SPIRITUAL KINSHIP

IN MIDDLE AND LATE BYZANTINE HAGIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual Kinship in Middle and Late Byzantine Hagiographic Sources

The thesis investigates the concept of spiritual kinship through middle and late Byzantine hagiographic sources. It groups the focus of study into two parts: the communal and the personal. In order to grasp the communal spiritual kinship, monastic foundation documents are used. First of all, the manner in which the spiritual family is envisaged is researched and, secondly, the transformation of the roles within the milieu of spiritual kinship along with the political and economic changes are touched upon. In the second part, spiritual kinship is investigated in a more bidirectional context through saints' lives from the late Byzantine period. The interaction between the socio-political transformations and the construction of spiritual kinship in the literary context is researched. The two complementary approaches aim to reveal how the members of Byzantine society were connected to one another through shared religious affinities in a family-like structure.

ÖZET

Orta ve Geç Dönem Bizans Hagiografilerinde Dini Akrabalık Kavramı

Bu tez, Bizans İmparatorluğu'nda dini akrabalık kavramını orta ve geç dönem hagiografi kaynakları üzerinden incelemektedir. Araştırmanın odağı iki bölüme ayrılmaktadır: toplumsal ve kişisel. Toplumsal dini akrabalığı anlamak için manastır vakıf belgeleri kullanılmaktadır. Öncelikle dini ailenin tasavvur ediliş biçimleri araştırılmış, ikinci olarak siyasi ve ekonomik değişimlerle birlikte dini akrabalıktaki rollerin dönüşümüne değinilmiştir. İkinci bölümde ise, Geç Bizans dönemine ait aziz yaşamları üzerinden dini akrabalık daha kişisel bir bağlamda incelenmiştir. Sosyo-politik dönüşümler ile dini akrabalığın tasavvuru arasındaki etkileşim, edebi bağlamda araştırılmaktadır. Birbirini tamamlayıcı bu iki yaklaşım, Bizans toplumunun aile yapısına benzer bir yapı içinde paylaşılan dini yakınlıklar yoluyla birbirleriyle ilişkilenme şekillerini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims, methodology, and historical context

The increasing significance of the family and lineage from the tenth century onwards in Byzantium is evident in countless primary sources from legal documents to ecclesiastical treatises to hagiographical literature. This rise transformed the ways of administration, the formation of social bonds and perception of the ingroups/outgroups in the society. As Nathan Leidholm has argued, certain lineages were so influential in the Byzantine court that surnames were treated as a title of nobility.[1] The emphasis on kinship ties and surnames, indeed, permeated the literary works. Byzantine authors not only claimed a glorious lineage for their protagonists, but they also strived to invent certain historical connections which enhanced the lineage of the character. Some important personages' lineages were linked with mythical or biblical figures and tried to be recreated in a more prestigious way.

The middle and late Byzantine periods were not solely popular with the rearrangement of the concept of family but also the interchange between the political and monastic milieus was more prominent than ever. According to Sophie Métivier, the association of the aristocracy with the monastic domains was common.[2] The convergence between the two spheres (aristocratic and monastic) was bidirectional. The saints commenced to play crucial roles in the political area. As it has been shown by several scholars, the saints became more politicized in comparison to the

[1]Leidholm, N. (2019). *Elite Byzantine Kinship, ca. 950-1204: Blood, Reputation, and the Genos*.
[2]Métivier, S. (2019). *Aristocratie et Sainteté à Byzance (VIIIe-XIe Siècle).*

earlier periods.[3] Two factors, the increase of the family's significance and the normalization of the interaction between the saint-like figures and the imperial family, led to the flourishing of terms on spiritual kinship.

The concept of spiritual kinship, of course, is not limited to Byzantine culture, yet the aforementioned circumstances enabled a visible influence of fictive kinship in the Byzantine literature. In many areas of Byzantine literature (from hagiographic sources to epistolographic ones) one can encounter the construction of fictive kinships. Hence, it was possible to construct and consolidate spiritual kinship with the tools of literary tactics.

The definition of fictive kinship can be tricky, yet the contexts in which it occurs can be traced. Certain characteristics are common in these categories: the kinship ties are constructed through the overlapping interests or worldviews rather than the biological one. Furthermore, since they are more intricate to justify compared to biological kinship, the help of the literary sources is almost a necessity due to the fact that the kinship must be manifested in order to get the recognition of the society. It was important to be remembered: When an individual from the imperial court was associated with a certain saint-like figure, she or he benefitted from this connection in many contexts. Same goes with a relationship between the saint and his disciple; the spiritual kinship between the two consolidated their prestige in the religious area. Therefore, this need of recognition and justification leads to the fabrication of evidence of spiritual kinship's construction in Byzantine literature.

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[3] For more information, see: Hackel, S, *The Byzantine saint*, especially the chapter "The Saint and Society".

My thesis first examines the sociological construction of spiritual kinship in different contexts, and secondly, it revolves around the literary constructions of spiritual kinship in the sources of the middle and late Byzantine periods. Throughout my investigation, I aim to analyze major trends on the conception of spiritual kinship in the middle and late Byzantine periods, during which relatively frequent transformations such as civil uprisings, the hesychast movement, the rising dominance of certain lineages, and "the politization of the saints"[4] emerged. In my research on the subject, I was able to detect certain influences in this fluctuant period which holds promise in understanding the changing perceptions on spiritual kinship. For instance, while increasing connection between the aristocracy and saints led to a construction of spiritual kinship in a way that aimed to create a social reconsolidation of the position, in the solely monastic milieus one can see new *topoi* in the literary field due to hesychasm. Therefore, the broader question will be: "How was the literary construction of spiritual kinship transformed in the late Byzantine period in the light of major social, political, and religious shifts?" In the search of questions, I will investigate the social position's influence in the construction of spiritual kinship. Furthermore, the employment of emotions in a sociological way will be one of my focuses. "Are there any ways to grasp a trend in the emotions used in describing or addressing spiritual kinship based on the position of the addressed and addresser, and if there are, how does it differ from the earlier periods and different classes?" will be another crucial question that I will be asking.

In order to achieve these, I will use hagiographic sources. Hagiographic sources bear precious examples to understand how an individual imagines the

[4] For more information, see: Harvey, "Politization of the Byzantine Saint"; Morris, "The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century; Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century"; Macrides "Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period"; Patlagean, "Sainteté et Pouvoir".

spiritual relationship with one's spiritual father. For instance, in the *Life of Maximos the Hutburner* by Niphon (a *vita* from the fourteenth century), the position of the author holds an importance. He is a disciple of the saint, and in this work, he does not only convey the life of the saint but also talks about how he is associated to him. Some descriptions of their relationship which are related to the social contexts of the era told by the author reveal the social dynamics of spiritual kinship in the literature.

Another example is from the life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki, a *vita* written in the ninth century, which provides the rare opportunity of investigating the intertwinement of two kinship forms: spiritual and biological. In the *vita*, the saint stays in the same convent with her daughter and the reader encounters the struggle between the two spheres since those who chose the monastic path must repeal the duties of the biological family. The expression of this struggle can be seen in the literary context.

Indeed, dealing with hagiographical sources may pose certain issues in the historiographical approach. There are many factors which detrimentally affect the authenticity of what has been written. Since religious subjects are at stake, certain rhetorical and thematic factors were employed in order to convince and move the reader. Nevertheless, this study is not after the events that "really" took place. I aim to inspect the mentality of the authors. In other words, the events which were seen influential by the author in a way that it may move the reader and conform to the norms of the society of the period hold the vital importance for my work.

Therefore, as a methodology, I will investigate certain sociological concepts directly linked to the kinship relations and how they were transformed throughout the centuries. Words like "father," "brother" or "sister" are frequently encountered in the religious contexts. The meanings attributed to the words not only borrowed from the

Byzantine family life, but also certain mechanisms that are proving the kinship ties are prevalent in the religious context. For instance, the concept of likelihood (both in terms of physical and characteristic) among the members of the same family can be seen in the construction of spiritual kinship. Hence, my analysis will focus on the sociological construction of the family-related terms and concepts in the literary sources, and I will compare and contrast the employment of the same terms, *topoi* or concepts between the earlier sources and late sources, and between the descriptions of biological kinship ties and spiritual kinship ties.

1.2 Chapter plans

Modern scholarship on the Byzantine family has been steadily advancing during the last couple of decades. Of course, there have been prior investigations on the classical family, especially from the 90's.[5] Not only the contemporary scholars have been meddling with the position of the family in Byzantine society, but also the Byzantines themselves, especially the imperial and ecclesiastical authorities tried to define the family in the society. The family was of vital importance in regulating the society due to the fact that it touched upon several issues in the legal, ecclesiastical, and traditional spheres. The extents of inheritance of both the physical[6] (such as the properties) and abstract[7] (such as an aristocratic surname, especially after the middle Byzantine era) values were tried to be determined in the canons and the disputes were attempted to be solved accordingly. In the canonical primary sources, which

[5] Some famous works are Pomeroy, *Families in Classical and Hellenistic Greece. Representations and Realities;* Parkin, *Demography and Roman Society;* Saller, '*Patria Potestas* and the Stereotype of the Roman Family'; Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family;* Treggiari, *Roman Marriage.*

[6] For further reading see: Laiou, "Family Structure and Transmission of Property"; Laiou, *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium.*

[7] Cheynet, "Aristocratie et héritage (XI-XIIIe siècle)".

span from the laws to religious canons, a subtle distinction between biological and "fictive" relationship has been made. Nevertheless, the definitions of biological kinship have been touched upon more frequently than the latter by the modern scholars due the plethora of the primary sources and more tangible definition made by the Byzantines themselves.

From the 1990's onwards, thanks to the precious works of Ruth Macrides[8], Angeliki E. Laiou[9], Claudia Rapp[10], Evelyne Patlegean[11] and many others, there have been multiple significant studies on the "fictive" part of the study. Macrides and Patlegean have focused on the issue of adoption and God parenthood, while Laiou investigated the issue in the legal dimension and in the marriage relationship. Rapp delved into another subtype of the "fictive" relationship which is *brothermaking*. The investigations by these prominent scholars have revolved around the structural changes that have been disseminated throughout the periods. This structural analysis indubitably constructed a solid ground for family studies of the Byzantine Society. Furthermore, Rapp has concentrated on the *brothermaking* in the late antique period with substantial case studies. Nevertheless, there are multiple aspects to unveil the operation of the "spiritual" fictive kinship in the middle and late Byzantine periods which provides a fertile ground for understanding the social dynamics of the kinship ties along with the transformation of the Byzantine culture.

The thesis will, thus, focus on the construction of spiritual kinship in the middle and late Byzantine periods. The study will mainly be divided into three parts:

[8] Macrides, "The byzantine godfather"; Macrides, "Kinship by arrangement"; Macrides, "Dynastic marriages and political kinship"; Macrides, "Substitute parents and their children in Byzantium"
[9] Laiou, *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium*; Laiou, *Family Structure and Transmission of Property*.
[10] Rapp, "Ritual Brotherhood in Byzantium"; Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*.
[11] Patlagean, "Christianisation et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance"; Patlegean, *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance: IVe- Xie siècle.*

transition to the monastic communities, sociopolitical aspects of the construction of spiritual kinship in the monastic communities, and finally the envisagement of personal spiritual kinship relationships by the authors of middle and late Byzantine *vitae*. Throughout the thesis, hagiographies (mostly saints' lives but not exclusively), *typika* and monastic foundation rules will be used as the main sources.

In the present introductory chapter, I will briefly discuss the classical roots of the Byzantine family. As it is at stake in almost every area of Byzantine studies, the dialectical relationship between the Greek/Roman past and the Christian one is evident in the study of family. "Which features have been kept from the pre-Christian period?", "Which characteristics of familial relationship have been altered?" and "Which were obliterated?" will be investigated in this part. This part of the investigation aims not only to detect the transformations throughout the ages, but also to underline certain recurring themes borrowed from the non-Christian past that remained in existence even in the time when the Byzantine Empire was at the brink of fall. Then, the shift of the perception of family during the Christianization period will be touched upon. And finally, the modern scholarship will be put under the light and the position of this thesis in the contemporary literature will be situated.

In the second chapter, social aspects of the traditional family and the spiritual family will be juxtaposed by using the *vitae* that were written in the middle and late Byzantine periods. The analysis of the part will be conducted through the theme of "transition to monastic life," in other words, the reaction of the protagonists to their family during the transition to monastic life, and biological family's reaction to their children will be analyzed. Finally, a gender-based approach will be applied in order to demonstrate the differences in the depiction of future saints resulting from the gender norms. This chapter aims to unveil the famous *topos* of "abandonment of

family" that was applied to those who chose the Christian ascetic life. Through the interaction with the family and the protagonist certain themes which will be useful in the following chapters of the thesis will be highlighted.

Chapter three will revolve around the question of the construction of spiritual kinship in the monastic communities. The establishment of certain rules, regulations, and operations of daily life in the monastic communities that have been dictated by top-down mechanisms will be questioned. Monastic foundation documents (*typika*) will hold a crucial place in understanding the regulation of daily life in the monasteries. Throughout the chapter, monasteries will be classified predominantly based on their socio-political position. This position is affected by certain factors such as whether it is an "elite" monastery or its involvement to the central authority.

The fourth and final chapter will mostly dwell on the construction of spiritual kinship in the hagiographic sources which are extracted from case studies, and they will be investigated through a sociological and linguistic approach. The usage of language by the author and the ingroup mechanisms that were borrowed from the traditional family roles will form the major points of discussion. Furthermore, the interaction between spiritual kinship and the sociopolitical atmosphere of late Byzantium will be investigated.

1.3 Modern Byzantine scholarship and spiritual kinship

To comprehend the fictive family, it is vital to dwell upon the "real" family. Thus, let us begin with the description of the Byzantine family. "What constitutes the Byzantine family?" This question is always at stake for those who study the subject. Multiple terms have been used in order to designate the family in the sources. The term "*genos"* is one of the more common ones and modern scholars have strived to

contextualize the word. At certain points it was considered to be the Byzantine counterpart of the "western European style" lineage or clan.[12] However, this view has been undermined due to its instability in the groups to which it referred. It capsulated not only clan but also social groups, and at the extreme cases it referred to the whole nation. Although the modern equivalent of family (especially the nuclear one) is non-existent in the Byzantine society, *genos* was used frequently in the legal texts when familial ties are mentioned. Therefore, a more inclusive description for *genos* was needed and was introduced by Leidholm:

> …the *genos* was a strictly consanguineous kin group (or at least imagined as such), whose members were this linked through bonds of shared descent and whose membership was limited to the seventh degree of consanguinity, at least in issues of legal marriage. It was largely immune to change beyond the reproductive act, and adults maintained their identities as members of their natal gene, even after marriage.[13]

In the claim of being a *genos'* member, first of all, biological ties are vital. Secondly, its expansion was provided by an act realized under legal borders: marriage. Finally, its immunity to any act rather than reproductive puts a crucial limit in understanding the "real" family. It might be too simplistic to argue that fictive kinship exclusively outside of this definition since there could be many inconsistent areas. Yet, these conditions may give certain clues on the contexts in which fictive kinship has occurred.

In my conceptualization, I will divide the notion of kinship first into two categories: real and fictive. The fictive one has been examined frequently by the Byzantinists. With the assistance of the scholars' analysis on the issue, the "fictive" category can be divided into two: secular and spiritual. As it will be mentioned below, the secular covers examples such as godparenthood and adoption, whereas

[12]Leidholm, *Byzantine Kinship, ca. 950-1204: Blood, Reputation, and the Genos*, 12.
[13]Leidholm, *Byzantine Kinship, ca. 950-1204: Blood, Reputation, and the Genos*, 13.

spiritual deals with the relationships that emerged in the religious context. Another crucial difference between the two subcategories is their position in reference to the traditional secular families. While secular fictive kinship replaces the conventional parental roles, the spiritual one reinvents it in the religious context.[14] In other words, changes in the Byzantine family reflect upon spiritual kinship but with some alterations made by the religious norms of the era. On the other hand, secular fictive relationship, such as godparenthood or adoptive parenthood, directly replaces the fathers'/mothers' role and maintains the intrafamilial role based on gender.

Regarding that, there are still certain major issues on the understanding of the very basics of the Byzantine family, spiritual kinship might pose extreme challenges for the academia. The intact relationship between the biological family and spiritual kinship has been demonstrated by Rapp before. For instance, she asserts that the role in the ritual brotherhood imitates the model of biological relations in a way.[15] Although there are no strict borders on what constitutes the family, certain concepts based on the roles (such as fatherhood, sibling relationships etc.) and the operation of these rather particular roles influence spiritual kinship. Rapp, in her book *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium,* searched for tangible conditions which introduce that there are some initiation periods in order to have access to this spiritual relationship such as oaths, acts as drinking blood or having received education from the same teacher.[16] Indeed, it is hard to detect any form of spiritual kinship, yet it is easier to look for what the relationship requires from the new member which is one of the crucial distinctions that can be made from biological kinship.

[14] Macrides, "Kinship by Arrangement: The Case of Adoption," 47.
[15] Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium.*
[16] Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium.*

Claudia Rapp also underlines the importance of terms belonging to friendship in the context of fictive kinship. It requires complex analysis to differentiate it from the familial context. Thus, this leads to the question, "What is peculiar to spiritual kinship exclusively, how can one distinguish it from the friendship?" "Is it true that certain mechanisms in the concept of friendship resemble the dynamics of spiritual kinship?" For instance, common affinities can make two individuals friends or members of the same religious community. Even in the Christian culture, the metaphors of friendship and of kinship are intertwined in a way that it is difficult to distinguish them from one another. Rapp states, "Friends enjoyed the same privileges and obligations as members of the family. "Made brothers" did, too. Conviviality, sharing of food and drink, visits to each other's houses, the exchange of gifts and letters, and the addition of further kinship relations through marriage or godparenthood all played their role." [17] Therefore, the ambiguous separation between the friend and fictive kin is evident in many cases. Moreover, Konstan argues that, in the fourth century there has been an association of friendship with pagan identity, thus Christian vocabulary tried to adopt the words that have connections to kinship, which made the story more complex.[18] Christianly love resembles a belonging to the same family; thus words like "brother" and "father" were much more common rather than the concepts of *amicitial* or *philia*.[19] Therefore, interpretation of the affinity in a more familial context would be more accurate rather than its connotation to concepts which are connected to friendliness.

When an author mentions an individual as a brother, it is impossible to know whether they are involved in a spiritual kinship, friendship or biological kins without

[17] Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium,* 39.
[18] Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, 158.
[19] Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, 158.

any further context. Thus, it is essential to point out the major difference between friendship and kindship. An authority or a hierarchical regulation is the factor that differentiates friends from the spiritual relatives. For instance, two "brothers" from a same monastic community are hierarchically in the same dimension; however, their responsibility towards one another is regulated by an upper mechanism which is embodied in the role of the *superior* (father) in the monastery., its major difference from friendship is set by the controlling of the responsibilities by the religious norms and by those who are complying to these norms. As it was mentioned before, second major difference is the assignment of the family-like roles in the community. Regardless of the type of kinship, whether it is communal or reciprocal (conducted in a smaller groups), the adaptation of forms derived from the hierarchical relations within the Byzantine family is present.

Ruth Macrides directs her question on the strategies and motives of choosing fictive kinship.[20] Two prominent types of fictive kinship are the adoptive kinship and godparenthood. One of the major differences from spiritual kinship are that they are referred to by the law and their legal positions guarantee certain privileges to the subjects unlike spiritual kinship. Furthermore, an important aspect is that conventional family stereotypes play a more significant role in the case of adoption: "Adoptive parents, together with blood kin, friends, and godparents, acted as complements to or substitutes for natural parents, undertaking the whole, or part, of the range of parental obligations."[21] Therefore, in contrast to spiritual kinship, which imitates the aspects of biological family, adoptive parenthood operates as an extension of the family. In some cases, it replaces biological parents, and the god parents or adoptive parents have an influence on the child. A final aspect touched

[20] Macrides, "Kinship by Arrangement: The Case of Adoption," 109-118.
[21] Macrides, "Kinship by Arrangement: The Case of Adoption," 118.

upon by Macrides is the instrumental usage of adoptive parenthood for networking. Such as marriage, the adoption mediates the connection of two families in a socially beneficial way.

Patlagean focuses on the more secular part of fictive kinship in her work as well.[22] She divides the secular part of fictive kinship into three: the continuation of the classical Roman adoption in the Christian context, kinship through baptism, and voluntary brotherhood (*la fraternité volontaire*).[23] What comes to the fore in her investigation is the preservation of the secular kinship by the laws. For instance, there are legal obstacles against a marriage between those who are affiliated with such a bond. Furthermore, Patlegean researches the position of fictive kinship in the Byzantine society. [24] To achieve that, she applies to middle Byzantine period that exhibits precious cases in which fictive kinship was well documented. Yet, there are certain linguistic caveats that should be taken into consideration: « Le terme d'*υἱοθεσία* qui désigne l'adoption est en effet étendu à la filiation baptismale dès l'époque patristique. En revanche, pères et fils adoptifs sont dits « spirituel » dans les rituels, comme dans le formulaire chypriote du XIIIe siècle… »[25] Hence, there are various linguistic « grey » areas in which secular and spiritual parenthood intermingle with one another. In order to deepen the investigation on spiritual kinship, it is necessary to match the epistemology with the vocabulary. As it was demonstrated by the former scholars, the legal position of the secular type of kinship is mentioned in emphasis and its regulation through the imperial system is evident unlike spiritual kinship which takes place in the monasteries.

[22] Patlagean, 'Christianisation et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance,' 625-36.
[23] Patlagean, 'Christianisation et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance,' 626.
[24] Patlagean, 'Christianisation et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance,' 630.
[25] Patlagean, 'Christianisation et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance,' 630.

The sources, of course, are not sufficient to describe spiritual kinship in the monastic contexts. The *typika* or the *vitae* reveal the ways in which spiritual kinship is envisaged. Nevertheless, in the practical sense there are many problematic aspects of the issue. Dirk Krausmüller argues that the monastic institutions do not operate as a substitute of a conventional Byzantine family.[26] Although, one can extract certain regulations about the organization of the relationship within the monastery and some references resembling the roles of family actors in the *typika,* as Krausmüller argues, the practicality is far different from what had been suggested by the normative Christological doctrines on the operation of spiritual kinship. Still, this thesis focuses on the manners in which spiritual kinship is envisaged in the sources and its connection with the concepts of the conventional family. Furthermore, Krausmüller claims that the trends in the spiritual kinship construction are highly influenced by the transformations in the Byzantine family. [27]

Briefly, the prominent scholars who worked on the Byzantine family mostly concentrated on secular fictive kinship, which was defined precisely by the laws. This thesis will focus on the religious type.

