

HISTORY AS LITERATURE IN BYZANTIUM

Papers from the Fortieth Spring Symposium of
Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham,
April 2007

edited by
Ruth Macrides

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

2. Uncovering Byzantium's historiographical audience

Brian Croke

One of Byzantium's better-known manuscript images is that of an author – Niketas Choniates according to the inscription – writing his lively history of the events leading to the sack of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204 and its uncertain aftermath. Modelled on the standard Byzantine representation of an evangelist or scribe, Choniates is depicted in an idealized setting, possibly at Nicaea where he ended up after 1207 with the remnant of the Byzantine imperial court. He is holding a stiff sheet on which he is writing. On the lectern in front of him lies another sheet, presumably a previous version of his history now being revised or a rough copy.¹ This image of Choniates immediately evokes some key questions: What did he think he was doing as he put pen to paper? Who did he think he was writing for? How did he expect, or know, that his new words would be communicated to his audience? Did he produce his history in instalments over several months or years? How did his projected audience influence the shape and style of his work, how he wrote and what he wrote about? How large was his audience and what criteria influenced their response to his work? How can modern historians and readers know what audience he had in mind, anyway?

Once we embark on answering these questions for Choniates we can discover that even the author's own education and occupation, his culture and literary style, tell us something about the nature of his audience. He was one of the best-educated men of his day who spent long winter evenings reading the ancient Greek historians,² and he enjoyed the highest imperial positions, at one stage *logothetes ton sekreton*. He wrote in a style befitting his elevated culture and literary capacity, a style that resonated with his bureaucratic and imperial contemporaries at the courts of the

¹ Vindob. gr. 53 with I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden, 1976), 153–5, 157–8.

² Oration 12, ed. J.-L. van Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae* (London and New York, 1972), 117.

Angeloi before 1204 and Theodore I Laskaris at Nicaea who had clear expectations of what such a work should provide.³ If he dedicated his history to any individual that fact is no longer known, but in writing his preface his potential audience was at the front of his mind. Part of this audience is future generations, although some are waiting for it more immediately, ‘gaping in eager expectation’,⁴ so he confidently insists. He does not identify these eager ones. ‘I humbly request the forbearance of those into whose hands [my history] may fall’, he goes on to explain, in case his audience should be critical of his style. In speaking here of ‘willing listeners’ (τοῖς φιλακροάμοσι)⁵ he would appear to envisage his history being read aloud to his audience. Then he strikingly suggests that he aspires to reach the ears of blacksmiths ‘covered with soot’, soldiers and women.⁶ However unrealistic Choniates’ ambition was, throughout the history his narrative consciously engages the audience and lets us speculate about whom he is addressing. For example, in concluding a discussion of the emperor Manuel’s setback in 1158/59, with the escape from custody of his cousin and rival Andronikos and the revolt of Styppeiotēs, he advises that ‘I insert these events into my history to show my readers (τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν) how unreasonable a thing wickedness is and how difficult it is to guard against it’.⁷ To complicate matters further, it is clear from the variegated manuscript tradition that Choniates produced different versions of the history himself, both before and after his ignominious flight from Constantinople as it was being burnt and ransacked in 1204, with a final revision in 1215/17.⁸

Each extant manuscript of Choniates’ history, the earliest dating from 1286,⁹ represents a conscious and identifiable expansion of his audience and sometimes provides a glimpse of audience reaction as individual readers comment and annotate. ‘You’re lying’, one wrote in the margin of an early manuscript.¹⁰ Another burst out: ‘You declare in your [preface] that

³ J. Harris, ‘Distortion, divine providence and genre in Niketas Choniates’s account of the collapse of Byzantium 1180–1204’, 19–31. On Choniates’ History: Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 429–41.

⁴ Choniates, *Historia*, 3.40–41.

⁵ Choniates, *Historia*, 2.27.

⁶ Choniates, *Historia*, 3.52–7.

⁷ Choniates, *Historia*, 11.26–7.

