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NATIONS AND MINORITIES IN PSELLOS' CHRONOGRAPHIA (976–1078)

Michael Psellos (1018–1081)¹ in his *Chronographia* gives a unique insider's view into the nations and minorities which the Byzantine Empire² needed to know and understand³. He wrote mainly about court dynamics⁴ and how the empire and its allies and enemies were seen from the Palace in Constantinople. Scholars have undertaken to compare his evidence with that provided by other historians such as Skylitzes⁵, Kekaumenos⁶, Aristakes Lastiverci⁷, Nicephoros Bryennios⁸ as well as focusing on peoples and minorities which later became prominent during the Comnenian dynasty (1081–1177)⁹. However, the *Chronographia* yields valuable information about Psellos' attitude formed long before the First Crusade (1095–1099). Psellos' letter to Machetarios¹⁰ reveals that he altered his writing strategy in 1057 when Isaak I Comnenos (1057–1059) became emperor:

¹ *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia*, ed. D.R. REINSCH, Berlin 2014 [= Mil.S, 51] (cetera: PSELLOS, *Chronographia*).

² A. KALDELLIS, *Ethnography after Antiquity. Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature*, Philadelphia 2013.

³ The Byzantine interest in the outside world is brilliantly described in CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G. MORAVCSIK, trans. R.J.H. JENKINS, Washington 1985 [= CFHB, 1; DOT, 1] (cetera: CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*).

⁴ F. LAURITZEN, *The Depiction of Character in the Chronographia of Michael Psellos*, Turnhout 2013 [= B.SBHC, 7].

⁵ *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, rec. I. THURN, Berolini 1973 [= CFHB.SBe] (cetera: SCYL., *Hist.*).

⁶ CECAUMENO, *Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo. Stratēgikon*, trans. et ed. M.D. SPADARO, Alessandria 1998 [= Hel, 2].

⁷ *Aristakes Lastivertci's History*, trans. R. BEDROSSIAN, New York 1985.

⁸ NICÉPHORE BRYENNIOS, *Histoire*, trans. P. GAUTIER, Brussels 1975 [= CFHB.SBr, 9].

⁹ P. MAGDALINO, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180*, Cambridge 1993.

¹⁰ P. MOORE, *Iter Psellianum*, Toronto 2005. [EP 365]. Sathas 5, 108. See M.J. JEFFREYS, M.D. LAUXTERMANN, *The Letters of Psellos. Cultural Networks and Historical Realities*, Oxford 2014 [= OSB], p. 363.

new court dynamics required a new history. Therefore, each book needs to be seen separately when dealing with nations and minorities.

Book 1 [Basil II (10th January 976 – 15th December 1025)] mentions some peoples: Arabs, Assyrians, Babylonians, Iberians, Scythians. This coincides with the concerns of Basil II with the North and the South East of the empire. However, the references are single instances and are not developed into a narrative.

Book 2 [Constantine VIII (15th December 1025 – 11th November 1028)] has no references to foreign nations or minorities (like book 6a, 7c).

Book 3 [Romanos III (15th November 1028 – 11th April 1034)] only refers to Saracens and Syria. That is because of the important narrative of the failed campaign of Edessa in 1031¹¹.

Book 4 [Michael IV (11th April 1034 – 10th December 1041)] for the first time gives wider information. It refers to Babylonians, Bulgarians, Persians, Scythians. Once more the concern is North and South East.

Book 5 [Michael V (10th December 1041 – 20th April 1042)] mentions only peoples to the North: Scythians and Tauroscythians.

Book 6 [Constantine IX (11th June 1042 – 11th January 1055)] mentions Alans, Armenians, Egyptians, Iberians, Indians, Italians, Macedonians, Russians.

Book 6a [Theodora (11th January 1055 – 31st August 1056), Michael VI (31st August 1056 – 31st August 1057)] mentions no foreign peoples.

Book 7 [Isaak I (1st September 1057 – 22nd November 1059)] mentions Assyrians, Egyptians, Getai, Italians, Moesians, Parthians, Tauroscythians.

