49] The exploitation of multiple source-types thus enables a better understanding of the relationship between texts, images, objects, and social practices. By examining the transhistorical development of social beliefs and practices related to childhood, Pitarakis also highlighted how the study of life-stage can elucidate broader historical processes.

Though broad in thematic, chronological, and methodological scope, these studies were not comprehensive. The first monograph on Byzantine childhood appeared with Ariantzi's *Kindheit in Byzanz* (2012), which elucidated underexplored aspects of youth, including the education of female

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[46] *Ibid*., 47-59, 62-63.
[47] L. Brubaker, 'Images of Byzantine Adolescents', in *Coming of Age in Byzantium: Adolescence and Society*, ed. D. Ariantzi (Berlin/ Boston, 2018), 141-174, 152-154.
[48] P. Melichar, 'Adolescent Behaviour in Byzantine Sources? Some Observations on Young Byzantine Women Pursuing their Goals', in *Coming of Age*, 105-115.
[49] B. Pitarakis, 'The Material Culture of Childhood in Byzantium', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 167-252, 204-207.

and non-elite children. As Ariantzi drew mostly on hagiography, her study terminated in the 11th century, which marked a pause in the production of hagiographical texts.[50] Excluding a few, mostly hagiography-based studies, the late Byzantine period remains underrepresented in scholarship of childhood and the family.[51] Moreover, although researchers have explored gender's influence on the perception and experience of youth, less attention has been devoted to socioeconomic status. Outside formal education and military training, was an adolescent life-stage enforced on the non-elite through practices such as apprenticeship, an aspect of youth almost entirely unexplored by Byzantinists? The overrepresentation of elite men in the sources limits our ability to address this question. Nevertheless, in chapter 5.4 I shed light on the ways that apprenticeship (formal or informal) could influence the duration and experience of youth for non-elite boys, and the related impacts of the monastic vocation – which was open to people of all statuses – on this life-stage.

Eve Davies' thesis, *From Womb to the Tomb: The Byzantine Life Course AD 518-1204* (2013), was the first study to demonstrate that a concept of the Life Course existed in Byzantium between the 6th and 12th centuries. Davies focused on life-stage transitions and how their timing was influenced by gender, social status, and historical period. Whereas scholars had previously identified the impact of these factors on the representation of familial roles and obligations, she was the first to explore age's role in formulating identity in Byzantium[52] (Harlow and Laurence had already examined age's influence on social expectations of behaviour in ancient Rome).[53] Davies relied mostly on biographical texts, particularly hagiography – a genre that Alberici had used previously to explore the Life Course constructions of late antique holy men and women.[54] Davies found that age played a

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[50] D. Ariantzi, *Kindheit in Byzanz: Emotionale, Geistige und Materielle Entwicklung im Familiären Umfeld vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2012), 7.
[51] A-M. Talbot, 'The Death and Commemoration of Byzantine Children', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 283-308; *idem*, 'Children, Healing Miracles, Holy Fools: Highlights from the Hagiographical Works of Philotheos Kokkinos (1300-ca. 1379)', *Bysantinska Sallkapet* 24 (2006): 48-64; T. Kiousopoulou, 'Adolescence in the Late Byzantine Society (14th-15th Centuries)', in *Coming of Age*, 99-104.
[52] Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status', 153; *Womb to Tomb*, 4-6.
[53] Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 17-18.
[54] L. A. Alberici, *Age and Ageing in Late Antiquity: A Life Course Approach* (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2008).

critical role in developing a saint's persona throughout the hagiographical narrative.[55] Childhood acted as an 'adjunct' to adulthood by prefiguring how the saint's adult personality would develop, while youth was portrayed as an atypical, disruptive life-stage in contrast to the more stable period of maturity, when the saint's character was perceived to become fixed and constant.[56] Essentially, Byzantine writers perceived the life-stages in relation to one another, and considered the transitions between them to bear consequence on personal identity.

Writers also manipulated age for rhetorical purposes: young saints were afforded the attributes of the elderly, and vice versa, to highlight their exceptional character.[57] References to numerical age in biographical texts were designed to match the audience's presumptions about familial and social roles at certain periods of life. Thus, a female saint's age at marriage might be invented in order to mirror social expectations about the appropriate time of life for women to marry.[58] By analysing rhetorical constructions of life-stage, historians can therefore deduce what Byzantine society expected of an individual on a specific social scale at a given point in life. Davies also used hagiographical age references to construct a model of the middle Byzantine Life Course. Byzantine writers afforded certain years of life special importance in marking the entry into a new life-stage, when biological or social milestones were attained. Thus, age 3/4 marked the onset of childhood, coinciding with the time when infants were weaned; age 12 marked a girl's abrupt transition towards youth, as puberty raised her prospects for marriage and reproduction, whereas boys passed from childhood to youth more gradually between ages 12 and 16.[59] This Life Course model reflects the influence of gender on the timing of life-stage transitions. Davies found that the Life Course construct was largely static throughout the 6th to 12th centuries, excepting some important changes born out of wider historical processes, including Christianisation. As Christian doctrine assigned increasing value to the prenatal and neonatal life-stages from the 6th century onwards, the Byzantine Life Course was the first to place

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[55] Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status', 154; *Womb to Tomb*, 4.
[56] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 251-4.
[57] *Ibid.*, 252, 265. This topos was discussed by Talbot, 'Old Age', 273.
[58] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 16-17; *idem*, 'Age, Gender and Status', 155.
[59] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 260-261.

the start of life at conception.[60] Davies also linked changes in the hagiographical Life Course construct from the 9th century onwards to the rising importance of the family unit in Byzantine society.[61]

I will discuss the historical development of the Byzantine Life Course further in my thesis' conclusion (chapter seven). Here, it is worth noting that constructions of the Life Course changed over time, and that these changes mirrored wider sociohistorical transformations. Therefore, understanding social change is important for interpreting the Life Course. It should also be noted that the rather static image of the Life Course painted by Davies may partially result from her thesis' broad chronological scope and the nature of its sources. As Davies observed, hagiographers tended not to highlight changes in contemporary practice related to the Life Course.[62] By analysing more varied source material across a more limited chronological span, I have been able to explore the relationship between Life Course representations and the historical contexts that produced them in greater depth.

One underdeveloped aspect of Davies' study (which she noted herself) was its omission of the afterlife as a component of the Byzantine Life Course.[63] In her archaeological study of medieval England, Gilchrist proposed the concept of the 'medieval extended Life Course', in which death constituted merely another stage in the Life Course, and the worlds of the living and dead were connected through the practice of intercessory prayer, commemoration, and almsgiving.[64] As stated above, in my thesis I argue that an extended Life Course model also existed in Byzantium, where one's spiritual life was also considered to continue beyond the grace. The duties that bound relatives to commemorate their deceased family members, thus ensuring their posthumous wellbeing, annually at the local church – the site of all ritual milestones of Christian life from birth and baptism to death and burial – determined that the living interacted with the dead through prayer on a cyclical basis.[65]

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[60] *Ibid.*, 3, 263-264.
[61] *Ibid.*, 257-258. On the family in the 9th century, Davies refers to the work of E. Patlagean, *Structure Sociale, Famille, Chrétienté à Byzance: IVe-XIe Siècle* (London, 1981), 620-623; *idem*, 'Famille et Parentèles à Byzance' in *Histoire de la Famille*, eds. A. Burgiière, C. Klapisch and F. Zonabend, vol. 2 (Paris, 1986), 421-441, 427.
[62] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 250.
[63] *Ibid.*, 256.
[64] Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 19-20.
[65] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 169.

(1.2) Terminology, structure, and source methodology

The Life Course having been defined above, two terms used throughout this thesis require further explanation: life 'trajectories' and 'transitions'. *Trajectories* denote the series of roles and events that make up an individual Life Course, which are themselves structured by *transitions*: changes of state or role that impact on personal or social identity.[66] An example of a common transition in the Byzantine Life Course is tonsure, through which the initiate monk or nun gained a new monastic identity and access to a social network based on spiritual rather than biological kinship.[67] The boundaries between life-stages were defined by transitions, whose timing within the Life Course often varied according to gender and status. I use the term 'gender' preferentially to 'sex', because I am primarily concerned with how the expectations placed on men and women by society changed over the ageing process. A wealth of literature has demonstrated that these expectations were shaped by Byzantine perceptions of gender roles, which, like age, were performative;[68] the Byzantines used gender to express social relationships and hierarchies, and manipulated it, as in saints' Lives, to convey specific meanings.[69] With respect to status, I refer primarily to an individual's wealth and position within the Byzantine socioeconomic hierarchy: the elite as opposed to the non-elite. However, the Life Course can also be broken down into further social dimensions, including the lay, monastic, urban, and rural.

Certain methodological issues arise from applying Life Course theory to historic societies. Firstly, it compels historians to identify a series of distinct life-stages within a society's cultural consciousness, while avoiding the risk of projecting an anachronistic Life Course model onto the past. As I outlined above, existing scholarship has successfully demonstrated that the Byzantines conceived of distinct life-stages between birth and death. Each time a new life-stage is introduced into this thesis'

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[66] Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe, 'Life Course Theory', 8.
[67] Talbot, 'Byzantine Family and Monastery', 120-121.
[68] J. Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 519-531. Butler's theory of gender performativity has been applied to Byzantine saints' lives by S. Constantinou, 'Performing Gender in Lay Saints' Lives', *BMGS* 38 (2014): 24-32.
[69] The construction of gender in Byzantium, particularly with respect to the expression of social-hierarchical order, was explored by C. Galatariotou, 'Holy Women and Witches: Aspects of Byzantine Conceptions of Gender', *BMGS* 9 (1984-1985): 55-94. These themes have been addressed most recently by L. Neville, *Byzantine Gender* (Leeds, 2019).

analysis, a section is devoted to examining how it was perceived and represented in late Byzantine texts and images. While this structure necessitates some repetition of themes addressed in previous literature, it is important to identify how the portrayal of a life-stage was shaped by textual and visual conventions – since the treatment of the life-stages depended on authors' and artisans' intent – as well as social practice, before analysing how characterisations of that life-stage varied by gender and status.

In this thesis, I examine five life-stages – infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age – but argue that the late Byzantine Life Course model included prenatal life and the afterlife. The chapters progress through the Life Course sequentially, with each chapter focusing on the transition from one or more life-stage to another. In chapter two, I lay analytical foundations for the thesis by examining the conceptualisation of age in Byzantium, which has not been addressed meaningfully in previous research. Chapter three examines the period from beginning of the Life Course to early childhood, focusing on birth and baptism as the major transitions of this life-stage. As the timing of Life course transitions varied according to gender and status, the chapters overlap with respect to the chronological period of life that they examine. After chapter four, subsections are used to highlight how constructions of ageing varied by gender and status, whose role in formulating familial roles and obligations becomes significant from childhood onwards.

Thus, in chapter four, the roles of formal schooling, religious and vocational education, and family structure in determining the experience of childhood and the transition to adolescence are examined under different subsections. Likewise, individual subsections are used in chapter five to analyse how the transition from youth to adulthood was constructed differently according to gender and status, thus allowing me to assess the extent to which we can identify an 'adolescent' stage in the Life Course of social groups outside the male elite. Finally, in chapter six I examine the transition from adulthood to old age, to death and the afterlife. As a running theme throughout each chapter, I focus on how age shaped the social roles and expectations of the individual within the family and society. Adulthood and old age are not addressed in separate chapters because the themes of

(re)marriage, parenthood, and familial obligation are closely connected across these life-stages, which are better understood in relation to one another.

The second methodological question concerns the nature of the source material. Ideally, a Life Course study examines an individual or group across the lifetime or multiple life-stages. This is why Davies focused her study on hagiography, which follows its subject from birth to death. A critical method of analysing saints' Lives as sources of social history was developed by Patlagean, who demonstrated that hagiographers sculpted their subjects' lives according to literary archetypes. The saint always comes from a wealthy family, is well-educated, and accomplishes deeds in adulthood that mirror the lives of Christ and other scriptural protagonists, such as periods spent in the remote wilderness and the performance of miracles from the Gospels.[70] Within the constraints of this narrative framework, details about contemporary daily life were inserted into the *vitae*, and often served a rhetorical purpose.[71] For example, portrayals of parent-child conflict served to signify the saint's devotion to asceticism from a young age, but also inadvertently highlight the pervasive ideal of familial bonds and obligation in Byzantine society.[72] Depictions of the life-stages adhere to literary topoi but also reveal aspects of contemporary reality, such as the types of household chores performed by children.[73] Hagiography's potential to convey social ideals (and sometimes realities) is why it remains the most exploited source of evidence for ageing and the family in Byzantium.

However, a study of the late Byzantine Life Course based solely on hagiography would be problematic for several reasons. Firstly, it would be limited to the lives of men, since only two late Byzantine women were afforded saintly status: Empress Theodora of Arta (c.1225-c.1270) and the

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[70] E. Patlagean, 'Ancient Byzantine Hagiography and Social History', in *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology. Folklore and History*, ed. S. Wilson (Cambridge, 1983), 101-121, 103.
[71] *Ibid*., 109-111.
[72] D. Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs as Ideal Children and Adolescents: Literary Conventions and Cultural Expectations', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 85-126, 122-123.
[73] A-M. Talbot, 'Childhood in Middle and Late Byzantium: Ninth to Fifteenth Centuries', in *Childhood in History: Perceptions of Children in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, eds. R. Aasgard, C. Horn and O. M. Cojocaru (London and New York, 2018), 240-256, 245.

14th-century Saint Matrona of Chios.[74] Alice-Mary Talbot proposes that this scarcity of Byzantine female saints from the 11th century onward may relate to the fact that, by this period, the model of female monasticism had become highly cloistered, so that the coenobitic lifestyle of later Byzantine nuns denied them the opportunity to travel and practice solitary asceticism as their male counterparts did.[75] Male hagiography, as noted, was different. Although there was a decline in hagiographical production during and after the 11th to 12th centuries, the later 13th to 14th centuries saw a revival in hagiography-writing, as many *vitae* were produced for long-dead saints but also for just over 30 contemporary holy men.[76] The latter group of *vitae* is of interest here, since they express contemporary Life Course constructions. These *vitae* were typically written by saints' younger disciples, whereas those of older saints were produced by (often lay) members of the literati, who had different agendas in representing the Life Courses of holy men and women who lived before their time.[77]

The contemporary saints came from families of varied social backgrounds;[78] thus, their *vitae* are useful for examining the life trajectories of individuals outside the urban elite. Several were patriarchs, like Isidore I (r.1347-1350), or archbishops, like Gregory Palamas (r.1347-1359), whose *vitae* are often lengthy and written in a higher literary style implying an educated audience.[79] As hesychasm grew to prominence in monastic life during the 14th century,[80] numerous *vitae* were written

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[74] Job, *Life of Theodora of Arta*, *PG* 127, 903-908; trans. A-M. Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, 1996), 323-333; Nikephoros of Chios, Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης.

[75] A-M. Talbot, 'A Comparison of the Monastic Experience of Byzantine Men and Women', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 30. 1 (1985): 1-20, 1-2, 16-18; *idem*, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium*, xi-xii.

[76] A-M. Talbot, 'Old Wine in New Bottles: The Re-writing of Saints' Lives in the Palaiologan Period', in *The Twilight of Byzantium*, ed. S. Ćurčić, D. Mouriki (Princeton, N.J., 1991) 15-26, 15-17; 'Hagiography in Late Byzantium', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1, *Periods and Places*, ed. S. Efthymiadis (Farnham 2011), 173-195, 174.

[77] Talbot, 'Old Wine in New Bottles', 17-; *idem*, 'Healing Miracles', 50; C. Messis, 'The Palaiologan Hagiographies: Saints Without Romance', in *Reading the Late Byzantine Romance: A Handbook*, eds. I. Nilsson and A. Goldwyn (Cambridge, 2019), 230-253, 233-234.

[78] On the social and geographical origins of late Byzantine saints and their followers, see A. E. Laiou, 'Saints and Society in the Late Byzantine Empire', in *Charanis Studies. Essays in Honor of Peter Charanis*, ed. A. E. Laiou (New Brunswick, N.J, 1980), 84-114, 85-89; R. Macrides, 'Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period', in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Hackel (Birmingham, 1981), 67-87.

[79] For example, Philotheos Kokkinos probably aimed some of his hagiographies towards the Constantinopolitan or Thessalonian elite: see M. Mitrea, *A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer: Philotheos Kokkinos and his Vitae of Contemporary Saints* (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2017), 271, 275, 283.

[80] A. Papadakis, 'Hesychasm', *ODB,* 923-924; D. Krausmüller, 'The Rise of Hesychasm', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5, *Eastern Christianity*, ed. M. Angold (Cambridge, 2006), 101-126, 102.

for hesychast monks, many of whom lived isolated, often peripatetic lifestyles, practising solitude and contemplative prayer and spending large portions of their lives on holy mountains such as Mount Athos. Among these saints were men from well-to-do but not rich provincial families, such as Romylos of Vidin (in Bulgaria) and Niphon of Athos, born in the Epirot village of Loukove.[81]

Moreover, the role of age in late Byzantine hagiography is somewhat diminished. Aside from the saint's age at death, which hagiographers reported as a matter of convention, references to chronological age (age-in-years) are rare. While some hagiographers who had personal ties with their subjects, such as Philotheos Kokkinos (c.1300-1379), wrote detailed accounts of their subjects' early years, others omitted childhood and adolescence episodes altogether, or limited their accounts to what was required by the conventions of hagiography-writing, including minor details about the saint's birth, parentage, and education.[82] It is possible that, since ageing milestones were associated with outward displays of sanctity, they may have been considered at odds with the isolated lifestyle of many late Byzantine monks or the model of asceticism advocated by hesychasm (which, from the 4th century, denoted the monastic lifestyle based on hermeticism and contemplative prayer, but from the 14th century also referred to psychosomatic methods of enhancing prayer – a highly inward-looking form of spirituality).[83] However, as I argue in my conclusion (chapter seven), this lack of focus on childhood and family life by hagiographers is more likely related to changes in the construction of the late Byzantine saintly Life Course, which stressed the monastic identity of the saint from youth.

Most age references, excluding age at death, appear in descriptions of the saint's youth. This is probably because medieval – like modern – authors perceived the early life-stages as periods of major developmental change. Childhood milestones such as education offered hagiographers the opportunity to indicate their subjects' budding virtue by having them exhibit extraordinary studiousness and

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[81] Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. 1-8; *Life of Niphon of Athos*, I. 1.
[82] Talbot, 'Healing Miracles', 52; Kiousopoulou, 'Adolescence'. On hagiographical topoi of childhood and adolescence, see Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs'.
[83] Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm*, introduction; *idem*, 'Is 'Hesychasm' the Right Word? Remarks on Religious Ideology in the Fourteenth Century', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983): 447-457, 447-448, 451.

wisdom in youth. As the saint's holy lifestyle and character become more developed throughout the

Life Course, life-stage milestones become less important as a means of illustrating individual sanctity.

To access more chronologically varied and individuated portrayals of the Life Course, it is

thus necessary to examine other texts of a biographical or autobiographical nature. Autobiographical

accounts are found in multiple genres of Byzantine writing. Some constitute deliberately crafted self-

portraits that span much of the author's lifetime, while others consist of a series of autobiographic

details or digressions inserted into otherwise non-biographical genres. They are best described using

Hinterberger's definition of Byzantine autobiographies as simply first-person narratives (though some

accounts were rendered in the third person).[84] The 13th and 14th centuries witnessed the emergence of a

kind of autobiographical writing by prominent ecclesiastic and secular figures, who made literary

subjects of their own lives.[85] Accounts of 13th-century writers, such as Nikephoros Blemmydes, help to

fill the chronological gap in the hagiographical corpus. In addition to biographical portraits of the

imperial family, historical narratives also contain autobiographic details about the lives of their authors

and, occasionally, their relatives. For instance, George Sphrantzes' (1401-1477/8) *Chronicle* begins

with the details of his birth and reports the major events of his life up to old age, but also recounts the

life of his godmother Thomais, whom according to Sphrantzes was venerated in Constantinople as a

saint (as Talbot notes, Thomais may have been one holy woman who was revered at a local level but

for whom no *vita* was ever produced).[86]

Since Byzantine writers had a fluid concept of literary genre, many topoi for portraying the

life-stages crossed multiple categories of writing.[87] Evaluating these topoi under one interpretive

framework reveals important trends. When Byzantine writers assigned specific character traits or

behaviours to a given age-group, they were tapping into a set of cultural symbols and values that their

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[84] M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz* (Vienna, 1999), 58-60, 116-117.

[85] A. Kazhdan, 'Autobiography', *ODB*, 234; I. Ševčenko, 'Storia Letteraria', in *La Civiltà Bizantina del XII al XV Secolo*, ed. A. Guillou (Rome, 1982), 109-137, 116.

[86] George Sphrantzes, *Minor Chronicle*, ed. V. Grecu, *Georgios Sphrantzes: Memorii 1401-1477*, Scriptores Byzantini 5 (Bucharest, 1966): 2-146; trans. M. Philippides, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477* (Massachusetts, 1980); Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium*, xi, n. 11.

[87] A. Kazhdan, 'Genre, Literary', *ODB*, 832.

audiences would have recognised. Their portrayals of the life-stages, especially when they show consistency across genres, allow us to examine societal perceptions of age and ageing. Thus, while historical and (auto)biographical narratives largely reflect the perspectives of the elite social echelons to which their authors belonged, their portrayals of life-stage formed part of a broader ideological framework. These texts are also valuable for exploring how constructions of ageing varied according to imperial, elite, lay, and monastic status.

Another genre useful for examining ageing is provided by the monastic *typika*, rulebooks designed to regulate the social conduct and government of monastic communities. The late Byzantine *typika* are numerous, often lengthy, and their prefaces – which became the preferred medium for autobiography in Byzantium[88] – often include accounts of their authors' lives. These accounts contain hagiographic elements, such as descriptions of parent-child conflict arising from the young founder's decision to enter a monastery.[89] These texts have been used to examine attitudes towards children and adolescents in Byzantine monasteries, but not the construction of the monastic Life Course.[90] It has been noted that monastic communities took the family unit as their organisational model, so that hierarchical relations between different members of the community were expressed through familial terminology;[91] nuns were instructed to obey their superior 'as true daughters obey their mother', for example.[92] This meant that the trajectory of monastic life was conceptualised to a large extent as a

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[88] M. Angold, 'The Autobiographical Impulse in Byzantium', *DOP* 52 (1998): 225-257, 240.

[89] Neophytos, *Testamentary Rule for the Hermitage of the Holy Cross near Ktima in Cyprus*, ed. I. Tsiknopoullos, *Kypriaka Typika* (Nicosia, 1969), 71-104; trans C. Galatariotou in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, eds. J. Thomas and A. C. Hero (Washington, 2000), 1338-1373, III, 1350; Matthew I, *Testament of Patriarch Matthew I for the Monastery of Charsianeites Dedicated to the Mother of God Nea Peribleptos*, eds. I. Konidares and C. Manaphes, 'Ἐπιτελεύτιος Βούλησις καὶ Διδασκαλία τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου Ματθαίου (1397-1410)', *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 45 (1981-1982): 472-510; trans. A-M. Talbot in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, A2-A3. 1633-1634.

[90] A-M. Talbot, 'The Adolescent Monastic in Middle and Late Byzantium', in *Coming of Age*, 83-98; R. Greenfield, 'Children in Byzantine Monasteries: Innocent Hearts or Vessels in the Harbor of the Devil?', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 253–282.

[91] Talbot, 'Family and Monastery', 120-121; D. Krausmüller, 'Byzantine Monastic Communities: Alternative Families?', in *Byzantine Family*, 345-358.

[92] 'πείθεσθε ὅσα καὶ μητρὶ γνησίᾳ γνήσιαι θυγατέρες'. Theodora Synadene, *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Deux Typica Byzantins de l'Époque des Paléologues* (Brussels, 1921), 18-105; trans. A-M. Talbot in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1512-1578, V. 38. 1534.

series of age-graded roles, as the inexperienced novice passed through the stages of spiritual growth to become a mature monk or nun. As monastic communities were scattered across the late Byzantine world and were formed of monks and nuns from varied social backgrounds, the *typika* shed important light on the lives of non-elites.[93] Moreover, whereas most hagiographies and historical narratives were authored by male writers, some aristocratic *typika* were composed by female founders.[94]

Just as law-codes convey an idealised image of how a society should function, the *typika* demonstrate how monastic founders expected their institutions to operate rather than how they necessarily operated in reality. These texts offer a timeless cross-section of the monastic community, describing the roles and expectations of its members at a given stage of monastic life rather than how an individual passed through the stages of spiritual development over time. However, when examined alongside biographical texts, the *typika* reveal the role of biological and social age in shaping not only the organisation of the monastic community, but also the trajectory of the monastic Life Course.

These genres – hagiography, historical narratives, *typika*, and (auto)biographical accounts – form the main textual source-base of this study. These texts are primarily useful for examining how authors constructed and rationalised the Life Course and voiced expectations of age-related behaviour rather than how ageing was truly experienced, although they inevitably reveal some aspects of lived historical reality. In some chapters, I also draw on non-literary texts, including liturgical treatises, letters, and other private documents, when they yield information about a specific life-stage or life-stage ritual, such as baptism. In chapter five, I explore portrayals of youth in late Byzantine romance. The romances offer rare depictions of young noblewomen that have been analysed primarily through the lens of gender rather than age (though Galatariotou has examined the representation of adolescence

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[93] The 13th- to 15th-century documents include rules for monasteries in Latin-ruled Cyprus and Crete or the despotate of Epiros, and several founders of monasteries on the outskirts of the late Byzantine world sought patronage and security from outside. See Talbot, *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1301-1302, 1339, 1396.
[94] On the subgenre of 'aristocratic' *typika*, see C. Galatariotou, 'Byzantine Ktetorika Typika: A Comparative Study', *REB* 45 (1987): 77–138.

in the 12th-century romances).[95] These texts, which were aimed at a literate courtly audience, construct youth similarly to historical narratives, thus reflecting the cultural values of the aristocracy.[96]

The second source-base used in this study is material culture. The primary reason for studying the Life Course through images is to extend our analytical scope to a wider proportion of the population, since all sighted Byzantines, regardless of age, gender, or status, interacted with images. Images have not yet been studied thoroughly as evidence for Byzantine constructions of the Life Course.[97] However, as Brubaker notes, all stages of the Life Course from infancy to old age are represented in Byzantine iconography.[98] Artisans, like writers, used a shared repertoire of motifs to construct each life-stage, which they manipulated to convey social, political, and theological meanings.[99] For example, just as hagiographers afforded child saints the attributes of old men – a trope known as the *puer-senex* or *παιδογέρων* – painters typically depicted saintly children with serious expressions and (for boys) receding hairlines to convey their premature wisdom.[100] Life-stage was indicated not only by scale, dress, and physical features, but also by gaze, position, and gesture – the modes that Byzantine painters used to signify relationships of power and dependence, including those within the family hierarchy, which was based on age and gender.[101] By examining how these tools were employed to depict the life-stages, we can see that Byzantine artisans associated different age-groups with specific behaviours and forms of interaction.

Iconographic representations of the lives of biblical and saintly figures are valuable for studying the Life Course because of their biographical nature. This is particularly true for the

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[95] C. Galatariotou, 'The Byzantine Adolescent: Real or Imaginary?', in *Coming of Age*, 203-213.
[96] On audience, see P. Agapitos, 'Writing, Reading and Reciting (in) Byzantine Erotic Fiction' in *Lire et Écrire à Byzance*, ed. B. Mondrain (Paris: 2006),125-176, 125-135; C. Cupane, ''Let Me Tell You a Wonderful Tale': Audience and Reception of the Vernacular Romances', in *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond*, eds. C. Cupane and B. Krönung (Leiden, Boston: 2016), 479-494, 483-490.
[97] Images featured only occasionally in the middle Byzantine Life Course study of Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 263.
[98] Brubaker, 'Images', 143.
[99] Hennessy has examined the theological meanings in portrayals of Christ's and the Virgin's childhoods, and how childhood features in visual expressions of political power: *Images*, 143-178, 179-212.
[100] On the *παιδογέρων* topos in texts, see Talbot, 'Old Age', 273; in iconography, Hennessy, *Images*, 127.
[101] On gesture, see L. Brubaker, 'Gesture in Byzantium', *Past and Present* 203. 4 (2009): 36-56. On gender in images of the family, L. Brubaker, 'Looking at the Byzantine Family', in *Byzantine Family*, 177-206, 180-185.

Palaiologan period, which witnessed a renewed interest in representing the infancies of Christ and the Virgin.[102] Like hagiographies, these iconographic programmes typically represent a subject across multiple life-stages from birth to death and feature the family as a prominent theme. Of course, we must remember that images adhere to their own set of conventions; artisans were not concerned with offering 'realistic' portrayals of life-stage. Images portray exceptional individuals who, regardless of the life-stage in which they are depicted, invert the expectations of their age or gender. For instance, in scenes of Christ's Nativity, the composed posture of the Virgin lying on the birthing bed recalls the supernatural painlessness of her childbirth and, subsequently, the miraculous nature of Christ's conception.[103] Nevertheless, the events portrayed in the lives of biblical and saintly figures – birth, baptism, childhood education, and death – were Life Course transitions experienced at all levels of society. Thus, Nativity scenes served specific theological and religious functions, but at a basic level they were images of birth that reflect the social settings and ritual customs that accompanied this transition.[104] Visual narratives did not exist in a temporal vacuum. As Mouriki shows, Palaiologan monumental iconography exhibits a trend towards incorporating children into scenes of Christ's life, which reflects the intellectual fashions of the contemporary elite.[105] Aspects of Palaiologan material culture were often incorporated into contemporary religious iconography, including objects associated with life-stage rituals such as baptismal fonts.[106]

Thus, whilst visual biographies generally portray exceptional individuals, they can also be seen as idealised portrayals of life-stage and life-stage rituals. Most of the images examined in this study depict biblical or saintly figures. However, in some chapters I draw on portraits of the local

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[102] J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'Enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire Byzantin et en Occident*, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1992), 191; *idem*, 'L'Illustration de la Première Partie de l'Hymne Akathiste et sa Relation avec les Mosaïques de l'Enfance de la Kariye Djami', *Byzantion* 54. 2 (2984): 648-702.

[103] H. Maguire, ''Pangs of Labor without Pain': Observations on the Iconography of the Nativity in Byzantium' in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honour of Alice-Mary Talbot*, eds. A-M. Talbot et al. (Leiden, 2011), 205-216, 206.

[104] Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', 205-210, esp. 208-209; Maguire, 'Labor without Pain', 207-208.

[105] D. Mouriki, 'Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983): 458-488, 460-462.

[106] M. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography, 11-15th Centuries* (Leiden, 2003), 197, 255, 272-273; M. Meyer, *An Obscure Portrait: Imagining Women's Reality in Byzantine Art* (London, 2009), 64-66.

nobility, aristocracy, or imperial family. Portraits are particularly useful for examining adolescence, since it is often possible to determine (at least approximate) ages for their subjects at the time of the painting's execution. A final source of evidence that is useful for examining the Life Course is funerary archaeology. As the spatial organisation of Byzantine cemeteries and forms of burials were designed to reflect the status of the deceased in society, mortuary practices shed light on how the population was categorised into age-classes.[107] However, a Life Course study based on burial evidence requires skeletons that have been aged, sexed, and accurately dated.[108] At present, no such large-scale data is available from late Byzantium.[109] Therefore, while I situate my analysis of textual and material sources in light of burial evidence, archaeology is not a major source-base for my study.

By applying Life Course theory to the textual and material record, my thesis offers the first examination of the Life Course in the late Byzantine period. I am predominantly concerned with examining perceptions and representations of ageing, since these are what can be extracted from the sources. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that the way the Byzantines constructed the Life Course was informed by their social reality, whether they chose to invert or reflect it in their textual and material worlds. Study of the late Byzantine Life Course can thus reveal much about social roles, values, and structure – particularly in the context of the family – during the empire's final centuries. How the late

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[107] E. A. Ivison, *Mortuary Practices in Byzantium (c. 950-1453): An Archaeological Contribution* (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1993), 277. This thesis offered a survey of middle and late Byzantine mortuary practices, and discussed the role of age, gender, and status in determining burial organisation and customs.

[108] On this type of analysis, see Gilchrist, *Archaeology and the Life Course*, 43-67.

[109] However, the deceased's sex and/or age, or life-stage (foetus, infant, child, adolescent/juvenile, sub-adult, adult), are used as parameters for analysis in several studies based on smaller sample sizes or on material spanning a broader time period: Ivison, *Mortuary Practices*, 53-55, 59, 84, 177, 184-187, 250, 266 (middle to late Byzantine); Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 73-77 (late Byzantine); S. Gerstel et. al., 'A Late Medieval Settlement at Panakton', *Hesperia* 72 (2003): 147-234 (late Byzantine); P. Agelarakis, 'Excavations at Polystylon (Abdera) Greece: Aspects of Mortuary Practices and Skeletal Biology', *ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΟ ΔΕΛΤΙΟ* 47 (1992), 293-308 (6th to 9th centuries); P. Tritsaroli and F. Valentin, 'Byzantine Burial Practices for Children: Case Studies Based on a Bioarchaeological Approach to Cemeteries in Greece', in *Nasciturus, Infans, Puerulus Vobis Mater Terra: La Muerte en la Infancia*, eds. F. G. Jener, S. Muriel and C. Olària (Diputació de Castelló, Servei d'Investigacions Arqueològiques i Prehistòriques, 2008), 93-113 (middle to late Byzantine); F. A. Demirel, 'Human Remains', in *Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia*, ed. P. Niewohner (New York, 2017), 60-70 (late Roman period to 13th century); E. Barnes, 'The Dead Do Tell Tales', in *Corinth: The Centenary: 1896-1996*, 20 (2003): 435-443 (Frankish period, 13th to 14th centuries); M. Schultz and T. H. Schmidt-Schultz, 'Health and Disease of Infants and Children in Byzantine Anatolia between AD 600-1350', in *Life and Death in Asia Minor*, eds. J. R. Brandt et al. (Oxford, 2017), 414-438; W-R. Teegen, 'Pergamon – Kyme – Priene: Health and Disease from the Roman to the Late Byzantine Period in Different Locations of Asia Minor', in *Life and Death in Asia Minor*, 250-267.

Byzantine Life Course compared to earlier periods, and what this tells us about late Byzantine society,

is addressed in my conclusion (chapter seven).

CHAPER TWO: AGE AND THE MEASURE OF TIME

In the post-industrial era, the impact of age on how the individual operates in society is self-evident. As early as 4 or 5 years old, children are socialised primarily within age-cohorts in the schooling system. As adulthood looms, age dictates when someone can work, vote, open a bank account, and – in later life – retire and receive a pension. The structure of society demands that an individual knows and can verify her/his age at any time, a task facilitated by birth certificates, passports, and other identity documents. This begs the question: how was age and its societal function conceived before the rise of modern bureaucracy and documentation? This issue was raised when ageing emerged as a field of historical enquiry, with Philippe Ariès' famous argument that childhood, as a concept, was an invention of the modern world.[1] Ariès assumed that medieval people had little awareness of age or attached little worth to it. While recognising the Christian name and surname as markers of medieval identity, Ariès reckoned that 'age, a quantity legally measurable to within a few hours, comes from another world, that of precise figures.'[2] In other words, age was not perceived as a major component of identity before the formal recording of ages and birthdays became commonplace in the modern world. Ariès thus posited a link between habits of dating and concepts of age and life-stage.

Byzantinists – though later than medievalists to refute Ariès' thesis[3] – have now proven that the concept of life-stage existed in Byzantium as well as the West. However, the concept of age itself has been largely overlooked. Whereas life-stage denotes a *period* of time in the Life Course, age is a *measure* of time that takes multiple forms, including the biological, social, and chronological. Modern western societies tend to prioritise chronological age – age in days, months, or years – as an index of

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[1] P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. R. Baldick with a new introduction by A. Phillips (Paris, 1960, repr. London, 1996).

[2] *Ibid.*, 13, see also 14-16.

[3] Arietta Papaconstantinou addressed the Ariès thesis in her introduction to *Becoming Byzantine*, 1-14. Seminal studies of childhood in the western Middle Ages include Hanawalt, *Growing Up*; S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1990).

change over the Life Course, even though the rate of biological ageing depends on individual

physiology, and the expectations of behaviour projected onto a given age-group (i.e., social age) vary

across time and culture.[4] Davies, writing on the middle Byzantine period, argued that the Byzantines

understood chronological or 'numerical' age in conceptual terms, since they probably did not record

birthdays or count their ages with any precision. Therefore, the ages that biographers assigned to their

subjects were not necessarily factual but designed to match the audience's preconceptions about the

'right' times of life for major undertakings, such as marriage.[5]

It is true that Byzantine writers modelled their subjects' lives according to age-related norms,

and sometimes invented ages for rhetorical purposes. For example, when Theoktistos the Stoudite

stated that Patriarch Athanasios I (1289-1293/1303-1309) died at the improbable (and indeed fictional)

age of nearly 100 years old, he was clearly inverting normative expectations of the human lifespan to

highlight the saint's remarkable longevity.[6] Yet, the question of how age was conceptualised and

measured in a medieval society such as Byzantium requires deeper analysis, which I provide in this

chapter. Several 13th- to 15th-century authors recalled their ages with great accuracy in

autobiographical accounts, which indicate the perceived significance of chronological age as a

measure of personal development and a determinant of social roles across the Life Course. Moreover,

while there is no evidence for the formal documentation or celebration of non-imperial birthdays in

Byzantium, some late Byzantine writers and manuscript-owners did make personal records of their

children's birthdates and ages at death.[7] Their texts illustrate the sentimental value assigned to age in

the family and demonstrate how social measures of time, such as religious holidays, facilitated the

memory of personal life events, including familial births and deaths. On this basis, in part 2.1 I argue

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[4] Neugarten and Datan, 'Sociological Perspectives', 53–69, 56-57.

[5] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 15-19, 260-261.

[6] Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, XXXVIII (48). In truth, Athanasios died no older than his 88th year: A-M. Talbot, *The Correspondence of Athanasios I Patriarch of Constantinople, Letters to Emperor Andronikos II, Members of the Imperial Family, and Officials* (Washington, 1975), xxvi, n. 83.

[7] Mount Athos, Vatopedi cod. 962 (720), fol. 362r. The manuscript-owner's note is transcribed and translated by R. S. Nelson, *Theodore Hagiopetrites: A Late Byzantine Scribe and Illuminator* (Vienna, 1991), 22, cat. no. 3. It is known that emperors' birthdays were celebrated at least into the middle Byzantine period. See A. Moffatt, 'Celebrating a Byzantine Imperial Birthday', in *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ. Studies in Honour of Robert Browning*, eds. C. N. Constantinides et al. (Venice, 1996), 254-266.

that a lack of textual documentation of birthdays is no reason to assume that the Byzantines did not

know their ages or attach meaning to them. In part 2.2, I examine the representation of the life-stages

in the sources, laying analytical foundations for future chapters by demonstrating the ways that the

Byzantines portrayed ageing across the Life Course.

(2.1) Concepts of age

When the 13th-century judge John Apokaukos of Epiros complained that the people in his jurisdiction

had a habit of marrying off their daughters below the legal age, he clearly expected that parents would

know their child's age with reasonable accuracy.[8] In Byzantium, age limits regulated when a person

could marry, hold or sell property, enter a monastery, and occupy certain offices in the civic and

ecclesiastic administration.[9] Such regulations would appear to reflect a society that viewed age as a

good measure of one's capacity to participate in various spheres of life. Yet in this regard, Apokaukos'

observations highlight how potential dichotomies between social ideal and reality may obscure our

understanding of age's function in Byzantine society and in the Life Course. Although Byzantine law

dictated that people must reach sexual maturity – that is, after the 12th year for girls and after the 14th

for boys[10] – before they could marry, clearly some Epirot parents did not share this sentiment. To

better gauge how the Byzantines understood age and its impact on behaviour, it is useful to ask what

role they assigned to age in accounts of their own lives and identify age's impact on self-perception.

Writers of autobiography cited their ages with great accuracy when describing momentous

events from their lives. One such writer was the statesman George Sphrantzes (1401-c.1478), who

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[8] John Apokaukos, *Letters*, ed. N. A. Bees, 'Unedierte Schriftstücke aus der Kanzlei des Johannes Apokaukos des Metropoliten von Naupaktos (in Aetolien)', *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 21 (1971-1974): 57-160, no. 9.

[9] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, A. 4 (77), Γ. 2 (153/91-92), M. 15 (396/172), Δ. 5 (209). All the age limits applied to individuals up to the age of majority – the 25th year – in Byzantine law are discussed by G. Prinzing, 'Observations on the Legal Status of Children and Stages of Childhood in Byzantium', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 15-34, 23-34.

[10] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 2 (153/91-92); Constantine Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, IV. 4. 2.

wrote his *Minor Chronicle* on the reigns of Byzantium's last emperors during his retirement in Corfu. Sphrantzes peppered his chronicle with details of his own life, beginning with his birth on 30 August 1401, his baptism, his sister's death from plague, and, later, his appointment to take charge of Manuel II Palaiologos' imperial chamber when – Sphrantzes noted – he was aged 16 and a half.[11] Sphrantzes was not the only writer to cite his age in autobiographical asides. In his *History*, George Akropolites (1217-1282) stated that he was 16 when, after completing secondary education, he was sent by his parents to the imperial court of Nicaea, where he learned under the teachers Theodore Hexapterygos from the age of 17 and Nikephoros Blemmydes from the age of 21.[12] Nikephoros Gregoras (c.1295-1360) wrote that he was 20 when he was grasped by a love for higher studies, learning from Patriarch John XIII Glykys, while George Pachymeres (1242-c.1310) recalled that he left Nicaea to enter the clergy at Constantinople a year before he turned 20.[13] All these writers pinpointed age as a matter of importance in their accounts. Their concept of age was chronological and precise; the number of years from birth serves as a measure of personal growth to locate milestones in the writers' lives.

Age regulated the timing of life events and transitions. It is no coincidence that these well-educated men highlighted the ages of 16/17 and 20/21 in their accounts; as I will show in chapter 5.2, these ages marked educational milestones in the early lives of men aspiring to prominent civil or ecclesiastic careers. The concept of age as a regulator of behaviour is especially well-expressed in instances when writers perceived their subject's actions to be out-of-synch with the normative Life Course pattern. For example, in his *Life* of Patriarch Isidore I (1347-1350), Kokkinos stated that the saint began secondary education at the late age of 16 (boys usually entered this educational stage around the age of 11). Kokkinos used natural metaphor to convey Isidore's concerns about his late

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[11] George Sphrantzes, *Minor Chronicle*, ed. V. Grecu, Georgios Sphrantzes: *Memorii 1401-1477*, Scriptores Byzantini 5 (Bucharest, 1966): 2-146; trans. M. Philippides, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes*, 1401-1477 (Massachusetts, 1980), preface; VI. 1.
[12] George Akropolites, *History*, ed. A. Heisenberg, *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1903); trans. R. Macrides, *George Akropolites: The History* (Oxford, 2007), XXIX (189), XXXII (192), XXXIX (210).
[13] Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantine History*, ed. L Schoppen, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae: Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia Graece et Latine*, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1829-1855); German trans. J. L. van Dieten, *Rhomäische Geschichte*, 7 vols. (Stuttgart, 1973-2007), VII. 11 (I. 271); George Pachymeres, *Chronicle*, A. Failler (ed. I-IV, French trans. III-IV) and V. Laurent (trans. I-II), *Relations Historiques*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, Series Parisiensis 24. 1-2 (Paris, 1984-2000), I. 1 (23).

start to learning, which he likened to seeking 'flowers in autumn' or 'as if to plough in harvest-time and senselessly sow in the time for threshing.'[14] The episode plays on ideas of agricultural calendars and seasonal cycles to express normative expectations about age's role in timing life-stage transitions.

The contexts where chronological age is referenced in (auto)biographical writing shed further light on its perceived significance. Whereas late Byzantine authors often mentioned their ages when recounting events from youth, such as educational and career milestones, they rarely cited age when describing later life events. For example, although Sphrantzes mentioned his wedding and the birth of his first child in his *Chronicle*, he omitted his age at the time of both events.[15] If we examine historical writers' treatment of their main subjects – the imperial family – age is again cited mostly in early life contexts. As illustrated in table 2.1, the period of life from birth to 25 years old accounts for 65% of the references to chronological age that I gathered from late Byzantine historical narratives. This trend can be explained partly by the contexts in which a subject's age was recorded. Many age references relate to the marriages of imperial sons and daughters, deaths of heirs or contenders for the throne, or the accession of young rulers (John IV Laskaris and John V Palaiologos attained the throne as minors) – in other words, life events whereby high-status young people became politically active. Historical writers also inverted age for rhetorical purposes or used it to explain a subject's behaviour. For example, Doukas exploited age to explain the self-indulgent behaviour of the young sultan Murad II (1421-1451), stating that 'because he [Murad] was a young man at the time, about 25 years of age, he delighted in revels.'[16] Age statistics from historical accounts therefore reinforce the notion that Byzantine writers framed their portrayals of historical characters according to expectations of age-normative behaviour, particularly when writing about the early life-stages.

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[14] 'ἐν μετοπώρῳ… τὰ ἄνθη… ἢ καὶ ἀροτριᾶν ὥσπερ ἐν ἀμητῷ καὶ σπείρειν ἀνοήτως ἐν ἅλωνι.' Philotheos Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου, πατριάρχου Κ/Π* (*Life of Saint Isidore, Patriarch of Constantinople*), ed. Tsamis, *ΑΓΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΕΡΓΑ*, V. 27-28.
[15] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XXIV. 1-2.
[16] 'ἦν γὰρ φιλῶν τὰ συμπόσια, νέος γὰρ ὑπῆρχε τότε, ἄγων ἔτος που κεον.' Doukas, *History*, ed. V. Grecu, *Historia Turco-Bizantina*, Scriptores Byzantini I (Bucharest, 1958); trans. H. Magoulias, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks* (Detroit, 1975), XXXIX. 5.

2.1. References to chronological age in historical narratives by age-group

- 50 years old+ 20%
- 26-49 years old 15%
- 0-25 years old 65%

Legend: ■ 0-25 years old ■ 26-49 years old ■ 50 years old+
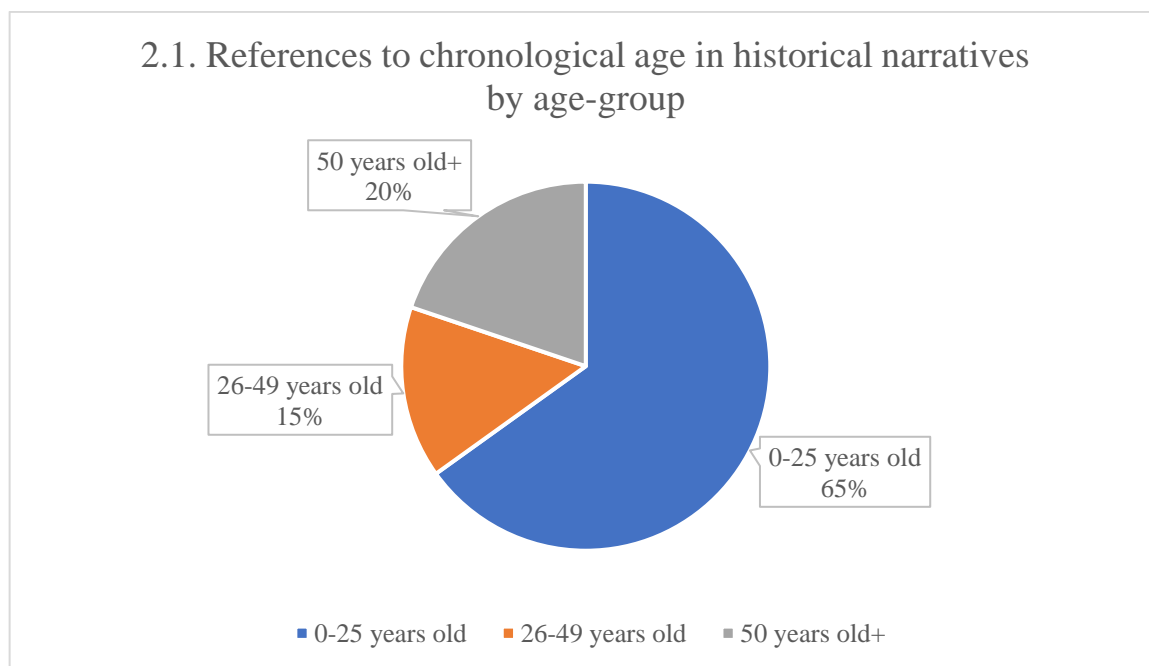
TABLE 2.1 – BASED ON 106 REFERENCES TO CHRONOLOGICAL AGE FROM HISTORICAL NARRATIVES[17]

Hagiographic evidence yields similar results. Table 2.2 breaks down the chronological age references in late Byzantine hagiography into three broad life-stages (youth, middle age, old age), while table 2.3 visualises the commonest contexts in which age is referenced. As table 2.2 shows, hagiographers cited saints' ages more often when describing early life milestones (from birth to 25 years old), such as education or the departure from the family home, than events in middle age (26 to 49 years old). In fact, the only older adult ages cited routinely by hagiographers and historians were saints' and emperors' ages at death, which is why old age (50 years old and above) accounts for the largest category of age references in hagiography and the second largest category in histories. Most references to age appear in writers' summaries of their subjects' lifelong deeds and character. Thus, Akropolites concluded his account of John III Vatatzes' reign by stating that people with more precise knowledge of the emperor said that he died aged 62, on the 3rd day of kalends in November (1254); in life, John exhibited a compassionate and gentle nature, generosity towards foreigners (more so than

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[17] The age references were gathered from George Akropolites' *History*; Nikephoros Gregoras' *Byzantine History*; George Pachymeres' *Chronicle* (books I-VI); John Kantakouzenos' *History* (books I. 1-19, III. 1-30, IV. 1-15); Doukas' *History*; and George Sphrantzes' *Minor Chronicle*.

towards his own subjects), a proclivity towards love affairs, and endurance in battle. [18] It thus appears

that citing age at death enabled writers to place their subjects' deeds in the context of their lifetime, as

well as historical time. In light of hagiographers' tendency to assign their subjects very old ages at

death, Talbot proposed that the Byzantines associated longevity with sanctity, which explains the

frequency of old ages in saints' Lives.[19]

2.2. References to chronological age in saints' Lives by age-group

- 0-25 years old 36%
- 26-49 years old 20%
- 50 years old+ 44%
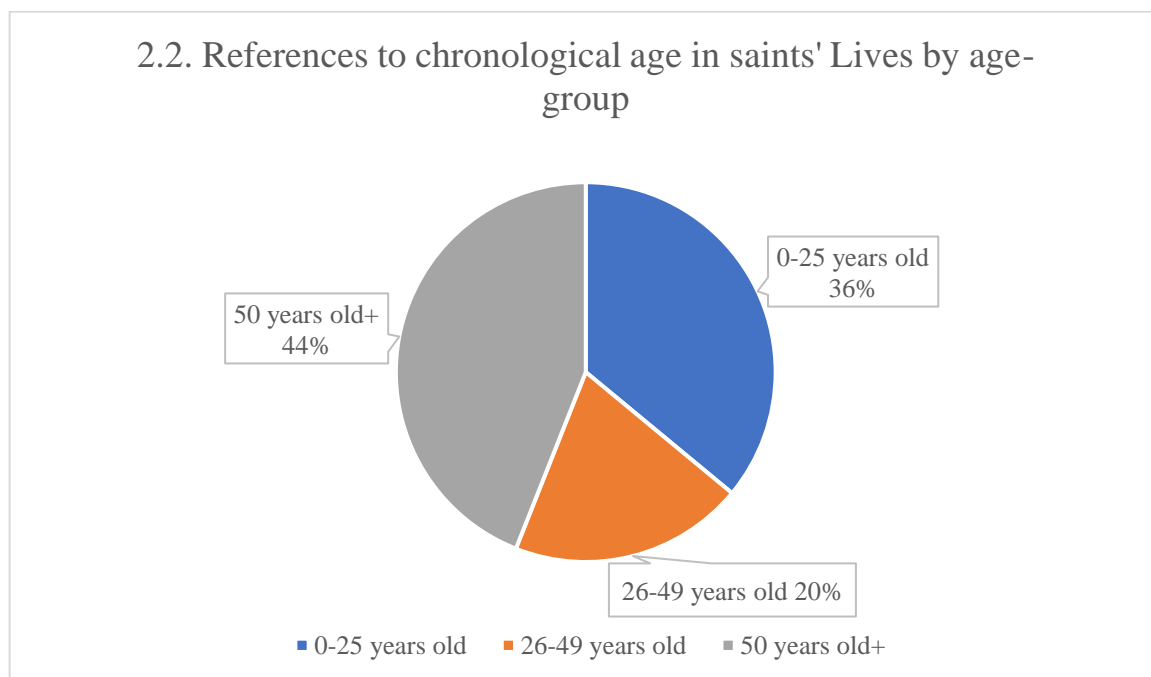
TABLE 2.2 – BASED ON 25 REFERENCES TO CHRONOLOGICAL AGE FROM SAINTS' LIVES[20]

The high occurrence of chronological age in the early Life Course has several explanations. Firstly,

due to high child mortality in this period, many references to age in late Byzantine texts refer to

children's or young people's ages at death. Secondly, since Byzantine writers treated adulthood as

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[18] Akropolites, *Hist.*, LII (271). Macrides notes that John actually died on 3 November, not the 3rd day of kalends: Macrides, *Akropolites: The History*, 274, n. 12).

[19] Talbot, 'Old Age', 269.

[20] Age references occurred in 12 of the *vitae* examined here: Theoktistos the Stoudite's *Life of Athanasios I*; Philotheos Kokkinos' *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ Μαρούλη*, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, *Life of Gregory Palamas*, and *Ὑπόμνημα εἰς ὅσιον Νικόδημον* (*Hypomnema for Saint Nikodemos*); *Life of Makarios Makres*; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*; Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*; *Life of Niphon of Athos*; *Life of Philotheos of Athos*; *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*; Makarios Chrysokephalos' *Life of Meletios of Galesion*. The *Lives* of Theodora of Arta and Matrona of Chios – the only two late Byzantine female saints – contained no age references.

normative,[21] they may not have considered age as a necessary temporal index for framing a subject's actions during later life. Alternatively, it is likely that the Byzantines understood the time between birth and early adulthood to be characterised by more frequent and significant change than the later Life Course, when changes of role and identity were less common.

2.3. Contexts of chronological age references in saints' Lives

- Other 8%
- Tonsure/ ordination 8%
- Childhood trauma (illness, bereavement) 8%
- Leaving home 12%
- Age at death 44%
- Education 20%

Legend: ■ Age at death ■ Education ■ Leaving home ■ Childhood trauma ■ Tonsure/ ordination ■ Other
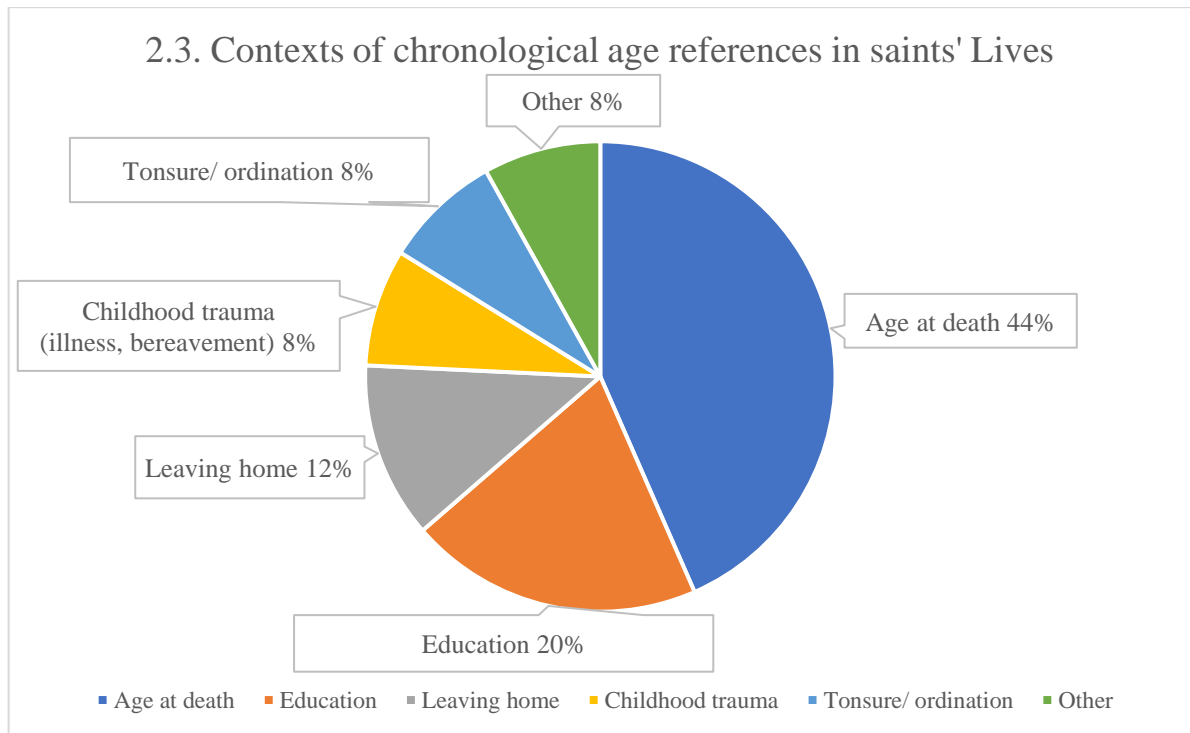
TABLE 2.3 – BASED ON 25 REFERENCES TO CHRONOLOGICAL AGE FROM SAINTS' LIVES[22]

The treatment of age in late Byzantine writing reflects a society with its own 'social clocks'.[23] There was a right time to be educated, leave home, get married, and even, in hagiography, to die. Chronological age provided writers with a yardstick for measuring a subject's behaviour against the social norms and expectations of their day. This brings us back to the question: how precisely could the Byzantines have known their actual ages? Not all ages cited in Byzantine texts were accurate. Writers often rounded ages to multiples of 5 or 10, probably when they lacked precise knowledge of

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[21] On the treatment of adulthood as normative, see Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 133.
[22] For the *vitae* used, see n. 20 above.
[23] Neugarten and Datan, 'Sociological Perspectives', 62. See also chapter 1, 1-2.

their subjects' age.[24] For example, Gregoras stated that the Constantinopolitan abbess Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina died at nearly 70 years old, apparently unsure of her true age at death (which was, in fact, around 64/65).[25] It is equally possible that Gregoras' attribution of this age to Eirene was ideologically motivated. Byzantine writers deemed the 70th year to mark the upper limit of human life, following the age when the biblical King David died (2 Samuel 5:4).[26] Biblical heroes – especially Old Testament figures such as Abraham, who lived to the 'good old age' of 175 (Genesis 28:8) – were notable for their long lives.[27] Such biblical topoi and numerology (which I discuss in part 2.2) shaped the social norms on which the Byzantine Life Course was constructed.[28] By assigning Eirene an old age at death, Gregoras brought her life in line with biblical Life Course archetypes and indicated her virtue gained from a life devoted to God.

Given that most ages at death cited in historical narratives belonged to emperors, it is likely that Gregoras mentioned Eirene's age because she was his friend and intellectual correspondent; as we shall see, writers assigned sentimental value to age when commemorating the deaths of their loved ones. It thus appears that knowledge of age depended on the proximity of the relationship between biographer and subject. This would explain why Akropolites estimated that Emperor Theodore I Laskaris was over 45 but less than 50 when he died in 1221 but stated that people with precise knowledge about John III Vatatzes – whom Akropolites knew intimately – said that he died aged 62.[29]

As mentioned above, some late Byzantine writers and manuscript-owners recorded their children's births and deaths in personal memoranda which exhibit the precision with which parents could cite their children's ages, but also suggest that children's birthdates were known amongst

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[24] Davies notes a similar tendency to round ages to multiples of 10 on early Byzantine tomb stones, which she links in part to inscribers' desire to save space when carving the inscriptions: *Womb to Tomb*, 232-233.
[25] Gregoras, *Hist.*, XXIX. 22 (III. 238). Eirene was born in 1291 and died around 1355, *PLP* 30936. On her life and correspondence, see A. Hero, 'Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina, Abbess of the Convent of Philanthropos Soter in Constantinople', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985): 119-157.
[26] Talbot, 'Old Age', 268.
[27] J. J. Griffin, 'Browsing Through the Ages: The Bible and Old Age', *Journal of Gerontology* 1. 4 (1946): 464-471, 464-465.
[28] For examples from middle Byzantine hagiography, see Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 28, 36.
[29] Akropolites, *Hist.*, XVIII (157), LII (271).

families. For example, a member of the Sarantenoi, a prominent landowning family in 14th-century Macedonia, made a note of the birth of a daughter Maria in the year 1308/9 in a 13th-century New Testament manuscript (Vatopedi cod. 962).[30] Michael Panaretos, chronicler of the Komnenoi of Trebizond, wrote that on the feast of the Transfiguration, around 19 July 1368, his beloved son died at the age of 15 after falling into the sea; later, his other 'dearest son Romanos' died aged 17 from a urinary infection.[31] Sphrantzes recorded the births and deaths of all his five children with greater precision in his *Chronicle*, citing their ages at death in days, months, and years. Thus, in the year 1440, Sphrantzes noted that his second son Alexios was born on Sunday 27 March and died aged 30 days old, while another son Andronikos was born on 15 August and died aged 8 days old.[32] The death notes of Sphrantzes' older children are more detailed, conveying a greater sense of parental grief. For instance, Sphrantzes wrote: 'In September 1455, my beautiful daughter Thamar died of an infectious disease in the sultan's seraglio. Alas for me, her wretched father! She was 14 years and 5 months.'[33]

Why would Sphrantzes place such importance on his children's times of birth and ages at death? Talbot suggests that Byzantine parents made death notes to mark the dates for their children's posthumous liturgical commemorations, but this does not explain the focus on age.[34] Late Byzantine funerary inscriptions marked the deceased's date of death but did not tend to enumerate their age.[35] The chronicling of children's ages at death, as well as birthdays, thus appears to be sentimentally motivated. To cite a child's age at death emphasises the tragic quality of a premature demise and reflects the intimacy of the parent-child bond. Indeed, the practice of recording of infants' ages at death in months and days on Roman and early Byzantine tomb stones has been interpreted as an

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[30] The note, contained in Vatopedi cod. 962, fol. 362r, is transcribed and translated by Nelson, *Theodore Hagiopetrites*, 22, cat. no. 3.
[31] 'ποθεινότατος υἱὸς Ρωμανός'. Michael Panaretos, *On the Emperors of Trebizond*, ed. and trans. S. Kennedy, *Two Works of Byzantine Trebizond* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), 89.
[32] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XXIV. 5, XXVI. 10.
[33] 'Καὶ τὸν Σεπτέβριον τοῦ ξδ–ου ἔτους ἀπέθανε Θάμαρ ἡ καλή μου θυγάτηρ ἐν τῷ τοῦ ἀμηρᾶ σαραγίῳ λοιμώδει νόσῳ, – ἰού, ἰού μοι τῷ ἀθλίῳ γενέτῃ, – οὖσα χρονῶν ιδ–ων καὶ μηνῶν ε´'. Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XXXVII. 9.
[34] Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 302.
[35] S. T. Brooks, *Commemoration of the Dead: Late Byzantine Tomb Decoration (Mid-Thirteenth to Mid-Fifteenth Centuries)* (PhD thesis, New York Institute of Fine Arts, 2002), 89.

emotional response of grieving parents.[36] This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that writers often cited ages at death for their children, but not other family members. Sphrantzes cited no ages at death for his parents, sister, niece, or brother-in-law, of whom the latter three died of the plague.[37] This trend recurs in two obituaries composed by an anonymous official from Phokas, Asia Minor. This man cited the ages of his 16-year-old daughter and even her premature foetus, whom he estimated was 5 or 6 gestational months old when the pair died in childbirth in the 3rd hour of the day on Friday 5 July 1443, whereas the obituary for his mother, who died in the 5th hour of the night on Thursday 29 December 1435, makes no mention of her age.[38] In these texts, chronological age acquires importance in marking the life-history of a biological family; the age of a child or grandchild at death calls to mind the rupture of the familial line from one generation to the next.

The texts I have examined thus far age were produced by the social elite and urban officialdom. It might be asked whether non-literate communities had a similar awareness of chronological ages or birthdates. In this regard, a comparison between late Byzantium and late medieval England, whose urban and rural poor are better attested in the textual record, may be instructive. At all levels of medieval society, childbirth and death were occasions for ritual activities in which the extended family and community participated. A child's birth was attended at home by midwives, female relatives, and neighbours, who also attended the mother's churching and the child's baptism, which was celebrated amongst godparents, family, and friends.[39] English women could calculate the age of someone in their community by linking the timing of that person's birth to their own life experiences, including children's births and spouses' deaths, or the religious holidays dotting the medieval calendar, which helped people to recall the date or at least the season of a child's birth.[40]

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[36] Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 6; Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 235-236.
[37] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, V. 1.
[38] P. Schreiner, 'Eine Obituarnotiz uber eine Fruhgeburt', *JÖB* 39 (1989): 209-16, 210-211.
[39] Shahar, *Childhood*, 37-38, 47; N. Orme, *Medieval Children* (Yale, 2001), 32-33.
[40] For example, see J. Goldberg, *Women in England, c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1996), 58-80, no. 3 (an inquiry into an adolescent girl's age at marriage from the Church court of York, 1365-1366). On knowledge of birthdates in the later Middle Ages, see Orme, *Children*, 43-45.

Hence, Christian rituals surrounding birth and death acted as timestamps facilitating the memory of family and community life-histories.

The same social and religious calendars structured daily life in Byzantium. Births and deaths were celebrated by the household and local community through the rituals of baptism, churching, and funerals. Feasts of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints punctuated the liturgical year, but were also integrated into the seasonal cycle of agricultural activities, such as the harvest, in Byzantine villages.[41] A closer look at the personal memoranda of late Byzantine fathers reveals that these social timetables acted as measures of the passage of time, specifically in the framework of a writer's or his family's lifetime. Fathers assigned special meaning to the timing of their children's births, especially when they fell on major religious holidays. In his *Chronicle*, Sphrantzes cited the day of the week on which only two of his children were born: his son Alexios and daughter Thamar, who were both born on Easter Sunday – a day symbolising spiritual rebirth and salvation.[42] In a 15th-century family chronicle, the scribe Demetrios Leontares noted the feast-days on which his twelve children were born; his daughter Anna was born on the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin, his daughter Eirene on the feast of Saint George, his son Demetrios on the feast of Saint John the Almsgiver, and so on.[43] Not only did religious festivals offer convenient temporal markers for remembering a child's birth; given the deeply spiritual aspect of Byzantine daily life, it is likely that parents also attached positive meaning to births that fell on religiously momentous dates.[44]

A notebook belonging to a 15th-century official of the metropolis of Thessaloniki, who has possibly been identified as the deacon and *nomophylax* John Eugenikos, reinforces the idea that the Byzantines understood ageing within the frameworks of social and religious time. This man recorded

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[41] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 44-47, see also 108-124 on the association of saints with the agricultural cycle.

[42] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XXIV. 5, 8.

[43] Demetrios Leontares, *Chronicle*, ed. P. Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1975), 643-645, no. 98 A. See also no. 90 (a chronicle in which a member of the Chrysolaros family recorded the births and/or deaths of his four children in the mid-14th century, citing the hour, day of the week, month, indiction, and year of each event), and no. 107 (a chronicle in which one Manuel Gerakis recorded the births and deaths of his children during the later 15th and early 16th centuries, citing the time of day, day of the week, month, indiction, and year of each).

[44] On Demetrios Leontares, see chapter 3.2.

the day of the month, indiction, year, and hour of the weekday on which his children were born (in that order).[45] For example, his son Antonios was born on 17 July, indiction 13, 1420, on the 4th hour of Wednesday.[46] However, when recording his son Manuel's birth, the official added a new temporal marker: Manuel was born on 31 January, indiction 13, 1405, on Sabbath day (Saturday) after the chanting of the vespers in the holy church.[47] This use of the evening church service as a chronological index reflects the role of church timetables in regulating Byzantine daily time, but also in aiding the memory of lifetime. Indeed, the structure of the official's notebook suggests that he recorded Manuel's birth from memory. Whereas all other notes relating to the man's family life appear in the manuscript in chronological order, the note on Manuel's birth is on a separate folio with space left blank for the addition of further notes – possibly the scribe's marriage, ordination as a priest, and his daughter Maria's birth.[48] Again, the recording of births and deaths appears to be emotively motivated; the multiple crossings-out and corrections in the official's notes attests to their personal nature.[49]

These autobiographical notes of late Byzantine fathers show that aspects of everyday life, from daily church services to major religious festivals, acted as temporal markers of personal life events that facilitated the creation and memory of family history. The recording of births and deaths by reference to religious holidays demonstrates the general importance of the Orthodox Church and its rituals to the late Byzantine Life Course – a theme we will see recurring in successive chapters. Given the interweaving of lifetime, family time, social and religious time in late Byzantine writing, I might postulate that the textual recording of birthdays was not necessarily required for an individual to have a good understanding of her/his age, or a family member's age, in this period. At the very least, we can conclude that 13th- to 15th-century writers had a strong awareness of chronological age and assigned it value as a measure of personal development over the Life Course. They treated age as a

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[45] For the children's deaths, see Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 293.
[46] S. Kougeas, 'Notizbuch eines Beamten der Mteropolis in Thessalonike aus dem Anfanf des XV. Jahrhunderts', *BZ* 23 (1914/19): 141-162, no. 74.
[47] Kougeas, 'Notizbuch', no. 71.
[48] *Ibid.*, 155-156.
[49] *Ibid.*, 141.

determinant of social roles and activities and expressed clear expectations about the timing of life events and transitions, so that the age when an individual reached a milestone such as education or marriage could be deemed as either normative or irregular. The key point to take from this analysis is that when the Byzantines approached the task of writing a subject's biography, they did so with preconceived images of the Life Course – sometimes attached to precise chronological markers – in mind.

This preoccupation with age is not unique to late Byzantine texts. With the rising of an autobiographical trend in Byzantine writing from the 11th century onwards – as well as personal records –, we occasionally find writers such as Michael Psellos mentioning their own ages in historical narratives,[50] or fathers citing children's ages at death in documents such as wills.[51] The increasing prominence of age, birthdates, and death-dates in texts can therefore be connected to literary trends and the chronological distribution of the surviving textual record.[52] However, in light of the evident significance afforded to these aspects of private life by 13th- to 15th-century writers, we might consider that their texts also indicate a growing interest in the documentation of family history.

(2.2) Concepts of life-stage

Despite the examples just discussed, chronological age is used rather infrequently as an index of life-stage in late Byzantine writing. Most often, authors simply chose to describe their subject's life-stage using generic terms such as 'child' (παῖς) or 'old man' (γέρων). These life-stage terms were employed

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[50] Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. É. Renauld, *Michel Psellos: Chronographie ou Histoire d'un Siècle de Byzance (976-1077)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1926-1928, repr. 1967); trans. E. R. A. Sewter, *Michael Psellus: Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, rev. ed (Harmondsworth, 1966), III. 25, VI. 36, VII. 7. On the rising autobiographical trend in Byzantine writing from the 11th and later centuries, see Angold, 'The Autobiographical Impulse'.
[51] Such as the well-known will of the provincial magnate Eustathios Boilas (1059). See S. Vryonis, 'The Will of a Provincial Magnate, Eustathios Boilas (1059)', *DOP* 11 (1957): 263-277, 265. The Greek text can be found in P. Lemerle, *Cinq Études sur le XI Siècle Byzantin* (Paris, 1977), 20-29.
[52] As I am constrained by space from exploring how the role assigned to age evolved in Byzantine writing over time in-depth here, I leave this as a subject for future work.

fluidly and could refer to subjects of widely varying ages.[53] Thus, the term 'μειράκιον' (young lad/

adolescent) was used to describe George Akropolites as a young man of 21 years old, but also Saint

Maximos the Hutburner (b.1272-1285) as a child who was learning his letters, which usually began at

age 6 or 7.[54] Similarly, the term 'κόρη' (girl) was used to describe an unmarried little girl (παιδίον

θῆλυ) in the *Life* of Saint Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), but also Sophia of Montferrat, who came to

Byzantium as the bride of John VIII Palaiologos in 1420, aged about 26.[55] The term 'κόρη' – which

was otherwise applied to imperial brides aged 6 to 19[56] – thus appears to be linked to the time of

marriage, or readiness for marriage, in a girl's life as well as actual age.[57] Studies of Byzantine legal

and hagiographical texts have identified a rough correlation between chronological age and Greek

terms used for the stages of childhood, while emphasising that their usages overlapped considerably.[58]

Thus, while I will indicate when a Byzantine writer employed a specific life-stage term in subsequent

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[53] Similar observations have been made about the use of terms for childhood in middle Byzantine literature by Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 39-41.

[54] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, ed. and trans. Greenfield and Talbot, *Holy Men of Mount Athos*, 2. 1; Akropolites, *Hist.*, XXXIX (211). Likewise, the term 'νεανίσκος' was applied by Pachymeres to the 11-year-old John IV Laskaris (*Chron.*, III. 10 (257)), but the word was also used by Kokkinos to describe Saint Isidore at 16 years old: *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, V. 25.

[55] Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, trans. A-M. Talbot, *Miracle Tales from Byzantium*, trans. Talbot and S. Fitzgerland Johnson (Cambridge, MA, 2012), I. 1; Doukas, *Hist.*, XX. 6. On Sophia of Monteferrat, see P. Melichar, *Empresses of Late Byzantium: Foreign Brides, Mediators and Pious Women* (Berlin, 2019), 311-318.

[56] In order of age: Simonis Palaiologina, m. Stefan Uroš II Milutin, 1299, aged 6 (Pachymeres, *Chron*, IX. 31 (69)); Eirene Palaiologina, daughter of John V, engaged to prince Şehzade Halil, 1358, aged 10 (Gregoras, *Hist.*, XXXVI. 13 (III. 508)); Anna of Moscow, m. John VIII Palaiologos, 1414, aged 11 (Doukas, *Hist.*, XX. 3); Maria Palaiologina, great-neice of Andronikos II, m. Stefan Uroš III Dečanski, c.1325, aged 12 (Gregoras, *Hist.*, IX. 12. 4 (I. 456)); Eirene Choumnaina Palaiologina, m. John Palaiologos, son of Andronikos II, 1303, aged 12 (Pachymeres, *Chron.*, XI. 5 (97); Hero, 'Irene-Eulogia', 120-121); Anna Palaiologina, daughter of Michael VIII, engaged to prince Stefan Milutin, aged about 12 (Pachymeres, *Chron.*, V. 6 (254). Anna was likely Michael's first – not second – daughter born c.1356, as it was her who was betrothed to the prince in 1268/9. See Melichar, *Empresses*, 74, n. 112); Theodora Kantakouzene, daughter of John VI Kantakouzenos, m. Orhan Gazi, aged 14+ (Gregroras, *Hist.*, XV. 5. 1 (763); Doukas, *Hist.*, IX. 1. As Theodora's little sister Helena was born in 1333, Theodora must have been at least 14 when she married in 1346: see D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus), ca. 1100-1460: A Genealogical and Prosopographical Study* (Washington, D.C., 1968), 134-135); Theodora Palaiologina, neice of Michael VIII, married twice in later adolescence (Pachymeres, *Chron.*, I. 12 (55); Melichar, 'Adolescent Behaviour', 110); Maria Branković, m. Murad II, aged about 17 (Doukas, *Hist.*, XXX. 1. On Maria, see M. St. Popović, 'Maria Branković: Eine Frau Zwischen dem Christlichen und dem Islamischen Kultukreis im 15. Jahrhundert', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 58.2 (2009): 357-364)); Anna of Savoy, sought as a bride for Andronikos III Palaiologos in 1325, aged 19 (Kantakouzenos, *History*, ed. L. Schopen, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni Eximperatoris Historiarum Libri IV*, 3 vols., Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae (Bonn, 1828-1832) I. 195; Melichar, *Empresses*, 173).

[57] The use of the term 'κόρη' to refer to girls aged 6-18 or 20 is noted by Prinzing, 'Observations on the Legal Status of Children and Stages of Childhood in Byzantium', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 15-34, 19.

[58] Prinzing, 'Observations', 18-23, tbl. 1; Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 36-41.

chapters where it is relevant, it is worth noting that these terms are not strict signifiers of actual age, since their application varied according to context and writers' personal preferences.

Writers also manipulated life-stage terms for rhetorical purposes. In his *History*, Doukas used age as a tool for political delegitimisation when reporting a speech by the supporters of John VI Kantakouzenos (r.1347-1354), who fought in the civil war of 1341-1347 against Empress Anna of Savoy and her 9-year-old son John V Palaiologos. The supporters protested that 'the empire, in female hands, is like a weaver's shuttle spinning awry and twisting the thread of the purple robe. Sovereignty belongs to a babe at the breast (ὑπομαζίῳ βρέφει) barely able to use its mind and tongue in games and stutterings.'[59] It is clear that John V, at the age of 9, was neither breastfeeding nor unable to speak. Rather, the attack on Anna's femininity and John's youth serves to delegitimise the ruling party and retrospectively justify Kantakouzenos' bid for imperial power. Pachymeres similarly used age – albeit more subtly – to express moral judgement in his account of the blinding of the 11-year-old emperor John IV Laskaris by his regent Michael Palaiologos. Throughout his *Chronicle*, Pachymeres referred to John IV variably as a child (παῖς) or young lad/adolescent (μεῖραξ, μειρακίσκος);[60] he even used the term 'νεανίσκος', which more typically denoted young men.[61] However, in the blinding episode, Pachymeres employed language that exaggerates John's youth, referring to him as a little boy who had barely passed infancy (τὸ βρέφους μικρὸν ὑπερβεβηκὸς παιδίον).[62] The exaggeration of John's youth highlights the cruelty of his treatment by Michael Palaiologos, whom Pachymeres portrayed as a power-hungry and paranoid ruler, and draws attention to Michael's usurper status.[63]

These examples demonstrate that writers employed life-stage terms consciously, but not always to indicate actual age. Even within the same text, the life-stage assigned to a literary subject

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[59] 'ἡ βασιλεία ἐν χερσὶ γυναικείαις κερκίδος δίκην παρακλώθουσα καὶ παρατρακτοῦσα τὴν ἁλουργίδα, ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν ὑπομαζίῳ βρέφει μόλις τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν ἐν παιγνίοις καὶ ψελλίσμασιν ἐνεργεῖν δυναμένῳ'. Doukas, *Hist.*, VI. 1.
[60] Pachymeres, *Chron.*, I. 15 (63), 16 (69), 27 (109), 'ἐν μειρακυλλίοις' 30 (115), II. 4 (137), III. 10 (257).
[61] *Ibid.*, III. 10 (257). On the use of the term 'νεανίσκος' to refer to younger boys and adolescents in middle Byzantine writing, see Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 40-41.
[62] Pachymeres, *Chron.*, III. 10 (257).
[63] *Ibid.* Pachymeres describes how Michael was himself blinded in the soul in his quest for glory, and his cruel treatment of John IV's suspected supporters: *Chron.*, II. 35 (225-227).

could vary according to authorial intentions. When writers wished to signal a subject's actual age, they

often compounded life-stage terms with references to milestones of biological or social development.