[26] Krausmüller, "Byzantine Monastic Communities: Alternative Families?," 361.
[27] Krausmüller, "Byzantine Monastic Communities: Alternative Families?" 361.

1.4 Notion of spiritual kinship and sociological explanations

The sociology of family has been in a transformation since the early 2000's.[28] One of the most significant transformations has occurred in the shift on perspective from "being a family" to "doing a family" in the words of Morgan.[29] To elaborate, the notion of "doing a family" is more than a taken-for-granted state of biological result, but rather the members have to perform and display the fact that they belong a group. Perhaps, when we are talking about the pre-modern conventional families this might be a far-fetched opinion, yet the fictive family can be explained with the concept of "doing a family." In the context of spiritual kinship, the common affinities by the spiritual subgroups also shape the ways in which the "doing a family" phenomenon work. A brief excerpt from Durkheim may unveil the context in which spiritual kinship functions as a part of fictive kinship. "… the collective ideal that religion expresses, is far from being due to some vague capacity innate to the individual; rather, it is in the school of collective life that the individual has learned to form ideals. It is by assimilating the ideals worked out by society that the individual is able to conceive of the ideal."[30] Durkheim asserts the agglutinative role of religion in the communes which were driven by religious motives. Rather than being encapsulated in the individuals, religious views and sharing these views in a collective context are fabricated in the communes. Individual's aims are shaped by the ways in which he or she is exposed to the ideas of religious communal living. These ideas are conveyed through cultural experiences and printed medias. In that point, hagiographies hold a

[28] For further reading see: Becker, A treatise of family; Parsons, Talcot, *Family, socialization and interaction process*.

[29] Dermott & Seymour, *Displaying families: A new concept for the sociology of family life*

[30] Durkheim, E. (1912). *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* New York, NY: The Free Press, 425.

vital position in depicting the ascetic life and reproducing the sociological aspects of religion.

Unlike the biological familial relationships, spiritual kinship requires a continuous proof of the bond created among the members. In Byzantine society, Christianity governs the imagery and norms that have been reaffirmed by the performativity of the members of spiritual kinship. For instance, every aspect of daily life monasticism, in a way, requires a performance through which the dedication of the members of a spiritual community is affirmed. The communal refectory hours, the simultaneous bodily rhythms (sleeping cycles, working hours etc.) and collective praying are all part of the spectacle of a society which is tied together through spiritual kinhood. All these performances, in the theory of sociology of family, fall within the analysis of "doing a family." This analysis enables us to investigate the differences throughout the time and geographies in the Byzantine spiritual kinship. For instance, this aspect unveils the questions such as "How the performances of being a family changed in parallel with the shift of religious and social conditions of Byzantium?"

A final important aspect of fictive kinship is the requirement of proof of dedication which is unlike the conventional families. This proof may be a well-defined oath or a series of acts which affirm that the members are part of this spiritual kinship.

Throughout the thesis, I will separate spiritual kinship into two: communal and reciprocal relationships. The monastic communities can be classified as the former one, and the small groups, such as father-son relationship in the solitary practice, fall into the reciprocal category. The cenobitic communities are deeply rooted in Byzantine society from the late antique period onwards. It is, briefly, a

spiritual kinship emerged under the roof a religious institution and regulated by certain top-down mechanisms including the local rules of the monastery or ecclesiastical hierarchies depending on the statute of the monastery. The second one is the relationship mostly seen in the solitary practices which is also around the early Byzantine period, yet the focus on this thesis will be from the middle and late period, and which can be named as Hesychastic practices.

1.5 Classical roots of the Byzantine family and socially constructed kinship in the ancient Greek period

Certain aspects from the classical past have been conserved in the Byzantine family throughout its life and thus influenced spiritual kinship profoundly. In this part, only the aspects that have contributed directly to the construction will be touched upon. First and foremost, patriarchal character of society permeated to the Byzantine family.[31] The division of roles in the family was based on the foregrounding of the masculine identity. That is to say, male members of the family were more proactive in the making of the rules and reflexing the societal norms into the household. Not only did they take control of the operation of the family, but also there are many cases in which the primary male member of the family assigned roles to the children and decided for them whom to marry.[32] Whereas, female members of the family were raised as a future domestic "manager" which was a prevalent concept from the classical period to the medieval Byzantine era. In the work of Psellos, the moderate manner in which the girls of the family were brought up is evident according to

[31] Harlow, M. & Parkin, T. (2013). Looking for the Family: The Greek and Roman Background. In Brubaker L., Tougher, S. (Eds.), *Approaches to the Byzantine Family* (pp.1-20). Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 3.

[32] Some examples can be found in Hillner, J. (2013). Family Violence: Punishment and Abuse in the Late Roman Household. In Brubaker L., Tougher, S. (Eds.), *Approaches to the Byzantine Family* (pp.21-46). Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Kaldellis.[33] The way in which the females are brought up is pertinent to the subject of the thesis since the concept of moderacy in the education of the women leads to a discrepancy in their involvement of religious kinship. The incompatibility of the roles of being a dependent part of the secular household and being a member of a spiritual kinship leads to issues revolving around the perception of women in fictive relationships as it will be shown in the following chapters.

Although these findings may not surprise the audience, it is useful to note that the similar conjuncture is created by the members who are esteemed by the patriarchal system both in the monastic contexts and in a more personal context (such as mentor-disciple relationships). As it will be touched upon in the following pages, an unquestionable obedience and full compliance to the male superior are underlined in the spiritual kinship ties even at the risk of transgressing the religious codes.

A second important phenomenon that was inherited from the classical period was the dynamic bordering of the Greek *oikos* and Roman *domus*. As it was pointed out by multiple scholars[34], it is very difficult to pin down the definition of family in the Byzantine society as it was in the classical period. There is not any definition of family in the Byzantine Empire which is overlapping with the modern "family". Although this has been pointed out as a drawback, or an ambiguity in multiple arguments, certain scholars underlined the fact that it is a complex structure which transforms and adapts over time regarding the social context: "It has recently been emphasized, however, that the (Athenian) *oikos* was not a static unit, but often a complex entity, which included various types of kinsmen (grandparents, aunts, etc.) and also non-kinsmen (slaves, friends, concubines, etc.) and owned more than one

[33] Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Father and Daughters*: *The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos.* 20.
[34] For more information see Métraux, « Ancient Housing: "Oikos" and "Domus" in Greece and Rome » ; Acampora, « Oikos and Domus: On constructive co-habitation with other creatures » ; O'Rourke, « Oikos – Domus – Household ».

house."[35] Therefore, unstable borders within the familial milieu which permit the practice of conviviality with different groups and the absence of a firm concept of nuclear family facilitated the construction of fictitious kinship in the Byzantine period. To wrap up, the two features that were inherited from the classical tradition played a vital role in the operation of kinship relations even in the later periods.

1.6 Transformation of the perception on the family after Christianization

With the adoption of Christianity in the late antique period, the rules of the household were preserved in many aspects. Besides this preservation, there were certain alterations in the notion of marriage and family emerged around the Christological teachings. The patriarchal constitution of the domestic structure was preserved with a few novelties. There was one more rule for the women, another obligation in another words: Conveyance of the religious education to the younger members of the family. Whereas the modesty preserved its importance even in the religious education. The mother of the family is obliged to inform the children about the religion without exceeding the cultural norms. Thus, there is a limit of religious education and religious devotion which violates the rules supporting the maintenance of the household. As Kaldellis argued, girls who refused to marry and start a family for the sake of pious devotion were commonly contradicted by their parents which only led to more oppression among the household.[36] Thus, the stress on the moderacy by the Christological doctrines applies to the practice of religion itself. This moderacy was also advised by the ecclesiastical authorities. Even for the individuals who decided to devote their lives into asceticism, choosing the solitary

[35] Trümper, *Space and Social Relationships in the Greek Oikos of the Classical and Hellenistic Periods*, 33.
[36] Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Father and Daughters*: *The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos,* 23.

practices before attending to the cenobitic monasticism was discouraged by the *Seventh Council of Toledo.*[37] Therefore, the emphasis on the adaptation to the communal life, both in the households and religious communities, was proliferated and supported by the religious authorities. Eventually, women of the household (mostly those who are in the role of mother) were envisaged as one of the essential parts of the family which sustain the physical life of the house and conveyance of the "moderate" religious education especially to the girls. First aspect enhanced with Christianization was the notion of moderate religious education in the household.

Second aspect which started to be more influential with Christianity in the construction of spiritual kinship was the father figure. In early Christianity the position of Jesus as a son of God and his father were discussed in the sources, councils and in several other evidence.[38] Indeed, when it is dwelt upon the issue of religious kinship, themes that have been popular among the hagiographies throughout the centuries merit an attention. The figure of father is one of those themes which played a crucial role in the conception of familial roles and spiritual kinship.

Vasileiou argues that there is a decrease in the authority of father during the Christianization and its influence on the operation of family.[39] The decrease was at stake mostly in the father's control over his son which was regulated by the church. The late antique Roman family and household were mostly directed by the father and the laws of property and inheritance were working in along with the power of the

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[37] Davis, The *first seven ecumenical councils (325-787): Their history and theology*.

[38] Matthew 14:33, Matthew 16:16, Matthew 27:54, Mark 1:1, Mark 15:39, John 1:49, John 11:27, John 20:31, Acts 8:37, Acts 9:20, Romans 1:4, 2 Corinthians.

[39] Vasileiou , The Death of the Father in Late Antique Christian Literature. 75.

father.[40] Although economically the father-oriented structure of Roman family preserved itself in the Byzantine era, the narrative was highly shifted, especially in the religious sources. The notion of "authority of father over the son" was decreased, nevertheless, that did not lead to the disappearance of the significance of the father in the hagiographies. As it has been pointed out by Vasileiou, the role of the fathers, despite the lack of mention, in the lives of important saintly figures (such as the Cappadocian father), the death of a father, its absence, was reflected as a relief.[41] Eventually, "the fatherless orphans gained to choose a mode of life beyond tradition and convention."[42] The freeing aspects of absence of fatherly figure can be linked to the freeing from the burdens of "secular" family and commencement of the new spiritual family.[43] In the bible there are multiple references to the abandonment of the family for the sake of a monastic path.[44] Therefore, with the Christological doctrines, the biological father was endowed with connotations such as worldly shackles, in other words, they posed an obstacle in the way of a monastic life. The dissapearance of the fathers in the early hagiographies' narratives does not directly point out that the role of father is undermined. On the contrary, it reemphasized the crucial role of spiritual fathers in the context of fictive kinship. This spiritual fatherhood also imitated the roles of the traditional fatherhood and readapted in a spiritual context as it will be shown in the following pages.

Therefore, moderate religious position of women in the household and the transformation of the role of the father in the Christian theology have, in a way, built

[40] Arjava, Antti. (1988). Paternal Power in Late Antiquity. In *JRS*, 88: 147–65.
[41] Vasileiou, "The Death of the Father in Late Antique Christian Literature".
[42] Vasileiou, "The Death of the Father in Late Antique Christian Literature," 86.
[43] Vasileiou, "The Death of the Father in Late Antique Christian Literature," 97.
[44] For instance see, Psalm 27:10.

the foundation of the contexts in which spiritual kinship ties have emerged in Byzantine society.

CHAPTER 2

BEFORE THE MONASTIC PERIOD OF AN INDIVIDUAL: ABANDONMENT OF WORLDLY FAMILY

2.1 Introduction

Monasticism was one of the options which every Byzantine woman could choose, especially with the flourishing monastic institutions from the ninth century onwards.[45] Yet, there were certain concessions that needed to be taken for choosing a monastic life. These concessions, which are sourced from women's inherent ties to the household, also reveal the struggle between the biological kinship and spiritual kinship. In order to distinguish the ways in which spiritual kinship mimics the traditional family context or the aspects that it omits from these role, investigation of the saint's life before the monastic journey is essential. I am of the opinion that women's *vitae* present a clearer picture regarding to that of male due to Byzantine women's roles in the household. Carolyn Connor succinctly summarizes the role of Byzantine women in her work:

> Overall, society placed great emphasis on marriage for women in order that they fulfill normative expectations; through marriage they remained in the domestic sphere in which they themselves were raised. In her home, a married woman's activities were primarily childbearing, the rearing and education of children, and the weaving of cloth for the family's use as well as running of the household.[46]

These "normative expectations" of the society built many obstacles in the way of women's abandonment of the family for an ascetic life. Regarding the societal norms, men were envisaged to be more mobile; for instance, in times of war, they could leave the family behind, and the household will be taken care of by the

[45] Connor, *Women of Byzantium,* 515.
[46] Connor, *Women of Byzantium,* 241.

mother. Not only women took the burden of taking care of the husband and her children, in certain instances they were planned to look after their elderly parents.[47]

The *topos* of family's dissent towards their child's choice of monastic life is prevalent in most of the *vitae.* Nevertheless, the narration of the women saints in the passage to the monastic life highly differs from that of the male. As it will be investigated in the following pages, the major difference revolves around the perception of women's association with the family in the society. They are depicted as individuals who had never stopped taking care for their family, and at the same time, who could follow the monastic life in their lives. Yet, when the male saints are observed, one can see a sharper disengagement from the family due to the difference between the societal norms that were employed to men and women.

In this chapter, I aim to investigate the life of the protagonist before the embarkment upon the monastic life in the *vitae* to reveal the mechanisms in the construction of the traditional family since it had crucial influences on the concept of "spiritual kinship". The focus of this chapter will be pious women, or saints who had chosen to follow the monastic way of life despite their roles in the household. Comparing and contrasting them with *vitae* of male saints will be instrumental in understanding the normative expectations derived from the society in the context of family, both spiritual and traditional.

Primary sources will be comprised of the *vitae* which span from the middle to the late Byzantine period (with few exceptions from the earlier examples). For the early period, the *Life of St. Matrona of Perge, Life of Saint Mary* and *Life of Saint Mary of Egypt* will be included. Although the origins of the sources are scattered around the vast geography of the early Byzantine Empire, they all provide a glimpse

of women's role in the family before monasticism. This part is not geographically and temporally specific in evaluating the sources, rather broader constructions of women in the hagiographic sources in relation to the familial spaces are aimed. From the middle and late Byzantine periods, *Life of St. Theoktiste of Lesbos*, *Life of St. Elisabeth the Wonderworker, Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina, Life of St. Theodora of Thessalonike, Life of St. Mary the Younger, Life of St. Thomais of Lesbos* and *Life of St. Theodora of Arta* will be presented. Rather than their biographical information, how they are described in the narratives will be reviewed. In the second part of the chapter, major differences with the lives of male saints will be compared and contrasted. Through the subchapter, I will try to distinguish common approaches of the authors who describe the protagonist's relationship with their biological family.

2.2 Pious women and discordance with the traditional household

The women were the key figure in maintaining the household. The role of housekeeping in every aspect was emphasized by the social norms, and it was institutionalized by the laws, or the decrees from the either ecclesiastical courts or imperial ones.[48] Any other preoccupation or dedication which undermines her role as a housewife is discouraged in multiple sources regardless of its genre. Thus, the being an "overly" pious woman and being a housewife do not match well in many aspects. In order to understand the challenges that was introduced with the disharmony of the two roles, *vitae* of female saints offer an in-depth perspective.

One of the most famous female saints of the middle Byzantine period, St. Marinos, is a transvestite monk who leaves the bodily world behind and joins a

[48] For more information on the position of the women in the laws, see: James, "Men, Women, Eunuchs: Gender, Sex, and Power"; Stolte, "The Social Function of the Law"; Delierneux, "The Literary Portrait of Byzantine Female Saints.

monastic community after her mother's death.[49] The theme of dispersal of family is a frequently encountered theme in the *vitae*, since it indicates the disconnection with the worldly family. A trigger which enables the subjects to leave the family life is the loss of a prominent member of the family. A second crucial change in her life was her father's decision of entering into a monastic community.[50] Through this, as a woman freed from her household obligations, a new path opens to her. The death or abdication of father to the monastic life facilitates the dedication to the worldly families. Even in the case of death of a mother, the father could bring up her daughter in a way that she can look after him at the old age. Daughter as a caretaker is a very common role in the society which can be proven by the hagiographies as well. For instance, in the life of St. Marinos, a man whose daughter was impregnated by a monk complains as such: "I had but a single daughter, who I hoped would support me in my old age, but look at what Marinos has done to her, he whom you call a Christian – he has deflowered her and she is pregnant."[51] Therefore, it is possible see that the priority of a daughter still revolves around getting involved with the family business. In that case, it goes so much further that the father can decide whether to marry or not.

Authority of the family is evident more than ever when there is a case of a woman who is after the monastic life. The expectance is higher when the family of the woman came from a high social background. Athanasia of Aegina was pressured into marrying a man and forming a family. [52] Although she consistently refused to marry due to her spiritual inclination, she was obliged to do so by his father. After the first husband passed away, she was, again, forcibly betrothed to another man who

[49] *Life of Saint Mary/Marinos*
[50] *Life of Saint Mary/Marinos,* 7
[51] *Life of Saint Mary/Marinos*, 9.
[52] *Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina*

was also eager to continue his life in the monastic way. The death of the husband or the father did not only sever the ties of biological family's obligation but also it was frequently used as an excuse in the narrative of hagiographies. It is commonly incorporated into the narrative in a strategic way as a phenomenon which frees the saint figure from the burdens of biological family. Apart from death, another way to inhibit the patriarchal authority was reflected with the monastic choice of the father or husband. Therefore, along with a husband who also chose the monastic path, Athanasia was able to pursue asceticism herself.[53] Although it was argued that marriage was not an obstacle for monastic life, in the *vitae* the suppression of familial roles through absence of a strong male role facilitated the realization of saintly living for the women.

Another contradiction with a housewife's lifestyle and a spiritual life is the overly philanthropic way of living for the female religious figures. For instance, Saint Athanasia spends all her time and worldly possessions for the poor:

> Not only did she provide them food but also clothed them with garments and comforted them with other gifts. On the Lord's day and on feast days, she lovingly assembled all the neighbor women in her presence and read them the Holy Scriptures, gradually opening their minds in a godly way directing them into a fear and desire of the Lord.[54]

Such a way of living usually is frowned upon by the male members of the family due to the fact that it both leads to the poor management of the items belonging to the household, but also, the woman is not able to perform her domestic obligations due to the excessive help to the Christian parish.

Indeed, it is not possible to know whether this was the practice of the saint, yet the juxtaposition with the dissonance between her family duties and Christianly duties was used strategically in order to show the incompatibility of saintly life with

[53] *Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina*
[54] *Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina*, 144.

the life of a regular housewife. The cases of beatings by the husband, or mistreatment of the father is not rare, in case of exceedingly philanthropic acts.[55]

The constant moderacy that was promoted by the Christian doctrines usually leads to controversial positions especially for the women. Keeping the family in order, and never ceding the familial duties were frequently advised for the women. In fact, the women who escaped the worldly life and cut the ties with her biological family, in the hagiographic narratives continues to support the image of domestic woman. For instance, Athanasia, in the posthumous miracles strives to mend the domestic role of a certain woman who is in search of the saint's assistance.

> There was another woman with an internal spirit who although she visited the coffin for quite a few days, still sadly returned to her house without success. Then she saw in her sleep the saint sating the words of this sort to her, "You have committed a deceit against your husband and have bitterly condemned to death your own soul. Therefore, depart and confess your transgression, and I will free you from the vexation of the wicked demon." After the woman heard these instructions and carried them out, she became healthy with the help of the Lord.[56]

Throughout the narrative, when the woman saint was alive, she was envisaged as someone tries to abandon the worldly family for the sake of monastic life. Yet, later she was depicted as someone who promotes the stability of the worldly family. That is to say, the importance and maintenance of the domestic family plays a crucial role regardless of the plane. When one has chosen a monastic life, although he or she is not an actor of the worldly/biological household, she still maintains the crucial role of preserving the traditional family structure.

The *topos* of loss of a family member is always in the foreground with the female saints. Due to the fact that they were regulated by the domestic family rules more than the male members, a way of breakaway from the worldly family was

[55] *Halsall, "Saint Thomais of Lesbos," 293.*
[56] *Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina*, 156.

necessary especially for the narrative strategies in the hagiographies. The severing of the ties with the family in order to live an ascetic life can also be seen in the life of St. Mary of Egypt, who rejects the familial life early in her life.[57] However, in this example, unlike most of the examples from the other *vitae*, this rejection was solely her own decision. In most of the cases, the separation with the family would be due to a forced condition, such as death of a father/husband/children or abandonment of a powerful familial figure. In the case of St. Mary, she is, first of all, portrayed as a lustful harlot by the author.[58] This may have been a consequence of her rebellious character in the family matters. Since the Christian doctrines always promoted the teaching of "first family, then solitary"[59], the protagonist has deviated from the manifested way and ended up being a sinful subject. Later on, with her trip to Jerusalem and her encounter with a famous spiritual father, she manages to pursue the monastic way.

As ironic as it can be, the extraordinary success in the religious matters did not facilitate St. Theodora's passage to the monastic life. On the contrary, it enhanced her "value" as a housewife. For instance, when the author mentions St. Theodora of Thessaloniki's characteristics as a perfect bride, he states:

> When the girl was seven years old, she was at the same time graceful and intelligent, and whatever lesson her adoptive mother decided to set for her, therein was revealed the girl's cleverness and natural intelligence. And she had learned the sacred letters and part of the Psalms… Therefore a huge swarm of nobleman sought to marry the young girl, and kept pestering her father in an importunate manner, whenever he returned from his isolated place of retirement.[60]

[57] *Life of St.Mary of Egypt*
[58] *Life of St.Mary of Egypt,* 67.
[59] For instance, *the Council of Toledo* strictly forbids the direct procession to a solitary ascetic life without experiencing the coenobitic. The same correlation could be established in the shift from domestic life to the monastic one. A family, first of all needed to be abandoned to commence any ascetic practice.
[60] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki,* 167.

Excellence in religious matters could be easily a back story of a male saint in order to justify his later dedication to an ascetic life; however, in the case of a woman, it is just another characteristic quality which contributes to her domestic life.