Book 7a [Constantine X (24th November 1059 – 22nd May 1067)] mentions Moesians, Persians, Syria, Triballi.

Book 7b [Romanos IV (1st January 1068 – 24th October 1071)] mentions Armenians, Curds, Franks, Persians.

Book 7c [Michael VII (22nd May 1071 – 24th March 1078)] mentions no nations or minorities (like book 2).

	976	1025	1028	1034	1041	1042	1055	1057	1059	1067	1071
	1	2	3	4	5	6	6a	7	7a	7b	7c
Alans						X					
Arabs	X										
Armenians						X				X	
Assyrians	X							X			

¹¹ PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 3, 7–11. The siege is described in SCYL., *Hist.* Romanos, III, 13 (387, 89 THURN) (within the date range September 1031 – August 1033: 15th Indiction 6540 [Romanos, III, 9 (384, 1–2 THURN)] – 2nd Indiction 6542 [Romanos, III, 17 (390, 90 THURN)]).

	976	1025	1028	1034	1041	1042	1055	1057	1059	1067	1071
Babylonians	X			X							
Bulgarians				X							
Celts	X										
Curds										X	
Egyptians						X		X			
Franks										X	
Getae								X			
Iberians	X					X					
Indians						X					
Italians						X		X			
Macedonians						X					
Moesians								X	X		
Parthians								X			
Persians				X					X	X	
Russians						X					
Saracens			X								
Scythians	X			X	X				X		
Syria			X						X		
Tauroscythians					X			X			
Triballi									X		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	6a	7	7a	7b	7c
	976	1025	1028	1034	1041	1042	1055	1057	1059	1067	1071

The data is striking and needs to be highlighted before it is interpreted. Books 2 (1025–1028), 6a (1055–1056) and 7c (1071–1078) do not mention any foreign nations. In the first case it is not striking since Psellos was aged 8 to 10 years old¹². The second case may be due to the recalling of Psellos to court during a short

¹² Psellos' birthdate: Before April 1034, he was not yet 16 (PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 3, 25, 1–3).

reign¹³. However the last case is surprising since the only portrait of Psellos which survives, shows him as an advisor to Michael VII¹⁴. The evidence of the *Chronographia* would indicate that his advice during 1071–1078 was not about foreign affairs¹⁵. Psellos was also too young to be writing book 1 (976–1025) while Basil II was alive¹⁶. He indicates that his first main memory was the funeral of Romanos III in 1034¹⁷. That would mean that his description of the siege of Aleppo in 1031 (when he was 13 years old) was rather hearsay¹⁸. Therefore, the direct and contemporary evidence would seem to cover book 4 to book 7b (1034–1071), reasonable since Psellos was 16 to 53 years old.

Most references to foreign peoples appear in books 6, 7 and 7a (1042–1055; 1057–1067). They amount to 58% of the total (20 out of 37). Of the 18 imperial speeches¹⁹, ten are dedicated to Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–1055) and two to Theodora (1056). Thus, twelve speeches were delivered at the same time as the period of most references to foreign nations in the *Chronographia*. Given that these imperial speeches were recited at court, it would imply that during the period 1042–1059 Psellos was active at court, and for this reason he heard direct information about the foreign relations of the empire. The period of 1042–1059 is important since it is the time when Psellos knew the events concerning the empire and the foreign policies and pressures.

In the period 1042–1059 he does not mention Arabs or Saracens, but shows concern for Egypt (Fatimid caliphate) and the Parthians/Persians (Seljuk Turks). He is aware of the Balkans and mostly the Moesians/Scythians and Triballi. In the period 1042–1055 alone he seems aware of the Caucasus (Alans/Armenians/Iberians), while it does not concern him at other times. This is important because the mistress of the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos was from Alanian²⁰. Moreover, Grigor Magistros²¹ was representative of Media (Vaspurakan). Thus,

¹³ PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 6, 13. Theodora reigned from 11th January 1055 to 31st August 1056.

¹⁴ Athos, Pantokratoros 234, f. 254 recto.