Expressions such as 'suckling infant',[64] 'beardless youth',[65] or girl 'of marriageable age'[66] appear

frequently in Byzantine texts. While they cannot be equated with chronological age directly, these

expressions clearly denoted times of life when people were normatively expected to reach milestones

such as weaning in infancy, beard growth in male puberty, or when girls were considered ready to

marry (as Byzantine law defined sexual maturity as a prerequisite for marriage, this probably denotes

the timing of female puberty).[67] Writers also expressed age by reference to the mental, physical, or

behavioural characteristics of a given age-group. Infants were defined by their inability to speak,

children by their lack of 'mature reason',[68] while the elderly may be referred to as 'those who have

grown grey with age or who may be failing in mind.'[69] It thus appears that, like us, the Byzantines

often considered signs of physical and mental growth or deterioration as more proximate, telling

gauges of individual maturity than chronological age.

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[64] 'ὑπὸ τίτθης βρέφος', Pachymeres. *Chron.*, II. 23 (179); 'ὑπομαζίῳ βρέφει', Doukas, *Hist.*, VI. 1, 'θηλάζοντα νήπια', VIII. 4, XLI. 10.

[65] 'μειρακίων ἐφήβων καὶ ἀγενείων', Gregoras. *Hist.*, XXXVII. 4 (531); 'νέος ἀγένειος', *Life of Niphon*, XVI; 'τὸν ἀγένειον', Manuel II, *Typikon for the Monasteries of Mount Athos*, ed. Papachryssanthou, D. *Actes du Prôtaton* (Archives de l'Athos 7) (Paris, 1975), 257-261; trans. Dennis in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1613-1624, 13. 1621.

[66] 'γάμου γενομένην ὡραίαν ἤδη τὴν πρώτην τῶν θυγατέρων', Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, VIII. 6-7; 'ὡραίαν γάμου', Pachymeres, *Chron.*, IV. 26 (401), 'ὡραίας γάμων' I. 27 (107); 'θυγατέρα γάμου… ὡραίαν', Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, ed. and trans. A. Kaldellis (Cambridge, MA, 2014), II. 11. The term also denotes the legal age of marriage. See, for example, a synodal letter to the metropolitan of Methymna, Lesbos (May 1394), concerning the request of a man who wished to dissolve a marriage contract he had entered with the daughter of one Nicholas Bambakas, who was a minor below the age of marriage (τὸ ἀφήλικα εἶναι τὴν παῖδα τοῦ Νικολάου καὶ ἀτελῆ πρὸς ὥραν τοῦ γάμου): *MM* II, no. 464, 212; *Regestes*, N. 2962; Prinzing, 'Adoleszenten', 52-53, tbl. II.

[67] Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, IV. 4. 2; Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 2 (153/91-92).

[68] 'φρονήματος ἀνδρὶ'. Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, partial trans. T. S. Miller, *The History of John Cantacuzenus (Book IV): Text, Translation and Commentary* (PhD thesis, Catholic University of America, 1975), III. 42. 19 (78/178). Children are similarly defined by their lack of reason (φρονήσει) by Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, ed. J. A. Munitiz, *Autobiographia sive Curriculum Vitae*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 13 (Turnhout, 1984); trans. J. A. Munitiz, *A Partial Account, Nikephoros Blemmydes: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Louvain, 1988), II. 5

[69] 'τοὺς πολιῶντας χρόνῳ ἢ καὶ φρονήματι'. Michael VIII Palaiologos, *Typikon for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios near Chalcedon*, ed. Dmitrievsky, *A. Opisanie Liturgicheskikh Rykopisei*, vol. 1: *Typika*, pt. 1 (Kiev, 1895), 769-94; trans. Dennis, *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1207-1236, III. 1219.

Given the fluid application of life-stage terms in Byzantine writing, what can be said about perceptions of the lifecycle in its entirety? How many life-stages were recognised, and how fixed were the conceptual boundaries between them? In this regard, the Byzantines were influenced by antique thought about the life-stages, which was predicated on the concept of universal harmony in nature and beliefs in the mystical properties of numbers, especially threes and sevens.[70] As early as the late 7th to early 6th century BCE, Solon described a scheme of ten seven-year life-stages, or *hebdomades*, which physicians of the Hippocratic school linked to changes in human growth that occurred at seven-year intervals; infancy (παιδίον) lasted up to age 7, when baby teeth fall out; childhood (παῖς) to age 14, when pubic hair grows; adolescence (μειράκιον) to age 21, when the beard blooms, and so on.[71] Astrologers spoke of seven ages corresponding to the astrological signs, which were perceived to influence behaviour. It was believed that young people experienced uncontrolled sexual passions in puberty because that life-stage fell under the rule of Venus, for example.[72] Another scheme accredited to the 6th-century-BCE philosopher Pythagoras conceived of four ages of life, each lasting 20 years, that mirrored the four seasons: childhood (παῖς) was like spring, youth (νέος) like summer, adulthood (ἀνήρ) like august, and old age (γέρων) like winter. In the medieval West, these traditions gave rise to three-, four-, six- and seven-stage models of the 'ages of man' that conceived of the human body as microcosm of the Christian macro-cosmological order.[73] While the schemes had their respective roots in the biological, physiological, or astrological sciences, they were taught in medieval schools and became fashionable subjects of visual culture.[74]

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[70] On the schemes of life in ancient Greece, see Garland, *Greek Way*, 3-6; in ancient Rome, Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 15-17.

[71] P. Barker, 'Greco-Roman Paediatrics', in *Childhood in History*, 77-91, 81-86.

[72] Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 16-17. On the seven stages of life and their relation to Greek terminology of the life-stages, L. Overstreet, 'The Greek Concept of the Seven Stages of Life and its New Testament Significance', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19.4 (2009): 537-563, esp. 548-549.

[73] E. Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton, 1986).

[74] J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1988), 1-2; Sears, *Ages of Man*, xvii.

Although the Byzantines did not develop schemes of the life-stages as cohesive or pervasive as the medieval West, they did engage with the ancient models.[75] The numbers three, seven, and nine (the square of three) are significant in the Byzantine tradition.[76] Writers from the 7th to 11th centuries continued to speak of seven ages of life.[77] In an 11th-century poem, Michael Psellos defined the ages as infancy (βρέφος), childhood (παιδίον), adolescence (μειράκιον), youth (νεανίας), maturity (ἀνήρ), middle age (μεσαιπόλιος), and old age (γέρων).[78] Like their western counterparts, Byzantine churchmen sought to situate human ageing within the temporal frameworks of Christian cosmology using number symbolism. Anastasios of Sinai (7th century) likened the ages of life to the seven days of Creation; the first day, when God made light, equated to infancy, when Christians are enlightened by baptism.[79] This correlation of life's ages with the days of Creation was previously endorsed by Saint Augustine (345-430), who established a scheme of life-stages based on the six ages of the world.[80]

The triad, which held connotations of sanctity in the ancient Greek and Judaic philosophy of numbers, was for early Christian theologians a symbol of divine unity – the Trinity – which was also analogous with the three parts of the human soul (mind, reason, and spirit).[81] In 15th century, Symeon, archbishop of Thessaloniki, still assigned value to the numbers three and seven, as well as six and nine (multiples of three), in relation to the growth of the human body and soul.[82] In explaining why

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[75] For a Byzantine account of the various ancient schemes of ages, see Boissonade, J. *Anecdota Graeca e Codicibus Regiis*, vol. II (Paris, 1830), 454-457.

[76] On threes and sevens in the emerging Christian tradition, see C. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 2006), 244-245. On the number nine and multiples of three, see P. Friesenhahn, *Hellenistische Wortzahlenmystik im Neuen Testament* (Leipzig, 1935), 24-25.

[77] Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 28-34. The seven ages are described in two poems, one attributed to George of Pisidia (7th century) and the other anonymous, in N. B. Thomadakis, 'ΦΩΤΙΟΥ, ΗΛΙΚΙΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ', *Ἐπισημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν* 23 (1972-1973): 9-16, 14-15.

[78] Michael Psellos, *On the Soul*, ed. L.G. Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli Poemata* (Stuttgart, 1992): no. 63, 44-50.

[79] Anastasios of Sinai (c.600-700 CE), *Hexaemeron*, ed. and trans. C. A. Kuehn and J. D. Baggarly, *Anastasius of Sinai: Hexaemeron* (Rome, 2007), VII. 7. 2. 469-494; *Questions and Answers*, in *PG* 89, 311-824, 368-369. Though attributed to Anastasios, the *Questions and Answers* was reworked in later centuries; see J. A. Munitiz, *Anastasios of Sinai: Questions and Answers* (Turnhout, 2011), 19-22.

[80] Sears, *Ages of Man*, 55-56. Earlier, the Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BCE-50 CE) had described ten seven-year stages of human life that equated to the seven planetary spheres of the created universe: Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 243.

[81] V. F. Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression* (New York, 1983), 52-54, 60-61, 73, 82-84; M. Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford, 2007), 75-77.

[82] On this passage, see chapter 3.1.

Christians commemorate departed souls on the 3rd and 9th days after death, Symeon stated that this practice mirrored the creation of humankind. The human seed, once planted in the womb, becomes an embryo on the 3rd day of pregnancy, gains mass on the 9th, is alive on the 40th day, moves in the 3rd month, is a complete baby in the 6th month, and is born in the 9th month. The new-born then undergoes changes in growth every triad of years, and especially at the start of the 3rd triad, that is the 7th year, since three triads make a total of nine – the same as the number of angelic orders, which were arranged into three triads representing the Trinity.[83] The importance of the number nine (the square of three)[84] to Byzantine schemes of ageing is also attested by a poem of Patriarch Photios I (c.810-c.893), who described nine ages of life between infancy (βρέφος) and deep old age (ἐσχατόγηρος), with transitions placed at ages 4, 10, 18, 20, 35, 45, 55, and 65, followed by an inferred stage of life after death.[85] It is fitting that earthly life should encompass nine stages, preceding what would be a tenth stage of eternal life. For early Christian exegetes, the number nine marked the highest level of perfection that human beings could attain (thus, Christ's earthly life ended in the 9th hour of the day),[86] while the truly perfect number was ten, which symbolised cosmic unity and totality in Pythagorean and Judaic numerology.[87]

Biblical topoi and numerology, or gematria (the practice of applying numerical values to letters or words, used by Jewish mystics to derive meaning from the Scripture),[88] also shaped the ages ascribed to biographical subjects by Byzantine authors. Medieval writers were conscious of the numerological symbolisms used by early Christian exegetes, drawing on the Pythagorean and Judaic traditions, to form theological arguments.[89] Thus, Kokkinos wrote that when Saint Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359) became a priest, the number of his companions was ten, 'the most complete and perfect

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[83] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Ordinae Sepulturae*, in *PG* 155, 669D-696D, 689C-690D. On the division of the angels into three triads and nine orders, see G. Podskalsky and A. Cutler, 'Angel', *ODB*, 97.
[84] On the number nine in Christian exegesis and its relation to the human life-stages and the ascent of the soul, see Friesenhahn, *Hellenistische Wortzahlenmystik*, 24-25.
[85] Thomadakis, 'ΗΛΙΚΙΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ', 13-14.
[86] Friesenhahn, *Hellenistische Wortzahlenmystik*, 24 (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:44).
[87] Hopper, *Number Symbolism*, 56-57, 60-61.
[88] *Ibid.*, 62-64; Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 243.
[89] Hopper, *Number Symbolism*, 69-76; M. Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge, 1986), 62, 65. On the role of numerology in Christian spiritual exegesis, see Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 242-248. On the medieval inheritance of the tradition, see E. Reiss, 'Number Symbolism and Medieval Literature', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 1 (1970): 161-171.

number', while Palamas himself was aged 30.[90] Here, Kokkinos showed his awareness of the number

ten as a symbol of perfection and totality in ancient numerological theory.[91] By ascribing the age of 30

to Palamas upon his ordination, Kokkinos also aligned the saint's life with the life of Christ, who

began his ministry aged 30 (Luke 3:23),[92] and the lives of Old Testament figures who came to their

destined office at the same age, such as King David (2 Samuel 5:4). It was for this reason that in the

early Christian and – later – the medieval tradition, the 30th year came to represent the 'perfect' age of

human life, when spiritual understanding and strength were attained.[93] Byzantine authors constructed

the Life Course with these biblical and numerological symbolisms in mind.

Medieval rationales for dividing the life-stages were also influenced by Greco-Roman

medicine, which viewed ageing as the result of changes in the human body. Particularly influential

was Galen (c.129-210 CE), who built on the tetradic scheme of ages and Hippocratic theory of the

four bodily humours (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm) to argue that each life-stage was

marked by a specific constitution of bodily heat, cold, moisture, and dryness – qualities of the four

elements of fire, air, water, and earth that made up all life. As the body aged, it cooled and dried like

the seasons, so that children (νέοι), whose bodies abounded in blood, were warm and moist like

spring; people in their prime (ἀκμάζοντες) were warm and dry like summer; the middle-aged (μέσοι)

cold and dry like autumn; and the elderly (γέροντες) cold and moist like winter.[94] As health relied on

correct humoural balance, physicians differentiated medical advice according to age.[95] The continuity

of this tradition is attested by a 14th-century medical manual ascribed to one John the physician, who

advised doctors to bleed patients for various diseases if they were aged 12, 15, 20, or 40, or in the

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[90] 'τὸν πληρέστατόν… καὶ τέλειον ἀριθμόν'. Philotheos Kokkinos, *Life of Gregory Palamas*, XXVI. 6-13.
[91] Hopper, *Number Symbolism*, 69-76.
[92] This followed the age when Aaronic priests could serve (Numbers 4:3).
[93] Dove, *The Perfect Age*, 54-56.
[94] Sears, *Ages of Man*, 13-15; Barker, 'Paediatrics', 82.
[95] The physician John Zacharias Aktouarios (c.1275–c.1330) also paid attention to age in his treatise *On Urines*. See P. Bouras-Vallianatos, *Innovation in Byzantine Medicine: The Writings of John Zacharias Aktouarios* (c.1275-c.1330) (Oxford, 2020), 82-83, tbl. 3.1.

prime of life (ἀκμάζων), while another treatment was specified for 14-year-old patients.[96] The same physician identified patients as young, middle-aged, and elderly (νέων μέσων καὶ γερόντων).[97] The 14th-century polymath Gregoras, in an episode from his *History* which I examine in chapter 3.3, also alluded to humoural theory when explaining the death of a 3-year-old child. The child was struck by a fatal fever, according to Gregoras, because his body lacked the moisture befitting the age of infancy, causing it to become dry and corrupting the natural course of growth and development.[98]

Whereas the aforementioned texts connect ageing to changes in bodily or spiritual growth, iconographic schemes – with which all sighted Byzantine interacted – used visual signifiers of age, particularly hair colour, hair thickness, and skin texture, to define life-stage. Three ages of life – the beardless youth, the bearded middle-aged man, and the wrinkled, grey-haired, elder – are discernible in certain biblical scenes, including those of the three Magi in the 14th-century Chora mosaics, and scenes of the prophets and apostles, such as the Transfiguration (fig. 5.1).[99] Sears, writing on the medieval West, explains that this iconographic scheme of three ages had folkloric rather than scriptural origins, and became incorporated into literature, apocryphal texts, and visual culture over time.[100] Given this link to myth and literature, it is noteworthy that three ages of life are also described in one 13th-century Byzantine romance. In an *ekphrasis*, the hero describes the god Eros, personified as a three-faced emperor whose faces each represent an age of life: 'his first face was that of a young baby, soft-skinned, tender and with a fair complexion', the second a man 'of middle age, with a rounded beard, a countenance like snow', and the third 'the countenance of an old man, its features,

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[96] John the Physician, *Iatrosophion*, ed. and trans. B. Zipser, *John the Physician's Therapeutics: A Medical Handbook in Vernacular Greek* (Leiden, 2009), 67, 108, (א), 81 (ω). On Galen and the role of age in this text, see 71-72 (א), and the discussion by Zipser, 11, 40, n. 90.

[97] *Ibid.*, 112 (א). Elsewhere, the text advises treatment for an immature patient (ἄγουρος), 67 (א).

[98] See chapter 3.3.

[99] P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, vol. 1, *Historical Introduction and Description of the Mosaic and Frescoes*, 92-93, vol. 2, *The Mosaics* (London, 1967), fig. 103. On the depiction of the Magi in the medieval West, see Sears, *Ages of Man*, 90-94. On age (particularly youth) in images of the apostles and prophets, see chapter 5.1 (fig. 5.1).

[100] Sears, *Ages of Man*, 90-91.

form, shape and appearance fashioned accordingly.'[101] Interestingly, Beaton notes similarities between the medieval author's description of Eros' three faces, which symbolise 'every human nature', and theological discussions the Trinity, which – as mentioned above – Symeon of Thessaloniki also linked to the stages of human growth.[102]

It is thus evident that the Byzantines perceived the life-stages in schematic terms to an extent, even if the number of life-stages was defined variably and not all schemes assigned chronological boundaries to each life-stage. However, outside theological and poetic discourses, writers usually envisioned the life-stages in light of the simple opposition between youth, maturity, and old age. Historical writers categorised the populations of towns or cities into three or four age-groups that mirrored the generational structure of society. Doukas, recounting the 1430 siege of Thessaloniki, described 'men and women, youths and maidens, adolescents and infants' amongst the citizens.[103] The same writer implied a four-stage model of life when he described John V Palaiologos as having passed through childhood, youth and maturity (τὴν μειρακιώδη καὶ νεανικὴν μεθηλικίωσιν καὶ τὴν ἀνδρῴαν) and reached old age (τὴν πρεσβυτικὴν);[104] here, Doukas employed the term 'μεθηλικίωσις', which designated the transition from one life-stage to the next.[105] The aforementioned 13th-century romance, *Livistros and Rodamni*, constructs a tripartite division of life when describing an imaginary kingdom, whose inhabitants included 'men, women, old men but also children'.[106]

We should note that schemes of the life-stages were modelled on a male subject, denoting each age by masculine nouns such as 'ἀνήρ' (man) or 'γέρων' (old man). Byzantine writers rarely

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[101] 'τὸ πρῶτον του τὸ πρόσωπον βρέφος μικροῦ παιδίου, ἀπαλοσάρκου, τρυφεροῦ, καὶ εἶχεν ξανθὴν τὴν πλάσιν… τὸ δεύτερον ἐφαίνετον ὡς μέσης ἡλικίας, νὰ ἔχῃ τὸ γένιν στρογγυλόν, τὴν ὄψιν ὡς τὸ χιόνι· καὶ τὸ ἀπ' ἐκείνου πρόσωπον γέροντος νὰ εἶδες ὄψιν, σύνθεσιν, σχῆμα καὶ κοπὴν καὶ πλάσιν ἀναλόγως.' *Livistros and Rodamni*, ed. P. Agapitos, *Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης: Κριτικὴ Ἔκδοση τῆς Διασκευῆς α* (Athens, 2006); trans. P. Agapitos, *The Tale of Livistros and Rodamne: A Byzantine Love Romance of the 13th Century* (Liverpool, 2021), 482-489.
[102] R. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance* (London, 2nd edn., 1996), 158; 'πᾶσαν φύσιν' *Livistros and Rodamni*, 934.
[103] 'ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας σὺν νέοις καὶ παρθένοις ἀφήλιξι καὶ βρεφυλίοις'. Doukas, *Hist.*, XXIX. 9.
[104] *Ibid.*, V. 1.
[105] Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 36.
[106] 'ἄνδρες, γυναῖκες, γέροντες ὁμοῦ τε καὶ παιδία'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 1258.

specified the stages of female ageing, and often expressed female life-stage by reference to marital status instead. Thus, when describing the sack of Constantinople in 1204, Niketas Choniates spoke of 'pious matrons and girls of marriageable age';[107] here, a category of girls below marriageable age may be implied. Nevertheless, some female authors spoke of infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, and old age in relation to female subjects. For example, Theodora Synadene, founder of the convent of Sure Hope in Constantinople in the late 13th century, mentioned three ages of life when outlining the qualities of the convent steward, whom she said must have passed through youth and maturity (τὸ νεάζον… καὶ ἀκμαῖον τῆς ἡλικίας) and already be elderly (γηραιάν).[108] Theodora Palaiologina, wife of Michael VIII (1259-1261), similarly distinguished between novices who came to her convent of Lips in infancy or childhood (βρεφόθεν… ἢ παιδόθεν), and between she who was still young (νεάζουσα) – specifically, below her 20th year – and she who was mature (πλήρης ἡμερῶν).[109] Texts written by women therefore convey the notion that women also passed through several distinct life-stages.

No model of the life-stages predominated in Byzantium. Schemes of the life-stages placed significance on the numbers three and seven according to the ancient paradigms,[110] and multiples of three, especially nine.[111] These numbers were assigned theological meaning as the ageing body came to be viewed as synchronised with God's universal order.[112] Concurrently, the Byzantines understood ageing as the result of bodily changes, whose proper timing ensured healthy development. What demarcated the life-stages from a Byzantine perspective is not always clear. This question will be examined further in following chapters, but my analysis thus far indicates that the Byzantines associated life-stage with the physical and behavioural traits exhibited by each age-group, which gave

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[107] 'γυναικῶν εὐλαβῶν καὶ κορίων ἐπιγάμων'. Niketas Choniates, *History*, ed. J. van Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia,* Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, Series Berolinensis 11. 1 (Berlin, 1975); trans. H. J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984), VIII. 574.
[108] Theodora Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, VII. 54. 1538.
[109] Theodora Palaiologina, *Typikon of Theodora Palaiologina for the Convent of Lips in Constantinople*, ed. Delehaye, *Deux Typica*, 106-136; trans. A-M. Talbot in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1512-1578, IX. 17-18. 1270-1271.
[110] Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 244-245.
[111] Friesenhahn, *Hellenistische Wortzahlenmystik*, 24-25, 86. See also n. 84, above.
[112] The symbolic value that each number acquired in the Christian tradition is outlined by H. J. Sorensen, 'Numerology (in the Bible)', in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 10, 2nd edn. (Detroit, MI, 2003): 476-478.

rise to literary and visual tropes such as the suckling infant or beardless youth. After childhood, these indicators of life-stage become gendered, so that men's age is defined by the presence, thickness, and colour of facial hair, whereas female age is frequently conflated with marital status. Even if the number of life-stages was defined variably, the concept of life-stage itself was strong. The Byzantines could draw on a rich linguistic and visual vocabulary to signify a subject's life-stage and often chose to do so, whether through social, biological, or chronological measures of age. Overall, the attention given to age in late Byzantine writing and iconography suggest that age was perceived as an important component of identity.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BEGINNING OF THE LIFE COURSE

At what point did life begin in Byzantine thought? When were infants considered fully 'human', with individual rights, characters, and destinies? What key transitions characterised infancy? The sources for infancy – more than any other life-stage – are unevenly distributed across multiple genres of evidence, whose representativeness of the views of the wider populace is difficult to discern. After birth, our range of available sources broadens. History, hagiography, and personal documents reveal how Life Course rituals surrounding birth and baptism constructed the new-born's social identity, while the treatment of infants in burial and visual culture reflect an effort to consolidate the infant's place in the family and Christian community. In part 3.1, I consider how the Byzantines defined the start of the Life Course, and how this definition was influenced by theories of human development and the nature of the soul – an important theme that will be returned to in chapter six's examination of the end of the Life Course. In part 3.2, I examine the roles of birth and baptism in crafting the infant's personal, familial, and cultural identity. Part 3.3 focuses on the transition from infancy to early childhood, identifying the social and biological milestones that signalled this shift.

(3.1) Beginning of the Life Course

It is important to begin by asking when the Byzantines placed the onset of life, not only to offer a logical point of departure for the present study, but also because this question relates to how living itself was conceptualised. For the Byzantines, life was not only a state of physical incarnation; it preceded birth and transcended death. Nevertheless, the physical embodiment, animation, and ensoulment of the human form in the womb was critical to defining when life began. In the following section, I argue that late Byzantine texts and visual culture reflect a society that afforded unborn infants a high degree of social value and protection, although perspectives on prenatal life varied

significantly according to genre and context. This variation compels us to consider whether unborn

infants were ultimately regarded as potential – rather than fully autonomous – human beings.

There is little doubt that life began in the womb from the perspectives of the Byzantine church

and law. However, exactly *when* life began after conception was a more complex issue, on which

medical, legal, and theological discourses overlapped significantly. Hippocrates' (460-370 BCE)

theory of the four bodily humours shaped the premodern medical tradition and influenced Byzantine

medicine especially through the works of Galen, who built on Hippocratic concepts.[1] The Hippocratic

influence on late Byzantine medical thought is reflected in the treatises of physicians such as John

Zacharias Aktouarios (c.1275-c.1330) and Demetrios Pepagomenos (15th century),[2] as well as 14th-

and 15th-century Greek medical manuscripts containing works ascribed to Hippocrates and Pseudo-

Hippocrates on human conception.[3] Hippocrates believed that the mixed 'seed' of both parents draws

breath through its mother as soon as it is formed *in utero*, and that an embryo gains human form by the

30th day of pregnancy if it is male or the 42nd if it is female (as male seeds are stronger and thicker).[4] A

male foetus becomes animate in the 3rd month and a female in the 4th, and during pregnancy it 'lives

from its mother in her uterus'.[5] The acquisition of sensory and motor functions was important to the

stages of embryonic growth, and these (like all) bodily functions were understood to be regulated by

the soul through its union with the human body, according to the Aristotelian doctrine embraced by

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[1] Bouras-Vallianatos, *Innovation in Byzantine Medicine*, 2-4. On the Galenic and Hippocratic influence on late Byzantine medical texts (some of which discuss embryology), see B. Zipser, 'Galen in Byzantine *Iatrosophia*', *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Galen*, eds. P. Bouras-Vallianatos and B. Zipser (Leiden, 2019), 111-123; Zipser, *John the Physician's Therepeutics*, 3, 11-12, 71-75 (a 14th-century medical treatise edited and translated by Zipser, which I discuss in chapter 2.2, 47-48, n. 96). On Galen's transmission of the Hippocratic theory of the four humours and its place the later Byzantine medical tradition, see J. Jouanna, 'The Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise *The Nature of Man*: The Theory of the Four Humours', in *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen*, ed. P. van der Eijk (Leiden, 2012), 335-359.

[2] Bouras-Vallianatos, *Innovation in Byzantine Medicine*, 23, 36-37, 40, 46-47, see also 111-112 (on Hippocratic texts in late Byzantium); A. M. Ieraci Bio, 'Nuovi Apporti sull'Ippocratismo a Bisanzio', in *Hippocrate et les Hippocratismes: Médecine, Religion, Société*, eds. J. Jouanna and M. Zink (Paris, 2014), 401-420, 406-411.

[3] Jouanna, 'Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise', 349-353; B. Zipser, 'Wellcomensis MS.MSL.14 as a Therapeutic Handbook', in *Exploring Greek Manuscripts in the Library at Wellcome Collection in London*, ed. P. Bouras-Vallianatos (New York, 2020), 54-65.

[4] 'ἡ γονή'. Hippocrates, *Nature of the Child*, ed. and trans. P. Potter, *Hippocrates*, vol. 10, Loeb Classical Library 520 (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 1 (30-31), 6-7 (42-45), 10 (55-56).

[5] 'ζῆ ἀπὸ τῆς μητρὸς ἐν τῇσι μήτρῃσι.' *Ibid.*, 10 (55-56), 16 (78-79).

Byzantine physicians.[6] Aristotle stated that an embryo begins to move on the 40th day of pregnancy for

males or the 90th for females, when its fleshy substance develops into distinct bodily parts.[7] The

impact of these ancient doctrines is reflected in Symeon of Thessaloniki's 15th-century liturgical

treatise on the funeral. In explaining why Orthodox Christians commemorate departed souls on the 3rd,

9th, and 40th days after death, Symeon wrote:

> Once the seed is deposited in the womb, the embryo is formed on the 3rd day; gains mass on
>
> the 9th day; and on the 40th day it gains life and is complete. And it is understood that in the 3rd
>
> month it moves, and in the 6th month it is a complete baby, and in the 9th month it is born.[8]

For Symeon, the foetus does not assume full physical form until the 6th month of pregnancy,

but it is alive and complete by the 40th day. The embryo first gains mass and then moves, according to

ancient theories of embryonic development. However, whereas ancient physicians upheld the idea of

natural male superiority by asserting that male embryos gained form and animation before females,

Symeon made no gender distinctions in discerning when a foetus acquires these attributes. As

Troianos explains, over the Byzantine period collective conscience came to discern that an embryo

gained human form by the 40th day of pregnancy regardless of sex, probably due to the importance of

the number 40 in the ancient philosophy of numbers, which[9] – as noted in chapter two – influenced

Byzantine ideas of the stages of human growth. The beginning of the Life Course was therefore

marked by an absence of gender discrepancy.

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[6] S. J. Baloyannis, 'Neurosciences in Byzantine Era', *Journal of Neurology and Stroke* 8. 4 (2018): 204-206, 204; P. Bouras-Vallianatos, 'Theories on Pneuma in the Work of the Late Byzantine Physician John Zacharias Aktouarios', in *The Concept of Pneuma After Aristotle*, eds. S Coughlin, D. Leith, and O. Lewis (Berlin, 2020), 365-399, esp. 373-374, 382-383.

[7] Aristotle, *History of Animals*, ed. and trans. D. M. Balme, books 7-10, Loeb Classical Library 439 (Cambridge, MA, 1991), IX. 3. Aristotle also writes that a male foetus developed on the superior right side of the womb, and a female on the inferior left.

[8] 'καταβληθέντος τοῦ σπέρματος ἐν τῇ μήτρᾳ, μορφοῦται τὸ βρέφος ἐν τῇ τρίτῃ· τῇ ἐνάτῃ δὲ πήγνυται, καὶ τῇ τεσσαρακοστῇ ζωοῦται καὶ τελειοῦται. Ἔστι δ' ἐννοεῖν, ὅτι καὶ τῷ τρίτῳ μηνὶ σκιρτᾷ· καὶ τῷ ἕκτῳ τέλειόν ἐστι βρέφος, καὶ τῷ ἐννάτῳ τίκτεται.' Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Ordinae Sepulturae*, 689C-690D.

[9] S. Troianos, 'The Embryo in Byzantine Canon Law', *Biopolitics* 3 (1991). Accessed online (30/07/2020): https://bipolitics.gr/biowp/publications/proceedings/. The notion that the embryo gained human form by the 40th day in the womb, without gender discrepancy, is found in Leo VI the Wise (r.886-912), *Novels*, eds. A. Dain and P. Noialles, *Les Novelles de Léon VI le Sage* (Paris: 1944), 17. 59-63.

However, the matter of how and when the soul – that is, the rational soul that philosophers believed human beings to possess – entered the embryo remained contested throughout Byzantine history.[10] In his *Answers* to Gabriel, archbishop of Pentapolis, Symeon of Thessaloniki explained that humans are formed of dual parts: the body and soul. Following Hippocrates, he stated that the infant *in utero* breathes through its mother as part of her body. It comes to thought (ἡ ἔννοια) gradually later on, but the rational soul is inside the sperm from the beginning, as Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-395) believed, rather than pre-existing or emerging later, as the pagans thought.[11] Thus, the infant's soul exists from conception. Contemporary ecclesiasts, including Gennadios II Scholarios and Theophanes of Medeia, held a different view. They argued that God places the soul in the infant later after its body is formed (on the 40th day of pregnancy according to Scholarios), whilst noting that there was no consensus on this matter.[12] The embryo first lives in a vegetative state of being, then later acquires the animalistic qualities of movement and sensation, then gains a human soul when the body forms.[13]

It is thus apparent that although Byzantine churchmen held different views about when the body and soul were united, they all located the beginning of human life in the womb. Nevertheless, the infant obtains 'humanness' by degrees, as it develops the faculties of breathing, moving, sensing, and thought over time. For Symeon, milestones in the infant's growth occur in multiples of three[14] – on the 3rd and 9th days and the 3rd, 6th, and 9th months of gestation – and also after birth. The new-born comes to its senses in the 3rd month and grows little by little, undergoing changes each year and each triad of years, and especially when the 3rd triad begins, that is the 7th year, when its growth is complete.[15]

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[10] Troianos, 'Embryo'. The church adopted Aristotle's view that a foetus transitions from a 'vegetative' to 'sensitive' state of being when it becomes animate, and later gains the 'logical' or 'rational' soul that is intrinsic to human beings. See J. Wilderbung, 'Embryology', in *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. G. L. Irby, vol. 1 (Chichester, 2016), 418-432, 429-430.

[11] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *Responsa ad Gabrielem Pentapolitanum*, *PG* 155, 829C-952D, 840A-B.

[12] H-M. Congourdeau, 'Grégoire de Nysse en Accusation: Un Dossier du XVe Siècle sur l'Origine de l'Âme', *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002): 135-146, 138-139.

[13] Congourdeau, 'Un Dossier du XVe Siècle', 138. The anonymous author of the *Hermippos*, a 14th-century astrological treatise, also upheld the embryo's animalistic status. See Congourdeau, 'La Postérité Byzantine de l'Ad Gaurum', in *L'embryon: Formation et Animation. Antiquité Grecque et Latine, Traditions Hébraïque, Chrétienne et Islamique*, eds. L. Brisson, M-H. Congourdeau, and J-L. Solère (Vrin 2008), 185-198, 194-195.

[14] On the significance of the number three in medieval schemes of the ages of life, see chapter 2.2.

[15] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Ordine Supulturae*, 689D-692A.

Symeon couched this breakdown in theological terms. The three triads of human growth mirror the nine angelic orders, which are grouped into triads representing the Trinity. The human soul is only received by the angels after death (thereby obtaining the 3rd triad), which is why it is commemorated on the 9th day.[16] This triadic division of the time from conception to the 7th year of life is worth bearing in mind as our analysis progresses towards early childhood. Whether Byzantines outside the educated social milieu of Symeon placed value on these numerical divisions or not, it will be seen that the 3rd and 7th years of life marked critical points in the development of children's social and legal status in Byzantium and had a broader significance in perceptions of the early Life Course.

Prenatal infants had a complex status from the perspective of Byzantine law.[17] The 14th-century *Alphabetical Collection* of Matthew Blastares, a Thessalonian hieromonk, is useful for tracing how this perspective developed over time. As the clergy's role in judicial affairs grew over the late Byzantine period, Blastares' legal encyclopaedia aimed to instruct legislators on the practical application of both canon and secular law.[18] The canons that Blastares deemed relevant for citation on the matter of abortion suggest that, in theory, practitioners were supposed to acknowledge an unborn life as equally valid to that of a postnatal child. He began with canon 91 of the Council in Trullo (692), which 'orders those women who either take or furnish drugs in order to miscarry, to suffer the penalties of murder.'[19] Whereas canon law stressed the embryo's status as a human life, secular law adopted the Roman legal definition of abortion, which was perceived not as murder, but as a crime enacted by a woman against her husband, whom she deprived of potential heirs by terminating her pregnancy.[20] Thus, the *Hexabiblos*, a 14th-century secular law-code of the jurist Constantine

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[16] *Ibid.*, 692B.

[17] For an overview of Byzantine laws on abortion, see H-M. Congourdeau, 'Un Procès d'Avortement à Constantinople au 14e Siècle', *REB* 40. 1 (1982): 103-115; E. Poulakou-Rebelakou, J. Lascaratos and S.G. Marketos, 'Abortions in Byzantine Times (325-1453 AD)', *Vesalius* 2. 1 (1996): 19-25, 21.

[18] P. D. Viscuso, *Sexuality, Marriage and Celibacy in Byzantine Law: Selections from a Fourteenth-Century Encyclopaedia of Canon Law and Theology, the Alphabetical Collection of Matthew Blastares* (Brookline, MA, 2008), 2-3.

[19] 'φόνου δίκας ὑπέχειν κελεύει, ὅσαι τῶν γυναικῶν ἢ δέχονται, ἢ ἄλλαις ὀρέγουσι πρὸς τὸ ἀμβλῶσαι φάρμακα.' Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 28 (199/140).

[20] Congourdeau, 'Avortement', 109-110.

Harmenopoulos, includes one law on abortion from the *Novels* of Leo VI (r.886-912), which allowed a husband to divorce a wife who purposefully aborted his seed.[21]

Although schools of medical and religious thought asserted that the unborn infant gained human qualities gradually, canon law on abortion did not theoretically differentiate between the stages of foetal development. Blastares cited Basil the Great's (330-379) canon 2:

> We do not hold that there is a difference whether that which is expelled is formed or unformed... we accuse the woman who does this of murder, because of the destruction of the embryo and of she who has expelled it, for sometimes it happens that she dies along with the embryo. At any rate, the seed that is sown in the mother is first changed into blood, then becomes formless flesh, and then is fully shaped into limbs and parts.[22]

Here, Basil refers to a passage of Exodus 21:22-25 in the *Septuagint*, which states that an embryo's destruction only amounts to murder if the foetus emerges from the womb 'fully formed'.[23] For Basil, the embryo's ontological status is irrelevant; abortion is defined as murder because of the intention of the woman who aborts and the threat posed to her own life.[24] Despite this, Blastares referred to the stages of pregnancy when he explained the contradictory nature of Basil's canons 2 and 8, which accuse women who abort of voluntary murder but prescribe them a 10-year penance – the penalty for involuntary murder. Blastares explained the contradiction by the fact that those women abort not out of vicious intention, but 'because of shame or ignoble fear' of a parent, master, or someone else, or 'on account of their not yet having become pregnant by appearance'.[25] Here,

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[21] Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, IV. 15. 6; see also Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 28 (199-200/141).

[22] 'Διαφοράν, φησιν, ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἔχομεν, εἴτε μεμορφωμένα, εἴτ' οὖν ἀμόρφωτά εἰσι τὰ ἀποβαλλόμενα… φόνου κρίνομεν τὴν τοῦτο ποιήσασαν, διά τε τὴν τοῦ ἐμβρύου φθορὰν καὶ αὐτῆς δὲ τῆς ἀποβεβληκυίας· ἐπισυμβαίνει γὰρ ἔσθ' ὅτε τῷ ἐμβρύῳ καὶ ταύτην συμφθείρεσθαι· τὸ γοῦν σπέρμα τῇ μήτρᾳ καταβαλλόμενον, πρότερον μὲν ἐξαιματοῦται, εἶτα εἰς ἀμόρφωτον πηλόμενον, πρότερον μὲν ἐξαιματοῦται, εἶτα εἰς ἀμόρφωτον πήγνυται σάρκα, εἶθ' οὕτως ἐξεικονίζεται καὶ διατυποῦται εἰς μέλη καὶ μόρια.' Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection* Γ. 28 (199-200/140-141).

[23] 'ἐξεικονισμένον.' *Septuagint*, trans. A. Pietersma and B. G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford, 2007).

[24] Z. Mistry, *Abortion in the Early Middle Ages, c. 500-900* (York, 2017), 51-52.

[25] 'δι' αἰσχύνην ἢ φόβον ἀγενῆ… παρὰ τὸ μήπω γεγονέναι τὸ κυοφορούμενον ἐν φύσει'. Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 28 (200/141).

Blastares highlighted the observable presence of the infant in its mother's body as a condition that determines how seriously abortion should be understood as a crime. The *Hexabiblos* also places high value on the life of a developed foetus, stating that 'anyone who buries a pregnant woman before the offspring is delivered from her shall be deemed to be guilty of murder' – the same judgement placed on people who commit infanticide by suffocation, starvation, abandonment, or exposure.[26]

Essentially, both legal and religious doctrine supported the notion that life preceded birth. Nevertheless, the onset of life was connected to the outward performance of living, whether by the physicality of the pregnant mother's body, the embodiment of the human form *in utero*, or the actions of breathing, moving, and sensing that the infant acquired gradually in and beyond the womb. The unborn child may have been considered as a living, ensouled being from conception or shortly after in theory, but in practice its 'humanness' rested on its manifestation of human corporeal attributes.

The one surviving record of a trial involving abortion from Byzantium further indicates the ideological value placed on prenatal life. The case came before the patriarchal court in Constantinople as part of an inquiry into magical practices in May 1370. It concerned a hieromonk named Joseph from the Hodegetria monastery, who conceived with a nun from the Saint-Andrew-in-Krisi convent and subsequently purchased an abortive drink to destroy the embryo. The nun's fate is unrecorded, but the physician who provided the abortifacient was exiled and Joseph was stripped of his priesthood.[27] It is hard to determine how the court defined Joseph's transgression, which involved engaging in sorcery and breaking monastic vows of celibacy as well as purchasing abortive drugs. Congourdeau points out that Joseph would have been liable to deposition whether he was tried as a fornicating cleric or a murderer, but his response to the court may reflect more widespread attitudes towards abortion.[28] After being accused, Joseph made an emotional plea of guilt, calling himself 'the murderer of this

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[26] 'Ὁ θάπτων ἔγκουν πρὶν ἢ τὸ βρέφος δι' ἀνατομῆς ἐκβληθῇ, φονεύειν δοκεῖ.' Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, VI. 6. 22, 13.
[27] *MM* I, no. 292 (541-550); *Regestes*, N. 2574.
[28] Congourdeau, 'Avortement', 112-113.

embryo'.[29] Whatever the basis of Joseph's trial, his self-perception as a murderer implies that social morality afforded the prenatal life-stage ontological validity.

A painting of sinners condemned to Hell in the Last Judgement at the church of St. John in the Cretan village of Agios Vasilios (dated 1291) reinforces the view that collective morality aimed to protect the status of the unborn. Here, there appears a female sinner labelled 'she who drinks a herbal potion so as not to give birth', who dangles from hooks with her legs spread (fig. 3.1).[30] As Gerstel explains, she represents a woman who has aborted her embryo, thus reflecting the canonical ban on abortion and the importance attached to childbearing by Byzantine society.[31] Hell scenes in late Byzantine churches depict sinners being punished for transgressions related to gender roles and rural occupations, and their decoration was often sponsored by families or sometimes entire villages.[32] They therefore reflect and reinforce the social values of the communities who produced them, many of whom would have been non-literate.[33] Unlike medical, legal, or religious texts, these images were accessible to all levels of society, and may better reflect 'real' cultural attitudes towards infancy. The types of female sinners depicted in these scenes, including she who abandons or refuses to nurse her children (fig. 3.15), illustrate the value assigned to women's roles as mothers by rural communities.[34] While the inclusion of the woman who aborts in the Last Judgement at St. John in Agios Vasilios *may* suggest that the patrons who sponsored the painting valued prenatal life, it is perhaps more likely that the image was designed to promote values about the regulation of female bodies and sexual conduct amongst the local community.

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[29] 'τοῦ ἐμβρύου ἐκείνου φονεὺς'. *MM* I, no. 292, 549.

[30] Fig. 3.1. Sinner who drank an abortifacient, church of St John, Agios Vasilios, Crete, 13th century. After Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes*, 90, fig. 66, see also 87-88 (for commentary). The Greek inscription (Η ΠΙΟΥCΑ ΒΟΤΑΝΟΝ ΠΡΟС ΤΟ ΜΗ ΠΕΔΟΠΟΙΗCΕΙ) is reproduced in I. Spatharakis, *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete* (Leiden, 2001), 15.

[31] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 87-88.

[32] See examples in Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 92-93, figs. 66-67. The Church of St John in Agios Vasilios, Crete, was sponsored by one Nicholas Tziakontopulos and a nun: Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings*, 15.

[33] S. Gerstel, 'The Sins of the Farmer: Illustrating Village Life, and Death, in Byzantium', in *Word, Image, Number: Communication in the Middle Ages*, eds. J. J. Contreni and S. Casciani (Florence, 2002), 205-217.

[34] Female sinner, 'she who refuses to nurse', Church of St Paraskeve, Kitiros, Crete, 14th century. See Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 93, fig. 68. For other images of female sinners as 'bad mothers', see Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 91-92; Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 88-94, figs. 63-67; Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings*, 30.

The condemnation of infant abandonment, neglect, and abortion in church iconography may be taken as an indication that these practices were common enough to require repeated address. For Andrea and Judith Stylianou, writing on Cypriot churches, the sinners in Last Judgement scenes reflect 'common bad habits' that the clergy tried to eliminate through visual communication.[35] The censure of these acts has parallels in images of sinners created by the Frankish and Italian-speaking cultures that ruled Crete and Cyprus in the late Byzantine period, which reveal a similar concern with regulating gendered social conduct.[36] Abortion is condemned as early as the late 12th century in an encyclopaedic handbook produced for young novices at a nunnery in Alsace, while from the late 13th century Italian painters gave prominence to gendered sexual offences and sins such as infanticide in the Last Judgement.[37] In a similar vein, the fact that the reforming patriarch Athanasios I (1289-1293/1303-1309) prohibited abortion in several of his encyclicals may reflect the rising value being placed on prenatal life by Byzantine society, *or* repeated attempts to curb what had become a rather common social practice.[38] The misconducts condemned in didactic texts and images likely reflect both realities. Collective morality denounced abortion and infanticide, yet these acts offered a recourse to women without the financial or practical support to raise children, or people in illicit relationships hoping to escape societal condemnation, such as the aforementioned nun and monk Joseph.[39]

Pregnancy was not a common subject of Byzantine iconography. However, some icons of the Virgin allude to her pregnancy and appear to convey the idea of a life-stage preceding birth. One type,

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[35] A. and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus* (Stourbridge, 1964), 62.

[36] On the relationship between Greek Orthodox and western depictions of Hell in medieval Cyprus, see A. Weyl-Carr, 'Hell in the 'Sweet Land' Hell's Place in the Last Judgements of Byzantine and Medieval Cyprus', in *Hell in the Byzantine World*, 346-411.

[37] R. Duits, 'Hell from West to East: Western Resonances in Cretan Wall Painting', in *Hell in the Byzantine World*, 191-234, 231-233, figs. 4.7, 4.12, 4.19 (the images are found in Herrad of Hohenbourg's *Hortus Deliciarum*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, fol. 253v; a fresco by Giotto di Bondone from 1305-1306, in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua; an early 15th-century fresco by Taddeo di Bartolo in San Gimignano, Collegiata). See also I. Grötecke, 'Representing the Last Judgement: Social Hierarchy, Gender, and Sin', *The Medieval History Journal* 1. 2 (1998): 233-260, esp. 255-256.

[38] *Regestes*, Ns. 1747, 1749, 1762, 1779.

[39] On the portrayal of women who abort in Byzantine law and literature, see my recent chapter: S. Novasio, 'Gendering Crime in Byzantium: Abortion, Infanticide, and Female Violence', in *Women and Violence in the late Medieval Mediterranean (ca.1100-1500)*, eds. L. L. Zanetti Domingues, L. Caravaggi, and G. M. Paoletti (Oxon, 2022).

the *Blachernitissa*, portrays the Virgin with her hands raised in the *orans* gesture and the child Christ in a medallion on her chest in reference to her pregnancy. A 13th-century example of this formula comes from St Catherine's monastery in Sinai (fig. 3.2).[40] The Virgin is flanked by Moses and Patriarch Eustathios II of Jerusalem, while Christ, on her bust, bears childish features; he is round-faced, wide-eyed, and has protruding ears, a visual marker of male childhood.[41] This iconographic type – which developed in the middle Byzantine period[42] – by the 13th century was associated with the term *episkepsis* ('visitation'/'protection'). It appeared on seals, where it invoked the metaphor of the Theotokos as the unbroken seal, whose virginal body, falling pregnant, was impressed by the Holy Spirit.[43] That the Virgin's pregnancy is central to this icon's meaning is further indicated by its influence on images of the Annunciation that depict the child Christ in his mother's upper torso.[44] Davies found that these 'foetal icons', which emerged by the 12th century, were paralleled by an increasing prominence of unborn infants in histories and hagiographies, and argued that they reflect the Byzantines' belief that unborn infants already had personal characteristics.[45]

Nevertheless, these images served to communicate the dual human and divine natures of Christ, as evidenced by the Theotokos' virginal childbirth. Whereas pre-iconoclastic artisans achieved this purpose by accentuating the physical signs of the Virgin's pregnancy, such as an enlarged belly and breasts, the aforementioned icons downplay the physicality of human gestation.[46] The shape of the medallion enclosing Christ recalls the womb visually, but its placement on the Theotokos' chest, rather than her belly, discourages the viewer from making a full mental connection between the two. Moreover, as Hennessy points out, these icons depict Christ as a child, not an infant.[47] They are

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[40] Fig. 3.2. Virgin Blachernititissa flanked by Moses and the Patriarch of Jerusalem Euthymios, tempera on wood, St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, c. 1224. After K. A. Manafis, *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of St Catherine* (Athens, 1990), 175, fig. 48, see also 117, fig. 61.
[41] Hennessy, *Images*, 203.
[42] M. Vassilaki, *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan, 2000), 140.
[43] B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006), 146-147.
[44] *Ibid.*, 153-154, figs. 102-104.
[45] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 43-46, figs. 1. 7-8.
[46] H. Maguire, 'Body, Clothing, Metaphor: The Virgin in Early Byzantine Art', in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium, Texts and Images*, eds. L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (Farnham, 2011), 39-52, 39-40.
[47] Hennessy, *Images*, 203.

images of prenatal life, but specifically that of Christ, whose conception was defined by its extraordinary foundations.

A more obvious depiction of pregnancy is found in a late 14th-century Visitation scene from the church of Timios Stavros in the village of Pelendri, Cyprus. Here, Christ and John the Baptist are depicted as naked infants in the womb (fig. 3.3), correctly positioned in their mother's bellies so as to convey a visual impression of pregnancy.[48] The painting – which visualises the gospel account of John leaping in Elizabeth's womb to acknowledge Christ's conception[49] – affords the unborn infants a sense of agency through gesture; Christ raises a blessing hand while John bends towards him to receive it. The image thus communicates the idea that the characters and destinies of the prenatal infants have already been formed. Yet, such a rendering of the Visitation is unusual in Byzantine monumental painting.[50] After iconoclasm, the Virgin's and Elizabeth's pregnancies were often concealed by their clothing.[51] Perhaps the Visitation at Timios Stavros, which features an extensive cycle of the Virgin's life, held special meaning for the church's patrons, whose portraits were painted in the church.[52] As John the Baptist, who was miraculously conceived by Elizabeth during her old age, was believed to be able to grant fertility and protection in pregnancy, one wonders whether personal piety – perhaps thanks for a recent pregnancy or hope for a new one – influenced this rendering of the Visitation.[53]

Prophetic events at the time of conception, pregnancy, and birth are common in middle Byzantine hagiography,[54] and were also used by some late Byzantine writers to indicate their saints' holy nature. Kokkinos reported that God protected the mother of Isidore I (patriarch 1347-1350), son

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[48] Fig. 3.3. The Visitation, Church of Timios Stavros, Pelendri, Cyprus, late 14th century. Accessed online (22/09/2019): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visitation_Pelendri.jpg. Cf. Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 32-33, fig. 17; A. and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus: Treasures of Byzantine Art* (Athens, 1985), 228, fig. 132.

[49] Luke 1:40-42; Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 46.

[50] A. and J. Stylianou, *Treasures of Byzantine Art*, 228; Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 32.

[51] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 45.

[52] The church interior is described by A. and J. Stylianou, *Painted Churches*, 101-103, who count the Visitation scene amongst the church's 15th-century paintings. See also J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'Enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire Byzantin et en Occident* (Brussels, 1992), figs. 27-28.

[53] On John the Baptist, see B. Pitarakis, 'Female Piety in Context: Understanding Developments in Private Devotional Practices', in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2005), 153-166, 159-160.

[54] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 27-29, 36, 40.

of a family of well-to-do clerics in Thessaloniki, during pregnancy and after her son's birth.[55] Saint Sabas the Younger (c.1283-1348), the son of a prosperous military family, was (we are told) chosen by God in the womb.[56] Both men also exhibited their saintly status by predicting other children's births. Isidore told Empress Helena Kantakouzene, who was 3 months pregnant with her first son Andronikos IV, that she would safely give birth to a healthy boy who would ascend to the throne.[57] Sabas appeared to the scribe who copied his *vita* in a dream and informed him that he would have a son, who was later given Sabas' baptismal name: Stephanos.[58] The saint's predestination for sanctity from the womb and the ability to predict other children's births – including imperial births – are both tropes found in earlier Byzantine hagiography.[59]

The biblical topos of miraculous conception appears in other *vitae*. In his *Life* of Maximos the Hutburner, who was born (1270-1285) to wealthy parents in the town of Lampsakos in Asia Minor, Theophanes reported that the saint's mother struggled to conceive and prayed tearfully for a male child 'just as Hannah did with Samuel'.[60] After giving birth, she devoted her son to the church in thanks to God, and Maximos*,* who at baptism 'was called Manuel, showed that he was really the new Samuel', deemed as blessed and beloved by everyone though he was still a child.[61] In these accounts, writers often compared saints and their mothers to biblical women and infants who were conceived by divine intervention, including Hannah and Samuel, to whom Saint Makarios Makres (c.1382/3-1431)

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[55] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 10 (Isidore's parentage is outlined in II. 32-35, III. 1-3).
[56] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα τοῦ νέου*, VI. 2-3 (the family's military rank is mentioned in V. 52-55). See also Theoktistos, *Life of Athanasios*, II. 11-15 (3).
[57] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, LXVI.
[58] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, LXXXIV. 60-66
[59] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 41-42; B. Caseau, 'Childhood in Byzantine Saints' Lives', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 127-166, 143-146.
[60] 'καθώσπερ ἡ Ἄννα τὸν Σαμουήλ'. Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, 2. 1. Makarios Makres also mentions the barrenness of Maximos' parents in his *Life of Maximos*, ed. and trans. S. Kapetanaki, *An Annotated Critical Edition of Makarios Makres* (PhD thesis, University of London, 2001), IV. 5-10.
[61] 'τὸν νέον Σαμουὴλ ὁ λεγόμενος Μανουὴλ ἐνδεικνύμενος ἦν ὅλως'. Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, 2. 1.

and his mother were also compared.[62] Sarah and Abraham, who offered their young son Isaac to God, embody another ideal family to whom Saint Isidore and his parents were likened.[63]

In his own *Life* of Maximos the Hutburner, Makarios Makres explained the rhetorical function of miraculous births accounts, through which the saint may 'first hint' at his monastic inclination:[64] 'having obtained such a brilliant and extraordinary start in life, he [Maximos] did not at all dishonour the earlier with his later life, nor did he choose a life which did not accord with such a birth', but proved himself to be a God-sent gift from childhood.[65] It is noteworthy that Maximos' parents pray specifically for a son in both *vitae*. When late Byzantine saints were conceived by miraculous design, prophesised births, or cured women of infertility, these cases also involved male children.[66] Authors therefore implied that male infants' births were especially desirable and worthy of report.

Miraculous conceptions, pregnancies, and births thus remained an important element of the late Byzantine saintly Life Course. As biblical topoi, they provided recognisable markers of sanctity, but also rested on the notion that infants developed unique characters and destinies in the womb. Yet, there is a tendency in late Byzantine hagiography to omit episodes from infancy altogether. This omission may partly reflect changing attitudes towards the biographical construction of infancy. Angelov notes that, in the 13th century, miraculous omens disappeared from accounts of imperial childhood and came to be viewed with suspicion; instead, one finds omens of a historical nature.[67] Nikephoros Blemmydes (c.1197-1272) expressed such a pessimistic attitude towards prophetic infancies in his *Autobiography*, a text otherwise replete with hagiographical topoi. For Blemmydes,

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[62] *Life of Makarios*, XI. 16-17. For other examples of this topos in Byzantine hagiography, see Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 36-37; Caseau, 'Childhood in Saints' Lives', 143-144; H-M. Congourdeau, 'Les Variations du Désir d'Enfant à Byzance', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 35-63, 38.

[63] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, II. 37-43. A similar comparison appears in Makarios Chrysokephalos' *Life of Meletios of Galesion*, ed. Th. N. Simopulos, *Μελέτιος ὁ Γαλησιώτης (1230-1307), ὁ Ἄγνωστος, Θεολόγος, Ὅσιος, Ὁμολογητής, Λόγιος, Συγγραφεύς* (Athens, 1978), 77-92, 78.

[64] 'πρῶτον… αἰνίξηται'. Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*, ed. and trans. S. Kapetanaki, *An Annotated Critical Edition of Makarios Makres* (PhD thesis, University of London, 2001), V. 17-18.

[65] 'λαμπρῶν καὶ ὑπερφυῶν τῶν τοῦ βίου τυχὸν προοιμίων, οὔμενουν κατήσχυνε τὰ πρότερα τοῖς δευτέροις, οὐδὲ ζωὴν εἵλετο, μὴ συμβαίνουσαν τοιαύτῃ γεννήσει.' *Ibid.*, V. 21-23.

[66] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, LXXXIV. 60-66; *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, XXXIII. 20-32; *Life of Makarios*, XI. 13-18.

[67] Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 101.

tales of miraculous events in infancy are merely petty and pride-bolstering unless the child in question proves the authenticity of these symbols 'when he reaches adult age and gains full rational powers' by his deeds.[68] Examples included tales of mothers who had visions of divine beings replacing their new-borns' swaddling clothes with rich garments, of infants who refused to nurse from any woman but their mother or rejected foul language from the time their teeth began to grow, or if 'as a little boy' the subject 're-enacts at home and imitates the gestures of the church cantors and ministers'.[69]

As this last motif appears in the *Life* of Isidore, who, according to Kokkinos, used to mimic priests singing and swinging their censers at church as a child, clearly writers continued to assign meaning to prophetic occurrences in infancy.[70] Indeed, Blemmydes viewed such occurrences as signs of God's affection, but only saw fit to honour those who proved themselves worthy of that affection in later life.[71] If writers like Blemmydes came to regard prophetic infancies more as symbolisms invented by biographers to foreshadow their subject's adult destiny, rather than effective predictors of sanctity, this may partly explain why early childhood accounts appear diminished in late Byzantine biographies.

Palaiologan-era historians also used prophetic events to presage emperors' historic deeds. In an anecdote foreshadowing Michael VIII Palaiologos' reconquest of Constantinople, Pachymeres described how the baby Michael would cry in his cradle and refuse to be calmed by his sister Eulogia's lullabies until she sang 'the canticle about the City', foretelling how the emperor would courageously re-enter Constantinople through the Golden Gate.[72] Writers also reversed the literary device of miraculous conception to attach negative prophetic meaning to the circumstances of a child's birth. Thus, Kantakouzenos wrote that Michael Katharos, an illegitimate son of the *porphyrogennetos* Constantine Palaiologos (1278/81-1334/5) and an unnamed concubine, 'drew his traits of character from a vulgar and obscure mother... he was not worthy of anything' but lacked the intellect, education,

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[68] 'τῆς ἡλικίας ἐπιδιδούσης, καὶ τῆς διανοίας κραταιουμένης'. Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, II. II. 3.
[69] 'καὶ τὰ τῶν ὑμνηπόλων καὶ θυηπόλων οἴκοι καθυποκρινόμενον τὸ μειράκιον καὶ μιμούμενον'. *Ibid*., II. II. 3-4.
[70] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 10-17.
[71] Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, II. III. 5.
[72] 'τὸ περὶ τὴν πόλιν'. Pachymeres, *Chron*., II. 23 (181).

military skill, and qualities that should adorn noble youths.[73] These accounts reinforce the belief that an individual's character is determined by the nature of her/his parents' union.

My analysis thus far suggests that prenatal infants were assigned a somewhat ambiguous social status by the Byzantines. Ideologically speaking, the beginning of human life was located in the womb, yet in certain contexts the perceived humanity of young infants rested on their developmental state. This conclusion is reinforced by burial evidence. Some late Byzantine graves suggest that the treatment of prenatal infants in burial was not dissimilar from that of post-natal children. This is significant because treatment of the dead in burial was supposed to reflect the deceased's social status in life.[74] The discovery of foetal remains in the pelvis of a young woman in a cemetery at Frankish Corinth provides one example of a prenatal infant buried with its mother, who both evidently died in childbirth.[75] The habit of burying children with their mothers was common in Byzantium and stressed the mother-child bond.[76] The willingness to bury a prenatal infant with its mother may be related to the fact that Byzantine – unlike western – theologians did not perceived unbaptised infants to carry the guilt of original sin.[77] By contrast, western medieval burial customs dictated that women who died whilst pregnant should be buried only in the churchyard, and only after the foetus – which, being unbaptised, was tainted by original sin and thus contaminated its mother's body – was removed.[78]

However, excavations at the Athenian Agora, mostly dating to the end of the middle Byzantine period, reflect an inverse situation. Here, the remains of a new-born infant and late-term foetus were buried in pitchers beneath house floors, an action that the excavators connect to fears

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[73] 'εἷλκε μὲν καὶ τὰς τοῦ γένους πηγὰς ἐκ φαύλης καὶ ἀσήμου μητρὸς, ἥν… ἄξιος οὐδενός'. John VI Kantakouzenos, *History*, partial trans. R. Trone, *The History of Kantakouzenos: Text, Translation and Commentary* (PhD thesis, Catholic University of America, 1979), I. 14. 23-24 (112-113).

[74] Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 33, 61.

[75] L. M. Synder and C. K. Williams, 'Frankish Corinth: 1996', *Hesperia* 66, 1 (1997): 7-47, 22; Barnes, 'The Dead', 438.

[76] On the practice of burying infants with their mothers, see Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 76-77; N. G. Laskaris, *Monuments Funéraires Paléochrétiens Et Byzantins De Grèce* (Athens, 2000), 280-282.

[77] Baun, 'Fate of Babies', 121.

[78] Shahar, *Childhood*, 51. Local communities did not always follow these rules, as explained by Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 209-210.

about the severe penalties imposed on parents whose children died unbaptised.[79] However, abortion or infanticide could also explain the desire to bury an infant covertly. It is unclear whether this type of burial of a preterm or neonatal infant was a local custom in this period, but since the burial of infants (including foetuses) in vessels is attested from the Iron Age in Attica[80] (and into the Byzantine era in Corinthia)[81] the form – if not the location – of the Byzantine infant burials at the Athenian Agora mirrors a prior social practice. Nevertheless, the domestic location of the burials may imply a hasty interment, which hardly reflects the treatment of prenatal and neonatal infants as full members of society. The scarcity of prenatal infants' remains makes it hard to determine how far burials reflect real social attitudes towards the unborn. Yet, the few surviving examples suggest that, in burial, prenatal infants were afforded a status similar to children and adults in some instances, but not others.

Skeletal remains from late Byzantine cemeteries also attest to high infant mortality rates. Infant mortality is cited at over 40% for Frankish Corinth;[82] comparatively, it is estimated that 75% of children would survive childhood in Ottoman-era Corinth.[83] Mortality rates for infants aged 0-2 years were 42.9% at Pergamon and 58.9% at Ephesos.[84] At late Byzantine Kyme, 48% of the dead were infants aged 12 months or younger, and at 14th- to 15th-century Panakton, central Greece, 41% of the dead were children.[85] These figures from geographically disparate sites mostly fall at the higher end of the estimated infant mortality range of 30-50% for contemporary western Europe.[86] They correlate

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[79] J. M. Camp, 'Excavations at the Athenian Agora: 2002-2007', *Hesperia* 76, 4 (2007): 627-663, 629, 646. On the punishment of parents who did not baptise their infants, see J. Baun, 'The Fate of Babies Dying Before Baptism in Byzantium', *Studies in Church History* 31 (1994): 115-125, 120.

[80] J. K. Papadopoulos and E. L. Smithson, *The Athenian Agora: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, vol. XXXVI, *The Early Iron Age: The Cemeteries* (Princeton, 2017), 597-602.

[81] J. L. Rife, *Isthmia IX: The Roman and Byzantine Graves and Human Remains* (Princeton, 2012), 180, ns. 95-96 (with bibliography), 207, 209, 461.

[82] Barnes, 'The Dead', 441

[83] G. D. R. Sanders, 'Introduction. Corinth and the Archaeology of the Poor', in *Ottoman Corinthia*, ed. S. M. T. Shariat-Panahi (Athens, 2015), 5-20.

[84] Schultz Schmidt-Schultz, 'Health and Disease', 296-297, 298-299.

[85] W-R. Teegen, 'Pergamon – Kyme – Priene: Health and Disease from the Roman to the Late Byzantine Period in Different Locations of Asia Minor', in *Life and Death*, 250-267, 261; Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 76.

[86] Barnes, 'The Dead', 241; Orme, *Medieval Children*, 64 (estimates about ¼ of English children did not survive their first year); D. Youngs, *The Life-Cycle in Western Europe, c. 1300-1500* (Manchester, 2006), 24-25 (infant mortality of 20-30% based on textual evidence or 50% on archaeological evidence for western Europe).

with Laiou's estimate, based on tax registers, that 50% of children amongst the 14th-century

Macedonian peasanty would have died by their 5th year, suggesting widespread high mortality.[87]

Although infant mortality varied according to the overall health of local populations, diachronic

bioarchaeological studies suggest that – in some parts of the eastern Mediterranean – the social climate

of the later Byzantine period posed greater threats to the health of infants and mothers compared with

earlier periods.[88] For example, poor health in later medieval Anatolia has been linked to the Seljuk

invasions, which would have caused diminished hygiene and sanitation in cities under siege.[89]

Evidence of late-term miscarriages, failed births, and neonatal deaths reflect the general susceptibility

of infants to their natural and social environments.[90]

15th-century chronicles demonstrate that the precariousness of infancy as a life-stage was not

affected by social status. Of George Sphrantzes' five children, three (60%) died before completing

their 5th year.[91] Of twelve children born over thirty-one years to the scribe Demetrios Leontares, six

(50%) died shortly after birth,[92] which, as Talbot notes, is in keeping with Laiou's estimate of a 50%

infant mortality rate in late Byzantine villages.[93] Although the evident vulnerability of prenatal and

small infants to death should not form a basis for assumptions about Byzantine attitudes towards

infancy, it may help to explain why legal and moral codes sought to ensure the survival of young

infants by giving them a protected status.

From the late Byzantine perspective, life began in the womb regardless of gender. The unborn

infant's perceived status as a living human being rested on beliefs about the timing of the formation

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[87] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 293-4.
[88] F. A. Demirel notes worsened infant mortality in late Byzantine Anatolia compared with Roman and earlier Byzantine times: 'Infant and Child Skeletons from the Lower City of Amorium', in *Life and Death*, 306-317, 309, table. 19. 1. P. Agelarakis notes higher mortality amongst late Byzantine women of childbearing age at Polystylon, 'Excavations at Polystylon', 302.
[89] Schultz and Shmidt-Schultz, 'Health and Disease', 297-298, 300-303.
[90] For examples of miscarriage and prenatal death: Camp, 'Excavations at the Athenian Agora', 629, 646; Teegen 'Pergamon – Kyme – Priene', 252-256, 261; Schultz and Smidt-Schultz, 'Health and Disease', 296-299; Demirel 'Infant and Child Skeletons', 309. For death in pregnancy or childbirth: Synder and Williams, 'Frankish Corinth: 1996', 22; Agelarakis, 'Excavations at Polystylon', 302.
[91] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XXIV. 5; XXVI. 10; XXVIII. 6; XXXVII. 9; XXXVII. 3.
[92] Demetrios Leontares, *Chronicle*, no. 98 A. For Leontares, see also Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 286, 302.
[93] Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 286.

and animation of the foetal body *in utero* and its union with the soul. The Byzantines therefore viewed physical and social markers of ageing as interconnected from the start of the Life Course – a trend we will re-encounter in subsequent chapters. Beliefs about life before birth were variable and sometimes contradictory, but whether the soul was considered to exist from conception or to be implanted in the embryo later by God – which theologians continued to debate throughout Byzantine history –, infants were understood to have the preconditions of human life within the first months of pregnancy. This notion, developed in the middle Byzantine period,[94] was well-established by the late Byzantine period. Biographers and artisans portrayed prenatal infants as conscious beings with individual traits and destinies. Legal and religious discourses afforded prenatal life a degree of ontological validity and protection, while the brand of social morality promoted in village church painting encouraged women to fulfil their maternal duties by giving birth and nursing small infants. Nevertheless, the unborn's status varied according to context. In burial, prenatal infants were sometimes treated in ways suggesting that they lacked full human identity. The Byzantine unborn infant's social status remains an ultimately ambiguous one. Thus, the beginning of the Life Course was not sharply defined.

(3.2) Birth and rebirth

Was birth, then, the moment when infants were recognised as full members of the family and community? This question relates to how the Byzantines constructed identity. Some aspects of identity, such as sex and (in certain societies) status, are acquired from birth. Others, such as religious affiliation, are acquired through socialisation – the process by which children acclimatise to and internalise society, learning the roles appropriate for their gender, status, and ethnic group. [95] In this section, I argue that the Byzantine rituals surrounding childbirth were essential in laying the foundations of the new-born's identity. Studies of Byzantine childhood have focused on baptism as a

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[94] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 41-46.
[95] W. A. Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, 2nd edn. (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2005), 7; Neugarten and Datan, 'Sociological Perspectives', 55.

critical early-life rite of passage, since through baptism the infant gained a spiritual status within both the worldly community of Christians and the intransient hierarchy of the created universe;[96] Baun even suggests that the Byzantines assigned unbaptised infants a sub-human status.[97] Birth has not been investigated as a Life Course passage in its own right. The following pages provide this investigation, arguing that the rituals surrounding birth and baptism, which was conceived as a spiritual 'rebirth', intersected in crafting the new-born's social persona and network.

Byzantine hagiographers attached great importance to birth. Following the rhetorical textbooks of Hermogenes, Aphthonios, and Menander, they opened their texts by praising their subject's *patris* (birthplace) and parents, including any omens or extraordinary events at the time of birth (as stated above, the latter are relatively infrequent in the later *vitae*).[98] As a matter of convention, authors outlined the social status and character of a saint's parents, since a child's nature was believed to stem from her/his natal origins.[99] These origins varied among late Byzantine saints, who came from various cities, towns, and villages of Asia Minor, Macedonia, Thrace, and the southern Balkans.[100] Some, such as Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), had parents among the governing ranks of great cities with links to the imperial family;[101] others were sons of priests[102] or refugees, such as the parents of Gregory Sinaites (b.1260s, d. after 1337) and Philotheos of Athos (late 14th to 15th century).[103]

Kokkinos' *Life* of Palamas exemplifies the typical hagiographical format. It begins with a brief laudation of Palamas' native city, Constantinople, which 'is universally agreed to be superior to all others', especially in learning and wisdom.[104] This is followed by an account of Palamas' father

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[96] Ariantzi devotes a chapter of her monograph to baptism: *Kindheit*, 92-110.

[97] Baun, 'The Fate of Babies', 123-124. See also Talbot, 'Childhood', 241.

[98] Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 92; C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Nicosia, 1982), 2. On middle Byzantine hagiographical structure, see Davies, *From Womb to Tomb*, 27-28, 46.

[99] On the meaning that biographers attached to parentage, see chapter 6.3.

[100] Laiou, 'Saints and Society', 85-88.

[101] Kokkinos, *Life of Gregory Palamas*, IV; *Life of Makarios*, X-XI.

[102] Sons of priests include Patriarch Isidore I, archbishop Gabriel Thessaloniki (1397-1416/19), and Niphon of Athos (b.1315), who came from a village in the Hellespont: Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 1-2, 30-32); Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 354. 77-78; *Life of Niphon*, I. 1.

[103] *Life of Philotheos*, II. 2; Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, III-IV.

[104] 'ἁπασῶν φημι παρὰ πάντων αὐτὴν ἄνωθεν καὶ προσειρῆσθαι καὶ εἶναι'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, III. 11, 16-20.

Constantine, a member of the senate who was renowned for his intelligence, sobriety, fairness, humility, and piety, which was so strong that he avoided kissing, caressing, or playing with his children so that – if they died – he would not appear as someone who loves his children more than he loves God.[105] Some authors outlined the order of saints births' relative to their siblings, especially in the case of eldest sons. Playing on the hagiographical opposition between worldly and spiritual life, Kokkinos stated that 'the admirable Gregory was the first of these [his siblings] in order of birth… but much more so in the higher matters that transcend the world'.[106] He made similar remarks about Saint Isidore, who was also a first-born.[107] As being an eldest son carried certain familial obligations, first-born status made a saint's commitment to monastic life particularly admirable. Indeed, when Palamas was a young aspiring monk, his spiritual teachers recognised that leaving the family home might be difficult 'because of some existing obligation';[108] as Palamas' mother was widowed by that time, his duty to provide for the household as the eldest male was all the more critical. Despite his monastic calling, Palamas fulfilled this duty. Before embarking for Mount Athos, taking his younger brothers with him, Palamas encouraged his relatives and servants to enter monasteries, and after his mother's death he moved his sisters to a town near to his own ascetic dwelling.[109]

Meanwhile, the 14th-century Saint Matrona was the youngest of seven daughters born to pious parents in Volissos on the island of Chios.[110] Given the mystical importance of the number seven to Byzantine concepts of ageing, one wonders whether this detail was designed to pre-signal Matrona's status as a holy woman.[111] Kokkinos also placed significance on the gender symmetry of births within a family; the parents of Saints Palamas, Isidore, and Germanos Maroules (c.1252-c.1336) reportedly had an equal number of male and female children.[112] As the Byzantines deemed symmetry a sign of

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[105] *Ibid.*, III-VI.
[106] 'ὧν ὁ θαυμαστὸς Γρηγόριος πρῶτος κατὰ γένεσιν… ἀλλὰ κἂν τοῖς ὑψηλοῖς πολλῷ πλέον καὶ ὑπὲρ κόσμον'. *Ibid.*, III. 1-8.
[107] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 1-10.
[108] 'διά τινας ἴσως προκατασχούσας αἰτίας'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, XI. 43-44.
[109] *Ibid.*, XIV, XXVII.
[110] Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 379. On Matrona, see *PLP*, 17399.
[111] On numbers in the lifecycle, see chapter 2.2.
[112] Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, III. 1-5; *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 1-3; *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, II. 43-45.

beauty and quasi-divine status, the symmetry of births within saints' families perhaps served to reflect the spiritual beauty of their holy offspring.[113]

The seemingly mundane circumstances and especially the timing of a child's birth also held meaning for parents of non-saintly children. In chapter 2.1, I discussed several late Byzantine officials who recorded the dates and times of their children's births, sometimes to the exact hour – a habit that reflects birth's status as a major event in the Life Course of both parent and child.[114] As we saw, fathers took care to note when a child's birth coincided with important feasts in the liturgical calendar, such as Easter Sunday or saints' days. To cite one example, the scribe Demetrios Leontares recorded that his daughter Euphrosyne was born on Thursday 11 July 1416, the feast of Saints Barnabas and Bartholomew.[115] Interestingly, this trend has precedents in 12th- and 13th-century court oratory, whose authors assigned emperors' birthdays to major feast-days in an effort – Dimiter Angelov argues – to situate imperial biographies within a preordained Christian scheme.[116] It is likely that parents also attached spiritual meaning to births that fell on religiously momentous dates. As the Byzantines selected and regarded a child's eponymous saint as her/his heavenly guardian,[117] we might glean that the saint on whose feast-day a child was born was also viewed as such a divine protector. The context of high infant mortality may have particularly encouraged parents to seek heavenly protectors for their offspring. Indeed, when one Thessalonian official recorded the birth of his son Antonios on Wednesday 17 July 1420 in a private notebook, he requested that the Theotokos, her son Christ, and the great-martyr Demetrios protect the child in health, happiness, and good fortune.[118]

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[113] On symmetry and beauty, see M. Hatzaki, *Beauty and the Male Body in Bzyantium: Perceptions and Representations in Art and Text* (Basingstoke, 2009), 59-61, 64-65.
[114] See chapter 2.1.
[115] Demetrios Leontares, *Chronicle*, no. 98 A.
[116] Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 100-101.
[117] For instance, Pachymeres reported that Simonis Palaiologina, daughter of Andronikos II and Eirene-Yolanda, was named after St Simon/Peter because, when icons of the apostles were brought before the sickly infant and a candle was lit in front of each, the candle before St Simon/Peter's icon burned the longest: *Chron*, IX. 32 (69). In his *Chronicle*, George Sphrantzes wrote that he appealed to Saint George whilst he was imprisoned in the Morea, since George was his namesake saint (below, pp. 87-88).
[118] Kougeas, 'Notizbuch', no. 74.

The practice of recording birthdates demonstrates that parents not only felt an emotional connection to their child from the moment of birth, but also conferred religious identity onto new-borns by situating their lifetime within Christian schemes of time. The aforementioned texts present birth as the moment when a child obtains the foundations of familial and religious identity, forming emotional bonds with parents and spiritual bonds to saintly and divine figures of Christian mythology. The relationship formed between parent and child at birth was fundamental in defining this moment of transition, as parents actively crafted an identity for their offspring through cultural beliefs and habits. In this regard, it is noteworthy that fathers recorded even short-lived infants' births. Sphrantzes (1401-c.1478) recorded the births of two sons who died aged 8 and 30 days old respectively, while Leontares documented the births of six children whose deaths he recorded in the same entry. If parents wrote down children's deaths to mark the dates for their annual liturgical commemorations, as Talbot suggests, clearly neonatal deaths did not stop parents from celebrating their children's lives.[119] Rather, from birth or shortly thereafter, these parents considered their child worthy of being incorporated into family history and receiving prayers for their salvation.

Although childbirth usually would have happened at home, it was hardly a private affair, but constituted a child's entry into the family and local community. Late Byzantine images of birth, based on the iconography of the Virgin's Nativity (whose elements draw on the *Protoevangelion*), portray birth as a feminine sphere of activity. Whereas late Byzantine images of the Annunciation generally occlude physical pregnancy, some Nativity scenes underscore the physical laboriousness of childbirth. As Henry Maguire explains, these images served a theological purpose. Byzantine artisans illustrated the miraculous origins of Christ's birth by contrasting it with the natural birth of the Virgin, rendered visually through the bodily exhaustion of her mother Anne on the birthing bed.[120] While bearing this theological meaning in mind, I intend to analyse Nativity scenes primarily as images of childbirth,

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[119] Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 302.
[120] H. Maguire, ''Pangs of Labor without Pain', Observations on the Iconography of the Nativity in Byzantium', in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honour of Alice-Mary Talbot*, eds. D. Sullivan, E. Fisher and S. Papaioannou (Leiden, 2012), 205-216, 206.

considering the characters they portray participating in birth and the actions they perform, and how their depictions relate to textual portrayals of childbirth.