As it is commonly witnessed, Theodora and her husband choose the monastic life after their family shatters. One of their children dies and they decide to give the other two to the monastic institution with the consent of the husband.[61] The complete abandoning of the worldly life starts with death of the husband: "For when the holy woman's husband departed this mortal life (for the father did not live long after the tonsure of his daughter), the blessed Theodora, after observing at home the third and ninth day commemoration of her husband, bade farewell to all worldly affairs."[62] In the earlier hagiographic texts, the father and the husband was the primary obstacle in the way of monastic isolation. Eventually, the death of patriarchal figures is generally regarded as a freeing occurrence, especially in the case of the pious women characters. Until the marriage they are bound to the father, and, after that, husband settles into the primary position which needs to be taken care of. A tension between the familial life and monastic future is customary in the primary sources on the female characters as the case of Theodora supports: "For she did not view the loss of her husband as a grievous affliction but revealed to all the heart-felt desire for the monastic habit which she had felt for many years…"[63]. Grief often goes hand in hand with a relief due to the fact that there is no one who binds her to the worldly family and thus, the traditional obligation of looking after the family members dissolves.

Theodora's upper socioeconomic background also influences how she acts and how she is treated in the monastery. The position of Theodora in the envisaged

[61] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*,170.
[62] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*, 180.
[63] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki.*

spiritual kinship is received oddly by the other inhabitants of the monastery. First of all, she expects to become a nun, rather quickly, since her biological aunt is also in the monastery. Nevertheless, her aunt replies as such: "Since you are my blood relative and my child and I am well aware of the mode of life you have held…But I am not willing to enroll you immediately in the ranks of nuns, lest through scheme of the devil you change your mind, once your grief abates."[64] Secondly, she works intensively to become a nun, other members of the community do not think that such a menial labor suits her and ask her the reasons of these acts which "demeans her noble ancestry."[65] Finally, throughout the narrative, one can tell that Anna (the aunt) actually privileges her niece and ameliorates her living conditions in the monastery. These excerpts point out that in the context in which there are members of a monastic community who are also connected to one another through biological ties, the complete separation of the two spheres of kinship is not feasible. On the contrary, the relationship among the members of the particular group has a stark tendency to be determined by the former biological ties.

Another example that bears similar characteristics with the former case is also evident in the same *vita*. Theodora's daughter was put into the same convent, and this was presented as a challenge by the Devil in the narrative.[66] The author, in a repetitive way, highlights the importance of embracing the new spiritual family and introduces new challenges posed by the biological ties. Consequently, Theodora desires to act like mother to her daughter, yet her requests were deemed to be futile: "My Lady Mother, you who alone are concerned with my soul, I cannot endure to see the daughter born of my womb clothed in a cheap and tattered garment and

[64] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*, 181.
[65] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*, 184.
[66] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*.

subsisting on so little food. Please arrange for her to be transferred to another convent, since I cannot bear the fire in my heart. For I am a mother, and like all mother, I too am devoted to my child."[67] When it comes to the motherhood, she emphasizes that she must be exempted from the new spiritual kinship that she has developed. Motherhood was depicted as a natural law by the author, and it is the most vital of worldly ties constructed by the traditional family. Anna declines her words by saying "Didn't you not vow to renounce … not only your blood relatives, but your very life, as the Lord said?"[68] Those who are in charge of the convents, such as the superior, also prevent the reanimation of the past worldly family ties as it is seen in the example. As Theodora does not denounce her motherhood, she was punished severely in the following chapters.

It is quite curious that, on the one hand the preservation of the bond with the biological family is frowned upon, manifestation of sympathy towards the spiritual family is acceptable when there is an abandonment for a religious cause. The strengthening ties with spiritual kinship was acceptable; however, this should not lead to a non-compliance with an order from the upper strata of the religious community. For instance, when there was an issue of appointing Theodora to another monastery, both she and superior Anna acted in an emotionally charged manner and they rejected this decision even though it was against the rules of monastic life.[69] The abandonment of family, taught by the biblical doctrines, is applied to the spiritual kinship ties, especially in the monastic communities. The fear of separation, creation of emotional ties can be seen clearly.

[67] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*, 185-6.
[68] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*, 186-7.
[69] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*, 194.

The narrative arrives to a point where the daughter of Theodora was appointed as the superior of the monastery. [70]This acts as great symbol in the narrative, which shows the victory of spiritual kinship over the former biological one since the mother must obey the orders which were given by her daughter without any hesitation. The narrative is created in contrast to denial of the fact that Theodora's biological daughter is her sister: As Theodora insist on the worldly family relationship, her tie with her daughter gets more complicated and, in the end, the motherly role undermined by increase of her daughter's position in the religious hierarchy.

Saint Theoktiste of Lesbos can be included in the group of saints who have been separated from their biological family in the narrative.[71] She was orphaned in the very early stage of her life and draws a drastic ascetic picture. Her descriptions of being naked, her encounter with Symeon can be placed in an opposing position from a typical housewife.

The narrative of Saint Thomais of Lesbos also follows the pattern of a protagonist, who, first, deviates from the monastic path due to the familial situations, then is attracted by the ascetic life. First of all, the fact that she is not after setting up a family is emphasized as an "oddity" by the translator: "Thomais' story also contains one major oddity in describing her life pattern: "like other Byzantine women she remained under her parents' control until marriage but was able to postpone marriage until the age of twenty-four, ten years later than usual." [72] A resistance against the marriage pressure from the parents, indeed, a crucial aspect which is used to underline the monastic tendencies of a woman. Although, in reality,

[70] *Life of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki*, 195.
[71] *Life of St. Theoktiste of Lesbos*.
[72] Halsall, P.(Trans.). (2016). Life of St. Thomais of Lesbos. In Talbot A.-M. (Ed.), Holy Women of Byzantium (pp. 291-322.) Washington, D.C.: Harvard University Press, 293.

this might have been sourced from another motive, the hagiographic author usually melds this perspective in favor of his narrative which aims to build a "natural-born saint."

The process of severing the ties from the biological family moves gradually in the case of Thomais. First of all, her father dies and consequently her mother chooses the monastic life.[73] Whilst her father was alive, she was married to a man who is in an oppressive nature. In fact, the discordance between the Saint Thomais and the profile of a domestic woman is striking in the source. Her rather "open" lifestyle is already present before her marriage.[74] A supporter of this discrepancy was her lack of femininity: "And one could see in this situation an unusual married couple; for the wife was manly and masculine in virtue and strove to surpass her own nature by works of zeal done for virtue's sake."[75] The excerpt reveals another common characteristic of the obstacles between the domestic woman and ascetic life: Pursuing a radical ascetic life is commonly associated with manly attributes. An inclination towards that kind of lifestyle has a potential to disrupt the Byzantine domicile harmony due to its controversy with the traditional gender roles. Furthermore, being overly ascetic, in some cases, leads to extra-philanthropic lifestyle and it exceeds the limits of modesty. For instance, Saint Thomais sees a naked man and she strips off her clothes to give them to him.[76] And, when her husband sees her, she is exposed to physical violence. As the beatings become frequent, the last chain of the separation from the family occurs.

An important *topos* in this process is the martyrization of women who are subjugated to male violence. "She adorned herself with wounds as with pearls, with

[73] *Life of St. Thomais of Lesbos*
[74] *Life of St. Thomais of Lesbos*, 292.
[75] *Life of St. Thomais of Lesbos,* 305.
[76] *Life of St. Thomais of Lesbos,* 306.

hurts as with most precious stones; she was embellished by thrashings as with golden coins and present herself as a queen clothed and arrayed in divers colors before the Ruler of all. She was adorned by insults as with expensive earrings, her beauty was enhanced by the beatings, and she was cheered by the mockeries."[77] The emphasis is mostly on how she was thrown away from the worldly family involuntarily. Yet, this narrative always prepares the background for a monastic life, especially for a woman, and the pains she endured are underlined in order to demonstrate her stark contrast to the "regular" and "feminine" housewives.

In summary, a complete replacement of the conventional family is depicted by the authors when thinking about the female saints. The abandonment of family was essential for all ascetics, regardless of their gender. Nevertheless, when the trajectory of female saints is considered, their attachment to the household is described in a more amplified way in the narratives.

Regarding the intention of these *vitae*, one can consider that the lives of the women who are mentioned above were aimed to be a role model for future generations. The common ground on all these cases is that they pursued a monastic life when their conventional role in the family permitted them to do so. In other words, when an absence of a figure to whom a woman is related through her traditional household roles is narrated, it is suitable for the woman to follow a monastic lifestyle. The absence might result from death of a male figure, abdication to the monastery or unchristianly ways of behaving by the figure (such as violence of father or husband to the woman). Indeed, there are exceptions who did not conform the tradition of "first the worldly family, then the monastic life"; however, they are depicted as the marginal characters who cannot fulfill their "womanly" role.

[77] *Life of St. Thomais of Lesbos,* 308.

Finally, the roles within the household do not change, yet adapt in the context of spiritual family. The monastic context reinterprets women through the traditional family roles and envisages them accordingly in the monastic context. Religious families on the one hand mimic the traditional kinship roles with dictation of abandonment of the "worldly family," acknowledging that certain characteristics are directly transferred from the secular life.

2.3 Privileges of male protagonists of the *vitae*

In the *vitae* of woman saints, an order of privilege is evident. Many of them are narrated as they choose the monastic life after they had fulfilled their role as a woman in the Byzantine family by the authors of the *vitae.* In other words, a disagreement of letting their daughter or wife to the monastic way of life comes to the fore and the normative way of abdication to the monastic way of life for a woman is "first the family, then the monastery." On the contrary, when the *vitae* of male saints are considered, although the opposition of family is at stake, the men are not depicted as faithful to the family compared to women.

Holy men were depicted as a more comfortable group in terms of their role in the biological family. They had the initiative on leaving their family for the monastic life even though their relatives might be in harsh conditions. For instance, Euthymios the Younger, whose *vita* was written in the ninth century, was a saint who could leave his family behind with ease unlike the examples from the female *vitae.*[78] Euthymios' family is coming from a middle class background and after the death of his father he had to take care of his mother:

> Euthymios was everything to his mother, a son, helper, caretaker, protector, reliever from distress, procurer of happiness; he served her as guardian,

[78] *Life of Euthymios the Younger.*

> father, defender, and what was most significant as a man who assumed the care of all household affairs and responsibility for external matters as well.[79]

His vital position in taking care of his mother was emphasized by the author to underline the benevolent traits of the character. Furthermore, his mother desires him to marry someone and continue their heritage with a child. He goes along with his mother's wish, yet this act was used as a step which facilitates the initiation to the monastic life. In other words, through marriage and having a child he could leave someone to take care of his wife and his mother according to the author.[80] After he realizes this step, Euthymios the Younger, one day, tells his family that he lost his horse and he needs to find it as an excuse.[81] Following his abandonment of the house, he starts his ascetic life without informing that he is not returning to the household.

Similarly, Saint Romylos was more proactive in his departure from the family for the monastic path. He was a hesychast monk from the fourteenth century and was born in Vidin, modern Bulgaria. His parents were middle class and according to his *vita*, they were "rich enough to distribute to the poor."[82] The period of the saint's abandonment is narrated as such:

> But his parents who, as parents, were more interested in material things and who had no foreknowledge of the youth's love of God nor how much divine love he had within his heart, were planning to marry him to a woman. But he didn't want to hear the word; in fact, he didn't even want to hear the sound of their voices, since he was thinking of abandoning the tumult of the world and of joining the monastic life.[83]

In the following pages, he escapes from his household to join a monastery in Turnovo. The neglection of family on their child's pious knowledge is frequently

[79] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 17.
[80] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 19.
[81] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 21.
[82] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of Saint Romylos,* 2.
[83] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of Saint Romylos,* 2.

emphasized in the primary source, as it can be seen from the excerpt. In contrast to that, depictions on the monk's zeal and the desire of monastic life are ornamented with emotions and metaphors. For instance, when the author is describing the hesychastic tendencies of the monk, he states: "…in his mind Romanes pined away, desiring that he might again abandon the tumult of the world, and that he might live in a deserted place far from men, like the turtle dove which loves solitude."[84] Throughout the narrative the proactive role of choosing the monastic life over the family is supported with the juxtaposition of neglection of the family and his unbridled desire of a more pious life.

Approach of the hagiographic authors to superior religious tendencies of women are different from that of male protagonist. When a male figure's excellence is at stake in his vita, this is generally interpreted as a vital foreshadower for the upcoming success of the male saint in the ascetic life. Although pious women were praised for their religious qualities, these must be moderate enough to stay at home. However, in the *vitae* of male saints, the superiority on the religious matters is one of the major pivot points which enables the male saints to initiate their ascetic life. In the *Life of Saint Maximos,* before the initiation to monastic life, the author focuses on his religious attributes:

> He pretended to his parents and everyone else to be deranged; but the man's virtue did not escape their attention. And so his parents hastened to make arrangements for his marriage, as is customary for those in the world to do, so that they might ensnare him and bind him to the world and keep their beloved child at hand and always in their sight; but they did not succeed in taking this action, since heavenly providence thwarted their plan. [85]

Clearly, the author underlines the family's despair in convincing the child to marry, to continue his life on the "worldly" plane since these religious attributes

[84] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of Saint Romylos,* 4.
[85] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner,* 453.

were signs of the "plans made by heavenly providence." Narrative does not indicate any aspect pertaining to the importance of familial ties, or the responsibilities of Maximos to his parent, but rather his excellence in religion directly explained as a reason to enter monastic life.

There are certain cases in which, due to the religious background of the family, a male monk is able to be brought up for the monastic way of life. Therefore, without any resistance from the family and with the help of their religious networks, they can pursue a monastic life with ease. Monk Niphon of Athos can be considered in this category. He was a monk from Achaia, a town in the borders of modern Greece. His *vita was* written in the thirteenth century by an anonymous author. Due to his family background, he was cut out for a monastic life. The author builds his connection with his father as follows: "In this village lived a priest of Christ's mysteries, who was nourished with piety and full of the Holy Spirit, a claim that, if ever a tree is known by its fruit; will be proved by his son, who was so famous for his virtue."[86] Unlike most of narratives of pious men who are in the period of transition to the monastic life, Niphon is not challenged with any dissent from the family; by contrast his choice is depicted as a religious destiny. The conditions prepared for this narration were influenced by the social structures on gender. Aforementioned perception of a man as a mobile member of the family, a male monk can be linked directly to the monastic life without having to deal with the obligations of the traditional family.

Not all the holy characters were obliged to go through an objection from their family. Famous Athanasios of Athos was raised by a nun after the death of his parents.[87] Thus, being orphaned accelerated the process of his transition to monastic

[86] *Life of Niphon of Athos*, 571.
[87] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* 135.

life. Therefore, the absence of family can still be used as a facilitator of a period in which the future monk is abandoning the worldly plane for a monastic path, yet when there is pressure from the family to marry and maintain their heritage, the men can act in a more proactive way.

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUAL KINSHIP IN MIDDLE AND LATE BYZANTINE *TYPIKA*

3.1 Introduction to monastic communities and *typika* as sources

This chapter revolves around spiritual kinship in the monastic context. In the monastic foundation documents, the concept of "religious family" has been frequently introduced to the audience, and a new form of kinship was promised to the newcomers by the author of these sources. One of the main reasons for the creation of the new family is that the biblical conception of "abandonment of the worldly family" for those who choose the ascetic life. The monastic communities replaced the worldly family with the religious one in order for the monks/nuns to be influential to one another and sustain the practical operation of the monastery. To what extent the monasteries provided a context of a family has been discussed by the scholars. Based on various approaches, the monastic communities' function as a family may differ: The kinship is constructed in multiple levels which were influenced by factors as the preservation of the self-sustainability by the community, the patronage type, the status of the monastic foundation and belonging to a religious movement. Envisaging the spiritual family solely as a reciprocal exchange among the spiritual parents and the brotherhood/sisterhood could lead to a superficial analysis regarding the different operation styles of the monastic family. It is inevitable to observe the reflection of the traditional Byzantine family's roles, yet spiritual kinship in the monasteries was not limited to it, especially from the middle Byzantine period onwards regarding the intertwinement of the religious and political sphere in Byzantium. Political figures' regulations or the private patrons had intervened the *typika* and strived to get the best out of the religious family in the operation of the

monastic foundation. In several cases, the essential rules of "spiritual kinship" were transgressed by the political elites and were shaped according to the context. Therefore, when the concept of spiritual kinship in the monastic context is at stake, a more dynamic analysis is required. Apart from the essence of spiritual kinship that has derived its characteristics from the biblical teachings, political and economic influence of the superstructure must be taken into consideration.

3.2 *Typika* and the social structure of the monastic communities

Dirk Krausmüller touched upon the question of whether the monasteries provided an alternative family to the newcomers. He argues that: "It is thus evident that mentors and disciples are not straightforward counterparts of parents and children. Indeed, one could argue that the relationship is closer to that between husband and wife, which was also established through negotiation."[88] It is possible to trace the pattern of the relationship between the husband and wife in the monastic context; however, this relationship is not static; dependent on the socio-political structures, constant changing roles can be observed. In the administrative ways, this role can evolve into the relationship between a superior and inferior, and in other cases, the matronly ways of the spiritual parent shift the relationship into one that resembles the parent and children, especially when there are ongoing religious crises.

In this subchapter, I will argue that spiritual kinship in the monastic context is a highly fluid one. Not only it changes from monasteries to monasteries, but also there are differences based on the functions that are needed to be realized in the monastic context. The superstructure which is comprised of the power relations and patronal privileges, leads to different contexts in which these functions occur, and

[88] Krausmuller, 355.

consequently, different spiritual kinship definitions emerge. Thus, first of all, the issues that are related to political power dynamics will be investigated as one part of the superstructure. Secondly, the need of practicality due to the economic factors and its influence on spiritual kinship will be touched upon. And finally, the perception of spiritual kinship and the allegories referred to it will be introduced.

The chronology of the primary sources starts from the ninth century with the *Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople*. The middle and late Byzantine period have been characterized with the politicization of the saints and involvement of the aristocracy into the religious sphere more than ever.[89] In order to trace the interaction of connection between spiritual kinship and political superstructures, primary sources will be from the areas whose connection with the imperial authority and with the political elite of the Byzantium persist until the fifteenth century. Hence, the origins of monastic foundation documents will be comprised of two foci: Constantinople and Mount Athos.

Typika set the forthcoming difference between the monastic communities and ecclesiastical networks with its relative autonomy through the rules. These rules were regulated neither by the ecclesiastical authorities nor by the imperial offices. Yet, they were under the preservation of these authorities. Unlike in the ecclesiastical context, monastic life was highly performative and from clothing to behaving, many of the aspects were regulated by the *typika* and practiced by the superiors.[90] Hence, it is important to emphasize its autonomy since the creation of spiritual kinship is highly embedded in this self-sustainability.

[89] For more information on the politization of the Byzantine Saints, see Harvey, "The Politicisation of the Byzantine Saint"; Morris, "The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century"; Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century".
[90] Agamben, G. (2005). State of exception. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The second major distinguishable characteristic was the emphasis on the communal leaving. In one of his excerpts Theodore the Studite, whose *typikon* was influential on the following *typika*, tells a monk who decided to choose solitary asceticism over monastic life: "My son how has Satan the Evil One driven you out of the paradise of the common life, precisely like Adam who was seduced by the counsel of the serpent?"[91] Communal living was such an indispensable part of the monastic life that those who are going for the solitary part usually encountered resentment from the spiritual fathers. The similarity of a child who is abandoning his home was usually established in these instances. The notion of being a family, being a "godly" family was utilized commonly to keep the monastic community together. Therefore, in order to keep this monasticism intact, a conception of a family was vital, and this family must be formed through performance, since the blood ties (which served as a primary feature that justifies being a family in the Byzantine conventional family) among the monastic members are missing. Eating together, the regulations on how to behave to the brethren, oaths taken, even the menial works were part of this performance as a glue which binds the community together. Giorgio Agamben points out the permeation of the monastic orders into the lifestyles of each individual: "It is only after monasticism had transformed clothing into a habitus, rendering it indiscernible from a way of life, that the Church (starting from the Council of Macon in 581) began the process that would lead to the clear differentiation between clerical habit and secular habit."[92] Furthermore, the regulation of every aspect of life is not limited to the operation but also it affects the

[91] Theodore Studite, *Epistle* 1, 938.
[92] Agamben, 16.

temporality: “One could not more clearly express the fact that the monastic ideal is that of a total mobilization of existence through time.”[93]

Nevertheless, it is essential to underline that this envisagement of communal and autonomous life was not consensual without any pressure among all the individuals. The *typika* were comprised of many sanctions that, in a way, makes one to question the consent or sincerity of the members. The consent is important in the context of creation of family since it depicts the ways in which the kinship is constructed in a certain context

3.3 Politics, autonomy, and economy in the monastic foundations

To understand the envisagement and planning in the monastic communities, first of all, the superstructure in which these relationships emerged must be taken into consideration. The superstructure is comprised of several elements which regulates and renovates the ways in which attitudes, behaviors and organization of the nuns/monks. Autonomy of the monastery, written codes of conduct which determines the discipline, politics and power relations and historical transformations can be considered as the most vital elements of the monasteries in Byzantium.

Above all, the issue of autonomy is emphasized in almost all the *typika* as it was mentioned above. The autonomy signified the absence of any imperial and ecclesiastical authority, yet as it will be presented below, this does not mean point out a complete immunity.

Regardless of the level of autonomy, all monastic rules have a common criterion which are accepted by all. Normative council rules are accepted without exceptions. In the *Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in*

[93] Agamben, 23.