¹⁵ Psellos claims Constantine IX dictated to him a letter addressed to the Egyptian Caliph. (PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 6, 190). He also wrote the letter in the name of Michael VII Doukas to Malik Shah. *Lettre au Sultan Malik-Shah rédigée par Michel Psellos*, ed. et trans. P. GAUTIER, REB 35, 1977, p. 73–97.

¹⁶ Seven years old at the death of Basil II on 15th December 1025. He says he does not remember seeing either Basil II or Constantine VIII (PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 3, 1, 12–16).

¹⁷ PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 3, 4.

¹⁸ PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 3, 7–11.

¹⁹ *Michaelis Pselli Orationes panegyricae*, ed. G.T. DENNIS, Stuttgartiae 1994 [= BSGR]. F. LAURITZEN, *Sul nesso tra stile e contenuti negli encomi di Psello (per una datazione dell'Or. Paneg. 3 Dennis)*, MG 7, 2007, p. 149–158.

²⁰ PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 6, 151–155.

²¹ *Գրիգոր Մագիստրոսի թղթերը* [The Letters of Grigor Magistros], Alexandropol 1910. See also G. MURADYAN, *Greek Authors and Subject Matters in the Letters of Grigor Magistros*, REArm 35, 2013, p. 29–77.

the North, East and South were important according to Psellos. The west appears irrelevant to him, all the more striking since the Norman advance was against Byzantine territory in Southern Italy. The period before Psellos was active at court (1018–1042)²² sees him focusing on Arabs and Scythians almost exclusively (Celts and Iberians are briefly mentioned). The subsequent period (1067–1078) Psellos mentions Armenians, Curds, Franks (Normans) and Persians (Seljuk Turks) alone (only 1067–1071).

Psellos' understanding of foreign nations and minorities can be divided into three phases.

- 1) Focus on Arabs and Scythians [1018–1042]
- 2) Wide range of nations [1042–1067]
- 3) Focus on Armenians, Curds, Franks and Persians [1067–1071]

The evidence of the panegyrics tells us that the second phase represents his more detailed understanding the court's view of the outside world. In general terms the shift from phase 1 to phase 3 seems to coincide with Byzantine history: the concern for Arabs and Pechenegs, at the beginning of the century, was replaced by the arrival of the Normans and Turks in the second half of the century. The discovery of three phases is interesting, since it reveals Psellos' understanding of the world he was watching change before his very eyes. The main problem, with the terms he uses, is that it is not immediately clear today to which population he is referring. Thus, one will now propose some solutions to identify the populations he names in the *Chronographia*.

Alans (Ἀλανοὶ, Ἀλανία 6, 145; 6, 151–155) = Ossets [a. 1050–1054]²³. They are to be identified with modern day Ossets²⁴ because Tzetzes records a sentence in Alanic²⁵ which can be understood as an older form of Ossetic²⁶. It is not clear

²² F. LAURITZEN, *Psellos' Early Career at Court*, BB 68, 2009, p. 135–143.

²³ A. ALEMANY, *Sources on the Alans. A Critical Compilation*, Leiden 2000; I. GERSEVITCH, *Word and Spirit in Ossetian*, BSOAS 17, 3, 1955, p. 478–489; CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 10, 11. For Psellos on Alania see С.Н. МАЛАХОВ, *К истории алано-византийских отношений в 1045–1055 гг.*, [in:] *Власть, общество и церковь в Византии. Сборник научных статей*, ed. С.Н. МАЛАХОВ, Н.Д. БАРАБАНОВ, Армавир 2007, p. 117–129.

²⁴ An Osset is present on the road between Vladikavkaz and Tbilisi at the beginning of M. LERMONTOV, *A Hero of our time*, Bela, St Petersburg 1840.

²⁵ H. HUNGER, *Zum Epilog der Theogonie des Johannes Tzetzes*, BZ 46, 1, 1953, p. 302–307.