The 14th-century mosaics of the Constantinopolitan Chora church depict Christ's Nativity (fig. 3.4) in the usual manner.[121] In the middle register, the Virgin lies beside the swaddled infant in the cave. She looks down to the viewer's left at a scene of the infant bathed by a midwife and female attendant. The midwife, who features in the *Protoevangelion*, appears in Nativity scenes as early as the 4th century, her profession signalled by her head-covering and dress with either short or rolled-up sleeves that allow her to bathe the infant.[122] Joseph, seated on the lower right alone and separate from the activity, ponders the miracle. His peripheral position reminds the viewer that Christ's birth had not natural but divine origins. The Virgin's Nativity at the Chora (fig. 3.5) creates a similar sense of gendered space.[123] Anne sits upright on the birthing bed in a housing complex to receive jarred liquids from a procession of young women. This iconographic feature of the Virgin's birth became standard by the 13th to 14th centuries and reflects a custom whereby new mothers were brought gifts of specially-prepared food by friends and relatives after childbirth – a tradition that has its roots in pagan antiquity but persisted throughout the Byzantine period and has parallels in modern Turkey.[124] The long jar at the Chora may contain *lochozema*, a sweet dish given to mothers to aid their post-partum recovery and milk production, which was dispersed among Constantinople's inhabitants as part of the week-long festivities following the birth of a *porphyrogennetos*.[125] The first young woman at the Chora leans towards Anne in a gesture of care, while the last carries a fan, or *flabellum*. The infant

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[121] Fig. 3.4. Nativity of Christ, Chora Church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (05/10/2019): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul-Saint-Sauveur_in_Chora-La_nativit%C3%A9-1981.jpg. See Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 1, 90-92, vol. 2, fig. 102.

[122] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 116; *Protoevangelion*, ed. K. v. Tischendorff, Evangelia Apocrypha (Leipzig, 1876), 1-50; trans. J. K. Elliot, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford, 1993), XIX-XX. 1.

[123] Fig. 3.5. Nativity of the Virgin, Chora Church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (09/07/2021): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meryemin_Do%C4%9Fumu_Mozai%C4%9Fi,_Kariye.jpg.

[124] Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', 205-210, esp. 208-209; Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, 97.

[125] Pitarakis 'Material Culture', 205, 209.

Mary is bathed in a gold basin by the midwife and her assistant, while to the left a servant prepares a gold cradle beside Anne. Joachim observes the scene, half-hidden in a doorway.

Both nativities depict birth as a female affair, in which men adopt subsidiary roles. They adhere to iconographic conventions, many derived from apocryphal texts. Yet, the actions of the midwife and young assistant bathing the infants and the servant preparing the cot mirror the kinds of activities that would have taken place at any Byzantine child's birth. Preparations for the infant's delivery would have been undertaken by female members of the household. The birth itself was marked by celebrations at home, with feasts and visits from relatives and friends who brought gifts for the new parents[126] – a more public element of birth rituals that is reflected by the gift-bearing women in nativities. It may be inferred that these festivities marked not only the initiation of the mother and father into parenthood, but also the acceptance of the new-born into the family and household. Indeed, in antiquity these festivities accompanied the time when the father recognised the new-born as part of the household, initiating it into domestic worship.[127]

The domestic activities rendered so meticulously in nativity scenes, which convey a tender atmosphere of childbirth, drew inspiration from everyday reality. This inspiration is reflected in the material objects depicted, such as the basins and pitchers used to bathe the new-born, which recall contemporary material culture.[128] The vessel-bearing women approaching Anne in the Virgin's Nativity may relate to imperial birth rituals described in the 10th-century *Book of Ceremonies,* whereby the wives of court dignitaries paid their respects to the empress, bearing gifts, on the 8th day after a male child's birth;[129] alternatively, it has been argued that these women – who do not feature in textual accounts of the Virgin's birth – are a motif borrowed from pre-Christian birth scenes of mythological

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[126] M. L. Rautman, *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire* (Westport, Conn., 2006), 56.
[127] The relation of antique practices to Byzantine images of the Nativity are discussed by Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, 96, note. 3. Cf. C. V. Daremberg and E. Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines, d'après les Textes et les Monuments*, vol. I. 1 (Paris, 1873), 238.
[128] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 64-66.
[129] Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', 204-6, 208-209, fig. 13; Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, ed. J. J. Reiske, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti Imperatoris de Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae Libri Duo*, 2 vols., Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae (Bonn, 1829-1830); trans. A. Moffatt and M. Tall (Canberra, 2012), II. 21 (R618).

or imperial infants.[130] A further domestic detail of the Virgin's Nativity, which is depicted at Hagia

Sophia in Mystras (figs. 3.6-3.7),[131] shows the infant Mary lying in a cradle, tended by two maids to

the right of Anne's birthing bed. The motif of the saintly infant in the cradle has been linked to the

middle Byzantine court ritual of publicly displaying male new-borns to members of the court in their

cots.[132] Whatever its origins, the cradle – like the bathing basin, pitcher, and food vessels (some of

which resemble contemporary ceramic ware)[133] – constructs an intimate domestic setting that portrays

birth as an important household event and probably drew on contemporary furniture.[134]

Inevitably, the degree of publicity surrounding childbirth varied according to the new-born's

status. The ceremonies that accompanied a *porphyrogennetos*' birth, including the congratulations of

the senate to the emperor on the birthday, and acclamations of the factions and *tagmata* in the

following days when the child's name was proclaimed, were particular to the imperial family.[135] The

elaborate décor, costumes, and ceremonial atmosphere of the Nativities of the Chora in Constantinople

and Hagia Sophia in Mystras reflect the social milieu of their imperial and aristocratic patrons

(Theodore Metochites, the Chora's patron, attained the lofty rank of *mesazon*, or prime minster, in

1305), at two seats of late Byzantine political power.[136] Saints' birth scenes draw many iconographic

features from the Virgin's Nativity but are often rendered on a simpler scale that evokes a more

private setting. On the peripheries of the late empire, the Nativity of Saint George from the church of

St George in Rethymnon, Crete (1319), depicts George's mother slouched in a birthing chair, legs set

wide as she fans herself – actions that recall the physical exertion of her labour (fig. 3.8).[137] Just one

woman bears the usual offerings. She holds a long-necked jar and extends a cup to George's mother,

[130] Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, 96-97.
[131] Fig. 3.6. Nativity of the Virgin, the Virgin in her Cradle, Hagia Sophia, Mystras, 14th century; fig. 3.7. The Virgin in her Cradle, Hagia Sophia, Mystras, 14th century (photos Rachael Helen Banes).
[132] Parani, *Reality of Images*, 193-194, figs. 204, 217.
[133] *Ibid*., 266.
[134] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 70.
[135] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, I. 42 (51). On imperial births, see J. Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, 2013), 223-224.
[136] 'Theodore Metochites', *ODB*, 1357. On Theodore Metochites, see chapter 5.2, 176-177.
[137] Fig. 3.8. Nativity of Saint George, Church of St George, Rethymnon, Crete, 14th century. After I. Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings*, fig. 43. See also Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 73-74.

while another woman supports her from behind the birthing chair. On the right, the midwife coddles the swaddled new-born; her attendant is absent. The scene takes place in a house, with no men present.

This scene's simplicity may be compared with the more elaborate Nativity of the emperor-saint Constantine at the church of Sts George, Constantine, and Helena in Herakleion, Crete (1314-1315, fig. 3.9). [138] The empress Helena, reclining on a bed draped in red and gold cloth, receives a procession of four women carrying vessels and a plant (possibly a turnip), while one woman holds the fatigued Helena's hand in a consoling gesture.[139] Two other women bathe the child in a pearled basin. A scene befitting the infant's imperial status, Constantine's birth receives greater attendance and ceremony than that of Saint George, more closely mirroring images of the Virgin's birth.

Despite their variations, all these nativities are typified by the actions of women bathing the infants, tending to the exhausted mothers, and gift-giving, as well as a general absence of males; when men are present, they appear as passive observers. Of course, these visual tropes reflect the fact that the artisans were working from the same iconographic models, yet they also reconstruct the social and material reality of childbirth. The attention afforded to nativities in visual biographies of the Palaiologan era – which exhibit a prominent interest in the infancies of biblical and holy figures – portray birth as a character-defining moment in the Life Course and a major event in the life of the household, irrespective of the infant's gender and social (or spiritual) status.

Texts reinforce this image of birth as a social occasion. When instructing what prayer a priest should perform at a child's birth, Symeon of Thessaloniki mentioned the women who were present to assist the mother.[140] Given the liturgical nature of Symeon's text, we may glean that the women were midwives, as prayers to be spoken for midwives after childbirth occur in some late and post-Byzantine

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[138] Fig. 3.9. Nativity of Saint Constantine, Church of Sts George, Constantine and Helena, Herakleion, Crete, 14th century. After Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings*, 36-38, fig. 28.
[139] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 74, 76 (Meyer notes that the turnip may be an influence from Venetian iconography).
[140] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacramentis*, PG 155, 175D-278B, 208D.

euchologia, though female relatives and wetnurses presumably also attended the birth.[141] The women's duties would have included assisting the labour itself, but also the mother's postpartum care and the new-born's bathing and swaddling, as illustrated in nativity scenes. Texts also reveal forms of male participation in childbirth. Kantakouzenos reported that before the birth (1279) of Andronikos III Palaiologos, his grandfather Andronikos II instructed everyone at the palace to pray for the infant so that 'nothing troublesome should happen at [his] birth'.[142] The father who composed an obituary for his teenage daughter, who died after a miscarriage in Asia Minor in 1443, must have been present or nearby during her traumatic labour, as he stated that the premature infant was 5 or 6 prenatal months old, female, and still breathing upon birth.[143] At least, he must have gathered these details from a midwife or other medical professional, whom the wealthy could pay to assist in childbirth.

Male relatives' participation in post-birth activities is also reflected in some scenes of the Virgin's Nativity. At Hagia Sophia in Mystras (fig. 3.6), Joachim, though separated from the main postpartum activity, is shown cradling his swaddled daughter at the end of Anne's bed. Similarly, at the church of Anna and Joachim at the Studenica monastery (1314), Joachim stands above the infant in her crib, his hand raised in speech towards a female servant who fans the child (fig. 3.10).[144] Here, the physical exertion of Anne's labour is accentuated by her pained facial expression, splayed legs, her swollen belly on which she rests a hand, and the two women supporting her stooped frame. Later images of Saint Nicholas' Nativity in Messenia also feature males, including a water-carrying boy at

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[141] A. Andreev, 'A New Source for Childbirth Prayers in the Byzantine Rite', *Scrinium* 18 (2022): 1-19, 15-16. Michael Psellos similarly mentioned multiple midwives (μαίαις) who assisted his sister when she gave birth: *Encomium for His Mother*, ed. U. Criscuolo, *Michele Psello, Autobiografia: Encomio per la Madre* (Naples, 1989), 85-153; trans. A. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (Indiana, 2006), 51-110, 14. d (27-28). Psellos also referred to the wetnurses (τιθηναῖς) who breastfed infants: *Funeral Oration for his Daughter Styliane*, ed. K. N. Sathas, *Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi*, vol. 5 (Venice, 1876), 62-87; trans. Kaldellis, *Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos*, 118-138, 5 (64), 37 (79-80).
[142] 'μηδὲν δυσχερὲς ἀπαντῆσαι τῇ σῇ γεννήσει'. Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, trans. Trone, I. 30. 19-20 (131).
[143] Schreiner, 'Eine Obituarnotiz', 210-211.
[144] Fig. 3.10. Nativity of the Virgin, Church of Sts Anna and Joachim, Studenica monastery, Kraljevo, 1314. Accessed: 06/10/2019 via https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Birth_of_MAry.jpg. See Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 77, 79-80, 130, fig. 53; T. Velmans, *La Peinture Muracle Byzantine à la Fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1978), 241 (on the church's painted programme).

Platsa (14th century), and Nicholas' father Epiphanios offering a bowl of food to his wife, Nonna, at Kastania (13th century).[145]

In a liturgical treatise, Symeon of Thessaloniki also outlined the obligations of religious professionals in birth. He instructed that a priest be present at a child's birth in case of complications that might endanger the infant's life, in which case the priest must administer baptism immediately.[146] A real-life case of such an emergency baptism may be described by the anonymous father whose teenage daughter and her premature infant died in childbirth in Asia Minor, 1443. The obituary states that towards 'the end' a baptism was performed by candle oil, a type of ceremony otherwise related to the consecration of land and blessing of vineyards.[147] This ritual may have served to initiate the unbaptised infant, who almost certainly died with her mother, into the Christian faith so that her soul might be saved. It may have also served to rid the mother, who was buried (perhaps with her child) in a chapel – i.e., on consecrated land –, from the impurities of childbirth.

The sources construct a picture of childbirth as an event in which various members of the household and community participated. They included midwives and their female assistants, female servants tending the mother and infant, female friends and/or relatives offering gifts, soon-to-be fathers or, occasionally, grandfathers (such as Andronikos II) who waited, watched, or prayed for a safe delivery, and religious professionals whose presence was intended to safeguard the souls of the mother and child throughout the birth. Some writers and artisans did not shy away from illustrating the corporeality of childbirth but signified the new mother's pain and/or fatigue. It may be concluded that birth marked the first transition of a child's life and was essential to establishing the new-born's identity as part of its Christian community.

Nevertheless, textual references to priests and emergency baptisms raise questions about the relationship between birth and baptism in the Life Course. In medieval Byzantium, baptism was

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[145] N. Ševčenko, *The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art* (Turin, 1983), 68, figs. 7.1, 28.1.
[146] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacramentis*, 208C-D, 212C.
[147] The Greek word used for this service is 'κανδηλοβαπτίσαι'. Schreiner, 'Eine Obituarnotiz', 210-211, 214. Talbot ('Death and Commemoration', 288-289) describes the service as a 'perfunctory baptism'.

supposed to occur by the 40th day after birth, when the new-born's mother was churched, or on the 8th day, when the new-born was taken to church for its naming ceremony.[148] The selection of the 8th day took as precedent Jesus' circumcision and naming 8 days after his birth.[149] According to Symeon of Thessaloniki, the 8th day signifies renewal, resurrection (*anastasis*), and the beginning of endless life, for it marks the revolution of a full 7 days, when Christ arose from the tomb (i.e., the day after Sabbath, the 7th day of the Orthodox week); unlike the first birth, which originates from human flesh, the God-granted regeneration of an individual through the baptismal bath marks his/her circumcision of sin.[150] Effectively, in the Orthodox view, the immersion at baptism is a process of spiritual death and rebirth. This concept was tacitly expressed in nativity scenes, where holy infants are immersed or about to be immersed in basins whose forms drew on contemporary baptismal fonts.[151]

If baptism constituted one's rebirth as a Christian, what does this mean for the life-stage preceding baptism? Were unbaptised infants perceived as valid members of Christian families and communities? Baun argues that unbaptised infants embodied a liminal state of being in the Byzantine mindset; since baptism marked the beginning of Christian life, parents who let infants die unbaptised were committing 'spiritual murder'.[152] However, as stated above, several Byzantine fathers deemed the deaths of very young infants who likely died unbaptised worthy of record, possibly for the purpose of commemorating their souls. This contradiction, which I examine in the remainder of this section, suggests that beliefs about the nature and validity of life before baptism were multiple, marked by differences between the Church, on the one hand, and parents, as part of wider society, on the other.

One source that elucidates baptism's role in the Life Course is Theognostos' 13th-century *Thesauros*, a handbook designed to instruct priests on religious matters. The text includes a section about those who die unbaptised, which begins with an exegesis of John 3:5, stating: 'the impious are

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[148] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacramentis*, 209-212; Ariantzi, 'Kindheit', 92, 94-98.
[149] Luke 2:21.
[150] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacramentis*, 212D.
[151] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 66-67; J. M. S. González, 'Iconography of the Birth of the Virgin on the Basis of a Homily of St John Damascene', *Eikón Imago* 10. 2 (2016): 39-68, 56.
[152] Baun, 'The Fate of Babies', 121-124.

delivered from darkness to darkness when they die, just like incompletely-formed infants from the womb.'[153] The baptismal font, Theognostos explained, is the womb of those begotten in a God-pleasing manner; therefore, people who are not reborn with the seal of baptism cannot be saved, and 'unbaptised infants are worthy of neither the kingdom nor punishment'.[154] In short, infants who die unbaptised cannot enter heaven because they are not born from the spiritual womb, the baptismal font. Theognostos concluded with a well-known cautionary tale about a pious governor of Loadikaia, who brought his sickly new-born to a local saint for baptism (here again, the father plays a role in an early Life Course rite). The infant died as the baptismal oil and water were being prepared, but thanks to the saint's prayers and the father's quick actions, an angel restored the infant's life just long enough for it to be baptised.[155]

The *Thesauros* makes the notion that a Christian life did not begin until baptism hard to dispute. What does this mean for the lives of the unillumined? It is noteworthy that unbaptised infants are not equated to sinners nor condemned to hell in Theognostos' view, but await ambiguous darkness and nothingness – this perception is not dissimilar from western medieval beliefs about unbaptised babies, who were understood to remain indefinitely in limbo.[156] Baun, drawing on apocryphal and canonical texts, compares this ambiguous status of unbaptised infants in Byzantium with their status amongst 20th-century Greek rural communities, for whom the unbaptised occupied a state between human and animal.[157] While the absence of unbaptised infants from heaven and hell alone does not necessarily imply sub-human status, if this was indeed a widespread medieval ideology, it may help to explain the ambiguity of our sources which discuss the time when an unborn infant gained human life.

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[153] 'Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀσεβεῖς ἀπὸ σκότους τῷ σκότει παραδίδονται ἀποθνήσκοντες, ὥσπερ τὰ ἀτελεσφόρητα βρέφη ἐκ μήτρας'. Theognostos, *Thesauros*, ed. J. A. Munitz, *Theognosti Thesaurus,* Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 5 (Brepols, 1979), 3-227, XV. 4. 9. (620-630).
[154] 'τὰ ἀβάπτιστα νήπια οὔτε βασιλείας ἀξιοῦνται οὔτε κολάσεως'. *Ibid.*, XV. 4. 9. 630-634.
[155] *Ibid.*, XV. 4. 9. XV. 5. 1. 639-657. On this tale's transmission, see Baun, 'The Fate of Babies', 115. Constas asserts that infants who died unbaptised were amongst those non-Christians whom the Byzantines would not have held funeral services for, although he does not cite any source for this information; N. Constas, 'Death and Dying in Byzantium', in Byzantine Christianity, ed. D. Krueger, vol. 3 (Minneapolis, 2006), 124-145, 136.
[156] Youngs, *The Life-Cycle*, 45.
[157] Baun, 'The Fate of Babies', 121, 124.

Since unbaptised infants could never gain the eternal life that comes from salvation, their lives – from the Church's perspective – were not perceived to be as valid as those of other Christians.

The ambiguous status of unbaptised infants is also inferred by the measures designed to ensure that baptism could be administered quickly when necessary. As stated above, Symeon of Thessaloniki urged parents to baptise sickly children immediately after birth and, for this reason, advised priests to attend the birth;[158] such precautions imply the existence of social anxieties about unbaptised infants. When outlining what should happen before baptism, Symeon instructed priests to mark the infant, who was brought to church 8 days after birth, with the sign of the cross on the forehead, mouth, and breast (where the mind, word, and breath – the power of life – each reside) so it remained protected until baptism.[159] Infants were not to be baptised in the dark, but if death was feared, the priest was to administer everything to the new-born immediately.[160] Like Theognostos, Symeon stressed the importance of baptism for salvation, implying that unbaptised infants lacked Christian identity.

Byzantine beliefs about children who died unbaptised therefore did not equate to western medieval fears about unbaptised infants, who were perceived as tainted by original sin and likely to return from the dead to harm others.[161] These anxieties were reflected in western medieval burial practices, whereby unbaptised infants, along with murderers and suicide victims, were excluded from burial on consecrated ground.[162] Even women who died in childbirth were supposed to be denied burial in the church itself.[163] No known restrictions were imposed on the burial of unbaptised children or pregnant mothers in late Byzantium. I have already cited several examples of women who died in childbirth, as well as prenatal and neonatal infants, who received proper burial. The aforementioned cemetery at Frankish Corinth which contained a mother and her unborn foetus also contained graves of premature and new-born infants, including twins no more than 7.5 lunar months old buried together

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[158] *Ibid.*, 117.
[159] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacramentis*, 208D-212B.
[160] *Ibid.*, 212C.
[161] Shahar, *Childhood*, 51-52, 132-3.
[162] R. Gilchrist and B. Sloane, *The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain* (London, 2005), 71-74.
[163] Shahar, *Childhood*, 50-2; Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 209-210. Gilchrist notes that local communities did not always follow these rules.

under a roof tile.[164] Neonates and foetuses were also interred in burial chambers containing multiple individuals, and women buried with foetal remains in the womb, in the Roman and late Byzantine cemeteries of Pergamon, Asia Minor.[165] One wonders whether those infants who were able to be born received emergency baptismal rites of the kind that Symeon described.

Some burial sites may provide evidence for the existence of specific burial practices for unbaptised infants. One is the 10th- to 11th-century cemetery at the Lower City church of Amorion, Asia Minor, which contained 128 infant and child skeletons.[166] Of these children, 48.2% died before or shortly after birth and were therefore probably unbaptised. Many were buried at the north end of the main church in an area east of the baptistry. Demirel argues that this location was chosen deliberately. The infants' graves next to the east wall and small apse of the baptistry would have been washed by the 'holy' rainwater pouring from its roof, which may have provided them with a symbolic baptism to console their grieving parents, suggesting that they were perceived as *pure souls*.[167] A similar pattern was discovered at the Ayazma church in Assos, where burials of infants, many of whom died before or shortly after birth, were dug over the early Byzantine baptistry and east apse.[168] If these infants died unbaptised, their placement in the eastern parts of cemeteries around baptistries, separated from adult burials, reflects their treatment as a distinct group. In her study of mortuary practices in Byzantine Anatolia, Moore also identifies a trend whereby baptistries were used more frequently for infant and child burials in 9th- to 12th-century church cemeteries.[169]

These mortuary practices suggest neither the existence of social suspicions towards unbaptised infants nor their perceived lack of Christian identity. However, the spatial treatment of the infants' burials, located in the churchyard and near desirable areas around the church, has parallels with

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[164] Barnes, 'The Dead', 438, fig. 26.7. Ivison notes that tiles graves were commonly used for infants and children, appearing also, for example, at cemeteries in Nicaea and Sardis. Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 83.
[165] Teegen, 'Pergamon – Kyme – Priene', 252-254.
[166] Demirel, 'Infant and Child Skeletons', 312-313.
[167] *Ibid*., 306, 312-313.
[168] N. Arslan, 'Assos 2010 Yılı Kazı ve Restorasyon Çalışmaları', *KAZI SONUÇLARI TOPLANTISI* 33. 3 (2011): 41-64, 50-51, pls. 10-11.
[169] S. V. Moore, *A Relational Approach to Mortuary Practices Within Medieval Byzantine Anatolia* (PhD thesis, Newcastle University, 2013), 83-84, 124.

western medieval practices. In English cemeteries, infant and child burials are found clustered in the western portion of the church or courtyard, where infants received baptism in the porch. Gilchrist connects this practice to the medieval beliefs about the Resurrection; namely that infants who died in their first years would join the Holy Innocents, the first souls to be saved on Judgement Day.[170] The same belief prevailed in Byzantium.[171] Indeed, a comparable case may be found in the 10th to 11th-century cemetery of Xironomi, Boeotia. Here, subadult burials were discovered in and outside the church, while burials of children below the age of 4 – a cultural milestone marking the end of infancy – were concentrated in the church narthex.[172] In a study of child burials in 10th- to 14th-century Greek cemeteries, it is argued that this differential treatment of children aged under 4 years reflects the functional and architectural association of the narthex with baptism, and a social desire to protect unbaptised children in the afterlife.[173] It was to the narthex that infants were brought for baptism; therefore, it is plausible that the choice of the narthex for young children's burials illustrates a conscious linking of early Life Course rituals to the space of the church. However, burial practices varied according to local custom. At 12th- to 13th-century Thebes, the pattern found at Xironomi is reversed; children buried in the church narthex, with one exception, were all above 3 years old.[174]

Considered in relation to western medieval parallels, these examples show that, while local custom dictated burial practices for Byzantine infants and children, their burials reflect the conscious connection of early Life Course milestones to specific spaces in the church and cemetery. Infant burials at the aforementioned Byzantine sites thus appear, if anything, to reflect a desire to protect the souls of unbaptised children rather than their perceived lack of Christian identity.

Other cases of the specialised treatment of infants in burial cannot be linked clearly to baptism. At the late Byzantine cemetery of Saraçhane, Istanbul, an underrepresentation of infant

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[170] Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 206-207.
[171] Baun, 'The Fate of Babies', 120.
[172] Tritsaroli and Valentin, 'Burial Practices for Children', 97.
[173] *Ibid*., 102, 104.
[174] *Ibid.*, 105.

remains has been linked to undefined differential burial practices for infants.[175] More recently, on the basis of comparisons with western Europe, Moore suggested that the presence of young children's remains in pits at Saraçhane may indicate furtive attempts to (informally) bury pre-baptised children on hallowed ground;[176] again, such practices would reflect the care taken by parents to ensure their infants' posthumous wellbeing. As mentioned above, burials of a foetus and neonate under house floors at Byzantine Athens have been linked to fears about the punishments imposed on parents who let their children die unbaptised.[177] However, it is hard to imagine that parents would have selected a domestic setting – the centre of family life – for burial, especially if they feared the infants' unholy state may spiritually taint those around them. In short, burial practices for infants appear to reflect baptism's importance to the Christian Life Course rather than a perception that unbaptised infants were lesser members of society.

Rather than a singular moment that marked the infant's entry into Christian society, baptism was part of a wider process – beginning with birth – that sought to establish the new-born's place in the family and community. Baptism was a social obligation of new parents, the importance of which was stressed by legal and religious practitioners alike. In his *Alphabetical Collection*, the hieromonk Matthew Blastares cited a stronger form of penance for parents who accidentally suffocated their infants whilst sleeping in bed if the baby was 'unillumined'.[178] The late Byzantine hagiographical Life Course also defined naming and baptism as parental obligations. Whereas earlier *vitae* often omitted baptism in infancy, so that the saint's life better reflected the template of the life of Christ (who was baptised in adulthood), later texts often mention the saint's naming and baptism.[179] For example, the *Life* of Athanasios I reports that the saint's pious parents 'brought him to the bath of regeneration' in

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[175] D. Brothwell, 'The Human Bones', in *Excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul:* The Excavations, Structures, Architectural Decoration, Small Finds, Coins, Bones and Molluscs, ed. R. M. Harrisson, I (Princeton, 1992), 374-398, 374; Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 284.

[176] Moore, *Byzantine Anatolia*, 124.

[177] Camp, 'Excavations at the Athenian Agora', 646.

[178] 'ἀφώτιστον'. Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Vicsuso, Φ. 8 (493/175).

[179] On the earlier *vitae*, see Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 251.

infancy (ἐκ πρώτης εὐθὺς ἡλικίας), naming him Alexios.[180] In the 15th-century *Life* of Philotheos of Athos, the saint's mother Eudokia recognises her lost children, who had been captured by the Ottomans, when she heard each call the other by name, 'using the names they were given at holy baptism.'[181]

Hagiographers typically situated baptism between birth and the beginning of education.[182] This is probably because baptism was a prerequisite for a child's education in Christian values; during the ceremony, a godparent was designated as the child's spiritual teacher. In the case of orphans, baptism became the responsibility of the wider family. Thus, Maximos, founder of the monastery of the Mother of God at Boreine, near Philadelphia, wrote in his *typikon* (1247) that his grandmother took him to be baptised after his mother and older sister died in his infancy.[183] The fact that this obligation fell to Maximos' grandmother, rather than his father, reflects the role of female relatives in baptism and childhood education, both of which were conceived as a kind of spiritual instruction.[184]

The choice of baptismal sponsor was also socially significant for parents, as a candidate of high spiritual or social status conferred rank onto the new-born and her/his family. Baptism was both a spiritual and social contract. Godparents provided their godchildren with not only spiritual education, but also the arrangement of marriage alliances and career opportunities;[185] the case of a 14th-century Constantinopolitan widow, who ran a dairy-shop in partnership with her godson, provides one example.[186] Accordingly, baptismal bonds were integrated into a wider web of social relations built on

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[180] 'τῷ λουτρῷ προσάγουσι τῆς ἀναγεννήσεως'. Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, II (3). See also Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 355. 84-85; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, II. 1; *Life of Makarios*, XII. 1-2; Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos of Vidin*, II. 9-12.

[181] 'καθὼς ὠνομάσθησαν παρὰ τοῦ θείου βαπτίσματος.' *Life of Philotheos*, III. 3.

[182] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, 2. 1; Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. lines; Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 82-88.

[183] Maximos, *Boreine: Testament of Maximos for the Monastery of the Mother of God at Boreine near Philadelphia*, ed. M. Gedeon, 'Διαθήκη Μαξίμου Κτίτορος τῆς ἐν Λυδίᾳ Μονῆς Κοτινῆς', *Μικρασιατικὰ Χρονικά* 2 (1939): 271-290; trans. G. Dennis in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1176-1195, III. 1180.

[184] A. Moffat, 'The Byzantine Child', *Social Research* 53 (1986): 705-723, 707-708. On women's role in baptism and childhood education, see chapter 6.3.

[185] R. Macrides, 'The Byzantine Godfather', *BMGS* 11 (1987): 139-162.

[186] A. E. Laiou 'Women in the Marketplace of Constantinople: 10th-14th Centuries', in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography, and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoglu (Leiden, 2001) 261-262, 270.

friendship, co-education, and marriage.[187] This point is illustrated by the case of George Sphrantzes (1401-c.1478), who chose Constantine XI Palaiologos as godfather for his children who survived infancy. Sphrantzes and his cousins had befriended Constantine in youth while working as his pages and being taught by Sphrantzes' uncle. Later, this friendship led Sphrantzes to choose Constantine as best man at his wedding.[188] The strength of the baptismal bond is also reflected by the fact that adult godchildren returned the spiritual aid they had received from their godparents by interceding on behalf of their godparents' souls after death – a type of posthumous care that children typically rendered to their natal parents.[189] For example, in her *typikon* (c.1335) for the convent of Sure Hope in Constantinople, Euphrosyne Synadene listed her godfather, the metropolitan of Ephesos and a special friend of her parents, amongst those relatives whose souls should be commemorated at the convent.[190]

The choice of a child's baptismal name also allowed parents to confer familial or spiritual identity onto their offspring. Laiou's analysis of naming practices amongst 14th-century Macedonian villagers shows that children were most frequently named after family members or saintly/biblical figures.[191] The practice of naming children after blood relatives is illustrated by the notebook of the aforementioned 15th-century Thessalonian father, who gave his children the names of their uncle and grandparents.[192] Symeon of Thessaloniki stressed that baptismal names should be meaningful, instructing priests not to just baptise everyone as John or Maria (the most popular names for boys and girls respectively) like some simple people do.[193] This is because personal names were understood to create a bond between the individual and her/his eponymous saint that lasted throughout the lifetime. Accordingly, George Sphrantzes explained that when he was imprisoned in the Peloponnese during his late 20s, he prayed to Saint George 'as my name is also George, and I had been devoted to his worship

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[187] Macrides, 'The Byzantine Godfather', 148-149.
[188] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, trans Philippides, XXIV. 1-2.
[189] See chapter 6.5.
[190] Euphrosyne Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, VIII. 156. 1567.
[191] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 108-115.
[192] Kougeas, 'Notizbuch eines Beamten'. The man's brother Antonios is mentioned in multiple times between nos. 19-25 and lends his name to a male child born in no. 74. If the author's identification of this official as Ioannes Eugenikos is correct, then the names of the man's parents, George and Maria, and his brother Manuel, were also given to his two children in nos. 71, 75, 77.
[193] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacramentis*, 209B; Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 109.

since childhood'.[194] The anecdote reflects a belief that saints were more likely to offer spiritual aid or protection to their namesakes, a belief that is widely evidenced by portraits of donors supplicating their eponymous saints in Byzantine churches.[195]

Baptism was not only a safeguard designed to ensure the infant's salvation or obtainment of Christian identity. Rather, it was part of an identity-building process that started from the moment of birth and incorporated multiple ritual activities, from the first bathing and swaddling of the new-born to its naming and ideological rebirth through baptism. These activities introduced the infant to a broad range of social characters, including parents, grandparents, servants, family friends, local spiritual pastors (priests), and medical professionals. If the foundations of human identity were laid in the womb, it was the ritual customs following birth that moulded the infant's social identity and established its status in the family and community. Therefore, the first months of an infant's life – before it even gained the capacity for verbal interaction – were essential to its social development.

(3.3) Infancy to early childhood

Despite the scarcity of infants in the source material, infancy was a relatively well-defined life-stage. Terminologies such as 'βρέφος', 'νήπιος', and 'παιδίον' were used to distinguish the stages of infancy and were semantically linked to distinctive infantile behaviours, such as breastfeeding and inarticulate babbling.[196] In this section, I examine how the sources construct the transition from infancy to childhood, identifying the developmental milestones that shaped it and arguing that its timing within the Life Course varied across social, economic, and political contexts. We will see that physical growth, as well as dress, diet, speech, and behaviour were perceived to distinguish earlier from later phases of childhood, so that social and biological milestones were inherently linked in this life-stage.

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[194] 'ὡς κἀγὼ Γεώργιος καὶ παιδιόθεν δοῦλος αὐτοῦ'. Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XIX. 1.
[195] S. Gerstel, 'Painted Sources for Female Piety in Medieval Byzantium', *DOP* 52 (1998): 89-111, 95-96, 98.
[196] See above, chapter 2.2; Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 30.

Textual and visual biographies present infancy as a fleeting life-stage that was critical for a child's biological and social development, which were treated as inherently linked. As depicted in the nativities of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, the time after birth was associated with bathing and swaddling. Images of the infant's first bath are especially common in cycles of the life of Saint Nicholas, where the motif is adapted to illustrate a miraculous event. According to his *vita*, immediately after his birth Saint Nicholas stood upright in the bath in a clear display of sanctity.[197] A late-12th- to early-13th-century icon from Sinai depicts the new-born half-submerged in the bath in the *orans* pose (fig. 3.11), his gesture mirrored by the midwife observing the miracle.[198] Like textual accounts of miraculous births, such images conveyed the idea that the holy character of a saintly figure can be witnessed from infancy, but also reconstruct (at least in part) the material reality of childcare.

The swaddling bands are another visual marker of infancy. They were designed to strengthen and mould infants' limbs, which were believed to be fluid, but also helped to prevent crying and retain warmth.[199] The Byzantines followed the Jewish tradition of loosening the swaddling bands 7 days after birth,[200] removing them 40 to 60 days later.[201] The swaddling clothes are well defined in an image of Saint Anne nursing the infant Mary at the church of St Anne in Anisaraki, Crete (1457, fig. 3.12), where white bands are tightly wrapped around a dark cloth covering the infant's body and head.[202] The swaddling bands were used as a symbol of the first life-stage by biographers, who sought to illustrate their subjects' exceptional characteristics or virtues from infancy or childhood (ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας/ ἐκ παιδὸς).[203] Thus, Kokkinos described how Saint Isidore exhibited pre-eminence in both divine and

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[197] On images of Saint Nicholas' birth and bath, see Ševčenko, *Saint Nicholas*, 68-69.

[198] Fig. 3.11. Icon of St Nicholas, detail, St Catherine monastery, Sinai, late 12th to early 13th century. After Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 51. See Ševčenko, *Saint Nicholas*, 69, fig. 3.1.

[199] Baker, 'Paediatrics', 84-85; Orme, *Medieval Children*, 62; Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, 64.

[200] P. Koukoules, *ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΒΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΣ*, vol. 4 (Athens, 1951), 29-30.

[201] Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 98.

[202] Fig. 3.12. Saint Anne nursing the Virgin, church of St Anna, Anisaraki, Crete, 15th century. Accessed online (20/07/2019): https://www.cretanbeaches.com/en/religious-monuments-on-crete/inactive-monasteries-and-hermitages/monasterial-monuments-of-selino/saint-anne-church-at-anissaraki-kandanos. See Gerstel, R*ural Lives*, 87; K. Kalokyris, *The Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, trans. L. Contos and C. Kazanas (New York, 1973), 124.

[203] 'ἐκ πρώτης εὐθὺς ἡλικίας': Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, II. (3); Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, II. IX. 18. 'ἐκ παιδὸς': Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, VIII. 10-11 (passage on Palamas' mother Kale), LXXIX. 14-

human affairs from the time he was born and dressed in swaddling clothes.[204] Other tropes used to illustrate a saint's precocious virtue referred to physical markers of development, including the growth of hair, fingernails, and milk teeth. Thus, Athanasios I's biographer claimed that he was dedicated to God from infancy, 'from the time when his nails and hair first began to grow'.[205] The 14th-century Saints Maximos the Hutburner and Niphon of Athos also reportedly exhibited a love of virtue and good deeds from the first hair growth.[206]

Whereas hair, tooth, and nail growth were used to symbolise the youth of small children, the transition from infancy to childhood was marked by the shift from crawling to walking. This milestone is often depicted in cycles of the Virgin's life. According to the *Protoevangelion*, at 6 months old the Virgin was placed on the ground by Anne to see if she could stand and, having walked seven steps, fell into her mother's arms.[207] The scene is represented at the Chora (fig. 3.13), where Mary steps into Anne's open arms, her youth denoted by her small stature. Mary meets Anne's gaze and raises her hands in a childish gesture that underscores the emotional bond between mother and child, as a female servant encourages the infant with a gentle push.[208] Here too, early childrearing is conveyed as a female prerogative.

Much like parents of today, Byzantine writers placed importance on the proper timing of infant development and portrayed delayed or abnormal growth as a cause for concern. Kokkinos described how Saint Gregory Palamas cured a little girl whose adoptive guardian, a nun, approached the saint because the child soiled her bedding and nightclothes when she slept at night. The girl's bed-

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16; *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, I. 18-19 (Kokkinos describes his friendship with Germanos' family 'from childhood'); Gregoras, *Hist.*, VI. 5 (I. 180) (passage on Patriarch Athanasios I); Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 355. 104. 'ἐκ παιδόθεν; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, VII. 2.

[204] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 3-10.

[205] 'ἐξ ἁπαλῶν ὀνύχων καὶ ἐκ πρώτης... τριχὸς'. Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Athanasios*, LXII. The same phrase (ἐξ ἁπαλῶν ὀνύχων) is used in the *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*, 255.

[206] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, V. 20 (here, the phrase 'ἐξ ἄρα πρώτης τριχός', is simply translated by Kapetanaki as 'from childhood'); *Life of Niphon*, I. 1.

[207] *Protoevangelion*, VI. 1.

[208] Fig. 3.13. First Steps of the Virgin, Chora Church, 14th century. Accessed online (09/10/2019): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_of_the_Virgin#media/File:Virgin's_first_seven_steps.jpg. See Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 1, 68-69, vol. 2, fig. 88.

wetting caused her guardian great distress, because 'the girl had long since stopped being a baby, but had in no way rid herself of a baby's unpleasant and burdensome ways'.[209] Weaning was perceived as a particularly critical, even dangerous period of a child's life. Gregoras expressed this idea when he described how, as a young man at the court of Andronikos II, he feared his rhetorical skills were not worthy of praising the learned emperor; he did not want to appear like an untrained athlete in the Olympic games, or like 'an infant [who] wanted to eat bread before being weaned'.[210] Since, as this anecdote indicates, the proper timing of weaning was deemed as critical for an infant's survival, physicians offered advice on managing the shift from breastmilk to solid foods, which could begin when a child started to grow milk-teeth at around 6 months old.[211] One 14th-century medical manual cited a remedy that sought to induce the growth of teeth in a small child (παιδίον) by anointing the gums with hare's brain or dog's milk.[212]

That weaning was considered to mark the transition from infancy to childhood is evident from the ways that writers employed the term 'suckling infant'.[213] This term was applied to new-borns like the sickly infant baptised by a local saint in Theognostos' cautionary tale,[214] infants in the cradle,[215] and non-verbal infants;[216] in other words, infants at an early developmental stage. Breastfeeding was also associated visually with the time of swaddling (which continued for up to 40 to 60 days after birth) in images of Saint Anne nursing the Virgin (fig. 3.13) and the Virgin nursing Christ, an iconographic type known as the *Galaktotrophousa*. The Nativity at the Omorphe church in Aegina (1282) similarly depicts Christ as a swaddled infant, held by his mother with one hand while she raises

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[209] 'τὴν μὲν βρεφικὴν ἡλικίαν ἀποθεμένην… πάλαι, τἀκείνης ἀηδῆ δὲ καὶ φορτικὰ μηδόλως ἀποβαλοῦσαν'. Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, ed. A-M. Talbot and J. Johnson (trans. Talbot), *Miracle Tales from Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), VI. 2.

[210] 'τι βρέφος ἐβούλετο μάζαν σιτεῖσθαι, πρὶν ἀπότιτθον γενέσθαι.' Gregoras, *Hist.*, VIII. 8 (I. 329).

[211] Baker, 'Paediatrics', 83; C. Bourbou and S. Garvie-Locke, 'Bread, Oil, Wine, and Milk: Feeding Infants and Adults in Byzantine Greece', in *Archaeodiet in the Greek World: Dietary Reconstruction from Stable Isotope Analysis*, eds. A. Papthanasiou, M. P. Richards and S. C. Fox, vol. 2 (Princeton, 2015), 171-194, 175-176.

[212] John Zacharias, *Iatrosophion*, 106. 5-6 (א), 129. 15-20 (ω).

[213] For variations of this phrase, see chapter 2.2, n. 64.

[214] Theognostos, *Thesauros*, XV. 5. 1 (640-643).

[215] Pachymeres. *Chron.*, II. 23. 29-6.

[216] Doukas, *Hist.*, VI. 1 (Doukas applies the term rhetorically to John V Palaiologos, but his words still show a semantic association between non-verbal and breastfeeding infants).

her breast to feed him with the other;[217] a 14th-century Nativity at the church of St Nicholas of the

Roof in Kakopetria, Cyprus, depicts Christ nursing in a short robe that enwraps his arms but leaves his

legs free (fig. 3.14).[218] The Virgin's free hand touches the child's leg in a loving gesture.

Just as nativity scenes usually downplay the roles of male family members in infancy, images

of breastfeeding emphasise mothers' roles in childcare. Breastfeeding also functioned as a symbol of

virtue for both mother and child, as embodied by the image of the Theotokos nursing Christ. It is a

hagiographical trope that saintly infants refused to nurse from any woman but their mother.[219] A

similar ideal may be expressed in Maximos' 13th-century *typikon* for the Boreine monastery. In his

autobiography, Maximos stated that after his mother died during his infancy, 'I was then left in the

care of my grandmother, who nourished me with her milk'.[220] As it seems unlikely that Maximos'

grandmother was producing breastmilk during her grandson's infancy, this detail may reflect the

writer's attempt to frame his biography within the Life Course structure of a typical holy man.

In relation to mothers, images of holy women breastfeeding in late Byzantine churches reflect

the perception of nursing as a female virtue. In contrast, the woman who refuses to nurse her infant is

frequently depicted amongst the sinners in Hell in late medieval Greece.[221] In the 14th-century village

church of St Paraskeve in Kitiros, Crete (fig. 3.15), she appears in the usual manner with serpents

suckling her breasts, beside the promiscuous woman.[222] These images of gendered sin reflect the

vilification of women who failed to meet the social expectations of motherhood, but also – as Gerstel

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[217] Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', fig. 15, 210, 212-213.
[218] Fig. 3.14. The Virgin nursing Christ, Church of St Nicholas of the Roof, Kakopetria, Cyprus, 14th century. Accessed online (15/10/2019):
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_St._Nicholas_of_the_Roof#/media/File:Kakopetria_Geburt_Jesu.jpg.
See Stylianou and Stylianou, *The Painted Churches*, 32-40.
[219] Talbot, 'Childhood', 241-242 (see also Blemmydes' comments above in part 3.1).
[220] 'Ἐγκαταλειφθεὶς οὖν ἔγωγε ᾗ μάμμη μου, καὶ παρ' αὐτῆς γαλακτοτροφηθεὶς'. Maximos, *Boreine*, III. 1180.
[221] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 91; A. Lymberopoulou, ed., *Hell in the Byzantine World: A History of Art and Religion in Venetian Crete and the Eastern Mediterranean*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2020), 154. On images of the woman who refuses to nurse from Venetian Crete, see vol. 2, 515, 545, fig. 39, 587, fig. 54, 695, fig. 91, 706, fig. 96, 741, fig. 107, 804, fig. 130, 809, fig. 133. On images from Lakonia, vol. 1: 332-333, figs. 7.13, 7.19, and Cyprus: 357-358, note. 39, figs. 8.5, 8.14.
[222] Fig. 3.15. Female sinner refusing to nurse (left), church of St Paraskeve, Kitiros, Crete. After Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 93, fig. 68. See also Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 93.

points out – fears of high infant mortality amongst Byzantine villagers.[223] Another common sinner in scenes of Hell is she who refuses to nurse another's infant or orphans;[224] her appearance is noteworthy because it demonstrates that communal breastfeeding was practised in Greek rural communities.[225] It is known that wealthy Byzantine families employed wet-nurses to feed their new-borns.[226] Church paintings extolling the virtues of female nurturing attest to an ideology of communal responsibility for infants' care and survival amongst the non-elite, who probably lacked the funds to employ wet-nurses for orphaned infants or infants whose mothers could not produce their own breastmilk.

Though late Byzantine writers rarely cited chronological age in reference to weaning, they described nurslings using terms associated with both infants and small children (βρέφος, νήπιος, παιδίον).[227] In light of the schemes of ages known to the Byzantines, this corroborates earlier textual evidence placing the end of weaning between the ages of 2-4 years old.[228] Bioarchaeological studies have also identified ages of weaning in medieval populations by examining periods of growth retardation shown by hypoplastic defects in the skeletal tissue during infancy or early childhood. These defects have been linked to poor nutrition following the introduction of nutrient-deficient foods during weaning, leading to health complications.[229] Osteo-biographies highlight the 4th year of life as a milestone whereupon children had completed a process of change affecting their health and nutrition, which may correlate to weaning. A disproportionately high number of children under 4 years old at the 10th- to 11th-century cemetery in Xironomi, Boeotia, has been partly explained by poor nutrition or nutritional changes as infants began to consume new foods during the weaning process, causing (amongst other complications) deficiency-related illnesses such as scurvy or rickets.[230] In contrast,

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[223] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 92.
[224] *Ibid.*, 91-91, note. 111; S. Gerstel and, P. Katsafados, 'Images of Hell and the Afterlife in the Churches of Lakonia', in *Hell in the Byzantine World*, 332-333, 339. figs. 7.13-14, 7. 19. For 'the woman refusing to nurse another's infant' (ἡ μή θηλάζουσα ξένω βρέφος) on Crete, see vol. 2 of the same study: 479, fig. 15.
[225] According to Lymberopoulou, it was customary for lactating women to nurse other women's babies in rural communities: *Hell in the Byzantine World*, 154, note. 219.
[226] Talbot, 'Childhood', 241-242.
[227] See chapter 2.2, n. 64. Also, for βρέφος: Gregoras, *Hist.*, VIII. 8 (I. 329); παιδίον: Theognostos, *Thesauros*, XV. 5.1. 650-651.
[228] Bourbou and Garvie-Lok, 'Breastfeeding', 73-74.
[229] Agelarakis, 'Excavations at Polystylon', 302, 304.
[230] Tritsaroli and Valentin, 'Burial Practices for Children', 99, 105, tbl. 4.

children buried at a Boeotian cemetery in Thebes containing 12th- to 13th-century burials were, with one exception, all above the age of 4 and therefore past the age of weaning. It was argued that these children, who were buried in graves with adult relatives, had undergone a change in social status after weaning that allowed them to be integrated into family burials.[231]

Weaning practices also varied according to local custom. A study of weaning practices based on skeletal remains from middle and late Byzantine cemeteries compared data from Greek Orthodox and Frankish communities in Greece during the Frankish occupation era. The data suggests that the Greek community continued to follow the Byzantine custom of weaning infants gradually into the third year of life, whereas the Frankish community followed the western European custom of weaning by the ages of 18 months to 2 years old, thus supporting the hypothesis that the Byzantines weaned later than western medieval communities.[232] There is little evidence of gender-based differences in early childcare practices. However, a gendered pattern of growth has been observed amongst skeletal remains from a 12th- to 13th-century cemetery at Polystylon-Abdera in Greece, whose community also practised prolonged weaning.[233] At this site, all female skeletons showed signs of growth disruption at ages 2, 5, and 7 years old, whereas only 17.8% of males experienced growth disruptions at ages 3 ½, 5, and 7. This gendered growth pattern was explained by the fact that male offspring were better protected by 'cultural filters' mitigating the effects of stress and disease.[234] One wonders whether such filters could have included gender-biased weaning, diets, or childcare, but the existing state of bioarchaeological research prevents the drawing of such conclusions.

In visual culture, clothing distinguishes infancy from early childhood. While infants are typically depicted in swaddling clothes, children appear in the short, loose-fitting tunics that artisans used to differentiate them from adults.[235] Unlike the restrictive swaddling clothes, these garments

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[231] *Ibid.*, 98, 107.
[232] Bourbou and Garvie-Lok, 'Breastfeeding', 76-83, esp. 80-81. On western medieval weaning practices, see Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 50.
[233] Agelarakis, 'Excavations at Polystylon', 302.
[234] Agelarakis, 'Excavations at Polystylon', 300-301.
[235] Hennessy, *Images*, 8-9.

would have allowed small children who could crawl or walk to move freely. This dress appears in images of Saint Nicholas going to school, as in the 14th-century church of Saint Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki (fig. 4.7), where Nicholas and the other schoolboys wear short tunics with decorated collars, gathered at the waist and leaving the lower legs bare. Biblical narrative scenes also depict ordinary (non-saintly) children dressed in pale-coloured tunics that bare the arms and legs, sometimes cloaked, as in the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes at the Chora (figs. 4.1-4.2). Scholars have linked the portrayal of children's activities in biblical scenes to the Palaiologan humanist trend of incorporating antique pictorial motifs into religious iconography;[236] however, it could equally be argued that, by including children among the crowds who witnessed these episodes of Christ's life, artisans also created a more 'realistic' image of the population. Regardless, images show that dress was used to symbolise different stages of childhood. Theoktistos also used dress as a marker of youth when referring to the childhood of Athanasios I, who was reportedly dedicated to God from infancy when he wore 'a little coat' like the biblical child Samuel.[237] As mentioned above, hagiographers styled Samuel as a model infant to whom they compared their subjects favourably. Pachymeres similarly referred to the knee-length dress worn by children as opposed to the full-length dress worn by adult men, indicating that this type of garment was associated with childhood.[238]

Did the time when a child left the safety of the swaddling clothes and its mother's breastmilk at age 3 or 4 thus mark the end of infancy? Writers presented the 3rd year of life as a critical point in a child's development, but still associated this age with infantile behaviour. Thus, at 3 years old, Saint Isidore still had underdeveloped speech, 'his good tongue stammering a little' as he impersonated the priests singing and performing the church service, and as he sung in praise of God when he was miraculously cured from a deadly illness.[239] It may be noteworthy that at this point in the *vita*, Isidore

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[236] Parani, *Reality of Images*, 260; Mouriki, 'Revival Themes'.
[237] 'διπλοΐδος'. Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Athanasios*, LXII.
[238] Pachymeres, *Chron.*, IV. 29 (417).
[239] 'ὑποψελλιζούσῃ τῇ καλῇ γλώττῃ'. Philotheos Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 30-31, IV. 11 (ψελλιζούσῃ γλώττῃ ψάλλων).

is called a child (παιδὶ) rather than an infant (νήπιον).[240] Stories of children re-enacting the liturgy are a hagiographical topos, and Isidore's imitation of adult behaviour clearly serves to denote his piety and foreshadow his future clerical career.[241] However, Isidore's play-acting also offers a biographical timestamp showing that he is entering childhood, when his individual character starts to emerge more visibly. The 5th year was also significant in marking the shift from infancy to childhood. Unlike non-verbal infants who could not walk, children of this age were portrayed as boisterous and physically active. In the *Life* of Saint Palamas, for instance, a 5-year-old boy (παιδίον) and son of gold-embroiderer is described as 'walking and moving and jumping about in childish fashion'.[242]

The ages of 3 and 5 years old are also mentioned in relation to developmental milestones in a passage from Gregoras' *History*. It tells the story of a child (παιδίον) born in the city of Traianopolis, 'who at 3 years old stammered like an infant', a habit befitting someone of his age.[243] However, as the child grew up, he developed unnaturally, acquiring the strength, appetite, and even the pubic hair of a 20-year-old man (ἀνὴρ). The child was struck by a fever and died before his 5th year. Gregoras, a well-versed polymath, rationalised the child's death by alluding to humoural theory. The child's body, he explained, lacked the moisture befitting the age of infancy (τῇ βρεφικῇ ἡλικίᾳ), causing such dryness in his body as he should have had at 20 years old (as mentioned in chapter 2.2, medieval physicians believed that the body should be moist in infancy and dry gradually with age). The course of development and 'growth appropriate to each age' was thus impaired and nature could not regulate itself;[244] like a plant sprung too early in the year, the child died.

In this unusual, certainly fictitious anecdote, it is noteworthy that the age of 3 years is again associated with a lack of speech, suggesting that it was perceived as the upper limit of infancy. The fact that writers identified infants by their capacity for stammering or 'just beginning to speak'

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[240] Isidore is described as an infant (νήπιον) just after his birth: *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 11-12.
[241] On this topos, see Pitarakis, 'Toys, Childhood, and Material Culture', 265-266; Talbot, 'Childhood', 243.
[242] 'βαδίσματι καὶ κινήματι καί παιδικοῖς ἄλμασι'. Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, VII.
[243] 'ὃ δὴ τρίτου γενόμενον ἔτους ἐψέλλιζε μὲν κατὰ νήπιον'. Gregoras, *Hist.*, XI. 7. 3 (I. 547).
[244] 'τὴν ἁρμόττουσαν ἑκάστῃ τῶν ἡλικιῶν αὔξησιν'. *Ibid*.

highlights the importance of speech development in distinguishing infants from children.[245] Likewise, Gregoras may have selected the age of 5 for the child's death because it was perceived to mark the cusp of childhood. The child could not pass from one life-stage to the next because his growth was out-of-synch with the natural course of ageing. It is significant that in the hagiographies and historical narratives I examined, references to chronological age become more frequent from the 5th year of life onwards; this was also the youngest age cited for the start of primary education in a saint's life.[246] The 5th year of life therefore appears to denote a transitional moment in early childhood.

Nevertheless, the chronological limits of infancy varied across contexts and sometimes overlapped with early childhood. Byzantine law placed the end of infancy at age 7, by which point a child was expected to have developed a moral conscience and awareness of the consequences of her/his actions. Children under their 7th year (designated by Blastares using the Latin loan-word 'ἰνφανς'), like the mentally insane, were not indictable for murder;[247] likewise, a girl could be engaged from her 7th year, as by then she 'understands well what is occurring'.[248] These laws define infancy as a life-stage typified by mental immaturity. The identification of the 7th year as a milestone in a child's moral and intellectual development mirrors the age of schooling in the hagiographical Life Course.[249]

As youth was a relative concept, historians sometimes described older children using terms that could also denote infants. For instance, John VI Kantakouzenos wrote that the young emperor John V Palaiologos was still a little child (νήπιος) at the time of his father's death and engaging in childish pastimes, 'for he was 9 years old'.[250] Akropolites similarly called the 8-year-old emperor John IV Laskaris a 'fruit-picking and dice-playing infant' just before Michael VIII Palaiologos was appointed as his regent.[251] As mentioned in chapter 2.2, in such cases it seems that writers deliberately

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[245] 'μόλις ψελλίζοντα'. Doukas, *Hist.*, XII. 2 (see also VI. 1).
[246] *Life of Makarios*, XII. 2-5.
[247] Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, VI. 6. 7; Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Φ. 8 (494/176).
[248] 'Ἡ τὸ γινόμενον δοκοῦσα νοεῖν'. Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 15 (184/125, see also 181/121).
[249] Prinzing, 'Observations', 20-21, 28; Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status', 159.
[250] 'ἔτη γὰρ ἦν γεγονὼς ἐννέα'. Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, II. 18. 20-21.
[251] 'βρεφυλλίου ὀπωριζομένου ἢ καὶ ἀστραγαλίζοντος'. Akropolites, *Hist.*, LXXVI (343).

used life-stage terms that exaggerate the youth of minor emperors to highlight their unsuitability for the demands of rulership. However, these examples also show that the chronological limits of childhood shifted according to social, legal, and political contexts.

It should be noted that the identification of ages 3/4 and 6/7 as marking transitions from infancy to early childhood and early to later childhood correlate with the chronological limits of infancy (βρέφος: 0-4 years) in the nine-stage model of the lifecycle, and early childhood (παιδίον: 0-7 years) in the seven-stage model, as discussed in chapter 2.2.[252] As these chronological limits show, infancy and early childhood were considered as one life-stage in some contexts, particularly when infants were being considered in relation to adult concerns. However, a definition of infancy lasting from birth to the age of 3/4 better reflects the lived experience of infants. Between these years, infants reached major biological and social milestones, including weaning and learning to walk and talk, all of which impacted on a child's social status as she/he developed the skills to express her/his individual character and engage in adult activities.

(3.4) Conclusion

The following conclusions may be drawn about the characterisation of infancy by late Byzantine writers and artisans. Firstly, infancy was perceived to last from the time of conception or shortly after up to the 4th year of life. The 5th year had some significance in denoting the shift from infancy to early childhood, while the 7th year marked the upper limit of infancy in certain (but not all) social and legal contexts. Infants were, and were understood to be, highly susceptible to changes in environment and lifestyle. Society tried to mitigate this vulnerability by affording prenatal and postnatal infants a protected status or high value through legal proscriptions, as well as didactic texts and images of Hell (which condemned the abortion and neglect of infants). Christian ideology stressed the innocence of infants' souls and sought to protect them through religious rites such as emergency baptisms and, in

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[252] Chapter 2.2., 39-40.

some cases, age-specific burial practices. The rituals that followed birth, including naming and baptism, were part of an identity-building process that established the infant's status as a member of the Christian family and community, situating the infant within a social network of people who would play roles in her/his later life, including godparents, family friends, local medical and religious professionals. Finally, infancy was a life-stage characterised by a lack of gender differentiation, in which biological and social ageing were perceived as inherently connected.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHILDHOOD

Childhood, though the most widely studied life-stage in modern historiography, remains a relatively new field of research amongst Byzantinists. To date, childhood has largely been examined as a self-contained entity, yet it relies on other life-stages for definition and meaning. Byzantine texts and images construct childhood in opposition to adulthood, and children's major occupations – education, socialisation, and even forms of play – were (in these texts and images, anyway) geared towards their prospective roles in adult society.[1] In regard to education and socialisation, researchers have tended to focus on parents' roles in the early Life Course rather than those of non-biological guardians – despite the omnipresence of foster-parents in the sources – and few have considered how children without access to formal schooling were prepared for adulthood. Finally, historiography often affords childhood a timeless quality that obscures how the experience of this life-stage varied across political, chronological, and socioeconomic contexts. This chapter addresses, and redresses, these gaps.

In childhood, the impacts of gender and status on the Life Course, and divergences between the lay and monastic life trajectory, become apparent. Our ability to detect gender's impact on late Byzantine constructions of childhood is made challenging by the fact that our richest source-base – hagiography – features almost exclusively male subjects. This disparity can be partly balanced by examining material culture, monastic rules, and documents of the Athonite monasteries, which shed light on the lives of female, non-elite, and rural children. In part 4.1, I survey the construction of childhood in the sources, exploring how this is shaped by genre and how childhood is characterised in relation to the contiguous life-stages of infancy and adulthood. Parts 4.2-3 focus on education, defined broadly as the processes through which children were prepared for adulthood. I identify the different

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[1] On play as a form of (gendered) socialisation and education, see B. Pitarakis, 'Toys, Childhood, and Material Culture in Byzantium', in *Ludics: Play as Humanistic Inquiry*, eds. V. Rapti and E. Gordon (Singapore, 2021), 243-274; *idem*, 'Material Culture', 238-250; Hennessy, *Images*, 50-51, 53-54, 65, 73, 79-81. On education (as well as religious education), see Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 105-111, 117-121; Talbot, 'Childhood', 244-247; Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 125-180.

social networks and environments in which education took shape, and consider whether young people engaged in labour, service, and slavery experienced a period of childhood that in any way resembled that of privileged children with access to education. In part 4.4, I examine the impact of changes to the family structure and parental bereavement on children's life trajectories. We will see throughout each section that the socioeconomic and political turbulence of the late Byzantine period did, at times, influence textual constructions of the early Life Course.

(4.1) Conceptualising childhood

Since medievalists set out to disprove Philippe Ariès' famous claim that childhood was not recognised as a distinct life-stage in the Middle Ages, Byzantinist have proved that a concept of childhood also existed in the east Roman empire.[2] This concept remained relatively stable throughout the empire's history; a combination of Christian and inherited Greco-Roman family values produced an image of children as inherently innocent, mouldable and, accordingly, easily-corrupted.[3] Therefore, rather than focusing on the perception of childhood itself, I examine how the late Byzantine sources portray childhood in relation to the adjacent life-stages of infancy and early adulthood, and how the social meanings attached to childhood vary across different textual and material genres. I argue that constructions of childhood depended on, and can only be understand in relation to, those of adulthood. This is partly due to the adult-centric nature of the sources, which presents a constant challenge when investigating the early Life Course. Just as our knowledge of Byzantine women's lives depends greatly on the works of men, so the sources for childhood largely reflect the concerns of adults.

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[2] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*. Moffat's 'The Byzantine Child' (published 1986) offered an introduction to the topic of childhood in Byzantium.
[3] The influence of early Christian writing on Byzantine hagiographical depictions of childhood are discussed in N. Kalogeras, 'What Do They Think About Children? Perceptions of Childhood in Early Byzantine Literature', *BMGS* 25 (2001): 2-19, 6. On Greco-Roman concepts of the family, see M. Harlow and T. Parkin, 'Looking for the Family: The Greek and Roman Background', in *Byzantine Family*, 1-20.

In chapter three, I concluded that the transition from infancy to early childhood occurred between the ages of 3-5 and was marked by the adoption of a new diet, dress, as well as motor and linguistic skills. Although Byzantine writers sometimes specified young children as being female or male, they rarely characterised children according to gender but stereotyped boys and girls with the same traits of childish excitability and liveliness. Thus, in two accounts of healing miracles by Saint Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), a 5-year-old boy (παιδίον ἄρρεν) and a little girl (θῆλυ παιδίον) both responded to regaining their health by jumping or running about their homes.[4] In contrast to the excitability and playfulness of normal, healthy children, young saints prefigured their holy status by rejecting childish pursuits and exhibiting unusual moderation and studiousness. Thus, at schooling age, Saint Maximos the Hutburner did not appear to have a child's mind; he took no interest in his classmates' jumping or sword games, but devoted himself to his lessons and frequenting churches.[5] Similarly, Gabriel, archbishop of Thessaloniki (1397-1416/19), took joy from neither his peers' toys, ballgames, nor shooting contests, but passed his time going back and forth to his teacher.[6] These athletic games, which imitated and developed martial skills, feature exclusively as boys' pastimes.[7]

Writers also viewed children's dietary and behavioural traits as symptoms of their impulsive and self-indulgent nature. Whereas non-verbal infants were associated with breastmilk and toddlers with stammering speech and soft foods used for weaning, children were portrayed as delighting in sumptuous food, laughter, mischief, and other pleasures that saintly children rejected. As a child, Gabriel of Thessaloniki sought neither luxury nor the juices of fruits, just as Saint Germanos (c.1252-c.1336) did not enjoy games like jumping or running, nor drinking or banquets, but went about his studies silently and with discipline while his classmates engaged in idle chat and laughter.[8] Rather than relying on conventional topoi used to indicate sanctity, Kokkinos offered anecdotes about his subjects'

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[4] Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, II. 2, VII. 2-3.
[5] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, VI.
[6] *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 355. 88-90.
[7] On racing, jumping, ballgames, archery, and military exercises as adolescent boys' activities in middle Byzantine writing, see Ariantzi, *Coming of Age*, 123, 125-126.
[8] Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 6. 90-92; Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, III. 7-13, 18-20, 31-33.

childhoods that reveal their individual virtues.[9] Thus, in his youth Saint Germanos did not retaliate when his schoolmates bullied him for his precocious wisdom, striking his hands with stones until they bled while he was writing in class; instead, he rose above their taunts with stoic silence.[10] By portraying Germanos as a stranger (ξένος) amongst his peers, Kokkinos transformed the social setting of childhood into an arena in which the saint could begin to take up the trials of asceticism.

Although Kokkinos ascribed the actions of Germanos' schoolmates to demonic influence[11] – a trope that reflects Christian writers' beliefs about children's inherent susceptibility to sin[12] – these anecdotes nevertheless reveal perceptions of 'normal' children's behaviour and construct a cultural world of childhood that mirrored everyday realities. It is their exclusion from this world that defines the peculiarity of young saints, who embody the παιδογέρων, the child who exhibits the wisdom and piety of an old man.[13] Thus, Theophanes stated that Saint Maximos, 'although still a child, like a man of mature mind used to devote himself to the teachings of the elders.'[14] As the inversion of age-based behaviour was crucial to the construction of childhood sanctity, child saints were frequently portrayed as alienated from their age-peers (ἡλικιῶται).[15] Therefore, hagiographers presented childhood, like femininity, as an obstacle to be overcome by the virtuous.[16]

Other literary genres exhibit the same adult-centric quality, using children as a rhetorical tool for reflecting on adult concerns. I have already mentioned Gregoras' comparison of his young self, feeling unqualified for the task of praising the learned emperor Andronikos II, to an infant eating

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[9] Cf. Talbot, 'Healing Miracles', 52-54.

[10] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, IV. 14-30.

[11] *Ibid*., IV. 30-32.

[12] The idea that the non-saintly children in hagiography reflect the activities of ordinary children in society has been expressed by Kalogeras, 'Perceptions of Childhood', 11-18; Talbot, 'Childhood', 253.

[13] On this trope (also known by the Latin term *puer senex*), see Talbot, 'Old Age', 273. A similar term, 'παιδαριογέρων', was used to describe Romylos of Vidin by Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. 28.

[14] 'ἀλλ' ὡς τέλειος ὢν τῷ φρονήματι ἀκμὴν παῖς ὑπάρχων ταῖς διδαχαῖς ἐσχόλαζε τῶν γερόντων.' Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, 2. 1. 450-451.

[15] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*. VI. 5.

[16] On the relationship between Christian ideology and constructions of womanhood, see E. A. Clark, 'Ideology, History, and the Construction of 'Woman' in Late Ancient Christianity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2.2 (1994): 155-184. Gender inversion in female saints' *vitae* reflects the projection of male-orientated narrative models onto the biographies of holy women: C. Walker-Bynum 'Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality', in *Anthropology and the Study of Religion*, eds. R. Moore and F. Reynolds (Chicago, 1984), 105-125.

bread before it was weaned.[17] Similarly, in one of his poems *To Himself*, Theodore Metochites used children's traits and preoccupations to reflect on the reversal of his fortunes after his fall from power in 1328. Metochites stated that he was not unprepared for this turn of fate; being aware of life's fickleness, 'I do not cry like small children from whose hands someone has taken a sweet they were holding onto so dearly, given to them by their affectionate mother'.[18] People who do not anticipate changes of fate, Metochites reiterated, are like small children playing their 'ephemeral games'.[19] These texts rely on conventions of childish behaviour to communicate ideas about the challenges of adult life, contrasting adult wisdom and competency with childish insensibility and ineptitude. Childhood represents a familiar state of blissful ignorance yet is inaccessible to those who have been initiated in the suffering of adult life. Whereas exceptional, saintly children overcome this ignorant state by fasting, nightly vigils, and other forms of self-denial – such as Germanos' refusal to fight back against school bullies – normal children will only outgrow their unique worldview as they mature.[20]

Textual references to children's pastimes also reconstruct the material settings of childhood by identifying the kinds of objects and animals that children played with.[21] Akropolites referred to some when he described the child emperor John IV Laskaris as a 'fruit-picking and dice-playing infant';[22] Pachymeres shared an anecdote about a tame giraffe sent as a diplomatic gift to Michael VIII in 1261, which the children at the palace led around by the nostrils to amuse themselves.[23] As toys were made from perishable materials, they often do not survive in the archaeological record, though early Byzantine animal-shaped rattles, whistles, balls, dolls, pull-toy horses, and knucklebones have been

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[17] Gregoras, *Hist.*, VIII. 8. 2 (I. 329).
[18] 'οὐδέ τε νηπιάχοισιν ἐοικώς, οἳ κλάουσ' αὐτοὶ δάκρυσιν ἴφι ῥέοντες ἥν τις ἀπό σφας ἄροιτο ἥν πάρος ἀνὰ χέρεσσι μελιττοῦταν ἄρ' ἔχεσκον ἀμφαγαπάζουσ' ἥν δότο μήτηρ τεοῖσι τεκέεσσι.' Theodore Metochites, *Poem 18: Another Poem to Himself, Written After the Change of his Fate*, trans. I. Polemis, *Theodore Metochites: Poems* (Turnhout, 2017), 315 (311).
[19] 'παίγνι'… ἀΐδῃ'. Metochites, *Poem 20: To Himself Once More, After the Change of His Fate*, 331 (328).
[20] Germanos also fasted, gave his food to the poor, and performed nightly vigils in childhood: Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, V. 18–22, VI. 13–44 (see chapter 6.3). See also Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, II. 2; Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, XII (on the ascetic acts of Gregory Palamas in youth, see chapter 5.2).
[21] *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 355. 88; Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, III. 72; *Life of Makarios*, XII. 6.
[22] 'βρεφυλλίου ὀπωριζομένου ἢ καὶ ἀστραγαλίζοντος'. Akropolites, *Hist.*, LXXVI (343).
[23] Pachymeres, *Chron.*, II. 4 (239).

unearthed.[24] Toys such as rattles would have provided the sensory stimulation essential for small children's cognitive development, while others may have helped older children to learn gender roles by mimicking the behaviour of a parent of the same sex; according to modern psychologists, children develop a more concrete perception of gender distinctions by the age of 6.[25] Pitarakis suggests that Byzantine girls, for example, may have used dolls to imitate the washing, nursing, and clothing of children by their mothers, or learnt to spin and weave while making miniature clothes for their dolls.[26] Dolansky, writing on Roman-era toys, suggests that girls may have also learned about their bodies' sexuality, codes of dress and adornment, and the role of clothes and hairstyles in expressing feminine virtues, such as modesty, by dressing dolls and styling their hair (some dolls were fitted with wool or human hair).[27] It is possible that everyday objects also functioned as toys during their lifecycle, though this would be impossible to detect archaeologically.

Occasionally, the expression of childhood as a life-stage was marked by objects used in burial, though their meanings are difficult to interpret. For example, excavations at Frankish Corinth discovered three infants buried with unbroken eggs placed by their sides or on their chests. The excavators compared this practice with a 13th-century Christian grave of a 25-30-year-old man from Sparta, who was buried with an egg in his hand, as well as an ancient Greek custom attested as early as the 5th century BCE, where blown egg shells in Corinthian children's and, later, women's graves were interpreted as symbols of growth and fertility.[28] Ivison compares the egg in the Spartan man's grave with the presence of glazed terracotta eggs in 11th- to 12th-century Romanian burials, suggesting that

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[24] Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', 218-238, figs. 18-26 (examples from Athens, Egypt, Istanbul); D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, ed., *Everyday life in Byzantium*, exhibition catalogue (Athens, 2002), 208-209, nos. 237-238 (*astragaloi*/ knucklebones), 493-495, nos. 674-677 (toy horse, dolls, and whistle).

[25] J. Kosorok Mellor, 'Gender Development', in *Encyclopaedia of Child Behaviour and Development*, ed. S. Goldstein and J. A. Naglieri (New York, 2011), 683-684.

[26] Pitarakis, 'Toys, Childhood, and Material Culture', 253-254.

[27] F. Dolansky, 'Playing with Gender: Girls, Dolls, and Adult Ideals in the Roman World', *Classical Antiquity* 31. 2 (2012): 256-292, 268-276. For examples of Byzantine-era dolls fitted with hair, see Pitarakis, 'Toys, Childhood, and Material Culture', fig. 3.

[28] Williams et al., 'Frankish Corinth: 1997', 241; C. W. Blegen, H. Palmer and R. S. Young, 'The North Cemetery', *Corinth* 13 (1964): ii-334, 70, 84, note 112. Here, the presence of seashells, brightly painted miniature vessels and figurines were also interpreted as children's toys; the authors interpret various grave items to reflect the inhabitant's age and/or sex. Cf. Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 301.

they were intended to symbolise the Resurrection or mark deaths that occurred in Easter.[29] Indeed, I would argue that the same motivations that led late Byzantine fathers to connect their children's birth-dates to spiritual holidays (see chapters 2.1 and 3.1), including Easter Sunday, could also explain the desire to mark a child's death that coincided with an important religious feast, especially one associated with the Resurrection.[30] However, it is equally possible that the eggs were intended to symbolise the nascent state of the infants or, as emblems of rebirth, parents' aspirations for their regeneration in the afterlife.

Archaeological Life Course studies have examined burial dress, objects, and the spatial organisation of the cemetery as indicators of the social categorisation of medieval peoples into age-groups.[31] In chapter 3.2, I noted some Byzantine age-specific mortuary customs, when small children were buried in or around parts of the church associated with baptism, an important Life Course ritual. However, forms of child burial varied. Children were often buried in tile-graves (pits lined with roof-tiles), possibly because their length was ideal for covering shorter bodies.[32] They were interred both individually and in family graves or ossuaries, while occasionally in urban areas small children were buried in amphorae.[33] Early Christian and middle Byzantine children's graves are distinguished from those of adults by the presence of toys (mainly in early graves) and higher quantities of jewellery, which was used to mark premature deaths; this custom has been interpreted as a reflection parental grief or, in the case of girls, as part of 'marriage-to-death' rituals, whereby the soul's journey to the

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[29] Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 197.
[30] See chapters 2.1, 3.2.
[31] Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, esp. 70-90, 197, 205-211. Although Life Course theory is yet to applied to Byzantine archaeology, some scholars have used age as a lens through which to examine the social structure and identities of the communities represented in Byzantine cemeteries, though in several cases they conclude that age-graded distinctions in burial are lacking: Rife, *Isthmia IX*, 206-210; Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 46, 262-268. Childhood is the only life-stage to have received special attention: Tritsaroli and Valentin, 'Burial Practices for Children'. It was not until recently that archaeologists began to study age as an aspect of social identity: R. Gowland, 'Ageing in the Past: Examining Age Identity from Funerary Evidence', in *Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*, eds. R. Gowland and C. Knüsel (Oxford, 2006), 143-154, 143.
[32] Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 84.
[33] Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 300-301 (with bibliography).

afterlife was likened to a bride's journey to her bridegroom's unfamiliar home.[34] However, many later graves contain no objects, making it difficult to link certain burial forms with age.[35]

An alternative explanation is that items in children's graves served an apotropaic function. In his study of middle and late Byzantine mortuary practices, Ivison suggests that stone, glass, and crystal beads found in a number of children's graves may have functioned to safeguard the dead in burial, based on the use of similar beads as protective amulets in Balkan children's graves.[36] Such cases would reflect parents' efforts to ensure their child's wellbeing beyond the grave, indicating that familial care transcended death. Miniature glass bracelets, necklaces, and earrings of bronze, gold, and silver from later Byzantine children's graves in Greece,[37] as well as miniature buckles and brooches,[38] indicate that, in life, children wore diminutive forms of adult dress and adornment which reflected social status. It thus appears that dress ceased to be a primary indicator of life-stage during childhood. Instead, the production of miniature items reflects adults' desire to modify their children's appearance to exhibit familial identity and status. Funerary portraits confirm that children and adolescents wore similar costumes to adults. Apart from headgear, which was worn by adults but rarely children, dress was differentiated by gender rather than age; boys wore ankle-length caftans like men, and girls wore long dresses like women, as in the portrait of a 13th-century mother and her two daughters at the Karsi Kilise in Cappadocia (fig. 6.15).[39]

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[34] Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', 191-193 (with bibliography). As Pitarakis notes, this Greek ritual custom did not disappear with the establishment of Christianity.

[35] Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 1, 185-186, tbl. 3, 265-267. Cf. Talbot, 'Death and Commemmoration', 300, on the burials of middle and late Byzantine children: 'grave goods are rarely associated with subadult burials'. A lack of grave artefacts at Byzantine Isthmia is also noted by Rife, *Isthmia IX*, 1.

[36] Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 184. The practice of using single beads in children's graves to protect them from the evil eye also prevailed in medieval England: Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 214.

[37] Papanikola-Bakirtzi, *Everyday life in Byzantium*, 419, no. 534 (bracelets); Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 265-266 (earrings); W. Wade et al., 'The Burials', in *Excavations at Nichoria*, vol. 3, eds. W. A. McDowell, W. D. E. Coulson and J. Rosser (Minneapolis, 1983), 398-404, 398 (beads from a faience necklace in a child's burial).

[38] Rife, *Isthmia IX*, 208. See also Synder and Williams, 'Frankish Corinth: 1996', 29 (bronze brooch/buckle).

[39] S. T. Brooks, *Commemoration of the Dead: Late Byzantine Tomb Decoration (Mid-Thirteenth to Mid-Fifteenth Centuries)* (PhD thesis, New York Institute of Fine Arts, 2002), 92-94, pls. 8.3-4, 11.4-6, 16.13-14, 16.17-18, 19.5-6. A funerary panel at the Chora (c.1330) depicts a male child dressed in a buttoned caftan with a girdle at the waist: Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 1, 288-292, vol. 3, *The Frescoes*, pls. 546-547 (discussed by Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', 179). On the Karsi Kilise portrait, see chapter 6.5.

Whatever local mortuary customs prevailed, there existed a distinct burial liturgy for children (νήπια).[40] Burial liturgies divided the population into categories based on age and social/spiritual rank, including laypeople, monastics, priests, and children.[41] Prayers for children requested that Christ place the deceased in the bosom of Abraham, ensuring the child's place in the afterlife, and stressed that nothing is more lamentable than parents burying their own offspring, especially when the child was old enough to speak.[42] Thus, funeral practices acknowledged children as a social category with distinct spiritual needs. It is noteworthy that the liturgy singles out the deaths of children old enough to speak as especially tragic for parents. As I demonstrated in chapter 3.3, speech development marked a milestone in the transition from infancy to childhood, which allowed children to express themselves and interact with family members on a more complex level. Funerary customs that distinguished earlier from later stages of childhood may reflect the different responses of parents to the deaths of younger and older children, but perhaps also the different spiritual statuses of these age-groups. After children developed verbal communication and comprehension, they could begin religious education, which – as the following section shows – parents sought to instil from this early age.

Finally, the representation of childhood in visual culture has been examined by Hennessy, whose findings are worth summarising. Artisans differentiated children from adults visually by several means. Boys were primarily identified by their short hair and thigh-length tunics, and girls by their uncovered heads and hairstyles. Smaller scale, frame, and rounder facial features also denote youth across gender.[43] As with texts, most images of children represent biblical or saintly figures who invert the behaviours of the ordinary children around them, who reflect genuine perceptions of this life-stage. These unindividuated children, who feature in Old and New Testament 'crowd scenes', are usually

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[40] J. Goar, *Euchologion sive Rituale Graecorum* (Venice, 1730, repr. Graz, 1960), 474.
[41] P. J. Fedwick, 'Death and Dying in Byzantine Liturgical Traditions', *Eastern Churches Review* 8. 2 (1976): 152-161, 154. For the development of this liturgical tradition and the categories of the dead, see E. Velkovska, 'Funeral Rites According to the Byzantine Liturgical Sources', *DOP* 55 (2001): 21-51, esp. 24-26, 36-38; V. Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2016), 85.
[42] Goar, *Euchologion*, 474-478; Talbot, 'Death and Commemoration', 299.
[43] Hennessy, *Images*, 47-50 (Parting of the Red Sea, Entry into Jerusalem, Multiplication of the Loaves, Baptism).

male and are mentioned directly or indirectly in the biblical accounts of the episodes.[44] The ways that artisans depicted children with respect to their appearance, position, and activities reflect a clear interest in portraying childhood as a life-stage. Through space and action, images construct a cultural world of childhood that is distinguishable from the world of adults in a way not dissimilar from texts.