Constantinople, the author explicitly accepts all the ecumenical councils: "In addition, I follow the six holy and ecumenical councils and reject every error of heretical association. I also follow the Second Council of Nicaea which was recently assembled against the accusers of Christ."[94]

Similarly, in the rule of Atteliates, the author asserts that: "For I absolutely forbid and reject any lay or ecclesiastical authority over this monastery and poorhouse, and I entrust them only to God who is glorified in the most sovereign and supra substantial Trinity, as I have often indicated in the present document."[95] The overemphasized autonomy was a fundamental part of the rules due to the fact that the monastic areas were vulnerable to the ongoing political and social transformations. They hold an inherently valuable position in terms of economy and politics, any individual from the higher echelons of the society, regardless of an ecclesiastical or secular power, can desire to take a hold of the power created by the monastic communities. The political power in the religious domains can be explained with a monasticism, from the middle Byzantine period onwards, which started to be more involved with political milieu and imperial authorities used this area in order to enhance their power.[96] Evidently, the increasing political and ecclesiastical attention influenced the rule makers of the *typika* be more reactive on the issue of independency. The famous *Typikon of Evergetis,* which created a role model for the future *typika*, as well, points out the importance of creation of an autonomous legal stance for the monasteries and its alienation of any worldly powers: "We instruct all in the name of our Lord God the Ruler of All that this holy monastery is to be independent, free of everyone's control, and self-governing, and not subject to any

[94] *Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople*,76.
[95] *Rule of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and for the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon in Constantinople*, 352
[96] Métivier, *Aristocratie et Sainteté à Byzance (VIIIe-XIe Siècle)*, 9.

rights, be they imperial or ecclesiastic or of a private person, but it should be watched over, steered, governed, and directed only by the Mother of God Evergetis who is worthy of all praise…"[97]

In the theory, the rule of God and the saintly guidance was present even in the case in which an imperial member is the patron of the monastery:

> "But if anyone ever at any time and in any way wishes to gain control over this our convent and set it under the power of someone else, whether he be an emperor, or a patriarch, or some other… member of the clergy or of the senate, or the superior herself, or its steward, or simply one of its sisters at present in it prompted by an attack of the devil, not only will he be held responsible for the divine body and blood of our God and Savior Jesus Christ but will also "be accursed…"[98]

The denunciation of the transfer of power to another milieu is not merely due to the fear of losing the independency of the monastery, but also the loss of power for the original patrons of the monastery. Another way of escaping from any kind of hierarchy also can be shown in rare examples in which the spiritual father advises the monks not to apply to the courts, but rather it must be resolved within the monastic foundation: "Similarly you must root out familiarity as much as possible and, that I may be brief, banish everything that does not lead to salvation. If you are wronged by someone, ever go to court but flee from this as one flees from a snake…"[99] Thus, before dwelling upon the envisagement of spiritual kinship in the monasteries, it is necessary to comprehend its political and economic aspects which also intervenes almost every dimension of the monastic life.

From early *typika* to late ones, several examples clearly emphasize that even the patriarch must not meddle with the rules of the *typika*; he is only tasked to preserve and guarantee the rules written by the patron:

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[97] *Typikon of Timothy for the Monastery of the Mother of God Evergetis*, 482
[98] *Typikon of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene in Constantinople*, 668
[99] *Rule of John for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Phoberos*, 944.

> Even he who is most holy patriarch at the time should take only that which he is commanded to take by the holy canons, should be content with these things alone and perforce keep his hands off the rest, that is whatever does not lead to the edification and support [of the convent], but to its ruin and destruction.[100]

Politics and power relations are two concepts which present themselves in every aspect of the monastic foundations including *typika*. George Dennis argues that especially from the eleventh century onwards, ideological interventions to the monasteries were visible in the Byzantine Empire.[101] The attachment to certain power foci was inherently connected to the status of the monastery. Dependent, private, or imperial monasteries, they all showed a difference in terms of the extent to which they are regulated by the ecclesiastical powers, yet the strife of preservation of the self-sustainability was evident. The attachment of an emperor did not directly signify that it will be governed by the imperial office regardless of the reign. Rather, it meant the monastic foundation was attached to a single imperial family. For instance, in the *Testament of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery*, a testament which belongs to a monastery patronaged by Emperor Nikephoros Phokas, the author Athanasios conveys the rules of the emperor in a direct manner.[102] A propaganda of the emperor can be traced in the monastic documents whilst his religious characteristics are underlined: "The thoughts of a truly lordly and sacred emperor are deeply concerned not only with political matters and plans for the army, with turning back hostile peoples and enslaving enemies, with subjugating populous cities beneath his hand, but also with upholding especially the divine ordinances and the sacred canons."[103] As a matter of fact, not only the operation of the monasteries

[100] *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople*, 1528.
[101] *Typikon of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos,* 281.
[102] *Testament of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery,*274.
[103] *Typikon of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos*, 284

was highly influenced by the patrons, but also every propriety of the monastic foundation belonged to the patron and his or her family.[104]

The political influence permeates to the religious rituals of the monks in the case that patron is an important imperial figure. In the *Typikon of Pantokrator,* when a monastic member is deceased, the families who contributed to the monastery are referred in the rituals: "After our decease these offerings also will be added to the commemorations of each day, namely, offerings for me and my most dear sons Born-in-the-Purple: basileus Lord Alexios, sebastokrator Lord Andronikos, sebastokrator Lord Isaac, and sebastokrator Lord Manuel…"[105]

The influence of the upper authorities was not only limited to the aspects mentioned above, but also, the network of the superiors was regulated by the patrons. In the monastery of *Lavra,* for instance, the emperor exercises the highest authority when electing the next superior of the monastery.[106] There are two ways in the election of a superior: Direct appointment of the superior, in the condition that the former one is deceased, or through voting among the monks. It is rather common to witness that the superiors directly assigned by the emperor choose to appoint their spiritual sons. The voting system is used as a last resort in extreme cases, such as when the superior dies unexpectedly. Indeed, there are certain exceptions; in the Monastery of Stoudios, voting the future superiors is ordered by the author of the *typikon*.[107] Nevertheless, patrons that have a strong political background have a tendency to keep the control in their hands as much as possible through creating the suitable appointment methods. Firstly, they assign a superior which transfers the

[104] *Rule of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and for the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon in Constantinople*, 335
[105] *Pantokrator: Typikon of Emperor John II Komnenos for the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople*, 743
[106] *Ath. Typikon: Typikon of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery*, 255.
[107] *Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople*, 77.

power to an individual who is attached to the patron and shares the same political and religious views. Later on, spiritual kinship plays a role in the inheritance of the position. The superior assigns his spiritual son to his place. This creation of network of authority connects the monastic foundation to the political superstructure. The *Typikon of Attaleiates* presents a similar case in which he assigns his son to an administrative position in his monastery.[108]

Another mechanism which consolidates the *status quo* is the strict rules on the prohibition of a superior who is outside the foundation. In the *Typikon of Lavra,* the emperor orders the following rule through a *chrysobull*: "By no means at any time at all do we receive a person from a foreign *lavra* or monastery as superior. I brought this to the attention of the revered emperor and suggested that it be made clear in the *chrysobull* to avoid any misunderstanding."[109]

In some extreme cases, monks from other monasteries are not allowed to begin a monastic life in the mentioned institution, yet only those who are trusted by the superior can have a concession in the rule. For instance, in the *typikon* of the Monastery of Attaleiates, the author, also Michael Attaleiates himself, orders that "But of no account do I wish a monk tonsured elsewhere to be enrolled in this monastery, with two exceptions: the monk Antony whom I myself appointed and named as ecclesiarch, since he is familiar with the monastic rules of the church and abides by them, and also the other monk Antony, who was the first monk installed in my poorhouse."[110] This example reveals that, regardless of the background of the patron (whether she is from an imperial family, or solely an individual from the

[108] *Rule of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and for the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon in Constantinople*, 328
[109] *Typikon of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery*, 256
[110] *Rule of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and for the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon in Constantinople*, 348

upper-class), authority figures strived to influence the community through mechanisms of creation of a network favors the family and isolating the community from outgroups (in terms of ideologically as well). These factors established the foundation on which the relationship (including spiritual kinship) among the monks, brothers and fathers emerge.

The preservation of a monastic community, of course, had its limits. In the *Typikon of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene*, the author highlights that if an individual who is from the upper strata of the society wishes to enter through the gates as a visitor, he must be permitted.[111]

The permeability of the political power through the monastic institutions led to some considerations. The loss of old habits, the decreasing importance of coenobitic life and the concessions made for the sake of privileged few followed by the reform movement originated from the Monastery of Evergetis. Timothy Miller asserts:

> The reformers' hostility to manifestations of aristocratic privilege is clear in their attempt to revive the legislation of Tzimiskes restricting the large number of servants who traditionally accompanied the superiors to the Athonite assemblies and frequently caused disturbances. The reformers failed to get the strict limitations of the earlier typikon revived and had to settle for more lenient restrictions.[112]

Therefore, there has been an attempt of consolidating the communal living and reducing the aristocratic privilege and concessions made by it. However, the movement has been inefficient in some of its aims, especially in undermining the aristocratic influence in the following centuries. In multiple *typika* that has been directly influenced by the reform movement, the power of the patron kept its position

[111] *Typikon of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene in Constantinople*, 680.
[112] Miller, "Constantine IX: Typikon of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos," 282.

intact along with the favoritism of the upper class. Therefore, a top-down intervention was almost always visible in the monasticism.

Besides the political authority, personal attachment to the monastic context can influence the relationships. The commitment of the patron to the monastic institution that she has founded is not only an area for power. It can also be thought as a place which she and her family will be affiliated to the place for generations and grant them salvation in the religious realm. The reference to the patron and her relatives in the rituals, repetitive remembrance mechanism that was dictated by the *typika* to the monastics renders the place as a religious "investment". Thus, they show the monastic foundation the utmost care, and a more personal connection could be constructed through the process. In the *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople,* this emotional connection can be seen: "Since in some obscure fashion I conceived in the womb of my heart and gave birth to this truly good and holy and divine love and desire, I decided to construct a holy dwelling for my all-pure Lady the Mother of God, and in addition to build from the foundations a convent."[113] The emotional connection and its beneficial point to the patron's family influences the every dimension of the order in the monastic context.

The fiscal aspects of the monastery can be considered as another component of the superstructure which altered the kinship ties in the monastery. The administrative branches in the monastic institution which deal with the expenditures and the distribution of resources is one of the most tangible evidence of the fiscal aspect. It was shown that Attaleiates appointed his son to an administrative position of the monastery which governed the flow of resources. Many other examples in

[113] *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople*, 1524.

which an upper-class patron appointed his own acquaintances to administrative positions can be extracted from the documents related to the monasteries. There were two sources that enabled the monasteries to enjoy economic autonomy: the patronage and the members themselves. On the other side of the coin, members were not asked to pay a fee or a gift during entrance, with very few exceptions. Nevertheless, their perpetual works were demanded through the rules which also made many references to the Christian doctrines that prohibit idleness. In numerous cases there are references to the detrimental effects of idleness, praise of practicality and the flawless work of the operation. To achieve this notion of practicality, the spiritual kinship roles were used strategically in regulating the hierarchical order and daily tasks.

The combination of this political and economic superstructure had tremendous effects on spiritual kinship in the monastic context. The concept of moderacy, for instance, was always functional at the socialization of the monks which is an essential element of the spiritual kinship that was aimed in the monasteries. Moderacy in the socialization with the brothers/sisters is at stake regarding the rules of the monastery. An interesting issue comes to the fore with the spirit of *akedia* which is referenced in the sources. *Akedia* is considered as a demon that forces the members of the monastery to be extremely idle, unfriendly and isolated. Crislip has argued that the descriptions of the monks who are suffering from *akedia* are very similar to symptoms of depression in the contemporary medical literature.[114] In the *Rule of John for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Phoberos,* the author asserts:

[114] Crislip, "The Sin of Sloth or the Illness of the Demons? The Demon of Acedia in Early Christian Monasticism," 143-169.

> You should struggle continuously against the spirit of akedia which is bound up with and works together with the spirit of grief. This is a dreadful and very oppressive demon always making war on monks. It attacks the monk at the sixth hour, implanting in him slackness and dread, and creating hatred both towards the place itself and the brothers who live with him and towards all work and the reading of the Holy Scriptures itself.[115]

Akedia poses a situation which the monks are no longer to realize the essentials for the operation of the monastery, both economically and socially. Thus, the author of the *typikon* advises those who are struck with *akedia* to go visit their spiritual brothers often and participate more in the communal activities.[116] In the light of these, even the socialization among the brothers are highly regulated with the economic and political patterns since communal production and menial works aimed to operate continuously and coordination among the monks was essential for the operation.

3.4 Initiation to spiritual kinship

The scholars who have worked on the concept of spiritual kinship highlighted the conditions of entering in a certain fictive kinship.[117] These entrance conditions also signify the dedication to the group for an individual and it points out the formation of the bond between two individual or among the group. Therefore, taking a closer look at the general entrance patterns to the monastic institution can reveal the nature of the formation of spiritual kinship.

Entrance conditions demonstrate the nature of the shared affinity in the monastic spiritual kinship. Tonsuring can be interpreted as a performance which refers a belonging to a community. Apart from the duties of the monks or nuns, the

[115] *Rule of John for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Phoberos, 890*
[116] *Rule of John for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Phoberos, 890*
[117] For more information, see Rapp, *Brother Making in Late Antiquity Byzantium;* Carsten*, Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship;* Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*.

ways in which they present themselves are also aimed to affirmation of being a spiritual family with the monastic community. The clothing, the "design" of the rooms and tonsuring are not solely cosmetic, but rather they are achievements which indicates a membership to the holy family. Consequently, tonsuring which signifies the initiation to family is not easily received in every case. The monastic foundation must be certain that the prospect monk is sharing the affinities with the monastic family. In other words, in the center of the monastic spiritual kinship shared affinities play a crucial role. Being an Orthodox Christian and practicing similar religious doctrines generate all the common points.

Confession is a part of the practices in the spiritual communities which operates as a justification of the concept "doing a family" as it was mentioned in the introduction part. It is not an optional act, but rather every monk has an obligation to practice it in order to be the part of the community. The *Typikon of Evergetis* considers the confession as a fundamental part of the spiritual brotherhood: "We must also speak about life-preserving confession and the discourse about the table must wait for a while. Well then, the superior must sit in a private place twice a day and leaving side all other work whatsoever and all the trouble of managing and directing, must take most diligent care to hear those who wish to make confession and set for each one the appropriate healing."[118] The plan of the superior and the timetable of the monks are planned accordingly to enact the confession.

Another excerpt from the *Typikon of Pantokrator* dwells upon this obligation: "As the preceding text has prescribed all the requirements common to the monks—sharing the refectory, living inside the monastery, attendance in the church, unwavering prayer—it also lays down as their common duty the confession of their

[118] *Typikon of Timothy for the Monastery of the Mother of God Evergetis,* 476.

sins before the superior and urges them…"[119] The striking part of the rule is that confession is considered as one of the duties that must be done without any force. It is approached as one of the essentials of conviviality in the monastery such as communal refectory hours, praying etc.

Confession hours also regulate and consolidate the hierarchy in the relationship of spiritual kinship. The confessor must confess to those who are in a higher position of authority, which is the spiritual father in this case. Confessions must be made to the spiritual father since, first of all, it has to be someone who can be trusted in the education of religion, and secondly, it has to be someone who is more advanced in the spiritual matters. Moreover, the spiritual father must be unique unlike the phenomenon of being a spiritual brother. The fact that confession must be made to a single superior reassures this uniqueness. The rules of the Monastery of Phoberos order that: "Concerning the fact that the monks in the monastery must not make their confession to anyone else except their own superior."[120] Formally, there might be more than one individual who are addressed as "father", nevertheless, in practice, those who receive confession hold a unique place in the relationship between father and son.

The *Typikon of Mamas* demonstrates the mechanics when another monk is about to be accepted to a monastery:

> One, however, should consider also those who come from a different [monastery] for the purpose of making a beginning in it. Let him, therefore, who has been chosen by the monastery to be admitted as a monk spend only eight days in it for the purpose of seeing it and its regimen. If, indeed, he is obviously pleased, let him make a confession to the superior. Then, while the trisagion is being performed in the church, he must present his head to the superior, bowed and uncovered, and, as the superior makes the sign of the precious cross over it, he reverently says approximately the following, "May the grace of the all-Holy Spirit, brother, through the prayers of our fathers,

[119] *Typikon of Emperor John II Komnenos for the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople*, 750.
[120] *Rule of John for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Phoberos*, 920.

> grant you power and strength to complete well and pleasingly to God the beginning which you made for the edification and salvation of your soul." Thereupon let the superior give him the kiss in the Lord and successively likewise all the brothers. Let him, however, make a prostration to the brothers, saying, "Pray for me, fathers and brothers, that God may grant me perseverance," and, after the brothers have answered, "May God grant you, brother, perseverance in every good work," he shall be enrolled in the brotherhood. For in no other way shall anyone be numbered among the brothers of our monastery unless, along with the confession, this ceremony takes place in exactly the same way.[121]

The excerpt informs the reader on the manners in which a member from a different monastic community is accepted. What strikes at the first glance is the reciprocity among the members. It is important to underline that the text is for a prospect member of the community who has an experience on the matter beforehand. Throughout the trial, the first goal is to see whether the "applicant" is a decent fit for the monastic community in terms of the operation of the religious life. Afterwards, the spiritual father functions as the authority of acceptance. The new member has to confess only to him. As it was seen before, the confession mechanism acts as a feature which binds an individual to a fictive family and the affirmation must be done by the one who is in charge of the role of father. Finally, the father symbolically demonstrates the acceptance of the new member to the spiritual community during the religious ritual and the acceptance of the brotherhood must be demonstrated in the same way with religious speech. The scene resembles the "oath" process which undertakes a vital role in the initiation of a ritual brotherhood that takes place since the late antique period as Rapp has demonstrated.[122]

There is no doubt that the acceptance may differ depending on the monastery. Nevertheless, the goal of the receiving institution stays the same: establishing a spiritual family through collective affinities. This affinity may be originated from the

[121] *Typikon of Athanasios Philanthropenos for the Monastery of St. Mamas in Constantinople*, 1010.
[122] Rapp, C. (1997). Ritual Brotherhood in Byzantium. Traditio, 52, 285-326.

religion itself, however, not necessarily. As it was mentioned above, the monastic establishments started to be more involved with the contemporary politics. The construction of private monasteries was on the rise due to the increasing popularity of religiosity among the laymen.[123] Therefore, for instance, in the Convent of the Mother of God *Kecharitomene* in Constantinople, which was founded by Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene, the tonsuring criteria may be different: "Tonsuring period varies based on the pious knowledge, and fame of the woman who is attending to the convent."[124] The affinity that holds the community together is comprised of two opposing criteria: pious knowledge or "worldly" fame. This example demonstrates that even the entrance to the monastic foundations was not free of the ongoing social and political environment.

3.5 Family as a "body"

Self-reflection of the spiritual communities by the rule makers illuminates the envisagement of the family. During the envisagement, allegories or metaphors are the most commonly used literary strategies. An outstanding allegory which is frequently applied is the allegory of "body" as a family. This allegory is used in multiple cases in order to emphasize the harmony that must be present in spiritual kinship. Not surprisingly, "the body as a family" is frequently used when the harmony among the brotherhood or sisterhood does not operate smoothly. For instance, in the *Typikon of Lavra,* Athanasios orders:

> I therefore enjoin upon the superior and those of my brothers who hold leading positions, as well as my sons and fathers, that they be watchful for anyone who is careless enough to utter insults of this sort against the brothers. If such a person, carried away by some misguided impulse or pettiness of spirit, be so boorish as to insult a brother by calling him "foreign tonsure," let

[123] Talbot, "An Introduction to Byzantine Monasticity".
[124] *Typikon of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene in Constantinople*, 685.

> him be cut off from the church, that is, not partaking of the sacred mysteries, for three weeks. He should not come in and join the brothers at their common meals, but should eat by himself, abstaining from wine and oil, and thus do penance. If indeed he should correct himself, so that his tongue is reined in by silence and his hand is over his mouth, then thanks be to God. If, however, he should again be detected thinking such thoughts and uttering more insults, then he should be completely cut off from the Lavra and expelled as an unhealthy, gangrenous limb of the body of the church, so that his disease and corruption may not spread to the others.[125]

Disruption of the communal peace was one of the most serious offenses aside from the blasphemous acts. In the excerpt, the author condemns those who marginalize a monk due to his monastic origins and advises serious punishments to prevent that kind of behavior. In the case of continuation, the author makes a metaphor of body as a family and those who weaken the community are associated with a metaphor of "gangrenous limb." This points to a crucial aspect of forming a community since it is believed that factionalizing not only stays with the subject of the act but also disseminates to the "other parts of the body."

The contagious nature of someone who is after damaging the familial unity is also present with different allegories. For instance, in the *Typikon of Lavra,* the monks who act in order to harm the brotherhood and refuse to blend in are treated as people who spread this bad spirit. Consequently, the author orders that: "You should, rather, quickly expel him and drive him out of your company as a corrupt influence and as yeast which has gone flat."[126] The perception of disharmony of a certain monk as a yeast which has a potential to damage the unity of kinship reveals the importance of a total submission to the spiritual family and the vital role of the harmonious relationship among the brothers and fathers.

Similar approach to an individual who is a source of the dissonance in the familial unity is evident in the later sources.

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[125] *Typikon of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery*, 258.
[126] *Typikon of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery*, 276.

> But if there be one who is not so wise and has an opinion he should not have and regards everyone as equal so that he, although the least, may number himself among the better; if he shall keep silence let him be pardoned, but if he continues in the same conduct, after being severely admonished, let him be cut off from the community, and let him also be expelled from the monastery, so he might not pervert the more simple and cause confusion within the community. "Bad company ruins good morals," according to the holy apostle (I Cor. 15:33). A pestilential disease also causes injury to the persons it comes in contact with.[127]

The allegory of "pestilential disease" demonstrates the perception of unity in the spiritual communities. The family is constructed through believing same religious doctrines, and consequently, similar attitudes, and lifestyle routines. Those who do not believe or internalize these roles have a potential to influence the other members of the family which paves the way to the collapse of the unity.

Allegories such as "rotten limb" and "gangrenous limb" are not only used for those who distort the feeling of unity, but also those who are having hardship throughout the integration to the spiritual family. As it was mentioned before, confession acts as a vital entrance mechanism. In order to be a part of the spiritual family, the monk must confess to the superior regularly. In the case of an individual who rejects this significant process, the rotten or gangrenous limb analogy steps in. In one of the most influential *typika* of the middle Byzantine period, the *Typikon of Evergetis,* the author writes about the approach to those who do not yield to the confession mechanism:

> Then we order that a person who does not make confession should be excommunicated from the Lord God Ruler of All until, coming to his senses and thinking of higher things, he confesses all his faulty and harmful thoughts. Thus it would be necessary also to expel such a person from the monastery and cut him off like a rotten limb, and as a wound that is hard to heal or completely incurable to remove him and cast him away, but the uncertainty of the future and the expectation that perhaps one day he may come to his senses held us back from this purpose.[128]

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[127] *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios*, 1223

[128] *Typikon of Timothy for the Monastery of the Mother of God Evergetis*, 477.

Although he does not directly advise to expel him from the monastery, the possibility of treating a monk who rejects confession as a limb that cannot be healed is mentioned. The theme of familial unity and body metaphor reoccurs. Confession is one of the unifying factors which makes an individual a member of "the body." Therefore, the rejection of this step transforms the monk into a disharmonious part of the body, which could not be unified.