²⁶ Τοῖς Ἀλανοῖς προσφθέγγομαι κατὰ τὴν τούτων γλώσσαν· καλὴ ἡμέρα σου αὐθέντα μου ἀρχόντισσα πόθεν εἶσαι· ταπαρχὰς· μέσφιλι χσινὰ κορθι κάντα καὶ τᾶλλα. οὐκ αἰσχύνεσσαι αὐθέντρια μου νὰ γαμῆ τὸ μουνὶν σου, παπάς. Να φαρνετζ κιντζι· μέσφιλι, καιτζ· φουά. Σαουγγέ. Tzetzes *Theogonia* in H. HUNGER, *Zum Epilog...*, p. 305. R. BIELMEIER, *Das Alanische bei Tzetzes*, [in:] *Medio-iranica*, ed. W. SKALMOWSKI, A. VAN TONGERLOO, Leuven 1993, p. 1–28. The translation into Greek is actually in red above the lines of Ossetian only present in Vind. Phil. Gr. 118 fol. 161v. See also

the geographic area of the Alans/Ossets at this time. Important is the inscription of Bolshoi Zelenchuk (Karachay Cherkessia, Russian Federation) which appears to be written in Ossetian but with Greek letters²⁷. Moreover the church at Senty (Karachay Cherkessia, Russian Federation) has an inscription in Greek dated to 965 which refers to Alania²⁸. Alda of Alania gave the fortress of Anakoufia (Anakopia) to Romanos III²⁹. Thus the Alans/Ossetians appear to control a large area north east of the Black Sea.

Arabs (Ἀραβες 1, 31) = Arabs [a. 976–1025]. See Saracens, Assyrians, Babylonians. Generic reference.

Armenians (Ἀρμένιοι 6, 189; 7b, 34–40 [a. 1045 and 1067–1071]) = Armenians³⁰. He refers to a part of Armenia becoming Byzantine³¹, i.e. the kingdom of Ani and its incorporation into the Byzantine Empire in 1045³². Evidence of this are the Armenian and Greek inscriptions at Ani³³. The second reference is to Chatatourios an Armenian man³⁴. However, his story does not allow one to understand from which kingdom or province of Armenia he originated.

Assyrians (Ἀσσύριοι 1, 9; 1, 11; 7, 50 [a. 980; 1057–1059]) = Caliphate with capital Baghdad. The focus is on the city rather than the country. See Babylonian. An ancient name for a new reality. Ancient Assyria was located in Mesopotamia, between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. The ancient name refers to a geographic reality not an ethnic one and appears to indicate the territory controlled by the Caliphate. Given the proliferation of emirates at this time, it would indicate the limited territory under direct control of Baghdad. Therefore Assyrians indicates central Iraq of today.

A. LUBOTSKY, 11. *Appendix. The Alanic text in Tzetzes' "Theogonia"*, [in:] IDEM, *Alanic Marginal Notes in a Greek Liturgical Manuscript*, Vienna 2015, p. 51–67.

²⁷ L. ZGUSTA, *The Old Ossetic Inscription from the River Zelenčuk*, Vienna 1987.

²⁸ + Ἐνεκεν[ισ]θ(η), ἐνεώσθ(η) ὁ να[ὸς] τ(ῆς) | ὑπεραγίας θε(εοτόκ)ου ἐπὶ βασηλ[είας] | Νηκηφόρου, Βασηλ[είου] καὶ | Κωνσταντίνου | κὲ Δα(υ)δ ἐξουσηγκράτορ(ος) [Ἀλανίας] | κα(ι) Μαρίας ἐξου-σ[η]γκράτ[ο]ρ[ισ]σης | μ]ην(ῆ) Ἀπρη(λίου) β', ἡμέρα ἀγ[ί]ου Α[ντιπάσχα] (?) | δηὰ χηρὸς Θεοδώρου, μητ[ροπο]λ(ίτου) καθηγη(ασμένου) Ἀλανί(ας), ἀπ[ὸ] κ[τ]ί[σε]ω(ς) κό(σμου) ἔτ(ους) ςυογ'. Ἀν[ε]γρά-φε[το] δηὰ χηρὸς [τοῦ] δείνος | ἀποκρησ(ιαρίου) πατρ(ικίου) (Vinogradov and Beleckij in A.Ю. Виноградов, Д.В. Белецкий, *Нижний Архыз и Сенты – древнейшие храмы России. Проблемы христианского искусства Алании и Северо-Западного Кавказа*, Москва 2011, p. 241–245).