For instance, the scene of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in the 13th-century Hagia Sophia in Trebizond depicts two small children in their mothers' arms amongst the crowds (fig. 4.1).[45] One short-haired child wearing a brown, long-sleeved tunic raises his face and hand to his mother, who appears to feed him as she observes the miracle. Another small, bare-armed child, also held by his mother, faces the miracle but extends his hand to receive the food from a man in the crowd. The children partake in the miracle, but they experience it through rather than *with* the adult participants. Their reliance on parents and other adults is rendered visually through posture and gesture. In contrast, two larger children wearing red and brown tunics in the central foreground, below Christ, fight to grab bread from an apostle, marked out from the crowd by their disruptive behaviour. These quarrelling children often appear in Palaiologan-era Multiplication scenes but, as Eastmond notes, their prominence and integration into the main activity of the miracle at the Hagia Sophia is atypical and characteristic of the monument's use of secondary narrative details.[46] The painter has incorporated children into the adult world but differentiated them from adults through distinctively childish forms of participation, scale, and physical features.

Another Multiplication from a 13th-century gospel, Iviron cod. 5, also depicts children, all short-haired and wearing short tunics gathered at the waist (fig. 4.2).[47] In the middle register, one child

[44] *Ibid*., 38, 69-74.

[45] Fig. 4.1. Multiplication, Hagia Sophia, Trebizond, 13th century. Accessed online (13/01/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/Trabzon_Hagia_Sophia_Feeding_of_the_thousands_4797.jpg. See D. Talbot Rice, ed., *The Church of Hagia Sophia at Trebizond* (Edinburgh, 1968), 129-131, 168-169, pls. VI, VII, 52, 53, 59, fig. 93.

[46] A. Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond* (Aldershot, 2004), 132, figs. 89-90, 94, pl. XVIII.

[47] Fig. 4.2. Multiplication, Iviron cod. 5, fol. 63v, 13th century. After S. M. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts*, vol. 2, *The Monasteries of Iveron, St. Pantaleimon, Esphigmenou, and Chilandari* (Athens, 1975), fig. 13. See Hennessy, *Images*, fig. 2. 20.

engages directly in the miracle, raising his hands to receive food from an apostle. The other children are separated from the main activity, clustered in a group in the lower right, two play-fighting while the other two observe. I am inclined to agree with Hennessy's view that the appearance of wrestling children in biblical scenes reflects artisans' attempts to portray children's everyday activities;[48] they create the impression that the crowds represent a true cross-section of society. Yet, in Iviron cod. 5, the spatial separation of the playing children from the other participants creates a divide between the worlds of childhood and adulthood. This divide is even more pronounced in the Chora Multiplication, where a crowd of men and women wait to receive the multiplied food above whilst in the lower register a group of children, bare-limbed, round-faced, and dressed in white and reddish tunics, play a game – possibly dice, knucklebones, or pebbles (fig. 4.3).[49] In both the Iviron and Chora scenes, playing children occupy secondary positions below the predominant activity of the miracle. They are delineated as a distinct social group by space, register, and performance, as well as scale and appearance. The scenes appear to depict not only children, but childhood itself.

The Chora mosaics well-exemplify the visual language that Byzantine artisans used to distinguish the life-stages. In the Multiplication, the age of the children playing in the lower register is clearly different from that of an infant wearing a sleeveless tunic in the upper register, held by its mother among other adults rather than age-peers. The infant's age is also marked out by its smaller scale, rounder limbs, face, and bald head – the same features characterise the babies clutched by their mothers in the Massacre of the Innocents at the same church.[50] The Chora mosaics thus distinguish the life-stages of infancy and childhood through scale, physicality, performance, and social grouping; children are portrayed in peer-groups, while infants appear with their mothers. This mirrors a trend in hagiography whereby children inhabit social environments populated by age-peers, while infants are

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[48] Hennessy, *Images*, 71-72.
[49] Fig. 4.3. Multiplication, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century (photo Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection). Accessed online (28/10/2021): http://id.lib.harvard.edu/images/8001538681/urn-3:DOAK.RESLIB:38642393/catalog. See Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 1, 121-123; Hennessy, *Images*, 71, note 104; Pitarakis, 'Material Culture', 236.
[50] Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 3, pl. 109.

mentioned in relation to their parents, especially mothers.[51] Both text and image envisage a transition whereby children, though still reliant on parents for their physical and spiritual needs, begin to attain a degree of autonomy from their parents in childhood, and extend their social networks beyond the private sphere of the family.

Images also help to balance the male-dominated portrait of childhood rendered in texts. Narrative cycles of the Virgin's life are useful for examining the female Life Course, as Mary's age at certain events from her life is known from the gospel accounts. For instance, at 3 years old – on the cusp of childhood – Mary was taken to the Temple; images depict her being welcomed by Zacharias and fed by the Angel.[52] Whereas scenes of Christ's Presentation at the Temple, which occurred 40 days after his birth, depict him as a tiny boy in his mother's or Symeon's arms,[53] and therefore in the life-stage of infancy, scenes of the 3-year-old Virgin's Presentation portray her as a child.

For example, in Stefan II Milutin's church (1314) at the Studenica monastery, the Virgin's youth is illustrated by her diminutive stature. She is roughly waist-height to the adults in the scene, her hands and round childish face turned up to Zacharias as he bends to welcome her with open arms (fig. 4.4).[54] Whereas Mary wears her usual mantle over her head, the candle-bearing maidens, as 'normal' girls, are bare-headed. Mary's childishness is similarly indicated by her height and facial features at the Chora (fig. 5.3) and St Clement in Ohrid (1295, fig. 4.6); the latter's painter has given Mary the fine facial features of a young girl, the wide-eyed expression and upward tilt of her face evoking a distinctly childish quality.[55] In the 15th-century Presentation at the church of the Holy Cross of

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[51] See chapter 3.1, 62-65, 3.2, 85-86.
[52] Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, figs. 22, 28, 30-31, 80-81, 84, 86-93.
[53] A. and J. Stylianou, *Treasures of Byzantine Art*, fig. 66; Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 72; Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings*, 11.
[54] Fig. 4.4. Presentation, church of Sts Anna and Joachim, Studenica monastery, Kraljevo, 1314. Accessed online (14/01/2020):
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cc/Manastir_Studenica%2C_Srbija%2C_041.JPG. See Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, 154.
[55] Fig. 4.6. Presentation, St Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia, 13th century. Accessed online (18/11/2021):
Paintings_in_the_Church_of_the_Theotokos_Peribleptos_of_Ohrid_0253.jpg (2727×1713) (wikimedia.org).
See Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, 44-45, 154; Velmans, *Peinture Murale*, 167-168 (on the church's painted programme).

Agiasmati, near the village of Platanistasa, Cyprus, Mary is slightly smaller as she climbs steps to

meet Zacharias, who bends low to meet her while her parents encourage her forwards with gestures

(fig. 4.5).[56] In each scene, height, physiognomy, and gesture distinguish the young Virgin from the

older, taller, and – at the Studenica, Chora, and Agiasmati – slenderer maidens. In the St Clement and

Studenica scenes, the Virgin's parents occupy a peripheral position while the maidens occupy the

central space (a feature of Palaiologan-era Serbian and Macedonian frescoes).[57] The St Clement

maidens, without making the gesture of presentation,[58] observe rather than encourage Mary.

In each scene, the Virgin's childishness is signified by her small stature, the curve of

Zacharias' adult-sized body as he bends to receive her, and the gestures of her parents and/or the

maidens encouraging her towards the Temple, through which the young Virgin receives adult

instruction. However, the painters exhibited different preferences in depicting the Virgin's youth

through their rendering of other participants. The Agiasmati painter has emphasised the Virgin's

childish age by adding another little girl to the group of maidens, who by her small height and

forward-stepping stance creates a reverse-image of the Virgin. An older, taller maiden drags her along

by hand. As Andreas and Judith Stylianou remark, this 'reluctant' little maiden gives the painting a

realistic touch;[59] certainly, she reflects an interest in depicting normal children's behaviour. However,

the little maiden's appearance in the scene may also serve to highlight the Virgin's exceptionalism, as

a holy child, by comparison. The girls are clearly the same age, but the Virgin willingly steps away

from her parents – who, according to the infancy gospel, were amazed that their daughter did not look

back as she left them, thus illustrating unusual maturity [60] – as though she knows her destiny, being

blessed with divine foreknowledge. In contrast, the little maiden, exhibiting normal childish

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[56] Fig. 4.5. Presentation, church of the Holy Cross of Agiasmati, Cyprus, painted 15th century. Accessed online (28/10/2021): https://www-bridgemaneducation-com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/en/asset/942956/summary. See A. Stylianou and J. Stylianou, *Painted Churches of Cyprus*, 95-96, fig. 44.

[57] Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, 153.

[58] From the end of the 13th century and for much of the 14th, it is the first member of the group of maidens, rather than the Virgin's parents, who makes the gesture of presentation: *Ibid*, 154; J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, 'Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin', in *Kariye Djami*, vol. 4, *Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and its Intellectual Background*, 161-194.

[59] Stylianou and Stylianou, *The Painted Churches*, 96.

[60] *Protoevangelion*, VII. 2-VIII. 1.

behaviour, must be guided by her elder peers. The painter has thus employed age as a device for conveying doctrinal messages.

In summary, late Byzantine writers and artisans drew on a well-established set of cultural symbols – age-specific interests, behaviours, physical features, and objects – to construct childhood and differentiate it from the adjacent life-stages of infancy and adulthood. Nevertheless, constructions of childhood varied according to the intentions of the adults who produced them. Kokkinos' customised portraits of saintly children diverge from the more generic picture of childhood in hagiography, whose primary goal was to construct the saint in opposition to the archetypical child. This quintessential child, who also appears in religious iconography, is naïve, impulsive, and indulgent, yet also playful, innocent, and reliant on adult guidance. Whether writers and artisans sought to produce negative or positive images of childhood, they always measured childhood against the yardstick of adulthood and often used it to convey messages about the nature of adult life, society, or spirituality. Their works reflect the social expectations, rather than realities, of Byzantine childhood. In contrast, the treatment of children in burial reflects parents' desire to integrate their offspring into the family sphere and preserve their social identity and status after death through ritual.

(4.2) Education

Overwhelmingly, the sources portray childhood as a life-stage spent training for adult life. This training took diverse forms, but all were designed to offer children the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to perform their roles in adult society, which were shaped to a large extent by gender and social status. In the following two sections, I define education broadly as training that cultivated children socially, spiritually, or practically for their future livelihoods. I consider how children from different socioeconomic backgrounds were prepared for adulthood, whether by formal schooling (explored in part 4.2), informal instruction by parents or other guardians, or participation in the types of labour undertaken by adults, including service and slavery (explored in part 4.3).

Childhood was the life-stage in which gender and socioeconomic status began to impact on the Life Course, since these aspects of identity determined the types of education provided to children.

Hagiographers usually situated the start of schooling at the age of 6 or 7.[61] As I noted in chapter three, this time of life marked a milestone in a child's intellectual development; from the 7th year, children could be engaged or prosecuted for murder, as the law then considered them mature enough to understand the consequences of their actions.[62] According to Antoniadis-Bibicou, the age of schooling varied between the age of 4 to 7 depending on a child's social status.[63] Such variation is reflected in late Byzantine hagiography, but it is unclear whether or not this correlates with status. Makarios Makres, born in late 14th-century Thessaloniki to wealthy parents with ties to the imperial family, was given to a teacher at just 5 years old;[64] however, Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), whose family was of senatorial rank, entered education at the more typical age of 7, 'when he was very young', according to Kokkinos.[65] The 14th-century Saint Niphon, a priest's son from the small village of Loukove in Epiros, began learning the Scripture from his uncle in a local monastery at the age of 10 (the age when children could enter monasteries).[66]

Writers often omitted the age when their subjects started schooling, but routinely placed this milestone after baptism or – in more detailed accounts – the saint's upbringing by their parents. Thus, the 14th-century *Life* of Romylos of Vidin begins by stating that the saint was born to a Greek father and Bulgarian mother, who baptised him as Raikos and 'raised him in accordance with the teaching and admonition of the lord'. Later, 'because it was necessary that this good child should not lack an education in sacred letters', his parents gave him to a teacher.[67] Thereafter, Romylos soon outshone his

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[61] É. Patlagean, 'L'Enfant et son Avenir dans la Famille Byzantine (IVe-XIIe Siècles)', *Annales de Démographie Historique, Enfant et Sociétés* (1973): 85-93; Talbot, 'Childhood', 244.

[62] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Φ. 8 (494/176), Γ. 15 (184/125); Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, VI. 6. 7.

[63] H. Antoniadis-Bibicou, 'Quelques Notes sur l'Enfant de la Moyenne Époque Byzantine (VIe-XIIe siècles)', *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1973): 77-84, 78.

[64] *Life of Makarios*, XII. 2-5.

[65] 'ἐπὶ πάνυ νεαζούσῃ τῇ ἡλικίᾳ'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, X. 12.

[66] *Life of Niphon*, I. 1.

[67] 'ἀνέτρεφον αὐτὸν ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νουθεσίᾳ κυρίου... Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἔδει τὸν τοιοῦτον καλὸν παῖδα μὴ ἄμοιρον εἶναι καὶ τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν γραμμάτων θείας παιδεύσεως'. Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. 12-19.

classmates, attracting admiration from his teachers, peers, and all the city's inhabitants. It is a defining quality of school-age saintly children that they attain intellectual autonomy at an early age, outpacing and becoming role models for age-peers and adults alike. Education thus signposts the shift from an earlier to later stage of childhood in the Life Course, which is indicated by the development of intellectual and spiritual maturity.

The basic moral instruction provided by parents, as role models of Christian behaviour, was reinforced as children began the primary schooling curriculum, the *hiera grammata*, which taught children to read, write, and spell using Christian texts and took 3 or 4 years to complete.[68] Young saints were often praised for their knowledge of Christian literature, which illustrated that they possessed the wisdom necessary to excel in their future monastic and ecclesiastic roles, but also reflects the morally didactic element of literacy training.[69] In youth, Athanasios I (1289-1293/1303-1309) was reportedly so inspired by reading the *Life* of Saint Alypios the Stylite that he decided to leave home and become a monk.[70] By such anecdotes, hagiographers suggested that saints' Lives may provide paradigms of moral behaviour for Byzantine children.[71] Some writers particularised their saint's childhood activities to foreshadow their future occupations. Saint Maximos, who led a largely hermetic adult life in the rugged landscape of Mount Athos, used to run away into the wilderness and caves after learning the holy Scriptures as a boy.[72] As we have seen, Kokkinos reported that Saint Isidore, who was a priest and teacher before serving as patriarch (1347-1350), used to mimic his priestly father performing the church service as little boy, his childish tongue stammering as he sung the hymns and psalms. Later, after Isidore reached an age suitable for education and began learning his letters and the Scripture, his musical talents flourished.[73]

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[68] Talbot, 'Childhood', 244; Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 1-2.
[69] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, VII. 21-24 (in youth, Maximos ardently studied the works of Gregory of Nazianzos).
[70] Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III (4).
[71] As has been suggested by Kalogeras, 'What Do They Think About Children?', 13.
[72] Niphon, *Life of Maximos*, II. 1.
[73] Kokkinos, Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου, IV-V. 1-4.

While hagiographical convention determined that young saints excelled in academic studies, Kokkinos used his subjects' learning difficulties as a device for exposing sanctity. When the young Gregory Palamas struggled to recite his lessons by heart, he prayed before an icon of the Theotokos – whom Gregory's father had named as his children's guardian on his deathbed – and suddenly found himself able to memorise his textbook.[74] Similarly, when Isidore came to secondary education at the late age of 16 (a time more often linked to the start of higher education in the male Life Course), he worried about beginning his studies at such an untimely age, when he was no longer an adolescent (ἔφηβον) but had already matured into a young man (ἐν νεανίσκοις).[75] Like Gregory, Isidore appealed to the Theotokos, who dispelled his fears and urged him to pursue his studies in a dream.

A notable difference between the biographies of patriarchs, statesmen, and scholars, as opposed to those of holy men of less prestigious legacies and social backgrounds, is the level of detail afforded to education. As a matter of convention, biographers of the former group outlined their subjects' study of the secondary curriculum, the *enkyklios paideia*, which taught grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and lower mathematics using secular texts and was required for even lesser ecclesiastical and secular offices.[76] Thus, Kokkinos argued that it was necessary for Saint Isidore to gain the intellectual benefits of 'outer learning' – that is, the secular study of Greek literature and philosophy as opposed to 'inner learning' of Christian theology – since he would grow up to become an 'interpreter and herald' of the Scripture.[77] Although the *enkyklios paideia* usually took 5 or 6 years to complete, Isidore progressed rapidly, like 'a bird cutting through the air', finishing his studies in just 3 years.[78] Here again, Kokkinos inverted the normative timing of Life Course milestones to highlight Isidore's exceptionalism. Other saints from wealthy urban families began secondary education, which usually started around the age of 11, at a more typical age. Thus, it was in his 12th year that Makarios Makres,

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[74] Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, IX. 5-7, X. 1-29.
[75] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, V. 8-10, 23-27.
[76] Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 1; Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 117-118, 120.
[77] 'ἐξηγητής τε καὶ κήρυξ'. Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου,* V. 10-15.
[78] 'πτηνός τις ἀέρα τέμνων'. *Ibid.*, VI. 1-3, 13-15. On the *enkyklios paideia*, see Constantiniades, *Higher Education*, 1.

future superior of the Pantokrator monastery and *protosynkellos* of the patriarchate (1424), wanted to become a monk, but honoured his parents' wish for him to continue his studies of poetry, rhetoric, and logic.[79] This *vita*, like others (such as Palamas' *Life*),[80] presents secular learning as a hindrance to the pursuit of spiritual wisdom, advocated by parents or guardians who wanted their progenies to pursue worldly careers.

Autobiographical accounts reveal the impact of the post-1204 sociocultural climate of the eastern Mediterranean on the schooling years of men born around the start or in the first half of the 13th century.[81] In his *Autobiography*, Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197/8-c.1269) provided a detailed account of his childhood in Bithynia, where his family moved after Constantinople fell in 1204. As a boy, Blemmydes studied grammar for nearly 4 years before moving on to Homer and the poets, the rhetorical exercises, and logic – the usual subjects studied by high-status boys. Modelling his young persona on the hagiographical archetype of the studious child, the scholar asserted 'my zeal forced me to arrive at the teacher's earlier than the others, and to return home from there later'.[82] However, when he wanted to pursue higher education at the age of 16, Blemmydes reported that he found nobody to guide him. Constantiniades points out that Blemmydes' learning was probably impeded by a lack of imperial or ecclesiastical schools with well-equipped libraries rather than teachers.[83] The great schools of Constantinople were lost, and imperially-sponsored education would only be revived in Nicaea in the 1230s, when Blemmydes began teaching students intended to serve the state, including George Akropolites.[84] The collapse of the empire's cultural and intellectual centre delayed Blemmydes' studies for 7 years, which he spent learning medicine, his father's trade. Finally, at the age of 23, he travelled to Latin-held Skamandros to find a teacher of mathematics and physical sciences, determined

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[79] *Life of Makarios*, XIII.
[80] *Life of Palamas*, XI. 18-24 (on this passage, see chapter 5.2). For the same topos in middle Byzantine hagiography, see Davies, 'Age, Gender, and Status', 162-163.
[81] On the practical problems faced by 13th-century scholars, see Ševčenko, 'Storia Letteraria', 113.
[82] 'Πολύ μοι γὰρ τὸ φιλόνεικον, προτέρῳ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἐς διδασκάλου φοιτᾶν, ὑστέρῳ δ' ἐκεῖθεν οἴκοι παλιννοστεῖν'. Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. II. 3-5.
[83] Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 6-9 (on Blemmydes' education).
[84] *Ibid.*, 9-11. On Akropolites' education under Blemmydes, see chapter 5.2.

to be put off by neither 'the length or danger of the journey', nor the country's foreign governance.[85]
Blemmydes was 26 when he returned to Nicaea.

Learned men born outside centres of Byzantine power and culture during the 13th century also stressed that they had to travel considerable distances to obtain the kind of education that men born in the later 13th and 14th centuries often pursued in their home cities.[86] In his *Autobiography*, Gregory II (c.1241-1290) complained of the schools in Latin-ruled Cyprus. After exhausting his first teachers' knowledge while he was 'very young', Gregory travelled to Nicosia in pursuit of a better education, but since the island's fall to the Latins 60 years earlier, the city lacked tutors who could teach more than the rudiments of Greek letters.[87] Gregory tried pursuing his studies in Latin but struggled to learn in the unfamiliar language. At the age of 15, he was back home passing his time hunting and begging his parents to fund him to attend school at Nicaea, which was reported to be like a new Athens in its abundance of scholars. However, Gregory described how his parents, due to their natural love of him and fear of sending him to foreign lands at such a young age, refused his wishes.[88] Two years later, Gregory left home in secret and after a perilous sea journey arrived at Ephesos, where the locals dissuaded him from approaching the then-thriving monastic school of Nikephoros Blemmydes, who – according to the locals – would never accept Gregory as a student on account of his youth, poverty, and foreignness. By then a young man (νεανίας), Gregory spent 6 months marching with armies across the Hellespont to Thrace and back again in, seeking teachers and struggling with poverty as he tried to raise enough money for an education in Nicaea.[89]

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[85] 'τῆς ὁδοῦ μακρᾶς οὔσης καὶ κινδυνώδους'. Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. IV. 6.
[86] See chapter 5.2, 177: George Akropolites (1217-1282) also travelled from his family home in Latin-held Constantinople to pursue higher learning at Nicaea. By comparison, Saint Gregory Palamas pursued his studies at home in Constantinople (Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, X-XI), while Isidore, Sabas, and Makarios studied at home in Thessaloniki (Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, V-VI; *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, V; *Life of Makarios*, XI-XII).
[87] 'ἐν πάνυ νέᾳ τῇ ἡλικίᾳ'. Gregory of Cyprus, *Autobiography*, ed. and French trans. W. Lameere, *La Tradition Manuscrite de la Correspondence de Grégoire de Chypre, Patriarch de Constantinople (1283-1289)* (Brussels, 1937), 176-191, 176-177.
[88] *Ibid.*, 179.
[89] *Ibid.*, 181-185.

Though Gregory's account contains many hagiographical tropes – his precocious childhood, the parent-child conflict over his plans to pursue an education abroad (here substituting the desire to pursue monastic life), his secret flight from home, and his ascetic struggle against poverty and the elements on his journey – it nevertheless implies that high-status boys faced societal barriers when trying to meet their educational needs outside a centre of Byzantine culture and learning in the 13th century. Macrides has suggested the possibility that George Akropolites (b.1217), who completed his secondary studies in Latin-ruled Constantinople, had – like Gregory II – learned in Latin;[90] however, Akropolites never complained about his teachers nor his ability to learn from them. Moreover, while the loss of schools, libraries, and books left behind in Constantinople after 1204 must have been an obstacle for emperors seeking to re-establish educational institutions in the early life of the Nicaean empire, individuals like Blemmydes were able to consult and lend books from monastic libraries even in areas under Latin control in the 13th-century.[91] This might suggest that learning was less affected in monastic, rather than secular, institutions. Whether Gregory II's and Blemmydes' criticisms about the educational facilities available to them were wholly justified or not, their accounts illustrate the impact of post-1204 cultural and political climate on how auto-biographers – in a period of limited hagiographical production – constructed the early Life Course and employed this climate as a tool for conveying their exceptional traits and deeds to their audiences.

The fact that writers outlined the ages, stages, and duration of their subjects' learning indicates the importance of education in demarcating the stages of male childhood. The start and end of secondary education marked Life Course milestones, with the years in-between – around the age of 11 to 16 – forming a distinct stage of youth. This secondary stage of education, which was tailored to the needs of high-status boys aspiring to civic or ecclesiastic careers, is not described in all *vitae*. Many writers outlined only their subjects' learning of holy letters or the start of school in early childhood.

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[90] Macrides, *Akropolites: The History*, 8, n.26 (Akropolites refers to his studies in chapter XXIX (189)).
[91] Constantiniades, *Higher Education*, 6-7, 8 (on the hermitage school of Prodromos, Blemmydes' teacher in Skamandros), 12-13, 16-17; J. Waring, 'Literacies of Lists: Reading Byzantine Monastic Inventories', in *Literacy, Education, and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. C. Holmes and J. Waring (Leiden, 2002), 165-186.

The author of Romylos of Vidin's *Life* recounted the saint's school activities briefly before moving onto his flight from home, prompted by his discovery of his parents' plans to marry him to a woman. At this point in the text, Romylos is called 'the youth' (τῷ νέῳ), indicating that he is an adolescent.[92] Theophanes offered a similarly brief account of the Athonite monk Maximos' tuition in holy Scripture and his childhood visits to local hermits, before stating that the saint fled home to avoid marriage at 17 years old. He also remarked that Maximos never studied grammar and was therefore considered ignorant of learned discourse, which attracted criticism when Maximos spoke publicly at the court of Andronikos II as a young monk.[93] By contrast, Makarios Makres, a writer well-versed in secular studies (as stated above), afforded Maximos' learning greater attention and purported that the saint had studied Greek literature and rhetoric,[94] whereas the *Life* of Maximos by Niphon, a monk and author of minimal literary training,[95] omits education altogether; likewise, Niphon's own *Life* only briefly mentions his learning of holy letters.[96] The importance afforded to education thus depended on the social background and occupation of the saint and/or their hagiographer.

Biographies therefore present childhood as the time when the male Life Course branches into one of several trajectories: for high-status boys, early schooling serves as preparation for further education and training for a career; for boys from less privileged backgrounds, the passage from childhood to adulthood is marked by a shift in focus from education to marriage, or the rejection of marriage in favour of monasticism. In each biographical trajectory, parents' aspirations for their children vary according to social status. While marriage in youth would have brought a child into the world of adult responsibilities and relationships early on in life, the institutions of secondary and higher education enforced an extended model of youth onto males from high-status families in the service of the church or state. The basic function of childhood is, however, the same across each life trajectory: to initiate the child in the skills and wisdom necessary for his role in adult society.

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[92] Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. 33-41-III. 1-4.
[93] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, II-III, V. 1.
[94] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, VI-VII.
[95] Greenfield and Talbot, *Holy Men of Mount Athos*, xiv; A-M. Talbot, 'Niphon', *ODB*, 1487-1488.
[96] *Life of Niphon*, I. 1.

Education also constituted an important form of socialisation, particularly for boys who learned outside the home. Hagiographers often stated that a saint's parents 'gave' their child to a teacher, using phraseology to convey the notion that the child transitioned from the domestic sphere of the family into the public environment of the school, where new types of relationships with peers and teachers could be fostered.[97] This transition is represented visually in cycles of the life of Saint Nicholas, where the life-stage of childhood is represented by education. For example, in the 14th-century church of St Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki, Nicholas' early life is condensed into stages depicted in three consecutive scenes (fig. 4.7).[98] The first, representing Nicholas' infancy, depicts him as a swaddled new-born in the crib beside his mother, attended by women at home. The second scene, representing childhood, shows Nicholas' mother Nonna taking him to school. Both mother and child appear to step from architecture of the home in the first scene into that of the school in the next, thereby suggesting Nicholas' transfer from a domestic to public environment. Nicholas wears a short child's tunic and carries a writing tablet, a symbol of his studiousness. Some artisans inscribed the tablet with letters of the Greek alphabet or the psalms, with which children were taught to read and write.[99] Nonna, taking responsibility for her child's tuition as a good parent, occupies the transitory space between the home and school, encouraging her son towards the teacher with gestures. The teacher extends a hand to receive Nicholas into the classroom, where two pupils – a common feature of 14th-century scenes[100] – are already seated.

Space, clothing, and gesture reflect Nicholas' entry into a new realm of childrearing, headed by teachers rather than parents and populated by classmates rather than members of the household. The similar appearance of Nicholas and the other pupils indicates that they embody one age-group, though Nicholas bears his usual receding hairline – probably a visual symbol of the 'παιδογέρων',

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[97] *Life of Makarios*, 12. 3-4; Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. 18-19.
[98] Fig. 4.7. Life of St Nicholas, church of St Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki, 14th century. Accessed online (25/02/2020):
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Thessaloniki%2C_Agios_Nikolaos_Orfanos_%28Άγιος_Νικόλαος_Ορφανός%29_%2814._Jhdt.%29_%2847851912501%29.jpg.
[99] Ševčenko, *Life of St Nicholas*, 73-75, figs. 14.2, 20.2, 21.2, 34.2, 37.1/3, 38.2, 41.2.
[100] *Ibid*., 75.

signifying premature wisdom.[101] Nicholas' schooling prepared him for the event in the third scene, where he is ordained as a deacon at church among other young clerics; Nicholas' hair appears to be greying here, but usually he is depicted as a beardless young man in his ordination as deacon (as in the Sinai icon, fig. 6.5), a mature bearded man in his ordination as priest, and an old, white-haired man in his ordination as bishop.[102] Nicholas transitions seamlessly from childhood to adulthood, and from the lay to ecclesiastic Life Course, with no intermediate scene to mark this passage (his early offices in the church, *deuterarios* and lector, were omitted).[103] Each scene embodies a new life-stage, as Nicholas passes from infancy, to childhood, to adulthood, entering a new social environment in each. Childhood is portrayed as a period that both foreshadows and primes Nicholas for his adult occupation.

For children who entered monasteries, later childhood heralded a different transition from the social setting of the family to that of the monastic community. The Byzantines viewed monasticism, in an ideal world, as an alternative to, and rejection of, the lay family,[104] an ideal hagiographers conveyed by describing young saints as 'abandoning'[105] or 'disregarding'[106] – or having them 'disdain'[107] – their *patris*, family, and friends. Therefore, aspiring novices had to attain a certain level of maturity before they could commit to the decision to enter a monastery. Byzantine law dictated that children could choose to enter monasteries from the age of 10 and protected their choice by forbidding parents from removing children from monasteries or excluding them from their wills.[108] However, in practice, monastic founders voiced different opinions about when a child became mentally capable of making this life-altering decision. The commonest age of entry into a monastery amongst middle and late Byzantine adolescents was 18, but ages of admission varied from 6 to 22.[109] It is significant that the lowest age of entry coincided with the ages of schooling and engagement (6 and 7). Since biographers

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[101] Hennessy, *Images*, 127.

[102] Ševčenko, *Life of Saint Nicholas*, 85.

[103] *Ibid.*, 79-80.

[104] Talbot, 'Family and Monastery', 119-121.

[105] 'καταλιπεῖν'. Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. 39.

[106] 'παρ' οὐδὲν θέμενος.' Philotheos Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγιου Σάβα*, VI. 5-6.

[107] 'ὑπερφρονεῖ'. Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III. 11-12 (4); Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 355. 113-115.

[108] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, letter M. 15 (395-396/171-172).

[109] Talbot, 'Adolescent Monastic', 85-87, 97, appendix I.

presented monasticism as an alternative to marriage, it may be suggested that founders perceived the decision to marry or enter a monastery as requiring the same level of maturity. Of course, these rules did not apply to infants who were taken into monasteries, some of which took on the care of orphaned or abandoned children (on this, see part 4.4 below).

Doubts about whether children were capable of grasping the meaning of the monastic lifestyle led Joachim, author of the *typikon* for the monastery of St John the Forerunner (1332) of Menoikeion, north-eastern Greece, to ban boys below 20 years old from admission. In explanation, Joachim stated that he himself was tonsured by his uncle at a very young age, when he 'was able to grasp nothing of his angelic way of life and conduct'.[110] However, other founders welcomed children into their institutions, believing that instruction from suitable role models would shape them into virtuous adults. Blemmydes allowed children to enter his monastery at Ephesos at the age of 10, stipulating that these young candidates must wear black until they passed their 12th birthday, then adopt full monastic garb in their 20th year.[111] He expressed a strong belief in the boys' potential for monasticism, stating that he had trained many such candidates to reach 'very high grades of virtue' and even restrained 'their natural impulses… thanks to constant exhortations, reprimands and all sorts of instruction'; therefore, 'one should conscientiously accept such youths and not turn them away because of the work required for their education and custody'.[112] Whereas other authors regarded children's spiritual greenness suspiciously, Blemmydes viewed this as an opportunity, comparing children's hearts to 'fresh writing tablets' ready to be inscribed with the 'letters and signs that constitute salvation'.[113]

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[110] 'αὐτὸς οὐδέν τι τῆς ἰσαγγέλου πολιτείας ἐκείνου τε καὶ διαγωγῆς ἠδυνήθη μεταλαβεῖν.' Joachim, *Typikon of Joachim, Metropolitan of Zichna, for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner on Mount Menoikeion near Serres*, ed. A. Guillou, *Les Archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrome sur le Mont Ménécée* (Paris, 1955), 163-176; trans T. Miller in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1579-1612, I. 1591.

[111] Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Typikon of Nikephoros Blemmydes for the Monastery of the Lord Christ-Who-Is at Ematha near Ephesos*, ed. A. Heisenberg, *Nicephori Blemmydae Curriculum Vitae et Carmina* (Leipzig, 1896), 93-99, rev. ed. Kurtz, *BZ* 6 (1897): 394-410 (for passages 9, 11, 13); trans. J. Munitiz, *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1176-1195, IX. 1203.

[112] 'μέγαν ἀρετῆς βαθμὸν… αὐταῖς ἐνθυμήσεσιν ἐκ τῶν πυκνῶν παραινέσεων ὁμοῦ καὶ ἐπιτηρήσεων καὶ πολυειδῶν ἀποκρίσεων… προσληπτέον νουνεχῶς τὴν νεότητα καὶ μὴ παραιτητέον διὰ τὸ ἐπίπονον τῆς ἀναγωγῆς τε καὶ φυλακῆς'. *Ibid.*, IX. 1202-1203.

[113] 'καθαροῖς πίναξιν… τὰ τῆς σωτηρίας γράμματα καὶ διδάγματα'. *Ibid.*

A similar ruling appears in Neilos Damilas' *typikon* for the Cretan convent of the Mother of God Pantanassa (1417). Neilos stated that women entering the convent may bring their daughters to be educated, so long as the girl is at least 10 years old and 'wishes to learn her letters and become a nun'.[114] Neilos stressed the superior's duty to teach the nuns to read, insisting that girls should be taught this skill before beginning the novitiate in their 13th year. Even if age 10 was considered too young for children to commit to monastic life, some authors clearly regarded children of this age as mature enough to know whether or not they *intended* to pursue monasticism and gave them the instruction necessary to do so. The girls who were raised in Theodora and Euphrosyne Synadene's Constantinopolitan convent of Sure Hope (whose original *typikon* was composed c.1300) also had to express their intention to become nuns in order to 'be educated, and learn lessons which contribute to the monastic rule'. While literacy was a principal element of primary education, Euphrosyne made clear that the instruction received by girls at the convent was designed to prepare them for monastic life. The education of lay girls was banned, since they were regarded as a harmful influence on the other nuns.[115] Such proscriptions, which appear in other *typika*, reflect the same social suspicions towards lay children expressed by hagiographers.[116]

Beyond citing canon law, founders did not always state why they deemed certain years of life as appropriate for entering new stages of monasticism.[117] However, possible reasons may be gleaned. Some theologians asserted that the 10th year – the earliest permitted age of monastic entry – was the

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[114] 'βούληται μαθεῖν γράμματα καὶ μονάσαι'. Neilos Damilas, *Typikon of Neilos Damilas for the Convent of the Mother of God Pantanassa at Baionaia on Crete*, ed. S. Pétridès, 'Le typikon de Nil Damilas pour le Monastère de Femmes de Baeonia en Crète (1400)', *IRAIK* 15 (1911): 92–111; trans A-M. Talbot in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1462-1482, V. 1470.

[115] 'προγυμνάζεσθαι δὲ καὶ ἀσκεῖν μαθήματα συντελοῦντα τῷ κανόνι τῶν μοναχῶν'. Euphrosyne Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, II. 148. 1564.

[116] The same proscription appears in Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, IX. 1352. Neilos, bishop of Tamasia, did not permit lay youths to study the Scripture at his monastery; only those who bore the first beard on their cheeks were permitted to study the psalter: Neilos, *Rule for the Monastery of the Mother of God of Machairas in Cyprus*, ed. I. Tsiknopoullos, *Kypriaka Typika* (Nicosia, 1969), 3-68; trans. A. Bandy in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 1107-1175, 115. 1155. Athanasios of Meteora also ruled (1350-1383) that 'children should not learn worldly letters' (Παιδία κοσμικὰ γράμματα μὴ μανθάνειν): *Canonical Rule of Athanasios the Meteorite for the Monastery of the Transfiguration (Metamorphosis)*, ed. N. Bees, 'Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν Ἱστορίαν τῶν Μονῶν τῶν Μετεώρων', *Βυζαντίς* 1 (1909), 250-252; trans. T. Dennis in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1455-1461, 6. 1460.

[117] Blemmydes, *Ematha*, IX. 1202.

time when children became capable of sin, though they stressed that this depended on individual knowledge and wisdom.[118] Others cited the 12th year, when children were expected to make confession before taking communion, suggesting that they were considered capable of moral reasoning.[119] The 12th year also held biblical significance as the age when Jesus amazed the doctors in the Temple at Jerusalem with his teachings (Luke 2:41-50). As Hennessy explains, in Judaism the 13th year was connected to the age of majority with respect to the obligation to follow the Torah – and therefore the acquisition of moral responsibility – since the 1st or 2nd century, and this tradition can be associated with the religious significance of the 12th year in the Byzantine Life Course.[120]

If the Byzantines associated the 10th and 12th years with the development of moral consciousness, it makes sense that some founders deemed children of these ages as more suitable for monastic training. It may also be significant that some children were allowed to begin the novitiate at the same age that others were allowed to marry. At the Pantanassa convent, girls could become novices at 13 years old, while Patriarch Matthew I (1397-1403/1403-1410) reported that he was able to enter a monastery at 15 years old despite the superior's concerns about his youth.[121] In his autobiography, the 13th-century monk Maximos of the Boreine monastery explicitly likened marriage to tonsure. As a boy, Maximos told his spiritual father that he would only choose tonsure 'when I am of age for marriage'; later, he compared the joy of donning the monastic garb to the feeling of entering 'a sort of bridal chamber'.[122] This equation of marriage with tonsure, which symbolised one's marriage to Christ, reflects marriage's status as a hallmark of maturity in both the male and female Life Course.

Moreover, according to Blemmydes, who set the minimum age of entry at 10 years, 'in general, those who have learned the rudiments of the spiritual life from a tender age are found to be more adept than the others, just as we see happening in all other professions and branches of

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[118] Patlagean, 'L'Enfant', 88; Munitiz, *Questions and Answers*, 74.
[119] Patlagean, 'L'Enfant', 88.
[120] Hennessy, 'Apocryphal Imagery', 184.
[121] Neilos Damilas, *Pantanassa*, V. 1470; Matthew I, *Charsianeites*, A2-A3. 1633-1634.
[122] 'ὁ χρόνος τῆς ἐν ἐμοὶ συναρμόσεως… τινα νυμφικὴν παστάδα'. Maximos, *Boreine*, VII. 1181-1182.

science.'[123] Other authors also expressed a belief that children's spiritual development could be augmented in a monastic environment. Neophytos stated in his *rule* (1214) for the Hermitage of the Holy Cross near Ktima, Cyprus, that he chose his nephew as his successor 'not indeed out of family affection, but because he was raised here from a tender age'.[124] For other founders, the maturity required for monasticism could be gained from life experience as well as age. In her *typikon* (c.1300), Theodora Palaiologina wrote that women entering her convent of Lips in Constantinople must undertake a three-year novitiate if they were under 20 years old, a one-year novitiate if they were 20 or older, or a six-month novitiate if they were above 20 *and* had experienced worldly misfortunes such as widowhood or the loss of children. Likewise, a girl who came to the convent in infancy or childhood, 'whether she is noble or of common birth', could be consecrated early, in her 16th year, as long as she was examined and found suitable for monastic life by the other nuns. These were girls who had arrived at the convent 'on account of some misfortune' – possibly orphanhood – or 'because of love of God'.[125] Admittance was therefore conditional upon the candidate's piety or experience of suffering, which was perceived to augment her suitability for monasticism.

Monasticism offered some individuals an education that their socioeconomic origins would have otherwise denied them. Neophytos, son of a humble family from the Cypriot village of Lefkara, explained in his *typikon* for the Holy Cross monastery that when he was 18 or a little older, he began his monastic career tending the vineyards, 'since I had not been given over to even one day's studying of lessons by my parents, so that I was ignorant of even the first letters of the alphabet'. Five years later, 'having acquainted [himself] with the rudimentary elements of letters' and learned the Psalter by heart, he was promoted to the office of assistant ecclesiarch.[126] In contrast, the 13th-century monk

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[123] 'δοκιμώτεροι δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ὡς ἐπίπαν εὑρίσκονται οἱ ἐξ ἁπαλῶν ὀνύχων τὴν πνευματικὴν ἐπιστήμην δεδιδαγμένοι, καθάπερ ἐστὶν ἰδεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν καὶ τεχνῶν'. Blemmydes, *Ematha*, IX. 1202.
[124] 'οὐ πάντως διὰ στοργικῆς συγγενείας διάθεσιν, ἀλλ' ὡς ὅτι ἐξ ἁπαλῶν ὀνύχων ἐνθάδε ἀνατραφείς'. Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, XVI. 1358.
[125] 'τῶν περιφανῶν οὖσα ἢ καὶ τῶν τύχην ἰδιωτῶν... διά τι πως τῶν ἐκ τύχης... ἢ καὶ διὰ πόθον ἄλλως τὸν πρὸς Θεόν'. Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, IX. 18. 1270-1271, IX. 18. 1270-1271.
[126] 'Ἐπεὶ δὲ παρὰ τῶν τεκόντων οὐδὲ μίαν ἡμέραν εἰς μαθημάτων διατριβὴν ἐπεδόθην, ὡς καὶ αὐτό με ἀγνοεῖν τὸ πρῶτον στοιχεῖον τῶν γραμμάτων... τὰ πρῶτα τῶν γραμμάτων στοιχεῖα γνωρίσας'. Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, IV. 1370.

Maximos of the small monastery at Boreine near Philadelphia, whose father was a craftsman charcoal burner, learned his letters as a child (possibly from his grandmother, who took charge of Maximos after his mother's death) and attended a school of grammar before entering the monastery.[127] His autobiography suggests that at least some children from modest social origins had access to formal schooling.[128] However, while the monastic life may have offered a degree of social mobility to some candidates, several institutions adopted rules that varied according to their members' social status. Thus, bishop Neilos' *typikon* (1210) for the Cypriot monastery of the Mother of God of Machairas stated that 'distinguished' people were to be given shorter novitiates than common people.[129]

What can be said about the tuition of girls, who did not receive formal schooling? Evidence for girls' education outside convents is limited. The 14th-century Saint Matrona of Chios was simply said to have gained knowledge of holy sayings and chosen a life of virginity in childhood of her own accord, uninstructed by parents or anyone else.[130] As knowledge of the Scripture was a prerequisite for sanctity, it is a hagiographical trope that saints without a formal education gained this wisdom by miraculous design.[131] Several late Byzantine noblewomen, such as the nun Theodora Raoulaina (b.1240), who wrote hagiographies, collected manuscripts, and exchanged classical texts with learned men of her day, were evidently well-educated, but little is known about their early lives.[132] Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina (1291-c.1335), daughter of the scholar Nikephoros Choumnos, also owned and commissioned literature and corresponded with learned men. After being widowed at 16 years old, Eirene was tonsured as Eulogia and later became abbess of the Philanthropos Soter convent

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[127] Maximos, *Boreine*, V. 1181.

[128] This was perhaps limited mostly to the urban environment. The precise location of Boreine/ Skoteine within the diocese of Philadephia is unknown. See *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1176.

[129] 'τινες… περιφανεῖς'. Neilos, *Machairas*, 55. 1139. The Evergetian tradition of distinguishing between aristocratic and 'common' candidates in regard to the novitiate and tonsure was adopted by several later institutions: see *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 464-465, 878, 979, 1045.

[130] D. I. Moniou, 'ΤΟ ΕΓΚΩΜΙΟ ΚΑΙ Η ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΟΣΙΑ ΜΑΤΡΩΝΑ ΤΗΝ ΧΙΟΠΟΛΙΤΙΔΑ ΤΟΥ ΝΕΙΛΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΟΥ ΡΟΔΟΥ', *Parekbolai* 5 (2015): 75-120, 96. 99-102.

[131] Patlagean, 'Byzantine Hagiography', 103.

[132] D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits, 1250-1500* (Cambridge, 1994), 35, 39-46. On literacy amongst late Byzantine aristocratic women who became nuns, see also A-M. Talbot, 'Bluestocking Nuns: Intellectual Life in the Convents of Late Byzantium', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983): 604-618.

in Constantinople.[133] Eulogia's *typikon* does not indicate whether her convent encouraged the teaching of novices, but a letter from her spiritual adviser Theoleptos, metropolitan of Philadelphia, did refer to a young girl who was entrusted to one of Eulogia's nuns 'for reasons of education and security'. Theoleptos advised Eulogia to guide and counsel this girl personally as a spiritual role model, 'lest the complete separation from you cast her upon unprofitable desires and unwise habits.'[134]

However, in her own letters Eulogia complained that her parents gave her no formal tuition in grammar, though her second spiritual adviser asserted that she surpassed all contemporary women in learning.[135] For Hero, the language of Eulogia's letters indeed suggests the poor level of education offered to aristocratic women of her day.[136] Thus, it appears that parents did not consider it necessary to offer their daughters a high degree of literacy, although it was not uncommon for noblewomen to be literate. A social expectation of basic literacy amongst women can be also inferred from the fact that young noblewomen read and write in late Byzantine Romance, and that it is typically mothers or female relatives who teach girls to read in texts.[137]

The latter point is exemplified by George Sphrantzes' sanctifying account of the life of his godmother Thomais, the daughter of a prominent family from Asia Minor. After being orphaned in childhood, Thomais' relatives brought her to Constantinople where she was raised and educated by the mother of the accomplished scholar Nicholas Kabisalas. Later, she accompanied her foster-mother when she entered the convent of St Theodora in Thessaloniki to be near her brother. There, Thomais was 'trained in virtue and literature' by her and 'the virtuous and learned Lady Palaiologina',[138] the

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[133] On Eirene, see A. Hero, 'Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina, Abbess of the Convent of Philanthropos Soter in Constantinople', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985): 119-157.

[134] 'παιδείας ἔνεκα καὶ ἀσφαλείας... μήπως ὁ παντελὴς ἀπὸ σοῦ μακρυσμὸς ἐπιρρίψῃ ταύτην εἰς ἀσυντελῆ θελήματα καὶ παράλογον συνήθειαν.' Theoleptos of Philadelphia, *Letters*, ed. and trans. A. C. Hero, *The Life and Letters of Theoleptos of Philadelphia* (Brookline, MA, 1994), II. 362-367. See also Theoleptos' comments about Eirene's duty to teach her nuns by providing them with an example of virtuous conduct: II. 397-408.

[135] Eirene-Eulogia, *Letters*, ed. and trans. A. Hero, *A Woman's Quest for Spiritual Guidance: The Correspondence of Princess Irene Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina* (Brookline, MA, 1986), I. 4-12. 26-27; II. 17-21. 56-57.

[136] Hero, 'Irene-Eulogia', 135-136, 147.

[137] *Livistros and Rodamni*, 1349-1357, 1390, 1468, 1798, 1817-1819 (see chapter 5.4).

[138] 'παιδεύουσαι εἴς τε ἀρετὴν καὶ λόγον'; 'Παλαιολογίνας, γυναικὸς ἐναρέτου καὶ λογίας'. Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XVIII. 1-2.

only late Byzantine nun known to have composed religious poetry.[139] Thomais was perhaps exceptionally fortunate to have received such an education, first at home by a female member a scholarly family and later by a prolific writer in a convent. Although the contents of Thomais' education are not specified, Sphrantzes wrote that her knowledge of the Scripture caught the attention of the emperor and patriarch, thus implying her expertise in Christian texts.[140]

Writers also referred to imperial daughters being taught by female relatives, though their education is reported with minimal detail. Akropolites stated that after the marriage of the 11-year-old Theodore II Laskaris and the 9-year-old Helena Asenina of Bulgaria was arranged (the betrothal was actually concluded in 1235, when the children were 14 and 12), the children 'were raised and educated by [Theodore's mother] the empress Eirene, as she had a good nature'.[141] Helena's learning probably included instruction in the Greek language, culture, and court ceremony, as foreign-born imperial brides of the middle Byzantine period received.[142] It seems likely that Eirene Laskarina was tasked with arranging the children's tuition instruction, which traditionally had been provided by the court eunuchs, rather than delivering it herself.[143] Yet, it is certain that Helena would have accompanied and learned from Eirene as she went about her imperial duties, in preparation for her future role as empress.[144] This closeness may be reflected in Akropolites' description of the child Helena's strong attachment to her mother-in-law.[145]

In childhood, variant life trajectories begin to emerge due to the impacts of gender, status, and changes in family structure (an aspect explored in part 4.4). Biographies present education as an

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[139] Talbot, 'Bluestocking Nuns', 607.
[140] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XVIII. 5.
[141] 'ἀνήγοντο δὲ παρὰ τῆς βασιλίδος Εἰρήνης καὶ ἐπαιδεύοντο, οἷα ἐκείνη φύσεως ἀγαθῆς τυχοῦσα'.
Akropolites, *Hist.*, XXXIV (197). For the children's ages, see Macrides' analysis: 191, note 2.
[142] Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 243-245. In the late Byzantine era, when Greek was no longer the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean, foreign brides typically learned Greek *after* arriving at the Byzantine court: Melichar, *Empresses*.
[143] Dimiter Angelov points out that, by this time (1235), Theodore II had already been assigned a tutor: D. Angelov, *The Byzantine Hellene: The Life of Theodore II Laskaris and Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2019), 60.
[144] Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 247, 249 (middle Byzantine princesses attended and observed the ceremonies in which the empress played a role).
[145] Akropolites, *Hist.*, XXXIV (198). Akropolites describes Helena's distress when her father Asan attempted to separate her from her mother-in-law.

activity undertaken by all male children, but only those of high-status boys aspiring to prominent careers detail schooling at both the primary and secondary level, which offer grounds for their subjects' exhibition of remarkable intellect or virtue. Reading proficiency is presented as a curricular goal of both boys and girls, which concurrently served to educate children in Christian spirituality, especially in monastic communities. Moral virtue and scriptural knowledge are presented as the tenets of girls' education, rather than the secular or 'outer' learning undertaken by high-status boys, even though several noblewomen were highly literate and acquainted with classical literature. In part, this trend reflects our lack of sources for girls' education in Byzantium. However, it may also stem from social norms that valued Christian wisdom as a more appropriate pursuit for women than secular knowledge. Finally, it is clear that children learned in a range of environments, including the home, school, and monastery, each reflecting the intended social setting of a child's adult life. Writers present the classroom as an environment where boys honed the skills they would need for a career in public life, girls were taught in private settings by female role models, and monasteries created an environment where prospective monks and nuns could learn from spiritual role models away from the corrupting influence of their worldly peers.

(4.3) Work, service, and slavery

This section focuses on the impact of social status on the nature and duration of childhood. Beyond moral guidance and teaching literacy, parents and guardians from all socioeconomic backgrounds sought to provide children with the practical, vocational, and social skills required for their adult occupations. Among the urban and rural non-elite, children's participation in labour served both economic and educational functions, and was afforded a moral value by apocryphal texts on the childhood of Christ, according to which he helped his parents with agricultural and household chores.[146] In contrast to the peer-populated environment of the classroom, labour – including service

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[146] Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 135.

and slavery – introduced children to the company, spaces, and duties of adults from a young age, and exposed them to different risks that affected their mental and physical growth. At first glance, these observations may appear to imply that non-elite children were absorbed into the adult world earlier than their more affluent counterparts. However, while the social activities and environments of childhood certainly differed according to social status and location (urban versus rural), this did not necessarily mean that poor and rural children, upon the age of economic productivity, were treated identically to adults. Children's work contributed to the household economy and constituted a familial obligation, but it was also tailored to their age and/or gender and served as preparation for adulthood. In at least some contexts, children's economic productivity was measured according to their age.

All children learned skills in the management of the household. As the son of a wealthy urban Thessalonian official, Saint Germanos was introduced to some of the duties of a head of household in childhood, when his father sent him to supervise labourers at the family vineyard.[147] Kokkinos, using the mundanities of daily life to signal his subject's charitable nature, reported that when the noon-time sun became overbearing, Germanos, inspired by his philanthropic and sympathetic soul, allowed the labourers a break to sleep, cook, or pick lice off their clothes while he read his book of psalms. When Germanos' father discovered the scene, he punished his son and sent him home.[148] In ordinary circumstances, such supervisory tasks would have taught children the skills needed to manage a well-to-do household. It can be assumed that daughters of wealthy families received similar kinds of instruction to prepare them for their duties as wives, such as managing servants. Such managerial skills would also have benefited urban women who sometimes owned or operated small shops.[149]

Aside from occasional references to women participating in the harvest, women's roles in agricultural production are poorly reflected by the sources.[150] The only well-represented female domestic work is spinning and weaving, which illustrated manuscripts and the skeletal profiles of rural

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[147] Germanos' family background is described by Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, II. 5-50.
[148] *Ibid.*, VII. 1-29.
[149] Laiou, 'Role of Women', 246.
[150] *Ibid.*, 248.

women show to be occupations of women of all ages and statuses (including servants and wetnurses).[151] The age when girls began learning to use the loom was implied by the 11th-century writer Michael Psellos, whose daughter was learning to weave at the time she was learning to read, from her 6th year; as her skill progressed, her mother also taught her embroidery.[152] These activities may have functioned as moral as well as practical instruction for girls, since the Byzantines deemed spinning and weaving as occupations of virtuous women and assigned them moral value.[153] Some village church paintings depict the dishonest weaver, a woman with skeins of wool hung from her neck, amongst the sinners in Hell.[154] Gerstel suggests that, since archaeological evidence indicates that Greek village women wove in domestic settings, the weaver may have been condemned for selling the products of her labour in public.[155] However, Byzantine texts indicate that lower-status women frequently employed their cloth-making skills for commercial profit in both urban and rural areas.[156] For example, Kokkinos described 'a poor elderly widow' who approached Saint Palamas' tomb in Thessaloniki to have her shoulder healed, since her injury prevented her from using the distaff 'and thus her means of earning a living'.[157] Thus, by learning to spin and weave, girls helped to clothe the household, but also gained skills that could be used to financially support themselves or their families in adulthood.

The household provided the primary setting in which children learned their roles in adult society, taking parents or other adults as models of behaviour. Hagiography, in its didactic capacity, largely focuses on parents' roles as moral instructors.[158] However, occasionally writers referred to saints learning the skills of their fathers' professions. Just as the little Isidore used to mimic his priestly father enacting the church service, Saint Sabas the Younger's (c.1283-1348) father, whose family was

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[151] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 153-162, figs. 91, 116, 121-126; Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 94-95.
[152] Michael Psellos, *Funeral Oration for his Daughter*, 10 (66).
[153] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 159.
[154] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, fig. 127; Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, fig. 71.
[155] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 95-96.
[156] Laiou, 'Role of Women', 245; Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, 161-162.
[157] 'Χήρᾳ τινί γυναικὶ γηραιᾷ τε καὶ πένητι… καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰς τῆς ζωῆς ἀφορμὰς'. Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, XVII. 1.
[158] See also chapter 6.3, 210-211.

of military rank, trained his son in physical exercises and military tactics.[159] The *Life* of Gregory

Sinaites states that he practised calligraphy as a young monk, suggesting he learned the craft sometime

during childhood or adolescence.[160] As stated above, Blemmydes also learned his father's trade,

medicine, which he called 'my foster-sister', implying his familiarity with and attachment to the

subject.[161] We can assume that women who practised crafts, such as cloth-making or glass-working,[162]

or who ran shops jointly with their children,[163] also passed their skills on to their children.

While evidence for rural children's education is scarce, fathers would have certainly handed

down skills of the family trade to their sons. This transmission may be reflected in the censuses of

peasant tenants, the *paroikoi* of the Athonite monastic estates, many of whom were assigned second

names that denote professions, including potters, tailors, weavers, shoemakers, butchers, millers,

carpenters, and metalsmiths.[164] The fact that these tradenames were often shared by fathers and sons

may indicate the transmission of artisanal skills from one generation to the next. For example, a 1316

census of the Iviron monastery mentions one *paroikos* Michael Brestiakos, who is designated as a

smith (χαλκεὺς) and had an adult son in the same village who is also named as a smith.[165] In the

documents, these trade-related names may denote the true profession of the head of household, *or*

family names that an individual's descendants adopted on the basis of an ancestor's trade, which they

themselves no longer practised. In the latter case, tradenames shared by fathers and sons would simply

reflect the importance of crafts in creating family names and – therefore – identity. However, Lefort

has highlighted many indications to suggest that the attribution of a tradename to an individual in the

documents was, generally, related to the practice of a craft.[166] Moreover, given the structure of rural

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[159] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, IV. 10-11; *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, V. 51-55.
[160] Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, VII.
[161] 'κἀμοὶ σύντροφος'. Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. II.-III. 5.
[162] E. M. Stern, 'Glass Producers in Late Antique and Byzantine Texts and Papyri', in *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, ed. C. Entwistle and L. James (London, 2013), 82-88, 85-86.
[163] Laiou, 'Women in the Marketplace', 270.
[164] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 120-124.
[165] *Actes d'Iviron* III, no. 74 (204). Michael Brestiakos' (Μπρεστιάκος) son is named as 'Basil, his son'.
[166] The fact that tradenames had a referential function, rather than acting as proper names, in the documents is indicated by 1) the fact that a Slavic translation of a Greek *praktikon* transcribed the proper names of the peasants but translated their tradenames, implying that the translator considered these to reveal information of a

society, we might expect that a son would learn his father's trade, which would ensure his future economic security. In several cases, it is clear that a father and son shared a profession. Thus, the 1316 Iviron census mentions one Basil Aroulis who is listed as a priest (a professional name that denoted an individual's actual social role),[167] who had in his household a son Constantine who was also a priest, while his other son heading a separate household in the village is designated by the tradename of shoemaker (τζαγκάριος).[168] Additionally, as the next chapter shows, some artisans clearly passed down their trades to their sons or nephews, and there appears to have been a degree of social expectation that a son would learn his father's trade. Cases of brothers in the same or separate households who share tradenames may also reflect the transmission of crafts within a family.[169]

Rural children would have also performed agricultural, pastoral, and domestic tasks such as shepherding, herding cattle and pigs, foraging, fishing, fetching water and wood, and (for girls) helping with grain-grinding and childcare.[170] Rather than indicating the premature adoption of children into the world of adult labour, the designation of specific tasks to children reflects adults' efforts to tailor children's work to their age and mental/physical capacities. In hagiography, young monks perform similar tasks in monasteries, including fishing, baking, building work, serving in the kitchen, refectory, and as custodians of the church, and running errands and caring for elders.[171] Hagiographers presented these tasks as having an educational purpose; in exchange for their service, elders instructed

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different nature; 2) peasants whose names comprised of three structural elements (e.g. names indicating kinship or social situation, like 'widow') have a far higher proportion of tradenames than among all peasants in the 14th century, again suggesting that they did not act as proper names; 3) tradenames often take the place of another identifier, such as a relation by kinship, in the texts: J. Lefort, 'Anthroponymie et Société Villageoise (Xe-XIVe siècle)', in *Hommes et Richesses dans l'Empire Byzantin, VIIIe-XVe Siècle*, vol. 2, eds. V. Kravari, J. Lefort and C. Morrisson (Paris, 1991), 225-238; repr. in J. Lefort, *Société Rurale et Histoire du Paysage à Byzance* (Paris, 2006), 249-263, 251.

[167] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 121; Lefort, 'Anthroponymie', 251-252.
[168] *Actes d'Iviron* III, no. 74 (197).
[169] See, for example the household of Theodore Katzimpoullos the potter (τζυκαλᾶς), whose two brothers in another household, Constantine (the head) and John also bear the name 'potter': *Actes d'Iviron* III, no. 74 (198).
[170] Ariantzi, 'Kindheit', 135-141; Talbot, 'Childhood', 246.
[171] Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, III (Romylos serves in the monastery church), V (Romylos works in the bakery, kitchen, construction work), XX. 30-34 (young monk bakes, cares for elderly master); Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, IV-V (Athanasios works in the refectory and kitchen); *Life of Philotheos*, II. 6, III. 3 (Philotheos and his brother are trained as custodians); Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, VII (Gregory works in the kitchen and bakery, serves other monks). See also R. Greenfield, 'Children in Byzantine Monasteries: Innocent Hearts or Vessels in the Harbour of the Devil?', in *Becoming Byzantine*, 253–282, 277-278.

young monks in the monastic conduct. Similarly, when the orphaned Philotheos of Athos and his brother were appointed by their superior to serve in the monastery church, the church custodians trained the boys in holy letters at the same time.[172] This educational labour was seemingly distinguished from the exploitative use of children as servants in monasteries, which was banned by several authors of monastic *rules* (implying that it was not uncommon).[173] Thus, Neilos forbade the monks at his Cypriot monastery of Machairas from bringing in boys 'for the sake of carrying water or any other service'.[174]

Skeletal remains confirm that children performed hard labour, probably the domestic and agrarian chores described in texts. At 14th- to 15th-century Panakton, rural Greece, bones of a 6/7-year-old and a 9-10-year-old child from a grave in the village church showed signs of repetitive overuse of the upper limbs, associated with lifting heavy loads and/or stress fractures.[175] The fact that these children were buried inside the church suggests that even the village's wealthier children performed strenuous work. At the urban site of Frankish Corinth, too, signs of functional stress on children's bones show that they engaged in physical labour from a young age, sometimes suffering injuries because of work or acts of violence;[176] hagiographers also described cases when children's work led to accidental injury or death.[177] At the Anatolian cities of Priene and Pergamon, Schmorl's nodes, a type of degenerative joint disease affecting the spine, were found on late Byzantine juvenile skeletons, suggesting that these children engaged in strenuous physical work; comparatively, Schmorl's nodes were found only on Roman-period skeletons aged in the late 30s to early 40s onwards, as results of

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[172] *Life of Philotheos*, II. 6.
[173] Joachim also banned the bringing of boys into his monastery of Menoikeion, 'not even under the pretext of performing some service (προφάσει δῆθεν ὑπηρεσίας)': *Menoikeion*, 14. 1601. Saint Maximos the Hutburner also heals the servant (ὑπουργῷ) of a *geron* in the *vita* by Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, XXXIV. 19-20. See also the nun who approached Saint Palamas with a girl whom she raised from infancy, so that she 'could offer her services in a capable manner (προς ὑπηρεσίαν δεξιώς ἔχειν δύνασθαι)': Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, VI. 1. On children as servants in monasteries, see Greenfield, 'Children in Monasteries', 259, 274, 277-278; Talbot, 'Adolescent Monastic', 92-94.
[174] 'χάριν δὲ ὑδροφορίας ἢ ἑτέρας διακονίας'. Neilos, *Machairas*, 115. 1155.
[175] Gerstel, 'Late Medieval Settlement', 206-207.
[176] Barnes, 'The Dead', 441.
[177] Hagiographical examples are mentioned in Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 138.

regular ageing.[178] Osteological evidence therefore suggests that children's work affected their physical development and exposed them to dangers of the urban or rural environment. While many child skeletons have not been sexed, the fact that Byzantine women's bones often show signs of participation in heavy manual labour may indicate that girls engaged in more strenuous work than literary sources would suggest.[179] However, whether or not gendered divisions of labour existed among the adult populace depended on locality, as indicated by skeletal remains from other late Byzantine sites;[180] in such instances, divisions of labour may have also been enforced on children.

Work also features as a children's activity in monumental painting. Scenes of Christ's Baptism at the Hodigetria church of the Brontochion monastery in Mystras (1311/12-1322) and the Old Metropolis of Veria in northern Greece (14th century) depict boys fishing, pulling in nets with a windlass, and joining in the celebration of the Baptism festival while adults watch from a distance (fig. 4.8).[181] At Veria, children dance on a bridge observed by an adult on-looker; at the Hodegetria, a young girl picks flowers.[182] The scenes reflect the Palaiologan tendency to integrate children, as secondary themes, into monumental decoration; for Mouiki, the images of children doing work unsuitable for their age give the scenes a humorous tone.[183] However, as children *did* perform subsistence work and partake in religious festivals alongside adults, we might consider that their presence in these scenes also serves to render a more complete image of the Christian community. It is noteworthy that the painters have distinguished the celebrants' activities according to age and gender.

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[178] Teegen, 'Pergamon – Kyme – Priene', 263.

[179] Gerstel, 'Late Medieval Settlement', 198-200, 203-204; W. Wade et al, 'The Burials', in *Excavations at Nichoria*, vol. 3, eds. W. A. McDowell, W. D. E. Coulson and J. Rosser (Minneapolis, 1983), 403-404; O. D. Erdal, 'Demre Aziz Nikolaos Kilisesi Geç Bizans ve Yakınçağ İnsanlarının Yaşam Biçimleri/ Lifestyles of the Late Byzantine and Modern Period Human Skeletons Uncovered at the Church of St Nicholas in Demre', *Adalya* 12 (2009), 361-383, esp. 375-376 (in Turkish with English abstract, 384-385).

[180] Agelarakis, 'Excavations at Polystylon', 302-303; Demirel, 'Human Remains', 67-69.

[181] Fig. 4.8. Children Operating Windlass at the Baptism, Old Metropolis of Veria, Northern Greece, 14th century. Accessed online (28/10/2021): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_Metropoly_in_Veria_Fresco_6.jpg. See Mouriki, 'Revival Themes', figs. 1-11.

[182] Mouriki, 'Revival Themes', 460-462, figs. 5, 7-8.

[183] *Ibid*, 461. Specifically, Mouriki argues the scenes of the children draw on antique motifs of pygmies, putti, and cupids engaged in aquatic activities. Cf. Hennessy, *Images*, 73, note. 107 (Hennessy argues that the male children pulling the windlass are depicted as youths).

The children's work is observed – perhaps even supervised – by adults; boys engage in the more physical fishing chores while the dancing and flower-picking girls contribute to the atmosphere of public celebration and entertainment. These images of age- and gender-specific roles construct an idealised image of daily life that perhaps conformed with the moral agendas of their elite patrons.

Children and youths also worked in bands of performers who provided entertainment to Byzantine city-dwellers; they appear in manuscript marginalia dancing and performing acrobatics, using their light, agile frames to perform stunts while adult performers support them.[184] In his *History*, Nikephoros Gregoras described such acts that he saw a band of twenty men perform when he was about 27 years old (c.1322). The men, who had toured cities, collecting money from crowds from Egypt to Constantinople, performed an act in which one man walked a tightrope with a little boy (παιδίον) atop his shoulders. Another boy climbed a rope ladder balanced a man's head as he walked around. Gregoras wrote that many of the performers had fallen and died while enacting their tricks.[185] The boys may have been relatives of the adult performers, or perhaps orphans for whom they provided care and training. The anecdote alludes to the real environments in which children worked, and the risks they faced as a result of being incorporated into the world of adult labour.

While child labour chiefly served the household economy, some children worked to better their own futures. Occasionally, writers offered details about the duties of young people who worked as servants.[186] The hagiographer Philotheos Kokkinos, reportedly born to parents of modest means, worked as a servant in the house of his teacher, the scholar Thomas Magistros, to fund his education alongside the sons of Thessalonian elite families, including the family of Saint Germanos Maroules.[187] In Kokkinos' adulthood, his background formed a basis for classist attacks by his opponents; Demetrios Kydones accused Kokkinos, who had 'served with earthen pots' in his teacher's house, of

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[184] Hennessy, *Images*, 65-69, figs. 2.14-2.18.
[185] Gregoras, *Hist.*, VIII. 10 (I. 348-351).
[186] Literary portrayals of relationships between young servants and their mistresses are examined in chapter 5.3.
[187] The sources of Kokkinos' early life are discussed by Mitrea, *Late-Byzantine Hagiographer*, 41-48, esp. 44-46.

having 'come to us having acquired some smoke instead of theology'.[188] The urban environment of Thessaloniki also allowed the orphaned Athanasios of Meteora (1305-1383) – according to his *vita* – to obtain an education he could not afford. While serving an imperial secretary, Athanasios used to stand outside wealthy boys' classes listening-in, until some teachers, observing his eagerness to learn, decided to teach him for free.[189] The scholar Maximos Planoudes (c.1255-1305) similarly paid a fellow teacher and friend to educate his young servant John, whom he employed as a messenger.[190] Message-delivering was also a task performed by 'a child servant' of Eirene, Michael VIII's sister, who according to Akropolites brought her the message of Constantinople's recapture in 1261.[191]

A group of children who are almost absent from the sources are slaves. Children could be sold or, if their mothers were slaves, born into slavery;[192] child slaves were also taken from war captives in the Palaiologan period, when a slave market continued to exist at Constantinople.[193] They worked in houses, workshops, and other predominantly urban settings.[194] Age, gender, and professional skills were key determinants of a slave's economic value.[195] Prices of young slaves in Byzantine law-codes suggest that children were deemed as more economically productive from the age of 12 onwards, or from the age of 10 if the child was a eunuch.[196] The 14th-century *Hexabiblos* states that unskilled (non-eunuch) slaves were worth 20 *nomismata* if they were aged 12 or older (earlier legislation cites age 10), or 10 *nomismata* if they were under 12. If the child was a eunuch *and* under 10 years old, he was worth 30 *nomismata*, whereas eunuchs aged 10 or older were worth between 50 to 70 *nomismata*

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[188] 'ταῖς χύτραις διακονῶν, καπνόν τινα κομίζων ἡμῖν ἤκεις ἐκεῖθεν ἀντὶ θεολογίας'. Demetrios Kydones, *Apologia di Procoro*, ed. G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri Appunti per la Storia della Teologia e della Letteratura Bizantina del Secolo XIV* (Vatican City, 1931), I. 205-206. I quote the translation of the passage by Mitrea, *Late-Byzantine Hagiographer*, 45.
[189] *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*, 240.
[190] Constantiniades, *Higher Education*, 92-93.
[191] 'παιδαρίου τινὸς'. Akropolites, *Hist*., LXXXVI (379).
[192] Y. Rautman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World* (London, 2009), 25-26, 141.
[193] J. Pahlitzsch, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Byzantium in the Palaiologan Era', in *Slavery and the Slave Trade in Eastern Mediterranean (c.1100-1500)* (Turnhout, 2017), eds. R. Amitai and C. Cluse, 163-185, 165-166.
[194] Rautman, *Byzantine Slavery*, 103-107.
[195] On adult slave prices in legal texts, see A. Hadjunucolauou-Marava, *Recherches sur la Vie des Esclaves dans le Monde Byzantin* (Athens, 1950), 90.
[196] Antoniadis-Bibicou, 'Quelques Notes', 82.

depending on whether or not they had professional skills;[197] incidentally, this stipulation indicates that children may have already acquired professional skills by their 10th year. We may consider the higher economic value placed on older slaves in Byzantine law-codes in light of known real prices of slaves in Roman Egypt, where a slave's value increased proportionally with age up to early adulthood (around the 25th year), indicating that slaves in their physical prime were valued mostly highly.[198] It appears that eunuchs – especially skilled eunuchs – were highly valued since the early Byzantine era, judging from the prices of two eunuchs over the age of 10 in 6th-century Constantinople, one of whom was sold for 30 *solidi*, while the other, who had professional skills, was sold for 70 *solidi*.[199]

Thus, we may glean that in Byzantium, the 10th and 12th years – which marked an increase in a slave's economic value – were perceived as milestones in a child's biological and – perhaps – mental development, since the years coincided with the legal age of entry into a monastery (10) and, in certain institutions, the minimum age for entry or tonsure. By their 10th or 12th year, slave children were perhaps considered to have reached a state of physical strength suitable for harder work alongside adults, but also a state of mental maturity that allowed them to handle more intellectually demanding tasks. This certainly makes sense in the case of child eunuchs, who were intended to serve imperial and (possibly) aristocratic families.[200] The scarcity of sources for slaves in the Byzantine empire makes it difficult to consider how enslaved children experienced childhood – if at all. However, if the increasing value placed on slave children according to age *does* reflect their perceived suitability for work of a different nature or level of difficulty, this may indicate some effort – on the part of slave-owners, slave-sellers, or lawmakers – to acknowledge the immaturity of slaves below a certain age and tailor their work accordingly. Greeks who became slaves of Venetian, Genoese, and Mamluk masters

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[197] Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, I. 18. 17. On this legislation, which draws from the *Basilikas* and Justinianic law, see Antoniadis-Bibicou, 'Démographie, Salaires et Prix à Byzance au XIe Siècle', *Annales* 27.1 (1972): 215-246, 227-230.
[198] W. Scheidel, 'Real Slave Prices and the Relative Cost of Slave Labor in the Greco-Roman Word', *Ancient Society* 35 (2005): 1-17, 3-4, figs. 1-2, tbl. 1.
[199] Rautman, *Byzantine Slavery*, 57, tbl. C. 1.
[200] On eunuchs in late Byzantium, see N. Gaul, 'Eunuchs in the Late Byzantine Empire c.1250-1400', in *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. S. Tougher (London, 2002), 199-219.

through the Black Sea slave trade during the 13th to 15th centuries were valued according to age. Most slaves in the Venetian and Genoese markets were aged between 15 to 25; that is, in the physical prime of life, when they were perhaps deemed more capable of work. In the case of female slaves who became pregnant, Mamluk authorities set the minimum age that a child could be separated from its mother variably at 7-8 years old, upon the loss of baby teeth (situated around the same age by medieval physicians),[201] or the onset of physical maturity.[202]

Moreover, despite their lack of legal rights and protections, the work of slave children may not have affected their health more negatively than that of poor children who performed heavy labour. The reverse situation was discovered at late Byzantine Pergamon, northwest Anatolia, where infant and child skeletons from two cemeteries of a poor urban community were compared. The first group dated to 1200-1315, when the settlement was under siege by the Turkish emirate of Karasi, and the latter to 1315-1350, when a small Christian population were living as slaves of the Turkish lords after the city's conquest.[203] Surprisingly, the children living as slaves had better health than the pre-conquest group (health and living conditions were also generally worse in the late Byzantine period compared with Roman-era Pergamon).[204] This may be explained by the fact that, whereas poor living conditions created by the city's siege probably harmed the health of children living in the pre-conquest period, it was in the Turkish lords' interest to maintain a healthy, well-nourished workforce in the conquered population. For comparative purposes, we may note that although the diet of agricultural slaves at an imperial-era Roman villa differed from those of higher-status inhabitants in that they included greater quantities of inferior types of meat (sheep and goat rather than pork, tougher cuts, meat from older animals), the slaves consumed meat regularly nonetheless, even though Roman authors described slave diets as being largely meat-free (and thus less protein-rich).[205] While the conquered population

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[201] Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 28-30.
[202] Barker, *Black Sea Slave Trade*, 109-110.
[203] Schultz and Schmidt-Schultz, 'Health and Disease', 288, 302.
[204] Teegen, 'Pergamon – Kyme – Priene', 263.
[205] U. Roth, 'Food, Status, and the *Peculium* of Agricultural Slaves', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 278-292, 284-287.

of 14th-century Pergamon does not reflect the position of slaves working in private shops, homes, or villas, it would have been in all masters' interests to keep their slaves nourished and fit for work.

Nevertheless, it was posited that high mortality among children aged 7 to 14 in post-conquest Pergamon was linked to their arduous work as slaves.[206] In this vein, it is worth noting that elevated mortality and poor health among children aged from around 6 to 10 in the Roman British countryside has been explained by the fact that rural children began their working life at this age, coinciding with a change to the Roman child's social status upon the 7th year,[207] which – as I noted in chapter two – also marked the upper limit of infancy in Byzantium. If the slave children at 14th-century Pergamon began their work from around the same age, this may explain the peak in mortality from around the 7th year. The Pergamon population exemplifies the intersection between socioeconomic status and political, historical, and environmental contexts in shaping experiences of childhood.

The Ottoman conquests also created an entirely new social status for some non-elite Christian children through the institution of the devşirme, a 'child-levy' system that recruited boys aged 10 to 18 amongst the Ottomans' non-Muslim subjects into the state's military-administrative service.[208] Called *paidomazoma* ('child-gathering') in Greek, the devşirme removed sons of peasant families from their ethnic, religious, and cultural environments in previously Byzantine-ruled provinces of the Balkan peninsula, and acclimatised them to Turkish culture and the Islamic religion.[209] The date of the devşirme's origins is disputed, but the practice of recruiting boys from the provinces is attested in two Greek sources describing events from the second half of the 14th century: the *Life* of Philotheos of

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[206] Schultz and Schmidt-Schultz, 'Health and Disease', 288, 302.

[207] A. Rohnbogner, 'Listening to the Kids: The Value of Childhood Paleopathology for the Study of Rural Roman Britain', *Britannia* 24 (2017): 221-252, 242. The 7th year marked the end of period of *infantia* in the Roman Life Course, associated with the loss of milk teeth, the beginning of participation in a private or public cult, and (for boys) education outside the home: Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 37.

[208] G. Yilmaz, 'Becoming a Devşirme: The Training of Conscripted Children in the Ottoman Empire', in *Children and Slavery Through the Ages*, eds. G. Campbell, S. Miers and J. C. Miller (Ohio, 2009), 119-134, 121. The age-range cited for *devşirme* varies in modern scholarship. Ages 8-20 are cited by E. Tucker, *The Middle East in Modern World History* (London and New York, 2012), 43; ages 10-20 are cited by Ü. Taşkin, 'Klâsik Dönem Osmanlı Eğitim Kurumları (Ottoman Education Foundations in Classical Terms)', *Uluslararası Sosyal Aratırmalar Dergisi* (*Journal of International Social Research*), 1.3 (2008): 343-366, 361.

[209] Yilmaz, 'Becoming a Devşirme', 121; V. L. Menage, 'Some Notes on the Devshirme', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29.1 (1966): 64-78, 64.