"The body" is not only utilized in the case of monastic communities, but also one can find the metaphors referring to all monastic institutions. In that circumstance, the "body" is envisaged as an impersonal entity which signifies the unity of different monastic units, and the head is the spiritual father. In the *Typikon of Pantokrator Monastery,* the author states that:

> There will be no superior in any of these monasteries, but their affairs will be managed by the stewards who must be included and counted in the aforementioned number of brothers in each monastery. However, all of the monasteries will be under the superior of the monastery of the *Pantokrator* and will be set, like one body made up of different limbs, under one head, the aforementioned superior.[129]

Since the monastic foundation is comprised of several units, the unity among the monastic foundations is represented as "the body," which is connected to "the head," the spiritual father. In this case, the allegory is made in order to refer to the administration of the institution.

A more special usage for the metaphor refers to spiritual love among the brotherhood. The members of the spiritual family are expected, or envisaged, to be complementary to one another. The collective manual works, the caring of the ill ones or the role distribution are highly associated with this attitude. The body and

[129] *Typikon of Emperor John II Komnenos for the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople*, 750.

limbs allegory are used according to this concept in the *Typikon of Phoberos:* "To love one another, to be keen each of you to surpass each other in humility, to labor with one another in everything as the limbs of one body and "to complete what is lacking" (Col. 1:24) in one another."[130]

The twofold nature of "the family as a body" is introduced in the *typika* of convents that were established in the late Byzantine period. The conception of unity is divided into two: first, the unity in the spiritual kinship and hierarchical relationship between the children and father. This was essential for the operation of the ascetic duties and physical tasks. Secondly, the monastic foundation as a body which indicates the integrity of the administrative units and their operation in tandem. In the *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople,* the author states:

> Therefore, do not do anything at all without the approval and permission of the superior, since a tool cannot do any work on its own, if the craftsman is resting and idle, nor can any limb of the body be moved involuntarily, unless the soul which inhabits the body stimulates the limb to move.

The hierarchization of the body is vital, besides the emphasis on the unity regarding the allegory. The unity is provided under the condition of being guided by the superior. The spiritual parent is the head or the one who decides what is correct in religious and worldly duties. On the other hand, the superior is connected to his/her "limbs" through emotions such as pain and love:

> You will set forth [this example], if you love and cherish the entire assembly of nuns equally and like your own limbs, as if they were your organs. As is reasonable, you should show more honor to the nuns who are the most useful and distinguished; but you should radiate your love and sympathy equally, like the rays of the sun, not more or less, since [p. 39] we naturally love the limbs of our body equally, but we consider some to be more honorable than others. For we love our eyes and feet equally, but we do not deem them both

[130] *Rule of John for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Phoberos*, 943.

> worthy of the same honor, nor do we protect them in the same way, although the pain of both affects us in the same way.[131]

In the excerpt, reference to a hierarchical relationship can be distinguished. Not all the members of the family operate in the same way; they have different values as organs. Consequently, sometimes some members might seem more precious from the others. However, the superior is connected to them through equal emotions such as pain and love. She/he must love them equally since, the sufferance will be equal in the case of a pain.

In the administrative perspective, the body allegory is used in order to demonstrate to the readers of *typika* that they must envisage the monastic foundation as a whole, and direct the emotions, behaviors and tasks in the same manner to the other parts of the body. A more practical agenda could be at stake in the case. A compliance of the members of the same monastic foundation to one another is important for the self-sustainability of the monasteries. The body as a monastic institution can be investigated and excerpt from the *Typikon of Bebaia Elpis*:

> The entire congregation of your sisterhood, together with your superior in Christ, resembles a complete body, composed and constituted of a head and different parts, which have different faculties and energies.[132]

The monastic body allegory is linked to the normative beliefs on the body of Christ. The differences among the branches of the monastic foundation are described as the mutually complementary parts of the body through referencing to multiple dimensions of Christ's body. Furthermore, as it is the case in spiritual kinship within the monastery, the superior is the head of the institution which points out the tendency of centralization in the monastic unit.

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[131] *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople*, 1533.
[132] *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople*, 1537

As the general conduct of spiritual kinship in the monastic context, the allegory of body is charged with many connections both religiously and politically. For some cases the allegory touches upon the monastic communities' characteristics resembling kinship, for other cases it refers to the operational and administrative feature of the monastic foundation.

3.6 Perception of spiritual kinship in the monastic sources: parenthood, sisterhood, and brotherhood

Spiritual love and its uniqueness are mentioned frequently throughout the investigation of spiritual kinship in the monastic documents. First and foremost, love, which has religious implications as well, is emphasized frequently in the rules. This love must be solely to the spiritual family, not the worldly one that was abandoned in the ascetic lifestyle. The uniqueness can be seen in the *Typikon of Evergetis* evidently: "As a fugitive from the world and from marriage, you should have no part of adopting those of the world as brothers or engaging in spiritual relationships with them since such practices are not found in the fathers, or if they have been found, then only rarely so that they do not constitute a law."[133] In the excerpt there is a clear demarcation between spiritual kinship and biological kinship. The *typikon* orders that: "Your body and your soul, nothing else, should be divided up for all your spiritual children and brothers in the impartiality of love." A monastic individual must direct all the attention to his new family and avoid bonding with the laymen in a similar way. In other words, a complete abandonment of the biological family is expected.

[133] *Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople*, 78.

The concept of spiritual love also can be employed strategically as well. The superior might use the term in order to the preserve the optimal operation of the institution:

> I command that the same disposition and spiritual love be observed by you toward the Lavra of lord John and the brothers with him which you saw my lowly and sinful self have and observe, and which I frequently taught to you in common during the instructions and individually to each one. You should act in this way not only to lord John and those with him but also to everyone else, not just to those who love and honor you, but at times to those who hate you, harass you, and confront you with trials and injuries.[134]

The excerpt mentions John of Iberia, who is one of the patrons that founded the monastery. Although he is not the member of the monastic community as a monk, (more likely an administrator), the superior orders the brothers to show the same brotherly love to saint John of Iberia. Furthermore, to consolidate the self-resolution mechanism in the monastery, he associates the brotherly love with loving the other regardless of how they treat.

The attitude and feeling of the spiritual father that has been described in the monastic rules bears several similarities with the "worldly" construction of fatherhood. In the examples, the symmetrical relationship among the spiritual brothers was touched upon. Yet, when one considers the creation of the relationship between father and son, it is not difficult to distinguish certain hierarchical elements which resembles the conventional kinship. In the *Typikon of Mamas* the role of the father is described as such:

> You, spiritual father and guide of this holy flock, be moderate and fair with the brothers, and in your concern maintain in everything a fatherly affection for them. Yes, I entreat you, care for them all, have concern for them all, forebear with them all, support them instructing, advising, teaching, comforting, healing the sick, supporting the weak, encouraging the faint-hearted, restoring those who sin, forgiving "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22) in accordance with the word of Our Lord. For it is better that we, who are imitating the Lord himself, be judged considerate [even though] a little

[134] Testament of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery, 276.

> remiss in what we ought to do, than by maintaining utmost righteousness we be condemned as heartless and haters of our brothers. Also, to omit the rest, St. Basil says "And the superior himself, as a father caring for true children, will watch over the needs of each one and will bring them suitable healing as far as he can, and will support with love and fatherly affection the member who is truly weak whether spiritually or physically.[135]

Briefly, the father must be caring and look after his children in a "matronly" manner. As it was presented in the introductory chapter, especially the upbringing of the children in religious and well-mannered way was mostly the duty of the mother of the household. Yet, in the monastic communities this role transfers to the spiritual father. Not only a supportive attitude is an obligation for the spiritual fathers, but also the affection and sincerity are emphasized. A concept of "fatherly affection" is referred, which indicates the emotional part of the role other than the disciplinary one.

In certain examples, the spiritual father was given a role as he is the mother of a child who is prone to the detrimental influences of the outside world. Since the father must educate and should look out for potential risks that might put the spiritual children's religious life into a danger, he was advised to create an atmosphere for the development of the spiritual child: "You shall not make for yourself a lodging or a secular house for your spiritual children in which there are women and go there frequently. [col. 1821] Rather you shall choose to attend to your temporary and essential needs at the home of pious men."[136]

The *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios* describes the father as someone who is a compassionate, emotionally charged individual. The conventional stereotype of the "protective father" is underlined in the source: "As a father he ought to suffer along

[135] *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios near Chalcedon*, 1022.
[136] *Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople*, 78.

with those who are weak. As a person in authority, he ought to be a shield to those who are under attack… Raise up as best you can those who are falling. With fatherly compassion take care of all of them equally."[137] The role of the spiritual father revolves around the two dimensions: being caring and being protective. It is not rare that, when there is a description of the spiritual fatherhood, the author incorporates the emotions and characteristics which are traditionally attributed to women in Byzantine society. Hence, at least, in the theoretical level, the spiritual fatherhood does not conform to the traditional father descriptions always.

In the spiritual fatherhood, equal love towards the brethren is an essential part of the relationship's layout. A superior must not approach in a partial way, should not favor anyone of his children, and most importantly, it is strictly forbidden to show a shred of favoring. These acts put an obstacle on the feeling of unity in the brotherhood and obstructs the operation of the monastic foundation since the "familial harmony" is the most vital guardian of the harmony. Thus, in multiple *typika*, several precautions were practiced in order to prevent any "unequal love." In the *Typikon of Mamas*, the author orders in the case of a transfer of a father from another monastic foundation:

> Sworn order to one from a different [monastery] who is about to hold the office of superior I adjure, by the Lord God and by the great martyr Mamas, him from a different monastery who is about to hold the office of superior in accordance with what has been prescribed above in our monastery not to bring into the monastery with himself more than one brother, and him in the role of a disciple, as it were, from either intimates or acquaintances which he has. For, if he brings over more, many are the improprieties that will spring up from this. For it is inferred from this that those whom he himself will bring in from the outside he considers as genuine sons, while those whom he will find in the monastery he views as illegitimate, which is one of the most improper things.[138]

[137] *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios near Chalcedon*, 1221.
[138] *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios near Chalcedon*, 1022-3.

If a superior who is from outside of the monastic community brings more than one child, this may result in unjust treatment among the children since a tie with the one whom he brought could be stronger than the other children. As mentioned earlier, equal treatment of all family is highly encouraged in the *typika*, and any factor that jeopardizes the equality among the family is strictly forbidden. Furthermore, the caution in the excerpt may point to the existence of certain groupings within the monastic life. These groupings can be based on the time spent together. A possible discrimination between the old monks and the new monks could be at stake. As it can be shown in another example that has been mentioned above, "foreign tonsure" is used in a pejorative way. An individual who joins the monastic family from another establishment is marginalized from other monks. Combining the information from the excerpt, there are strong indications which reveal these "outside groups" do not blend in their new monastic communities in a flawless manner in every cases. Hence, this phenomenon requires a rule, a warning in several *typika*.

Especially in the monasteries whose patron is from an imperial family, the patron can directly intervene the choice of the spiritual father if there are groupings which pose a threat to the unity and autonomy of the monastic institution. All of the monks must be of the same opinion in the decision. If the condition is not secured, the patron has an initiative to intervene the election system. In the *Typikon of Auxentios,* it is clearly indicated as follows:

> If, therefore, all the brothers agree upon one man, all choosing him with one accord, this is pleasing to God, and is also what my majesty desires. It would be a great step toward that peace which is sweeter than pure honey. But if—my majesty prays this will not happen—[the monks] take sides during the election with some of them joining forces with other brothers, each one proposing a different candidate and supporting him on the pretext of friendship or any other convincing pretext which is generally used to conceal

> the truth, the choice of the superior should then be brought to the attention of him who, with God's assistance, then wields the scepter of empire…[139]

When kinship and unity of the monastic community are imagined, the procuring of unity has a twofold dimension. First of all, it is important for being a part of the family and secondly, it ensures the stability of the monastic foundation in an administrative way. The intervention of the emperor can be linked to the desire of notion of political stability.

From the ninth to the fourteenth century, the separation between the biological and spiritual family is highly nuanced in the sources. For instance, Patriarch Athanasios I asserts:

> Unless there is a pressing necessity, neither the superior nor those under him should leave the monastery, either because they are shackled by indifference or vain thinking or because they are thinking of visiting friends or relatives—we have joined ourselves to Christ, and there is no family connection on earth for those "who have their citizenship in heaven" (Phil. 3:20)[140]

Athanasios orders that, regardless of the position in the hierarchy, one should completely cut his/her ties with the bodily world in which the biological family connection holds the most binding tie. However, it is obvious that there have been many concessions for these essential rules, based on the status of an individual in terms of "worldly criteria." These criteria might be, closeness to the patron, socioeconomic status in the society or connection to the "spiritual" hierarchical networks.

Despite all the emphasis on the roles of spiritual father, and the impartiality of him, the monastic foundation did not only host the spiritual relationships but also the biological kinships can be found under the roof of the institution. Yet, this was

[139] *Typikon of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios near Chalcedon*, 1218.
[140] *Rule of Patriarch Athanasios* I, 1502.

under the privilege of selected few who might be from the patron's family or an imperial family. For instance, Michael Attaleiates, who is the patron of the Monastery of Christ *Panoiktirmon* and author of its *typikon*, demands certain concessions for his biological son, in the case of certain minor punishments after a religious transgression:

> "However, I do not want my son, the *mystographos* lord Theodore, to be badly treated or scorned by any of the monks, or annoyed to an unreasonable degree, but I want everyone to love and be in awe of him, to respect and fear him, and to regard and revere him as they do me, since I bequeath to him the privileges of founder, and leave him, after God and the Virgin, as the irrevocable heir and lord, who is not liable to give an accounting for any reason or cause whatsoever…"[141]

Severe penalties were regarded usual for the regular monks in the case of transgressions, still, there has been made some concessions for the son of the patron. It is evident that monastic foundation is not a place that solely shelters the spiritual families, but rather, due to the power dynamics, a completely opposite "worldly" construction can flourish in the religious environment.

The spiritual communities do not approach the different genders equally. The concepts of sisterhood/brotherhood, communal living, Christian doctrines remain as the common ground; however, the responsibilities that were assigned to different genders vary due to the social conceptions of skills and characteristics attributed to men or women. The administrative role of *ephoreia* (which can be translated as protectorate) can contradict with the characteristic of women according to the *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis*:

> On occasion the frail nature of women requires the *ephoreia* and guardianship of men, to drive away to the best of their ability the insolent and greedy people who are likely to attack them from time to time, through the envy and rage and cooperation of the devil who is always indignant at and envious of

[141] *Rule of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and for the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon in Constantinople*, 349.

> the good, so that [the nuns] may be completely liberated from troublesome and bothersome people.[142]

The "soft" nature of the women was regarded as an obstacle in dealing with financial matters. The conventional characterization of women is not only present in the case of administrative works; how they are treated in the spiritual rituals bears importance. One can see the adaptation of the women's role in the conventional household to the monastic context. The menial works have a tendency to be lighter and the skills that are associated with the womanly nature are encouraged in the daily routines. According to the *Typikon of Irene Choumnaina Palaiologina for the Convent of Christ Philanthropos in Constantinople*,

> For thus [the nuns] would devote the appropriate amount of attention [to all their] common [activities], their handiwork, church services, all the housekeeping] duties, reading and prayer in their cells, and all other spiritual labor, since thereby they behave like nuns and not like businesswomen and even worse than laymen.[143]

The roles which do not go well with the social norms in terms of femininity are condemned and nuns were ordered to stick to their conventional works. The term "businesswoman" is used in a pejorative way, and it justifies the incompatibility of women and administrative work in the last example on women's nature.

Regarding the representation of women in the *typika*, the incorporation of the conventional gender roles is another factor that regulates the religious lives in convent. Thinking on the monastic life and spiritual family should always go in parallel with the traditional family roles in Byzantine society, since one can see several clear reflections of the roles that are attributed to women in the secular household.

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[142] *Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God Bebaia Elpis in Constantinople*, 1528.
[143] *Typikon of Irene Choumnaina Palaiologina for the Convent of Christ Philanthropos in Constantinople*, 1387.

The concept of spiritual family mimics the operation of inheritance as well. In the material world, the inheritance of the father is conveyed to the children and what has been inherited ranges from properties to the position (it is possible especially for the individuals who are from the administrative elite). A parallel construction of inheritance can be observed in the monastic context. Not only the patron assigns his/her position to the successors after the death, but also a spiritual father may inherit his place to one of his spiritual children: "Concerning my spiritual son, the ordained monk lord Daniel—if as stated above, he should completely withdraw from the world and [still] be dwelling here (as I have enjoined) [when I die], then [let him] take charge and assume care for my other spiritual children, [p. 137] as well as the greater progress of the *kellion*."[144]

The coexistence of spiritual father's selection of one of his spiritual sons and the notion of equal treatment may seem controversial. However, if we contextualize the example, the spiritual kinship bond was constructed outside of the monastic context or in a more direct relationship. Therefore, the father chooses him to be a more appropriate candidate in the case of death, since he has brought up him, and versed in religious matters in a more personal context. Although, there has been several precautions on not bringing more than one spiritual son in the case of a superior assigned from another monastery, it is obvious that, due to the longer personal histories, a favoritism may occur between a spiritual father and a son. Therefore, the concept of equal treatment changes from context to context.

[144] Testament of Neilos for the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner (Prodromos) on Mount Athos, 1393.

3.7 Conclusion of the chapter

Spiritual kinship is multi-faceted in the middle and late Byzantine monasteries. Not only was it defined by the biblical doctrines or religiously influential characters that authored the *typika*, but the political and economic organization of the monastery shaped its structure as well. At certain points, the duties of the monastic families were driven by the need of the patron, or certain concessions were made for the benefit of the upper class. Furthermore, the roles within the spiritual kinship were utilized strategically to increase the efficiency. For instance, fatherhood was not interpreted as a merely religious duty; due to the hierarchization provided by the position, it evolved into a role of an administrative superior if there was a need of political or economic efficiency.

Descriptions of spiritual kinship in the *typika* also use the characteristics of the "worldly" family. Nevertheless, multi-faceted construction of the kinship is evident in this similarity. Even in the construction of allegories on the familial integrity, "family as a body," a two faceted employment comes to the fore under the arch of "unity." This allegory, on the one hand, represents the conviviality and togetherness of a family, and, on the other hand, it indicates administrative cooperation. Therefore, when considering spiritual kinship in the monastic context, the superstructure which consisted of the political ties and economic practicality must be taken into consideration. This superstructure does not transform "spiritual kinship" to another entity, but it renders the community flexible, a situation in which the roles of the kinship change according to the context. Thus, for instance, the role division between spiritual father and child can transform into a role resembling that of manager and officer, or mother and son in different situations.

CHAPTER 4

CONSTRUCTION OF SPIRITUAL KINSHIP IN LATE BYZANTINE SAINTS' LIVES

4.1 Saints' lives as sources for understanding spiritual kinship in late Byzantium

In this chapter, small-sized spiritual kinship groups will be the main focus. In the latter parts, a top-down construction of spiritual kinship was investigated. In other words, the author's perceptions of monastic documents were observed and the regulation of spiritual kinship and its interaction with the overarching superstructures were explained. This chapter aims to take a more literary approach during the evaluation of the "personal spiritual kinship relationships." Rather than the structural rules which define the limits of spiritual kinship, the testimonies of the hagiographic authors, their literary and social construction of this fictive relationship will be illuminated.

Before going into the details, the employment of hagiographical material brings many questions in terms of credibility. It is necessary to acknowledge certain concerns to be more cautious in evaluating spiritual kinship. Hagiographies, particularly *vitae*, tend to be truly discursive. Especially regarding the proliferation of saints and their *vitae*, the attempts to reinstate the credibility of the events, the authors had to use discursive methods.[145] Regarding the authorship, there are further points which the reader must approach with caution. There is a great possibility that the authors are the disciples of the protagonist saints, or they are from the close circles.[146] Thus, in an environment of doubt towards the saints, it is probable that many alterations can be carried out to convince the audience. However, in the case

[145] Talbot, "Hagiography in Late Byzantium (1204-1453)," 176.
[146] For more information see Hinterberger, "The Byzantine Hagiographer and his Text," 212-215.

studies, the primary aim will be to reveal the ways in which the dynamics of spiritual kinships are conveyed by the author.

The *vitae* that will be used in this part were written in the middle and late Byzantine periods. The chapter plans to investigate three points: the operation of the spiritual family and the influences of the roles within the traditional family, significant literary constructions, and the impact of the socio-political environment on the sources.

4.2 The construction of spiritual kinship in hagiographies

Due to the differences on literary aspects, descriptions of spiritual kinship differ deeply, comparing the saints' lives and monastic foundation documents. The predominance of practical and political aspects disappears, and more personal and literally vivid descriptions are visible in the *vitae*. Still there are certain drawbacks of the personal narratives: authors' relation to the protagonist of the *vita* influences the narrative in a profound way. For instance, if the author is the spiritual son of the mentioned saint, he may exaggerate their relationship or omit certain facts which may pose a detrimental effect to him as a successor of the saint.

The historical context of the primary sources included in this chapter directly influence the relations of kinship. Regarding the region of Mount Athos, it is important to emphasize that solitary monk does not mean he is completely isolated from the surrounding monasteries and religious complexes. For instance Maximos the Hutburner, during his period of isolation, travels to the monasteries and his secluded dwelling back and forth which enables him to interact with other monks.[147] In a similar manner, Saint Euthymios the Younger, who is also living in an isolation,

[147] *Life of Maximos the Hutburner, 461.*

he is in interaction with the monks frequently during his trips to the surrounding monasteries: "As for the all-holy Euthymios, he sometimes associated with the brethren, guiding them and visiting them and filling them with his own graces, and on other occasions he spent time on his own in that very deep ravine; but most of the time, overcome by his passion for spiritual tranquility, he would go to Athos and dwell there by himself in hope, supplicating God and desiring to converse with Him on an individual basis."[148] Hence, the saint is depicted to educate the monastic groups, apart from being in a complete seclusion, and converse with them in encounters. Therefore, when the Holy Mountain is envisaged, one must presume a space in which cenobitic communities, and the solitary fathers are in interaction and there are not any strict authorities of cenobitic monasteries in regulation of the relationship of spiritual kinship.

Apart from the interaction with the cenobitic communities, there is evidence for the interaction among the anchoretic groups in the sources. In the the *Life of Saint Romylos,* the author describes a mediation process between the two solitary groups.[149] It is narrated in the source that there was a spiritual father which acts in wrathful behavior towards his disciple, although this monk is obedient and patient in his nature. Due to this harsh treatment, the son always strives to flee from his spiritual father, and when their relationship comes to an unbearable point, they seek the advice of Saint Romylos. The saint tries to soothe the disputes by giving advise to both parts: "O father and brother in the Lord, you ought not to set yourself so harshly and fiercely upon your brother…" and he tells the disciple the following: "In any case, either you or the old man will die in a little while and you will lose the reward for your pains. If you should stay with the old man till the end, you will be

[148] *Life of Euthymios the Younger, 82.*
[149] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of Saint Romylos,* 13.

crowned among the martyrs and from part of the choir of angels, exalting along with them in all eternity."[150] Thus, the saint's role as the mediator between the father and the son points to the interaction and assistance between the secluded groups of the region.