²⁹ τότε δὴ καὶ Ἀλδῆ ἡ Γεωργίου τοῦ Ἀβασγοῦ γυνή, τοῦ γένους οὔσα τῶν Ἀλανῶν, προσερρῆ τῷ βασιλεῖ, παραδούσα καὶ τὸ ὄχυρῶτατον φρούριον τὴν Ἀνακουφίαν. (SCYL., *Hist. Romanos*, III, 16 (389, 48–50 THURN). The effective possession of the fortress by the Byzantines is witnessed by Greek inscriptions published in A.Ю. Виноградов, *Эпиграфика. Надписи с Анакопийской горы*, [in:] Е. Ендольцева, *Искусство Абхазского царства VIII–XI веков. Христианские памятники Анакопийской крепости*, Санкт-Петербург 2011, p. 209–224.

³⁰ CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 22, 44.

³¹ PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 6, 189.

³² А.П. КАЖДАН, *Армяне в составе господствующего класса Византийской империи в XI–XII вв.*, Ереван 1973.

³³ J.P. MANÉ, *Ani sous Constantin X d'après une inscription de 1060*, TM 14, 2002, p. 403–441.

³⁴ Chatatourios 61 PBW 2016.

Babylonians (Βαβυλώνιος 1, 11; 4, 19 [a. 976–1025; a. 1040]) = Caliphate with capital Baghdad. Focus is once more on the capital. See Assyrians. An ancient name for a city close to modern day Baghdad. It would therefore refer to those people living in the capital of the Caliphate.

Bulgarians (Βούλγαροι 4, 40–47 [a. 1040–1041]) = Bulgarians during the revolt headed by Peter Delian and Alusianos. They are mentioned by name and refer to a people rather than a place in the *Chronographia*. This reflects the conflict over territory between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians which had been partially settled four years before Psellos was born. Psellos grew up with Bulgarians living within the Byzantine Empire.

Celts (Κελτοί 1, 31) = Northern Europeans (which ones?) [a. 976–1025]. Unclear which northern population he is indicating.

Curds (Κούρτοι 7b, 20 [a. 1067–1071]) = Curds. Brief mention, but important given that it indicates that the meaning of the title of Alp Arslan (1063–1072) was ‘ruler of Turks or Curds’³⁵.

Egyptians (Αιγύπτιοι 6, 159; 6, 190; 7, 50 [a. 1050–1054, 1057–1059]) = Fatimid Egyptians³⁶. Fatimid Caliphate with capital in Cairo. The references concern only the period 1050–1059 and reveal the shared concern of the Caliphate of Cairo to the events in Baghdad, namely the sieges and conquest (1058) by the Turks of Toğrul Bey (1037–1063).

Franks (Φράγγος 7b, 39 [1067–1071]) = Normans after the conquest of most Byzantine territory in Italy.

Getae (Γέται 7, 67 [a. 1057–1059]) = Uzes. The identification is certain since Scylitzes refers to the same episode giving the name as Uzi³⁷.

Iberians (1, 10; 1, 15; 1, 17; 1, 31; 6, 100; 6, 105 [a. 976–1025, a. 1047]) = Georgians.

Indians (Ινδοί 6, 159 [a. 1050–1054]) = India, land from where spices come (see also Egyptians).

Italians (Ιταλοί 6, 78; 7, 24 [a. 1043, a. 1057–1059]) = Italians rather than Normans and before the latter settled properly in Italy.

Macedonians (Μακεδόνες 6, 99; 6, 102; 6, 110 [a. 1047]) = Inhabitants of Adrianople (modern Edirne). Leo Tornikios is defined as someone who was Macedonian. He is described in the *Chronographia* only in relation to his rebellion dated to 1047³⁸.

³⁵ ὁ σουλιτάν, ὁ τῶν Περσῶν ἢ Κούρτων βασιλεὺς (PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 7b, 20, 2).