Athos and a sermon attributed to Isidore Glavas, metropolitan of Thessaloniki.[210] Yilmaz describes the criteria for selecting boys for the devşirme and the educational process they underwent after selection, which can be paraphrased as follows:

> Once a levy was issued, janissary officers requested a register of baptised boys from the village priest. Families were not to be deprived of only sons, or of multiple sons, since each household required one boy for land cultivation. The boys should be attractive, able-bodied, intelligent, unmarried, uncircumcised, well-born, and well-raised – orphans were excluded, as it was believed that a lack of parental guidance made them undisciplined. The boys were transported to the capital, where they were converted to Islam and given Muslim names. How the boys were educated, and at what rank they would enter the *kapikulu* corps (troops of the sultan's imperial household) depended on their appearance and personal skills. Handsome, talented boys were sent to the palace schools to learn Turkish, Arabic language and literature, Muslim law, and theology, and received military training in a two-tiered educational system. Their grades determined what administrative or military roles they specialised in. Other boys were sent to Turkish families in the Anatolian or Rumelian countryside to work and learn Turkish language and customs, before returning to receive training in military skills, literacy, governance, and the Quran.[211]

Greek sources reinforce this image of the devşirme as a transition from one familial, cultural, and religious identity to another. In his 1395 sermon, Isidore Glavas described the emotional pain of Christian Thessalonian parents whose children were taken by the Turks and forced to adopt alien customs, barbaric garb (in Isidore's view), speech, and impiety, and, worst of all, made to fight against Christians.[212] In a transition that was not, in theory, dissimilar to the one undergone by aspiring monastics, the cultural transformation of boys recruited by the devşirme was marked by a change of

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[210] S. Vryonis, 'Isidore Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme', *Speculum* 31.3 (1956): 433-443, 432. On Philotheos of Athos, see below: chapter 4.4.
[211] Yilmaz, 'Becoming a Devşirme', 121-123 (paraphrased not quoted).
[212] Vryonis, 'Isidore Glabas', 436-437.

name, dress, and environment. Their natal family ties were severed and replaced by bonds with peers and superiors in the Ottoman military-administrative hierarchy. Moreover, devşirme boys' links to the imperial household gave them access to educational privileges that their socioeconomic origins would have ordinarily denied them. The young age and low social status of the recruits was emphasised by contemporary authors. In his *History*, Doukas stated that Murad II (1421-1444/1446-1451) doted on his janissaries as a father dotes on his children, writing that these 'young and robust' servants came from Christian families of 'goatherds and shepherds, cowherds and swineherds, farmers' children and horse-keepers.'[213] Greek writers therefore revealed how the political climate of the late medieval Mediterranean transformed the lives of these boys, many of whom came from rural areas. The displacement of children and their families due to war and conquest is also reflected in some late Byzantine *vitae*, which are discussed in the following section.

In this section, I have examined the childrearing methods through which children from varied socioeconomic backgrounds were taught their roles in adult society. Like education, this training was tailored to a child's gender and status. It took place primarily at home, where parents transmitted domestic and occupational skills to their offspring by having them perform chores. Skills in household management and, in rural settings, agricultural production formed an essential part of training for adult life, but children were assigned work that was deemed suitable for their mental and/or physical capacities, thus reflecting the importance of age in structuring the daily life of the household. The labour undertaken by children at home served an educational purpose, but also contributed to the household economy. For child servants and slaves, who held a distinct social and legal status (or lack thereof, in the case of slaves), work served the economic and physical needs of a household; however, it appears that children could also offer service in exchange for training or education. As we saw in the case of slaves, the 10th and 12th years of life were assigned value in marking a child's capacity for economic productivity – particularly in regard to child eunuchs. Perhaps most significantly, the

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[213] 'νέον καὶ εὔρωστον… αἰπόλεις καὶ ποιμένας βουκόλους τε καὶ χοιροβόσκους, γεωργῶν παῖδας καὶ ἱπποφόρβων.' Doukas, *Hist.*, XXIII. 9.

sources reveal the impact of 13th- to 15th-century political events, including the Turkish and Ottoman conquests, on the lives of non-elite urban and rural children. This impact, which is explored further below, exemplifies the importance of historical time in shaping the Life Course.

(4.4) Children in the family: alternative trajectories

My analysis thus far has focused on the impacts of gender, socioeconomic status, and spiritual status (lay versus monastic) on the early Life Course. It has highlighted the importance of parents in crafting children into functioning members of Christian society and has touched on the impacts of the political turbulence of the late Byzantine period on the experience of childhood. However, this analysis can be developed further. Due to the predominance of the natal family in the modern western world, scholars often focus on parents' roles in childrearing, but the natal family was just one of numerous family structures in late Byzantium.[214] 13th- to 15th-century biographical texts shed valuable light on how the territorial losses, invasions, and unrest of the ever-shrinking empire, as well as more quotidian tragedies like parental bereavement, impacted on the late Byzantine family and children's position within it. In this context of high mortality and socio-political unrest, changes to the family structure were not uncommon events in children's lives. In this section, I explore how these changes affected the early Life Course, illustrating the vital role played by the institutions of the extended family, church, and monastery in children's lives during times of crisis. In doing so, I highlight the intersection between family structure and social-historical climate in shaping the early Life Course.

Autobiographical texts portray orphanhood as a common feature of the late Byzantine Life Course. In this chapter, I have already mentioned the 13th-century monk Maximos, a craftsman's son who was reportedly breastfed and baptised by his grandmother after his mother died in his infancy.[215]

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[214] Family structures amongst rural populations have been discussed by Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 72-107; Kondyli, 'Structure of the Family', 371-393.

[215] As noted in chapter 3.3, the unlikely statement that Maximos was breastfed by his grandmother is probably related to hagiographical tropes.

While he was still in primary school, Maximos grew attached to an elderly monk in his father's

monastic community, whose instruction he consumed 'as though it were honeycomb'.[216] This pious

monk acted as a spiritual role-model for Maximos, while his father's role in his upbringing appears

strangely nominal. Joachim of the Mount Menoikeion monastery was another orphan who came to

monasticism by a spiritual father, his paternal uncle, who nourished, educated, and trained him in the

monastic discipline after he was orphaned at just 2 years old.[217] Presumably, Joachim was breastfed by

a female relative or wetnurse. That Joachim's care fell to his uncle is in keeping with the Byzantine

system of guardianship, which defined orphans' care firstly as the obligation of any maternal or

paternal relatives, but preferentially selected uncles for this duty.[218] The probable reason for this

preference is that uncles had no claim to their nieces or nephews' estates and were therefore less likely

to abuse their status as guardians for personal gain.[219] It appears that uncles were also perceived as

good spiritual role-models for children, since hagiographers mentioned several uncles, including Saint

Germanos and the uncles of Saints Niphon, Athanasios I, and Athanasios of Meteora, who acted as

teachers and spiritual instructors for their nephews who entered the same monasteries (excepting

Athanasios of Meteora, whose uncle entered a monastery later).[220] Nevertheless, we shall see that an

array of biological and spiritual kin feature as guardians in late Byzantine writing, including aunts,

siblings, grandparents, god-parents, in-laws, stepparents, and foster-parents.

Biographical writing thus highlights the roles of both the extended family and monastery in

providing care and security to orphans, who often followed their guardians into monastic life. As

attested by the cases of Maximos, Joachim, and the aforementioned girls who entered the Pantanassa

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[216] 'ὡς κηρίον μέλιτος'. Maximos, *Boreine*, III-VI. 1180-1181.

[217] Joachim, *Menoikeion*, I. 1592.

[218] T. Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium: Child Welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington, 2003), 19-22, 85, 88-89.

[219] *Ibid.*, 257.

[220] *Life of Niphon*, I. 1; Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, XXXIV (whereas Niphon was taken into his uncle's care as a child, Germanos' nephew, Jacob, had already completed his secular studies, or 'outer learning'). The 13th-century monk Neophytos also raised his nephew at his Cypriot hermitage: *Holy Cross*, XVI. 1358. Saint Athanasios I entered his parental uncle's monastery when he was a teenager: Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III (4). On the chronology of Athanasios' life, see A-M. Talbot, *The Correspondence of Athanasios I Patriarch of Constantinople, Letters to Emperor Andronikos II, Members of the Imperial Family, and Officials* (Washington, 1975), xvi-xxviii.

convent with their mothers, it was relatively common for late Byzantine children to follow their

primary carers into monasteries after a parent's death.[221] Whereas hagiographers often characterised

entry into a monastery as a sharp severing of natal family ties, monks' autobiographies indicate that a

child's or parent's decision to pursue monasticism was often influenced by changes to the natal family

structure or the Life Course trajectory of another biological relative.

In biographical accounts, when one of a child's parents dies it is often a relative of the same

sex who acquires the deceased parent's childrearing responsibilities, a tendency that may reflect the

different parental duties of mothers and fathers. Just as Maximos' grandmother provided him with

breast-milk and spiritual care (baptism) in his infancy, Pachymeres reported that Michael Palaiologos

spent at least part of his childhood in the care of his sister Martha, who had shown herself to be like a

mother to him, raising him in her home with the help of their sister Eulogia, who sang the baby

lullabies.[222] Rather than emotional care and nourishment, writers emphasised male guardians' duty to

protect and secure their charges' future. In the short *vita* of Empress Theodora of Arta (d. c.1270), it is

stated that the saint's brothers spent their years at court 'protecting their baby sister as the apple of

their eye;'[223] similarly, after Theodora Palaiologina was orphaned in childhood, it was her uncle John,

who reportedly loved Theodora as his own daughter, who arranged her marriage to Michael VIII.[224]

However, both male and female guardians appear to have taught children. I have already mentioned

several guardians who took up this duty in this chapter, including the foster-mother of Thomais,

Sphrantzes' godmother. This is significant because, as I show in chapter six, Byzantine biographers

defined education as both a maternal and paternal duty. Accounts of orphans' childhoods therefore

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[221] Talbot, 'Family and Monastery', 121-123.

[222] Pachymeres, *Chron.*, II. 23 (179-181). Michael's father, Andronikos Palaiologos, died between 1248-1252, when Michael was in his 20s (Akropolites, *Hist.*, LXXVI (243-244), note 6), while his mother, Theodora, died sometime before Andronikos had his son Constantine by his second wife in 1230, when Michael was around 7 years old. See J. Cheynet and J. Vannier, *Études Prosopographiques* (Paris, 1986), nos. 32-33.

[223] 'τὴν ἰδίαν ἀδελφὴν νηπιάζουσαν, ὡς κόρην ἐφύλαττον ὀφθαλμοῦ.' Job, *Life of Theodora of Arta*, 329 (*PG* 127, 905B).

[224] Akropolites, *Hist.*, LI (268). Theodora early life is summarised by A-M. Talbot 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina, Wife of Michael VIII', *DOP* 46 (1992), 295-303, 295.

suggest that guardianship aimed not only to ensure the survival of bereaved children, but also to reproduce the model of parenthood encapsulated in the natal family structure.

Responsibility for orphans may also be assumed by the community through networks of spiritual kinship (for example, godparents taking charge of their orphaned godchildren)[225] or religious institutions. Orphans' care was the focus of both private and state charity; churches, monasteries, and episcopal schools functioning as orphanages in the capital and provinces not only provided orphans with housing and education, but also secured their futures by arranging marriages for girls and apprenticeships for boys.[226] As charity towards vulnerable groups such as orphans and widows was considered a Christian virtue, monks and nuns frequently appear as carers and teachers of foundlings in the sources. Nuns who took charge of orphaned or abandoned girls are found in the *Life* of Palamas, the letters to abbess Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina, and Theodora Palaiologina's *typikon* for the convent of Lips, which accepted children who arrived at the convent 'on account of some misfortune'.[227] The *Life* of the 13th-century patriarch Athanasios I – whose social reforms placed emphasis on orphans' care – also features a disciple of the saint named Euthymios, who sought refuge in the church after being orphaned as a small child.[228] As stated above, these children were raised in monasteries until they were old enough to decide whether or not to be tonsured, though some of them would have already received an education that was tailored towards the monastic vocation by that time.

Although children sometimes faced maltreatment or exploitation in monasteries – being used as servants, for example – religious foundations clearly offered a valid alternative lifepath for children whose futures were jeopardised by parental death.[229] Biographers whose subjects lived through times of social and political unrest assign great importance to this role of the church and monastery. In part

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[225] Macrides, 'Byzantine Godfather', 148.

[226] The various Byzantine institutions overseeing orphans' welfare have been examined extensively by Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, see esp. 3, 51-69, 113-140. On the episcopal orphan school and letters of the 13th-century Epirot judge John Apokauakos, see also chapter 5.4, 176-178.

[227] 'διά τι πως τῶν ἐκ τύχης'. Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, VI. 317-319; Theoleptos of Philadelphia, *Letters*, II. 362-367; Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, IX. 18. 1270-1271.

[228] Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, X (13).

[229] Negative aspects of children's experiences in monasteries have been revealed by Greenfield, 'Children in Byzantine Monasteries', 263.

4.3, I mentioned the 14th-century *Life* of Philotheos of Athos, who as a child was taken with his brother in the Ottoman devşirme. The saint's parents had previously left their home in Elateia, Asia Minor, fleeing the Turkish advance, and had come to Macedonian Chrysopolis, where Philotheos' father died shortly after. Though the taking of two sons in the devşirme was prohibited, the author explained that as a widow and refugee, Philotheos' mother 'did not have kinsmen to object or resist' this abuse;[230] since their arrival in Macedonia, her family had been 'ridiculed and abused by their neighbours as strangers and outsiders and orphans, being orphans of the worst kind with no paternal or maternal relatives, but only God and their birth mother'.[231] The account of Philotheos' early life reflects the vulnerability of orphans and widows who had no recourse to extended family or local community for support, and reveals the monastery's importance in substituting in this role for the displaced poor. The author, framing the context of Philotheos' childhood in order to display his God-favoured status, explained that when the Theotokos heard the desperate prayers of Philotheos' pious mother, she appeared to her captive sons and led them to a monastery, whose superior gave the boys shelter and trained them in holy letters. Later, the boys were reunited with their mother.[232] In periods of crisis, the monastery could function as a locus of support and security.

Although the maltreatment of Philotheos' family at the hands of their new neighbours serves a literary purpose in the *vita* – to highlight the saint's patient endurance of suffering – it also reflects the real vulnerability of orphans and widows to social abuse and exploitation. Abuses of orphans by guardians who mismanaged their charges' property, or subjected them to exploitative marriages for their own gain, are well documented.[233] Widowed mothers could mitigate these risks by remarrying or,

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[230] 'μὴ ἔχειν τινὰ ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτῶν, ἵνα εἴπῃ ἢ ἀντιτείνῃ τι'. *Life of Philotheos*, II. 3.

[231] 'ὀνειδιζόμενοι καὶ κακουχούμενοι ὑπὸ τοῖς ἀγχιστοῖς αὐτῶν ὡς ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι [Ephesians 2:19] καὶ ὀρφανοί, καὶ ὀρφανίαν τὴν χαλεπωτάτην, οὔτε συγγενῆ τινα ἢ πατρὸς ἢ μητρὸς ἢ μόνον τὸν Θεὸν καὶ τὴν κατὰ σάρκα μητέρα αὐτῶν.' *Ibid.*, II. 1, 3.

[232] *Ibid.*, I-II. 6.

[233] Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 80-81, 93-94. The Constantinopolitan register of the patriarch also records the dissolution of a marriage between a young man and an orphaned girl, whose guardian arranged the marriage to ensure his lineage's survival and his own subsistence. The union transgressed the 6th degree of consanguinity: Laurent, *Regestes*, vol. I/4, no. 1232.

if they were poor, giving their children up for adoption.[234] However, giving one's child to the church or monastery may have offered a more attractive option for women like Philotheos' mother, who could not be certain how well their children would be integrated into an adoptive or step-family. Adopted children had many of the same legal rights as biological children, but adoption contracts defined the obligations of adoptive parents variably;[235] not all children were made inheritors of their adoptive parents' estates, for instance.

Some texts report abuses of children by stepparents who denied them their paternal inheritance;[236] others allude to the negative impact of remarriage on family dynamics. For example, in his *Chronicle*, Sphrantzes referred to his childhood friend Markos of Corinth, who was raised with him at court. Markos was so disliked by his stepmother that he often relied on Sphrantzes' parents for help. Eventually, he was 'forced to abandon his father under such conditions', whereupon he entered a monastery.[237] Although Sphrantzes did not state what kind of help – whether practical, financial, or emotional – his family offered Markos, it is clear that his friend was denied the support children could usually expect from their parents. Though entry into monastic life marked a substantial change in a child's life trajectory, it appears often to have been considered as a safe and secure lifepath for children without natal families to support them.

It is noteworthy that Philotheos of Athos' biographer elaborated on none of the standard details about the saint's early life, such as his baptism, education, or childhood character. The hagiographical model of childhood is abandoned; instead, the historical climate of the later 14th century provides a basis for constructing sanctity. In his *Life* of Gregory Sinaites, Kallistos I employed the chaotic climate of the saint's early life to similar effects. Born in the 1260s to wealthy parents in a small town near Klazomenai, Asia Minor (around the south shore of the gulf of Smyrna), Gregory's

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[234] On widows who gave their children up for adoption, see Macrides, *Kinship and Justice*, II. 111-112; chapter 5.4, 196-197, below (on the case of a poor woman's son adopted by the 13th-century bishop John Apokaukos).
[235] On distinctions between 'adoptive' kinship and 'natural' kinship, and the creation of adoption (υἰοθεσία) for the inheritance of property, see Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, B. 8 (126-127/68-69); Macrides, *Kinship and Justice*, II. 109-112.
[236] See further examples in Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 100-102.
[237] 'ἀναγκασθεὶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ κακοῦ ἔφυγεν ἀπὸ τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ'. Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XXVI. 5.

family were captured as slaves in a Turkish raid during his youth.[238] However, Kallistos explained that by God's will the family were taken to an Orthodox church in Laodikeia, where they sang the psalms and hymns so beautifully and rhythmically – as though they were trained in choral singing – that the Christian residents released them from slavery.[239] Again, Kallistos omitted the details usually provided about a saint's childhood. His text highlights the role of the church and local community in supporting displaced inhabitants from the empire's contracting margins, and how biographers adapted the saintly Life Course model to reflect the historical contexts that shaped their subjects' lives, which they fit into a moralising narrative framework. This use of the political and/or cultural threat posed by the Turks as a means of constructing sanctity began with the revival of hagiography-writing in the latter half of the 13th-century, when members of the Byzantine elite produced *vitae* for neo-martyrs who were killed by the Turks.[240]

The biographer of Athanasios of Meteora (1305-1383) also focused on the traumatic events of his saint's childhood. According to his *Life*, Athanasios lost both his parents in infancy and was raised and taught by his paternal uncle. When his hometown of Neopatras was seized by the Catalans (1319), he was captured by a Frank who, admiring the boy's beauty, wanted to send him back to his home as spoils; however, Athanasios realised his captor's plan and, like Philotheos, managed to escape.[241] In the text, Athanasios' triumphs over the hardships of his childhood indicate his astute, resilient character and imply his God-favoured status. They were perhaps also deemed by Athanasios' biographer as particularly inspiring for an audience living through similarly challenging times.[242]

Late Byzantine biographical writing emphasises the importance of family structure in shaping the experience of childhood. Orphanhood is a recurring theme in Life Course constructions that reflects the realities of everyday life in a preindustrial society such as Byzantium. Nevertheless,

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[238] The raid occurred during the early years of the reign of Andronikos II (r.1282-1328). On Gregory's life, see D. Balfour, 'Saint Gregory of Sinai's Life Story and Spiritual Profile', *Theologia* 53 (1982): 30-62.
[239] Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, III-IV.
[240] Talbot, 'Hagiography', 179-180; Messis, 'Palaiologan Hagiographies', 240.
[241] *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*, 239-240.
[242] Athanasios' *Life* was written in the late 14th century: D. M. Nicol, 'A Layman's Ministry in the Byzantine Church: The Life of Athanasios of the Great Meteoron', *Studies in Church History* 26 (1989): 141-154, 146.

writers presented parental death as a tragedy that rerouted a child's life trajectory, often leading to

changes in socioeconomic status and the consequent decision to enter monastic life. This trend can be

attributed partly to the fact that most late Byzantine (auto)biographical subjects are monastic figures.

However, it also attests to the status of monasticism as an alternative lifepath for children without the

support of an extended family or local community. Finally, it is clear that biographers did not hesitate

from adapting the Life Course to reflect the socioeconomic and political unrest characterising the 13th

to 15th centuries. In *vitae* such as those of Philotheos of Athos and Gregory Sinaites, the impact of the

empire's precarious state on its inhabitants' lives are used to sculpt heroic portraits of the Life Course

that were perhaps intended to inspire audiences living through uncertain periods of the empire's

history.

(4.5) Conclusion: exiting childhood

This chapter's analysis has demonstrated that, overwhelmingly, the Byzantines constructed childhood

as a period of preparation for adulthood. Representations of this life-stage focus disproportionately on

children's education rather than aspects of life such as work or play – an imbalance that reveals the

concerns of our sources' adult and (in regard to texts) highly-educated creators. When children's

extracurricular activities *do* feature in the sources, they are often employed figuratively to contemplate

the difficulties of adult life, which is contrasted with a romanticised image of childish bliss. Even

autobiographical accounts of childhood adhere to the social ideals extolled in hagiography and

religious iconography, which invert the normative traits and behaviours of childhood to highlight their

subjects' exceptionalism. Nevertheless, our sources construct a clear image of the early Life Course

that places transitions in social status at consistent intervals. This may be summarised as follows.

Texts and images conflate early childhood with infancy. Small children are usually portrayed

in the company of parents or other adults, who mediate their participation in the traditions and customs

of Christian society. Around the age of 6 or 7, children reached a milestone in their intellectual

development and were considered capable of formal education, moral reasoning, and understanding the consequences of their actions (including criminal actions). Education and work aimed to prepare children for adult life, but also acted as forms of socialisation that expanded children's social network beyond the home. This was certainly the case for boys who received formal schooling, while the sources are largely silent on the social settings in which girls were taught. Existing evidence implies that outside monastic institutions, girls learned in private settings where their prospects to socialise with age-peers were probably limited.

The 6th to 7th years of life thus marked the shift from an earlier to later stage of childhood, which was associated with increased mental maturity. Other changes to a child's social status occurred between the 10th and 12th years. By this age, some children were deemed spiritually and mentally mature enough to enter monasteries, receive tonsure, and assume moral responsibility for their actions in regard to confession. Likewise, slave children were deemed as more economically productive from their 10th (for eunuchs) and 12th years. It was from around this age that the Ottomans, too, considered children as capable of being re-educated and re-integrated into a new sociocultural environment through the devşirme.

Hence, as children acquired greater social, physical, and intellectual capacities, they were able to access new social networks and spheres of activity. Children's activities – and, accordingly, the experience of growing up – depended on gender and social status, since these aspects of identity determined the skills that children were taught in preparation for adulthood. However, biographical texts also reveal the impacts of high medieval mortality, war, and invasion on children living in the 13th to 15th centuries, who became displaced, enslaved, or who lost their natal families. As monastic autobiographies indicate, these circumstances redirected children's life trajectories, as their familial fortunes were reversed, and as orphans' care fell to the extended family, local community, or monastery, which above all is presented as a refuge for society's vulnerable. Some authors adapted the hagiographical Life Course pattern to reflect the socioeconomic and political unrest of the late Byzantine period, which drastically altered some saints' experience of childhood. Likewise, 13th-

century scholars' autobiographies highlight the long-term impacts of the loss of Constantinople in 1204 on the lives of high-status boys, who lacked access to the educational institutions and resources enjoyed by their earlier and later counterparts.

The transition out of childhood is less clearly defined than the entry into it, and its timing certainly varied according to gender and status. While Byzantine law set the 25th year as the age of majority, by this time young people had attained other milestones that marked their acquisition of adult social roles and responsibilities.[243] Biographers described three Life Course trajectories after the end of childhood education: marriage, monasticism, and secondary education. While the latter route was, as a general rule, open only to high-status boys, the former two often coincide in the Life Course structure, as texts link the times of marriage (after the 12th year for girls and after the 14th for boys in Byzantine law) and the adoption of monastic identity. Though ages of entry varied across individual monasteries, they were often set in the teenage or early adult years, when aspiring novices had some experience of lay life. In the next chapter, I consider how the timing of marriage, entry into a monastery, and tonsure affected female and non-elite children's potential to experience an adolescent life-stage. Here, it may be concluded that from the 10th to 12th years, children gained access to an expanding range of occupations, social networks, and environments, which may be associated with the entry into an intermediate period between childhood and maturity.

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[243] Prinzing, 'Observations', 34, tbl. 1.

CHAPTER FIVE: ADOLESCENCE AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

To identify an adolescent period in the late Byzantine Life Course poses certain methodological challenges, since the primary features of adolescence have been defined variably across disciplines.[1] The conceptual birth of adolescence lay in early 20th-century psychoanalytical theory, which viewed the biological (hormonal) aspects of puberty as instigators of mental trauma resulting in adolescent behaviours such as mood swings, parent-child conflict, and a proclivity to risk-taking.[2] Today, psychology affords culture a greater role in shaping the adolescent experience, but the definition of this life-stage as a time of crisis – namely one of identity – remains influential in many fields.[3] Even pioneering research on Byzantine adolescence, culminating in the recent volume *Coming of Age in Byzantium* (2019), factors modern psychological theories into its interpretive frameworks.[4] However, social scientists have highlighted the problem that adolescent traits held as universal by western scholars – particularly those associated with the adolescent 'crisis' – are often absent from non-western cultures.[5]

In this chapter, I examine how the Byzantines defined the characteristics, activities, and spaces of adolescence in opposition to those of childhood and adulthood. Part 5.1 focuses on how authors and artisans represented the transition from youth to maturity, to consider whether the structure of the late Byzantine Life Course allowed for an interim period between childhood and adulthood. This analysis is developed in parts 5.2-5.4, to consider if and how the structure of late Byzantine society imposed an adolescent life-stage onto different segments of the population. Ultimately, I will argue that the

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[1] P. K. Smith, *Adolescence: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2016), 2-15.
[2] Smith, *Adolescence*, 12; L. Green, *Understanding the Life Course: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2010), 90.
[3] Green, *Life Course*, 103-104.
[4] Ariantzi, *Coming of Age*, 2-3.
[5] H. Montgomery, *An Introduction to Childhood: Anthropological Perspectives* (Chichester, 2009), 323-4, 330-331.

sources, by expressing social expectations of age-based behaviour, construct a life-stage that is distinguishable from both childhood and adulthood, and which appears to reflect a cultural concept of youth that was *not* limited to a particular social group or identity. However, whereas biological and social markers of age were closely intertwined during infancy and childhood, they did not always coincide in the transition childhood to adulthood. Instead, the timing of milestones such as puberty, marriage, and tonsure varied according to gender and status.

(5.1) Locating adolescence in the Life Course

In chapter four, I concluded that by the 10th to 12th years of life the social status of a Byzantine child had changed significantly; in these years, privileged boys started secondary education, some children entered monasteries, while others saw their parents begin planning their marriages. In the following life-stage, the hallmarks of maturity varied considerably according to gender and status. Byzantine writers and artisans treated puberty as a greater symbol of maturity in the male than in the female Life Course. Moreover, whereas the timing of puberty and marriage (or tonsure) in the male Life Course was often signalled by chronological age, in the female Life Course biological and social puberty were conflated.[6] Social markers of maturity – namely marriage – replace biological age in representations of female youth, so that the role of chronological age in the transition from girlhood to womanhood appears diminished. In this section, I identify the milestones characterising the shift from youth to maturity, and how gender and status influenced their timing in the Life Course.

The growth of facial hair in young men is the only feature of biological puberty commonly mentioned by Byzantine writers.[7] References to male voice mutation, and female menarche or breast

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[6] Social puberty and biological puberty were first distinguished by van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 65-68.
[7] S. Tougher, 'Bearding Byzantium: Masculinity, Eunuchs and the Byzantine Life Course', in *Questions of Gender*, 153-166.

growth, are rare.[8] Nevertheless, it is clear that the Byzantines perceived the adolescent years as a

critical period of biological growth, which shaped social preferences about the ages when milestones

such as marriage were obtained. In chapter 2.2, we saw that a 14th-century medical manual advised

specific treatments for patients who were aged 12, 14, 15, or 20 – thus identifying these years of life as

critical developmental periods – and designated patients as young (νέος, ἄγουρος), mature, or elderly.[9]

Ancient theories of human growth defined the period from 14 to 21 years as one life-stage, whose

onset was marked by the growth of facial hair and the breaking of the voice in boys and menstruation

in girls.[10] The Byzantines assigned these biological milestones social meaning. The end of the 12th and

14th years marked the legal ages of marriage for girls and boys respectively,[11] since by that time boys

were expected to have reached puberty (ἡ ἥβη) and girls to become 'capable of receiving a man'.[12] At

the other end of this life-stage, the 20th year marked the age that men could become readers, deacons,

or apply for advance legal majority, while women could apply at 18.[13] The notion that key biological

changes occurred between the teenage years and early 20s thus influenced the social patterning of the

Life Course, dictating the time when an individual gained adult rights and responsibilities.

Generally, late Byzantine hagiography offers fewer details about saints' youth than earlier

vitae.[14] As I suggested in chapter one, this development *may* relate to the hesychast model of sanctity

that was gaining popularity in the 14th century, which upheld quiet contemplation and obedience to

one's elder as requirements for a stable spiritual life;[15] however, the fact that Kokkinos' *vitae* of

hesychast saints provide the most descriptive accounts of childhood would seem to contradict this

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[8] Michael Psellos referred to the breaking of the voice and broadening of the upper body in boys of 14 years old, and the growth of the breast and hips for childbearing in girls: *Michael Pselli Philosophica Minora*, ed. J. M. Duffy (Leipzig, 1992), 55. 666-683.
[9] John the Physician, *Iatrosophion*, 67, 108 (א), 81 (ω). 112 (א).
[10] Baker, 'Paediatrics', 86.
[11] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 2 (153/91-92); Constantine Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, IV. 4. 2.
[12] 'τὰς δὲ θηλείας ἀνδρὸς δεκτικάς'. Constantine Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, IV. 4. 2; John Apokaukos, *Letters*, no. 10 (Apokaukos explained that by these ages both males and females are capable of sexual reproduction).
[13] Prinzing, 'Observations', 34.
[14] Kiousopoulou, 'Adolescence', 99-104.
[15] J. Meyendorff, *St Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (New York, 1974), 155; Krausmüller, 'Rise of Hesychasm', 108-109.

hypothesis. It is also plausible that hagiographers writing for monastic, especially Athonite audiences chose to focus on stages of their saints' lives spent in isolation and monastic communities rather than the lay world, so as to provide more suitable models of spiritual conduct. Regardless, late Byzantine hagiographers constructed a life-stage that falls between the saint's childhood education and departure from the family home, which may be equated with an adolescent period.

In hagiography, the transition from boyhood to manhood is signalled by the first or imminent growth of the beard. Authors usually situated this milestone in the late teens, which is later than the age of puberty in modern populations.[16] It is also at this time when saints leave the natal home, thus symbolising their independence from parental authority. Thus, it is stated that Maximos the Hutburner left home to join a monastery after his parents began planning his marriage, when he was aged 17 and 'the down upon his cheeks had not yet begun to grow'.[17] The reference to beard growth situates Maximos on the cusp of the transition to maturity. As an index of biological age, beard growth often replaces numerical age to signal the life-stage when boys enter monastic life. When Saint Germanos (c.1252-c.1336) first approached his spiritual father, John of Athos, and asked to become his disciple, John told him to return to the paternal home for a short time, since he still had no beard (τοῦ πώγωνος), but to come back when the down appeared on his cheeks.[18] Similarly, Athanasios I came to Athos when the down on his cheeks was just starting to grow, having left home for Thessaloniki as a teenager (around the age of 12) and been trained in monastic conduct by his paternal uncle.[19] The growth of facial hair thus signposts the age when boys could be expected to leave the parental home and take on the duties of either wedded life or the trials of monasticism. Only occasionally does the young saint begin to pursue ascetic trials at home, having separated himself from parental authority in a purely symbolic sense.[20]

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[16] Talbot, 'Adolescent Monastic', 83-98, 84-85.
[17] 'οὔπω τὸν ἴουλον φθάσας'. Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, III.
[18] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, VIII. 41-47.
[19] Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III (4-5).
[20] For example, after Saint Isidore finished education, he worked as a teacher in Thessaloniki for several years before going to Athos: Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, IX-XII.

In practice, too, monasteries often preferred the first beard as a visual marker of maturity over chronological age when judging whether to grant young men entry into the community. In his *typikon*, bishop Neilos allowed only youths who had or were growing their first beards to be educated at his monastery of Machairas.[21] The prohibition of beardless youths and eunuchs, which was instituted on Mount Athos from the 10th century, stemmed partly from a desire to stop women entering monasteries in disguise.[22] Other founders appeared to fear that homosexual relationships would arise between younger and older monks, since, as we will see below, young men were perceived to lack control over their sexual impulses. Neophytos voiced such concerns in his *typikon*, which ordered the punishment of monks who in secret 'playfully embrace each other, especially if they are younger'.[23] Temptation and erotic conflict of the young had been founded as *topoi* in early Byzantine hagiographic literature, which drew on biblical models such as the tale of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (an example of which we will see below),[24] but Christian authors were equally concerned with the possibility that young monks, by virtue of their beauty, might draw the elders with whom they shared their cells into temptation.[25]

Although saints leave home at a young age in some *vitae* – such as those of Athanasios I and Sabas the Younger, who fled home in secret as an adolescent (ἔφηβος)[26] – when a chronological age is provided, this milestone is often placed around the 18th year of life. Thus, Makarios Makres wanted to become a monk at 18, but heeded his mother's wish for him to stay home and waited until after her death.[27] This timing may relate to the fact that the 18th year was the commonest permissible age of

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[21] Neilos, *Machairas*, 55. 1139.
[22] Talbot, 'Adolescent Monastic', 83-85, n. 2. Manuel II Palaiologos similarly banned monks from bringing beardless youths and eunuchs into the Athonite monasteries, fearing that the practice would allow women to enter disguised as men unnoticed: *Typikon for the Monasteries of Mount Athos*, trans. Dennis in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1613-1624, 13. 1621. On the banning of beardless youths from monasteries, see Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, xviii.
[23] 'παιγνίως συμπλεκομένων, καὶ μάλιστα νεωτέρων'. Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, C6. 1363.
[24] On these topoi, see A. Kazhdan, 'Byzantine Hagiography and Sex in the Fifth to Twelfth Centuries', *DOP* 44 (1990): 131-143, 137-140.
[25] C. Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual* (Oxford, 2016), 138-148; B. Crostini, 'Temptation in the Cell: Dangerous Closeness and Redeeming Love in a Byzantine Narrative of Paired Monks', *Anales de Filología Clásica* 31. 1 (2018): 49-64.
[26] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, VI. 5-13 (see n. 51 of Tsamis' edition). One may infer that Sabas was 16 or younger when he left home, as Kokkinos described Isidore as having surpassed the age of an 'ἔφηβος' by his 16th year: *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, V. 25.
[27] *Life of Makarios*, 14. 1-12.

entry into monasteries;[28] however, some writers also connected this time of life with marriage. In his *typikon*, the monk Neophytos, a son of humble parents who gave him not even a basic education in letters, stated that he was 18 when his parents tried to marry him off, having 'confirmed the customary contracts of marriage and the betrothal' seven months earlier.[29] The 18th year thus marks a milestone in both the lay and spiritual Life Course, wherein marriage and tonsure represent alternative paths to maturity.

In biographical writing, motives for leaving the parental home vary according to age and status. Whereas both Maximos and Neophytos fled home to avoid marrying, marriage is not cited as a reason why Athanasios or Sabas left home to join monasteries.[30] This may be because Athanasios and Sabas decided to become monks at a younger age, before their parents would have been expected to start arranging their marriages. Yet, marriage is not a motive for leaving home in *vitae* of other high-status saints who entered monasteries in later adolescence, such as Makarios Makres and Gregory Palamas, who left home at 20.[31] Instead, it was a desire to pursue secular education that prevented Makarios from entering a monastery at the age of 12,[32] while Gregory's decision to become a monk was a great disappointment for the emperor, who 'was expecting great things of him' before he made known his intention to serve the heavenly rather than earthly empire.[33] These *vitae*'s presentation of secular studies and careers as barriers to monasticism reflect the social status of their subjects, who belonged to the Thessalonian and Constantinopolitan elite.

By contrast, writers presented children's obligations of care and obedience toward their parents as a concern of young men regardless of age or social status. Thus, although as a boy Saint Maximos 'was obedient to his parents in all things', he could not tolerate their efforts to bind him to

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[28] Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status', 159-161; Talbot, 'Adolescent Monastic', 85-87, 97: Appendix I.

[29] 'κυρώσαντες τὰ εἰωθότα τοῖς γάμοις σύμφωνα καὶ τοὺς ἀρραβῶνας'. Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, III-IV. 1349-1350.

[30] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, III; Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III (4); Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγιου Σάβα*, VI. 1-13.

[31] *PLP* 17147; Mitrea, *Late-Byzantine Hagiographer*, 181.

[32] *Life of Makarios*, XIII.

[33] 'μεγάλα τινὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ φανταζόμενος'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, XI. 18-20.

the world through marriage.[34] Conflict between holy children and parents who wanted their offspring to pursue worldly marriages or careers is a hagiographical convention, which highlights parents' strong influence over their children's futures.[35] In this vein, Neophytos described 'what fight and battle and deliberation' he played out with his parents before they finally agreed to dissolve his marriage contract.[36] In an emotive account, Theoktistos explained that Saint Athanasios disregarded his widowed mother's tears over his decision to leave home, knowing that while children must honour their parents above all others, they must honour God above their parents.[37] Regardless of the age when saints leave the natal home, their departure symbolises the rejection of lay adult social roles and responsibilities.

A final characteristic of male adolescence in Byzantine texts is sexual awakening, which hagiographers situated between the saint's childhood education and departure from home. Thus, in his *Life*, the account of Philotheos of Athos' childhood ends with the saint being raised and educated in a monastery with his brother. In the following chapter, where the boys are referred to as 'young lads' (μειρακίων), a nun possessed by the devil tries to 'to lure him [Philotheos] into a shameful union', but 'the spiritually courageous' young saint rebuffs her advances.[38] Here, the motif of sexual temptation implies that Philotheos is approaching the age of sexual maturity, thus enabling him to exhibit remarkable control over the desires that our hagiographer assumed normally rule young men. After Philotheos' victory over temptation, he could not bear how his community glorified him, heralding him as 'a new Joseph', the man who 'escaped from the Egyptian woman'.[39] Driven by humility, Philotheos left the monastery. His biographer adds that the saint's mother had, conveniently, died by that time, thus releasing her son from any filial obligations of care towards her. Shortly after this point

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[34] 'τοῖς γονεῦσιν ὑπήκοος ἦν κατὰ πάντα'. *Ibid.*, II. 2.
[35] Davies, 'Age, Gender, and Status', 165-166; Caseau, 'Childhood in Saints' Lives', 138, 146.
[36] 'πόσης πάλης καὶ μάχης καὶ περινοίας'. Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, III.
[37] Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III (4).
[38] 'ἑλκύσῃ αὐτὸν εἰς αἰσχρὰν μίξιν… γενναῖος τὴν ψυχὴν'. *Life of Philotheos*, III. 5-6.
[39] 'νέον Ἰωσήφ... τὴν Αἰγυπτίαν ἐξέφυγεν'. *Ibid.*, III. 7.

in the *vita*, Philotheos entered the wilderness and is no longer called 'the youth' (τοῦ νέου) but 'the holy man' (τοῦ ἁγίου), indicating that he had attained physical and spiritual maturity.[40]

The young saint's triumph over carnal desire, which is a feature of adolescent sanctity in middle Byzantine hagiography, is not especially common in the later *vitae*.[41] Other late Byzantine saints rebut women's sexual advances, but these episodes occur in adulthood.[42] Biographers also referred to their young saints' control over bodily urges without illustrating it explicitly.[43] Thus, when he was still studying Greek literature, Maximos the Hutburner used reason to restrain 'the childish and frantic impulses of his soul' and 'the rage and fury of the flesh'.[44] When Gregory Palamas was training in asceticism with his first spiritual father, he abstained from clothes, bedding, sleep, sweet foods, and 'overcame even sexual desire and the rebellion this gives rise to – and he did this in the full flush of youth'.[45] Here, Kokkinos stressed Gregory's youth to highlight the saint's remarkable self-control, but also alluded to social expectations about the uninhibited, impulsive behaviour of 'normal' adolescents. The overcoming of youthful impulses acts almost as a rite of passage; like other saints, Gregory only left home to become a monk when he had 'reached the end of his adolescence'.[46]

Nikephoros Blemmydes' *Autobiography* offers a detailed account of his own youthful battle against sexual desire, drawing on hagiographical conventions. Blemmydes portrayed his young self as a pious boy who spent his time studying, rejecting friendship, and leading a life free of temptation. However, in his 20th year, through 'stupidity and ignorance' Blemmydes became subject to the desire

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[40] *Ibid.*, IV. 1 (Philotheos is called 'ὁ νεός'), V. 1 (Philotheos is called 'ὁ ἅγιος').

[41] Ariantzi, 'Soziale Identitätsbildung im Jugendalter in Byzanz', in *Coming of Age*, 117-140, 131-133; Talbot, 'Adolescent Monastic', 85.

[42] Similar episodes also occur later in the saint's Life Course in some *vitae*. Maximos the Hutburner was tempted by an apparition of a well-dressed woman after he had attained maturity and the status of a monastic father (ὁ πάτηρ): Niphon, *Life of Maximos*, III. 2. After Sabas the Younger had been serving his spiritual elder for several years, he travelled to Cyprus, where he had to rebut the advances of a woman who was attracted by his beauty: Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, 20. 1-35.

[43] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, III. 10.

[44] 'Τὰς μὲν μειρακιώδεις καὶ οἰστρώδεις ὁρμὰς τῆς ψυχῆς… τὸ δὲ λελυττηκὸς καὶ μεμηνὸς σαρκὸς'. Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, VII. 15-16.

[45] 'καὶ αὐτῆς περιγεγονὼς τῆς σαρκικῆς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ τῆς ἐκεῖθεν ἐπαναστάσεως ἐν ἀκμῇ τῆς ἡλικίας'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, XII. 25-27.

[46] 'τὸν ἔφηβον ὑπερβεβηκὼς'. *Ibid*, XIV. 1.

of his companion's wife, a woman who was 'shameless, bold, and tempting inescapably toward lust.'[47] Blemmydes spent three years in a state of emotional turmoil, not daring to break off his relationship with the couple, until – by God's mercy – they relocated. Biographers always attributed young men's struggles with adolescent sexuality to female lust; it is the woman who makes an advance on the youth, rather than the reverse. Sexual desire is thus presented as a challenge that pious adolescents must overcome in order to achieve spiritual strength.

In iconography, as in texts, male age is predominantly signified by the presence, thickness, and colour of facial hair, so that the 'beardless youth' constitutes a life-stage in its own right.[48] As stated in chapter two, images often juxtapose three stages of the male Life Course. They appear, for example, in the Transfiguration of the 13th-century church of Tatlarin underground city in Cappadocia (fig. 5.1), where the ages of the prophets and disciples are indicated chiefly by hair.[49] The youth of Moses, on Christ's right, and John, below Christ's feet, is signalled by their round, smooth, beardless faces and full heads of hair; only height marks them out as men rather than boys. At Christ's lower right, James is clearly middle aged; he has a full beard, straight, cropped hair, and a narrower facial shape, whereas Elijah and Peter, on Christ's left, have sallow skin and long, bushy white beards and hair to indicate their old age. The participation of John, James and Peter in the theophany is also differentiated by age. Peter raises his arm to Christ in address, hand blessing, while James is seated, raising his head to Christ as he recognises the miracle. Meanwhile, John is prostrated on the ground, his cloak partially off, staring straight ahead, stunned by light. Peter, the most senior of the disciples in both physical age and spirituality, thus participates most actively in the theophanic vision.

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[47] 'ἀναισθησίας καὶ ἀκρισίας… ἀναισχυντούσης, θρασυνομένης, ἀκαθέκτως ἐχούσης ἐς τὴν ἀσέλγειαν.' Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. III. 5.
[48] 'νέος ἀγένειος'. *Life of Niphon*, XVI.
[49] Fig. 5.1. Transfiguration, Tatlarin Church, Cappadocia, Turkey, 13th century (own photo). See C. Jolivet-Lévy, 'Nouvelles Églises à Tatlarin, Cappadoce', *Monuments et Mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 75 (1996): 21-63, 41-42. On age in Byzantine images of the prophets, see C. Hennessy, 'Representations and Roles of Adolescence with a Focus on Apocryphal Imagery' in *Coming of Age*, 175-202, esp. 178.

Whereas youths are depicted as beardless men, young adolescents could be distinguished from children by height and frame. In a painting of Manuel II Palaiologos, his wife Helena, and their sons John, Theodore, and Andronikos in a manuscript of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite (dated 1403-1405), height is the chief marker of the boys' ages (fig. 5.2).[50] John, the eldest, here aged 10 to 12, is taller than his brother Theodore, aged 7 to 9, and Andronikos, the youngest and smallest. Whereas his brothers stare at the viewer, the very young Andronikos looks to his mother. The transition from childhood to adolescence is thus visualised on a realistic gradient. The boys' dress indicates status rather than age. John, occupying the superior position on his father's right, wears the same costume as Manuel, highlighting his status as heir to the throne, while his brothers wear the same costume as their mother.

While biological puberty (beard growth and sexual awakening) and social puberty (marriage and the departure from home) coincide often – though not always – in the male Life Course, it is more difficult to identify structural elements of the female transition from childhood to adulthood. There is no clear biological marker of female adolescence. Instead, marriage acts as an index of social puberty that replaces biological and chronological age altogether. Hence, writers often referred to girls as being 'unmarried'[51] or having reached 'marriageable age' to designate their actual life-stage.[52] However, it is clear that the Byzantines perceived the end of the 12th year of life, which marked the legal age of marriage, as a milestone of both biological and social development. According to John Apokaukos, 13th-century judge and bishop of Naupaktos, by marriageable age women were considered fit for giving birth (γέννησιν) but also for helping to maintain a household (οἰκωφέλειαν).[53] Therefore,

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[50] Fig. 5.2. Manuel II Palaiologos and his family, Paris Louvre MR 416, fol. 2r, 1403-1405. Accessed: 27/03/2020 via https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1d/Manuel_II_Helena_sons.JPG. See I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden, 1976), 139-144. The children's role in the family portrait is also discussed by Hennessy, *Images*, 170-173, fig. 5.11, note. 112. S. T. Brooks, ed., *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261-1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, exhibition catalogue (London, 2006), fig. 2.5 (see also the chapter by E. A. Laiou, 'Byzantium and the Neighbouring Powers: Small-State Policies and Complexities', 42-53, fig. 4.
[51] For example, see Kokkinos, *Miracles of Palamas*, I. 1 (παιδίον ἦν θῆλυ τοῖς τοῦ γάμου μὲν οὔπω δεσμοῖς ὑποβεβλημένον).
[52] See above, chapter 2.2, n. 66.
[53] Apokaukos, *Letters*, no. 10.

by their 13th year, girls were perceived as ready to adopt the sexual and social functions of a married woman. The fact that Apokaukos, as well as the monk Joseph Bryennios, writing on the Orthodox community in late 14th-century Crete, complained of local parents marrying off their daughters below the suitable age indicates the importance they assigned to marriage as a marker of female maturity (but also, of course, the fact that some parents did not consider physical maturity as a prerequisite for marriage).[54]

When Byzantine biographers referred to the age of marriage in the female Life Course, it is therefore likely that they were describing the time of biological puberty. However, it must be borne in mind that ages of menarche vary across and within cultures and were affected by factors such as social status in medieval populations.[55] Moreover, not all Byzantine parents necessarily chose to marry off their children as soon as they reached legal age; as shown above, many male saints were closer to their 18th year than their 15th when they reached this milestone. Hence, it can only be said that in biographical texts, female adolescence equates to the age that society *expected* girls to marry.

The only well-developed *Life* of a late Byzantine holy woman – that of the 14th-century Matrona of Chios – focuses on the young saint's rejection of marriage, which is a topos of earlier female saints' Lives.[56] There are notable differences between the construction of Matrona's *Life* and the male saintly Life Course constructs discussed above. Firstly, no details of Matrona's childhood character or education are provided; the account opens with Matrona's discovery of her parent's plans to marry her off. In an effort to guard her purity and virginity (παρθενίαν), she secretly fled home for the mountains of Katabasis, where she began the typical ascetic trials that young saints conduct in isolation: fasting, praying, and abstaining from sleep. Matrona's decision to abandon her parents and

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[54] John Apokaukos, *Letters*, no. 9. On the writings of Bryennios, who complained about Cretan girls being subjected to 'παιδοφθορία' (marriage at an immature age): D. Stathakopoulos, 'From Crete to Hell: The Textual Tradition on Punishments in the Afterlife and the Writings of Joseph Bryennios on Crete', in *Hell in the Byzantine World*, 21-59, 52. In a similar vein, Patriarch Athanasios I (1289-1293/1303-1309) banned priests from joining prepubescents in marriage, or marrying young girls to old men, in multiple encyclical letters: *Regestes*, vol. I/4, N. 1738, 1748, 1762, 1776.
[55] Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 65-66; Montgomery, *Childhood*, 325; Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 38; Post, J. B. 'Ages at Menarche and Menopause: Some Mediaeval Authorities', *Population Studies* 25.1 (1971): 83-87.
[56] Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status', 165-166.

home was entirely driven by her desire to enter a convent and become 'a good and unblemished bride of Christ, the immortal bridegroom', in keeping with standard constructions of saintly youth.[57]

A second, more significant departure from the conventional saintly Life Course comes when Matrona's parents, after discovering her in the mountains, ordered her to return home, and Matrona, in a display of filial duty, 'obeyed her parents' blessed command'.[58] While some young holy men, like Makarios Makres, delayed their plans to enter monastic life in order to satisfy their parents' needs, it is atypical for saints to return home after fleeing to pursue ascetic life.[59] Melichar, adopting a psychoanalytical approach, interprets Matrona's decision to return home as a reflection of her adolescent desire for security, which overrode her desire for instant gratification that led her to flee home and the unwanted marriage originally.[60] While I would argue that Matrona's decision to return home chiefly serves as a demonstration of filial obedience – a key feature of adolescent sanctity – the account does appear to construct a more realistic image of youth that reflects the control that parents wielded over their children. A similar sequence of events unfolds in the autobiography of the Cypriot monk Neophytos. At the age of 18, Neophytos 'departed secretly from the paternal home' and fled to a monastery in the mountains, thinking his parents would never find him in such an inaccessible place.[61] Yet, two months later, he was also discovered, apprehended, and forced to return home by his parents.

It is not clear how long obligations of parental obedience delayed Matrona's pursuit of her ascetic goals, although she was eventually able to achieve spiritual and material autonomy from her parents. As Matrona continued to reject the idea of marriage entirely, her parents, recognising the steadfastness of her mind, released her parental inheritance and allowed her to conduct herself as she wished.[62] After dispensing her property to widows, orphans, and the poor, giving the remainder to her

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[57] 'νύμφη καλὴ καὶ ἄμωμος τοῦ ἀθανάτου νυμφίου Χριστοῦ'. Nikephoros of Chios, Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης, 379-380. Minimal details about Matrona's childhood are provided by an *enkomion* by Neilos, metropolitan of Rhodes (b.1350): Moniou, 'ΟΣΙΑ ΜΑΤΡΩΝΑ', 96. 99-101.
[58] 'ὑπήκουσεν… εἰς τὸ εὐλογοφανὲς πρόσταγμα τῶν γονέων της'. Nikephoros of Chios, Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης, 380.
[59] *Life of Makarios*, 14. 1-12. On this trend in middle Byzantine *vitae*, see Ariantzi, *Kindheit* 263–264, 297.
[60] Melichar, 'Adolescent Behaviour', 106-107.
[61] 'λάθρα τῆς πατρικῆς ἑστίας ἀπαναστὰς'. Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, III. 1350.
[62] Nikephoros of Chios, Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης, 380.

sisters for safekeeping, Matrona left home for the mountains permanently. Thus, while the time of marriage does not coincide with Matrona's physical separation from the family – as it does in many male saints' Lives – it nevertheless precedes her departure from parental guardianship and authority.

The most notable difference between the portrayal of youth in Matrona's *Life* and the male *vitae* examined here is the emphasis on Matrona's desire to protect her virginity. Though several holy men viewed marriage as an obstacle to their monastic aspirations, the desire to retain virginity is not presented as a primary motive of these saints for fleeing home; rather, it appears to be an aspect of female sanctity linked to ideals of gendered behaviour. In fact, Matrona's *Life* conforms to a topos attested across the Byzantine Lives and Passions of holy women, whose ability to retain virginity in the face of trials – whether the amorous advances of a man, a husband, or, as with Matrona, parental pressure to marry – was vital to the construction of female sanctity.[63] Early Christian authors viewed virginity – embodied by the exemplary woman, the Virgin Mary – as an antidote for the corrupting effects of female sexuality embodied by the primordial woman, Eve, which led to the Fall.[64] Virginity was not only a physical state, but also the highest state of spiritual purity (superior to marriage, since virginity denoted a celestial marriage to Christ), a path to immortality[65] that neutralised the inherent threat of femininity to salvation, enabling holy women to transcend their human nature and passions.[66] Matrona's virginity thus reflects her spiritual integrity and reveals her identity as a saintly woman.

[63] On the role of virginity and the body in Byzantine portraits of female sanctity, see S. Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women* (Uppsala, 2005), 15-16, 21-22; *idem*, 'Virginity in Danger: Holiness and Sexuality in the Life of Mary of Antioch', in, *ΔΩΡΟΝ ΡΟΔΟΠΟΙΚΙΛΟΝ: Studies in Honour of Jan Olof Rosenqvist*, eds. D. Searby, E. Balicka Witakowska, and J. Heldt (Uppsala 2012), 123-132; N. Delierneux, 'The Literary Portrait of Byzantine Female Saints', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2, *Genres and Contexts*, ed. S. Efthymiadis (Farnham, 2014), 363-386, 364, 368, 371.

[64] A. Cameron, 'Virginity as Metaphor: Women and the Rhetoric of Early Christianity', in *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History*, ed. A. Cameron (London, 1989), 184-205, 186-187.

[65] T. H. C. van Eijk, 'Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality', in *Epektasis: Mélanges Patristiques Offerts au Cardinal Jean Danielou*, ed. J. Fontaine and C. Kannengieser (Paris, 1972), 209-235.

[66] E. A. Castelli, 'Virginity and its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity', in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2 (1986): 61-88, esp. 68, 71-78. See also P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), 268-269.

It is difficult to identify an intermediary life-stage between childhood and adulthood in visual representations of women. Women are predominantly differentiated from girls by their covered hair, but head coverings could denote status and modesty as well as age. Thus, prostitutes and servants always appear young and bare-headed, whereas the Virgin and female saints appear with covered hair regardless of age.[67] Generally, whether young women were portrayed as slight, bare-headed maidens or veiled matrons depended not on biological age (i.e., puberty) but marriage.[68] This point is well-illustrated by Brubaker in her analysis of the 12th-century Kokkinobaphos manuscripts, where Mary transitions instantaneously from a child in the scene of her Presentation to the Temple, to a woman in the subsequent scene of her departure from the Temple with Joseph.[69]

A similar pattern appears in the scenes of the Virgin's early life in the 14th-century Chora mosaics, though here the mosaicist has rendered Mary's age with more nuance. Between her birth and marriage to Joseph, the Virgin is depicted at three – *possibly* four – life-stages. In the Nativity, she is a naked, chubby baby (fig. 3.5); by her first steps, at 6 months old, she already appears as a small child (fig. 3.13); by the Presentation to the Temple, at 3 years old, she is taller and clearly a grown child (fig. 5.3).[70] The Virgin's appearance does not change between this scene and her Entrustment to Joseph at 12 years old, where she appears again as a small, round-faced child, standing just over waist-height to Zacharias, who rests his hand protectively on her head (fig. 5.4).[71] However, in the following scene, where the Virgin departs from the Temple with Joseph, she appears suddenly with the fine facial features and stature – if not yet the full height – of a young woman (fig. 5.5).[72] The life-stage at which Mary is depicted depends not on biological age, but her performance of age-related behaviours.

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[67] Brubaker, 'Images', 144-145, 152-154; Hennessy, *Images*, 62-63, 128-129.
[68] Brubaker, 'Images', 152-153.
[69] *Ibid.*, 153-154.
[70] Fig. 5.3. Presentation of the Virgin, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (22/10/2021): https://creativecommons.org/. See Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 1, 72-73, vol. 2, fig. 92.
[71] Fig. 5.4. Virgin Mary entrusted to Joseph, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (22/10/2021): https://creativecommons.org/.
[72] Fig. 5.5. Joseph takes Mary to his House, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century. Joseph takes Mary to his House, Chora Church, Istanbul, 14th century (photo Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection). Accessed online (28/10/2021): http://id.lib.harvard.edu/images/8001538681/urn-3:DOAK.RESLIB:38642393/catalog. See Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, 79-80, vol. 2, fig. 97.

At 6 months old, she transitions from infant to child when she gains the ability to walk. When she leaves her parents' home at 3 years old, she is an older child. Finally, when Mary leaves adult care to become a wife, she is a young woman with fine facial features, and by the time Joseph takes leave of her she has acquired full adult stature[73] – could this latter change of representation be related to the imminent Annunciation of her pregnancy and motherhood, which act as the final hallmarks of womanhood? The mosaics construct the passage from girlhood to womanhood as somewhat gradual, but marriage, as an established index of female life-stage, replaces biological age almost entirely in marking this transition.

In summary, Byzantine texts and images characterise adolescence using prescribed indexes of social and biological age, which often coincide in the male Life Course. The timing of male puberty, signified by the growth of the first beard, often corresponds with the time of marriage, departure from the natal home, and embarkment on a (monastic) career path. Adolescence thus brought young men the social, intellectual, and physical independence necessary to pursue their adult goals. By contrast, social age effectively supplanted biological age in the female Life Course. Female youth was characterised almost solely by a girl's readiness for marriage, marked by the sexual maturity required for childbearing, and the social maturity required to maintain a household or (for unmarried women) administer property. The sources thus construct a life-stage that intervenes, and is distinguished from, childhood and adulthood. In the following section, I take a closer look at the roles of gender, status, and occupation in dictating the length of this life-stage and timing the attainment of maturity.

(5.2) Extended youth: masculinity and the social elite

As we have seen, modern definitions of adolescence conceptualise this life-stage as a time of identity crisis and exploration, which is essential to the formation the adult personality.[74] Peers are deemed to

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[73] Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 2, pl. 99.
[74] Green, *Life Course*, 99-100; Smith, *Adolescence*, 14.

play a key role in this process by providing models of behaviour for adolescents as they develop a sense of self independent from the one projected onto them by their parents. Ideally, by the end of adolescence, the individual has grown into an adult with a strong sense of personal orientations and beliefs (identity achievement).[75] As stated above, psychoanalytical approaches remain influential on historiographical studies of ageing. In attempting to define Byzantine adolescence, scholars have looked for adolescent mental traits (mood swings, impulsivity, risk-taking), secondary socialisation (the gradual integration of adolescents into society through activities outside the home), and peer-group formation in the sources.[76]

Of all groups in late Byzantine society, these parameters of adolescence (as defined by modern society) resonate best with males from the upper social echelons. In this section, I explore how the sources characterise adolescence by expressing expectations of age-based behaviour, since the way Byzantine society perceived youth is central to defining its position in the Life Course. I focus chiefly on four types of adolescents: young emperors learning the arts of rulership; young aristocrats learning martial values; young scholars training for secular or ecclesiastic careers; and young monks. By identifying the milestones that structure the passage from childhood to adulthood, I will assess whether an interim life-stage is represented within each of these life trajectories.

Whereas young saints inverted adolescence by exhibiting unusual wisdom, control over their emotions, and a preference for solitude during youth, writers afforded young men who were not destined for sanctity opposite characteristics and behaviours, which were perceived as the natural tendencies of this life-stage. Young men were defined by their immaturity and need to develop the

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[75] W. E. Herman, 'Identity Formation', in *Encyclopaedia of Child Behaviour*, 779-781. Herman summarises the theories of Erik Erikson, the chief founder of identity formation as a psychosocial construct. On his theory of the stages of identity formation, in which adolescence is assimilated with the stage of 'identity versus role confusion', see E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd edn., rev. ed. (London, 1995), 234-237.

[76] For the methodological background, see Ariantzi's introduction to *Coming of Age*, 1-18, esp. 1-12. Chapters adopting or engaging with psychoanalytical theory include: Melichar 'Adolescent Behaviour'; Ariantzi, 'Identitätsbildung'; Galatariotou, 'Byzantine Adolescent'. The volume also includes a chapter by U. Sirsch (215-236) on 'emerging adulthood', a recently-conceived life-stage in modern psychology lasting from 18 to 24/29 years old.

skills and values appropriate for their gender and status, and inhabited social networks where the roles of seniors and peers appear equally important. This point is well-illustrated by historical portraits of young rulers. Largely, adolescents were portrayed as incompetent leaders whose poor judgement and recklessness posed a threat to political stability. Such an image is found in Akropolites' portrayal of Demetrios Angelos Doukas, who became despot of Thessaloniki in c.1244, around the age of 24: 'the youth was reckless and fit to occupy himself only with childish pastimes and juvenile playthings, not indeed to be in charge of sensible men or to rule a state and be in lawful command'.[77] Due to his immaturity, Demetrios 'associated with stupid youths and had much in common with them'.[78]

As a result of Demetrios' incapability, Thessaloniki's leading men plotted to surrender the city to the Nicaean emperor. Demetrios, being unable to think for himself and misplacing his trust in the advisers scheming against him, was outwitted. Akropolites' use of biological and social markers of age situates youth as extending into the mid-20s; when Demetrios relinquished Thessaloniki two years later, 'he was a young man in age, just at the start of manhood, for he did not yet have the first down on his chin.'[79] This characterisation of young men as reckless and inept also extends back to the mid-teenage years. For example, Doukas argued that Murad II, who succeeded his father as sultan in 1421 at the age of 16, 'because he was young was unable to hold in his hands the reins of government', exhibited no self-confidence and placed excessive trust in officials who manipulated him, causing the government to fall into disorder.[80] Thus, from the mid-teens to the mid-20s, young men were depicted as reckless, easily-led, prone to misjudgement, and a lack of reason. As Messis and Nilsson illustrate, reason was defined as a masculine attribute in both the ancient Greek scientific and – subsequently – Christian mindset. Adolescents transgress their 'natural' gender often in Byzantine texts by exhibiting emotional behaviours traditionally associated with the opposite sex; hence, adolescent males conduct

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[77] 'ἀτάσθαλον ἦν τὸ μειράκιον καὶ παιδιαῖς ἐνσχολάζειν προσῆκον καὶ μειρακίων ἀθύρμασι, μή τοι γε ἀνδρῶν προΐστασθαι συνετῶν καὶ πολιτείας κατάρχειν καὶ νομίμως ἐπιστατεῖν'. Akropolites, *Hist.*, XLV (236). On Demetrios, see Macrides, *Akropolites: The History*, 224, n. 3; *ODB*, 605.
[78] 'μειρακίοις γὰρ ἀβελτέροις ὡμίλει καὶ τούτοις τὰ πλεῖστα συνήσθετο'. Akropolites, *Hist.*, XLII (223).
[79] 'ἦν δὲ φέρων οὗτος τὴν ἡλικίαν τοῦ μείρακος, προσεχῶς εἰς αὐτὴν παραγγείλας καὶ μήπω χνοάζων τὸ γένειον'. *Ibid.*, XLV (238).
[80] 'γὰρ ὁ Μουρὰτ νέος ὢν καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τὰς ἡνίας οὔπω ταῖν χεροῖν κρατῶν'. Doukas, *Hist.*, XXIV, 3.

themselves with a feminine lack of power over their emotions, as opposed to masculine self-control, thus embodying the social disorder threatened by the adolescent awakening.[81] As we shall see in the next section of this chapter, "normal" (non-saintly) adolescents of both sexes tend to invert accepted definitions of gender roles in late Byzantine texts, with the result that "correct" gendered behaviour is presented as a distinctively adult virtue.

The same trope allowed Kantakouzenos to excuse the actions of his 15-year-old son-in-law John V Palaiologos, who was convinced to rebel against his father-in-law by Kantakouzenos' enemies in the senate. Since John was 'still young and not possessed of mature reason', he received no blame for the plot.[82] Age served again as Kantakouzenos' excuse when his other son-in-law, the despot Nikephoros, then in his early 20s, and some other noble youths brought him close to danger through 'disorder and thoughtlessness' by attacking the Turks as Kantakouzenos was parleying with them.[83]

Kantakouzenos' *History*, which is unusual in that it contains characterisations of young men by an author who was also their father(-in-law) and guardian, reinforces the image of imperial youths as an age-group with distinct behavioural traits and social networks. The distinguishing features of young rulers is that they spend time with age-peers who wield significant (often negative) influence over them, and that they lack the judgement necessary to rule effectively. The Byzantines considered specialised tuition on the nature of rulership necessary to teach young emperors the key imperial virtues of justice, wisdom, and temperance, as has been illustrated elsewhere.[84] However, we should note that these portrayals of young rulers – though they represented a minute fraction of the population – reflect wider social expectations about adolescence as a life-stage, as I show in parts 5.3-5.4.

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[81] C. Messis and I. Nilsson, '*Eros* as Passion, Affection and Nature: Gendered Perceptions of Erotic Emotion in Byzantium', in *Emotions and Gender in Byzantine Culture*, eds. S. Constantinou and M. Meyer (Cham, 2019), 159-190, 166-167, 170-171.

[82] 'νέον καὶ οὔπω φρονήματος ἀνδρὶ προσήκοντος ἐπειλημμένον'. Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, trans. Miller, III. 42. 19-20 (78/178).

[83] 'ἀταξίᾳ… καὶ ἀβουλίᾳ'. Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, trans. Miller, III. 65. 23 (103/200). Nikephoros was betrothed John VI's daughter, Maria Kantakouzene, in 1340 and made despot in 1347. See Nicol, *Byzantine Family*, 130-131.

[84] Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 105-111.

In contrast, portrayals of noble youths in romance literature construct an idealised image of adolescence that reflects the martial values of aristocratic society. The romances, whose audience belonged to a literate, courtly circle,[85] take noblemen and women at the age of marriage as their protagonists and may have been intended to appeal to young aristocrats just entering the world of adult relationships.[86] Unlike hagiographers, the romance authors celebrated rather than inverted the primary features of adolescence, portraying young men as brave rather than reckless, and emphasising the physical prowess that comes in youth as well as its violent emotional and physical impulses.

Romance heroes embody the martial virtues of strength, beauty, and bravery, and excel in the equestrian sports that taught noble youths combat skills. Thus, the 14th-century hero Velthandros is introduced as 'an exceptional hunter and a bowman always on target', who was 'handsome, well-built and brave, blond and curly-haired, bright-eyed and fair';[87] the 13th-century hero Livistros 'was a high-born nobleman' and 'skilled warrior… a young man with truly well-shaped features and figure, blond, tall, beardless, his hair cut short all round.'[88] Hunting – a common pastime of noble youths in the sources – helped young men to develop not only the combat skills necessary for a military career, but also bonds with age-peers, thereby fostering the comradeship that was central to a soldier's life. Livistros, who spent time hunting, jousting, and dining with his hundred 'companions, all youths my

[85] For an introduction to the late Byzantine romance, see R. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, 2nd edn. (London, 1996). On dating and chronology, P. A. Agapitos, Ἡ Χρονολογικὴ Ἀκολουθία τῶν Μυθιστορημάτων Καλλίμαχος, Βέλθανδρος καὶ Λίβιστρος', in *Ἀρχὲς τῆς Νεοελληνικῆς Λογοτεχνίας. Πρακτικὰ τοῦ Δευτέρου Διεθνοῦς Συνεδρίου*, ed. N. M. Panagiotakis (Venice, 1993), 197-234. On audience, P. A. Agapitos, 'Writing, Reading and Reciting (in) Byzantine Erotic Fiction' in *Lire et Écrire à Byzance*, ed. B. Mondrain (Paris, 2006), 125-135; C. Cupane, ''Let Me Tell You a Wonderful Tale': Audience and Reception of the Vernacular Romances', in *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond*, eds. C. Cupane and B. Krönung (Leiden, Boston, 2016), 479-494.

[86] The 14th-century romance *Velthandros and Chrysandza* is internally addressed to 'all you young people' (ὦ νέοι πάντες), ed. and Italian trans. C. Cupane, *Romanzi Cavallereschi Bizantini: Callimaco e Crisorroe, Beltandro e Crisanza, Storia di Achille, Florio e Plaziaflore, Storia di Apollonio di Tiro, Favola consolatoria sulla Cattiva e la Buona Sorte* (Turin, 1995), 227-305; English trans. G. Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances* (New York, 1995), 5-30, 1 (5) (I cite the lines of the edition followed by the page number of the translation).

[87] 'παράξενος καὶ κυνηγός, πανευτυχὴς δεξιώτης, εἰς κάλλος καὶ εἰς σύνθεσιν μέγας τε καὶ ἀνδρεῖος, ξανθὸς καὶ σγουροκέφαλος, εὐόφθαλμος καὶ ὡραῖος'. *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, 32-34 (5).

[88] 'ἄνθρωπος ἦτον εὐγενὴς… ἄγωρος ἐπιτήδειος… νέος πολλὰ καλόκοπος εἰς σύνθεσιν καὶ σχῆμαν, ξανθός, μακρύς, ἀγένειος, τριγύρου κουρεμένος'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 36-39.

[Livistros'] equal in age', inhabits such a peer network.[89] Not only were these companions good fighters; as 'true friends', they also offer Livistros counsel and advice out of love for him.[90]

The martial image of youth found in late Byzantine romance reflects the aristocracy's interest in chivalric ideals, which began to influence literary constructs of imperial youth in the 11th to 12th centuries.[91] Yet, the virtues of youthful beauty and physical strength were assigned such cultural value that hagiographers also adapted the saintly Life Course model to reflect the social ideals of this life-stage. Some young saints were educated in combat-related sports, including Sabas the Younger, who was trained by his father in physical exercises and military tactics in youth (νεότης).[92] As Sabas' father was a soldier himself, Sabas' athletic training may reflect his filial duty to maintain the martial traditions of the family. Military service often became a family tradition, as the late Byzantine state granted some *pronoia*-holding soldiers hereditary rights over their property on the condition that their heirs rendered service.[93] Gregory II, in his *Autobiography*, also reported that after abandoning his Latin studies, he returned to his parents' home at the age of 15, where he passed his time hunting.[94]

While these accounts shed light on the real social activities of high-status boys, hagiographers also used the adolescent life-stage – just before or at the time of the saint's entry into monastic life – and its connotations of physical strength and beauty to underline their subject's *spiritual* strength and beauty. Thus, when Gregory Sinaites (b.1260s) left his family and came to Cyprus, where he met his first spiritual master, he gained the affection of the locals because of his good nature, but also the bright,

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[89] 'τὰ παιδία μου τὰ συνομήλικά μου'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 846, see also 129-130, 683, 851-858 (references to hunting, jousting, dining). Though originally a western sport, the jousting tournament had been practised as a form of military training and entertainment in Constantinople since the mid-12th century, when it was introduced Manuel I Komnenos; it was also a favoured pastime of the young Andronikos III Palaiologos. In this sense, the romances reflect the historical realities of the Byzantine court. See Beaton, *Greek Romance*, 155; C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204-1453* (Philadelphia, 1992), 207-208. Hunting is also mentioned in *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, ed. and Italian trans. Cupane, *Romanzi Cavallereschi Bizantini*, 47-213; English trans. Betts, *Greek Romances*, 37-87, 854 (53) (I cite the lines of the edition followed by page number of the translation).
[90] 'Φίλοι ἐγνώριμοι'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 976, 803-805.
[91] On this, see Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 111.
[92] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, V. 51-55. Sabas is described as an 'ἔφηβος' (adolescent) in the chapter immediately following this description, VI. 6-7.
[93] Bartusis, *Late Byzantine Army*, 179-182.
[94] Gregory of Cyprus, *Autobiography*, 178-179.

beautiful appearance of his face and irreproachable, holy soul.[95] As mentioned above, youthful beauty acted as an obstacle to be overcome by some monastically-inclined boys like Philotheos of Athos, who received unwanted attention from the opposite sex. Authors also employed athletic and militaristic symbolism to describe a saint's training in the preliminary exercises of the monastic conduct,[96] playing on the trope of the 'athlete' or 'soldier' of Christ. Thus, after Gregory Sinaites left Cyprus, he came to Sinai, cut off his hair and all fleshly impulses, and nobly took up 'the divine contest', fasting and performing vigils until he seemed to everyone at the monastery to be almost incorporeal.[97] When Saint Germanos returned to his first spiritual father as a young man (νεανίας) with a newly-grown beard and took up the monastic habit and name Germanos (instead of George), he is called 'that good soldier of Christ' who was not inexperienced in the apostolic conduct.[98] In the saintly Life Course, the spiritual blossoming of young men as they adopt a new monastic identity is thus expressed through physical maturation.

The link between physical and spiritual strength and beauty is also reflected in iconographic portrayals of male youth. Military saints, in particular, were traditionally represented as handsome, beardless men in the prime of life. At the church of the Saviour in the village of Paleochorio, Cyprus, painted in the 15th century, Saints George and Demetrios appear as beardless youths with short, curly hair, dressed in military garb and riding side-by-side on horseback (fig. 5.6).[99] The saints' visible youth recalls their martyrdoms and status as strong athletes of Christ, but also – according to Byzantine hagiographers – the beauty of their souls.[100] It is noteworthy that warrior saints were often portrayed in pairs, a 'twinning' that recalled images of the *Dioskouri*, the young blood brothers of

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[95] Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, V. 2-5.
[96] (τὰ τῆς μοναδικῆς πολιτείας… προγυμνάσματα). Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III (4).
[97] 'τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν θεῖον'. Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory Sinaites*, VI. 7-16.
[98] 'ὁ καλὸς οὑτοσὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ στρατιώτης'. Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, IX. 16-17, 46-50 (Germanos was instructed to grow a beard before joining monastic life: IX. 9-12).
[99] Fig. 5.6. Saints George and Demetrios, Church of the Saviour, Paleochorio, Cyprus, 15th century. After A. and J. Stylainou, *The Painted Churches*, 144-145 fig. 68.
[100] Hennessy, *Images*, 130-131; 'Apocryphal Imagery', 179-181; C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (London, 2016), 287-288. See also Sphrantzes' description of Saint George, who appeared to him in a dream as 'a young nobleman', *Minor Chron.*, XIX. 1.

antiquity, but may also reflect the bonds of comradeship formed between young men in the military.[101] Gesture and gaze emphasise the companionship between George and Demetrios; one rests a hand on the other's shoulder, and they look into each other's eyes. The saints echo the idealised model of male youth found in romance literature, based on physical beauty, martial strength, and peer camaraderie.

The timing of athletic and/or military training in the male Life Course was clearly dictated by biological age. As mentioned in chapter 4.1, male saints of schooling age engaged in athletic sports such as running and jumping,[102] and practiced Christian acts of charity and almsgiving[103] rather than the rigorous asceticism that came in later youth. It is clear that high-status boys began learning military skills from a young age; Manuel II (1391-1425) learned to handle the bow, spear, and ride a horse before he left childhood.[104] However, writers only associated the onset of true military activity with middle to later adolescence, when males were entering their physical prime.[105] Thus, John V Palaiologos (1341-1391) was 15 years old when his father-in-law first took him on tour in Thrace to learn 'the hardships which were part of a soldier's life';[106] Andronikos II and his son Michael IX were both 16 when they began rigorous military training, while Michael VIII stated in his *typikon* that he donned armour, a helmet, spear, and shield when he was well into his 18th year.[107] Skeletal remains also suggest that soldiers were aged between roughly 16 and 50 years old.[108]

Thus, middle adolescence marked both a biological and social milestone in the male Life Course: the attainment of physical strength and the entry into a cohort of men in their prime, whether

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[101] Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 288-290 (the two Saints Theodore were also often 'twinned'); A. and J. Stylianou, *Painted Churches*, 144.

[102] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, VI-VII; *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 88-94 (355); Kokkinos, Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ, III. 7-8; Βίος ἁγιου Σάβα, V. 51-55.

[103] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, VIII. 5-9; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, III. 2; Kokkinos, Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ, V. 18–22, VII. 1-29 (on these passages, see chapters 6.3 and 4.3).

[104] Bartusis, *Late Byzantine Army*, 207. Physical/military education becomes an important feature in late Byzantine accounts of imperial childhood: see Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 106-107.

[105] Ariantzi, 'Identitätsbildung', 126-127.

[106] 'τοὺς πόνους στρατιώτῃ πρέποντας'. Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, trans. Miller, III. 53. 6-7 (188). John V was born in June 1332, and they left on campaign after Constantinople was hit by the bubonic plague in 1347.

[107] Angelov, 'Emperors and Patriarchs', 109; Manuel VIII Palaiologos, *Auxentios*, XV. 1230-1231.

[108] Men aged 16 to 50 years old, who were probably soldiers – possibly casualties of the fall of Nicaea to the Ottomans in 1331 – were discovered in the 14th-century mass graves at the urban theatre of Nicaea: Ivison, *Mortuary Practice*, 55, 197, vol. 2, 36.

soldiers in a real sense or 'soldiers of Christ', whose ranks young men joined after they entered monasteries. The sources thus construct two phases of male youth. The first phase precedes physical maturity and is marked by training in physical or spiritual exercises; the second is marked by the attainment of physical maturity and an occupational identity, which, in the aforementioned sources, is either martial or monastic. This dipartite model of male youth is also reflected in the Life Course of young scholars with family backgrounds in the civil service. I demonstrated in chapter 4.1 that scholars' (auto)biographies focus on education, undertaken at the secondary level from the ages of roughly 11 to 15/16, and at the higher level into the mid-20s (or sometimes later), so that the shift from secondary to higher education coincides with the transition from earlier to later adolescence. As the pursuit of higher learning and high-status careers often required young men to leave their families and homelands, this milestone also brought young men independence from parental authority.[109]

This Life Course pattern is exemplified by Theodore Metochites (1270-1332), who described his early life in one of his poems. The scholar portrayed himself as child naturally disposed towards learning from the time he learnt to speak.[110] He studied at home for 13 years, attending the classes which were necessary for a young man (νέον ἄνδρα) in grammar and rhetoric (i.e., the *enkyklios paideia*), before moving onto nature, logic, mathematics, and finally 'the books of wise men of the past'.[111] Then, in his 20th year, Metochites' life took a profound turn; his oratory skills impressed Andronikos II, probably while the emperor was visiting Asia Minor, where Metochites' family lived.[112] Beyond his expectations, Metochites was brought to Constantinople, made a courtier, and then a senator within a year, even though – Metochites added – 'I was very young'. By his 25th year, though he was 'still a young man', he was entrusted with a mission to negotiate an imperial

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[109] On the education of late Byzantine scholars, see S. Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1970), 52-56, 61-62; Constantinides, *Higher Education.*
[110] Theodore Metochites, *Poem 1: A Glorification of the Lord Together with an Account of the Author's Life and a Description of the Monastery of the Chora*, trans. I. Polemis, *Theodore Metochites, Poems: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Turnhout, 2017), I. 16.
[111] 'βίβλοις… ἀνδρῶν ἐμφρόνων'. *Ibid.*, I. 16-17.
[112] Theodore's father, George Metochites, was exiled to Nicaea after Patriarch John XII Bekkos fell from power, in 1283, when Metochites was around 13 years old: *PLP* 17982.

marriage.[113] Like most biographers, Metochites emphasised his youth so as to present the deeds of his early life as extraordinary. However, structurally, his account follows the pattern of male youth reflected in other biographical texts: by his 13th year, he reached an intellectual milestone with the undertaking of secondary learning, while his 20th year marked the beginning of his career.