Furthermore, the assistance among the groups is not limited to consulting, also there is evidence which indicates "physical" help. With the permission of the father, his spiritual son can be "borrowed" by neighboring monks if there is a need of assistance.[151] Hence, regarding the primary sources, distinct religious groups in the region, whether cenobitic or anchoretic, are in contact and they share their experiences, religious views with one another.

In the light of these information, when spiritual kinship in the region is imagined, the borders of kinship relationships may not be as strict as monastic *typika* have stated. On the contrary, especially in the period when the hesychastic movement had emerged, there was a tendency for a cenobitic monk to have connection with a spiritual father who follows a solitary life nearby. The ways in which the future disciples get in touch with their spiritual fathers vary based on the context. In a broader view, the monks who desire an isolated practice with a father who had committed to the same religious life are, first of all, advised to practice their religion in the cenobitic context. Even the most famous "religious athletes" stay in the cenobitic monasteries and follow the orders of the superior for a period of time. Of course, the period of coenobitism may range dependent on certain backgrounds such as religious conviction, socio-political background, or religious knowledge. Anchoritism are approached in an ambivalent manner by the authorities: Despite the

[150] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of Saint Romylos,* 13.
[151] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of Saint Romylos,* 10.

fact that increase of the demand on solitary prayer poses a threat to monastic unity and perceived as an unnecessary, extreme practice, nevertheless, those who committed to the solitary life attracts respect and awe from all echelons of the society. Regardless of one's opinion on solitary prayer, the consensus can be reached about its hardship. In the *vitae*, there are multiple examples which support the difficulties of solitary life. In the life of Euthymios the Younger the frequent attacks of the devil are mentioned in order to underline the hardship of solitary monks: "For the soul-destroying enemy, that is, the Devil, attacked him in his isolation, and exerting every wickedness against him, used every device to tear the holy one away from the cave…"[152]

The difficulties of the solitary life are conveyed in an exaggerated way by the authors of the *vitae* for those who rejected to commence with a spiritual father which is experienced in this type of life: "Another monk, who had shut himself away to pursue an individualistic way of life and who did not communicate with any of the other father there, had unwittingly admitted an angel of darkness instead of on of light; this had given him all sorts of absurd ideas that he should not have had."[153] The possibility of magnifying the difficulties of solitary life in order to enhance the positive attributes of the protagonist by the author is always present. Yet, both from the excerpts and the hagiographic sources in general, it is very common that, regardless of the superiority of a saint's religiosity, everyone who is after a solitary life must find a spiritual father who will guide him throughout this life.

The initiation of the solitary prayer starts with reaching out to a father which is appropriate for the monk in terms of religious practices and the condition of consensual relationship is crucial throughout the process. Hence, initiation process

[152] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 59.
[153] *Life of Niphon,* 599.

could illuminate the common grounds on which spiritual kinship is constructed and it will be useful to take an in-depth look to this period in the selected sources.

4.3 Initiation to solitary asceticism

In the *Life of Saint Romylos,* the need of a spiritual father after the monk's father in the cenobitic monastery is evident, even though he desires a solitary monasticism: "… one could see this holy Kaloromanos weeping and mourning day and night, for he did not wish to carry on by himself without being subject to another."[154] The author expresses the crucial need for a master for everyone who is practicing monasticism, and in the same manner, the solitary fathers need a disciple not only due to the religious necessities, but also due to life conditions. A father will be in need of the assistance of his son(s) when they are in need of building a shelter or gathering some food for their survival.

There are multiple ways of achieving a spiritual kinship with a father who pursues a solitary life. It could be through reference, especially regarding the prominent religious figures involved in the political networks. For instance, Athanasios of Athos is referred to the Emperor Nikephoros Phokas by his uncle who is a monk in the monastery[155] or Maximos the Hutburner had become popular in this way, after being referred by Gregory the Sinaite.[156]

Apart from the referrals, a monk from cenobitic monastery can leave or can be expelled from the monastery and ask for the guidance of spiritual father which dwells nearby: "A timekeeper from the holy Lavra, who had been expelled for some fault, came to the holy one and told him what had happened: "I don't want to go back

[154] Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Saint Romylos,* 6.
[155] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* 149.
[156] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*, 505.

there anymore, because I've been expelled unjustly. I beg you holiness to accept me and let me build a cell and set myself up near you so that I may be guided by your hand."[157] Hence, someone who cannot continue his life in a cenobitic monastery whether it is with his own decision of through expulsion, as in the case, he can search for a spiritual father in the surrounding area.

It is important to note that, regarding the information extracted from *vitae,* not every individual can attain the spiritual guidance of any father they desire, unless she or he is coming from a prestigious social background. The author of the *Life of Euthymios the Younger* states that there has been a "competition" among those who want to be a disciple of his: "Therefore husbands abandoned wives, children left parents, brothers left their siblings, and friends left behind friends as though they were strangers, people for whom their irrational attachment to secular life foreordained that they should take a different view from them."[158] Of course, these narratives' aims to aggrandize the deeds of the protagonist should be taken with a grain of salt; however, from the other hagiographic sources, it can be validated that certain spiritual fathers serves to upper level individuals due to his popularity and network he gathered throughout his life, especially in the Palaiologan era.[159] Hence, it would not be a far-fetched assumption that there might be certain criteria for those who desire to become the disciple of prominent fathers.

4.4 Spiritual kinship and biological families in the *vitae*

Unlike the religious teachings which emphasize complete isolation from the biological family, the *vitae* demonstrate that strict separation from the worldly family

[157] *Life of Niphon,* 601.
[158] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 85.
[159] For more information, see: Hackel, S. (2001). The Byzantine saint. Especially the chapter "The Saint and Society".

was not always the case for the monks. Saints faced the challenges posed by the love of family in certain instances. Euthymios the Younger was frequently visited by a feeling of longing for his wife and his parents: "For to fight off the pleasures,… love for one's parents and affection for a wife… Taken captive by none of the previously mentioned temptations, even though he was often besieged by them, he was as immovable as a strong and unshakeable rock buffeted by waves."[160] The description charged with strong emotions on the issues relating to the worldly family is used as a narrative discourse by the author. He emphasizes the difficult challenge presented by the longing for the biological family and shows the superior discipline of the saint. However, it still shows a crucial aspect of the influence of the biological family. Although Saint Euthymios is praised for his strong will in dealing with these emotions, as the narrative proceeds, he cannot bear the fact that he left his parents behind without letting them know. After having learnt that they are in a poor condition, he reaches out to them and interacts with them via a messenger in order to relieve their pain caused by not having heard from him for a long time.[161] Even after a long time (after 42 years later), he ameliorates their worldly conditions by buying a plot for his biological family.[162]

In drastic periods, such as times of war, there are further examples which point to the intermingling of the two spheres (biological kinship and spiritual) in the *vitae* from the late Byzantine era. After being captured by the Ottomans, Saint Philotheos, his brother, and his mother were gathered in the same monastic foundation and continued their lives as monks and nuns.[163]

[160] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 60.
[161] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 45.
[162] *Life of Euthymios the Younger,* 117.
[163] *Life of Philotheos, 625.*

Despite cases which indicate that complete separation from the biological family in the monastic life was not achieved, the priority of the spiritual kinship ties is evident in the sources. In the *Life of Niphon,* a father and son who had committed themselves to monastic life ask the permission of their spiritual father Niphon in the following case: "The name of Mark's brother was Gabriel, and his father, after he received the monastic habit, was Dositheos. Because of some pressing need Dositheos asked the elder Niphon to allow Gabriel to go to the monastery of Vatopedi."[164] In the excerpt it is clear that the biological kinship is distorted, and the context necessitates the superiority of the spiritual father over the biological one. Thus, the "worldly" father asks for a permission from the spiritual one in the matters concerning his biological son.

The dominance of spiritual kinship in the monastic context is not only sourced from its religious aspects but also owes its power to the ways in which it replicates certain aspects of the traditional Byzantine family. The superstructure of family is replicated in many cases which suggests the interpretation that the operation of spiritual kinship persisted through the mechanisms of the traditional family.

One of the mechanisms that resembles the traditional family is the encouragement of communal activities among the disciples and father. In the *Vita of Saint Romylos*, the spiritual father insists on having the meal together even though one of the spiritual sons is practicing solitary prayer. The father asks, **"**Where is your brother?" and one of the brothers answers as**:** "Father, we eat food for the body, and he for the soul." Hearing this, the old man quickly searched the meaning of my words and when I made clear what I had heard, the old man sat a little while deep in

[164] *Life of Niphon*, 587.

thought. “Go back,” he said to me, “and summon him so that we may feast together and then we will rise from the table.”” [165] Doing an activity together is one of most encouraged acts in the cenobitic monasteries as it was touched upon in the previous chapters. However, in more anchoretic contexts this aspect is valued as well. The case also suggests that extremely individual prayers might not be approved by the spiritual father even in the solitary context.

Heritance is another key concept that can be found on direct relationship of spiritual kinship. Heritance is used as a vital mechanism which guarantees the continuation of the family and consolidates its remembrance through time. Similar concept of inheritance can be observed in the relationship between spiritual father and son in the *vitae*. The hut of Saint Maximos is transferred to his spiritual son Niphon after his death according to the source.[166] In the *Life of Philotheos*, when the saint dies his skull is taken by a monk who is not his spiritual son.[167] Yet, the saint appears in the monk’s dream and orders him to leave his skull to one of his spiritual sons. In the case the perception of the author on the inheritance of the father’s belongings strikes the reader, rather than the actual events. The narrative clearly depicts that the passing of the saint’s belongings to his spiritual sons bears importance for the author.

In certain cases, inheritance can be narrated through the passing of characteristic features from the spiritual father to his son. Leidholm points out that the inheritance of parent’s characteristics to the children was evident in the middle Byzantine sources.[168] In a similar manner, this concept is used by the hagiographic authors in the context of spiritual kinship. Throughout the *vitae* of Maximos the

[165] Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Saint Romylos,* 8.
[166] Niphon, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner,* 381.
[167] *Life of Philotheos,* 637.
[168] Leidholm, *Elite Byzantine Kinship,* 112

Hutburner, he is depicted as a foreseeing saint who is capable of guessing the future events beforehand.[169] Similarly, in the *Life of Niphon,* he was depicted as having similar capacities as his spiritual father. For instance, a monk named Mark visits him and Niphon asks him to bring his brother. However, Mark says that he cannot do that since he is tied to his "worldly" family. As the narrative resolves, his brother was already in desire of choosing the monastic life as Niphon had guessed earlier.[170] In a similar case, Niphon foresees that one of his spiritual sons will be in danger in a fishing accident, then protects him through his prayers thanks to his ability to foresee.[171]

4.5 Sociological aspects of spiritual kinship in late Byzantine saints' lives

Creation of spiritual kinship between father and son was prevalent in the excerpts from the monastic foundation documents and hagiographies. This hierarchy also can be constructed through religious achievements. It is not surprising to see that one of the main differences between the father and son was their experience and knowledge in pious matters. The perception of the monk as a child who has to mature once again in his monastic life was touched upon above. In parallel with this, the revelation of the former religious education can alter the relationship between the father and son. For instance, Niphon, the disciple of Maximos the Hutburner, was a spiritual son of another monk called Theognostos; however, when the father learnt about the successful past of Niphon, he had a change of heart about the spiritual kinship between the two: "The elder found out that the great Niphon was both a priest and had been adorned with many spiritual gifts. From then on Theognostos no longer

[169] See Theophilos, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*; Niphon, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*.
[170] *Life of Niphon,* 581.
[171] *Life of Niphon,* 594.

thought it appropriate for the great one to live in obedience to him, but instead wanted them both to live as monastic brothers together…"[172] After having been informed on the past of Niphon, who was a priest and excelled in spiritual manners, the father "descends" into the position of spiritual brother.

Niphon, the disciple of Maximos the Hutburner, describes their relationship through shared affinities which resembles a unique relationship, rather than being a symbolic one, such as those images of spiritual kins reproduced within the monastic documents:

> He spent many days there, bound to the elder with such bonds of love that they were kindred spirits and saw themselves in each other. They both drove the golden chariot of virtue together to such an extent that, when the blessed Maximos left his cell he gave it to the elder Niphon and constructed another for himself.[173]

In the excerpt, the author depicts his relationship in a highly emotional way such that the spiritual kinship is comprised of individuals predestined to meet each other. The usage of "kindred spirits" sheds light on the importance of the harmony between the members of the kinship. Furthermore, giving his only possession, his hut, to the disciple supports the genuineness of the relationship. Nevertheless, the text must be approached with a caveat, since this was written by the disciple and there is a possibility that he might exaggerate the relationship with his spiritual father in order to benefit from the popularity he provides.

4.6 Paternal authority

One of the most crucial aspect which replicates the roles of the traditional family, and through it consolidates the spiritual kinship ties, is paternal authority. The dominance of male figures was frequently pointed out in the parts on the traditional

[172] *Life of Niphon,* 575.
[173] *Life of Niphon*, 579.

family. They act as a controller of the household, and this division of role can also be applied to spiritual kinship groups.

Obedience is a trait that has been encouraged in both communal context and more personal spiritual kinship as those in the saints' lives. Euthymios was praised for his obedience and this concept was regarded as the "preliminary training" in his *vitae*. The emphasis on the obedience is carried out in a way that it is one of the most important elements of being a spiritual family. Doing the tasks given by the fathers without taking any incentive even though it benefits the survival of the family is evident in the *vitae*. As it was mentioned earlier, father Niphon's disciple goes to fishing without his consent. When he returns from the fishing the father replies to him as: "I'll never eat something that's been caught as a result of disobedience."[174]

Similar stories on fishing and obedience are evident in other two *vitae*. Father Athanasios of Athos order two of his disciples to fish and bring them for the meal.[175] He even describes a location which is appropriate for fishing; however, the children find a better place for fishing and return to the dwelling with a better yield. At the beginning, the father was content since they were in dire need of provision. Yet when they said that a different spot was better for fishing the narrative unfolds as follows:

> But when they revealed the place where they had caught the multitude of fish, as though they considered themselves more experienced, the father could not bear to leave their bold disobedience unpunished even though, they had not done this out of laziness or contempt. Thus, at the father's orders, that haul of fish was immediately cast to the ground and scattered, as he chastened all the others in this way as well, so that they would never disobey his orders, not even for good reasons.[176]

Even though the group was in urgent need of food, and, indeed, those who were tasked to bring nourishment realized their duties with success, the excerpt

[174] *Life of Niphon.* 585.
[175] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B,* 279.
[176] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B,* 279-81.

shows that obedience to the father comes before their means of survival. Thus, in the end the father throws the fish to the ground at the cost of starving.

In the *Life of Saint Romylos,* there is a case of disobedience by the disciples regarding the duration of fishing time:

> Once his master, that infirm old man, ordered him to go and catch fish. He had given him an order to spend a specific amount of time fishing, but the good fisherman, having success fishing, extended the appointed time. When Romanos returned, the old ma did not receive him gladly, even though Romanos was carrying more fish than ever before… he made the fisherman spend the night in the open air.[177]

Since the disciple did not conform the precise rules set by the father, he was punished even though he was more than successful in his job. Indeed, these stories can be regarded as exemplary cases for the audience, in practicality, there might be many exceptions to the rules. Nevertheless, the importance of obedience through fishing task is strived to be conveyed by the authors and its importance is highlighted through juxtaposition with obedience and survival. In all these cases, obedience is emphasized more than their living conditions.

Obedience is a behaviour which may excel the religious norms in terms of priority in some cases. Father Athanasios forgives a brother who had committed a fornication as it was told by the author in the *vita* which was one of the most serious sins that leads to an expulsion. However, when there is an objection in his decision by another brother, he directs his anger to him:

> One of the brethren, who did not understand this, loudly decried the father and the fallen brother to their faces, saying that it was not right to have compassion on him, but that he should be punished by various torments; he also cursed the brother and condemned him for daring to commit such an abominable act. Then our mild-mannered father, staring sternly at the accuser, said, "Paul"(for this was the elder's name), "watch what you're doing.[178]

[177] Gregory of Constantinople, *Life of Saint Romylos,* 6.
[178] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B,* 321.

Even though his decision might be faulty regarding the religious doctrines, any act that leads to undermine the authority of the father requires a more serious penalty due to the threat it poses to the authority and order in the spiritual kinship.

Not complying to or completely neglecting the authority of the father of course had repercussions other than the textbook penalties of monasticism. These structural outcomes of misconduct such as peer pressure or discrediting the non-complier was at the stake in crowded spiritual kinship groups. As is it was demonstrated in the case of Maximos the Hutburner, the acceptance by the spiritual father was one of the most vital elements which tied the member to the group.

Condescension by the spiritual father was quite possible in order to discredit the spiritual son in the case where the son was not compatible with the general views of the father. For instance, Maximos the Hutburner gathers the attention of his superior due to his desire of excessive solitary life: "…he **(**Maximos**)** was beloved by them all but mocked by his own elder on account of the roughness and rigidity of the road."[179] An act of discrediting of the father following a non-compliance may be done in front of the other monks as well in order to enhance the effect of the punishment:

> If a monk had a hot temper and did not realize what was wrong with him but was incorrigible, Athanasios would first advise him and instruct him that the faults engendered in the soul by anger are numerous, and that a great reward lies in store for those who struggle against this affliction. If Athanasios observed him saying that he had good reason to be angry, then he would heal him by a clever device. For he would secretly allow him to be made the butt of everyone's mockery; one person would stand in front of him and mock him with impunity, and another one passing by would mock him as well…unable to endure the abuse any longer.
> [180]

In the excerpt, a monk insists on his behaviour even after the father warns him on that. This act is perceived as an undermining of the authority of the superior

[179] Theophanes, *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*, 453.
[180] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B,* 273.

and as a punishment, and as a way of regaining his authority, he condescends the monk in front of his peers so that it would be a pressure upon the culprit. Although the treatment of Athanasios was referred as "a clever device" in order to mend the acts of the monk, regarding the overemphasis of father's authority in the *vitae*, this treatment can be perceived as a way of adjusting the monk's connection with the father's authority.

Another example from the same source may demonstrate the dimensions of the peer pressure following a discrediting act in the religious community:

> Another monk who was under the authority of this great father suffered from an awful and unspeakable affliction; for while he slept, his urine would flow without his realizing it. He did not know what to do; for what made the affliction completely unbearable was that he could not tell anyone but was ashamed to admit to his incontinence. After he suffered a great deal and came up with every kind of idea and device… finally he decided … to hang himself and commit suicide.[181]

A potential humiliation, even it was led by natural cause, is described as an unbearable pain and due to that monk decides to end his life even though it is one of the deadliest sins. Furthermore, he hesitates to share this occurrence with his spiritual father who has a potential to be one of the mockers.

4.7 Spiritual kinship as political network: Life of Athanasios of Athos

The founder of the great Lavra of Mount Athos, Athanasios, was an important figure in middle and late Byzantine monasticism. Although he lived in the tenth century, many novelties were pioneered by him in the monastic life including new daily monastic devices, and *typika* whose effects lasted in the following periods.[182] He had connections with the Byzantine imperial family, due to his profession as a teacher in the elite cycles and later his mentorship to the emperor Nikephoros Phokas. There

[181] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B,* 305.
[182] Kazhdan, *the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* 219.

are two *vitae* written by different authors after his death, only "Version B" will be used in the chapter. Athanasios' *vita*e can be regarded as crucial evidence, not only for understanding spiritual kinship in the monastic and bidirectional connections, but also it is valuable for researching the proliferation of spiritual kinship in the political milieu.

The *Version B* was written between the eleventh and twelfth centuries by an anonymous monk and, according to Talbot, it was accessible to a wide audience.[183] Regarding the theme of spiritual kinship, the work illuminates multiple issues such as the operation of spiritual kinship between a political figure and a saint figure, the network among those who were mentored by the same spiritual father, the paternal figure of the saint in dealing with his disciples, and the interplay between the political and religious planes in eleventh-century Mount Athos.

From his early childhood, Athanasios acts as a spiritual athlete, as if he is a perfect fit for pursuing an ascetic life. He was raised by a nun, he abandons "childly" acts and dedicates himself to ascetic practices too earlier.[184] This dedication to the religious matters, attracts the attention of the imperial authorities and for a period of his life, he works as a counsellor/teacher for the upper class. All the background that is derived from his *vita* demonstrates the characteristics of a perfect cut ascetic who also has access to important political networks.

The first intertwinement of religion and politics in the establishment of spiritual kinship occurs when Athanasios is introduced to the great elder Michael, who is the uncle of the emperor Phokas. The saint starts to shine out among the brethren with his obedience and zeal, eventually attracting the attention of the great elder Michael. Not only the spiritual father of the saint focuses on the saint in terms

[183] Greenfield & Talbot, *Holy Men of Mount Athos,* xii.
[184] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B, 135.*

of spiritual education, but also he refers him to the emperor. Consequently, Phokas, wonders about this miraculous man and pays him a visit in his solitary cell. After a while the uncle and spiritual father of both Phokas and Athanasios assign the saint as the future father of the emperor by saying that "From this moment on entrust your thoughts to this monk, and in future obey him as your father in all respects."[185]

The network of spiritual kinship is created with the mediums from the higher social classes in the example. The utilization of spiritual kinship as a practical medium in the political area was highlighted by Rosemary Morris in her article: "…far from being the distant, solitary and unworldly figure of popular imagination (and, sometimes, scholarly inclination) the Byzantine saint was an active participant in the affairs of the world. He was both 'in the world' and 'of it'.[186] In the article, she claims that as the fame of the saint increases with the imperial entourage, there is a tendency of an increase among his upper-class spiritual sons.[187] A parallel to that assumption may be seen in the life of Saint Athanasios. The Elder Michael begins to send the members from high echelons of the Byzantine society, as his fame as a zealous saint escalates: "That most blessed Michael, Athanasios's spiritual father, then began to send all the senatorial magnates who came to him for a blessing to Athanasios as well, so that they might also be blessed by him and acquire spiritual benefit."[188]

The author does not mention the relationship between the saint and the new members from the senatorial class since the saint is depicted as a monk who is always inclined to solitary practice devoid of worldly fame. However, his

[185] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B,* 157.
[186] Morris, "The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century," 43.
[187] Morris, "The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century," 48.
[188] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B,* 159.

relationship with the emperor Phokas is referred to multiple times and it reveals deeper insights on the operation of spiritual kinship between a monk and an emperor.