³⁶ CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 15, 25.

³⁷ SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 16 (455, 45 THURN) Getae/Uzi force Moesians/Pechenegs across frozen Danube [a. 1046/7] [ODB Uzes].

³⁸ The rebellion of Tornikios is described in SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 8, 103 (September 1046 – 13th Indiction [SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 8, 1 (435, 1 THURN)] – August 1048: 1st Indiction [SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 8 (439, 10–11 THURN)]).

Moesians (Μυσοί 7, 67; 7a, 23 [a. 1057–1067]) = Pechenegs (Πατζινάκai) crossed frozen Danube³⁹.

Parthians (Πάρθοι 7, 50; 7, 63 [a. 1057–1059]) = Seljuk Turks⁴⁰. Lead by a Sultan (σουλτάν 7, 50) [Toğrul I]. See Persians.

Persians (Πέρσαι 4, 19; 7a, 11; 7b, 13; 7b, 20; 7b, 41; [a. 1040, a. 1059–1071]) = Seljuk Turks⁴¹. Sultan is ruler of Persians or Curds (7b, 20). See Parthians.

Russians (σκάφη Ῥωσικά 6, 90–6, 95 [a. 1043]) = Rus⁴².

Saracens (Σαρακηνοί 3, 7 [a. 1031]) = Arabs living in Koile Syria whose capital is Aleppo (Psellos, *Chronographia*, 3, 7)⁴³.

Scythians (Σκύθαι 1, 13; 1, 31; 4, 43; 4, 49; 5, 15 [a. 976–1025; a. 1040; 1041]) = Pechenegs or Bulgarians?⁴⁴

Syria (Συρία 3, 7; 3, 8; 7b, 13 [a. 1031, a. 1059–1067]) = Syria (Emirate of Aleppo)⁴⁵. Local language Arabic (Psellos, *Chronographia*, 3, 8). The emirate became an ally of the Byzantine Empire after 1031 and was the first ally to confront the Turkish armies in the 1050s.

Tauroscythians (Περὶ τὸν Ταῦρον Σκύθαι 5, 25; 7, 13 [a. 1041, 1057–1059]) = *Scyths near Crimea*. This population is the only one described by a geographic paraphrase. Tauros refers to Crimea and the Scythians are those living around the Crimea but not in the Crimea. This could refer to the Varangians who were travelling between Kiev and the Black Sea especially during the time of Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054) whose daughter married Harald Hardrada, and whose wife was also Scandinavian. Defined as ξενικόν (5, 25).

Triballi (Τριβαλλοί 7a, 23 [a. 1059–1067]) = Uzses?⁴⁶ or Serbs? It is difficult to identify the population. Psellos may be ambiguous on purpose. He is defining a geographic area. Indeed, the Triballi used to live in the area of Moesia Inferior (the area of modern-day Serbia).

These ancient names sometimes represent overlapping populations. It is worth recalling the modern names and how they are referred to:

³⁹ SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 16 (455, 45 THURN) [a. 1046/7]. [Leaders were Turach and Kegenes]. (See CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 1–8. F. CURTA, *The Image and Archaeology of the Pechenegs*, Ban 23, 2013, p. 143–202 [ODB Pechenegs].)

⁴⁰ Τοῦρκοι SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 9 (442, 87; 442, 88 THURN). CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 6.

⁴¹ Τοῦρκοι SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 9 (442, 87; 442, 88 THURN). CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, *passim*.

⁴² CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 9; Г.Г. ЛИТАВРИН, *Пселл о причинах последнего похода русских на Константинополь в 1043 г.*, ВВ 27, 1967, p. 71–84.

⁴³ CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 25, 71.

⁴⁴ CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 1–8.

⁴⁵ CONST. PORPH., *De Adm.*, 25, 71.

⁴⁶ J. СТАМЕНКОВИЋ, *Цар Константин X Дука и Михаило Псел – Историја једног односа* (Diss., University of Belgrade 2016).