Late Byzantine writers often cited the 16th and 20th or 21st years of life as milestones in their education and/or career trajectories. For example, George Akropolites (1217-1282) described how he was 'captivated by love of philosophy and higher studies in literature' in his 17th year, when he began learning with other young men being trained for careers in the imperial service, having arrived at the court of Nicaea at the age of 16 (after his father's death).[114] In his *History*, Akropolites presented his departure from the court to pursue higher learning as a defining moment in his life. He reported a speech by Emperor John III, who urged the young Akropolites: 'demonstrate that you indeed go forth from my household, and engage in your studies accordingly', and promised that as a philosopher he would receive great honours, more so than if he were to become a soldier.[115] Hence, Akropolites presented middle adolescence as a critical moment in youth, whereupon he chose one of the two life trajectories open to men of his social status: a scholarly as opposed to martial career. The writer was still learning at 21 years old, when he began studying philosophy with Nikephoros Blemmydes.[116]

Other writers also associated their 16th and 20th years with early life milestones. Gregoras stated that he was aged 20 when his love of higher learning was blooming, while Pachymeres reported that he came to Constantinople to join the clergy a year before he turned 20.[117] George Sphrantzes (1401-c.1478) recalled that he was 16 and a half when he was placed in charge of Manuel II's imperial chamber, having already served as a page of prince Thomas and a companion of prince Constantine

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[113] 'νέον γ' ἐμὲ… με… νέον ὄντα'. Metochites, *Poem 1*, trans. Polemis, I. 19-20. This was the marriage of Michael IX Palaiologos and Rita of Armenia (1295).

[114] 'αὐτὸς ἔρωτι τῶν μαθημάτων ἁλοὺς καὶ τῆς ὑψηλοτέρας τῶν λόγων παιδεύσεως'. Akropolites, *Hist.*, XXXII (192).

[115] 'δεῖξον οὖν, ὡς ἀληθῶς τῆς ἐμῆς οἰκίας ἐξήεις, καὶ οὑτωσὶ τῶν μαθημάτων ἀντιποιήθητι'. *Ibid*. See also XXIX (189) for Akropolites' departure from home.

[116] *Ibid*., XXXIX (210). For Blemmydes' own education, see chapter 4.2, 117-118.

[117] Gregoras, *Hist.*, VII. 11 (I. 270-271); Pachymeres, *Chron.*, I. 1 (23). Gregoras was probably studying rhetoric and logic: Constantiniades, *Higher Education*, 99.

XI, with whom Sphrantzes had been educated.[118] While Sphrantzes did not describe his education, it must have included some higher studies and military training, since he partook in battle strategies and fighting at the siege of Patras (1429) and was described by Constantine XI as 'skilled in arithmetic'.[119] Sphrantzes' account also indicates how early high-status men began training their sons for a public career; when his son John was 12 years old, Sphrantzes took him on a mission to the Morea to 'visit the places and learn all those things which would be of use in his life'.[120]

Autobiographical accounts of scholars and statesmen thus reinforce the model of youth found in biographical portraits of saintly and even imperial adolescents. This model was divided into an early stage, which lasted from around the age of 11/12 to 16 and was geared primarily towards education, and a later stage, which extended into the mid-20s and was essential for career development. Hence, we can observe that the social patterning of the late Byzantine Life Course enforced an extended stage of adolescence onto males of the social elite, who attained intellectual maturity and occupational identity gradually. This extended transition from childhood to adulthood allowed young men to create social networks of peers and superiors that would benefit their later lives, as attested by the cases of Akropolites and Metochites, who rose to lofty government positions from middling elite backgrounds by impressing the imperial family.[121] What potentially set young men of this social milieu apart from their aristocratic and imperial contemporaries was the timing of marriage in the Life Course. Though rarely recorded, the ages of marriage known for scholars suggest that young men pursuing prominent secular careers could delay marriage up to their 30s due to the time they spent in education or service of the state. If so, the spousal age gap between these men and their wives was probably considerable. A similar marriage pattern has been observed among the ancient Roman elite, where men in their mid-20s married women in their mid-teens; this created a hierarchy of ages across the bride's and groom's

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[118] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, V. 1-VI. 1, XV. 5.
[119] 'καλῶς ἀριθμεῖν'. *Ibid.*, XXXV. 8; XVII. 7-8. See Philippides, *A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes*, 10-11.
[120] 'νὰ ἴδῃ καὶ τοὺς τόπους καὶ νὰ παιδευθῇ εἰς πᾶν εἴ τι χρήσιμον ἐν τῷ βίῳ'. *Ibid.*, XXXIV. 7.
[121] Akropolites held the title of *megas logothetes* (c.1259-1282), and Metochites that of *mesazon*, or prime minister, from 1305: Macrides: *George Akropolites: The History*, 23; A-M. Talbot 'Theodore Metochites', *ODB*, 1357.

families that would bring both sets of in-laws social connections which would benefit the male relatives' public careers.[122]

To cite a few examples, George Sphrantzes married his wife Helena in 1438 at the age of 37, and the couple had their first son a year later.[123] Akropolites married his wife Eudokia by 1256, probably not long before their first son Constantine's birth between 1250 and 1255, when Akropolites was between 33 and 38.[124] Niketas Choniates (c.1155-1216), whose family was not from the high nobility and who received an education similar to these men at Constantinople, where he lived with his brother Michael from the age of 9, married at 30 or 31.[125] As a son of the aristocratic (not yet ruling) Palaiologoi, Michael VIII married at a similar age of 33.[126] Metochites must have married by the age of 23 or 24, if his daughter was of age when she married John Palaiologos shortly after 1305/6.[127] In contrast, it was common for imperial sons and especially daughters to marry in their early- or mid-teens.[128] Early (even illegal) marriages were not uncommon amongst first-born sons and heirs. Andronikos IV Palaiologos was 8 when he married the 9-year-old Keratsa-Maria, daughter of tsar Ivan Alexander; Theodore II Laskaris was 14 when his marriage to the 12-year-old Helena of Bulgaria was arranged.[129] Other princes married between ages 14 to 25, their brides usually being younger.[130]

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[122] Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 10-11, 95-97.

[123] Sphranztes, *Minor Chron.*, XXIV. 1.

[124] Macrides, *Akropolites: The History*, 18.

[125] For Niketas' early life, see Michael Choniates, *Oration for his Brother, Niketas Choniates*, ed. S. P. Lampros, *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ Σωζόμενα*, vol. 2 (Athens: 1879-1880), 21. 345-366, 21. 7-8 (347-348), 15-16 (351); Magoulias, *Annals of Niketas Choniates*, ix-xvi; A. Simpson, *Niketas Choniates: A Historiographical Study* (Oxford, 2013), 11-23.

[126] Talbot, 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina', 295 (Theodora was around 13 years old). John VI Kantakouzenos, who was born into an aristocratic family, had married his wife Eirene Asenina by his mid-20s (Nicol, *Family*, 35-36). His son Matthew was younger when he married his wife Eirene Palaiologina in 1341, probably around the age of 16 (Nicol, *Family*, 108).

[127] John Palaiologos, the nephew of Andronikos II Palaiologos (*PLP* 21479).

[128] For brides' ages at marriage, see chapter 2.2, n. 56.

[129] Akropolites, *Hist.*, XXXII (197). Akropolites cites Theodore's and Helena's ages as 11 and 9 when the betrothal was arranged, but Macrides notes that this was Theodore's age when the marriage negotiations began in 1232, and that the betrothal was not accomplished until 1235, when Theodore was 14: *Akropolites: The History*, 191-192.

[130] For example: Andronikos II, m. Anna of Hungary, 1272, aged 14 (Pachymeres, *Chron.*, IV. 29 (411-413); Gregoras, *Hist.*, IV. 8 (I. 109). Anna was 12/13 years old: Melichar, *Empresses*, 108-110); Michael IX Palaiologos, m. Rita of Armenia, 1294, both aged 16 (Pachymeres, *Chron.*, IX. 6 (52)); John Palaiologos, son of Andronikos II, m. Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina, 1303, aged 17 (*PLP* 21475; Hero, 'Irene-Eulogia', 120-121:

Differences between the typical ages of marriage amongst imperial sons, aristocrats, and scholars may be explained by marriage's role in the lives of each sub-group. As marriage served a diplomatic function for the imperial family and was an important aspect of late Byzantine foreign policy, it was politically expedient to have royal children betrothed or married at young ages, even before they attained social or biological maturity.[131] Further down the social scale, the primary goal of marriage was to establish a household and beget heirs; therefore, when the time came for Niketas Choniates to marry and establish a household, he sought 'a wife given by God, who was a beneficial assistant and united [with him] in an inseparable bodily communion which leads to childbearing'.[132] The interface between social maturity, biological maturity, and marriage in the Life Course therefore varied according to gender and status-based differences between rulers and the wider social elite.

(5.3) Fleeting youth? Femininity and the social elite

The stance of current scholarship on a Byzantine concept of a female adolescence is clear. In her introduction to *Coming of Age in Byzantium*, Ariantzi stated, 'there was no transitional period between childhood and adulthood for young girls', whose upbringing was geared toward marriage rather than a career, and who had little opportunity to form peer-groups due to gendered social ideals that kept girls at home.[133] Naturally, these remarks are more applicable to high-status girls – who are the subject of this section – than lower-status female adolescents, whose lives presumably had more in common with the lives of non-elite urban and rural women who worked in public spaces, and who are ill-represented

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Eirene was 12); Theodore Palaiologos, son of Andronikos II, m. Argentina Spinola, 1306, aged around 15/16 (Gregoras, *Hist*., VII. 5 (I. 237); Pachymeres, *Chron*., XIII. 18 (159); *PLP* 21465); Andronikos III, m. Eirene-Adelheid of Brunswick, 1317, aged 20 (Gregoras, *Hist*., VII. 12 (I. 277); *PLP* 21437); John VIII Palaiologos m. Anna of Moscow, 1414, aged 21 (Doukas, *Hist*., XX. 3; *PLP* 21481); Constantine IX Palaiologos, m. Theodora Tocco, aged 22 (*PLP* 21500); Thomas Palaiologos, son of Manuel II, m. Catherine Palaiologina, aged 21/22 (*PLP* 21470). Manuel II Palaiologos, who was not a first-born heir, married Helena Dragas at the late age of 42 (*PLP* 21513).

[131] For a recent survey of imperial women and their political roles, see Melichar, *Empresses*.

[132] 'γυναῖκα τὴν παρὰ θεοῦ δεδομένην οἰκωφελῆ βοηθὸν καὶ συνεζευγμένην εἰς ὁμοσαρκίαν παιδουργόν τε καὶ ἀδιάσπαστον'. Michael Choniates, *Oration for his Brother*, 21. 15 (350).

[133] Ariantzi, *Coming of Age*, 8.

in Byzantine writing.[134] Certainly, textual sources do not construct a female Life Course pattern wherein adulthood is attained gradually. Rather, upon marriage, girls were treated as, and expected to fulfil the roles of, adult women. Yet, it is worth considering how far this pattern reflects a lack of interest in female youth by male authors, who provide the bulk of our sources for young women's lives. Just as historical writers were chiefly interested in male adolescence because of its impact on political life, so their interest in young women mostly related to marriage – the primary sphere in which women wielded political influence. As hagiographers constructed saintly youth in opposition to normative adolescence, their interest naturally lay in girls who inverted social norms of their age-group by *not* marrying. Rather than focusing on the social structuring of the female Life Course – which left little room for an interim period between childhood and adulthood – in this section I analyse how writers portrayed women of marriageable age. I argue that, ultimately, writers ascribed to young women traits and behaviours that reflect a wider cultural conceptualisation of youth as a life-stage.

Before analysing the characterisation of female youth in literature, some general observations about the relationship between age and marriage in the female Life Course must be made. Firstly, it was common for imperial and aristocratic daughters to marry upon or within a few years of the legal age, at 12 to 13.[135] To cite one example, Eirene Choumnaina Palaiologina, daughter of the scholar Nikephoros Choumnos, was 12 when she married Andronikos II's 17-year-old son, John Palaiologos, in 1307, and was widowed by 16.[136] Secondly, young women of this social milieu started childbearing soon after marriage. Eirene-Yolanda of Montferrat, who married the 25- to 26-year-old Andronikos II at the age of 11, had her first son John two years later;[137] Theodora Palaiologina, who married Michael VIII around the age of 13, already had three children by her 19th year.[138] Whereas the ages that men married appear to have varied amongst the social elite, early marriage affected girls outside the high

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[134] On women in public spaces, see Laiou, 'Women in the Marketplace'; *idem*, 'Role of Women', 246-248. See also chapter 4.3, above.
[135] See chapter 2.2, n. 56.
[136] Hero, 'Irene-Eulogia', 120-121.
[137] Nicol, *Byzantine Lady*, 49-50; Gregoras, *Hist.*, I. VI. 2 (I. 168) Here, Gregoras gives Andronikos' age as 23, while he refers to Eirene-Yolanda simply his young wife, 'ἡ νέα σύζυγος ἡ Εἰρήνη'.
[138] Talbot, 'Theodora Palaiologina', 295-296.

aristocracy as well. For example, the daughter of the 15th-century Thessalonian official mentioned in previous chapters died in childbirth at the age of 16.[139]

Girls who married in childhood underwent a major transition in early life; having left the parental home, they were transported into entirely new familial and (in the case of imperial brides) cultural environments. Ideally, these girls' new families would accommodate their young ages. Both imperial and non-imperial in-laws took responsibility for rearing and educating their children's young spouses, as we saw with the case of Helena of Bulgaria, who was raised by her mother-in-law Eirene after arriving at the Byzantine court in her 12th year.[140] Nor were girls who married into the imperial family as children expected to adopt the political duties of an *augousta* immediately, but were crowned later on account of their youth.[141] Nevertheless, from the imperial family down to the general populace, there are known cases where girls, after wedding below the legal age, were exposed to the sexual aspects of married life in their grooms' households. A well-known case concerned Simonis, daughter of Andronikos II Palaiologos, who was wed to king Stefan Milutin at just 6 years old in 1299 on the condition that she would be raised and educated at the Serbian court, and the union remained unconsummated, until she reached marriageable age.[142] However, Gregoras reported that Milutin – whom he characterised as a lecherous, faithless man – broke his agreement with Simonis' parents and consummated the marriage when she was just 8, leaving her permanently infertile.[143] The patriarchal register records a similar case from 1325, when a divorce was granted after a cleric's son, having taken his 11-year-old bride into his home, broke his promise to the girl's father to leave the marriage unconsummated until his wife reached the legal age; this abuse left her permanently injured.[144] While

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[139] Schreiner, 'Eine Obituarnotiz', 210-211.

[140] Akropolites, *Hist.*, XXXIV (197); R. Macrides, 'Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship', in *Kinship and Justice*, 263-280, 275.

[141] Melichar, *Empresses*, 406, 121 (Eirene-Yolanda), 307 (Anna of Moscow), 265 (Maria of Bulgaria). Doukas explains that Anna was not crowned because she was still a young girl of 11 years old: *Hist.*, XX. 3.

[142] Gregoras, *Hist.*, VI. 9 (I. 203); Pachymeres IX. 31 (69), X. 1 (71).

[143] Gregoras, *Hist.*, VII. 5 (I. 243).

[144] G. Prinzing, 'Adoleszenten in der kirchlichen Rechtsprechung der Byzantiner im Zeitraum 13.–15. Jahrhundert (Adolescents in the ecclesiastical jurisprudence of the Byzantines in the period 13th to 15th Centuries)', in *Coming of Age*, 29-82, 47-48, see also 52 (another very young bride).

we cannot determine the commonality of such cases, they highlight the potentially vulnerable position of brides – especially those who had not reached sexual maturity – in their in-laws' homes.

It is clear that marriage customs often left little time for girls to transition from the role of daughter to that of wife and mother, which (as mentioned above) constitutes a major hallmark of female adulthood in biographical writing. Nevertheless, it is worth questioning whether girls would have been subject to all the social expectations of adult women upon marriage. As I demonstrated in part 5.2, historical writers accorded imperial youths, such as John V Palaiologos and the despot Nikephoros, adolescent traits and behaviours even after they were married.[145] Is this also the case for literary portrayals of young women? In the remainder of this section, I examine representations of young women in romance literature, where we find constructions of female youth and the social world of young women that are rarely represented in Byzantine writing.[146]

The romances' heroines – all young women on the cusp of marriage – partake in leisure activities and occupy social networks not dissimilar to those of noble youths. For example, the newly-wedded heroine Rodamni accompanies her husband Livistros on a hunt, releasing falcons to chase partridges.[147] This sport was enjoyed by real noble women; according to Gregoras, Empress Eirene Laskarina was unable to have more children after her firstborn, Theodore II, because she injured her womb in a riding accident while she was hunting with the emperor.[148] Scholars have noted that Byzantine girls did not form peer-groups, a defining tendency of modern adolescents.[149] When Byzantine writers described the lives of unmarried girls (which was rarely), they situated them in the secluded setting of the household, which symbolised and ensured their virginity, thus enhancing their prospects of contracting a good marriage. Thus, Michael Choniates stated that when the time came to choose a bride for his brother Niketas, he did not base his selection on nobility, beauty, or a hefty

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[145] Nikephoros II of Epiros married Maria Kantakouzene, daughter of John VI, in 1340, when he was 12-13 years old (Nicol, *Byzantine Family*, 130).
[146] On the 12th-century novels, see Galatariotou, 'Byzantine Adolescent', 211-213.
[147] *Livistros and Rodamni*, 2237-2247, 2403, 2651-2656.
[148] Gregoras, *Hist.*, II. 7 (I. 44).
[149] Ariantzi, *Coming of Age*, 8; Melichar, 'Adolescent Behaviour', 114.

dowry, but preferred his schoolmates' sister, 'who had been brought up by a good mother and kept at home'.[150] Such texts, which adhere to social ideals of feminine modesty and seclusion, convey the impression that the social networks of young women were tightly constrained. However, in the romances, while women do not inhabit the large peer-groups distinctive of young noblemen, they *do* form close bonds with other age-peers. Just as Livistros passes his time with fellow youths, the lady Rodamni spends her days in her private apartments with other maidens, all 'beautiful young ladies' like herself, and her closest companion Vetanos, a 'young eunuch, truly handsome as to his form';[151] she also shares the company of 'a very young page'.[152] The author thus placed Rodamni at the centre of a youthful social network populated by the kinds of servants whom high-status girls would have spent much of their time with – people of a status that is ill-represented in Byzantine historical writing or hagiography.

In the romances, noblemen form close bonds with men of equal status. *Livistros and Rodamni* is narrated by a noble youth named Klitovon, who accompanied, aided, and counselled Livistros on his travels, so that the two became bound by 'pure friendship'.[153] In contrast, cross-status relationships play a major role in young noblewomen's lives. It is the eunuch Vetanos who acts as 'the maiden's [Rodamni's] confidant in counsels, in secrets and in her private conversations', and facilitates her courtship with Livistros.[154] It is he who comes to Rodamni's bedchamber at night to interpret her dreams, delivers her letters, and – as we will see below – advises her on how to conduct herself in courtship.[155] The 14th-century heroine Chrysandza shares a similar bond with her female servant Fedrokaza. Like Rodamni's eunuch, Fedrokaza is trusted with keeping her mistress' secrets and helps to hide her love affair with the hero, Velthandros, from Chrysandza's father. She does so by posing as Velthandros' bride, even wearing 'the garment which she [her mistress Chrysandza] had stained with

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[150] 'παρὰ μητρὶ ἀγαθῇ τρεφομένην καὶ θαλαμευομένην'. Michael Choniates, *Oration for his Brother*, 21. 18 (351).
[151] φοδοῦλες ὡραιωμένες… ἕναν εὐνουχόπουλον πανεύμορφον εἰς εἶδος.' *Livistros and Rodamni*, 1260-1262.
[152] 'ἕνα παιδόπουλόν'. *Ibid.*, 2239.
[153] 'καθαρὰν φιλίαν'. *Ibid.*, 4288.
[154] 'οἰκεῖον τῆς κόρης εἰς λόγους, εἰς μυστήρια καὶ εἰς κρυφιοσυμβουλάς της'. *Ibid.*, 1263-1264.
[155] *Ibid.*, 1425-1445, 1532-1555.

the blood of her maidenhood' to make the union appear consummated.[156] Fedrokaza states that she

will help Chrysandza out of love for her mistress, whom she had grown up with, and – according to

the romance's author – only secondly because she is her 'slave'.[157]

The heroines' relationships with their servants resemble the bonds between noble youths and

their companions in that they are characterised by sameness of age, mutual trust, affection, and the

provision of help or guidance. This mistress-servant bond echoes the one presented by hagiographers,

who praised servants for exhibiting love and loyalty towards their mistresses or, but also noblewomen

– like Saint Macrina (4th century) and Mary the Younger (9th- to 10th-century) – who cared for their

servants and slaves, or even treated them as equals.[158] Although these relationships are fictional, they

reflect the importance of cross-status relationships in the lives of young noblewomen, and the types of

bonds they could form in the domestic settings where they grew up. Such was the environment in

which the 11th-century writer Michael Psellos' daughter Styliane was raised, where she spent time

conversing with her wetnurses, bonding with girls her own age, and playing with her maidservants.[159]

Here again, we may observe servants providing children with companionship as well as care. Psellos'

mother also wove cloaks for her maidservants – a testament to her charity but also her care for these

women.[160] Though Byzantine texts rarely offer details about the relationships between young

mistresses and their servants – the romances are atypical in this regard – servants are nevertheless

ubiquitous in the sources. Even noble and imperial women who entered monasteries were often

allowed to bring their female servants or take nuns as servants, despite the fact that, ideally, nuns were

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[156] 'τὸ ὑποκάμισο ἔδωκεν τὸ εἶχε ἀπὸ παρθενίας καταχραμένον αἵμασιν'. *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, 1042-1043 (24).

[157] 'δούλα'. *Ibid.*, 888 (21).

[158] For example, see Gregory of Nyssa's description of the relationships of his mother, brother, and sister (Saint Macrina) with their servants in the *Life of Saint Macrina*, *PG* 46, 960-1000, 966D-970C; trans. K. Corrigan (Eugene, OR, 2005), 26-29. Agathe, female servant of the 9th- to 10th-century Saint Mary the Younger, refused to betray her mistress to her abusive husband out of loyalty: *Life of Saint Mary the Younger*, *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, 4 (Brussels, 1925), 692-705; trans. A. E. Laiou in *Holy Women of Byzantium*, 254-289, V (260), VIII (264-265). A miracle story about a woman who brought her young female slave to be healed by the 9th-century Theodora of Thessaloniki, due to her love for the girl, is recounted by Gregory the Cleric, author of the *Life of Saint Theodora of Thessaloniki*, ed. S. A. Paschalides, *Ὁ Βίος τῆς Ὁσιομυροβλύτιδος Θεοδώρας τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ* (Thessaliniki, 1991), 66-188; trans. A-M. Talbot in *Holy Women of Byzantium*, 164-237, 56 (212).

[159] Michael Psellos, *Funeral Oration for his Daughter*, 5 (64).

[160] Michael Psellos, *Encomium for His Mother*, 4. b (10).

supposed to leave behind the luxuries of worldly life.[161] In this vein, Theoleptos of Philadelphia, the spiritual adviser of Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina, encouraged his spiritual daughter to let go of her 'multitude of servants' in a letter from 1307, when Eirene had just become a nun after being widowed at the age of 16.[162]

The close bond between Rodamni and Vetanos certainly reflects the personal nature of eunuchs' duties toward their mistresses; Byzantine princesses used eunuchs as their confidants and companions when they travelled outside the empire to marry.[163] Eunuchs also performed duties for their mistresses as described in the romance, such as delivering private letters, assisting in managing household servants, and even providing education.[164] Even when writers portrayed cross-status relationships negatively, as in *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi* – a 14th-century romance probably composed by a member of the Palaiologan imperial family[165] – they emphasised the emotional and physical proximity of servants to their young mistresses. In this romance, the heroine Chrysorroi's secret affair with the hero is uncovered by 'the trick of the evil eunuchs and the deceit of the wicked maid', who used their position to spy on their mistress and report her actions to her husband.[166] In the text, servants clearly act as a plot device. However, the domestic roles of servants and slaves would have certainly placed them in a good position to act as supervisors and educators of younger members of the household, as they did in antiquity.[167] Servants may have also helped girls to learn the domestic tasks performed by adult women; images of women spinning and weaving, for example, frequently

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[161] Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, XVII. 40-41. 1278; Theodora Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, VIII. 93-94. 1550.

[162] 'τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ὑηρετῶν'. Theoleptos of Philadelphia, *Letters*, I. 15.

[163] Pachymeres described a cohort of servants and eunuchs who accompanied Anna Palaiologina, daughter of Michael VIII, to the Serbian court in 1269: *Chron*, V. 6 (453). Eunuchs also had a role in the ceremonies in which late Byzantine princesses and empresses participated: Melichar, *Empresses*, 346, 350, 367-368, (on eunuchs as empresses' servants and their scarcity in late Byzantine written sources) 273-274, 371-372. On the relationship between eunuchs and Palaiologan empresses, and their portrayal in late Byzantine romance, see Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 204-205, 207-208.

[164] Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 5, 17, 243-244.

[165] For an up-to-date discussion, see C. Cupane, 'In the Realm of Eros: The Late Byzantine Vernacular Romances', in *Fictional Storytelling*, 95-126, 95-97, 114-118.

[166] 'τὸ συσκεύασμα τῶν πονηρῶν εὐνούχων καὶ τὸ κακομηχάνημαν τῆς πονηρᾶς δουλίδος'. *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, 21999-2200 (80).

[167] V. Vuolanto, 'Family Relations and the Socialisations of Children in the Autobiographical Narratives of Late Antiquity', *Approaches*, 56-57, 66, 68; Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 41, 44.

depict female servants working alongside their mistresses, thereby reconstructing the social setting of a wealthy household.[168] As servants were always depicted as unveiled young women[169] – examples include the midwives' assistants and women tending infants' cots in nativity scenes (figs. 3.4-3.7, 3.9-3.10) – unfortunately nothing can be said about their age representation.

Thus, although the social world of high-status girls did not expand in adolescence as it did for boys, who undertook physical and/or intellectual education in peer-groups outside the home, girls nevertheless had opportunities to form peer-relationships within the household. These relationships were not static but transformed as girls grew up, acquiring new interests and occupations, including romantic relationships.

The expectations that Byzantine society placed on young noblewomen are encapsulated by the romance heroines – all beautiful, highborn virgins who received an 'impeccable upbringing' in the privacy of the household.[170] Male authors characterised their own daughters according to the same ideals. Thus, when George Sphrantzes recorded the death of 'my beautiful daughter Thamar', who died of an infection in the sultan's harem at the age of 14, he emphasised her physical beauty and youth;[171] Sphrantzes also stated that his children's beauty and good upbringing compelled the sultan to take them into his household.[172] Similarly, in a letter written to his 16-year-old daughter Eirene upon her widowhood, Nikephoros Choumnos affectionately described Eirene's extraordinary beauty of body and soul, God-fearing attitude, observation of Christ's commandments, and decorum. These traits – he wrote – delighted her parents, who considered her as the glory of their family and placed all their hopes on her as they began to plan her marriage.[173] Fathers' portrayals of their daughters thus adhered to literary and social conventions by constructing an image of female youth spent at home, in

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[168] Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, figs. 116, 121-124, 126.

[169] *Ibid.*, 134-135, 148-149.

[170] 'τῆς παιδεύσεως τὸ ἀκέραιον'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 1705, see also 525-526, 614-615 (a description of Rodamni's appearance); likewise, see *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, 387-388 (12); *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi,* 648-649 (50).

[171] 'Θάμαρ ἡ καλή μου θυγάτηρ'. Sphratnzes, *Chron.*, XXXVII. 9.

[172] *Ibid.*, XXXV. 12

[173] Nikephoros Choumnos, *Letter to His Daughter*, ed. J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca e Codicibus Regiis*, vol. I (Paris, 1829), 293-305, 295.

isolation and preparation for marriage. This emphasis on young women's confinement to the domestic setting reflects the importance that writers attached to sexual purity and modesty when raising daughters or – as expressed by Michael Choniates – selecting wives for their male relatives.

While beauty, modesty, and piety were regarded as virtues in both girls and women,[174] in romance literature young women are also assigned traits that are portrayed as deriving from their age, including arrogance, vanity, intemperance, and impulsivity, the latter of which also characterised male youth. Thus, when the princess Rodamni initially rejects the advances of the text's hero, Livistros, the author blamed Rodamni's haughtiness, stating, 'it is a trait of noble maidens that they are arrogant'.[175] Livistros frequently begs Rodamni to 'set aside your haughtiness, let go of your arrogance', and pity his love-stricken heart.[176] Yet Rodamni, inverting the feminine virtues of compassion and gentleness, exhibits a proclivity towards anger – a negative female trait favoured by Byzantine authors[177] – many times in their courtship. Upon receiving one of Livistros' letters, she 'flew into a rage at its words'.[178] Elsewhere, Rodamni fears the letters may be intended for one of her maids and instructs her eunuch, Vetanos, that if any of them are found receiving or sending letters she shall be put to death. Vetanos, adopting a teacherly role, advises her to set aside her anger, which 'does not befit a noble lady'.[179]

Of course, in the romance, Rodamni's haughtiness serves the rhetorical function of enhancing the hero's victory when she is finally won over by his courtship and submits to the power of Eros, or love, which – as Agapitos and Andreou point out – is presented as a status-appropriate skill that young nobles must learn in the romance.[180] As mentioned above, the eunuch Vetanos plays a role in teaching Rodamni this skill. However, the author's portrayal of Rodamni's shortcomings as a noblewoman as

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[174] On Byzantine ideals of gendered virtue, Neville, *Byzantine Gender*, 33-55. On imperial feminine virtues, see Brubaker, 'Sex, Lies and Textuality'; Melichar, *Empresses*, esp. 102, 153, 207, 294, 317-318, 330, 389.

[175] 'αἱ φοδοῦλες ἔχουν το ἵνα κενοδοξοῦσιν'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 1686.

[176] 'ρίψε τὸ κενόδοξον, ἄφες τὸ ἐπηρμένον'. *Ibid.*, 1720.

[177] In Byzantine writing, feminine emotional instability is contrasted with masculine self-control. See, for example, Brubaker, 'Sex, Lies, and Textuality', 92-93; Neville, *Byzantine Gender*, 50, 75-76.

[178] 'θυμώνεται εἰς τοὺς λόγους της'. *Ibid.*, 2072.

[179] 'φουδούλα οὐδὲν ἁρμόζει'. *Ibid.*, 1535-1540.

[180] A. Andreou and P. A. Agapitos, 'Of Masters and Servants: Hybrid Power in Theodore Laskaris' Response to Mouzalon and in the Tale of Livistros and Rodamne', *Interfaces: A Journal of Medieval European Literatures* 6 (2019): 96-129, 114-115.

symptoms of her youth recalls the rhetorical strategies that Byzantine historians used to explain or excuse the actions of young men. These writers were clearly exploiting a common cultural concept of youth in their works, characterising young elites as imperfect noblemen and women who are yet to learn the virtues and values of their gender and status, including the ability to conduct oneself in the world of adult relationships. Parent-child conflict is also a notable feature of the romance. As in hagiography, young women's efforts to pursue their true love interests are hindered by the authority of fathers who wish to arrange their marriages for them. Rodamni quarrels with her father over his choice of a husband for her – while speaking 'in a respectful manner' that good daughters show their parents – while the heroine of the text's subplot, Myrtani, is fiercely admonished by her father for taking a lover while her real husband, chosen by her father, was away from home.[181]

Hagiographers also characterised young women as having a self-focused preoccupation with appearance, status, and luxury – qualities that young saints inverted. Thus, according to her *Life*, when 'the beautiful young Theodora' of Arta first married Emperor Michael II Komnenos Doukas (c.1231-1267/8) as a girl (she had her first son around 16 years old), she was not carried away by her 'glorious position, nor did she succumb to her youth, nor did she indulge in luxury. Neither was she puffed by pride in her imperial power';[182] instead, Theodora devoted herself to God and strove 'to cultivate the pursuit of virtue, and to conduct her life in a chaste manner'.[183] Neilos of Rhodes (b.1350s) assigned Matrona of Chios similar traits of moderation and modesty in an *enkomion* for the saint. After praising Matrona for choosing a life of virginity at a young age, he commended how she was indifferent to things that excite young women (νεανίδων) by nature, including fleshly pleasure and desire, luxury, beauty, gilded clothes, the charms of jewels, and 'all other such nonsense'.[184] Though Theodora and Matrona were the only late Byzantine women to have received saintly status, their characterisations form a coherent ideal of female youth, whereby pious young women invert the adolescent traits of

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[181] 'δουλικῶς'. *Ibid*., 2421, 2775-2777.
[182] 'οὐ παρεσύρη τῇ δόξῃ, οὐχ ἑάλω τῇ νεότητι, οὔτε μὴν πρὸς τρυφὰς οἶδε κατασπαταλᾶν. Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῷ τῆς ἀρχῆς ὄγκῳ ἐπήρθη'. Job, *Life of Theodora of Arta*, 330 (*PG* 905C).
[183] 'ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, σωφρόνως ζῶσαι'. *Ibid*.
[184] 'ἅπας ὁ τοιοῦτος φλήναφος'. Moniou, 'ΟΣΙΑ ΜΑΤΡΩΝΑ', 96. 102-112.

vanity, arrogance, passion, and material desire. An indifference to romantic or sexual passions was also praised in girls who were approaching marriageable. Psellos wrote that his daughter Styliane, who died 'before the age of marriage' (she was in her 9th year) was not tempted by the amorous advances of suitors – despite her great beauty – being unaffected by youthful passions.[185]

In sum, writers assigned young women a set of traits and behaviours that they connected often explicitly or implicitly to their age. Representations of adolescent women in late Byzantine writing thus appear to be not only constructions of femininity, but specifically feminine youth. Like male adolescents, young women were afforded negative attributes including vanity, pride, impulsiveness, and intemperance, which writers regarded as symptoms of youth and inverted when constructing idealised portraits of young women. Moreover, in literature, adolescent women inhabit a social world that was largely formed of peers in age but not status. This trend is significant because it reflects the real environment in which girls grew up – surrounded by young companions and servants – which is so rarely represented in the sources. Even visual portrayals of women's domestic activities, where servants appear frequently, do not depict servants according to actual age, and representations of young women as a distinct age cohort – such as scenes of the Presentation of the Virgin, where the candle-bearing maidens appear as (usually) bareheaded young women (figs. 4.5-4.7) – are rare. Nevertheless, hagiography, romance, orations, and even private letters tend to stereotype young women according to the moral standards of Byzantine society; girls are largely confined to the domestic setting – a symbol of feminine modesty and sexual purity – in which their daily activities are almost invisible. The sources do appear to represent a period of female youth: a life-stage coinciding with the time of sexual maturity and preparation for marriage, which followed imminently.

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[185] 'πρὸ ὥρας γάμου'. Michael Psellos, *Funeral Oration for his Daughter*, 1 (118), 31 (76), 46 (136).

(5.4) Youth, status, and occupation

My analysis thus far has examined how adolescence was shaped by gender and the institutions of marriage, education, and the social codes of the elite. Where does this leave young people who did not marry or receive the type of education necessary to pursue high-status careers? Socioeconomic status poses a problem for investigating youth in Byzantium, as the hallmarks of adolescence, according to modern definitions, resonate better with Byzantine expectations of masculinity than with femininity, and with the elite than with the non-elite. Moreover, our sources offer limited information about apprenticeship, an institution that – as I argue below – could delay the attainment of social maturity for boys. However, the *typika* provide a wealth of information about the experience of young people in monasteries, many of whom came from non-elite origins. As I demonstrate in this section, the forms of training and socialisation undertaken by apprentices and aspiring monastics were not dissimilar in that they prolonged the transition from social immaturity to maturity. The expectations of behaviour that monastic authors expressed towards young monks and nuns were also similar to those placed on high-status adolescents, and thus reflect a cultural concept of adolescence that transcended social level.

It is difficult to pinpoint the transition from youth to maturity in the rural Life Course. As the rural populace engaged in agricultural labour from a young age, the social spheres and activities of children and adults were probably less sharply defined in the countryside. Moreover, while Byzantine authors defined marriage as an important marker of social independence and maturity, in rural society marriage did not necessarily entail a split from the parental household. Laiou has demonstrated that among the 14th-century Macedonian peasantry (her data refers to the populations of various larger and smaller villages), marriage was usually virilocal or patrilocal;[186] that is, brides joined the household of

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[186] For a list of the villages and monastic estates that make up the main sample, see Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 17-18.

their grooms or grooms' parents upon marrying.[187] It was rarer for a groom to join the household of his bride, which might have happened if the groom came from a poorer family than the bride, or if he had migrated to the village from elsewhere.[188] Thus, while marriage usually entailed a move away from parental custody for the bride, the newlyweds might remain under a parental roof for some time. As Kondyli – writing on the 13th- to 15th-century Lemniot peasanty – explains, a son whose parents had already divided their property amongst one or more offspring may require a substantial dowry from his wife in order to establish an independent household; otherwise, he and his bride would have to remain in the parental home until they inherited property upon the parents' deaths.[189] Consequently, the age of marriage (of which we have no solid evidence for rural communities)[190] did not necessarily coincide with the time when couples gained fiscal independence from their parents. Variable patterns of inheritance also affected whether or not the establishment of a new household upon marriage was possible. In some cases, the paternal holding was divided amongst children while their parents were still alive, allowing the children to form independent households.[191] Likewise, as can be observed in Lemnos in the latter part of the 14th century, where land became more available in the aftermath of the plague (thus enabling more peasants to leave the paternal home), population size and land availability in a region could inhibit or encourage the creation of households independent from the natal family.[192]

What, then, were the other channels through which non-elite and rural adolescents could have experienced a gradual transition to social maturity? One was apprenticeship, which could – as I argue below – delay the attainment of social maturity and professional identity until early adulthood. In both urban and rural communities, family trades were passed down from father to son, while other parents had their children learn the crafts of uncles, godparents, extended relatives, and family friends. Before

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[187] *Ibid.*, 78-85, tbl. III-1. This table illustrates that it was not uncommon for a peasant household in the themes of Thessaloniki and Strymon to include one or more younger married couple(s) cohabiting with parents or siblings.

[188] *Ibid.*, 95-97. See also Kondyli, 'Family Structure', 385-386.

[189] Kondyli, 'Family Structure', 384.

[190] Laiou has estimated an average age of marriage of 15 for women and 20 for men based on the sex structure of the Macedonian peasantry; however, her categorisation of the population into age-groups is based ultimately on marital status: *Peasant Society*, 272-274, 296.

[191] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 192; *idem*, 'Family Structure', 52-53.

[192] Kondyli, 'Family Structure', 382-383, 390.

examining how apprenticeship impacted on the experience and duration of youth, it is necessary to

surmise what information can be gleaned from the sources about apprenticeship.

It appears that apprenticeships began shortly before or around puberty, as decrees from Mount

Athos banned builders from bringing 'beardless boys' from their workshops to the monasteries 'on the

pretext that they were assisting them'.[193] These boys worked firstly as labourers, cutting and removing

stone from the quarry, before progressing to more complex tasks such as laying and carving stone; if a

boy showed skill, he would then learn design techniques from a master mason through practical

experience and studying existing monuments.[194] The sources also attest to the existence of painters'

apprentices, whose names appear with their masters' in small Greek church and chapel inscriptions;

for example, the apprentice (μαθ[η]τοῦ) Theodore helped his master and brother Nicholas, a painter

from the village of Retzitza (possibly on the border of Arkadia and Messenia), to paint the chapel of

Hagioi Anargyroi in Kepoula, Mani, in 1265.[195] Art historical research on painters from rural Greece

and Crete shows that these local artisans worked within limited geographic regions that could be

travelled easily, and often concurrently held other professions connected to the village church, such as

priests, readers, and deacons who painted seasonally.[196] Hence, their apprentices were probably often

related to them by familial or communal ties. Inscriptions reflect a level of kinship among painters,

who included fathers and sons, uncles and nephews, and brothers, indicating how crafts were passed

down within the family.[197] In a will from 1436, the Cretan painter Angelos Akotantos, before

travelling to Constantinople, even left the tools of his trade, including his drawings or designs, to his

unborn child on the condition that it would be male and learn to read, write, and paint.[198] The

document attests to a father's desire to pass his trade on to his son, thereby giving him a means to

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[193] 'παῖδας… ἀγενείους… ἐπὶ προφάσει συνεργίας αὐτῶν'. Manuel II, *Mount Athos*, 15. 1621; Greenfield, 'Children in Monasteries', 277.

[194] R. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Philadelphia, 2008), 52-53.

[195] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 47-48, 56, fig. 32; S. Kalopissi-Verti, 'Painters in Late Byzantine Society: The Evidence of Church Inscriptions', *Cahiers Archaeologiques* 42 (1994): 139-158, 149, fig. 8.

[196] M. Panayotidi, 'Village Painting and the Question of Local 'Workshops'', in *Les Villages dans l'Empire Byzantin, IVe-XVe Siècle*, eds. J. Lefort, C. Morrisson, and J.-P. Sodini (Paris, 2005), 193-212, 208-209. See also Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 56-58; Kalopissi-Verti, 'Painters', 147-149.

[197] Panayotidi, 'Village Painting', 209; Kalopissi-Verti, 'Painters', 149.

[198] Kalopissi-Verti, 'Painters', 149-150; Nelson, *Theodore Hagiopetrites*, 122.

sustain himself, but also preserving the family identity, which – as I mentioned in chapter 4.4 – was often rooted in trades.

As Angelos' will illustrates, few parents aspired to have their daughters learn professional skills. There are only a few known examples of women who learned the family trade, such as Eirene, daughter of the 13th- to 14th-century scribe and book-illuminator Theodore Hagiopetrites, who also became a scribe and (possibly) illuminator and may have carried on her father's work after his death.[199] As daughters were generally expected to become wives or nuns, their security was regarded as the duty of their future husbands or monastic communities.[200]

Details about urban apprenticeship can be found in several acts in a notarial register concerning boys who were apprenticed to masters including a furrier, shoemaker, and blacksmith in Constantinople in the 1360s.[201] The apprenticeship contracts lasted between 5 and 10 years, therefore taking up the greater part of the boy's youth, and obliged the masters to provide their pupils with food, clothes, and shoes, as well as teach them their trades. Some of the masters were required, at the end of the contract, to provide the apprentice with clothes or tools of the trade of a fixed value, or a small amount of capital might be loaned interest-free for a fixed time.[202] Thus, in 1372 one Michael, son of Kalokyris, was apprenticed for 10 years to a blacksmith who was to provide him with tools of the trade worth 10 *hyperpyra*.[203] In this case, as in others, any party who broke the contract had to pay compensation, here set at 25 *hyperpyra*. The apprenticeship contract was thus mutually beneficial: the craftsman maintained and taught his trade faithfully to his apprentice in return for the boy's labour. The contract was observed by witnesses, who were sometimes fellow craftsmen.[204]

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[199] Nelson, *Theodore Hagiopetrites*, 18, 122-123; A. Weyl-Carr, 'A Note on Theodore Hagiopetrites', *Scriptorium* 35.2 (1981): 287-290, 288-289.

[200] Monastic institutions provided dowries to orphaned girls in preparation for adulthood: Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 129-134.

[201] The contracts can be found in G. Ferrari Dalle Spade, 'Registro Vaticano di Atti Bizantini di Diritto Privato', in *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*, ed. S. Giuseppe, vol. 4 (Rome, 1935), 249-267, 264-266.

[202] *Ibid*. See also N. Oikonomedes, *Hommes d'Affaires Grecs et Latins à Constantinople: XIIIe-XVe Siècles* (1907), 73-74. On similar apprenticeship arrangements known from Cretan notarial documents, see Nelson, *Theodore Hagiopetrites*, 124.

[203] Ferrari, 'Registro Vaticano', 266 (no. XIV).

[204] *Ibid*., 264 (no. VI).

It is noteworthy that the apprentices are sometimes identified by the names of their mothers – such as the son of Eirene Kyriotissa, apprenticed in 1365 – instead of their fathers;[205] these women were probably widows who arranged apprenticeships for their sons. Apprenticeship not only enabled fatherless boys to secure a future livelihood by learning a trade, but also allowed childless craftsmen to transmit their skills and knowledge to someone who could take up their trade. Notarial documents of 14th- to 15th-century Crete also record women contracting apprenticeships for their sons, such as Maria Mussuro, who in 1400 arranged for her son George to learn the art of painting from one Nicholas Philanthropenos for 3 years; in exchange, George would serve his master day and night.[206] As illustrated by the case of Philotheos Kokkinos, who funded his education by working in his teacher's kitchen, it was not atypical for adolescents to offer service in exchange for learning.[207] A similar model of apprenticeship prevailed in the medieval West, where apprenticeship acted as a form social integration that gave children the skills necessary to earn a stable income and even climb the social ladder.[208] The master's home was considered the optimum setting for young people to develop a good work ethic, as their masters would give them none of the special treatment offered by parents, thus forcing them to develop social ties with adults.[209] We can only wonder whether Byzantine boys who took up longer apprenticeships, such as those described in the Constantinopolitan contracts, would have delayed marrying until their training was complete, as was the case in north-western Europe.[210]

Based on the analysis thus far, it can be argued that the Byzantine model of apprenticeship extended the period of youth experienced by boys. Upon becoming an apprentice, boys were

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[205] *Ibid.*, 264-265 (nos. V, IX).

[206] Nelson, *Theodore Hagiopetrites*, 124.

[207] See chapter 4.3.

[208] F. Michaud, 'From Apprentice to Wage-earner: Child Labour Before and After the Black Death', in *Essays on Medieval Childhood: Responses to Recent Debates*, ed. J. T. Rosenthal (Donington, 2007), 75-92.

[209] L. Brockliss, 'Apprenticeship in Northwest Europe 1300-1850', in *Childhood and Violence in the Western Tradition*, ed. L. Brockliss and H. Montgomery (Oxford, 2010), 171-180, 175.

[210] After the Black Death, English women married on average at 23 years old and men at 26: Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 38. The relatively late age of marriage and small spousal age-gap in north-western Europe has been compared with the "Mediterranean" model of marriage, whereby young women married considerably older men. In ancient Rome, the average age of marriage amongst the sub-elite was around 20 for women and 30 for men: S. Huebner, 'A Mediterranean Family? A Comparative Approach to the Ancient World', in *Mediterranean Families in Antiquity: Households, Extended Families, and Domestic Space*, eds. S. Huebner and G. Nathan (Chichester, 2017), 3-26, 7-8, 13; Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up*, 10.

transferred from the care and authority of a parent to that of a master, who became not only a teacher but also a guardian for his apprentice. Apprenticeship thus delayed the attainment of socioeconomic independence for several years. It also constituted an important transition in a boy's life. The master-apprentice bond was a working relationship; in his master's home or workshop, the apprentice held a new status whereby he was expected to serve, and had the opportunity to integrate himself into a network of craftsmen whose ranks he would join when his training was complete.

This point is well-demonstrated by the letters of John Apokaukos, the 13th-century judge and bishop of Naupaktos, whose church ran an affiliated orphan school for boys. Miller's study of the Byzantine welfare system for orphans identified several such episcopal and monastic schools that educated orphaned children at a primary and sometimes secondary level, and sent boys who exhibited non-academic talents to learn crafts from professional tradesmen.[211] Such a practice was followed at Apokaukos' school, which trained boys to join the clergy.[212] In one letter, Apokaukos introduced a boy whom he had sent to his friend Nicholas, bishop of the nearby town of Vonditza, to learn accounting and calligraphy, since Naupaktos lacked teachers of these crafts.[213] Apokaukos had had the boy in his care from birth since the child's mother was too poor to care for him, and he had given him his own name, John, at baptism. Apokaukos did not specify the child John's age but referred to him as a 'μειράκιον' and 'μειρακίσκος' – terms usually denoting younger adolescents or children near the age of puberty.[214] By the time his training began, John had also been taught grammar, the primary stage of education that boys typically completed around the age of 11.[215]

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[211] Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 111-124, 127-132.
[212] Apokaukos, *Letters*, no. 27, 5-8.
[213] *Ibid.*, no. 100. For a fuller description of Apokaukos' orphan school and his letters that mention the orphans, see Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 124-127.
[214] Ariantzi, *Kindheit*, 37-38; Overstreet, 'Greek Concept', 541. See also chapter 2.2.
[215] This timing of the apprenticeship is also suggested by the 8th-century *Life* of Saint Elias of Heliopolis, a boy from a family of lowly means who undertook a paid apprenticeship as a carpenter around the age of 12, having begun learning carpentry in childhood, before the age of 10: *Life of Elias of Heliopolis*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kermeus, *Συλλογὴ Παλαιστίνης καὶ Συριακῆς Ἁγιολογίας*, vol. I. (St Petersburg, 1907), 42-59; trans. S. McGrath, 'Elias of Heliopolis: The Life of an Eighth Century Saint', in *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations, Text and Translations Dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides*, eds. J. W. Nisbett and John. W. Nisbett (Leiden, 2003), 85-110, VI (94).

Apokaukos outlined John's traits and habits for Nicholas' benefit. The boy was prematurely wise but, being a quick learner who was quicker to carry out commands, he sometimes struggled with instructions and made mistakes when performing his chores. He was nicknamed 'Thief' by the other boys because he had a stealing habit, having been caught taking eggs from the hen-hutches to play games with the other children at Easter. Apokaukos described his hesitation to send John away due to his emotional attachment to him but, forced by John's need to progress, he asked Nicholas to take care of the child's education and training, including his spiritual development. He asked his friend to follow a daily routine, practising and singing psalms with John each morning so that he would be familiarised with them. He also urged Nicholas not to hesitate to threaten John with the rod, as the boy required a tight rein. Apokaukos thus hinted at another purpose of apprenticeship; he wanted Nicholas to be for John as Eli was for Samuel, not teaching him in a soft and fatherly manner, as was the case with Eli's other sons (who died because of their disobedience). In exchange, Apokaukos would pay for John's food and clothing, and John would serve his master food and drink and help with household chores.[216]

Apokaukos' letter offers several important insights into how apprenticeship structured male youth. Firstly, some apprentices had to relocate from one town to another for their training, thus entailing a split from the family home. Secondly, apprenticeship served as an extension of a child's education; masters were responsible for their pupil's spiritual and sometimes academic growth as well as vocational training. Thirdly, masters were expected to instil discipline in their pupils and were deemed as more effective in this task than the child's parents (Apokaukos regarded himself as John's father). Finally, an apprentice was expected to serve his master, performing menial tasks. It appears that John, like other apprentices, was unpaid. While a lack of sources makes it difficult to determine how representative John's experience was, it has affinities with the contracts of apprenticeship known from Constantinople and with the better-known apprenticeship systems of Venetian Crete and western Europe. The examples we have suggest that apprenticeship constituted a period of extended social

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[216] Apokaukos, *Letters*, no. 100.

immaturity, wherein the apprentice was subject to a master who oversaw his care, discipline, and education, while the apprentice occupied a lower status as a pupil and servant to his master.

Apokaukos may have considered it especially important to provide John with a trade since, as an orphan, he lacked family to support him. It was for this reason that orphans began apprenticeships as early as 11 years old in 14th-century England, whereas other boys were aged 13 to 14.[217] Indeed, Apokaukos told Nicholas that he trusted him to observe John carefully, not only because of Nicholas' good nature and the friendship between them, but also because John was an orphan.[218]

There are similarities between John's training as an apprentice and the process undergone by young people who were training to become monks or nuns. As discussed in chapter 4.2, several monasteries accepted children, who became novices in adolescence and sometimes received early tonsure.[219] The novitiate was effectively a probationary training period that culminated with an assessment of the novice's suitability for monastic life. Thus, Krausmüller terms the novitiate as a kind of monastic 'socialisation', whereby novices unlearned the behavioural and value systems of worldly life and replaced them with spiritual learning.[220] The novitiate's length varied by institution, but some young candidates, or those who lacked life experience, had to undertake longer novitiates.[221]

During the novitiate, novices shared the lifestyle of the other nuns or monks, obediently performed tasks, and were observed to see if they persevered in their attitude of humility.[222] Sometimes, novices were allotted a senior member of the community to oversee their development. For example, Neilos Damilas' Cretan convent assigned each novice a sponsor to be responsible for her training in 'the monastic way of life'.[223] Even saintly monks who practised more solitary, idiorhythmic

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[217] Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, 113.
[218] Apokaukos, *Letters*, no. 100, 39-40.
[219] Chapter 4.2 describes such rulings in late Byzantine monastic *typika*, including those of Blemmydes for the Monastery at Ematha near Ephesos; Neilos Damilas for the convent of the Mother of God Pantanassa on Crete; Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople; and Theodora Palaiologina for the Convent of Lips in Constantinople.
[220] Krausmüller, 'Monastic Communities', 345, 355.
[221] Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, IX. 18. 1270-1271; Blemmydes, *Ematha*, IX. 1203-1203.
[222] Neilos, *Machairas*, 56. 1140; see also Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, IX. 18. 1270.
[223] 'τῆς μοναδικῆς πολιτείας'. Neilos Damilas, *Pantanassa*, VI. 1470.

than coenobitic lifestyles engaged in master-pupil-style relationships with spiritual fathers for several years after leaving home in their teens or early 20s.[224] A spiritual father or mother taught his/her charge humility, self-denial, and obedience, and was served by the young disciple in turn. As with apprenticeship, tough treatment could be used to instil discipline in young disciples. After Maximos the Hutburner left home at 17, he donned the habit and 'was assigned to an experienced elder to learn the monastic life in obedience.' While most of the monastery's elders admired his premature experience in fasting, vigils, prayer, and bodily mortification, Maximos 'was mocked by his own elder', whose duty was to expose him to the harshness of the monastic lifestyle.[225]

The novitiate, like apprenticeship, was designed in such a way that the novice gained social maturity and membership in the community gradually through a series of roles and rites that signified her/his integration into the sisterhood or brotherhood, which was signified by dress and daily routine. Thus, at Blemmydes' monastery of Ematha, young candidates wore black throughout their preliminary training until their 12th birthday, whereupon they took the novice's rags to be tested for another seven years before adopting the full garb in their 20th year. Conversely, 'adult candidates, who have attained mental maturity' were to spend just one year in black and two in the novice's habit.[226] Age thus structured the timing of milestones in the monastic Life Course: the onset of the novitiate and its culmination in tonsure, whereafter they could adopt greater roles in the community. A novice's gradual transition from uninitiated non-member to initiated member of the community imposed an extended period of enforced immaturity onto young monastics in a way not dissimilar to apprentices, who underwent years of service, discipline, and training in order to join communities of craftsmen.

Monastic communities conceived of seniority in terms of both biological age and wisdom gained through life experience – that is, social age. Modelled on the family hierarchy, these roles were encapsulated by familial terminology.[227] As stated in Theodora Synadene's *typikon* for the convent of

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[224] Talbot, 'Adolescent Monastic', 93-94; *Life of Niphon*, I. 2-II.
[225] 'ὑπὸ γέροντα τέτακτο δόκιμον, τὴν μοναδικὴν ἐν ὑποταγῇ μαθεῖν πολιτείαν… ἐσκώπτετο δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἰδίου γέροντος' Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, III.
[226] 'ὅσοι δὲ καὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν ἐντελεῖς ὄντες καὶ τὸν λογισμὸν στερεοὶ'. Blemmydes, *Ematha*, IX. 1203.
[227] Talbot, 'Family and Monastery', 120-121.

Sure Hope, a mother superior was both a teacher, chastiser, and role model for the nuns under her authority, who in turn had to obey her 'as true daughters obey their mother'.[228] The young nuns (τῶν νεανίδων) who were engaged in chanting and learning their letters – the choir sisters rather than the convent's non-literate nuns, who served and engaged in physical labour[229] – were similarly bound to obey the *ecclesiarchissa*, who was responsible for the church services and thus experienced in ecclesiastical rites and matters.[230]

This link between biological and social maturity in structuring the monastic community is visualised in a portrait of the nuns of the convent of Sure Hope in the Lincoln College *typikon* dated to c.1300 (fig. 5.7).[231] In the background, mature nuns gaze and gesture identically, wearing black garb and headgear; the abbess is marked out by her staff.[232] In the foreground, five young nuns – perhaps novices – are poised and gesture similarly, their youth signified by their small heights. These girls are clearly younger than Theodora's daughter, Euphrosyne Synadene, who is depicted aged 15 or 16 in a miniature on the preceding folio, dated c.1300, in monastic garb with her mother, standing slightly shorter than Theodora (fig. 5.8).[233] The smallest nun in the group portrait (second from the right) looks much like Euphrosyne as she appears in an earlier portrait with her parents, as a small, round-faced, bareheaded child in a brown novice's habit (fig. 5.9).[234] The taller girls have somewhat leaner, less

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[228] 'πείθεσθε ὅσα καὶ μητρὶ γνησία γνήσιαι θυγατέρες'. Theodora Synadene, *Bebeia Elpis*, III. 26. 1530, IV. 38. 1534, see also X. 65. 1541-1542.
[229] *Ibid.*, VIII. 56-60. 1539-1540.
[230] *Ibid.*, VI. 50-53. 1537-1538.
[231] Fig. 5.7. Nuns of the Convent of Our Lady of Sure Hope in Constantinople, c. 1300, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, f. 12r. After Spatharakis, *Portrait*, 199-206, fig. 154. See C. Hennessy, 'The Lincoln College Typikon: Influences of Church and Family in an Illuminated Foundation Document for a Palaiologan Convent in Constantinople', in *Under the Influence: The Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts*, eds. J. Lowden and A. Bovey (2008), 97-109. Hennessy has demonstrated that the portrait of the nuns, like those of Theodora's family in monastic garb, probably dates to c.1300 rather than c.1330, as suggested by I. Hutter, 'Die Geschichte des Lincoln College Typikons', *JÖB* 45 (1995) 79–114.
[232] J. Ball, 'The Group Portrait in the Lincoln typikon: Identity and Social Structure in a Fourteenth-Century Convent', *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies* 5 (2016): 139-164, 150.
[233] Fig. 5.8. The Nuns Euphrosyne Synadene and her Mother Theodoule, c.1300, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, fol. 11r. Accessed online (20/09/2021): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/TheodoraPalailogina%26EuphrosyneSynadena.jpg. See Hennessy, *Images*, 105-109, pl. 8; Brubaker, 'Images', 152-153. On the dating of this portrait to c.1300, see Hennessy, 'Lincoln College Typikon', 107.
[234] Fig. 5.9. The Nun Theodoule and Monk Joachim with their Daughter Euphrosyne, c. 1300, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, fol. 7r. After Hennessy, *Images*, pl. 7.

childish faces, possibly suggesting that they are older. The nuns are also distinguished by dress. The mature nuns wear a dark *himation* and black *skepe*, a square-structured veil worn only by initiated nuns, their uniform symbolising humility and equality among the sisterhood – as Theodora stated in her *typikon*.[235] Conversely, the young nuns wear black, brown, white, and translucent veils, whose colours appear to symbolise different ranks in the convent hierarchy, or no veil in the case of the smallest nun (second from the right).[236] Clothing thus reflects the social and spiritual status of each nun, which also coincides with biological age, signified by height. Together, the *typikon* and its portraits present a community wherein age and status are intricately connected.

Young apprentices and monastics were subject to the social expectations of adolescence discussed above, whereby young people were considered as reckless and requiring adult guidance in order to combat youthful desires. Another letter of Apokaukos described an orphan who came into his care at the age of 10, since the boy's mother was too poor to provide him with clothes or shoes. Apokaukos clothed, educated, and trained the boy to join the clergy, eventually raising him to the position of *lausynaktes*. However, Apokaukos reported with dismay that the boy later rejected this paternal inheritance; he fled from the church, having seduced another cleric's wife, and travelled from town to town with her. He later seduced a young virgin and indulged in lust, all the while leaving his old and destitute mother without her son's care. Apokaukos expressed his own paternal feelings of hurt by the boy's actions, which he recognised as 'the ways of a man in youth' (Proverbs 30:19).[237]

Monastic communities were also concerned with the natural inclinations of young monks and nuns and observed them closely. Theodora Synadene's convent made special provisions when young nuns visited their families; a young nun was to be accompanied by an elderly nun 'for her greater security' when meeting relatives at the convent, or by two nuns when visiting relatives at home.[238] The

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[235] Theodora Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, XIX. 98-99. 1551, 102-104. 1552.
[236] On the nuns' dress, see J. Ball, 'Decoding the Habit of the Byzantine Nun', *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 27-28 (2009-2010): 25-52, 32-33.
[237] 'ὁδοὺς ἀνδρὸς ἐν νεότητι'. Apokaukos, 'Δυρραχηνά', ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *BZ* 14 (1905): 568-574, 572-573 (no. 2).
[238] 'εἰς περισσοτέραν ἀσφάλειαν ἑαυτῆς'. Theodora Synadene, *Bebeia Elpis*, XV. 76-77. 1545-1546.

older nuns watched the young nun's behaviour carefully, and the young nun would return to the convent by evening to report her thoughts and conversations from the day, stating if she felt tempted to contradict any monastic rules.[239] This close observation and examination of young monastics – a practice advocated by Basil of Caesarea (330-379)[240] – reflects a belief that the young are more easily inclined to temptation. The restriction of young members' actions outside monasteries was applied across gender. Neophytos described how, when he was a young monk, his superior kept him from performing services outside the monastery 'because of [his] tender youth'.[241] Neophytos was at least 23 at that time, suggesting that – for the non-elite too – youth was perceived to extend into the early 20s. In a similar vein, in his *typikon* (1374) Makarios Choumnos instructed the young novice Theodoulos not leave his monastery in Thessaloniki except on two conditions: to visit the local priest for confession accompanied by another monk, or to work in the vineyards, which was permitted for the sake of relaxation 'in the good [pursuits] of his peasant background'.[242] Again, Makarios' instructions indicate the roles of age and status in shaping adolescents' communal roles and activities.

Monastic founders instituted special rules for young members because they perceived youth as a life-stage marked by unique mental and social characteristics. For this reason, Blemmydes kept the boys at his monastery in Ephesos under constant observation and ruled that they should not form private groups, thus expressing a belief that young people were more likely to misbehave amongst age-peers.[243] Likewise, Patriarch Matthew I explained in his *typikon* (1407) for the Charsianeites monastery in Constantinople that the superior must embody a loving father-figure for the monks in his charge, so as to endure 'the rashness and congenital stupidity of the novice' – words echoing notions of adolescent naivety and impulsivity.[244] In his autobiography, Matthew also referred to the social

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[239] *Ibid.*, XV. 76-77. 1545-1546.
[240] Basil's rule for his orphan school is described by Miller, *Orphans of Byzantium*, 114.
[241] 'διὰ τὸ τῆς νεότητος ἁπαλόν.' Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, IV. 1350.
[242] 'τῆς εἰς τὰ καλὰ χωρικίας αὐτοῦ'. Makarios Choumnos, *Rule and Testament for the Nea Mone of the Mother of God in Thessaloniki*, ed. V. Laurent, 'Écrits Spirituels Inédits de Macaire Choumnos († c.1382), Fondateur de la 'Néa Moni' à Thessalonique', *Hellenika* 14 (1955): 60-71, 76-85; trans. Talbot in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1433-1354, A.17. 1443.
[243] Blemmydes, *Ematha*, IX. 1202.
[244] 'τῆς προπετείας τοῦ νεωτέρου καὶ τῆς βρεφικῆς ἐξ ἁπαλότητος ἀναισθησίας'. Matthew I, *Charsianeites*, A. 2. 1633-1634.

expectation that young people lacked the self-discipline and dedication required for monastic life. He recounted how, when he first expressed his wish to become a monk before his 12th year, his parents tried to dissuade him by describing the arduous lifestyle and extreme hardship of monks, 'all of which were difficult and scarcely tolerable for immature adolescents like myself.'[245] Even when Matthew approached a monastery at the age of 15, the superior hesitated to accept him because of his youth, which – Matthew wrote – usually leads people to 'flit from one thing to another, and tire easily of the intensity of virtuous discipline'.[246] Matthew's superior appears to have had in mind the adolescent proclivity towards impulsive and morally loose behaviour that concerned other authors.

By characterising young people as naïve, capricious, vacillating, and prone to disruptive moral or sexual behaviour, monastic rulebooks voiced similar expectations of adolescents as hagiographies and historical writing. This is significant because, unlike the latter genres, the *typika*'s rules were created for, and expected to be followed by, people of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. These documents project the view that adolescents' natural habits and activities must be controlled and transformed by social practice onto a much larger swathe of the social hierarchy than most of our texts allow. The structure of both apprenticeship and the monastic novitiate enforced an extended period of social immaturity onto young people, who remained under the guidance, observation, and instruction of elders throughout their training. Once this training was complete, the apprentice or novice acquired a new identity as the member of a community which was united by a common occupation.

(5.5) Conclusion: exiting adolescence

Two periods of pre-adult youth can be discerned in the male elite Life Course. The first began around the age of 11/12 and was marked by the onset of secondary education, which prepared boys for their

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[245] 'ἃ δὴ πάντα ἐργώδη καὶ ἥκιστα φορητὰ τοῖς ἄωρον κομιδῇ καὶ νέαν ἡλικίαν ἄγουσι παραπλησίως ἐμοί.'*Ibid.*, A. 3. 1634.
[246] 'ἀπ' ἄλλων εἰς ἄλλα περιτρεπομένην ὡς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ ῥαδίως πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀπαγορεύουσαν'. *Ibid*.

future careers as civil servants, ecclesiasts, or rulers. At this time, boys also undertook physical education that – particularly among the aristocracy – was geared towards a military career. The second period of youth began around the age of 16, when young men started higher education or military training. Both milestones introduced youths to social networks formed of age-peers and seniors in the prime of life, whether in a mental (in regard to higher learning) or physical sense (in regard to military life). These ties helped young men to forge career paths. Yet, this period of life was clearly distinguished from adulthood; young rulers were assigned adolescent traits of impulsivity, recklessness, and naivety from the age of 16 to the 25th year of life, which appeared to mark the threshold for adulthood (and was, indeed, the legal age of majority). The 20th/21st year also held value as an intellectual milestone in the male scholarly Life Course, as did the 18th year, which writers from varied social backgrounds associated with marriage or, alternatively, entry into a monastery.

With the exception of marriage in childhood, which was not uncommon amongst the imperial family, marriage was an important hallmark of maturity which – for Byzantine authors – marked an individual's independence from parental authority. However, as we have seen, the function of marriage in the Life Course varied according to gender and status. Marriage meant establishing one's own family, as a biological unit. However, it did not necessarily entail establishing a household, as a socioeconomic unit, at least for the segment of the rural peasantry who remained in their parents' or older relatives' households after marrying. Even if marriage was assigned meaning as a symbol of social maturity, it did not always mark the attainment of independence from the natal family.

It is difficult to identify such a structured progression toward maturity in the female Life Course, where marriage stands out as the defining event whereby womanhood was attained. Whereas differences of social status produced variations in the timing of marriage in the male Life Course, it appears that girls were expected to marry close to the age of sexual maturity and begin childbearing soon after regardless of status. Even girls who married before attaining sexual maturity were not always protected from the reproductive functions of marriage; this depended on the family environments in which girls were raised. What remains ambiguous, based on my analysis thus far, is

the respective importance attached to wifehood and motherhood as milestones that transformed a girl's status in the family and society. As marriage carried expectations of both these roles, it was assigned value by authors writing about women on the cusp of adulthood. A question left to consider is the extent to which becoming a mother altered a woman's social status. It may be significant that the young women I discussed in part 5.3, whom writers afforded adolescent traits (naivety, arrogance, vanity, susceptibility to material or physical temptations) or portrayed as inverting the behavioural hallmarks of youth, were all close to the age of marriage or – in the cases of Theodora of Arta and Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina – recently married without children. This may indicate the importance that writers attached to motherhood in marking the full attainment of womanhood.

Among the non-elite, the attainment of social adulthood could be delayed by various informal or institutional forms of training and socialisation. Apprenticeships and novitiates integrated aspiring young tradesmen and monastics, over an extended time period, into communities of adults who shared occupational identity. These young trainees were subject to the instruction of elders who were tasked with moulding them into full members of the community. Particularly in rural areas, apprenticeships appear to have been conducted within family networks. Boys, whether the sons of village painters, craftsmen, civil servants, or military men like Saint Sabas' father, were expected to pursue their father's trade as a kind of familial obligation. Perhaps the most important point to be taken from this chapter is that the Byzantines held a set of social expectations of behaviour toward adolescents – like children – that pervades the sources and was not limited to one gender or social level but reflects a wider cultural concept of youth as a life-stage.

CHAPTER SIX: AGEING AND THE 'END' OF THE LIFE COURSE

Adulthood and old age are, by far, the longest stages of the Life Course and the most varied with respect to social roles and activities. In this chapter, I focus on themes that have recurred throughout the present study, placing the family at the centre of my analysis. I examine the role of age in shaping men's and women's roles in the family, the sources' representation of the different stages of maturity, and the ways in which the transitions between those stages were expressed by rituals connected to marriage, parenthood, widowhood, and death. I show that Life Course milestones, from birth and baptism to death and burial, were interconnected and given meaning through cross-generational relationships. My analysis of the end of the Life Course returns to themes from chapter three, which explored Byzantine attitudes towards the non-living and their relationship with the living, although here our concern is with the social category of the dead rather than the unborn. From the Byzantine Orthodox Christian perspective, the Life Course was not linear; death constituted a rebirth, whose rituals and textual and material representations were inextricably linked to those of physical birth.

Part 6.1 begins with the characterisation of adulthood in the sources and their expression of gendered attitudes towards ageing. I focus particularly on the expectations of behaviour placed on mature men and women in monastic communities, as portrayed in hagiography and the *typika*. As the organisation of monastic communities was based on the family hierarchy, these texts reflect wider social attitudes towards middle and older adulthood that are applicable to both the lay and spiritual Life Course. In parts 6.2-6.3, I extend this analysis by examining how marriage and parenthood transformed men's and women's status in the family and society, and the interaction between gender and marital status in shaping the later Life Course. Part 6.4 turns to portrayals of old age, focusing on the impacts of status, gender, and – most significantly – familial environment on the lives of the elderly, who relied heavily on cultural expectations of familial obligation for their welfare and

security. Part 6.5 concludes our analysis of the Life Course with an examination of representations of the deathbed and funerary rituals, focusing on the family's role in preserving the deceased's posthumous identity and wellbeing in the afterlife.

(6.1) Conceptualising maturity

Chapter five illustrated that the structure of Byzantine society rendered the attainment of adulthood as a piecemeal process, with the completion of higher education, apprenticeship, the monastic novitiate, and marriage all acting as hallmarks of maturity. With these hallmarks in mind, in this section I examine the ways in which writers and artisans portrayed and differentiated between the stages of maturity, including early, middle, and older adulthood. We shall see that gender had a particularly strong influence on the characterisation of old age in visual culture, where older women are almost invisible. However, hagiographers and monastic authors assigned to mature men and women the same characteristics and social expectations to regardless of gender, which attest to the impact of ageing on the individual's status within the (spiritual) family and community.

Just as facial hair is the main index of male maturity in visual culture, so it was used by artisans to distinguish early from later adulthood. From the 9th century onwards, younger and older men wore different beard styles, which were represented in portraiture.[1] This is exemplified by the portraits of Theodora Synadene's relatives in the Lincoln College *typikon*, which were added to the manuscript by her daughter Euphrosyne (b.1285/6) around 1335 and depict eight couples dressed in secular and/or monastic costume.[2] Variations in age are rendered through facial features.[3] Theodora's son, the *protovestiarios* Theodore Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Synadenos (b.1286/7),[4] depicted with his wife Eudokia Doukaina Komnene Synadene (fig. 6.1), is portrayed as a mature man with

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[1] Brooks, *Commemorating the Dead*, 94-95.
[2] See Hutter, 'Lincoln College Typikons'; Hennessy, 'Lincoln College Typikon', 107.
[3] On age in the portraits, see Brubaker, 'Images', 152-153; Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 190-207, pls. 143–154.
[4] Hutter, 'Lincoln College Typikons' 98-99.

long, curly hair worn down, and a long, thick, neatly-styled brown beard and moustache.[5] The *protosebastos* Constantine Komnenos Raoul Palaiologos, depicted beside his wife Euphrosyne Doukaina Palaiologina, Theodora's granddaughter, is evidently younger (fig. 6.2);[6] he wears his red hair down and long like Theodore, but his beard is thinner and cut short in the style worn by young men. Meanwhile, Michael Tornikes, the husband of Theodora's other granddaughter Eirene Synadene, appears as a beardless youth (fig. 6.3).[7]

The portraits appear to portray Theodora's male relatives close to their true ages. When they were added to the *typikon*, Theodore Syndanos would have been in his later 40s. The long beards of Theodora's sons, Theodore and John Synadenos, the short beards of her granddaughters' husbands – particularly Constantine Raoul and Michael Philanthropenos – and the beardlessness of Michael Tornikes reflect the painter's clear attempt to demarcate each generation in the family. Yet, these generational divides are portrayed solely through the male relatives; there is nothing to distinguish the ages of Theodora's granddaughters and daughters-in-law, who all appear as young women. Eudokia (fig. 6.1), Theodora's daughter-in-law, looks much the same as Euphrosyne (fig. 6.2), Theodora's granddaughter, even though Euphrosyne was probably an adolescent when the portrait was made.[8]

The portraits thus maintain a trend, identified in previous chapters, whereby the stages of the male Life Course are distinguished more clearly than those of the female Life Course in visual culture. Subtle differences between two portraits of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1350-1425) illustrate the care that painters took to portray the stages of male maturity. In the Louvre manuscript portrait (fig. 5.2), where the emperor is in his early 50s, he is shown as an ageing man with a lean face and dark

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[5] Fig. 6.1. Portrait of the *protovestiarios* Theodore Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Synadenos and his wife Eudokia Doukaina Komnene Synadene, c.1335, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, f.8r. Accessed online (23/10/2020): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TheodoreandEudokia.jpg.
[6] Fig. 6.2. Portrait, the *protosebastos* Constantine Komnenos Raoul Palaiologos with his wife Euphrosyne Doukaina Palaiologina, c.1335, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, f.6r. Accessed online (23/10/2020): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:6ConstantineandEuphrosyne.JPG.
[7] Fig. 6.3. Portrait of Michael Komnenos Tornikes Asanes Palaiologos and Eirene Komnene Kantakouzene Asanina, c.1335, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, f.9v. After Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, fig. 151.
[8] On Euphrosyne Synadene's age, see Brubaker, 'Images', 152.

grey hair and beard. A later manuscript containing Manuel's funeral oration for his brother Theodore

(d.1407), depicts Manuel, here around 4 years older, similarly except that his hair and beard are paler

and flecked with white (fig. 6.4).[9] Age variations are less apparent in portraits of women, whose

maturity was only signified by the subtle rendering of facial features, as attested by the portrait of

Theodora Synadene and her daughter Euphrosyne, aged 15 or 16, as nuns in the Lincoln *typikon* (fig.

5.8). Euphrosyne's youth is indicated by her round face, plump pink cheeks, full, small, red lips, and

soft, pale complexion. The portrait is flattering by Byzantine beauty standards, as these features were

used to construct the ideal of feminine beauty in Byzantine Romance; for example, the 13th-century

heroine Rodamni had a face that was 'round, clear and full' as the moon, 'a forehead as white as a

snow-patch', and 'a small, delightful mouth' with 'lips red and delicate, their red like a rose'.[10]

In contrast, the older age of Theodora is signified by her leaner face, with its pointier chin,

hollowed cheeks, paler, thinner lips, and deeper shadows below the eyes.[11] Age is also signified by

performance. Theodora offers a model of the church to the Virgin and Christ with one hand, while she

leads Euphrosyne with the other – a gesture that stresses Theodora's status as a foundress and nun but

also as a pious mother who holds a position of seniority in both her biological and spiritual family.

The reluctance to convey the physical signs of ageing in women may reflect more than a lack

of interest in representing female age. Images of old men pervaded the Byzantine visual world; many

saints (e.g., Saint Nicholas, figs. 4.7, 6.5)[12] and New and Old Testament figures (e.g., Peter and Elijah,

fig. 5.1, Zachariah, figs. 4.4-4.6, 5.3-5.4) were conventionally depicted with long, sometimes unkept

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[9] Fig. 6.4. Portrait of Manuel II Palaiologos, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris Supplément, gr. 309, f.7, c.1407. Accessed online (19/10/2021): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manuel_II_Palaiologos_(cropped).jpg (photo by Pitchka, CC BY-SA 4.0). See Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 233-234, fig. 174; Brooks, *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 26, cat. I, figs. 1.1, 40.

[10] 'ὁλόκυκλος, καθάριος καὶ γεμᾶτος… Μέτωπον ἄσπρο τίτοιον ὡς τοῦ χιονίου κομμάτιν… στόμα μικρὸν ἐνήδονον… κόκκινα χείλη καὶ πτενά, τὸ κόκκινον ὡς ρόδον'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 2542- 2562. Descriptions of the 14th-century heroines Chrysandza and Chrysorroi are very similar: *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, 682-711 (18-19); *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, 1916 (74).

[11] See a similar comparison between a young woman's portrait from the Myrelaion Church and an older woman's portrait from the Chora by Brooks, *Commemorating the Dead*, 99-100.

[12] Fig. 6.5. Icon of St Nicholas, St Catherine monastery, Sinai, late 12th to early 13th century. After Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 51.

grey or white hair, long beards, and wrinkled skin. These physical markers of elderliness in men conveyed positive qualities of wisdom and experience amassed from a long life and career; for this reason, Theodora Palaiologina explained in her *typikon* for the convent of Lips in Constantinople that the attendant priest should be one 'who is most distinguished by his white hair and wisdom'.[13] It is for the same reason that certain ecclesiastical ranks, including patriarchs (fig. 3.2) and bishops (fig. 6.5), as well as teachers (e.g. Saint Nicholas' tutor, figs. 4.7, 6.5) were generally depicted as elderly.