One of the crucial moments in the narrative is the promise of the emperor to the spiritual father. To the saint he claims: "Father, I desire to live in spiritual tranquility away from the storms of the world, and I have decided to renounce all worldly things and serve God, to the best of my ability."[189] This promise, in the following pages shapes the relationship between the two in terms of commitment to spiritual kinship and indebtedness to the spiritual father.

Throughout the narrative, Nikephoros Phokas is depicted as an individual who has a guilty conscience since he did not pursue the monastic life as it was promised to the spiritual father. When the saint is missing, he feels guilty for the absence and interprets it as an attitude by the saint. His emotions were depicted with the words "sorrowful despair" and strives to do everything to resolve the issue that he had caused.

An important theme in the research of the saint is the mobilization among the spiritual brethren. He asks help from those who were spiritual children of the saint. For instance, he sends a letter to the judge of Thessaloniki as follows: "I beg and ardently beseech you, my spiritual brother, do not disregard my request, and do not hesitate or neglect a good deed that will also benefit you, my dear friend. Go quickly to Athos, and make careful inquiries about the monk Athanasios, my most venerable spiritual father…" In the time of crisis, as it can be observed in other structures of kinship, the spiritual brethren try to cooperate in searching the father Athanasios. Another important point is the profile of the spiritual brethren. After the rise of his popularity, Athanasios attracted many influential elites who consulted him for

[189] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B, 188.*

spiritual guidance. Thus, the fact that the subject of the letter, the judge of Thessaloniki, supports the construction of an upper-class network. Hence, this example illustrates the political dimensions of spiritual kinship.

The promise between the father and the son, Saint Athanasios and the emperor, shapes the relationship between them all along the narrative. The shame of not being able to adhere to the promise is frequently expressed by Phokas, on the other hand, the resentment of the father is prevalent due to the lack of commitment by his spiritual son. Yet, the emperor utilizes the relationship with the saint effectively. In one of the times the emperor decides the monastic life, he says to the saint: "The time has come, for which I have long been yearning, to flee the affairs of this world; all we need to do now is to build a place for us to live. So, I beg your holiness first of all to build us cells in which to pursue spiritual tranquility and to establish a church and fit it out for a cenobitic community."[190] In order to follow the ascetic life, the emperor asks the saint to establish a new monastic community which is directed by Athanasios. Not only he is responsible for the administration, and regulation of the operations of the monastic community but the emperor wants him to find the monks who will be accompanying him throughout his religious life. This case must be evaluated with the ongoing political context in which the imperial class uses the religious associations in a way that can contribute to the political power. The emperor is indebted to the saint regarding the unfulfilled promise. With the ongoing situation it is difficult to ask an establishment of a monastic community from scratch and he tries to mend the wrongful act of not keeping the promise. Thus, he restates the desire that he conveyed to the saint and persuades him to construct the Monastery of Lavra on Mount Athos.

[190] *Life of Athanasios of Athos, Version B, 218.*

The promise between the two and resentment of the unfulfilled promise influences the narrative profoundly. As it was mentioned above, the construction of the Lavra was built with the aim of sheltering Nikephoros Phokas in his future ascetic life. Yet, when the saint hears that he has chosen the throne over the monastic life, the author describes the disappointment of Athanasios with the following excerpt: "For the father had undertaken the construction of the monastery because of this Nikephoros, since that man had promised him to renounce worldly affairs and live with him in spiritual tranquility."[191]Athanasios, once again, decides to shut himself into an isolated life after the disappointment caused by his spiritual son, Phokas. The theme of resentment of the saint after the disappointment caused by his spiritual son is evident and constructed with the shifts between the solitary and cenobitic life. Shame of not being able to hold onto a promise, and resentment following the disappointment caused by the disciple demonstrate the themes endowed with emotions in the spiritual kinship relation between a saint and his spiritual son.

With the recent escape of Athanasios, Phokas strives to find the saint since he is of the opinion that he caused this resentment and following escape of the saint. The same drill of informing the spiritual brethren takes place. For this time, the monks, the disciples from the monastery that was built by the saint, conduct an operation for the lost saint. Finally, a monk finds him. The news on the emotional stance of the monastic community which the saint has to take care of are the factors which convince him to return to the monastery: "But when the father learned that the brethren were upset and totally unsheperded and starting to disperse, he turned from joy to dejection and sorrow, and sent Theodotos straight back to the Lavra to let the

[191] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* Version B, 248.

brethren know he was coming."[192] The disciples are in a deep sorrow as it was described in the excerpt. Yet, apart from the emotions of the parish another theme comes to the fore. The privilege among the disciples of the saint is depicted in the narrative with the emphasis on the rather frivolous act of Athanasios after receiving the news from his "most important" disciple. The decision of Nikephoros Phokas made him abandon his duties and reveals the hierarchy among his spiritual sons.

The shame by the emperor leads into a stance which creates, perhaps, hierarchical relation with the saint. The guilt of the emperor continues as he pays a visit to his spiritual father, however, not with his imperial robe: "When the emperor learned of his arrival, he rejoiced because he yearned to see him, but at the same time he was ashamed since Athanasios would see him in his imperial robes. And so he went to meet him not dressed as an emperor, but as an ordinary person."[193] In the context of spiritual kinship, even an unfaithful emperor may leave behind the imperial title and places himself on the lower position in the hierarchy. As a matter of fact, this behavior must be grasped with the ongoing context in which the relationship with a popular ascetic figure consolidates the political power of the emperor. The preservation of the "father and son" connection is beneficial to the both. A shameful son who could not keep his promise of following the monastic life and a resentful father due to the unfulfilled promise contributes to this role.

The spiritual kinship between the saint and the emperor was used in a practical manner by the other superiors not only in the monastery but throughout the region. When there is financial need or when a building project must be undertaken, the saint is used operationally due to his close relationship with the emperor. That is

[192] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* Version B, 260.
[193] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* Version B, 262.

why the monks ask Athanasios to demand help from the emperor when the monasteries of Thessaloniki are needed to be rebuilt.[194]

Contextually the politization of the religious sphere in the middle Byzantine period and onwards is evident in the primary source. The close relationship of the saint with the Byzantine emperor led to disturbances among the rivals of the saint who advocate a less worldly monastic community:

> Then the archon of darkness, seizing the opportunity provided by the reign of Nikephoros's successor on the throne, John, rose up again against the father. After discovering that the elders of the Mountain were extremely simple men who, in their spiritual zeal, did not wish to diverge from their old traditions, he went to visit all of them and deceived each one, taking advantage of their simplicity and giving them this advice: "Why have you disregarded the fact that Athanasios is lording it over the Mountain and destroying the ancient rules and customs? For he has erected luxurious buildings and has constructed churches and harbors, and channeled streams of water and bought teams of oxen and has already transformed the Mountain into a worldly place. Don't you see that he has sown fields and planted vineyards and made them to yield fruit of increase?[195]

The archon of darkness refers to John the Usurper who strives to undermine the authority of Athanasios. It can be observed that the more the spiritual kinship between the emperor and saint is emphasized, the more its political dimensions came to the fore. In the narrative, the unfulfilled promise by the "son" and flights of the father (due to his resentment) were depicted as a factor that consolidates the relationship. Eventually, the emperor used the saintly figure and his initiative in the monastic communities so that he can strengthen the influence in the religious sphere and consolidate the image of pious emperor which was a popular trait at that time. Vice versa, the closeness of the saint to the emperor, indeed, procured him certain authority and respect regarding the behaviors of the other monks. The mutiny of John

[194] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* Version B, 264.

[195] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* Version B, 270.

the Usurper reveals the extent to which the monastic plane has converted to an area of hegemonic struggle. He mobilizes the monks against the saint with the argument that shows the detrimental effects of the ongoing "worldly" developments of monasteries. Increase in the economic means, followed by more financially self-sustainable activities, the "luxury" buildings, the increase in the fruit yield are reflected as a degradation of the spirituality in the monastic context.

Indeed, the arguments from John the Usurper could be valid; however, according to our author, he also makes the same amount of donations to the monasteries in the region as Athanasios did. In other words, political influence is correlated with the financial aids made by the prominent figures.

The reasons lying beneath these struggles are easily understandable regarding the ongoing transformations in the profile of the monastic communities. The association of piety with the aristocratic class was not limited to the emperors or prominent political figures all over the Christian world, but also to all of the wealthy who strived to enter into these monastic communities:

> Already, a great multitude of people from all sorts of different origins was flocking to him, from Rome itself, from Italy, Calabria, Amalfi, Iberia, and Armenia, not only ordinary and common people, but well born and wealthy men as well; and not only these, but also the superiors of cenobitic monasteries and bishops renounced their thrones and came to him and subjected themselves in obedience to him.[196]

To conclude, the spiritual kinship between Athanasios of Athos and Emperor Phokas points out the instrumental application of kinship in the political milieu. The source also reveals the dimensions of the spiritual network that serves a specific socioeconomic class in Byzantine society.

[196] *Life of Athanasios of Athos,* Version B, 294.

4.8 Maximos the Hutburner: A case study on religious networks

Maximos the Hutburner (*Kausokalybites)* was an ascetic monk who lived amidst extreme conditions of solitary asceticism in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Byzantium. The epithet of "Hutburner" was given to him due to the regular burning of his hut as a way of practicing his solitary asceticism. His living in poverty, harsh measures in practicing asceticism attracted the attention of the forthcoming religious and political figures of the region. According to the *vitae* of him, he was a controversial figure since people were unsure about whether he was an ascetic athlete or solely a deranged figure. Therefore, a theme of gaining credibility and respect is evident in his *vitae*.

There are two versions of his *vitae* discovered in the Palaiologan period. The first one is authored by a hieromonk named Niphon of Athos, who lived in the second half of the fourteenth century. The second *vita* is written by Theophanes of Vatopedi roughly in the same centuries with Niphon. According to Richard Greenfield and Alice-Mary Talbot, the investigation of the two *vitae* in a complementary manner reveals the nuances of how the saint is depicted and interpreted by the close circle of the subject.[197] Regarding this importance, in this part the two sources will be taken into account.

In the *vita* authored by Theophanes, the issue of credibility comes to the fore if we are to talk about the approach of the author. Due to the extraordinary characteristics of the monk, it seems that there have been many suspicions towards the acts by Maximos both by his contemporary witnesses and by the audience of the *vita*. There are passages devoted to the authenticity of the saint with the interruptions of the author.[198]

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[197] Talbot and Greenfield, *Holy men of Mount Athos,* xiii.
[198] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner by Theophanes*, 447-9.

We know a few things about the childhood and background of the saint. First of all, he apparently comes from a noble family which facilitated him to become familiar with the Holy Scriptures from the early age. Furthermore, he is regarded as a "child prodigy" in the religious matters as usual, yet his early contact with the holy men near his household is the most vital aspect of his early childhood regarding the subject.[199] He commences to build his spiritual network from his childhood which inherently influences his choices on the religious life as it will be seen in the following parts.

From the beginning of his monastic life, he was depicted as an ardent supporter of the solitary religious practices. Several disputes take place in the monasteries between him and his spiritual father due to the insistence on solitary monasticism. A trigger which enables him to embark upon the anchoretic life was death of his spiritual father from the monastery.[200] This *topos,* as it was mentioned in the former chapters, was very popular before the initiation to the monastic life. The absence of paternal figure which attaches the saintly figure to the traditional family life leads to abandonment of the familial plane for the sake of the subject's religious desires. A similar concept is evident in the life of Maximos. Although he desires leaving the monastery and continuing his religious life in the wilderness, with his spiritual father's insistence it is prevented occasionally. Thus, his freedom in the religious practices begins with the death of the father.

The breakpoint in his narrative occurs when he visits the Monastery of Hodegetria in Constantinople:

> He spent his nights there and, on the days of the procession of the miracle-working image, appeared to be completely overwhelmed by the miracles of the Mother of God, going barefoot and bareheaded, and wearing only one garment made of haircloth which itself was mostly in rags. After his ecstatic

[199] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner by Theophanes,* 449.
[200] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner by Theophanes,* 455.

> vision he seemed to everyone to be deranged, and he himself probably feigned this and exaggerated his folly, like Andrew, that greatest fool for Christ.[201]

The author describes how he went "mad" and how everyone perceived him as a "deranged" individual. Extremely ascetic lifestyle can be seen in his clothing and his acts. Even, the author asserts that he might have overplayed being in a folly since it was one of the most forthcoming characteristics of several popular saints. Yet, regarding the caveats taken by the author, the concept of Christianly folly needed to be employed in a moderate manner. The author strives to curb the exceedingly "insane" attitudes of the saint through the connections which he had made with, either political or religious, the popular figures. Through that, he aims to justify that the insane characteristics of Maximos the Hutburner are actually sourced from Christianity, not from worldly reasons. The attribution of the respect through high-ranking individuals was put into reality by spiritual kinship as it will be shown in the following pages; therefore, it plays a crucial role for the subject.

As it is claimed in the source, Maximos had some connections with the important political and religious figures. First of all, he was invited to the court by Andronikos Palaiologos and he conversed with him.[202] Yet, the saint found these people in the court "weak minded and silly," thus, he did not want to visit here second time. Apart from the imperial milieu, he becomes acquainted with Patriarch Athanasios I and, according to the author, they got along well.[203] The patriarch tries to convince him to enter one of the monasteries that he had founded in Constantinople, yet Maximos refuses and continues living in the doorway of the Church of Hodegetria.

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[201] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner by Theophanes,* 457.
[202] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner by Theophanes,* 459.
[203] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner by Theophanes,* 459.

The perception of the saint as a fool is emphasized by the author as his journey starts with leaving his monastic community. Yet it was justified with the fact that this knowledge has a potential to attract people in order for them to use this religious knowledge; however, the saint only desires the solitary practice. Thus Theodosios explains: "And by day he was considered a fool by foolish people, feigning this in the wisdom of the Spirit, so that a most wicked and arrogant love of popularity might not shake off his fruit."[204] Throughout the narrative, the foolishness of the saint is tried to be explained as a Christianly way, and it is used by the monk in an instrumental way since he tries to fend off the people who come to his assistance.

Despite the fact that Saint Maximos is after the solitary life, the decision must not be taken alone. In order to be a reputable monastic, the recognition of prominent fathers was crucial. This acknowledgement of holiness by the other authorities is frequently visited by the author, which shows us the importance of spiritual kinship in the religious networks. Throughout his life, contrary to his desire of solitary asceticism, due to the concept of "first coenobitism, then solitary," and with the advises from the prominent fathers that encourage him to delve into the monastic life more, his spiritual practice was much of a hybrid one. After a while he joins the Monastery of Lavra. The conventional warning of his spiritual fathers persists throughout his cenobitic years, and they strive him to give up on solitary asceticism. A breakthrough in his character occurs when he starts to tell the visions of the "Mother of God" to one of his former spiritual fathers. The father does not believe Maximos and labels him as a "vagrant" in the text:

> When the elder heard this, he thought the vision was a delusion; and for this reason, dubbed Maximos "the vagrant", the foolish man calling the radiant one deranged. As a result everyone began to apply the same term to him and

[204] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 479.

> they chased him away to stop him from approaching anyone, rejecting him as someone who was deranged and reviling him.[205]

The influence disseminated with the spiritual father and his parish is evident in the case. Although his folly was more ambiguous throughout the text, the author states that everyone started to approach him as a crazy old man who is in delusion. Theophanes claims that this approach was not important for the saint, yet, in the following narrative his search for respect and acknowledgment through spiritual kinship continued.

It is evident that, for a period, he had no clientele as the former famous religious figures, nor had he regular visitors; on the contrary, people seemed to avoid him deliberately.[206] Another breakthrough in the narrative that weaved between the folly of the saint and respect is introduced through his encounter with the other prominent fathers:

> The holy one became acquainted with some great elders, who had their dwellings in ravines, I mean Gerontios in the monastery of Bouleuteria and Kornelios in the region of Saint Mamas, and Auxentios and Isaiah and the wondrous holy Makarios on the island of Saint Christopher, as well as the most learned Gregory of Strabe Langada, who was nourished with heavenly bread by an angel, and the one residing in the monastery of Dorotheos and at Leukai; I am also referring to the holy elders who lived in spiritual tranquility on what is called the Melanea, Gerontios of Saint Mamas, Theodoulos. Iakobos surnamed Maroules, another Iakobos from Trebizond, the holy Clement and Galaktion who lived in spiritual tranquility, the wondrous Mark the Simple, and many other elders… All these men, marveling at how holy Maximos used to destroy his huts by fire and always lived without shelter and without taking thought for the future, but also perceiving from conversation with him the divine grace that dwelt within him, from that time on no longer called him deranged, but the Hutburner and the honorable Maximos and an exceedingly brilliant luminary.[207]

The intention of the author is one of the striking elements that can be derived from the excerpt. Indeed, there is no way of knowing whether the connections had

[205] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 479.
[206] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 483. Theophanes, explicitly states that he had almost no contact with anyone, unless he visited someone.
[207] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 485-7.

taken place between Maximos and these prominent religious figures. Yet, the ways in which Theophanes justifies the holiness of the saint (rather than him being an ordinary fool) through naming these religious figures can reveal an insight on the importance of acknowledgment by the religious authorities even for a solitary monk. Naming all these individuals is crucial since the credibility and reputability of Maximos is highly correlated with the religious network he constructed. Not only a reconnaissance is needed but, as the excerpt suggests, the vindication of the saint by also granting his "luminous" piety is vital in the way of gaining his prestige.

His increasing fame attracted the famous Byzantine saint and theologian Gregory the Sinaite. Through the conservations they had, Gregory does not find his extreme tendencies but he asserts that it was part of the Hesychast practice which was about to be a popular religious movement in the following centuries of Byzantium.[208] Moreover, as the author claims that spiritual kinship with the saint is constructed and this will be instrumental in his future influence in Mount Athos: "So take heed of my advice and divine obedience, and do as I tell you, as your best friend and brother. For it is written, 'A brother helped by a brother is as a strong city."[209] Gregory of Sinai suggests him to stop changing his location by burning down his hut, but rather his spiritual fatherhood is needed. He continues "Please, stop burning your cell from now on, and instead, as the wise Isaac the Syrian says to his spiritual kin, stay in one place and remain there, so that you may bear more fruit."[210] Settling down on a certain location meant that it would be more useful if he is able to accept spiritual sons and share his "brilliant" religious teachings with them.

[208] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 497.
[209] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 507.
[210] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 505.

The acknowledgement by Gregory the Sinaite also paved the way to carry out his solitary practices more freely. Theophanes narrates that "When the other great elders of the hermitages, whom we have previously mentioned, learned about these developments, they agreed with the words of the Sinaite and persuaded the holy one to settle down."[211] Before the increase in his religious reputability through creation of network and spiritual kinship with prominent figures, he was regarded as a novice in the religious matters which led to constant advices of staying in the cenobitic monasteries and mastering the fundamental aspects of the ascetic life. The concept of "First cenobitic, then solitary" was not just a way of controlling the monk community, but also it was a hierarchical organization of monastic life. As it is evident in multiple hagiographic sources, mostly the religious athletes were able to follow a solitary path. Yet, even for them getting the fundamental teachings in the monastery was necessary in order for the religious athlete, to be ready for the harsher conditions. Therefore, the lack of credibility of Maximos usually led to condescension by the spiritual superiors until his connection with Gregory the Sinaite. The spiritual kinship enabled him to be recognized by the religious community of the region. The example reveals how spiritual kinship had a potential to operate in an instrumental way in religious contexts.

The acceptance and acknowledgement of the fathers in the region of Mount Athos with the influence of Gregory the Sinaite is articulated by the author: "When the other great elders of the hermitages, whom we have previously mentioned, learned about these developments, they agreed with the words of the Sinaite and persuaded the holy one to settle down."[212] The excerpt reveals the fact that there had

[211] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 507.
[212] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 507.

been a more comprehensive acceptance of the solitary saint and his practices in the region.

Mount Athos was not a purely religious place, devoid of any worldly associations. As it has been argued, the political connections from the start of its popularity in the middle Byzantine period, frequent interactions between the prominent figures of the Holy Mountain and imperial office have taken place. Thus, shining in the region as a prominent spiritual father possibly led to an increasing popularity across the Orthodox world. Theodosios emphasizes the increase in his popularity with these words: "…through wondrous edifying letters he made the rulers of the earth, I mean Andronikos and Alexander, Stefan and Alexander, eager to him."[213]

With the rising popularity of the saint, his connections with prominent figures from Byzantium such as emperor or patriarch increase in the later parts of the narrative. For instance, Emperor John Kantakouzenos and John V visit him on Mount Athos and ask about the future of the empire and the calamities that are awaiting the state.[214] Moreover, the Patriarch Kallistos I of Constantinople consults him about the religious decisions that he is about to make: "When the most holy patriarch was going to Serbia with his clergy for the unification and peace of the Church, upon his arrival at the Mountain he sought an audience with the holy one."[215] An important detail that attracts attention is the fact that the patriarch is the spiritual son of Gregory of Sinai.[216] The association through the same spiritual father and its operational usage have been touched upon in the previous parts. The spiritual

[213] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 511.
[214] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 519.
[215] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 523.
[216] Kazhdan, *the Oxford Dicitionary of Byzantium,* 1095.

kinship constructed among the Patriarch, Saint Maximos, and Gregory the Sinaite once again supports the usage of spiritual kinship in network creation.

4.9 Literary imagery

The spiritual father is depicted as a matronly character in multiple saints' lives. There are analogies to motherhood, yet this time the motherhood is not a "worldly" type, but rather it is a mother who feeds her child with Christian doctrines and ascetic ideals. In the *Life of Maximos the Hutburner*, Gregory of Sinai is depicted as the caregiver of the monks in the monastery: "When Kyr Gregory the Sinaite arrived there at Paroria he shone upon the benighted people there like a brilliant sun, he nourished with the bread of life all those who hungered for salvation there."[217] The nourishment of the children is a popular allegory in the *vitae*, when an author attempts to describe the relationship between the mentor and disciple. It is possible to witness that those who are in the beginning of their religious education are depicted as children in the hagiographic sources. Thus, the perception of the relationship between the spiritual father and son resembles the one between parent and child. Mentors feed their disciples with religious knowledge in order for them to grow mature and be successful in the way to "salvation". Usage of words of nutrition or acts of conventional motherhood are, hence, evident in the literary descriptions of spiritual kinship.