- Adrianople inhabitants = Macedonians (1047)
 Aleppo Emirate = Syria (1031; 1059–1067), Saracens (1031)
 Arabs = Arabs (976–1025)
 Armenians = Armenians (1045, 1067–1071)
 Bulgarians = Bulgarians (1040–1041), Scythians (1040–1041)
 Caliphate of Baghdad = Babylonians (976–1025; 1040), Assyrians (976–1025; 1057–1059)
 Curds = Curds (1067–1071)
 Georgians = Iberians (976–1025; 1047)
 Indians = Indians (1050–1054)
 Italians = Italians (1043; 1057–1059)
 Normans = Franks (1067–1071)
 Northern Europeans = Celts (976–1025)
 Pechenegs = Scythians (976–1025; 1040–1041), Moesians (1057–1059)
 Russians = Rus' (1043)
 Turks = Persians (1040), Parthians (1057–1059), Persians (1059–1071)
 Uzes = Getae (1057–1059), Triballi (1059–1067)
 Varangians = Scythotaurians (1041; 1057–1059)

Psellos refers to nations which border with the Eastern Roman Empire or else with minorities present within the empire. In Costantine Porphyrogenetos' *De Administrando Imperio* one sees an important difference: each neighbouring nation is defined also by other countries it has on its borders. In other words, Psellos seems more concerned by the internal matters of the empire, even though he has some understanding of the foreign peoples present at the borders. While one sees a much wider understanding of foreign relations between 1042 and 1059, with an understanding of all points of the compass, it is striking that Psellos does not mention those nations which are a concern for states bordering with the Eastern Roman Empire. It is a view from the imperial palace. Psellos' network is also that of the local governors within the empire. More than half of his surviving letters are addressed to provincial governors (*kritai*).

It would appear that Psellos' understanding of nations and minorities depends on his friendship with provincial governors until 1042. When Constantine IX Monomachos became emperor, Psellos gained access to information from within the palace about the outside world. After 1059 he seems to have less information about what is going on abroad. These dates correspond to the tenure of Leichoudes

as *mesazon* (1042–1050, 1057–1059)⁴⁷. In other words, Psellos had access to information about the empire when his friends were in power⁴⁸. In particular Leichoudes as *mesazon* but also Leichoudes' son was governor of Vaspurakan⁴⁹. It is interesting that though his friend John Xiphilinos was from Trebizond, Psellos does not seem particularly interested in that area. His knowledge about Alania, Iberia and the Rus seems connected with events in Constantinople itself.

Psellos however seems to consider most of these populations as barbarians (βάρβαροι). This generic term is useful for him since it allows him to speak about his main subject (the emperor), but reveals his 'inner' view. He is less interested in differentiating foreign populations, than discussing their impact within court politics. The term barbarian seems to be a generic term, which does not reveal particular interest in the populations concerned. The word barbarian is not used in book 5, 6a, 7c confirming that Psellos is not concerned by foreign peoples in 1041–1042, 1055–1056 and 1071–1078. He seems to imply that there is a distinction between barbarian and 'Greek' culture⁵⁰. However, the most important element is that three nations are not defined as barbarian: Armenians, Macedonians, Tauroscythians. The Macedonians are defined as those connected with Leo Tornikios and his rebels. Armenians and Tauroscythians owe their 'non barbarian' status to their mercenary role. Indeed, Psellos refers to ξενικὰ δυνάμεις⁵¹. The term 'foreigner' is connected with the term alliance (ξενική συμμαχία). Therefore, barbarians are those who do not have a formal agreement with Constantinople and who tend to rebel or fight against the empire. This implies that the Scythians living around the Crimea were actually Varangian settlements. In other words the references to the Scythians around the Crimea in 1041 refer to *xenoi*, allied foreigners (at the service of Michael V), while the Rus' as a foreign people refer to their enemy status in 1043. Therefore, *barbaros* does not define a foreign nation, but a foreign enemy, instead of a foreign ally. Thus, Byzantine rebels are as local

⁴⁷ F. LAURITZEN, *Leichoudes' pronoia of the Mangana*, *3PBI* 55, 2018, p. 81–96.