Late Byzantine images of old women are comparatively rare, although some biblical and saintly women, such as the 7th-century Saint Mary of Egypt, were depicted with wrinkled skin and grey hair.[14] Images of the Visitation depict Saint Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, as an older woman, as seen at the Cypriot church of Timios Stavros (fig. 3.3), where the pregnant Elizabeth's hollowed cheeks and deep under-eye shadows indicate that she is older than Mary, whose round, younger face bears a soft complexion and reddish cheeks. Elizabeth's elderliness serves a doctrinal purpose; like the hagiographical trope of conception in old age, it conveys the miraculous nature of John the Baptist's conception, bestowed by God to reward Elizabeth's piety. Images of Elizabeth nursing John, and Saint Anne giving birth to (fig. 3.10) and (occasionally) nursing Mary (fig. 3.13, shown here as a young woman), made Byzantine churchmen wonder at such a transgression of the biological limits of old age.[15] By portraying aged women conceiving and nurturing – acts that only women in their reproductive years could perform – these images inverted the normative expectations of old age and symbolised God's power over nature. Artisans therefore possessed the means to portray female elderliness, but they rarely did. Portraiture tended not to depict women with wrinkles or grey hair; instead, women were depicted as youthful regardless of age – a trend that may relate to Byzantine ideals of female beauty.[16] Alternatively, because Byzantine social norms accorded value to women's

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[13] 'ὁ πολιᾷ τε καὶ συνέσει διαφορώτερος'. Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, IV. 7. 1267.
[14] For Mary of Egypt, see Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, figs. 155-156, see also fig. 123 (Elizabeth depicted with wrinkled skin in a mid-15th-century Cretan icon of the Nativity of John the Baptist in St Petersburg Hermitage Museum (I-456)); Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 64 (Eve as a wrinkled, grey-haired, elderly woman).
[15] A. Cutler, 'The Cult of the Galaktotrophousa in Byzantium and Italy', *JÖB* 37 (1987): 335-350, 342, figs. 3-4.
[16] Brooks, *Commemorating the Dead*, 99-101.

roles as wives and mothers, rather than the pursuit of scholarly or vocational wisdom, old age was not perceived to hold the same positive connotations in women as it did in men.

In regard to the Lincoln *typikon* portraits, we might also consider that the youth of Theodora's female relatives was related to a desire to convey the (dynastic) power of an elite family. In imperial portraits, Byzantine empresses were depicted in the prime of life even if they were already mature (the Hagia Sophia portrait of Zoe *Porphyrogenneta*, who appears free of wrinkles or grey hairs beside Constantine IX Monomachos, whom she married at the age of 50, is a classic example),[17] suggesting that youth was, possibly, assimilated with power in the Byzantine visual world. Indeed, Byzantine artisans were accustomed to using symbols of biological age to communicate power or status rather than life-stage. In imperial portraits, junior emperors were customarily as beardless, and senior emperors as bearded (as a mark of seniority), regardless of the rulers' actual age.[18]

While the Lincoln College *typikon* may obscure the physical realities of ageing women, the text itself is a rich source for examining age's impact on the social roles and expectations of the mature and elderly in the monastic community, which – as mentioned previously – organised the roles of its members according to biological and social age. Founders' instructions regarding the election of candidates to offices that required a high degree of responsibility and hard work reflect a belief that age made an individual more likely to conduct herself with diligence and sensibility. For example, Theodora required that the nun tasked with the role of gatekeeper at the convent of Sure Hope exhibited piety, 'judgment and prudence', and 'be possessed of a character which is at the same time dignified and steady and stable,' so as to instil awe and shame in any nuns who approached the gate unduly.[19] She must 'thus be of such an age that she herself should not require supervision, on account of her youth, instead of supervising others, nor on account of old age should she be less vigorous and

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[17] Spatharakis, 'The Portrait', 101-102.
[18] Brubaker, 'Images', 144.
[19] 'φρονήσει καὶ… σωφροσύνῃ… ἐμβριθές τε ἅμα τὸ ἦθος καὶ βεβηκὸς καὶ στάσιμον κεκτημένην'. Theodora Synadene, *Bebeia Elpis*, XIII. 72. 1544.

sluggish, and incapable of fulfilling the demands of her obligation and duty'.[20] Theodora's words express a belief that maturity brought with it a stability of character that made adults good models of behaviour, and which Byzantine writers contrasted with the instability of youth.[21] Authors also contrasted the vitality of mature women with the elderly, who were past their mental and physical prime and hence unsuited to hard work. Neilos Damilas similarly advised the nuns of the Pantanassa convent on Crete to elect two 'pious and trustworthy elderly women' for the gatekeepers' offices, which at that time were held by a mother and daughter (who cannot have been especially old).[22]

Although the elderly were regarded as lacking in physical vigour, they were perceived as profuse in wisdom, piety, and insusceptibility to sin.[23] Thus, Theodora Synadene instructed that the steward charged with managing her convent's property must be a woman who 'has passed through her youth and middle age and is already elderly, not so much in terms of actual years, but with respect to her wisdom and character and the purity and chastity of her life'.[24] Such a nun, in Theodora's view, would not grow faint-hearted when she was required to work more than the other nuns, nor 'when she must leave the convent in order to visit the monastic estates will she be liable to any of the involuntary sinful actions which can harm the soul'.[25] The belief that the elderly were less liable to sin, and thus more suited to jobs that may lead younger people to temptation, was also expressed by Neilos, who stated in his *typikon* (1210) that the brothers charged with managing the monastery of Machairas' immoveable property should be 'reverent and discreet, and elderly if possible, unaffected by passions

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[20] 'οὕτω τε γήρους ἔχειν, ὡς μήτε διὰ τὸ τῆς ἡλικίας νεάζον μᾶλλον δέεσθαι αὐτὴν ἀσφαλείας ἢ ἀσφαλίζειν ἑτέρας, μήτε διὰ τὸ γῆρας ἀμβλυτέραν εἶναι καὶ νωθεστέραν τῆς χρείας παρὰ πολύ τε τοῦ ὀφειλομένου καὶ δέοντος ὑστερίζουσαν'. *Ibid.*

[21] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 133-134.

[22] 'δύο γραίας εὐλαβεῖς καὶ πιστὰς'. Neilos Damilas, *Pantanassa*, 16.

[23] For example, see Choumnos, *Nea Mone*, A14. 1142; Joachim, *Menoikeion*, VII. 1597. An older monk is similarly preferred for staffing the church at the fortress of the main monastery of Menoikeion by Joachim, *Menoikeion*, XXII. 1609.

[24] 'παραδραμοῦσαν μὲν καὶ τὸ νεάζον δηλονότι καὶ ἀκμαῖον τῆς ἡλικίας… καὶ οὖσαν μὲν ἤδη γηραιάν, οὐ τοσοῦτον τὸν χρόνον, ὅσον τὴν σύνεσιν αὐτὴν καὶ τοὺς τρόπους καὶ τὸ εἰλικρινὲς τοῦ βίου καὶ ἀκηλίδωτον,'. Theodora Synadene, *Bebeia* Elpis, VII. 54. The keeper of the communal storeroom was also to manage the accounts with intelligence and prudence: XI. 68.

[25] 'ποτὲ τῆς μονῆς ἐξιοῦσα, τοῦ ἐπισκέψασθαι τὰ τῆς μονῆς ἕνεκα πείσεταί τι τῶν ἀβουλήτων καὶ ἃ ψυχὴν ζημιοῦν'. *Ibid.*

that are caused by the attacks of Belial.'[26] Other founders reserved the gatekeeper and steward roles

for older candidates because they considered them less likely to abuse their powers.[27] It was essential

that these office-holders remained unmoved by the lures of the material world, to which they were

exposed when visiting monastic properties or distributing food to beggars at the gates.

Hagiographers distinguished the stages of early, middle, and later adulthood by saints'

activities rather than chronological age, which is rarely cited in the life-stages between youth and old

age. On occasion, writers referred to adult ages to indicate that their subjects were entering their

physical or spiritual prime. For example, Kokkinos described how Gregory Palamas, as a newly

ordained priest, 'was then 30 years old and physically strong, having not yet experienced even a short

bout of sickness', which enabled the saint to intensify his ascetic struggles and regimen of bodily

mortification.[28] It was at this time that Palamas 'refined and purified his soul's power of sight' through

unceasing mental prayer and communion with God[29] – the goal of hesychastic monasticism.[30] As 30

marked the minimum age of priesthood, following the age when Christ began his ministry (Luke

2:23), this reference to Palamas' age indicates that his life followed both the trajectory appropriate for

an ecclesiastical vocation and that of Christ's life.[31] When the biographer of Athanasios of Meteora

remarked that the saint was tonsured around the age of 30, he may have also had the scriptural

connotations of this age in mind.[32] Other (auto)biographers also cited adult ages in relation to

transitions of occupational and/or spiritual identity. For instance, Blemmydes stated that he was 38

when he was tonsured as a monk and ordained as a priest, having spent 10 years in the clergy.[33]

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[26] 'εὐλαβεῖς δηλονότι καὶ σώφρονας καὶ γηραιούς, εἰς ἅπαν εἰ δυνατόν, καὶ πρὸς τὰ πάθη νεκρούς, διὰ τὰς τοῦ βελίαρ ἐπιβουλάς.' Neilos, *Machairas*, 109. 1154 (here, Neilos is quoting the Evergetis *typikon*: *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 493).

[27] For example, see Choumnos, *Nea Mone*, A14. 1142; Joachim, *Menoikeion*, VII. 1597. Joachim of also preferred older monk as staff of the church at the fortress of the main monastery: *Menoikeion*, XXII. 1609.

[28] 'Ἔτος μὲν οὖν αὐτῷ τῆς ἡλικίας τηνικαῦτα τριακοστὸν ἦν, εἶχε δὲ καὶ τοῦ σώματος ἐρρωμένως ἔτι, μήπω μηδεμιᾶς προσβαλούσης αὐτῷ νόσου μηδὲ βραχύ'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, XXVI. 12-17.

[29] 'τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὀπτικὸν ἀπολεπτύνων τε καὶ καθαίρων.' *Ibid*, XXVI. 18-21.

[30] A. Strevoza, *Hesychasm and Art: The Appearance of New Iconographic Trends in Byzantine and Slavic Lands in the 14th and 15th Centuries* (Canberra, 2014), 11-13.

[31] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacris Ordianationidus*, PG 155, cols. 361-470, 385B.

[32] *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*, 242.

[33] Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. XXIII. 37.

Of course, saints' adult occupations varied greatly; patriarchs like Athanasios I were engaged in public affairs of the church and state, while Athonite monks such as Maximos the Hutburner led more isolated lives, much of which they spent travelling. Nevertheless, hagiographers constructed a generic Life Course pattern whereby saints, after leaving home, lived with one or more spiritual masters as young men, learning humility and obedience through self-denial, performing menial work, and climbing the lower rungs of the monastic hierarchy. Thus, Maximos the Hutburner (b.1270/1285) was still young (νέου) when he buried his first master, the elder Mark, who taught him for a brief time after he was tonsured on Mount Ganos at 17 years old.[34] Next, Maximos travelled to Macedonia to seek a new elder, and spent time with holy men on Mount Papikion, 'soaking up their virtues like the purest sponge', before going on to Constantinople, where he lived 'like a poor homeless man' without food and wearing only a haircloth shirt.[35] Shortly after, Maximos entered the Lavra monastery, where 'he was first tested in the most menial duties' before being promoted to the church choir because – Theophanes explained – 'he had studied the holy chant in his youth.'[36] Here, we can observe the hagiographer's effort to present his saint's adulthood as a natural progression from childhood.

The periods of monastic servitude undertaken by young monks enabled them to take on the real trials of asceticism in the prime of life – a time of physical and spiritual strength. This concept is conveyed in the *Life* of Maximos, who, after a short time, left Lavra to climb the summit of Mount Athos, where he battled the elements and demonic apparitions wielding 'slings and spears and javelins';[37] here, Theophanes employed militaristic imagery to present Maximos as a young athlete of Christ. In the *vita*, Maximos' ascetic isolation establishes him as a holy man. Atop Athos, he received a vision of the Theotokos with the Christ child, surrounded by young officials (i.e., angels), who informed him of God's will that he become a teacher of virtue for all who dwell in the wilderness;[38]

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[34] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, III.
[35] 'ὡς καθαρώτατος σπόγγος τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐκείνων εἰς ἅπαν ἀνακραθείς'. *Ibid*., IV. 1; 'ὡς πένης ἄοικος'. V. 2.
[36] 'δοκιμάζεται πρότερον ἐν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις… Ἔτυχε γὰρ μεμαθηκὼς καὶ ἱεροῖς μελῳδήμασι νεαλὴς ὤν.' *Ibid*., VII.
[37] 'σφεδονῶν καὶ κοντῶν καὶ λογχῶν'. *Ibid*., IX. 3.
[38] *Ibid*., IX. 4-5.

after this, Maximos began his wanderings as a holy fool.[39] In contrast, by older adulthood, the saint is publicly recognised as a holy figure and expected to begin guiding other members of the community and accruing disciples. When Gregory Sinaites (b.1260s) visited Athos, he implored Maximos, who was then renowned for his asceticism, to settle in one place and provide spiritual aid to others, for 'old age rapidly approaches and the seed wants to be multiplied'.[40] Hereafter, Theophanes' Maximos is born as a saint; he began advising monks and laymen and healing people of demonic possession. Maximos' age is never mentioned throughout the account of his adulthood. Instead, the stages of maturity are expressed through the saint's transition from spiritual pupil, to independent ascetic, to spiritual teacher and master.

As with other life-stages, some hagiographers inverted the normative trajectory of adulthood to illustrate their subject's virtue.[41] This inversion features in the *Life* of Romylos of Vidin. Romylos' early life trajectory was similar to that of Maximos; as a young man, he served under several spiritual masters, including Gregory Sinaites, together with his spiritual brother and fellow-initiate Ilarion. Again, the author emphasised Romylos' physical strength at this time of life; whereas 'the weaker Ilarion' was assigned 'the lighter services in the monastery', 'the strong Romanos' (Romylos) was tasked with carrying water, stones, and timber for the monks to build their monastery.[42] However, when one of Romylos' spiritual masters died whilst he was living in isolation, the saint was overcome by deep regret over his disobedience. He begged to become a disciple of his spiritual brother Ilarion, despite the fact that he was 'greater in virtue' than Ilarion, and 'from then on one could see this great man among ascetics travelling the path of a novice and running around in all his duties'.[43]

By entering the service of his monastic brother and spiritual inferior and reverting to the status of a novice, Romylos inverted the typical trajectory of the hagiographical Life Course by refusing to

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[39] *Ibid.*, X. 1.
[40] 'τὸ γῆρας... κατατρέχει, καὶ ὁ σπόρος πληθύνεσθαι [2 Corinthians 9:10] βούλει'. *Ibid*, XVI. 1.
[41] Davies 'Age, Gender and Status', 161.
[42] 'τὸν μὲν Ἰλαρίωνα ὡς ἅτε ἀσθενέστερον ὄντα τὰ κουφότερα τῶν ὑπηρεσιῶν τῆς μονῆς… τὸν δέ γε ῥωμαλέον τοῦτον Ῥωμανὸν.'*Life of Romylos*, V.
[43] 'κρείττονα ἐν ἀρεταῖς… ἦν ἰδεῖν ἔκτοτε τὸν μέγαν ἐν ἀσκηταῖς ἐν τῇ τάξει τῶν ἀρχαρίων ὁδεύοντα καὶ περιτρέχοντα ἐν πάσῃ διακονίᾳ.' *Ibid*., IX.

progress to the more senior role of spiritual father, like Ilarion. For the hagiographer, this reversal signified Romylos' great humility.[44] It was not until later, after 5 years in the wilderness, that Romylos 'the saint' (ὁ ἅγιος) built a hut near the Lavra and became a spiritual father to younger disciples.[45] The normative timing of the Life Course is inverted in the *Life* of Saint Niphon (b.1315) to similar effects. After Niphon was ordained at a young age – probably around his 20th year, well below the canonical minimum age of 30 – he trained under an elder from Sinai before submitting himself to the elderly monk Theognostos, hiding the fact that he was a priest.[46] Later, when Theognostos discovered that Niphon was a priest, he insisted that they abandon their pupil-elder relationship and live 'as monastic brothers together' instead.[47] Niphon's desire to continue serving an elder, despite his experience in the monastic conduct and priestly status, serves to exemplify his humility; the saint rejects his true spiritual age and status. These accounts also enabled hagiographers to show that their saints were upholding the hesychast ideology, of which was obedience to one's master was a defining principle.[48]

Although hagiography and the *typika* were concerned with the lives of monks and nuns, they reflect a trend common to both the lay and monastic Life Course, whereby the passage from early to later adulthood was marked by the gradual adoption of social and spiritual duties towards others. Ageing monks and nuns were expected to acquire positions of authority in their communities, acting as spiritual 'fathers' or 'mothers' for inexperienced members. There is a notable disjuncture between the positive qualities associated with ageing by monastic authors, who saw prudence, reliability, and vitality as qualities of adult men and women alike, and the treatment of ageing by artisans, who were reluctant to depict female maturity. This trend may partly reflect the ways in which ageing was exhibited in social reality. Hair (including facial hair on men) is the most visible marker of age in Byzantine images and was such a strong symbol of seniority that white hair was regarded as a mark of

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[44] 'τὴν πολλὴν… ταπείνωσιν'. *Ibid*.
[45] *Ibid*, XII.
[46] *Life of Niphon*, I-II. For Niphon's age and other examples of early ordination, see F. Halkin, 'La Vie de Saint Niphon Ermite au Mont Athos (XIVe s.)', *Analecta Bollandiana* 58 (1940): 5–27, 7-9.
[47] 'ἀδελφικῶς ἄμφω'. *Life of Niphon*, II.
[48] Meyendorff, *St Gregory Palamas*, 155.

wisdom and virtue by writers. As adult women typically wore their hair covered, there is less to distinguish them visibly from girls and older women in images. Yet, the scarcity of older women in Byzantine visual culture does appear to reflect a lack of interest in the experience of female ageing, just as writers – as noted in chapter five – exhibited little interest in the realities of female youth.

(6.2) Marriage and remarriage

In chapter five, I identified marriage as a critical transition in marking the passage from youth to maturity. In the first half of this section, I explore in greater depth the ways in which marriage transformed an individual's status in the family and society, and how this transformation was expressed through ritual, including both the formal marriage rites of the Orthodox church and marriage customs passed down from antiquity. We will see that the rituals surrounding marriage expressed social ideals about gender roles in the family, and that writers portrayed the wedding, like childbirth, as a major event in the Life Course of both the individual and the household. In the second half of this section, I examine widowhood and remarriage, which, in the medieval context of war and high mortality (especially maternal mortality), would have been a relatively common life experience that people encountered often while still in their reproductive years. Hagiographical portrayals of widowhood are particularly revealing of the impact of marital status on the middle and later Life Course, which varied according to gender.

From the perspective of the Byzantine church and society, the primary purpose of marriage was reproduction. When outlining the Orthodox marriage rite, Symeon of Thessaloniki (d.1429) explained that marriage was granted to humankind for the sake of childbearing (παιδοποιία), which was made necessary by the fact of human mortality.[49] This goal of marriage is reflected by the topos of miraculous conception in hagiography, which conveyed the emotional distress experienced by infertile

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[49] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Honesto et Legitimo Conjugio*, *PG* 55, 503-515, 504C.

couples, especially women.[50] As marriage precipitated childbearing, it marked a change in the social and sexual status of both spouses. Marriage rituals stressed the newly-weds' transition from a virginal state of being to one of marital chastity – the Church's ideal of marriage as a blessed state of monogamy, shared exclusively between two people in the manner of Christ's union with the Church.[51] The marriage sponsor, like the baptismal sponsor, was to act as a teacher for the newly-weds in good and harmonious union.[52] While there is little evidence to connect the wedding sponsor to the baptismal sponsor in Byzantium, as in modern Greece,[53] in at least some cases these roles were held by the same person. When George Sphrantzes married his wife Helena in 1448, Constantine XI Palaiologos sponsored the marriage and later became godfather to the couple's children.[54]

Before marriage, the contract between a courting couple was marked by an exchange of rings (or another type of jewellery),[55] whose materials were assigned symbolic meaning by Byzantine writers.[56] According to Symeon of Thessaloniki, a man traditionally gave his fiancée an iron ring that symbolised his firmness (τὸ στεῤῥὸν), while she offered him a gold ring embodying her softness and purity (τὸ ἁπαλόν τε καὶ ἁγνόν).[57] The materials of lovers' rings were assigned similar meaning by the author of the 13th-century romance *Livistros and Rodamni*, whose hero gave his lover a ring made of ruby, gold, iron, and magnet steel – 'all four [materials] attracting love's strong desire'.[58] There was a contemporary belief, according to Nikephoros Blemmydes, that rubies had the power to attract gold and other gemstones, just as magnet draws iron.[59] The ruby's colour may also be significant, since

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[50] See chapter 3.1.
[51] J. Meyendorff, 'Christian Marriage in Byzantium: The Canonical and Liturgical Tradition', *DOP* 44 (1990): 99-107, 100-101.
[52] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Honesto et Legitimo Conjugio*, 509D.
[53] Macrides, 'Byzantine Godfather', 145.
[54] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, XXIV. 1-2, 8.
[55] For example, a divorce case heard by the patriarchal synod in 1315 involved the exchange of *enkolpia* (jewellery with Christian imagery or inscriptions) to mark betrothal; *MM* I, no. 6, 14-16; *Regestes*, no. 2039. The case is analysed by Prinzing, 'Adolescenz', 44, tbl. II, no. 28.
[56] Meyendorff, 'Christian Marriage', 104.
[57] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Honesto et Legitimo Conjugio*, 508A; M. Parani, 'Byzantine Bridal Costume', in *Dorema: A Tribute to the A.G. Leventis Foundation on the Occasion of its 20th Anniversary* (Nicosia, 2000), 185-216, 207.
[58] 'ἑλκυτικὰ τὰ τέσσαρα πρὸς κρεμασμὸν ἀγάπης'. *Livistros and Rodamni*, 1969-1983.
[59] Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. XXXI. 51.

Maria Parani notes that the colour red was associated with the bridal costume in Byzantine images, possibly because red was believed to signify joy in women.[60] A scene of the Wedding at Cana in one 13th-century *Tetraevangelion* manuscript of the Iviron monastery, where the young bride wears a bright red veil and costume (fig. 6.6), exemplifies this trend.[61] In the 13th-century romance, the ring offered by the heroine to the hero is formed of two magnet and iron hands clasped together which, according to the ring's inscription, signify that their love cannot be unbound.[62]

This image of the clasped hands appeared on real marriage rings and alluded to the betrothal rite itself. The priest joined the bride's and groom's right hands to show that were united in Christ, repeating this action at the marriage ceremony to show that the union was complete.[63] One 5th-century example of a gold ring depicts the bride's smaller hand, wearing a bracelet on the left, clasping the groom's hand on the right (fig. 6.7).[64] This positioning of the bride and groom during the ceremony signified the hierarchy and duties of the married union. The man stood on the priest's right because he became the head (κεφαλή) of the woman and responsible for her, while the woman stood on the left because she was subordinate to her husband, and because woman came from man's rib (Genesis 2:22-24). The priest asked God to unite the couple in peace and harmony (εἰρήνην… καὶ ὁμόνοιαν), prayers for which were repeated throughout the marriage rite.[65] Betrothal rings, like the 5th-century example, were often inscribed with the word 'ὁμόνοια', which may have served the amuletic function of helping the wearer to maintain the optimum state of harmonious union bestowed by God during the marriage ceremony.[66]

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[60] Parani, 'Bridal Costume', 202.
[61] Fig. 6.6. Wedding at Cana, Iviron cod. 5, fol. 363r.b, 13th century. After S. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol. 2, *Monasteries of Iveron, St. Pantaleimon, Esphigmenou, and Chilandari*, fig. 38.
[62] *Livistros and Rodamni*, 2012-2013.
[63] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Honesto et Legitimo Conjugio*, 508D, 509C.
[64] Fig. 6.7. Gold ring with clasped hands, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 5th century. Gift in memory of Robert E. and Julia K. Hecht, 63.1555. After I. Kalavrezou, ed., *Byzantine Women and Their World* (New Haven and London, 2003), cat. no. 122. For the symbolism of Byzantine marriage rings, see the chapter by A. Walker, 'Marriage, Wife and Husband: 'A Golden Team'', 215-231, 222; D. Papanikola-Bakiritzi, 'Marriage, Motherhood and Children', in *Everyday Life in Byzantium*, 476, cat. no. 652.
[65] *Ibid.*, 508B-509A, 512D-513A.
[66] Walker, 'Marriage', 227.

The ceremonial and material aspects of betrothal and marriage thus reflected a social ideal of spousal cooperation and concord, which emphasised husbandly authority and wifely subservience and expressed the change in each spouse's familial and social status. Upon marriage, a man acquired the role of 'head' of the family, assuming authority over, and responsibility for, his future offspring and wife, whose role was to support her husband and household. Marriage rites also marked the change of sexual status of the bride and groom by celebrating their premarital chastity. Symeon of Thessaloniki explained that the crowns placed on the couple's heads during the marriage ritual signified that they were 'pure virgins', and were only granted to couples being married for the first time, whose union was undefiled.[67] Couples undertaking second marriages were not crowned or offered communion – a practice advocated by early Christian writers who believed that marriage was designed to maintain chastity.[68] The marriage crowns appear in scenes of the Wedding at Cana, which from the 10th century onwards depicted the newly-weds, as we see in the *Tetraevangelion* manuscript (fig. 6.6).[69] Since, in reality, the crowns would have been removed before the bride and groom left the church to attend the wedding feast, their appearance in the biblical scene is purely symbolic;[70] as symbols of premarital chastity, the crowns may serve to denote the virginal state of the ideal newly-weds.

The bridal couple's chastity may also be suggested by the age of the bride and groom, who were always depicted as youthful. In the *Tetraevangelion* scene, the couple have smooth, youthful faces, the bride's brown hair flowing visibly from beneath her veil and the groom sporting a short young man's beard. The couple are portrayed similarly at the 14th-century church of St Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki, where they wear pearl-encrusted crowns and solemn expressions, the bride depicted with her hair gathered at the neck and the groom with a short brown beard.[71] The couple's features mark them out as mature but still young, and thus appear to reflect the ideal of a marriage contracted between two previously unwed parties, as opposed to second or third marriages, which, as

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[67] 'παρθένους καὶ καθαροὺς' Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Honesto et Legitimo Conjugio*, 505A.
[68] *Ibid*., 508B-C, 513A; Meyendorff, 'Christian Marriage', 2.
[69] Parani, 'Bridal Costume', 200.
[70] *Ibid*., 208-209.
[71] *Ibid*., 185-186, fig. 1.

mentioned above, were regarded as spiritually inferior. The newly-weds' visible youth may therefore be connected to the meaning of images of the Wedding, which symbolised the status of marriage as a Christian mystery connected to the Eucharist – not only in regard to the miracle performed by Christ at Cana, but also in that 'pure' couples being married for the first time took communion.[72]

Literary accounts of weddings, though often clichéd, shed light on the ways that wedding rituals publicly marked the change of social status undergone by the bride and groom through the marriage rite. Writers characterised the wedding feast as a noisy, colourful event[73] that was of special importance for the bride's natal household, for whom the wedding provided an opportunity to display wealth and the social capital gained from the alliance between the bridal couple's birth families. This notion is conveyed in Kokkinos' vibrant account of the wedding of Saint Germanos' older sister, whose parents arranged their daughter's wedding feast with the participation of their entire household (τοὺς οἰκείους). The festivities took place at home over several days, which were filled with sounds of laughter, musical instruments, games, dancing, and drinking.[74] Although the purpose of this episode in the *vita* is to highlight the virtue of the young Germanos, who, already being determined to pursue a life of monastic celibacy, refused to engage in the worldly festivities, Kokkinos' image of the bustling atmosphere of the wedding preparations and celebration certainly drew inspiration from social reality. Indeed, the 14th-century hieromonk Matthew Blastares confirmed that Christians of his day continued to ignore canonical bans against dancing and other amusements at weddings in his legal manual.[75] Images of the Wedding at Cana, whose depictions of furniture, dishes, and tableware drew from contemporary material reality, also reinforce the image of the wedding as a household festivity.[76] In the *Tetraevangelion* scene (fig. 6.6), the banquet is set against architecture evoking a wealthy household, and is attended by beardless servants who fill amphorae with the water that became wine.

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[72] Meyendorff, 'Christian Marriage', 104.
[73] Such a wedding feast is described in the 14th-century romance *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, 1031-1035 (24).
[74] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, VIII. 6-17.
[75] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 7 (163/102). Blastares was referring specifically to canons 53-54 of the Council of Laodicea (363-364) and canon 24 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681), which he cites in Θ. 1, and which banned the clergy from taking part in wedding festivities after administering a marriage.
[76] Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 226, 237, 286-287.

Before its eucharistic significance, the wine played an important role in the marriage feast of antiquity, as it was believed to aid the newlyweds in childbearing, thereby fostering the goal of marriage.[77]

The textual and material sources for weddings highlight the importance of marital status as an index of social maturity. Marriage rituals publicly expressed the transition undergone by the newly-weds, as the groom passed from the role of son to that of head of his own family, and the bride from the role of daughter to that of wife and maintainer of the household. Although the marriage rite placed value on the bridal couple's chastity to mark their union as pure and in accordance with the Christian tradition, it may be gleaned that the change in sexual status that came with marriage was particularly impactful for young women, who were subject to social expectations of seclusion and virginity before marriage. When Byzantine authors like Michael Choniates spoke of girls being 'kept at home' so that they remained unseen by men outside the family, their aim was to convey prestige onto themselves or their male relatives, whether as fathers to whom an affiliation was so desirable that these men had to hide their daughters away from would-be suitors, or as bachelors who possessed the social merits required to 'win' the hand of a locally prized bride.[78] However, by conforming to this ideal of virginal seclusion, Byzantine parents could have also sought to increase their daughter's chance of contracting a good marriage. Although the Byzantines valued chastity and modesty as feminine virtues in married women, the social expectation of female seclusion was aimed at unmarried high-status girls.[79]

Widowhood, by transforming an individual's marital status, marked another transition in social and economic identity. Widowhood brought women a degree of fiscal autonomy, as they were able take up the role of head of household and freely administer their dowries and family property; this was especially true during the later Byzantine period, by which point restrictions on the use of dowry property had become relaxed.[80] Based on the tax registers, which designated a widowed woman as a 'χήρα', Laiou estimated that 17-22% of households amongst the Macedonian peasantry were headed

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[77] G. Vikan, 'Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium', *DOP* 44 (1990): 145-163, 162.
[78] Michael Choniates, *Oration for his Brother*, 21. 18 (351); Koukoules, *ΒΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΣ*, vol. 4, 73-74.
[79] Neville, *Byzantine Gender*, 34, 38-41. See also part 6.3 below.
[80] Laiou, 'Role of Women', 243, 247-248.

by widows between 1300-1301 and 1341.[81] This number is not surprising given that the spousal age gap was probably considerable at most levels of late Byzantine society, meaning that women who survived the childbearing years often outlived their husbands. As these widows were taxed the same way as male heads of households (as opposed to the 15th-century Ottoman custom of taxing female heads of household at a lower rate than males), it is clear that they were accepted as tenants and regarded as capable of fulfilling their fiscal obligations.[82]

Yet, despite the inevitable commonality of widowhood, ideals of marital chastity – which conceived of marriage as an exclusive union between two people that transcended even death – determined that the Church discouraged remarriage.[83] Second and third marriages were subject to age-graded restrictions. People entering third marriages had to be childless and no more than 40 – that is, still in their reproductive years – while people aged 30 or who were entering second marriages were banned from the eucharist for varying lengths of time depending on whether or not they had children.[84] The church thus recognised that, for men and women in their reproductive years, the prospect of having children, or more children, who could provide care in old age, extend the family bloodline, and improve the family's socioeconomic circumstances through their labour, outweighed the social, or religious, stigma of remarriage. Single parents could also mitigate the social and economic costs of raising children or performing agricultural labour alone by remarrying. In the latter regard, it may be telling that most female heads of village households had at least one son or grandson living at home, who could help to provide the physical labour necessary to maintain the land.[85] As well as age, status may have influenced the decision to remarry. In wealthy households, duties such as childcare could have been delegated partly to servants or slaves, which may have relieved economic pressures to remarry. The social strictures placed on widows, specifically, related to women's sexual function as

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[81] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 89, tbl. III-4.
[82] *Ibid*., 90-91.
[83] On the commonality of remarriage, see Laiou, 'Role of Women', 235-236.
[84] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Honesto et Legitimo Conjugio*, 505C; Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 4. (456/95, 159-160/98-99). See also the introduction to Viscuso's translation of Matthew Blastares, *Sexuality, Marriage, and Celibacy*, 39-40.
[85] Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 'Female Church Founders', 199.

begetters of heirs as well as Christian morality. Widows were obliged to observe a year-long mourning period, in which they prohibited from remarrying unless they gave birth to a child within that year, since in that instance there would be no ambiguity about the child's parentage.[86]

Byzantine writers constructed two types of widow, both drawing on biblical archetypes: the wealthy widow (reminiscent of figures such as Judith)[87] who charitably dispensed her property to the needy and retired to monastic life, and the poor widow (reminiscent of the story of the widow's mite or widow of Zarephath)[88] who was oppressed by obligations of work, childcare, or lack of familial support.[89] Among the first category one finds the empress-saint Theodora of Arta, who according to her biographer took the monastic habit 'immediately' after she was widowed in c.1267/8, spending the remainder of her life helping other widows, orphans, and the poor.[90] When Eirene Choumnaina was widowed in 1307 at just 16 years old – the start of her childbearing years – and decided to become a nun, taking the monastic name Eulogia, her spiritual adviser Theoleptos encouraged her to establish a spiritual marriage with Christ and praised her for performing 'the [duties] of widowhood' while 'maintaining outward dignity.'[91] In young women especially, the swift and gracious acceptance of widowhood was regarded as a mark of piety. In a flattering account, Gregoras reported that Eirene-Eulogia, whose names ('peace' and 'blessing') truly accorded with her life, words, and deeds, took up the nun's habit 'immediately' after her husband's death, having allocated her wealth to the poor and ransoms for prisoners.[92] Similarly, Akropolites reported that when Empress Theodora Palaiologina's father, the *sebastokrator* John Doukas, died in 1261, her mother Eudokia, 'although young, was very ready to endure widowhood; she loved virtue and was entirely devoted to God'.[93] As recompense,

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[86] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, B. 8 (140/84).

[87] Judith 8:4-7.

[88] Mark 12:42-44; Luke 21:2-4; 1 Kings 17:7-24. The story of the widow's mite was recounted by Byzantine authors: see S. Gerstel and S. Kalopissi-Verti, 'Female Church Founders: The Agency of the Village Widow in Late Byzantium', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 60. 1 (2012): 195-211, 195.

[89] Kokkinos exploited the trope when he described Saint Palamas' healing a poor elderly widow, whose injury prevented her from earning a living: *Miracles of Palamas*, XVII.

[90] 'εὐθὺς'. Job, *Life of Theodora of Arta*, 332 (*PG* 908C).

[91] 'τὰ τῆς χηρείας… τὴν ἔξωθεν σεμνότητα περιποιουμένη.' Theoleptos of Philadelphia, *Letters*, I. 7-10.

[92] 'εὐθὺς'. Gregoras, *Hist.*, XXIX. 22 (III. 238).

[93] 'καίτοι γε νέα οὖσα πάνυ τὴν χηρείαν φέρειν ἠσπάσατο, ἀρετὴν δὲ ἐφίλει καὶ τὸ καθάπαξ προσανέχειν θεῷ.' Akropolites, *Hist.*, LI (268).

Akropolites added, God arranged the marriage alliance between Eudokia's daughter Theodora and Michael (VIII) Palaiologos.

Scholars have noted a disjunction between the image of widows reflected in the monastic archives, *typika*, church inscriptions, and donor portraits – which attest to the socioeconomic agency of urban and rural widows as patrons of religious objects and monuments, thus indicating their active role in their communities[94] – and their representation in Byzantine literature, where widows, like orphans, constitute a vulnerable category of society. We have already seen such a portrayal in the 14th-century Saint Philotheos of Athos' mother, Eudokia. As described in chapter 4.4, Eudokia was left 'completely destitute' and struggling to protect her two young sons, with the help of 'neither parents nor husband nor friends', when her husband died shortly after the family migrated to Macedonian Chrysopolis, fleeing the Ottoman advance.[95] The helpless widow is a hagiographical, and indeed biblical, archetype.[96] The trope appears again in the *Life* of Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), whose pious father Constantine helped a poor widow who had her money unjustly appropriated by the emperor's son.[97] The episode serves to indicate Constantine's pious and charitable character.

In Philotheos' *Life*, the injustices endured by the saint's family and the divine aid they received during their struggles serve the rhetorical function of foreshadowing Philotheos' holy and God-chosen nature. Nevertheless, the predicament of Philotheos' mother does allude to the plausible reality of widows who lacked relatives, friends, or community to support them, especially in times of social unrest. As I illustrated in chapter 4.4, the extended family was instrumental in helping to rear widowed relatives' children and safeguarding widows against the kinds of financial and social exploitation that Eudokia suffered. Late Byzantine writers – and not only hagiographers, who were concerned with promoting the monastic vocation – presented the monastery as a refuge for women in

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[94] Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 'Agency of the Village Widow'; Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 101.

[95] 'ἐκ πάντων ἀπορουμένη... οὔτε γονεῖς οὔτε ἀνὴρ ἤ τις τῶν κατὰ συνήθων'. *Life of Philotheos*, II. 4.

[96] On widows in the gospels and early Christianity, see J. N. Bremmer, 'Pauper or Patroness: The Widow in the Early Christian Church' in *Between Poverty and the Pyre: Moments in the History of Widowhood*, ed. J. N. Bremmer and L. van den Bosch (New York, 1995), 31-57, 32-34.

[97] Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, V.

vulnerable domestic circumstances. George Sphrantzes (b.1401) mentioned a female attendant of his godmother, Thomais, who became a nun after she tired of enduring her husband's abuse.[98]

However, monastic retirement was not always feasible, nor encouraged, for parents with children who were minors.[99] Byzantine law bound widows to raise their children and provide them with suitable marriage gifts.[100] Even hagiographers promoted the expectation that widowed parents fulfil their worldly childrearing duties before entering monasteries. Kokkinos reported that Gregory Palamas' mother, Kale, was driven by zeal to become a nun as soon as her husband Constantine died, leaving her a widow with children who 'were still of a very tender age', of whom the 7-year-old Gregory was eldest.[101] However, Kale heeded her spiritual fathers' advice that she continue to care for her children's needs, 'bringing them up and educating them according to Christ's commands', before she retired from the world.[102] In a similar episode, Saint Isidore dissuaded a noblewoman who was under his spiritual guidance from renouncing worldly life and abandoning her husband and children, instead encouraging her to return home.[103] In Kokkinos' *vitae*, spousal and maternal duties take priority over female personal piety. Even Philotheos' mother, Eudokia, remained with her sons after becoming a nun (which she did only after losing her sons in the devşirme), since they lived at the same monastery. This emphasis on maternal duty stands in contrast to the attitude expressed by earlier hagiographers who praised holy women such as the 5th- to 6th-century Saint Matrona and 9th-century Saint Theodora of Thessaloniki, who abandoned their families to pursue asceticism.[104]

It is telling that, in our late Byzantine *vitae*, it is mothers, not fathers, who grapple with the choice between monastic life and parental duty – a trend that appears to reflect the social expectations placed on women in the family. Married men who left their families to become monks were not encouraged to wait until their children had grown up or their spouses had died, at least as long as the

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[98] Sphrantzes, *Chron.*, XVIII. 3.
[99] That is, under the age of 12 for girls or 14 for boys. See Prinzing, 'Observations', 20, tbl. 1.
[100] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, M. 15 (390-400/164); Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 90.
[101] 'ἁπαλοῖς ἔτι σφόδρα τὴν ἡλικίαν οὖσιν'. Kokkinos, *Λόγος εἰς Γρηγόριον*, IX. 4-7.
[102] 'τοῖς παισὶ… θρέψασα καὶ παιδαγωγήσασα κατὰ νόμους Χριστοῦ'. *Ibid.*, IX.
[103] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, XXXVII-XXXIX.
[104] Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 93, 102.

family was provided for financially.[105] The potentially difficult position of these men's wives is implied by an episode in the *Life* of Saint Maximos, who healed a sailor of demonic possession. This man, having witnessed the miracle, decided to become a monk. When his fellow sailors prepared to leave Athos, the saint ordered them: 'don't cheat [the man's] wife out of any of his share.'[106] His words allude to the dependency of widows on their male relatives, friends, or, here, their husbands' business associates for security, and the potential of being treated irresponsibly by them.

The fact that men, as a general rule, were not designated as widowers in late Byzantine writing or tax registers suggests that widowhood was treated as a gendered age-status that held special significance for women, thus reflecting the strong link between marital status and concepts of female life-stage. This trend is directly related to the ways in which widowhood transformed a woman's status in the family and society by placing her at the head of the household – a position ordinarily occupied by the husband. As stated in the 8th-century *Ekloga*, if a husband predeceases his wife and there are children from the marriage, the wife 'shall control all of her marriage portion and all her husband's property as becomes the head of the family and household'.[107] This change of status brought widows a new set of social and legal liberties and obligations. In addition to the financial management of the household, these included – as we have seen throughout the thesis – the provision of their children's education, marriage, and a marriage portion (all legal duties),[108] the arrangement of apprenticeships for sons, the burials and posthumous commemoration of deceased spouses, parents, and children,[109] and even managing the family trade.[110] Although we can assume, despite the silence of our sources, that

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[105] Niphon, *Life of Maximos*, XVII; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, XX. 3; *Life of Niphon*, V. 1-2. See chapter 4.4 on the autobiography of the monk Maximos of the Boreine monastery, whose father became a monk after his wife's death and gave his infant son over to the care of his grandmother.

[106] 'τὸ γύναιον αὐτοῦ μηδὲν ἀδικήσετε ἀπὸ τὴν μερίδα αὐτοῦ τὸ τυχόν.' Niphon, *Life of Maximos*, XVII.

[107] 'ἐγκάτοχον τῆς τε προικὸς αὐτῆς καὶ ἀνδρῴας ἀπάσης ὑπάρξεως εἶναι, καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν πᾶσαν τοῦ οἴκου ποιεῖσθαι φροντίδα τε καὶ διοίκησιν'. Leo III the Isaurian, *Ekloga*, ed. L. Burgmann, *Ecloga: Das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos V.* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983); trans. E. Freshfield, *A Revised Manual of Roman Law Founded upon the Ecloga of Leo III and Constantine V, of Isauria, Ecloga Privata Aucta* (Cambridge 1926), II. 6 (74).

[108] *Ibid.*, II. 6 (74-75).

[109] Many of the churches founded or sponsored by late Byzantine women, both in cities and in the countryside, were used as burial chapels and for the purpose of holding commemorative services: Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 'Village Widow', 204, 210.

[110] Laiou, 'Women in the Marketplace', 271.

widowhood impacted on the lives of men, particularly those with small children, becoming a widower did not fundamentally change a man's status and responsibilities within the family.

The Byzantine social model of marriage, based on spousal harmony, husbandly authority, and wifely subservience, was ritually fostered at the Orthodox wedding and regarded by the church as an acceptable outlet for the necessary evil of procreation. This attitude was expressed by ecclesiastical writers and artisans, who celebrated marriage as a form of nuptial chastity that, ideally, was shared exclusively between two people until death. This social ideal of marriage lay in opposition to the late Byzantine sociohistorical reality, which left many people widowed and forced to choose between remarriage or tonsure. Marriage acted as a major index of social maturity in both the male and female Life Course; it elevated men to the highest rank of the family and household hierarchy, and women to the secondary rank of maintainer of the household. However, the impact of marital status on concepts of life-stage was greater for women than for men. Writers identified adult women, like adolescents, primarily by marital status, to the extent that they characterised widows as a distinct social category. Widowhood placed on women a new set of social obligations and expectations, in addition to certain freedoms which, I would argue, characterise it as a distinct stage of the female Life Course (a point I shall return to in chapter seven).

(6.3) Parenthood

In addition to biological reproduction, marriage served the purpose of reproducing the norms, values, and structures of society by promoting particular forms of childrearing. Thus, Symeon of Thessaloniki explained that people united in Christian marriage rear children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, as the apostle Paul taught (Ephesians 6:4).[111] Byzantine writers and artisans constructed a model of parenthood that defined childrearing as a shared obligation of mothers and fathers, though some parenting roles were gendered. Fathers appear in texts primarily as figures of authority and discipline,

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[111] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Matrimonio*, 516A.

while mothers act as nurturers and family mediators, and both parents as educators of children. When considering gender's impact on expectations of parental obligation, it must be remembered that while several late Byzantine men wrote about their experience of fatherhood, portrayals of motherhood stem almost entirely from the perspectives of women's male relatives or other male writers. The sources construct an idealised image of parenthood that downplays the potential of childrearing as a source of marital strife; instead, parents' choices and desires for their offspring are always in harmony.

At the outset of their texts, hagiographers foreshadowed the saint's holy character by praising the qualities of their parents, who usually abounded in both material and spiritual assets. Thus, Saint Matrona of Chios' parents, Leo and Anna, were pious Christians who were distinguished among the island's inhabitants by their wealth and worldly possessions.[112] Parental affluence was a prerequisite for sanctity, as it enabled saints to imitate Christ by abandoning their worldly wealth in adulthood, but also to exhibit piety through almsgiving.[113] Therefore, even when saints' parents were not rich, they were affluent enough to perform acts of charity. Thus, while Saint Romylos' pious and God-fearing parents 'could not boast of much wealth', they had enough to live in self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκειαν) and distribute charitably to the poor.[114] Athanasios I's parents, Euphrosyne and George from Adrianople, were also described as living in self-sufficiency, while being adorned with piety and modesty and distinguished by their noble ways.[115] Saints' parents exemplify harmonious Christian marriage, with wives reflecting their husbands' virtues. Archbishop Gabriel of Thessaloniki's (r.1397-1416/19) parents were described as united not so much in body as in spirit, his father being a priest and his mother proving herself as a wife to him by the sincerity of her ways and the holiness of her mind.[116] Kokkinos similarly praised the prudence and decorum of Saint Isidore's mother, describing her as a

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[112] Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 379.
[113] This trope was noted by Patlagean, 'Ancient Byzantine Hagiography', 103.
[114] 'οὐ πάνυ τῷ πλούτῳ κομῶντες'. Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II. 5-7.
[115] Theoktistos, *Life of Athanasios*, II (3).
[116] Makarios Makres, *Enkomion for Gabriel*, 79-81 (354-355).

fitting wife for a man such as her husband, who also ranked among the priesthood.[117] As these examples suggest, biographers tended to typify women as extensions of their husbands' characters.

Late Byzantine hagiographers described saints' parents fulfilling the obligations of parenthood in a timely manner, thus highlighting the importance assigned to normative timing in the Life Course. For example, Saint Athanasios I's parents took their son to be baptised 'immediately' from infancy;[118] Saint Germanos' parents found their daughter a bridegroom when she reached an age suitable for marriageable (γάμου… ὡραίαν), which, Kokkinos remarked, was according to custom.[119] Saints' parents also undertook the naming, baptism, and marriage of their children as joint obligations.[120] In this regard, hagiographical accounts of childhood obscure the fact that early Life Course milestones carried different social meanings and expectations for mothers and fathers. For example, although the Church understood baptism as an obligation through which Christian parents ensured their child's spiritual welfare and instruction, the customs that accompanied birth and baptism held special ritual significance for mothers. Ecclesiasts such as Symeon of Thessaloniki advised parents to baptise their infants by the 40th day after birth, which marked the day of the mother's churching, when she was ritually cleansed of the carnal impurities of childbirth. The mother carried her infant to the church as a gift to God, where they were marked with the sign of the cross and blessed by the priest at the door. The mother, thus spiritually cleansed, could approach the altar and receive the eucharist again, while her infant, unless already baptised, remained behind the barrier.[121] By identifying birth as an experience that affected a woman's spiritual as well as bodily condition, the churching ceremony ritualised the attainment of motherhood.

It has been noted that mothers act as the primary teachers of children in middle Byzantine hagiography, especially in regard to religious instruction (suggesting a higher rate of female literacy

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[117] Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, II. 32-35.
[118] 'εὐθὺς'. Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, II (3).
[119] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, VIII. 6-10.
[120] *Life of Makarios*, 12. 3-4; Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II; Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, II (3); Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, 2. 1.
[121] Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Sacramentis*, 209D-212B.

than the sources infer), and that writers across the Byzantine period stressed women's duty to educate their children.[122] I have already discussed several late Byzantine women who provided literary and spiritual instruction to male and female children, including the foster-mother of the Constantinopolitan abbess Thomais, and Gregory Palamas' mother Kale, who sent her son for formal schooling in grammar and literature.[123] Taking children to school was also portrayed as a maternal duty in visual cycles of the life of Saint Nicholas, which usually depict the saint's mother Nonna leading her son to the teacher, as shown at St Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki (fig. 4.7). Images of Saint Nicholas led to school by his father Epiphanios, as in the late 12th- to early 13th-century Sinai icon (fig. 6.8), or both parents, as in a 13th-century icon from Kakopetria (Cyprus), are much rarer.[124]

However, several late Byzantine fathers also took a prominent role in their sons' academic learning.[125] In his *typikon* (1295-1321) for the monastery of the Anastasis in Constantinople, Constantine Akropolites described how his father George provided him with tutors as a boy and ensured that he studied a general curriculum.[126] George would test Constantine's progress when his son visited him at the monastery building site after school, asking him, 'What have you been taught this week? About whom did you learn yesterday? The day before?'[127] In his will, Constantine stated that his father left him many books and money to pursue his studies.[128] It is unsurprising that George Akropolites, who was a teacher himself, took a special interest in his son's learning. In this regard, the

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[122] A. Kazhdan, 'Women at Home', *DOP* 52 (1998): 1-17, 16; V. Vuolanto, 'Family Relations and the Socialisation of Children in the Autobiographical Narratives of Late Antiquity', in *Byzantine Family*, 21-46, 59-63; Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 72-73; Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 91-92.

[123] Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, X. On Thomais, see chapter 4.1, 128-129.

[124] Fig. 6.8. Saint Nicholas led to School by his Father, St Catherine monastery, Sinai, late 12th to early 13th century. See Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 51. On the Kakopetria icon, see Ševčenko, *Life of Saint Nicholas*, 72-73, pl. 14.2, also pls. 7.2, 10.2, 16.2.

[125] On late Byzantine scholars who oversaw or arranged their sons' education, see Constantiniades, *Higher Education*, 71, 93-94, 98.

[126] On George Akropolites' education, see chapter 5.2, 177.

[127] 'Τί διὰ τῆς ἑβδομάδος δεδίδαξαι, περὶ τίνος ἠκροάσω τὴν θές, περὶ τίνος τὴν πρότριτα;' Constantine Akropolites, *Testament for the Monastery 1374 of the Resurrection (Anastasis) in Constantinople*, ed. H. Delehaye, 'Constantini Acropolitae Hagiographi Byzantini Epistularum Manipulus,' *Analecta Bollandiana* 51 (1933): 279-284; trans. A-M. Talbot in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1374-1382, V. 1379.

[128] Constantiniades, *Higher Education*, 138, 141.

text may also reflect the role of fathers in transmitting professional knowledge and skills to their sons, which – as I demonstrated in previous chapters – was regarded as a paternal obligation.[129]

In his *typikon*, Constantine also referred to his father George's careful financial planning regarding the monastery, which he planned to bequeath to Constantine, his eldest child, after he died. For this reason, George reduced Constantine's inheritance more than that of his siblings to fund the monastery's construction, leaving him far less than the 7,000 gold pieces he had planned initially.[130] George assured his young son that God would provide for him if he were ever in want of necessities, since his inheritance had been spent on a spiritual project. The passage – through which Constantine hoped to reinforce his role as a founder of the monastery, a status that brought certain privileges[131] – portrays George as a spiritual role-model for his son, but also as a father who was conscious to provide financially for all his children. This was in harmony with the Byzantine custom of partible inheritance, which determined that parental property should be distributed amongst children on an equal or near-equal basis.[132] As we shall see, obligations of financial support toward one's children appear as a particular concern of fathers in our texts.

Spiritual education, which began as soon as a child developed verbal communication skills, is a prerogative of both mothers and fathers in saints' Lives, which therefore portray both parents as instrumental in early childrearing. Kokkinos described how the parents of Gregory Palamas, Kale and Constantine, made regular visits to monks and spiritual fathers with their children, including 'not just those who were adolescents and already reasonably mature, but also those who were still very young and had only recently begun to speak and understand what was being said to them.'[133] The aim of Gregory's parents was to ensure that 'from the very beginning of their lives their children's souls

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[129] See chapters 4.3, 5.3.
[130] Constantine Akropolites, *Anastasis*, V. 1379.
[131] Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1375.
[132] A. E. Laiou, 'Family Structure and the Transmission of Property', in *Social History of Byzantium* (Oxford, 2008), 51-75, 52, 65.
[133] 'οὐ τοὺς ἀκμάζοντας μόνον καὶ ἡλικίας ἡμμένους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀτελεῖς ἔτι καὶ ἄρτι πρώτως ἀρχομένους καὶ λέγειν καὶ συνιέναι τῶν ὑφ' ἑτέρων δηλαδὴ πρὸς αὐτοὺς λεγομένων'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, VII. 6-8.

should be directly moulded and broadened by holy discourses and teachings'.[134] The passage, which contributes to Kokkinos' sanctifying portrait of Gregory's father Constantine, indicates the importance of verbal instruction for educating very young children. The duty of parents to help their children develop verbal communication was also implied by Theodore Metochites (1270-1332), who wrote that his learning progressed rapidly as soon as 'my parents brought me to speech', which they achieved almost as soon as he was born.[135] In other words, non-hagiographical writers also presented both parents as teachers of children in their formative years.

However, biographers gendered the roles of men and women in the family by casting mothers in the role of family mediator and fathers as providers of authority and discipline. Some saints' mothers acted as allies in their children's spiritual endeavours. As a child, Saint Germanos began offering his meals to the poor, thus fulfilling Christ's command to love one's neighbour, nourishing himself on just a little bread and beans cooked in salt and water. His mother, because she loved the poor and her children alike, encouraged and joined in her son's charitable acts.[136] This emotional and spiritual support provided by Germanos' mother is negated by the saint's relationship with his father, from whom he attempted to hide his spiritual activities. When the young Germanos engaged in his 'nightly contests', performing secret vigils in the room where he and his brother slept at home, he would leap into bed and pretend to be asleep when he heard his father approaching.[137] In another episode, described in chapter 4.3, Germanos disobeyed his father's instruction to supervise the workers in the family vineyard by allowing them to take a rest, and was rebuked and struck by his father many times. At home, Germanos fell before his mother in tears, asking her to act as a mediator (διαλλακτὴν) on his behalf with his father, whom he admitted to having angered by disobeying his paternal command. Kokkinos, evoking the bond of maternal love between the saint and his mother,

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[134] 'ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς εἰς τὸν βίον εἰσόδου τοῖς ἱεροῖς λόγοις καὶ ταῖς διδασκαλίαις εὐθὺς τυποῦνται καὶ πλάττωνται τὰς ψυχάς.' *Ibid.*, VII. 8-10.
[135] 'οἵ με φύσαντες λούγοις δῶκαν'. Metochites, *Poem 1*, 16 (60).
[136] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, V. 4-27.
[137] 'τοὺς νυκτερινοὺς ἄθλους'. *Ibid.*, VI.

stated that she immediately assented to the words of her 'dearest' child and easily reconciled him with his father.[138]

Saintly children who performed charitable acts often received rebukes or blows from their parents;[139] this is a hagiographical trope designed to illustrate the young saint's commitment to the trials of an ascetic life. However, it is noteworthy that mothers do not feature specifically as providers of corporal punishment in the texts I have examined. This trend probably related to gendered social ideals of the family, which placed mothers in the role of nurturer rather than that of disciplinarian. Byzantine law generally prohibited women from using physical violence against men except for their sons, as certain forms of domestic violence – including strikes with a hand, rod, or whip – were socially accepted as means of ensuring children's obedience and maintaining the family hierarchy.[140]

Imperial mothers also appear in the role of family mediator, mitigating and resolving fathers' anger toward children who acted disobediently. In his *History*, Kantakouzenos recounted an instance when his son Matthew plotted to rebel against the throne (1347), thus causing him to be seized by uncontrollable anger. Kantakouzenos reported that, after tempering his fury, he sent his wife Eirene 'to reconcile her son with his father', and as soon as Matthew caught sight of her 'she very easily dissolved all obstacles and suspicions', as she was intelligent and skilled in shaping affairs to her will, but also loved her son dearly and was loved in turn by him.[141] These texts portray the root of motherly authority as lying in feminine intelligence and maternal love, and its goal as the maintenance of familial peace and order. They reflect women's roles as manager of the household, which came under

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[138] 'τοῦ φιλτάτου'. *Ibid*, VII. 1-38.

[139] Makarios Makres, *Life of Maximos*, VIII. 6-8.

[140] C. Messis and A. Kaldellis, 'Conjugal Violence and the Ideological Construction of Marriage', *Limes Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 2 (2016): 21-40, 23-28. For 'real-life' examples of violence as a means of ensuring children's obedience, see Prinzing, 'Adoleszenten', 45-47; John Apokaukos, *Letters*, no. 100 (the passage, in which Apokaukos encourages physical punishment as a means of teaching children discipline, is analysed in chapter 5.4, 176-178).

[141] 'διαλλάξουσαν ἐκεῖνον τῷ πατρὶ… ῥᾷστα πάντα τὰ προσκόμματα διέλυε καὶ τὰς ὑποψίας'. Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, trans. Miller, III. 49. 2-9 (184-185).

their direct authority. One wonders whether the Theotokos' role as a mediator between the worldly supplicant and God, the heavenly father, in Byzantine Christianity relates to this literary convention.

Kokkinos portrayed Gregory Palamas' father, Constantine, as a provider of both paternal authority and spiritual guidance for his family. It was Constantine who rebuked his family when they forgot to bring a gift for a monk and spiritual teacher whom they were visiting on Galata, and it was he who admonished his wife, Kale, when she beseeched him on his deathbed to ask the emperor to grant 'maintenance and protection' to their children.[142] Constantine 'reproached her [Kale] for uttering words unworthy of her own outlook and the virtue she had practised since childhood', stating that he would entrust his children's care to the mother of the heavenly emperor instead;[143] the Theotokos answered Constantine's prayers and became a protector and guide for the children in both bodily and spiritual affairs after he died. The episode highlights Constantine's piety, as he was able to fulfil his paternal duty to provide for the family as head of household through divine rather than worldly means.

While the sources generally reveal little about the upbringing of girls, some late Byzantine fathers, including the scholar Nikephoros Choumnos, described their paternal duties toward their daughters. Nikephoros wrote an emotionally charged letter to console his daughter, Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina, after she was widowed at the age of 16 (1307), in which he described her as 'my life and breath, and the light of my eyes' from the moment of her birth.[144] Nikephoros recalled his fear about Eirene's upbringing, and how he constantly entreated God to protect her through the perilous years of infancy, praying that no calamity would ever befall her, and preferring his own death to seeing his daughter pained in the heart. Nikephoros also referred to the role of Eirene's mother, who – he reported – went constantly to church to pray for Eirene in her infancy, and displayed an immense love for her daughter by suckling, embracing, and always carrying her in her arms, refusing to leave her side for long.[145] The letter constructs a vivid image of maternal care and affection that recalls the ideal

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[142] 'προμηθείας… καὶ προστασίας.' Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, VIII. 4-6.
[143] 'κἀκείνην ἀνάξια τοῦ φρονήματος ἔλεγεν εἰρηκέναι τοῦ οἰκείου νῦν τέως καὶ τῆς ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρετῆς'. *Ibid.* VIII. 11-21.
[144] 'ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν, καὶ φῶς τῶν ἐμῶν ὀμμάτων'. Nikephoros Choumnos, *Letter to His Daughter*, 293.
[145] *Ibid.*, 294.

of motherhood encapsulated in representations of the saintly mothers Anne and Mary cradling and nursing their infants (figs. 3.12, 3.15).

In describing the efforts of himself and his wife to protect Eirene through prayer, Nikephoros portrayed the spiritual welfare of children as a parental duty, while also expressing his deep affection for his daughter. Paternal love, though less prevalent than the theme of maternal love in hagiography, was well-represented in the late Byzantine visual world. Images of the infant Mary caressed by her mother and father, as at the Chora, where the child raises her face to Joachim and stretches her hand to Anne (fig. 6.9), featured in the infancy cycles that pervaded Palaiologan-era religious iconography and visualised a Christian ideal of paternal love.[146] It may be telling that Nikephoros' letter made no mention of Eirene's education, despite the fact that other writers praised her learnedness.[147] In part, this omission may reflect the intention of Nikephoros' letter, which sought to console and advise Eirene on the pain of her early widowhood rather than recount the details of her childhood in full. However, it may be inferred from Nikephoros' omission that fathers did not feel obliged to educate their daughters beyond providing spiritual instruction. Eirene complained that her parents gave her no formal education in grammar in her own letters,[148] whose spelling mistakes provide evidence of her accusation.[149] Instead, Nikephoros' paternal aspirations for Eirene centred on marriage, which her parents set their minds to as soon as she reached marriageable age.[150]

Nikephoros was not the only learned father who saw the provision of a good marriage as his primary duty toward his daughters. In his treatise *Concerning Education*, Theodore Metochites stated that his obligation 'to provide' his daughters and new-born son 'with a means of life that will be not only temporary but secure for the future, when I am gone', occupied his mind day and night and kept

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[146] Fig. 6.9. Virgin Caressed by her Parents, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (23/10/2020): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chora_Church,_Istanbul,_Virgin_caressed_by_her_parents.jpg. See Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, 71-72; (on the iconography of the episode) Lafontaine-Dosogne, *La Vierge*, 124-127.
[147] On Eirene's education, see A. Hero, *A Woman's Quest*, 15-16. See also chapter 4.2 of the present thesis.
[148] Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina, *Letters*, no. 1. 1-12.
[149] Hero, 'Irene-Eulogia', 135-136, 147.
[150] Nikephoros Choumnos, *Letter to His Daughter*, 295.

him from his usual occupations, namely the pursuit of learning.[151] Specifically, Metochites referred to a father's duty to find his daughters respectable bridegrooms by amassing 'treasures worth many talents' to offer as a dowry;[152] his words illustrate the importance of marriage as a means of ensuring a daughter's security. A good dowry not only enhanced a daughter's marriage prospects; it usually provided the bulk of a woman's parental inheritance and was protected by law, thereby providing women with a source of financial security in the event of widowhood or divorce.[153]

In his text (composed in the early 14th century), Metochites also asserted that the expected size of the dowry had grown, thus requiring fathers to provide more than they had received upon marrying their own wives.[154] One wonders how far this observation reflects real changes in dowry customs over time, or the fact that Metochites, upon being elevated to the status of a high-ranking civil servant, was able to seek prestigious marriages for his daughters that, presumably, carried expectations of an equally prestigious dowry. Cases from the patriarchal register of the 14th and early 15th centuries show that the size of dowries varied considerably according to social status.[155] In this vein, it is noteworthy that Metochites criticised the tactics of greedier fathers, who sought to attract bridegrooms of higher status than themselves by offering great sums of money, thereby leaving behind successors of greater rank and fame.[156] Here, Metochites alluded to the potential of families to better their fortunes through their offspring's marriages.

Given that his daughter married a nephew of Andronikos II Palaiologos, Metochites' words appear to reflect his attempt to avoid being branded as a social climber. As we have seen, authors such as Michael Choniates also played down their interest in social status and dowries as criteria on which

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[151] 'τρόπον βίοτον σφίσι ποριζόμενον, ὅντινα ἔξεστιν, οὐ νῦν δὴ μόνον, ἀλλ' ἄρ ἀσφαλῆ καὶ μεθύστερον, ἐμοῦ τελευτῶντος'. Theodore Metochites, *Concerning Education*, ed. and trans. S. Xenophontos (Cambridge, MA, 2002), XLVII. 4.
[152] 'θησαυρῶν πολυταλάντων'. *Ibid.*, XLVII. 5.
[153] R. Macrides, 'Dowry and Inheritance in the Late Period: Some Cases from the Patriarchal Register', in *Eherecht und Familiengut in Antike und Mittelalter*, ed. D. Simon (Munich, 1992), 89-98, 94-95; Laiou, 'Role of Women', 239.
[154] Metochites, *Concerning Education*, XLVII. 5. On the date of the text's composition, see the introduction to Sophia Xenophontos' translation, xii-xiii.
[155] Macrides, 'Dowry and Inheritance', 90.
[156] Metochites, *Conerning Education*, XLVII. 5.

the family chose its sons' brides, asserting instead that familial reputation and virtue were the most desirable traits in a potential spouse.[157] Such assertions, while indirectly underlining the financial draw of a good dowry, express an attitude whereby 'good' parents and guardians prioritised the possession of moral virtue over wealth when selecting a child's marriage partner. This is unsurprising, given the status of marriage as a Christian rite.

As mentioned above, in (auto)biographical writing mothers and fathers tend to co-organise their children's marriages.[158] The patriarchal register also attests to the fact that providers of dowries could be fathers, mothers, adoptive parents, and godparents in the 14th and 15th centuries.[159] Yet, from a legal standpoint, the father's input on a child's marriage was assigned greater weight. If parents could not agree on a betrothal, the father's choice was supposed to triumph.[160] Similarly, whereas sons could refuse unwanted betrothals, daughters could only reject betrothals that were 'unworthy and shameful', presumably because they undermined their social status or reputation.[161] Although hagiographers presented marriage as a common source of domestic strife between saintly children and their parents, the *vitae* examined here make no mention of such disagreements between husband and wife. Instead, hagiographers characterised saints' mothers and fathers as a united front, in accordance with the Christian ideal of marital harmony.

Literary portrayals of parenthood largely reinforce the social ideal of the family advocated by Christian marriage, wherein fathers, as heads of the household, adopted the role of providing authority and spiritual guidance for their families, while mother's roles as nurturers and mediators are directly related to wives' duty to support their husbands and raise children. However, as mediators, mothers wielded significant authority in the family, maintaining cross-generational relationships and reinforcing household hierarchies. More nuanced accounts of childhood allude to the changing nature

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[157] Michael Choniates, *Oration for his Brother*, 21. 16 (350-351).
[158] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, II-III; Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Romylos*, II; Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 379; Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, III-IV. 1349-1350.
[159] Macrides, 'Dowry and Inheritance', 90.
[160] Matthew Blastares, *Alphabetical Collection*, Γ. 15 (184/125).
[161] 'ἀναξίους καὶ αἰσχροὺς'. *Ibid*.

of parents' duties toward their children across the early stages of the Life Course. While both parents played an important role in spiritual education in early childhood, mothers feature most prominently as nurturers of small children, whereas fathers took a leading role in the education of sons in later childhood, whether academically or vocationally. These differences aside, Byzantine models of parenthood placed great value on the concept of the husband-wife 'team'. Upon becoming parents, husbands and wives were expected to have developed a strong sense of marital concord that would enable them to raise the next generation according to the values and customs of Christian society.

(6.4) Growing old

The sources insinuate that old age commenced in the later 50s.[162] Metochites considered himself as 'approaching old age' at 56;[163] Doukas stated that John V Palaiologos had passed through 'childhood, youth, and maturity' and had grown old by 1390, when the emperor was 57/58.[164] Skeletal remains indicate that ordinary people rarely attained such longevity. The mean life expectancy across the Byzantine period is estimated at 35 years, with female lifespans typically shorter due to high maternal mortality and, possibly, inferior nutrition.[165] Evidence from later medieval sites supports this trend. 10th- to 13th-century human remains from eastern Anatolian cemeteries produced mean adult ages at death ranging from 34 to 46.3 years old (the latter is atypically high), while at Frankish Corinth most adults died between the ages of 30 and 50.[166] At Saraçhane, Istanbul, the life expectancy was 29 for

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[162] This follows the trend of middle Byzantine hagiography: Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 182; 'Age, Gender and Status', 167.

[163] 'ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῷ'. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 9: Funeral Verses for his Kinsmen, the Caesar John Palaiologos*, trans. Polemis, *Theodore Metochites: Poems*, 192-201, 164 (193).

[164] 'τὴν μειρακιώδη καὶ νεανικὴν μεθηλικίωσιν καὶ τὴν ἀνδρῷαν'. Doukas, *Hist.*, V. 1. Doukas was describing the time when sultan Bayazid I rebuilt the Gallipoli fortress in 1390.

[165] A-M. Talbot, 'Life Expectancy', *ODB*, 1226; A-M. Talbot, 'Old Age in Byzantium', *BZ* 77.1 (1984): 267-278, 267-268.

[166] Demirel, 'Human Remains', 61, table 4.2; Barnes, 'The Dead', 441. See also Erdal, 'Church of St. Nicholas in Demre', 385 (among the group of 28 late Byzantine skeletons of the graves at the church of St Nicholas in Demre, the average age at death was 38.77 years, which is higher than average for Anatolian populations and related to the socioeconomic situation of the group).

males and 26 for females.[167] At late Byzantine Pergamon, Kyme, and Priene, most adults died before 40, but the average female lifespan was 10 years shorter (most likely due to maternal mortality).[168] This data supports Laiou's estimations, based on 14th-century tax registers, that 71% of women died by age 45, and 74% of men by age 50, among the Macedonian peasantry.[169]

Lifespan was affected by status, and longevity was commonest amongst the elite. Talbot found that the average age of death among Palaiologan emperors was 60 years, almost identical to the Komnenian period, and among scholars 67.3 years.[170] Indeed, of the late Byzantine writers featured in this study whose dates of birth and death are (at least roughly) known, the majority died between their mid-60s to late-70s.[171] Writers implied that living into one's 80s was uncommon even amongst the wealthy. Thus, Akropolites referred to the Latin emperor John of Constantinople (r.1231-1237) as 'exceedingly old, having lived about 80 years or even longer'.[172] Saints were attributed very old ages at death, often cited in the 80s or 90s. For instance, Saints Germanos and Philotheos of Athos both died at 84, which Philotheos' biographer described as a 'very old age'.[173] Niphon of Athos died at 96, and Maximos the Hutburner at 95.[174] Sometimes, authors clearly exaggerated saints' ages at death, a trope that Talbot connects to a Byzantine ideological linkage of old age with sanctity.[175] For example, although Athanasios I died no older than his 88th year, Theoktistos insisted that he lived nearly 100

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[167] Brothwell, 'Human Bones', 374, 380. For the date of the cemetery (mid-12th-early 13th century), see Ivison, *Mortuary Practices*, vol. 2, 27.

[168] Teegen, 'Pergamon-Kyme-Preine', 252, fig. 16. 21. Similarly, at middle Byzantine Hierapolis, two thirds of Byzantine women died before their 40th year: H. Kiesewetter, 'Toothache, Back Pain, and Fatal Injuries', in *Life and Death*, 268-285, 281.

[169] Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 296.

[170] Talbot, 'Life Expectancy', *ODB*, 1226; Talbot, 'Old Age', 269.

[171] Including: Niketas Choniates (c.1155-1216); Nikephoros Blemmydes (c.1179/8-1269 – for the date of Blemmydes' death, see Munitiz, *A Partial Account*, 28); George Akropolites (1217-1282); George Pachymeres (1242-c.1310); Nikephoros Choumnos (b.1250-1255, d.1327); Maximos Planoudes (1255-c.1305); Theodore Metochites (1270-1332); Thomas Magistros (c.1275 – shortly after 1347); Nikephoros Gregoras (born c.1290/1, d.1358-1361); Constantine Akropolites (b.1250-1255, d. prior to May 1324 – for his birth date, see Macrides, *George Akropolites: The History*, 18); Demetrios Kydones (c.1324-1398); George Sphrantzes (1401-1477/8); Doukas (c.1400-c.1462); Laonikos Chalkokondyles (c.1423/1430-c.1490). Other writers, including Michael Choniates (c.1138-c.1222), lived into their 80s.

[172] 'ἔξωρος ἄγαν ἦν, περί που τὰ ὀγδοήκοντα ἔτη ἢ καὶ πλείω τούτων διαβιώσας.' Akropolites, *Hist.*, XXVII (184).

[173] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, XLV. 5-6; 'ἐν βαθὺ γῆρας'. *Philotheos of Athos*, V. 4.

[174] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, XXXIV. 1; *Life of Niphon*, X. 2

[175] Talbot, 'Old Age', 269; examples discussed in Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 185.

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years, 'when he had exceeded the years of David and entered extreme old age'.[176] The biblical king

David, who was believed to have died at the age of 70 (2 Samuel 5:4), was considered by Byzantine

writers to have attained the upper limit of old age.[177] However, hagiographers reported suspiciously

high ages at death only occasionally. Rhetorical exaggeration aside, the longevity of saints may relate

to the fact that most of them came from elite or moderately wealthy families, and therefore grew up on

better diets in good housing. The practice of caring for the elderly in monastic communities, their

isolated locations, and the dietary regimens of eremitical monks especially,[178] may have also offered

protection against disease and health degeneration.

Given gender- and status-based variations in longevity, the onset of old age was probably a

moveable Life Course transition. The experience of old age also depended on the individual's family

circumstances. Byzantine expectations of familial duty determined that elderly parents, regardless of

gender, wealth, or rank, should receive a level of support from their children, or, alternatively, their

spouses, in old age. Therefore, the childless and widowed elderly had to seek security from institutions

outside the family. This section explores the impact of marital status and familial situation on the

perception and experience of old age, and how individuals navigated the difficulties of entering old

age in times of socioeconomic and political instability. It discusses the status of the elderly in the

family and community as recipients of care, but also as providers of leadership and authority.

Old age reversed the nature of the parent-child relationship. In hagiography, the strife between

parents and children who wished to enter monastic life usually arose from parents' desire that their

offspring marry and extend the family bloodline. However, some late (like middle)[179] Byzantine

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[176] 'τὸν Δαβιτικὸν ὅρον ὑπεραναβεβηκώς, καὶ πρὸς γῆρας ἐληλακώς'. Theoktistos, *Miracles of Athanasios*, VIII. 27-28; *Life of Athanasios*, XXXVIII (48). Talbot, 'Old Age', 269-270, notes that the figure of 100 years old is borrowed from Gregory of Nazianzos' funeral oration for his father. For Athanasios' true age of death, see A-M. Talbot, *The Correspondence of Athanasios I Patriarch of Constantinople, Letters to Emperor Andronikos II, Members of the Imperial Family, and Officials* (Washington, 1975), xxvi, note. 83.
[177] Talbot, 'Old Age', 268.
[178] Hagiography suggests that eremitical monks' diets included considerable amounts of fish and seafood, as well as fruits, vegetables, oil, and bread: Niphon, *Life of Maximos*, XVIII-XIX; *Life of Niphon*, IV, XX; *Life of Philotheos*, VI. 1; Laiou, 'Saints and Society', 102-103.
[179] Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status', 163-166.

hagiographers also referred to the cultural expectation that children would support their parents in old age as a source of familial tension. A parent's age, marital status, or number of children could all enhance the negative impacts of a child's decision to leave home.[180] For example, when the teenage Athanasios I left home to become a monk, the hagiographer stressed that he left his mother alone, worn out by widowhood and old age, and bereft after having placed all her hopes in her son.[181] In the text, the gravity of Athanasios' decision to leave his elderly mother without the care of other children or relatives serves as an indicator of his extreme piety. By contrast, Makarios Makres (c.1382/3-1431) remained with his mother at home until she died, which the hagiographer regarded as a mark of filial obedience.[182] Although the *vita* does not explicitly state why his mother wanted him to stay at home, Makarios' decision was evidently connected to notions of family duty. Makarios is atypical in this sense; most saints examined in this study left home in youth regardless of their parents' circumstances. This Life Course pattern repeats the trend found in early Byzantine hagiography, which promoted a model of monasticism based on the rejection of worldly ties in favour of spiritual tranquillity.

Theodore Metochites described the kinds of support that elderly parents could expect from their children in a funeral oration for his son-in-law John Palaiologos, who died in 1326, when Metochites was 56. Metochites wrote that he no longer desired longevity after his son-in-law's death, which left his daughter widowed and his grandchildren without their father's wealth or care to ensure their future prosperity. He also considered John's death an unexpected disaster for himself, telling the deceased man how he beheld 'your children, which you have left to me now that I am approaching old age, forcing me to take care of them constantly'.[183] For Metochites, John's death reversed the life trajectory he had been anticipating for himself, depriving him of not only the emotional joy of his son-in-law but also the comfort of his old age. Metochites stressed that he was expecting John to protect *his* children after *he* died, not to find himself burdened with his grandchildren's care in old age, and

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[180] *Ibid.*, 161 (for an example of age).
[181] Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Life of Athanasios*, III (4).
[182] *Life of Makarios*, 14. 1-12.
[183] 'τάδε φίλτατα σεῖο, σύν θ' ἅμαδις τέκεα λειφθέντ' ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῷ, νυνί γ' ἐμοὶ πᾶσ' ἀναγκαίη, διδόοντα φρόντιν ἀμφ' ἄρ' ἔχειν σφίσιν ἄτροπον'. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 9*, 164 (193).

denied the favours that children usually rendered their aged parents by preparing their bodies and souls for the afterlife.[184] It was John, Metochites wrote, who wanted 'to close my eyes with your hands, when I would die, as pious children do their fathers, honouring them'.[185] The provision of a proper funeral was regarded not only as a sign of respect for one's parents, but also as an aid in securing salvation. Metochites wished to die before John because he hoped that his son-in-law would do for him those things that 'good children are accustomed to do for the departed souls of their parents', to help him to escape punishment for his sins.[186]

Children's filial obligations, according to Metochites, thus included the assumption of responsibility for their parent's living dependents and the funeral arrangements. Given that Metochites considered himself to be responsible for John's grandchildren even though their mother (his daughter) was still alive, and had expected John to support his own children after his death, we might infer that the safeguarding of the family's security was regarded as a duty of male descendants.

Other parents emphasised children's role in providing emotional support in old age. The widowed Theodora Synadene described her only daughter Euphrosyne, with whom she entered the convent of Sure Hope, as 'the hope of my old age, my refreshment, my comfort, my consolation'.[187] Writers placed similar expectations of parental care on children regardless of gender or status. A letter of John Apokaukos (c.1155-1233) provides insight into the relationship between a non-elite woman and her only son.[188] As mentioned in chapter five, Apokaukos took charge of the boy, then aged 10, because his mother was too poor to clothe or care for him. With disappointment, Apokaukos wrote that although he provided the boy with a career in the church, as a young man he began travelling from town-to-town, leading a promiscuous life and leaving his elderly mother destitute and without her son's care.[189] Apokaukos thus implied that the responsibility for aged parents' care was enforced on

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[184] *Ibid.*, 9. 167 (195).
[185] 'χερσὶν ὄσσε καλύψαι, οἶα ποεῦσι τοκεῦσι φίλοισιν εὐσεβέα τέκεα τιμάοντα σφεῖας πολλόν'. *Ibid.*, 165 (194).
[186] 'ψυχᾶς ἡμετέρας, ἅ τε νούμιμ' ἔασιν, ἀμφὶ τοκεῦσι θανόντεσσ' ἐσθλὸν υἱέα ποιεῖν'. *Ibid.*, 167 (195).
[187] 'τὴν ἐμὴν γηροκόμον ἐλπίδα, τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναψυχήν, τὸ ἐμὸν παρηγόρημα, τὸ ἐμὸν παραμύθιον'. Theodora Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, IX. 1526.
[188] On Apokaukos' orphan school, see chapter 5.4.
[189] Apokaukos, 'Δυρραχηνά', no. 2.

children from all social backgrounds, especially when there were no other siblings to assume this duty. Since Apokaukos never mentioned the youth's father, we might infer that his mother was single or widowed, and therefore all the more requiring of her son's support.