The employment of the verb "to nurture" (*χορτάζω*) that was used in the excerpt also points out the role between the spiritual father and the son. *Χορτάζω* is translated as to nurture, but if we are to look at its context in classical Greek, it has

[217] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 509-11. " 'Ο δέ Σιναίτης κύριος Γρηγόριος γενόμενος έκεισε ειστά Παρόρια, ώς ήλιος φαιδρός τοίς έσκοτισμένοις έκεΐσε άνέτειλεν, καί χορτάζει άρτον ζωής τοις πεινώσι πάσι τόν σωτήριον έκει."

certain connotations to fulfill, to satiate. This situates the object of the verb as someone who is in a needy position. When we overlap it with the conventional matronly role that was attributed to the spiritual father, an inheritance need of religious knowledge of the disciple and its provider father comes to the fore in the plane of spiritual kinship.

Depiction of the spiritual fathers as those who give birth to their spiritual sons, protect them from the wicked acts, and nurture them with their pious knowledge can be found in multiple *vita*s, especially those that are written by a disciple. The spiritual son of Saint Euthymios the Younger, for instance, describes his father as such:

> In the judgment of sensible people, it would perhaps seem inappropriate and even ridiculous not to demonstrate my strength in composition for my father Euthymios who labored to give birth to me through the gospel, who swaddled me with prayers and holy admonitions, who suckled me with the milk of virtues and nourished me with the living bread of divine knowledge, my father who also prepared me, at least as far as it depended on him, to mature into a man of the company of Christ (even if, out of foolishness, I am comparing myself with infants whose minds are devoid of intelligence).[218]

The spiritual father brings his son to the world for the second time, conveys the religious knowledge as a nutrition that must be taken for every ascetic. References to vital foods such as bread and milk are used in order to envisage the father with his matronly aspects. All the feminine roles of a mother of the household are overlapping in the character of the spiritual father apart from his paternal attributes. Furthermore, the positioning of the disciple as a child and the spiritual father as a parent is evident in the example. As the translator of the text points out, there are certain references to the parts of the Bible which describe the relationship

[218] *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, 5.

between the spiritual father and his son. This reveals the continuity of influence in the perception of spiritual kinship originating from the Bible.

The allegory of parenthood can be observed in the decease of a spiritual father. The notion of being orphaned along with the descriptions of a profound sorrow is evident in the cases in which the spiritual father dies:

> When the holy one's passing became known to everyone, the Great Lavra regarded this as though it had been orphaned again, just as at the passing of the holy Athanasios, and after assembling with sorrow and many tears within the Lavra, they performed the hymns for his laying to rest with candles and much incense.[219]

Although Saint Maximos was a solitary monk who performed his religious practices in a secluded place with his disciples, we know that he was in connection with the monks from the nearby monasteries. Thus, the spiritual parenthood, in this case, can be interpreted as a more symbolic one whose influence spreads to a wider area.

4.10 The *topos* of second abandonment of family

Saints' lives that take place on Mount Athos present a valuable theme of second abandonment of the family due to the historical context. In the previous chapters, struggles that were experienced by the saints in the process of leaving the traditional household have been pointed out. The parents' reluctance to permit their children to abandon the household for the monastic path was a popular theme in the saints' lives from the beginning of Christianity. From the middle Byzantine period onwards, with the rise of Palamite Hesychasm, a movement in which solitary asceticism was at rise, one can witness the scenes of a saint leaving the cenobitic monastery. A similar struggle between the spiritual father from the monastery and the saint is evident in

[219] *Vita of Maximos the Hutburner* by Theophanes, 559.

the *vitae* which are about monks who desire a solitary life. First of all, there is an overarching reason for prohibiting the monks who have hesychast tendencies in the late Byzantine period. As it was demonstrated in certain regulations on the monastic life, there was a complaint on disruption of social and economic conditions from the upper strata of the Byzantine Empire.[220] In the *Life of Niphon* the opposition from the superior of the monastery can be seen clearly. When the monk Niphon strives to leave the monastery for a solitary life, the superior objects to his decision as follows:

> Why are you leading a life that is not one of flesh and blood, one that, moreover, gives rise to conceit and error, rather than reading the sure, middle path which is without rise and free of snares? The reason the fathers ate plants in the desert was because they lacked bread, but here there is both bread and other food to eat, so to avoid conceit you should be content with these.[221]

In order to convince the monk, he attributes the choice of earlier prominent religious figures to live in solitude and in harsh conditions to the practicality and lack of access to the resources in that time. Also, in the *Life of St.Romylos* written by Gregory of Constantinople, insistence of the superior on the saint in order for him to stay at the cenobitic monastery can be observed:

> From that time on then, while Zagora held his body, the wilderness of Paroria possessed his soul. Just as the thirstiest deer seeks the fountainhead he thirsted, and he asked God that he might go to Paroria. But the superior's piety and love did not permit him because he dearly loved this good Romanos. For a while he was also hindered because of this, since he did not want to cause his superior pain.[222]

Even though zeal is forcing the saint to pursue an isolated asceticism, the emotional connection with his spiritual father prevents him to do so. Regardless of the religious gain that he can achieve from his choice, the spiritual kinship that he had created with the superior can weigh more in his decisions. When the time to

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[220] For more information, see *Manuel II: Typikon of Manuel II Palaiologos for the Monasteries*, *Athanasios I: Rule of Patriarch Athanasios I.*
[221] *Life of Niphon,* 579.
[222] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of St.Romylos, 4*.

leave the monastery has come, he explains it to the superior. The moving response of the spiritual father is conveyed by the author as follows: "He seized the opportune moment and explained his plan of departure to the superior who after listening to it became very deeply grieved for the wished never to be separated from him for his whole life."[223] Descriptions of sorrow and the difficult separation between the two illuminate the ways in which certain patterns mimic the occurrences from the traditional household. Of course, this might be just for the sake of the narrative without any reflection on the truth; however, the influence of the *topos* of abandonment of the family from the secular life to the spiritual kinship is more crucial regarding the subject.

The departure of Romanos does not sever the tie between the superior from his old monastery. Rather than his religious connections, emotional expressions are depicted by the author when the superior dies, which resembles the loss of a biological parent. The guilt followed by the death of his spiritual father is the most intense emotion in the narrative: "…(Romanos) shed tear after tear and lamented deeply. He was struck by the sting of regret for contrite and repentant heart, such as the heart of the holy man, if it happened by chance to stray."[224] Indeed, a grief after death of an acquaintance is not peculiar to this context. A more collective grief was performed in the commemoration when a member of the monastic community deceased. However, the emotion of guilt makes the case more intimate than the relationship between a monastic superior and his monks. The case of Saint Romylos resembles a scene of a loss of a biological family member.

[223] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of St.Romylos, 4*.
[224] Gregory of Constantinople, *The Life of St.Romylos,* 7.

The reaction of those who desire to leave the cenobitic monastery for the solitary asceticism are not always the same. The persistence by the spiritual father of the monastery is maintained, yet the future saint can neglect this persistence. For instance, in the case of Philotheos, the author depicts a monk who neglected the wish of the superior father: "He requested the superior's permission to depart from the monastery. The latter implored him, saying, "Do not leave us." But even though the superior left no stone unturned, the holy man was not swayed by his words."[225]

Philotheos was illustrated as a very stubborn character, especially in his pursuit of solitary asceticism. In the continuation of the narrative, he moves into another monastery and when he feels ready for the solitary life, again he tries to leave the place. However, this time he lies about his condition in order to facilitate his departure: "He pretended that he was ill and suffering from deafness. The superior and all the brothers were saddened regarding Philotheos, believing that he spoke the truth."[226]

One of the major differences in the two cases (the case of saint Romylos and Philotheos), loyalty to former spiritual father from the monastery and the incessant neglect of it were used as a theme in order to prove the extraordinary religious qualities of the saint. On the one hand Philotheos is an ascetic athlete who is presented as a zealous person and can withstand the wishes of his spiritual father for a greater religious achievement, on the other hand, Romylos is praised for his loyalty and the profound connection he has built with his spiritual father even after leaving the monastery. Therefore, the attitude of the solitary monk to his spiritual father from the cenobitic monasticism shows that they hold a crucial position in the narrative of the hagiographies, nevertheless, there are no norms on whether to keep the

[225] *Life of Philotheos,* 658.
[226] *Life of Philotheos,* 660.

connections with the “former spiritual family” in the narratives. The end of this loyalty could be used by the authors in a strategic manner.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Defining the family in Byzantine society always has been a challenging task due to epistemological differences between the modern times and the centuries in which the Byzantine Empire had survived. Despite the impossibility of demarcating what constitutes a family, scholars have successfully pointed out that there has been at least a concept of kinhood among the people who are connected through blood or through shared religious affinities. In my thesis, I strived to concentrate on spiritual kinship, a vague subject due to its highly subjective interpretation which keeps changing based on the context. Thus, one of the challenges that the subject of spiritual kinship posed throughout the research was sourced from its fictive nature, which prevented it to be defined by any social norms.

On the other hand, this vague situation of the concept of spiritual kinship has forced me to investigate the perception of it with different subjects and in different contexts. The aim of the thesis has not been generating general patterns on the operation of spiritual kinship, but to illuminate its employment based on different contexts in hagiographic sources.

In the second chapter the transition from worldly family to spiritual community was investigated through saints' lives. The aim was to juxtapose the traditional family and spiritual community to unveil the essential reasons which led to a contradiction between the spiritual and secular sphere. The interaction with the prospect saint and his family was investigated in a bidirectional way, which unveiled the reaction of the family towards their children who were after an ascetic life. Furthermore, I discovered that the ways in which these children acted during the

abandonment period differed depending on the gender of the protagonist. A deeper investigation on the difference was applied, and, I believe, it provided vital information on the obstacles for women who desired the ascetic life due to the traditional gender roles in the household.

First of all, I tried to clarify the subject of spiritual kinship. I divided it into two categories: communal and reciprocal. The reason of this division was the context in which spiritual kinship emerges. Communal one takes place in the monastic communities, whereas the reciprocal (more personal) one can be seen in the groups who are after anchoretic asceticism. The communal spiritual kinship was observed through the monastic foundation documents. The descriptions and suggested behaviors mostly authored by the patrons of the monasteries, first, revealed the continuities and shifts in the concept of spiritual kinship, and, secondly, how it was reshaped in tandem with the political and economic structure of the monastery. Investigating spiritual kinship with the *typika* demonstrated the non-religious dimensions of its operation and pointed out the transformation of the roles within this fictive relationship for the sake of practicality. In other words, investigation of spiritual kinship through monastic documents was essential to grasp its multi-faceted characteristic, which was influenced by the power focuses, political networks, and even the ongoing economic structure of the monastic community. To achieve this, certain breakpoints which give away the foundation of the plain on which spiritual kinship flourished was under investigation. Through these findings, I concluded that the concept of "spiritual kinship" has many facets in the monastic context, and eventually its every characteristic shaped by the top-down regulations such as economics, hierarchical power within the institutions, and self-sustainability of the monasteries. Furthermore, the constant change in the roles and duties of spiritual

kinship can occur in the same monastery, thus a specific *typikon* does not present a single depiction of a family, rather the roles of the spiritual kinship members change depending on the different contexts in the same monastic institutions. That is to say, a role of father is in constant reproduction based on the task he is undertaking. For instance, when dealing with the religious issues of his children, a textbook paternal role can be observed, yet when we consider the physical or fiscal works, they can act as administrators without losing their roles in spiritual kinship.

This everchanging structure of the kinship reflects upon the literary descriptions as well. The part in which the body metaphor is used concisely illustrates that the "body-limb" relation can have twofold meanings: the one that is associated with being a family (in other words, signifies the familial harmony among the father and brethren in the monastic community) and body as an administrative unit which uses instrumentally in the communal works that consolidates the self-sufficiency within the institution. To conclude succinctly, spiritual kinship that is constructed in the monastic *typika* is prone to be affected by every aspect pertaining to the physical entity of the institution.

In the second part of my thesis, type of a spiritual kinship that has a personal aspect was investigated through middle and late Byzantine saints' lives. In contrast to the communal spiritual kinship, we encounter a unique perception of the relation rather than a symbolic one. The literary descriptions, reccurring *topoi*, and social structure of the spiritual kinship perceived by the authors of hagiography were used in order to draw a comprehensive picture. Furthermore, I showed its interaction with the socio-political context of the late Byzantine period.

Studies on spiritual kinship have started to be more popular, as studies on the Byzantine family attract the attention of new scholars. The investigation of spiritual

kinship has a potential to unveil many crucial aspects on Byzantine society's affiliation with religion such as the ways in which Byzantine society was organized under religious ideals, how the network of spiritual kinship affected not only the religious but also the political sphere, and even the identification through religious affinities. Therefore, maintaining the studies on the subject could have an unmeasurable value for understanding both people's attachment to religion and their perception of family.

The fourth chapter aimed to explore spiritual kinship in a smaller context, through the eyes of the hagiographic authors. It included the subjects that are tied to them with a master/disciple relationship. The more subjective narratives of the authors unveiled the mental contrition of these personal relationships, and how they can be used in a strategic way. To show these, two exemplary *vitae* were used, and they unveiled the position of spiritual kinship in both religious and political networks. That is to say, the effectiveness of mechanisms belonging to spiritual kinship (such as hierarchical positions, emotional connections) is borrowed by creating political and religious networks and these were inherently linked to the socio-political context of the middle and late Byzantine periods.

Furthermore, in the fourth chapter, concepts, roles, and themes that were derived from the traditional Byzantine family's role can be distinguished. The application of mechanisms such as paternal authority and loyalty to the spiritual father from the monastic community showed that there are vital influences from the traditional Byzantine family.

In the part in which literary investigations are applied, it is shown that the imagery of the father in prominent sources is tried to be likened to the traditional mother, whose primary objective is to nurture and bring up the children. Therefore,

along with the general characteristics of the spiritual father, who is protective and wise in religious matters, in the literary analysis, the matronly aspects of him are highlighted. This demonstrated the constant changing roles of the spiritual father based on the events that they were experiencing.

To summarize very briefly, in the research of "spiritual" kinship, four criteria are crucial in order to achieve a profound comprehension: the period of abandonment of the worldly family, the hierarchical construction of relations, its employment in different contexts regarding the sociopolitical backgrounds of the individuals involved, and its sociological and literary construction in the narratives which are written through a more personal approach as it was demonstrated in the *vitae.*

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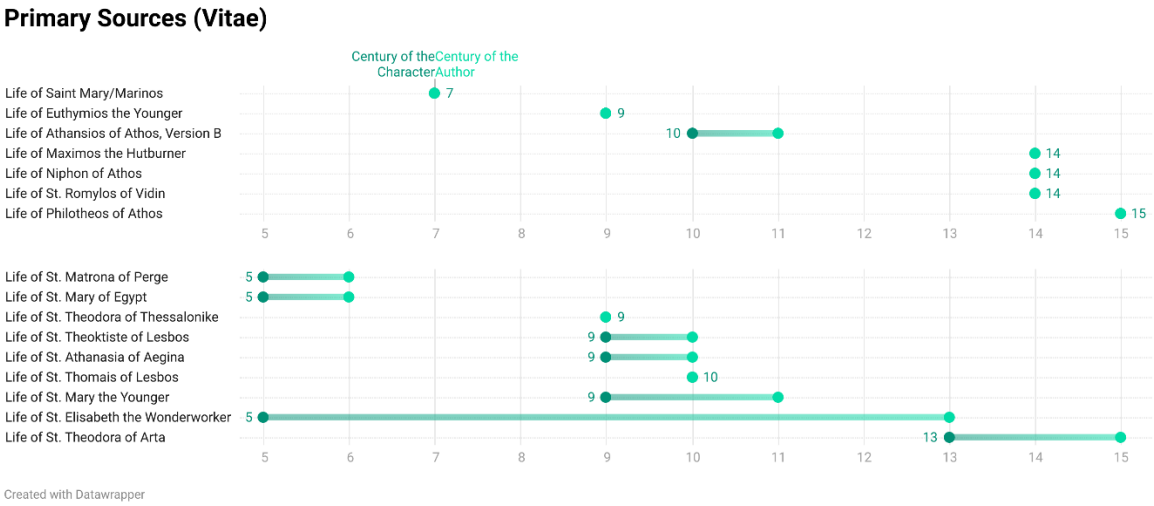
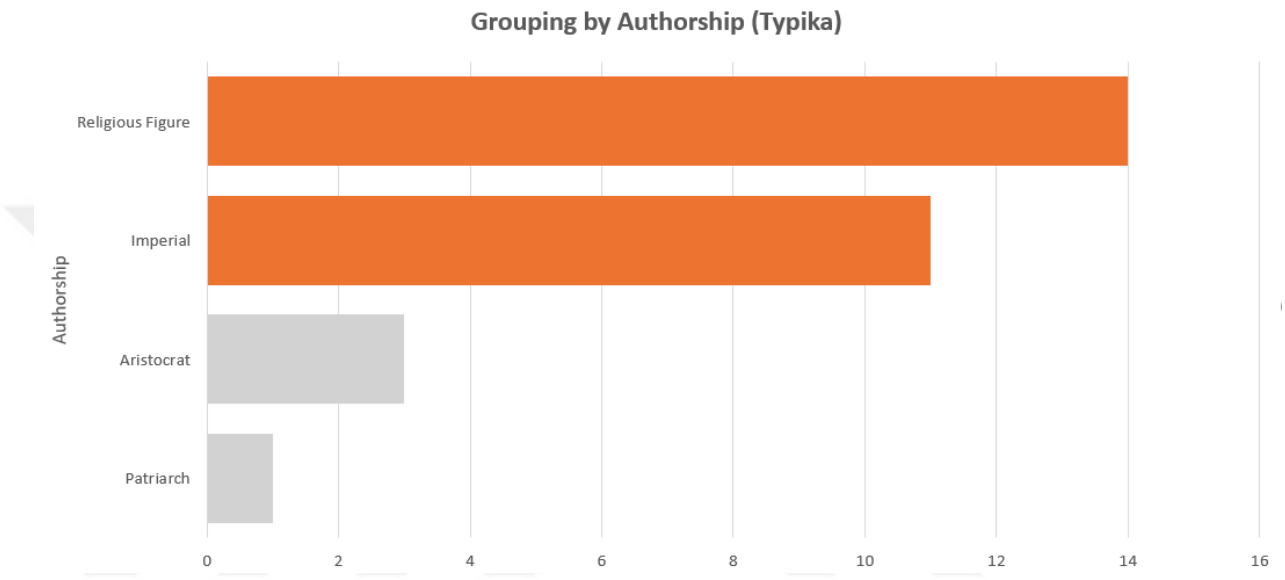
APPENDIX A

VITAE USED IN THE THESIS, GROUPED BY CENTURY OF THE CHARACTER AND THE AUTHOR



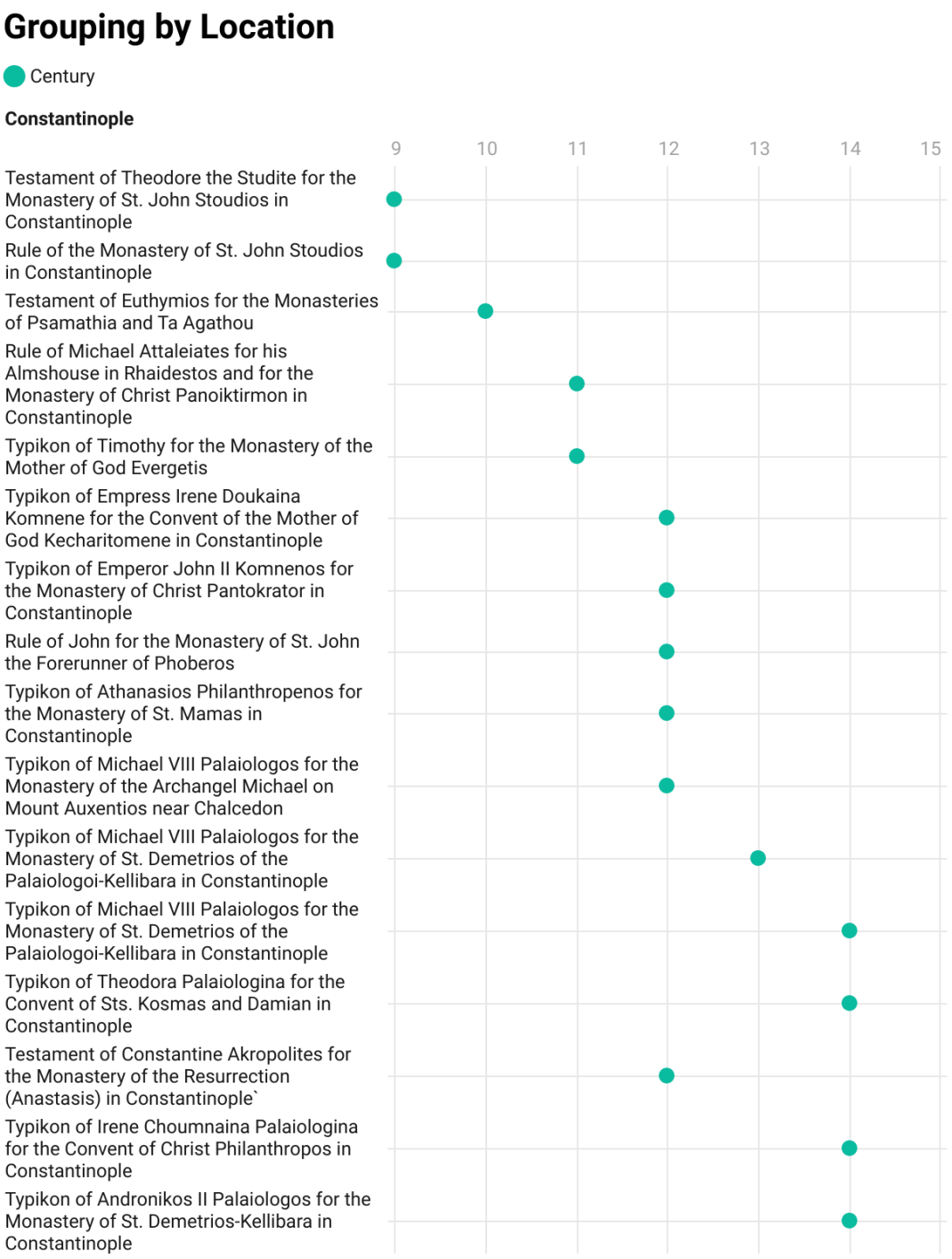
APPENDIX B

TYPIKA GROUPED BY THE BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHORS



APPENDIX C

TYPIKA SOURCES GROUPED BY LOCATION



APPENDIX D

TYPIKA SOURCES GROUPED BY LOCATION (CONTINUED)