⁴⁸ F. LAURITZEN, *Il mecenate Costantino Licudi e la monodia di Michele Psello in memoria di Maria Sclerena (poem 17 Westerink)*, *Pare* 8, 2018, p. 23–35.

⁴⁹ ὑποστρέφων δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς τροπῆς καὶ μέλλων διοδεύειν ἀπὸ τῆς Μηδίας ἦτοι τοῦ Βαασπρακᾶν (ἦρχε δὲ τότε τῆς τοιαύτης χώρας ἐκ βασιλέως πεμφθεὶς Στέφανος πατρικίος ὁ Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ παραδυναστεύοντος τῷ βασιλεὶ τῆς Λειχουδίας υἱός) στέλλει πρεσβευτὰς πρὸς αὐτόν, ἀξίων συγχωρηθῆναι διελθεῖν ἀκωλύτως, ὑπισχνούμενος μεθ' ὄρκων φρικωδεστάτων ἄψαστον καὶ ἀσινή διατηρήσαι τὴν χώραν. (SCYL., *Hist. Const.*, IX, 10 (446, 79–84 THURN)). [1st Indiction September 1047 – August 1048: *Const.*, IX, 9 (439, 10–11 THURN)].

⁵⁰ PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, 6, 37.

⁵¹ ξενικὴν ἐτέραν ξυλλοχισάμενος δύναμιν 1, 13, 4; ξενικάς τε συγκροτῶν δυνάμεις 3, 7, 10–11; ξενικόν τε καὶ συμμαχικὸν εἰώθασι παρατρέφειν οἱ βασιλεῖς, λέγω δὲ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ταῦρον Σκύθας 5, 25, 17–18; ἐν ταῖς ἀύλαις ξενικὸν 5, 30, 10; εἰ μὴ τις ὀλίγη μερὶς ξενικῆ, ὅποση τις εἴωθεν ἐφέπεσθαι ταῖς βασιλείοις πομπαῖς 6, 105, 8–9; τὰς παρ' ἡμῖν ξενικάς δυνάμεις 7, 10, 14–15; ὅποση καὶ στρατοπέδω καὶ ξενικαῖς ἀρκέσειεν ἂν δυνάμεισιν 7, 22, 5–6; ξενικὴν συμμαχίαν 7b, 12, 4.

as foreign mercenaries. This means that Psellos does not have a problem with foreigners but defines them by their allegiance: barbarians are enemies, foreigners are allies.

The evidence Psellos' *Chronographia* yields is essential. He is one of the foremost eyewitness accounts of the court's attitude towards nations and minorities, especially for the period 1042–1059. Before that time, he is unaware of the changes occurring in distant lands, and after that date, his role appears less informed. His understanding of foreign affairs does not imply he was central to such questions, but rather that his circle of friends was aware of such information. It seems that while Constantine Leichoudes was *mesazon*, Psellos has the widest interest in the outside world, otherwise he appears to rely on the network of *kritai* (judges) with whom he has an important exchange of letters. Therefore, Psellos sees nations and minorities from the prism of the court. First from the outer circles of the court, then as an insider thanks to Leichoudes and then once more as an outsider.

* * *

The *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos (1018–1081) reveals a limited interest in nations and minorities within and without the Byzantine Empire. He had access to information about these peoples either indirectly (1018–1042) or more directly (1042–1078). He has a greater understanding of their complexity, especially between 1042–1059 when his friend Constantine Leichoudes was *mesazon*. Psellos refers to nations and minorities in his *Chronographia* through the prism of the imperial court at Constantinople.

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Abstract. The *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos (1018–1081) reveals a limited interest in nations and minorities within and without the Byzantine Empire. He had access to information about these peoples either indirectly (1018–1042) or more directly (1042–1078). He has a greater understanding of their complexity, especially between 1042–1059 when his friend Constantine Leichoudes was *mesazon*. Psellos refers to nations and minorities in his *Chronographia* through the prism of the imperial court at Constantinople.

Keywords: Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, nations, minorities, Byzantine Empire.

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