Since the family acted as the primary locus of support for the elderly, older laypeople without children or other relatives could find themselves in a socially compromised situation. The institutions best equipped to care for the elderly, outside the family, were monastic communities. Retirement to a monastery in old age was a relatively common practice in Byzantium, which often followed changes in familial circumstance such as spousal death or the maturing of children.[190] Monastic founders exhorted monks and nuns to care for the infirm and elderly in their communities, and excused those enfeebled by illness or old age from the harsher dictates of the monastic lifestyle, including fasts, prostrations, and dietary and bathing restrictions.[191] Instead, the elderly were cared for according to doctors' instructions, as several monasteries provided access to healthcare.[192] According to the monastic rubric of mutual affection and homogeneity amongst the community, the responsibility to care for ailing monks and nuns was expressed through the language of familial obligation, whereby favours were reciprocated between members. For example, Andronikos II, in his *typikon* (1282) for the Constantinopolitan monastery of St Demetrios-Kellibara, advised the monks to spare no expense in caring for their sick brothers, because 'the solace you now bring to the other one, you yourselves will surely soon be requesting from those in good health as an appropriate sort of reward'.[193] From the 11th century, people with financial means could also donate land or money to a monastery in exchange for an *adelphaton*, a kind of lifetime pension that sometimes extended to the donor's relatives after death,

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[190] Talbot, 'Old Age', 275-276; *idem*, 'Family and Monastery', 121; 'Late Byzantine Nuns: By Choice or Necessity?', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1985): 103-117.
[191] Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, V. 9, XIII. 33-34. 1275-1276; Theodora Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, XVIII. 90-92. 1549-1550; Neophytos, *Holy Cross*, C9. 1368; Michael VIII Palaiologos, *Auxentios*, X. 1227; Andronikos II Palaiologos, *Typikon for the Monastery of St. Demetrios-Kellibara in Constantinople*, ed. Ph. Meyer, 'Bruchstücke Zweier Typika Ktetorika', *BZ* 4 (1895): 45-48; trans. G. Dennis, in *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1505-1511, V. 1509-1509.
[192] Theodora Palaiologina, *Lips*, XIII. 33-34.1275-1276; Theodora Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, XVIII. 90. 1549; Andronikos II Palaiologos, *Demetrios-Kellibara*, V. 1509-1509.
[193] 'ἢν ἀρτίως ἐπικουρίαν τοῖς ἄλλοις εἰσφέρετε, αὐτοὶ πάντως μετὰ μικρὸν ὡς ὀφειλομένην ἀντίδοσιν, πρὸς τῶν εὐεχόντων αἰτήσετε'. Andronikos II Palaiologos, *Kellibara*, VI. 1509.

whose holders could reside either inside or outside the monastery, with non-residents retaining lay status if they wished.[194] This practice offered the elderly a source of practical and financial security and attests to the increasingly institutionalised nature of monastic retirement.

By the late Byzantine period, compared to previous centuries, there was a lack of funding for hospitals, orphanages, and old-age homes in the provinces, and outside Constantinople monasteries were deserting their tradition of caring for sick laypeople.[195] Miller links this change to the emphasis on worldly withdrawal by the hesychast movement, which grew to dominate monastic life in the 14th century. A potential impact of these historical developments is that tonsure became an increasingly attractive means of securing care in old age, particularly for the elderly without family or the means to pay for private doctors. The statesman George Sphrantzes and his wife Helena were one couple who sought refuge in a monastery in old age, taking the monastic names Gregory and Eupraxia at Corfu in 1468.[196] The couple had found themselves unexpectedly destitute in the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, losing their home, livelihood, and two surviving children over the next fifteen years. At the age of almost 67, Sphrantzes was suffering from chronic rheumatism and – given his lack of children – was probably reliant on Helena for his care. The fact that Sphrantzes mentioned his health when recounting his tonsure suggests that it influenced the timing of the couple's decision. The later Life Course of Sphrantzes and his wife reflects the options available to childless elderly couples, and the role of monasteries in providing security to the destitute and displaced in times of political and social upheaval. During the seven years before he was tonsured, Sphrantzes – who was no longer serving the surviving Palaiologoi – sought refuge in various eastern Mediterranean monasteries.[197]

However, scholars have interpreted statements in some 12th- to 15th- century *typika*, whose authors sought to stress or justify their community's duty of care towards the infirm, as evidence that the obligation to care for monks who were unable to serve the monastery was becoming contentious in

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[194] Talbot, 'Old Age', 276-277; P. Magdalino, 'Adelphaton', *ODB*, 19 (the *adalephaton* is first attested in the 11th century). Gregory of Constantinople also refers to the *adelphaton* in the *Life of Romylos*, XIII.
[195] T. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore, 1997), 194-198.
[196] Sphrantzes, *Chron.*, XLV. 3.
[197] *Ibid.*, XLI. 7, XLIII. 2.

later centuries.[198] At least some monks were anxious about financing their old age. The authors of the Charsianeites *typikon* (1407) stated that any monk found 'storing up something for oneself from his own property, with a view to his old age or illness, is not liable to any charge'.[199] Manuel II, in his *typikon* (1406) for the Athonite monasteries, cited a similar practice among the monks, who held onto personal property to provide themselves with 'a modest income';[200] these monks were allowed to retain their possessions until death. As coenobitic monasteries generally prohibited private property, these monks' desire to retain theirs may imply a lack of trust that their community would sustain them through old age or infirmity. Of course, by securing funds to sustain themselves, these monks also alleviated pressure on the community and its resources.

The portrayal of the elderly as a vulnerable category of society in the aforementioned texts is inverted in hagiography, where elderly saints are characterised as extraordinarily vigorous and sharp-witted in comparison to their aged peers.[201] For example, when Saint Romylos had become a monastic father, he and his disciples would construct cells for other monks on Mount Athos, and 'one could see this holy man helping into the night, as if he were a youth.'[202] Earlier, when Romylos was serving as a disciple of his spiritual brother Ilarion, who was suffering from a weak stomach as an old man, the saint caught fish for the elder whilst eating nothing himself.[203] Therefore, at every stage of the saintly Life Course, sanctity is signified by the inversion of age-based behaviour. The vitality of elderly saints lay in contrast to normative expectations of the elderly, who were perceived to be deteriorating in their physical and mental capacities. Blemmydes referred to this norm in his autobiography, in which he intended to record the 'matters [of his life] whose shape memory's old age has not yet blotted out'.[204]

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[198] Talbot, *Byzantine Foundation Documents*, 1497, note. 9 (for examples).
[199] 'τὸ δ' ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ἑαυτῷ ταμιεύσασθαι γήρως ἕνεκα ἢ ἀσθενείας, οὐδεμίαν ἐγκλήματος ἔχει κατηγορίαν'. Mark and Neilos, *Charsianeites*, B13. 1646.
[200] 'πρόσοδον μερικὴν'. Manuel II, *Mount Athos*, II. 1619.
[201] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 191-192.
[202] 'ἦν ἰδεῖν τότε τοῦτον τὸν ὅσιον ὥσπερ τινὰ νέον ὑπερητοῦντα... ἄχρις ἑσπέρας.' *Life of Romylos*, XIV.
[203] *Ibid.*, X.
[204] 'τούτων, ὅσων ἐκ τῆς τῶν πεπειραμένων διανοίας τὸ τῆς λήθης γῆρας οὔπω τὴν διαμόρφωσιν ἀπημαύρωσε'. Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, II. 1. 1.

Hagiographers characterised old age as the spiritual prime of life. It is in older adulthood that many saints, like Maximos the Hutburner, perfected their own virtue and were expected to become spiritual role models for disciples, which acted as an important index of maturity in the monastic community.[205] It is just before Niphon of Athos acquired his first novice, Mark, who begged Niphon 'to teach him the rules of spiritual tranquillity and obedience', that the saint is called 'the elder' (τοῦ γέροντος).[206] Similarly, Philotheos of Athos is called 'the holy elder' (ὁ θειότατος γέρων) in the chapter where he acquired and trained his three disciples and performed his first miracles.[207] The veneration of old age as the spiritual prime of life was not a genre-specific topos but stemmed from an attitude of admiration towards the elderly in monastic communities, who – as we saw in part 6.1 – associated old age with the virtues of wisdom, piety, diligence, and insusceptibility to sin.[208]

Old age embodies something of a paradox in late Byzantine writing, where it is a source of both power and vulnerability. Cultural expectations of veneration and familial duty towards old age safeguarded the position of vulnerable groups of elderly people in society, but also conferred a strong degree of social authority and responsibility onto the elderly as role models of behaviour – especially spiritual conduct. If the Byzantines regarded early to middle adulthood as the physical and mental prime of life, old age marked the spiritual prime of life, when the mind peaked in wisdom and piety and the soul was most robust against the forces of sin. Biological and spiritual families reciprocated these benefits by providing their elderly with physical, emotional, and spiritual care in life, and by ensuring the burial of their bodies, the salvation of their souls, and the security of their dependents after death. The sources portray childlessness and lack of familial support as major threats to the security of elderly people, which was partially offset by the practice of monastic retirement. This trend reflects, at least in part, the monastery's role as a source of stability and security for people living through periods of political and socioeconomic instability in the empire's last centuries.

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[205] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, XVI. 1.
[206] 'ὡς ἂν ἡσυχίας ὅρους ὑπ' ἐκείνῳ διδαχθῇ καὶ ὑποταγῆς'. *Life of Niphon*, IV. 2, V. 1-2.
[207] *Life of Philotheos*, V. 2-3.
[208] On the *typika*, see Talbot, 'Old Age', 271-272. On old age as a source of 'spiritual capital' and authority, see Gilleard, 'Old Age', 631-633.

(6.5) Death and the afterlife

The Byzantines perceived death as a transition. Rituals surrounding death and burial aimed to help the deceased's soul return from an embodied to disembodied state, so that the identity of the individual transcended death. This concept was expressed partly through the use of different funerary liturgies based on age, gender, and status, as well as burial forms.[209] The realms of the living and dead were regarded as distinct but nevertheless interactive spaces, with actions in the former determining one's fate in the latter. This notion is conveyed in biographical accounts of death, which offered writers the opportunity to reflect on and cement an impression of their subject's character. Motifs such as grave-side visions, miracles, and the emission of sweet scents from a deceased saint's body frequently act as posthumous markers of sanctity in Byzantine hagiography.[210] Several saints, including Maximos the Hutburner and Matrona of Chios, exhibited sanctity by predicting details of their deaths, such as the date or names of the funeral attendants.[211] Prophetic events surrounding death, like birth, could also be employed to reflect negatively on non-saintly characters. For example, Blemmydes reported a story about an Ephesian governor whose grave was inhabited by a black dog, which scared away mourners after he died – an omen that signified God's punishment of the deceased man, who in life had dealt out injustice to the people and falsely accused Blemmydes' of theft.[212]

Before death, holy men and women performed specific deathbed duties, including the final instruction and blessing of younger disciples, and handing over of monastic responsibilities. Thus, Sphrantzes concluded his account of the life of his godmother Thomais, whom the Constantinopolitan people had called 'the saint' (ἡ ἁγία), by stating that the abbess, falling ill in her final days, 'had given

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[209] See above, chapters 3.2, 4.1; Ivison, *Mortuary Practices*, 170, 174-175 (on clothing).

[210] *Life of Romylos*, XXIV; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, XXXV. 1, 3; *Life of Philotheos*, VI. 2-3; Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, LXXVI- LXXVIII; Kokkinos, *Ὑπόνομα εἰς ὅσιον Νικόδεμον*, ed. Tsamis, *ΑΓΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΕΡΓΑ*, VII. 9-8-12, VIII (Philotheos' and Nikodemos' first miracles occur at their places of death, as they did not receive proper burials, Philotheos having asked his disciples to leave his body exposed to be consumed by wild beasts, and Nikodemos having been unjustly murdered, though he later received a proper burial). Many posthumous miracles were also performed by Saints Athanasios I and Gregory Palamas: Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Athanasios*, XXVII-LXIX; Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, CXVII-C XXXIII.

[211] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, XXXIV. 3; Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 384. See also *Life of Niphon*, IX; Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Σάβα*, LXXXIII. 4-8, 14-15; *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, LXX. 9-14.

[212] Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. XXXI. 52.

advice to all her nuns, entrusting them to the service of my aunt, who was the foremost in virtue and in her service'.[213] Thomais died seven days later, having given a last blessing to the emperor, nobility, officials, clerics, and monks. Saints were often afflicted by illness towards the end of life, but always exhibited resilience in the face of bodily suffering by fastidiously executing their deathbed duties.[214] For example, Athanasios I did not fail in his duties even though 'his body was ailing and he was facing death, and was exhausted by his death pains and final suffering', but instructed his young disciples 'as a gymnasiarch or physical trainer, who was grown weary and stopped doing physical exercise himself… instructs the young athletes by means of perceptual training'.[215] The account highlights Athanasios' spiritual strength, portraying the physically infirm saint as an athlete of Christ.

Biographers thus afforded great attention to the details of their subjects' deaths, which served as a final index of personal virtue or (in polemical accounts) vice. Age at death was provided as a matter of convention, and the date of the death[216] or other time-markers were often included. For example, Saint Niphon predicted that he would die during the fast of the Holy Apostles;[217] Saint Germanos reportedly fell ill six days before he died.[218] While the date of death was important for the saint's posthumous commemoration, a subject's foresight of the timing of her/his death acted as a final marker of saintly status. Thus, Matrona of Chios foresaw her death seven days earlier, the same day that the saintly abbess Thomais fell ill before dying.[219] Matrona's and Thomais' biographers may have selected the seventh day for death since, as we saw in chapter two, the Byzantines assigned mystical value to the number seven. The details provided in death accounts – date, timing, prophetic events – are the same as those that feature in birth accounts. I would argue that this is because biographers

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[213] 'πάσας κοινῶς νουθετήσασα καὶ καταλείψασα εἰς τὴν ὑποταγὴν τῆς μητρός μου ἀδελφῆς, ἣ καὶ πρώτη εἰς ἀρετὴν καὶ ὑποταγὴν αὐτῆς ἦν'. Sphrantzes, *Chron.*, XVIII. 6-8.
[214] Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, 114-115; Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 384.
[215] 'πονήρως ἔχων τοῦ σώματος καὶ πρὸς θάνατον ἀφορῶν, ταῖς ἐσχάταις τούτου κακώσεσι καὶ ταῖς τῶν πόνων ὑπερβολαῖς συντετριμμένος… ὥσπερ τις γυμνασιάρχης ἢ παιδοτρίβης ἤδη καμών, τῶν γυμνασίων αὐτὸς παυσάμενος… παιδοτριβεῖ τοὺς νέους ἀθλητὰς ταῖς πρὸς αἴσθησιν γυμνασίαις'. Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Athanasios*, VII. 1-17.
[216] *Life of Philotheos*, VI. 4; Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 384; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, XXXIV. 1.
[217] *Life of Niphon*, IX-X.
[218] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, XLV. 9-11,
[219] Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 384; Sphrantzes, *Chron.*, XVIII. 8.

viewed death as defining moment in the Life Course that fixed the deceased's personal identity and legacy, which were foreshadowed at the time of birth. This desire to portray a subject's life trajectory as one logical, consistent reflection of her/his character is exemplified by Theoktistos' description of the end of Athanasios I's life, 'which was dedicated to God from childhood'.[220]

The posthumous retainment of the deceased's personal identity was a primary function of the rituals and imagery of death, which I examine in the remainder of this chapter. Byzantine writers and artisans celebrated death as a rebirth into a new state of being. Writers personified the soul as an animate being, which hovered over the deceased body for three days, like sorrowful bird seeking its nest, before departing the world.[221] Artisans represented the soul as an infant, a motif that drew clear ideological parallels between birth and death. A typical example of this imagery may be found in the scene of the Dormition of the Virgin at the Chora (fig. 6.10), where the Virgin's soul appears as a swaddled infant cradled by her son.[222] Writers always characterised the souls of virtuous subjects as departing the body eagerly and peacefully, which was indicated by miraculous events. For example, Kokkinos reported of that 'at the very time of the departure of his soul', the face of Saint Gregory Palamas was illumined by radiant light, appearing more like 'the face of an angel' than that of a corpse.[223] Saintly souls could depart the body peacefully and certain of salvation.

Such peaceful images of saintly death were contrasted by death scenes of non-saintly figures, such as that in a 12th-century psalter of the Dionysiou monastery. Here, a monk lies on his deathbed surrounded by mourners, while his soul, personified as a naked child, is dragged from his mouth by an

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[220] 'τῆς ἐξ αὐτῶν ὀνύχων Θεῷ καθιερωμένης'. Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles*, VIII. 1-2 (literally 'from the time his nails began to grow').

[221] Fedwick, 'Death and Dying', 156; N. Constas, 'Death and Dying in Byzantium', in *Byzantine Christianity*, vol. 3, ed. D. Kreuger (Minneapolis, 2006), 124-145, 137.

[222] Fig. 6.10. Dormition, Chora church, 14th c. Accessed online (23/10/2020): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chora_Church#/media/File:Istanbul_Kariye_museum_Naos_Dormition_june_2019_2393.jpg. See Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, vol. 2, 164-168.

[223] 'ἅμα τῇ ἐξόδῳ τῆς ψυχῆς ξένῳ… ὡσεὶ πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου'. Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, 116. 3. See a similar account by Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Athanasios*, VIII. 17-23.

angel (fig. 6.11).[224] Marinis explains that this forceful dragging motion signified the soul's reluctance

to leave its body and face imminent judgement.[225] Indeed, the scene below depicts the monk's soul

being weighed by angels, who place scrolls containing his good deeds on the scales on the left, while

demons clutch scrolls containing his sins on the right (after weighing, innocent souls would be

received into Abraham's bosom, while the damned went to Hades to await the Last Judgement).[226]

The rituals of death also recalled those of birth and baptism. Like birth, the death and

preparation of the body for burial occurred at home; the deceased's body was laid out as though

sleeping, the eyes and mouth closed, and the jaw sometimes tied shut with string.[227] Just as new-borns

were ritually bathed, the deceased's body was washed, marked with the sign of the cross (for clergy)

on the forehead, eyes, mouth, breast, knees, and hands, and anointed with oil before entombment.

Symeon of Thessaloniki explained that these actions mirrored those performed at baptism, in which

the water and oil signify that the initiate has lived in faith and with piety.[228] Indeed, the formula for the

blessing of the oil poured over the body at the tomb was the same as that used for the pre-baptismal

anointing.[229] Just as new mothers received gifts of food after birth, the deceased's family brought

kollyva – a dish of boiled wheat, fruits and nuts symbolising the human body and its resurrection – to

the graveside on the 3rd, 9th, and 40th days after death, when memorial services were held at church.[230]

Symeon of Thessaloniki explained that these memorial dates echoed the stages of the infant's growth

in the womb, where major changes occurred on the 3rd, 9th, and 40th days of pregnancy.[231] Other

writers specified that the 3rd day marked both the formation of the human face in the womb and its

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[224] Fig. 6.11. Death of a Monk, Dionysiou cod. 65. fol. 11v, 13th century. Death of a monk, Dionysiou cod. 65, fol. 11v, 12th century. After S. M. Pelekanidis et al., *Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol. 1, *The Protaton and the Monasteries of Dionisysou, Koutloumousiou, Xeropotamou and Gregoriou* (Athens, 1974), fig. 121. For similar images of the soul's departure, see Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, figs. 1-4.
[225] Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 50-51; on the literary portrayals, see Constas, 'Death',
[226] On images of judgement, see Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 49-73, esp. 53-54, 58-59.
[227] Ivison, *Mortuary Practices*, 171.
[228] Constas, 'Death', 135; Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Ordine Sepulturae*, 676A, 687A.
[229] Velkovska, 'Funeral Rites', 35.
[230] F. R. Trombley and A. Kazhdan, 'Kollyba', *ODB*, 1137-1138; Symeon of Thessaloniki, *De Ordine Sepulturae*, 688D-689D. This, too, followed the ancient custom: M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in the Greek Tradition*, 2nd edn., rev. ed. (Boston, MD, 2002), 7.
[231] On the infant's formation in the womb, see chapter 3.1.

decay after death, while the 40th day marked the decay of the heart, the last part of the body to be dissolved.[232] The formation of the disembodied soul thus mirrored the formation of the body in utero. Death rituals reversed the transition undergone at birth by helping the soul to return to the incorporeal and immortal state that it occupied before entering the embryo.

Women – who, as demonstrated in chapter three, played a leading role in birth rituals – oversaw the preparation of the body for burial, the funeral feast at home, and led the display of grief at the home and graveside, a custom that crossed the chronological expanse of ancient to modern Greece.[233] This ritual display of grief by women is reflected in some representations of the deathbed. For example, Kokkinos described how, when Saint Isidore was struck by a lethal illness as a 3-year-old boy, his mother immediately began to bewail her dearest child's death, 'maternally' beating her breast with other women at the bedside[234] – actions performed as part of the ritual lament.[235] A more restrained image of female mourning is found in the Bulgarian manuscript containing Constantine Manasses' chronicle (fig. 6.12, dated 1344-1345), which depicts the death of tsar Ivan Alexander's young heir, Ivan Asen IV.[236] Behind the bedstead, Asen's father and brother stand with the patriarch of Turnovo, who holds a gospel book and swings a censer – an element of the funeral service inserted anachronistically into the deathbed scene.[237] Asen's mother, the tsarina Theodora, his wife Eirene (the daughter of Andronikos III Palaiologos, who married Asen at the age of 9 in 1336), and two sisters lean over the bedside. On the right, an angel holds Asen's soul, represented as a swaddled infant, which is carried to the blue sphere of heaven above.[238]

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[232] Constas, 'Death and Dying', 137.
[233] Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*, 5-6, 10, 29, 39, 44, 108, 122-125; Constas, 'Death', 127, 129-130.
[234] 'μητρικῶς'. Kokkinos, *Βίος ἁγίου Ἰσιδώρου*, IV. 1-7.
[235] Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*, 6-8, 28-29.
[236] Fig. 6.12. Ivan Asen on his deathbed, cod. Vat. Slavo 2, fol. 2r, 1344-1345. Accessed online (24/10/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/02-manasses-chronicle.jpg. See Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 160-165.
[237] On the incorporation of elements of the funeral service into deathbed scenes, see L. Brubaker, 'Byzantine Visions of the End', *Studies in Church History* 45 (2009): 97-119, 98-101, 102-105, fig. 5.
[238] The inscription is translated in Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 163.

The painter has represented the deathbed in the usual manner, as a household event, with the deceased surrounded by mourning family (the basic elements recall the iconography of the Virgin's Dormition).[239] Female kin play the most active role in the image, surrounding the deathbed, and the emotions of death are expressed through them. Ivan Alexander's inanimate stance and expression is contrasted by the bent body of the tsarina, who draws her face close to her son in a gesture evoking the maternal bond and the distressing nature of a child's untimely death. Whereas Theodora wears the imperial costume, Eirene wears a black garment, perhaps symbolising her widowhood.[240] The transition from life to death is thus visualised through the women's display of grief. Their position in the liminal space between Asen's corpse and his saved soul departing to heaven above may also be significant. As Byzantine writers likened the pangs of death as the soul parted from the body to the pangs of childbirth,[241] women were central to the ideological expression of death as a rebirth.

Womanhood and the act of mourning are inherently connected in Byzantine iconography of death. In addition to the presence of female mourners in the Virgin's Dormition (fig. 6.10), the image of a grieving mother bent over her dying son recalls the iconography of the *Threnos*, or Lamentation of Christ. Although only the two Maries are mentioned in the gospel account of this episode, from the 13th century representations of the *Threnos* incorporated elements of ritual lament inspired by earlier deathbed imagery, including more violent expressions of grief such as hair-pulling, cheek-scratching, and the tearing of clothes, by a greater number of female mourners.[242] The Virgin was depicted leaning over her son's head, sometimes weeping, her brow drawn with grief, as at the 13th-century church of St Clement in Ohrid (figs. 6.13-6.14), while in other images she cradles and presses her cheek to her son's head.[243] In the St Clement fresco, the Virgin's hair is loosened from her veil, while her female

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[239] On the development of deathbed iconography, see Brubaker, 'Visions of the End', 98-101, figs. 1-2.
[240] On dark clothing worn by female mourners, see Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*, 8, 16-17, 32.
[241] On the imagery of the soul's separation from the body and the rendering of this as a painful experience, see Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife*, 51; on associations with childbirth, Constas, 'Death and Dying', 128.
[242] See K. Weitzmann, 'The Origin of the Threnos', in *DeArtibus Opuscula XL. Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. M. Meiss (New York, 1961), 476-490; H. Maguire, 'Women Mourners in Byzantine Art, Literature and Society', in *Crying in the Middle Ages*, ed. E. Gertsman (New York, 2012), 3-15, 7-8.
[243] Fig. 6.13. Threnos, St Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia, 13th century. Accessed online (06/10/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/97/Paintings_in_the_Church_of_the_Theotokos_Peribleptos

companions throw up their arms, raise their hands to their faces, or expose and pull their hair in more intense displays of grief.[244] As the veiling of women's hair symbolised modesty, its exposure in death scenes marks out the intensity of the mourner's grief. For Maguire, the inclusion of more intense actions of mourning in 13th- to 14th-century scenes of Christ's and the Virgin's deaths reflect changing social attitudes towards the relationship between sacred images and daily life.[245]

The *Threnos* also presents a mirroring of birth and death. Kalavrezou notes that in later scenes, the Virgin's embrace of her dead son mirrors the way that she embraced him as an infant.[246] In a similar vein, the image of the grieving Virgin supported by other women at St Clement recalls the image of her mother Anne, whose body, exhausted from childbirth, is supported by female attendants in some later scenes of the Virgin's birth, such as that of St Anne and Joachim at Studenica (fig. 3.10).

While ritual displays of grief appear as a women's remit, other death rituals were regarded as filial duties, including the closing of the eyes on the deathbed (a practice that still holds in the modern Greek custom).[247] As stated above, Metochites had planned for his son-in-law, not his daughter, to close his eyes on his deathbed and do those things that good children do to help cleanse their parents' souls from sin (here, Metochites was probably referring to the arrangement of commemorative services).[248] In his *Autobiography*, Nikephoros Blemmydes reported that it was he who spoke the holy formulae required for departing souls on his monastic superior's deathbed, and 'put my fingers on the eyelids of that sacred body, to close the eyes, according to custom with the departed.'[249] The writer

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_of_Ohrid_0428.jpg; Fig. 6.14. Threnos, detail, St Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia, 13th century. Accessed online (06/10/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e2/Paintings_in_the_Church_of_the_Theotokos_Peribleptos _of_Ohrid_0117.jpg. See Maguire, 'Women Mourners', 3-5, figs. 1.2-1.3. For other images of female mourners, see Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 75; Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings*, figs. 113, 119; A. and J. Stylianou, *Treasures of Byzantine Art*, fig. 111b; Meyer, *Obscure Portrait*, figs. 128-129 (female mourners in Old Testament scenes).
[244] On these gestures as symbols of grief, see H. Maguire, 'The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art', *DOP* 31 (1977): 123-174, 126-151, 158-160; Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*, 6.
[245] Maguire, 'Women Mourners', 14.
[246] I. Kalavrezou, 'Exchanging Embrace: The Body of Salvation', in *Mother of God: Representations*, 103-116, 106-107.
[247] Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*, 39.
[248] Metochites, *Poem 9*, 165-167 (194-195).
[249] 'ἡμῶν τε τοῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ σκήνους βλεφάροις δακτύλους ἐπιβαλομένων εἰς συγκλεισμὸν τῶν ὀμμάτων, ὡς ἐν τοῖς ἐκπνέουσιν εἴωθε γίνεσθαι'. Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, I. XXXIII. 55.

was only willing to render this filial duty toward his superior, his spiritual father, in the manner of a spiritual son. Blemmydes recalled that when his real father was dying, 'he greatly desired to see me at the moment of separation, partly because of the simple [affection] of nature, and partly because I was the only one of all his children still alive'.[250] However, Blemmydes refused to attend the deathbed, choosing to prioritise 'the law of monastic renunciation' over 'the law of nature'; later, he also refused to visit his dying mother.[251] Blemmydes portrayed his rejection of filial duties towards his parents – made graver, as he noted, by the fact that he was their only child – as a mark of his commitment to the spiritual life and rejection of worldly ties. As his superior granted him permission to attend his parents' deathbeds, Blemmydes may have taken his monastic vows to an extreme in this regard; nevertheless, his account suggests that some monks did not feel obliged to fulfil their duties towards worldly parents.

Other monks attended relatives' funerals and performed their familial obligations in the wake of death regardless of their tonsured status. Upon his mother's death, Gregory Palamas visited his sisters, who were living as nuns in Constantinople, to offer them spiritual advice. As they wished to remain with their brother and receive his daily counsel, Gregory settled them in the town of Berroia near his ascetic hut.[252] Later, Gregory and his brothers attended the deathbed of their elder sister Epicharis, who had predicted her death ten days earlier. With a personal touch, Kokkinos remarked that Gregory enjoyed telling stories that his mother told him about his sister, who exhibited virtue 'since her earliest childhood'.[253] The author's remark reflects the importance of the natal family in retaining the deceased's memory after death. Later again, Gregory made the funeral arrangements for his younger sister Theodote. Her ailing body had lingered in life miraculously for eight days until Gregory, her 'brother and father', arrived at her deathbed to speak final words of comfort, as he

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[250] 'ἡμῶν ἡ θέα κατὰ τὴν διάστασιν περισπούδαστος, τὸ μὲν διὰ τὴν φύσιν ἁπλῶς, τό δ᾽ ὅτι καὶ τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ, προλελοιπότων ἀωρὶ τὸ βιώσιμον, μόνοι τῶν ὅλων ὑπολελείμμεθα'. *Ibid*, II. XVIII. 42.
[251] 'τοῦ τῆς φύσεως… νόμου, τὸν τῆς ἀποταγῆς·'. *Ibid.*, II. XVIII. 42-43.
[252] Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, XXVII.
[253] 'ἐκ παιδικῆς πάνυ τῆς ἡλικίας'. *Ibid*., XXVIII.

himself foresaw.[254] Theodote's face, like Gregory's, shone with radiant light at the moment her soul departed, and her corpse emitted a fragrance as it was carried out to the singing of funeral hymns. As Kokkinos portrayed the Palamas family as a saintly family, their deaths provide further evidence of Gregory's spiritually exceptional character in the text. However, they also portray Gregory as a man who dutifully fulfilled his obligations as the head and spiritual guide of his family, which fell to him – as the eldest son – after his parents' deaths. The funerals of the Palamas siblings, as saintly figures, bear none of the violent displays of grief historically condemned by the Church;[255] instead, the soul's departure and the preparation of the body for burial are carried out with dignity.

The posthumous care of the soul was regarded as a wider familial obligation, which people performed on behalf of both natal and spiritual family. As the Byzantines believed that the deceased would be judged for their actions in life, family members offered commemorations to help ensure their relatives' salvation. Elite founders of late Byzantine monasteries offered commemorations for the souls of their spouses, children, siblings, nephews, nieces, in-laws, godparents, and grandparents.[256] Through customs of posthumous care of the deceased, family obligations exceeded death and formed part of the daily lives of the living. The names and images of deceased relatives decorated the walls of Byzantine chapels, where donors propitiated biblical and saintly intercessors on behalf of deceased relatives. One such group of donors, who probably represent a natal family, appear on the walls of the early 13th-century Karsi Kilise in Gülşehir, Cappadocia, where a Christian community was living under the Turkish sultanate of Rum; the church probably served as a private chapel for its donors and hosted their commemorative services.[257] On the west wall, two girls, Kali and Maria, are depicted

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[254] 'τὸν ἀδελφὸν καὶ πατέρα'. *Ibid.*, LV.

[255] See Alexiou, *Ritual Lament*, 28-29.

[256] Excepting aunts and uncles, these types of relations were commemorated at the Convent of Sure hope: Theodora and Euphrosyne Synadene, *Bebaia Elpis*, XXII, 113-119, Appendix. 134-143, VIII. 156-158. Theodora Palaiologina makes similar burial and commemorative arrangements for her parents, children, grandchildren and their (future) spouses in *Lips*, XVIII. 42. 1278. For parents, spouses, and children, see Constantine Akropolites, *Anastasis*, VII. 1380; for parents and grandparents, Michael VIII Palaiologos, *Auxentios*, XIII. 1228.

[257] C. Jolivet-Lévy, 'Images et Espace Cultuel à Byzance: l'Exemple d'une Église de Cappadoce (Karşı kilise, 1212)', in *Le Sacré et son Inscription dans l'Espace à Byzance et en Occident, ed. M. Kaplan* (Paris, 2001), 163-181, 164-168, fig. 4.

flanking their mother Eirene – probably the wife of the anonymous male donor depicted on the north wall (fig. 6.15).[258]

The women's high status is indicated by their rich dress, and the girls' youth by their diminutive height. Kali, on the left, is bareheaded, while Maria, on the right, is veiled, probably indicating that she is slightly older than her sister. The women stand beside Saints Theodote, Kyriaki, and Paraskevi, who are flanked by another female figure in secular costume. The girls' hands are crossed over their chests – a gesture that, according to Brooks, indicates the depicted person is deceased[259] – while Eirene rests a hand on their heads, as though interceding on her daughters' behalf. Indeed, Saints Kyriaki and Paraskevi, who stand beside the family, were associated with the celebration of Good Friday and Easter Sunday – days that held Christian symbolic connotations of death and rebirth.[260] The apotropaic military saints, George and Demetrios, who appear in the upper register, may offer protection for the girls' souls as they faced judgement, which is depicted above their heads (fig. 6.16).[261] The enactment of familial duty is central to the portraits; Eirene, ranking first in the family hierarchy as a parent, occupies the central position in the family grouping, while her daughters occupy secondary spaces at her sides and receive their mother's touch – a gesture implying their reliance on her in their request for salvation.

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[258] Fig. 6.15. Donor portrait of Eirene and her daughters, Karsi Kilise, Gülşehir, Cappadocia, 13th century (own photo). See Jolivet-Lévy, 'Images et Espace', 166-168, figs. 4, 9; N. Karamouna, N. Peker and T. Uyar, 'Female Donors in Thirteenth-Century Wall Paintings in Cappadocia: An Overview', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 60.1 (2012): 231-242, 232-234.

[259] Brooks, *Commemorating the Dead*, 41, n. 25, see also 47-51, 63, 146-149, 152 (some portraits also have an inscription identifying the subject as deceased. As Brooks notes, the position of the deceased's crossed arms in portraits resembles the disposition of the body in burial); *idem*, 'Women's Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium', in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. L. Theis et al. (Vienna, 2013), 317-332, 321-322. Karamouna, Peker, and Uyar also consider the children Kali and Maria at the Karsi Kilise to be deceased: 'Female Donors', 234-235, n. 14. Spatharakis similarly considers the representation of a boy and girl with crossed arms at the church of St John the Baptist at Diskouri, Crete, dated c.1400, as a possible indication that the children are deceased: I. Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, vol. 2, *Mylopotamos Province* (Leiden, 2010), 338, fig. 239. Cf. Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 253-254, who notes that there is nothing to distinguish the living and dead in portraits found in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts.

[260] Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 45-46, 66.

[261] Fig. 6.16. West wall including Last Judgement, Karsi Kilise, Gülşehir, Cappadocia, 13th century (own photo). On the apotropaic powers of military saints, see Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 277, 284.

The portraits represent not only an act of familial piety and donation, but also the fulfilment of the familial obligation to provide spiritual care and protection to one's relatives in the afterlife. As Brooks has illustrated, the living and dead do appear together in late Byzantine funerary portraits;[262] among those images depicting adults and children, we find living parents or guardians making gestures of intercession on a deceased child's behalf.[263] Whether Eirene's daughters had died by the time their portraits were painted at the Karsi Kilise or not, their representation in the chapel attests to their mother's efforts to secure their spiritual wellbeing by including them in the act of donation and the perceived spiritual benefits that came with it.

(6.6) Conclusion: the 'end' of the Life Course

In Byzantine texts and images, the final stage of the Life Course mirrors the first. Just as writers and artisans characterised birth as a critical transition in the formation of individual identity, so the preservation of identity was a primary goal of the rituals surrounding death, which – as with birth – were enacted chiefly by the nuclear family. As death was conceptualised as a rebirth, women emerge in the sources as central players in the ritual aspects of death. The perception of death as a rebirth was not only the abstract product of Christian theological beliefs in the salvation of humankind but translated into cultural practices that bound family members through ties of obligation long after death. Above all, if the individual character was perceived as latent in childhood, developed in adulthood, and perfected (in the spiritual faculty) in old age, in death it was crystallised. The details of death acted as a final testament to the individual's lifetime deeds and persona, and provided an opportunity for biographers to bring the trajectory of their subject's life to a logical, meaningful conclusion.

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[262] Brooks, *Commemorating the Dead*, 41-64, 144-146.
[263] *Ibid.*, 47-51, see also 54-55, 147-148 (in which the parent is deceased, and the child/children living).

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

What can be concluded from applying Life Course theory to the late Byzantine sources? Firstly, the sources convey a clear concept of the Life Course that is particular to the period from 1204 to 1453, though it shows significant continuities with earlier periods in regard to its presentation of familial roles and expectations. Secondly, applying Life Course theory to a broad range of evidence yields a more nuanced understanding of the perception and function of age in Byzantine society. The sources present age as a fundamental aspect of identity that influenced what society expected of an individual over her/his lifetime, in conjunction with gender and status. The impact of social status on ageing was multifaceted and did not only pertain to wealth; imperial, elite, non-elite, scholarly, lay, monastic, urban, and rural identity all generated specific features of the Life Course. The past two decades of scholarship have demonstrated that gender, like status, was vital to the organisation of Byzantine society, and intersected with other aspects of identity (including race and sexuality) to influence how the individual operated within that society.[1] My thesis, building on recent scholarship of ageing and the family,[2] demonstrates that age also shaped the mechanisms of late Byzantine society. Age influenced the hierarchical structure of the lay family, the monastic community, and even how political power was theorised and wielded. Age, together with personal agency, shaped the ways the individual interacted with the institutions governing her/his society.

Genre impacts on the representation of age in our sources. Writers treated age as a determinant of behaviour that could shape their audience's understanding of a subject's actions, but also manipulated age for rhetorical purposes. At almost every stage of the saintly Life Course, hagiographers inverted age to praise the exceptional character of a holy man or woman, while historical writers inverted age

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[1] James, 'Men, Women, Eunuchs', 31.
[2] I refer to those works cited in the literature review: Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status'; Talbot and Papaconstantinou, *Becoming Byzantine*; Ariantzi, *Coming of Age*; Brubaker and Tougher, *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*.

to explain or criticise the actions of powerful people. Thus, age – like gender[3] – has specific functions in Byzantine hagiography[4] and political rhetoric. Partly due to the revived popularity of infancy cycles in Palaiologan visual culture and the 'humanising trend' of religious iconography, church painting and mosaic offer a fruitful source of portrayals of life-stage in the late Byzantine period.[5] Images, like texts, associate age groups with unique traits and behaviours, which they inverted when rendering the life of a holy subject. Scenes of conception, birth, education, and death reflect the importance of life-stage milestones in visual constructions of the Life Course and the rituals that accompanied them at all levels of society.

The sources yield a portrait of the Life Course that is weighted towards masculinity and elite status.[6] The fact that few biographical sketches of late Byzantine women follow the subject across her lifetime, and our lack of knowledge about women's education or ages at milestones such as marriage, inhibit our understanding of how femininity and social status coalesced in the Life Course. In place of a Life Course structured by biological or chronological age – which both influenced representations of male ageing – the female Life Course presents a series of age-graded roles, as women transitioned from virginal maiden to wife, to mother, to widow. The effect of this conflation of age and marital status is that women often appear in the sources as ageless and stereotyped in comparison to men, whose life trajectories reflect greater diversity of experience. Likewise, the most detailed biographical texts concern the lives of men from wealthy families in major Byzantine cities, although hagiography helps to counteract this imbalance. There is scope for further analysis of ageing from the perspective of the Byzantine material record, which may help to mitigate the gender and status biases in the textual corpus. Age, gender, and status have been identified by Brooks as defining features of the individual subject in 13th- to 15th-century funerary portraiture, whilst Ivison has highlighted their impact on the hierarchical organisation of late Byzantine cemeteries and, by extension, society.[7]

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[3] Brubaker, 'Sex, Lies and Textuality'; Constantinou, 'Performing Gender'.
[4] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 264-265.
[5] Mouriki, 'Revival Themes', 473.
[6] As in middle Byzantine texts: Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 250.
[7] Brooks, *Commemoration*, vi; Ivison, *Mortuary Practices*, 59-61, 277.

Some general observations about Byzantine perceptions of ageing can be made. As I illustrated in chapter two, the Byzantine concept of age was multifaceted, encompassing biological, chronological, and social age. Writers cited chronological age in specific contexts, of which death was the most common. This is because, at the simplest level, age served as an index of personal identity. Parents noted their children's ages as part of an emotional response to their deaths, just as biographers noted their subjects' age at death when summarising their lifetime deeds and character. In narrative texts, chronological and biological age could also indicate whether a subject was in- or out-of-synch with normative Life Course patterns. This trend arises most frequently in hagiography, where age is cited to demonstrate that the saint has defied the usual course of ageing. Generally, writers attached greater meaning to biological and social age as signifiers of a subject's development. The commonest index of male age in texts and images is facial hair, so that the 'beardless' youth features as an age-category in its own right. Likewise, 'marriageable age' acts as a shorthand for a stage in the female Life Course that probably coincides with puberty, thus marking an interim between girlhood and womanhood. These terms, the former based on physical growth and the latter a cultural marker of age, typify a gendered pattern in Byzantine portrayals of ageing, whereby biological and social age are more conflated in the female than the male Life Course.

Finally, by expanding the source-base to include autobiographies, monastic *typika*, and private documents (family chronicles, letters, etc.), this study has brought to light new features of the Byzantine Life Course. When considered alongside hagiography, the *typika* portray the monastic life trajectory – to a large extent – as a series of age-graded roles, with an individual's position in the convent or monastery transforming over time according to her/his degree of biological, social, and spiritual maturity. Hagiographers inverted the pattern of the monastic Life Course to indicate virtue, by having their saint revert to the status of a novice after already acquiring spiritual maturity, for example. Monastic founders expressed expectations of age-graded behaviour similar to those voiced by hagiographers and historical writers; for instance, all these authors perceived young people as susceptible to worldly temptation and corruption. This is significant because the social expectations

expressed in the *typika* related to communities of both men and women, whose members held varied social statuses. This study has also identified apprenticeship as an age-graded status through which non-elite males could experience a protracted period of social immaturity that presents some parallels with the 'extended adolescence' of elite males, or boys pursuing higher education or a monastic vocation – which, as we have seen, also enforced a period of social youth on girls training to become nuns.

(7.1) Change and continuity

The literary construction of the late Byzantine Life Course exhibits a significant degree of continuity with earlier periods. This continuity reflects the staying-power of social ideals and expectations about the roles of men, women, and children in the family rather than lived reality. In fact, there are several ways in which the 13th- to 15th-century sources mirror the effects of the late Byzantine socioeconomic, cultural, and political environment on everyday life. Upheaval in the countryside as a result of the Turkish advance, for example, prompted the creation of new models of sainthood. Hagiographers presented child saints and their families enslaved by Turks, such as Philotheos of Athos and Gregory Sinaites (b.1255/65), as symbols of the Orthodox faith and identity at a time when these were perceived to be under both physical and ideological threat.[8]

   The absence of female saints from the 13th to 15th centuries leaves us with the impression that the ascetic, eremitic Life Course was not open to women in this period except in specific circumstances. This absence may be related to developments in the practice of women's monasticism. As Talbot explains, the pattern of female monasticism had become embedded in the cloistered life of the coenobitic convent by the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods, when dangers of piracy and foreign

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[8] *Life of Philotheos*, 12. 2-3; Kallistos I, *Life of Gregory of Sinai*, 4.

invasion – which are mentioned frequently in our male saints' *vitae*[9] – made the countryside a rather

dangerous place to live alone.[10] By contrast, hagiographies of late Byzantine monks present a period of

life in the wilderness as a defining feature of the saintly Life Course (which was, in fact, undertaken

by both late-period female saints, Theodora of Arta and Matrona of Chios).[11] However, as mentioned

in chapter one, it is also possible that there were late Byzantine female saints who – like Sphrantzes'

godmother Thomais and Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina, whose tomb worked miracles according to

Gregoras[12] – were worshipped locally but never commemorated in a *vita*, or whose *vitae* have not

survived. In any case, late Byzantine biographers presented the coenobitic monastic lifestyle or the lay

ideals of wifehood and motherhood as the life trajectories pursued by pious Christian women. As in

earlier periods, the role of monasteries in providing a refuge for orphans, widows, and people left

without familial support due to political instability emerges as a strong theme in the sources.

Late Byzantine characterisations of life-stage roles and behaviours show much continuity with

earlier periods, mirroring a social ideal of the family structure that remained essentially stable over

time. The tenacity of the trope of parent-child conflict in hagiography throughout the 6th to 15th

centuries, for example, illustrates the fact that despite changes in Byzantine society during this period,

the social duty of children to obey and care for their ageing parents remained central to the conceptual

model of the family.[13] As I stated in my introduction (chapter one), late Byzantine *vitae* do not

generally devote much space to their subjects' youths and family lives, barring notable exceptions

such as the works of Kokkinos. Given the production of extended infancy cycles in late Byzantine

church decoration, which reflect a clear interest in the childhoods of holy figures, I would suggest that

this lack of focus on youth by hagiographers – some of whom came from social backgrounds similar

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[9] Many *vitae* mention upheaval in the Byzantine countryside, particularly in the form of Turkish raids.: Niphon, *Life of Maximos*, 8.3, 12; Theophanes, *Life of Maximos*, 23; *Life of Niphon*, 7. 1, 18-20; *Life of Philotheos*, 5. 2; *Life of Romylos*, 9, 11-12, 22; *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*, 243-244. See also Laiou, 'Saints and Society', 91-96.
[10] Talbot, 'Comparison', 16-18.
[11] Nikephoros of Chios, *Ἀκολουθία τῆς Ματρόνης*, 380; Job, *Life of Theodora of Arta*, 331 (*PG* 905D-908A).
[12] Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium*, xi, n. 11; Gregoras, *Hist.*, XXIX. 21 (III. 238).
[13] Davies, 'Age, Gender and Status', 161-166; Melichar, 'Adolescent Behaviour', 114.

to the patrons of these iconographic programmes – had more to do with changing attitudes towards the literary construction of sanctity than to shifts in the perception of childhood as a life-stage.

It is possible that, since many late Byzantine saints led largely isolated lives and aspired to a model of asceticism based on *hesychia* – the practice of inner spiritual tranquillity and solitude as a means of effecting communion with God[14] – from an early stage of life, their biographers placed less emphasis on childhood and family life as occasions for the outward display of holiness, and instead emphasised the young saint's rejection of worldly ties. It is unsurprising that childhood episodes feature marginally in the *vitae* of monks such as Maximos the Hutburner and Niphon of Athos, which were written by and for Athonite monks who were well-distanced from the lay life and community. Those *vitae* that contain more individuated portrayals of their saints' early years also seem to have been written by hagiographers with personal ties to their subjects. Kokkinos, for instance, knew most of the late Byzantine holy men whose *vitae* he composed; moreover, such texts were probably intended for well-educated audiences formed of the Constantinopolitan and Thessalonian elite, and may therefore reflect the distinct literary tastes of that social strata rather than monastic circles.[15]

However, in this regard, it is very significant that many late Byzantine saints followed a similar path to holiness: they entered a monastery in youth, served under one or more spiritual elders for a number of years, and eventually became spiritual 'parents' to younger monastics in maturity or old age. By contrast, few saints took up monasticism in maturity, like the 14th-century Athanasios of Meteora and Isidore I (who were tonsured in their 30s but, according to their biographers, had been living ascetic lifestyles for some time even then),[16] or were married, like Theodora of Arta (c.1225-c.1270) – a status she shared with several middle Byzantine holy women – who became a nun upon widowhood.[17] The late Byzantine saintly Life Course thus emphasised the monastic destiny of the

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[14] G. Podskalsky, 'Hesychia', *ODB*, 924.

[15] Mitrea, *Late-Byzantine Hagiographer*, 129-130, 271, 275, 283. Talbot, 'Healing Miracles', 51, also notes the influence of Kokkinos' classical education on his works.

[16] On Isidore, see Mitrea, *Late-Byzantine Hagiographer*, 165, 180. Before being tonsured around the age of 30, Athanasios had been travelling, conversing with famous holy men, and living in solitude while his beard was still blooming (i.e., when he was young): *Life of Athanasios of Meteora*, 240-242.

[17] Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium*, xii-xiii, 324.

saint from youth. This is an important development in the Life Course construct that sheds light on the ways in which sanctity could be achieved and formulated in late Byzantium. It may also explain why many later hagiographers described their saints' early lives at home in little detail, and, in part, why so few women – on whom the social expectation of marriage was strongly enforced – attained sanctity.

Nevertheless, writers did not portray the maintenance of family ties as an impediment to sanctity. Several saints and/or their disciples maintained relations with family members after tonsure. Saint Germanos met with his brother and healed his nephews, one of whom he took on as a novice;[18] Niphon's disciples consisted of two blood-brothers and their father;[19] Gregory Palamas, whose brothers accompanied him to Mount Athos to become monks, who visited and cared for his sisters in the wake of their mother's death.[20] Biographical writing thus conveys the strength of familial bonds in this period, which is also reflected in the monastic *typika*. Diehard monastics like Nikephoros Blemmydes, who refused to attend his parents' funerals despite having his superior's permission, were perhaps an exception to this rule.[21]

This maintenance of family ties in hagiography continued a trend in *vitae* from the 9th century onwards, which has been interpreted to reflect the rising value assigned to the nuclear family unit by Byzantine society.[22] The aforementioned examples attest to the fact that it was common for family members to enter monasteries together in late Byzantium, so that natal and spiritual family ties often coalesced.[23] Kokkinos tried to downplay this coalescence in his *Life* of Germanos, stating that the saint agreed to take on his nephew Jacob as a disciple not because of their family connection, as one might infer, but because of the boy's virtuous way of life.[24] It thus appears that that the breakage of family ties upon tonsure remained more of an ideal – inherited from the past – than a historical reality. Other specific features of the later Byzantine Life Course can also be observed. Whereas many earlier

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[18] Philotheos Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, 31-32, 34-35. Cf. Talbot, 'Healing Miracles', 54.
[19] *Life of Niphon*, 5. 2, 7.
[20] Kokkinos, *Life of Palamas*, XIV, XXVII.
[21] Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, II. XVIII. 42-43, I. XXXIII. 55.
[22] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 257; Patlagean, 'Famille et Parentèles', 427.
[23] On family ties within monasteries, see Talbot, 'Family and Monastery', 121-123; chapter 4.4, 129-130.
[24] Kokkinos, *Βίος ὁσίου Γερμανοῦ*, 34. 13-17.

Byzantine hagiographers omitted the saint's baptism in infancy to remain in keeping with the biblical model of the life of Christ (who was not baptised in infancy),[25] later hagiographers often mentioned their subject's naming and baptism as infants, responding to the meaning placed on this rite of passage in formulating Christian identity in the late Byzantine Life Course. Late Byzantine writers thus adapted the saintly Life Course model to reflect contemporary practice. Davies also noted an increased attitude of devotion toward the elderly in sources from the 11th century onwards that is well-developed in late Byzantine hagiography, which portrays reverence to one's spiritual elder(s) as a tenet of monastic virtue.[26]

While the sources generally imply the predominance of the nuclear family in this period, the extended family features prominently in late Byzantine (auto)biographical writing. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings, and adoptive parents all appear as providers of childcare, education, and practical support for displaced, orphaned, or widowed relatives, which presumably reflects the real functions of the extended family in Byzantine society. While Davies noted that middle Byzantine biographers presented biological parents as irreplaceable, (auto)biographies of late Byzantine orphans reflect positively on the childrearing capacities of the non-natal family.[27] Late Byzantine writers also portrayed widowhood and orphanhood as life events that often led an individual to pursue a monastic Life Course, either because the orphan or widow lacked familial support or – in the case of orphans – because they were placed in a tonsured relative's care. This trend attests to the sustained role of the Byzantine monastery as a locus of support for individuals and families in times of crisis. While the nuclear family remained dominant among the peasanty across the 13th- to 15th centuries, extended households were not uncommon in this period.[28] The importance of extended and non-natal blood relations to the aristocracy, amongst whom large family networks become visible from the 11th century

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[25] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 53, 250-251. On the age of baptism in middle Byzantium, see Ariantzi, 'Kindheit', 92, 94-98.

[26] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 255.

[27] *Ibid.*, 167.

[28] Laiou, 'Family Structure', 59-60; *Peasant Society*, 80, 84-85, tbl. III-1; Kondyli, 'Changes', 373-376.

onward,[29] in later centuries is indicated by the *typika* of aristocratic founders, and the Lincoln College *typikon* portraits (figs. 5.7-6.3).[30] The use of multiple surnames to signify status among the late Byzantine aristocracy also reflects a strong sense of blood lineage in this period.[31]

Some observations about the treatment of age by late Byzantine writers may also be made. While hagiographers continued to state saints' ages at death as a matter of rhetorical convention, historical writers also cited rulers' ages at death and assigned special meaning to elderliness. This marks a departure from middle Byzantine historical writing, where references to age at death are less frequent, and largely reserved for subjects who attained very old ages (this was also true for saints).[32] However, late Byzantine writers did not only cite age at death for subjects who attained notable longevity; Saint Nikodemos the Younger (b.1267) was said to have died at the age of 40, whilst Emperor Theodore I Laskaris (1205-1221) was reportedly over 45 but under 50.[33] Age at death in late Byzantine texts thus appears not only to signify a saint's life-long virtue or an emperor's God-favoured reign. Rather, writers deemed age at death important for understanding their subjects' lives and placing their achievements and/or failures in context. In chapters two and three, we also saw that birthdays were afforded significance in the chronicles and personal documents of late Byzantine fathers, who assigned meaning to births that coincided with feasts in the liturgical calendar, thus conferring religious identity onto their new-borns. The practice of recording children's birthdates in texts such as chronicles was certainly sentimentally motivated on the part of parents, but it may also reflect a growing interest in the recording of family history.

The role of wives and mothers in the family is not generally well-attested in late Byzantine biographical texts, partly because most of them took male subjects. Those texts that *do* provide insight

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[29] Laiou, 'Family Structure', 59-60. On the middle Byzantine family, see Kazhdan, Epstein and Wharton, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 101-102.

[30] Chapter 6.5, 189-191. On family in these documents, see Galatariotou, 'Ktetorika Typika', 89-90, 95-101.

[31] A. Laiou, 'The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development', *Viator* 4 (1973): 131–151, 135-136; Melichar, *Empresses*, 366.

[32] Davies, *Womb to Tomb*, 184-186, see also 181.

[33] Kokkinos, Ὑπόμνημα εἰς ὅσιον Νικόδημον, ed. Tsamis, ΑΓΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΕΡΓΑ, VI. 21-22; Akropolites, *Hist.*, XVIII (157).

into women in the family portray parenting roles as gendered. This point is well-demonstrated by tales of spiritually inclined spouses, wherein wives were encouraged to stay with their husbands, and widows to raise their children, before entering monastic life, while husbands were freer to pursue a monastic vocation as long as their families were supported financially. Hagiographers constructed a patriarchal family structure in which women's influence stemmed predominantly from their roles as nurturers and educators of children, including older sons. Thus, the roles of women in late Byzantine biography echo the roles of women in the family during earlier periods of the empire's history.[34] Likewise, despite the hagiographical characterisation of widows as a vulnerable category of society, some late Byzantine authors expressed an expectation that women would assume responsibility for the household after their husbands' deaths. Such cases support the assertion of Laiou – writing on the Macedonian peasantry – that the late Byzantine household was not always patriarchal.[35]

Perhaps most significantly, a wide reading of the sources demonstrates that Byzantine perceptions of ageing were shaped by the Orthodox Christian faith and beliefs in the human soul, which produced an extended model of the Life Course that exceeded bodily life.[36] Ideas about the body's formation and ensoulment *in utero* shaped the view that life preceded birth, and mirrored ideas about the body's decay and release of the soul in death. The 3rd, 9th, and 40th days of pregnancy marked milestones in the infant's growth in the womb, but also the days when family members commemorated the souls of deceased relatives. This suggests that the Byzantines believed it took the soul the same amount of time to leave the body as it did to attach to it in the first place.[37] The notion of death as rebirth was expressed vividly in iconography, where departed souls appear as swaddled infants, and tales of graveside omens or miracles, which presented the details of a subject's death – like birth – as a reflection of the individual character. If birth marked the formulation of personal identity, death

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[34] On women as educators, Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 91-96; N. Kalogeras, 'The Role of Parents and Kin in the Education of Byzantine Children', in Hoping for *Continuity: Childhood, Education and Death in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, eds. K. Mustakallio et al. (Rome 2005), 133-143.
[35] Laiou, 'Family Structure', 59-60.
[36] On the 'extended' Life Course, see Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 19.
[37] This concept of the soul's gradual departure from the body was inherited from Greco-Roman ideological traditions. See Velkovska, 'Funeral Rites', 40.

marked its crystallisation. This observation is significant in the context of the Life Course, in which birth and death were envisaged not as beginnings and endings, but as transitions.

The 40th day after birth – the day the infant Christ was taken to the Temple – also marked the time by which children were ideally baptised. While theologians asserted that the soul entered the body before birth, they also insinuated that Christian life did not truly begin until baptism, which enabled the soul to be saved after death. The importance of baptism as an infant rite of passage is reflected partly by the burials of infants around baptistries, which may reflect attempts to protect their souls in the afterlife. The ceremonies of baptism and tonsure – a rather prevalent Life Course event, due to the common practice of entering a monastery in old age – mirrored one another in that they were marked by the adoption of a new name and spiritual identity that expressed the initiate's membership in a religious community.

The major transitions of the Christian Life Course were not only bound by timing (and the fact that they took place in the Church), but also bolstered and maintained ties of spiritual kinship. This is reflected by parents who chose people with whom they shared existing spiritual ties, such as marriage sponsors, to be their children's godparents, and children who commemorated their godparents' souls. Just as women played a leading role in rituals associated with birth, including the bathing, swaddling, and ceremonial naming of new-borns, so it was female members of the household who washed and dressed the body for burial, and led the mourning of departed souls, thus preserving personal identity after death. The very structure of the Life Course was infused with religious meaning, designed to situate the individual within the order of not only society, but of the Christian cosmos at large.

(7.2) George Sphrantzes (1401-c.1478): a Life Course case study

The chronicle of George Sphrantzes offers a prime case study for putting Life Course theory into practice. Its autobiographical passages cover a significant portion of Sphrantzes' life and are presented in a matter-of-fact tone that lacks the overt rhetorical manipulation usually found in biographical

writing. This final section analyses the chronological sequence of Sphrantzes' life, identifying the major events, transitions, institutions, and relationships that moulded it. This allows me to draw together themes addressed throughout the thesis and demonstrate the relationship between an individual actor and the social-historical context of late Byzantium in sculpting the Life Course.

After his birth in 1401, Sphrantzes' acceptance into his Christian family and community was marked by the rite of baptism, through which his family forged a prestigious social connection to his godmother, Thomais. A revered abbess of her day, Thomais first came to Constantinople with her relatives after being orphaned in childhood – a relatively common event in the Byzantine Life Course. She was entrusted to the scholar Nikolaos Kabasilas' mother for her care and education, which enabled her to climb the monastic hierarchy in later life. Thomais was likely chosen as Sphrantzes' godmother because of her close relationship with the Sphrantzes family, which developed while she was staying on Lemnos with Sphrantzes' grandparents and aunt, whom Thomais inspired to become a nun.[38] Thus, even in infancy, the religious and legal institutions of baptism and adoption, and natal and spiritual bonds of kinship, were exercising an influence on Sphrantzes' social world and connections.

The lasting impacts of childhood relationships on Sphrantzes' life are illuminated by his emotive descriptions of his friends' deaths, including that of the cleric Hierotheos, whom Sphrantzes stated 'had been with me as classmate and friend from childhood until he died.'[39] Likewise, when he attended Markos of Corinth's funeral (at the age of 42), Sphrantzes recalled how he and Markos had formed a strong friendship while they were brought up together in court, as Sphrantzes' parents had supported Markos because his own stepmother disliked him.[40] The environment of the classroom and court ensured that Sphrantzes engaged in future rites and transitions in these men's lives – namely their funerals – and that periods of his life were affected emotionally by theirs in turn. The interaction between age-peer bonds, education, and life events such as marriage, baptism, and career milestones, are also reflected in Sphrantzes' rapport with Constantine XI Palaiologos. Sphrantzes explained that

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[38] Sphrantzes, *Minor Chron.*, preface; XVIII. 1-8 (on Thomais' life).
[39] 'ἦν ἐκ νεότητος μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν καὶ συσχολίτης καὶ φίλος μέχρι καὶ τοῦ τέλους αὐτοῦ.' *Ibid.*, XLVII. 4.
[40] *Ibid.*, XXVI. 5.

his friendship with Constantine had sacred bonds, 'since my uncle had been his tutor and my cousins and I were his companions, friends, and attendants'; therefore, the two exchanged favours for one another in adulthood.[41] Their ties of spiritual kinship were strengthened when Constantine sponsored Sphrantzes' son John's baptism in 1438 (when Sphrantzes was 38), and when he was best man at Sphrantzes' wedding to his wife Helen a year earlier.[42]

At 37 years old, Sphrantzes married perhaps slightly later in life than the average high-ranking civil servant. His delay in marrying can be explained by his education and career ambitions, which – as mentioned previously – won him an official title at Manuel II's court at the age of 16. These same ambitions caused Sphrantzes to worry that his wife, unhappy with his long, frequent absences on missions abroad, would divorce him and remarry.[43] In this sense, the ambitions and anxieties guiding Sphrantzes' life were unique to the experience of an educated lay elite male. Other events of his life would have been shared by people regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or occupation. These include his sister's death from Bubonic plague when Sphrantzes was around 15, his parents' deaths, and his children's deaths, when Sphrantzes was between the ages of 39 and 46. Much of the population, having married and started childbearing earlier, would have experienced at least some of their children's deaths earlier in life.[44] Whereas disease and high infant mortality were forces that affected the lives of all Byzantines, the deaths of Sphrantzes' teenage son and daughter, who died in the custody of Mehmed II, were related to the specific political and social climate in which he lived.[45]

The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and its aftermath meant that Sphrantzes' later life trajectory deviated drastically from the one his parents might have imagined for him at birth. The writer emotively explained how the fall of Byzantine power reduced his family to slavery; first, he was separated from his family, then his children were taken from his wife, leaving her alone with a single

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[41] 'ὅτι ὁ τοῦ πατρός μου ἀδελφὸς ἦν αὐτοῦ τατᾶς καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ συνανάτροφοι καὶ φίλοι καὶ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐγὼ μετ' αὐτῶν.' *Ibid*., XXIV. 1-2.
[42] *Ibid.*, XXIV. 1-2.
[43] *Ibid.*, XXXIII. 3.
[44] *Ibid.*, V.1; XXIV. 5; XXVI. 10; XXVIII. 6.
[45] *Ibid*, VI. 1; XXXVII. 9; XXXVII. 3.

nurse for company. Sphrantzes was able to ransom his wife after receiving protection from Thomas, despot of the Morea, upon entering his service. After his children's deaths, when he was around 60, Sphrantzes went to the Monastery of the Holy Apostles to live with a man he described as his spiritual father, brother, and good friend Dorotheos. After Dorotheos' death, when Sphrantzes was 'old, sick, and penniless', he received yearly compensation from the lord of Santa Maura and his mother-in-law, since that man had married the niece of Sphrantzes' old master, Constantine, and because Sphrantzes had once helped his father to obtain a peace treaty.[46] Finally, at the age of 67, Sphrantzes and his wife Helena gave up the material world and were tonsured under the names Gregory and Eupraxia.[47] In the remaining account, Sphrantzes described the illnesses and friends' deaths he encountered as an old man. Both would have been regular occurrences for people who lived into old age, which, in Sphrantzes' day, was commoner amongst the elite than the non-elite.

Otherwise, Sphrantzes' later Life Course embodies a tale of a family whose fortunes were reversed in times of political turmoil, thus exemplifying the intersection of historical context and individual lives in spurring the creation of new relationships and identities. The transfer of Byzantine to Ottoman power severed many of Sphrantzes' familial ties, but also prompted him to form new extra-familial relationships and capitalise on connections at the fringes of his social network. That Sphrantzes was instantly drawn to his spiritual father and brother, Dorotheos, attests to the fact that monks and their lay relations continued to provide one another with emotional and material support. Meanwhile, Sphrantzes' reliance on the ruling family of Santa Maura indicates that when the situation demanded, people could exploit ties of friendship and cross-generational bonds of cooperation to meet their needs. Such a multifaceted social network would ensure the survival of its members through social, political, and economic turns of fate. Concurrently, the individual's actions across the Life Course were shaped by the institutions governing his/her society. Thus, the Church and monastery gave Sphrantzes and Helena – like many Byzantines – a safe place to live out their old age. Without

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[46] 'γέρων καὶ ἀσθενὴς καὶ πτωχὸς'. *Ibid*, XLV. 1, XXXV. 11-12; XXXVII. 3-4, 6, 9; XLI. 7,
[47] *Ibid*., XLV. 3.

blood relatives to support them, their care would be ensured by their new spiritual families, to which they gained access upon taking a monastic identity, ritualised by the adoption of new names and dress at tonsure.

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APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 3.1. Sinner who drank an abortifacient, church of St John the Baptist, Agios Vasilios, Crete, 13th century. After S. Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in late Byzantium: Art, Archaeology and Ethnography* (New York, 2016), 90, fig. 66.

Fig. 3.2. Virgin Blachernitissa flanked by Moses and the Patriarch of Jerusalem Euthymios, tempera on wood, St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, c. 1224. After K. A. Manafis, *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of St Catherine* (Athens, 1990), 175, fig. 48.

Fig. 3.3. The Visitation, Church of Timios Stavros, Pelendri, Cyprus, late 14th century. Accessed online (22/09/2019): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visitation_Pelendri.jpg.

Fig. 3.4. Nativity of Christ, Chora Church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (05/10/2019): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul-Saint-Sauveur_in_Chora-La_nativit%C3%A9-1981.jpg.

Fig. 3.5. Nativity of the Virgin, Chora Church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (09/07/2021): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meryemin_Do%C4%9Fumu_Mozai%C4%9Fi,_Kariye.jpg.

Fig. 3.6. Nativity of the Virgin, Hagia Sophia, Mystras, 14th century (photo Rachael Helen Banes).

Fig. 3.7. The Virgin in her Cradle, Hagia Sophia, Mystras, 14th century (photo Rachael Helen Banes).

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Fig. 3.8. Nativity of Saint George, Church of St George, Rethymnon, Crete, 14th century. After I. Spatharakis, *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete* (Leiden, 2001), fig. 43.

Fig. 3.9. Nativity of Saint Constantine, Church of Sts George, Constantine and Helena, Herakleion, Crete, 14th century. After Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings*, fig. 28.

Fig. 3.10. Nativity of the Virgin, Church of Sts Anna and Joachim, Studenica monastery, Kraljevo, 1314. Accessed online (06/10/2019): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Birth_of_MAry.jpg.

Fig. 3.11. Icon of St Nicholas, detail, St Catherine monastery, Sinai, late 12th to early 13th century. After Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 51.

Fig. 3.12. Saint Anne nursing the Virgin, church of St Anna, Anisaraki, Crete, 15th century. Accessed online (20/07/2019): https://www.cretanbeaches.com/en/religious-monuments-on-crete/inactive-monasteries-and-hermitages/monasterial-monuments-of-selino/saint-anne-church-at-anissaraki-kandanos.

Fig. 3.13. First Steps of the Virgin, Chora Church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (09/10/2019):
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_of_the_Virgin#/media/File:Virgin's_first_seven_steps.jpg.

Fig. 3.14. The Virgin nursing Christ, church of St Nicholas, Kakopetria, Cyprus, 14th century. Accessed online (15/10/2019): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_St._Nicholas_of_the_Roof#/media/File:Kakopetria_Geburt_ Jesu.jpg.

Fig. 3.15. Female sinner refusing to nurse (left), church of St Paraskeve, Kitiros, Crete. After Gerstel, *Rural Lives*, 93, fig. 68.

Fig. 4.1. Multiplication, Hagia Sophia, Trebizond, 13th century. Accessed online (13/01/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/Trabzon_Hagia_Sophia_Feeding_of_the_thousands_4797.jpg.

Fig. 4.2. Multiplication, Iviron cod. 5, fol. 63v, 13th century. After S. M. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts*, vol. 2, *The Monasteries of Iveron, St. Pantaleimon, Esphigmenou, and Chilandari* (Athens, 1975), fig. 13.

Fig. 4.3. Multiplication, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century (photo Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection). Accessed online (28/10/2021): http://id.lib.harvard.edu/images/8001538681/urn-3:DOAK.RESLIB:38642393/catalog.

Fig. 4.4. Presentation, church of Sts Anna and Joachim, Studenica monastery, Kraljevo, 1314.
Accessed online (14/01/2020):
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cc/Manastir_Studenica%2C_Srbija%2C_041.JPG.

Fig. 4.5. Presentation, church of the Holy Cross of 'Agiasmati', Cyprus, painted 15th century.
Accessed online (28/10/2021): https://www-bridgemaneducation-
com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/en/asset/942956/summary (photo Philippos Goul).

Fig. 4.6. Presentation, St Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia, 13th century. Accessed online (18/11/2021): Paintings_in_the_Church_of_the_Theotokos_Peribleptos_of_Ohrid_0253.jpg (2727×1713) (wikimedia.org).

Fig. 4.7. Life of St Nicholas, church of St Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki, 14th century. Accessed online (25/02/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Thessaloniki%2C_Agios_Nikolaos_Orfanos_%28Άγιος_Νικόλαος_Ορφανός%29_%2814._Jhdt.%29_%2847851912501%29.jpg.

Fig. 4.8. Children Operating Windlass at the Baptism, Old Metropolis of Veria, Northern Greece, 14th century. Accessed online (28/10/2021): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_Metropoly_in_Veria_Fresco_6.jpg.

Fig. 5.1. Transfiguration, Tatlarin Church, Cappadocia, Turkey, 13th century (own photo).

Fig. 5.2. Manuel II Palaiologos and his family, Paris Louvre MR 416, fol. 2r, 1403-1405. Accessed online (27/03/2020):
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1d/Manuel_II_Helena_sons.JPG.

Fig. 5.3. Presentation of the Virgin, Chora church, Istanbul, 14ᵗʰ century. Accessed online (28/10/2021): https://creativecommons.org/ (photo Nick in exsilio, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Fig. 5.4. Virgin Mary entrusted to Joseph, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (22/10/2021): https://creativecommons.org/ (photo Nick in exsilio, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Fig. 5.5. Joseph takes Mary to his House, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century (photo Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection). Accessed online (28/10/2021): http://id.lib.harvard.edu/images/8001538681/urn-3:DOAK.RESLIB:38642393/catalog.

Fig. 5.6. Saints George and Demetrios, Church of the Saviour, Paleochorio, Cyprus, 15th century. After A. and J. Stylainou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus* (Stourbridge, 1964), fig. 68.

Fig. 5.7. Nuns of the Convent of Our Lady of Sure Hope in Constantinople, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, fol. 12r, c.1300. After I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden, 1976), fig. 154.

Fig. 5.8. The Nuns Euphrosyne Synadene and her Mother Theodoule (Theodora), Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, fol. 11r, c.1300. Accessed online (20/09/2021): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/TheodoraPalailogina%26EuphrosyneSynadena.jpg.

Fig. 5.9. The Nun Theodoule and Monk Joachim with their Daughter Euphrosyne, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, fol. 7r, c.1300. After C. Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2008), pl. 7.

Fig. 6.1. Portrait of the *protovestiarios* Theodore Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Synadenos and his wife Eudokia Doukaina Komnene Synadene, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, f.8r, c.1335. Accessed online (23/10/2020): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TheodoreandEudokia.jpg.
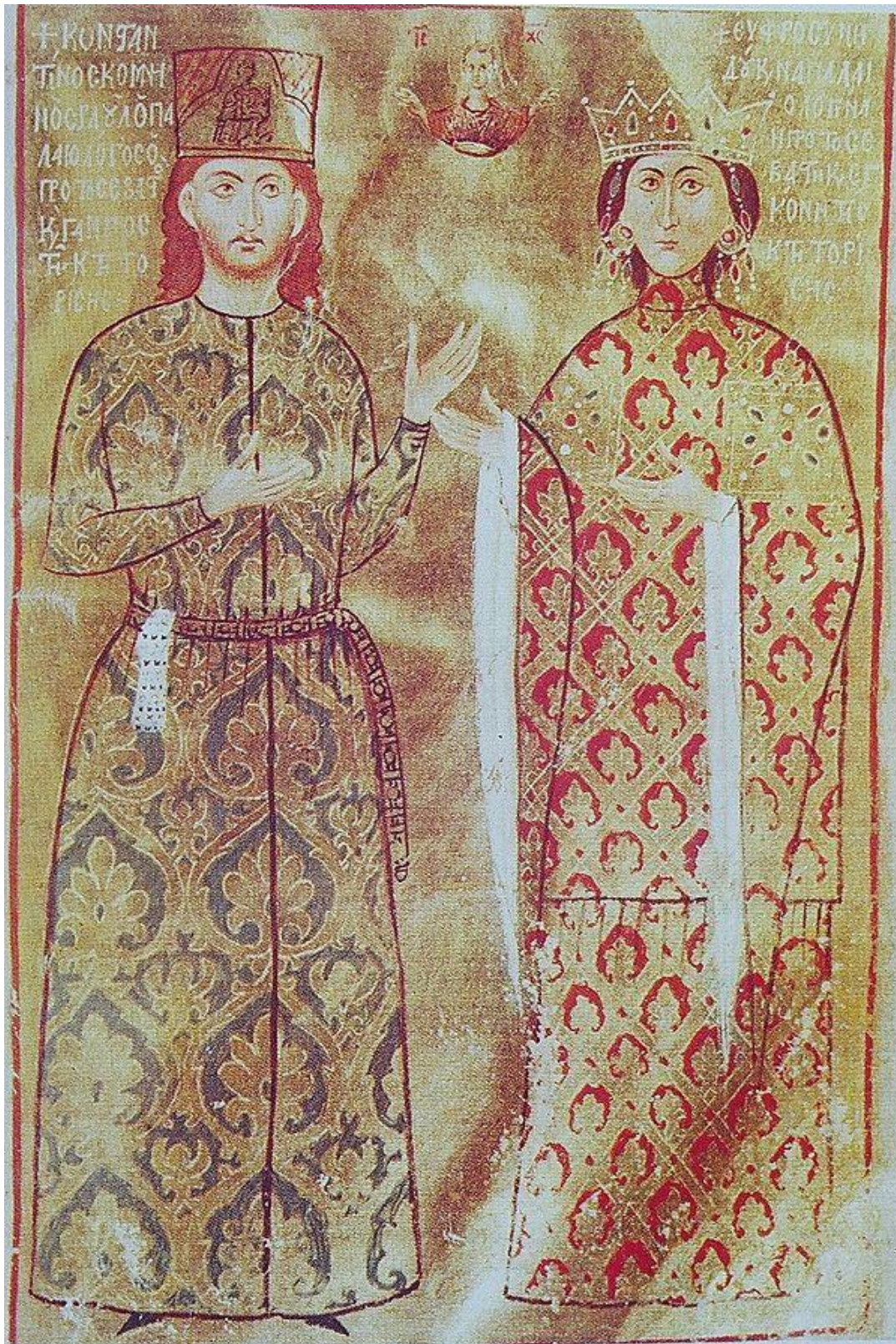
Fig. 6.2. Portrait, the *protosebastos* Constantine Komnenos Raoul Palaiologos with his wife Euphrosyne Doukaina Palaiologina, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, f.6r, c.1335. Accessed online (23/10/2020): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:6ConstantineandEuphrosyne.JPG.

Fig. 6.3. Portrait of Michael Komnenos Tornikes Asanes Palaiologos and Eirene Komnene Kantakouzene Asanina, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College, Ms. gr. 35, f.9v, c.1335. After Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, fig. 151.

Fig. 6.4. Portrait of Manuel II Palaiologos, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris Supplément, gr. 309, f.7, c.1407. Accessed online (19/10/2021):
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manuel_II_Palaiologos_(cropped).jpg (photo by Pitchka, CC BY-SA 4.0).

Fig. 6.5. Icon of St Nicholas, late 12th to early 13th century. After Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 51.

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Fig. 6.6. Wedding at Cana, Iviron cod. 5, fol. 363r.b, 13th century. After S. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol. 2, *Monasteries of Iveron, St. Pantaleimon, Esphigmenou, and Chilandari*, fig. 38.

Fig. 6.7. Gold ring with clasped hands, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 5th century. Gift in memory of Robert E. and Julia K. Hecht, 63.1555. After I. Kalavrezou, ed., *Byzantine Women and Their World* (New Haven and London, 2003), cat. no. 122.

Fig. 6.8. Saint Nicholas led to school by his father, St Catherine monastery, Sinai, late 12th to early 13th century. After Manafis, *Treasures*, fig. 51.

Fig. 6.9. Virgin caressed by her parents, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (23/10/2020):
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chora_Church,_Istanbul,_Virgin_caressed_by_her_parents.jpg.

Fig. 6.10. Dormition, Chora church, Istanbul, 14th century. Accessed online (23/10/2020): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chora_Church#/media/File:Istanbul_Kariye_museum_Naos_Dormition_june_2019_2393.jpg.

Fig. 6.11. Death of a monk, Dionysiou cod. 65, fol. 11v, 12th century. After S. M. Pelekanidis et al., *Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol. 1, *The Protaton and the Monasteries of Dionisysou, Koutloumousiou, Xeropotamou and Gregoriou* (Athens, 1974), fig. 121.

Fig. 6.12. Ivan Asen on his deathbed, cod. Vat. Slavo 2, fol. 2r, 1344-1345. Accessed online (24/10/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/02-manasses-chronicle.jpg.

Fig. 6.13. Threnos, St Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia, 13th century. Accessed online (06/10/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/97/Paintings_in_the_Church_of_the_Theotokos_Peribleptos_of_Ohrid_0428.jpg.

Fig. 6.14. Threnos, detail, St Clement, Ohrid, Maceodnia, 13th century. Accessed online (06/10/2020): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e2/Paintings_in_the_Church_of_the_Theotokos_Peribleptos_of_Ohrid_0117.jpg.

Fig. 6.15. Donor portrait of Eirene and her daughters, Karsi Kilise, Gülşehir, Cappadocia, 13th century (own photo).

Fig. 6.16. West wall including Last Judgement, Karsi Kilise, Gülşehir, Cappadocia, 13th century (own photo).