⁸ A. J. Simpson, ‘Before and after 1204: the versions of Niketas Choniates’ *Historia*, *DOP* 61 (2006), 189–221.

⁹ Oxford, Bodleian MS Roe 22, fols. 423r–447r, with A. Turyn, *Dated Greek Manuscripts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in the Libraries of Italy* (Urbana, IL, 1973), 47–8, and Simpson, ‘Before and after 1204’, 205–12.

¹⁰ Par. gr. 1778, in J.-L. van Dieten, ed., *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* (Berlin and New York, 1975), xx1.

a learned style is the lucid style, and then you compose in an oracular and high-flown manner'.¹¹ Sometimes we know exactly who copied and owned a manuscript of the history, such as the influential teacher and bibliophile John Chortasmenos who made his copy of Choniates at Constantinople in 1391.¹² In addition, effort was later put into creating an entirely new version of Choniates' history, a so-called *metaphrasis*, in which the author's high style was simplified.¹³ This version has been taken to signify a whole new audience for the history, but this need not be so.¹⁴

If we want to uncover the Byzantine historiographical audience, these are the questions we need to ask of all historiographical texts. Yet because the evidence is so scanty and elusive they are difficult to answer in detail and it would appear that no comprehensive attempt has ever been made to address them. More complicated still is evaluating how the Byzantine audience for history changed between the fourth and fifteenth centuries. The likely places to look for hints of the Byzantine historiographical audience and how it changed are therefore the dedications and commissions of historiographical works, occasions of public recitation or presentation of the works, citations of such works by later authors, different versions of a work, individual manuscripts of a work, and traces of how the author's narrative consciously engages the audience.

Focusing on the historian's audience highlights the essential literary dimension of Byzantine historiographical texts. A history's or chronicle's style and character are invariably shaped and judged by literary tradition and audience expectation. In recent years increasing attention has been paid to the Byzantine author and the construction of the narrative, but the nature and role of the audience, at least for history writing, deserve closer scrutiny.¹⁵ This paper is designed to do no more than open up

¹¹ Scholion quoted in Grigoriadis, 'Prooimion', 339.

¹² Van Dieten, ed., *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, xxv.

¹³ J.-L. van Dieten, 'Bemerkungen zur Sprache der sog. vulgärgriechischen Niketasparaphrase', *BF* 6 (1979), 37–77.

¹⁴ G. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance* (Paris, 2006), 92; E. Trapp, 'Learned and vernacular literature in Byzantium: dichotomy or symbiosis?', *DOP* 47 (1993), 116; I. Ševčenko, 'Some additional remarks to the report on levels of style', *JÖB* 32 (1982), 228 (a reminder of the complexity of such metaphraseis and their use by the best-educated scholars). See also the contribution of John Davis in this volume.

¹⁵ The various contributions led and concluded by Ljubarskij, 'Quellenforschung', 5–93, and the papers in Odorico, *et al.*, eds., *L'écriture de la mémoire* and in Burke, *et al.*, eds., *Byzantine Narrative*. On the audience itself, not much has changed since A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Washington, DC, 1982), 102: 'The problem of the audience for Byzantine literary works has hardly been touched. The question itself seems vague and undefined and must be asked in another way if it is to be clarified'.

the question of Byzantium's historiographical audience on the widest possible front, propose occasional conclusions and suggest further lines of investigation. Even though it is recognized that historiography represents one of Byzantium's greatest literary achievements, it was always a marginal activity for a small and relatively narrow audience.

c. 350 to c. 640

Byzantine historiography originated in a relatively secure and stable world of well-resourced cities with strong civic institutions including well-educated teachers and good collections of books. At Constantinople in particular there was an imperial library from c. 350.¹⁶ The capacity to write historical works, have them copied and appreciated, arose from a traditional rhetorical education during which students read Thucydides and other historians. They then deployed them in their own compositions, the *progymnasmata*, which practised a particular literary model such as 'narrative' (διήγημα).¹⁷ Although they were educated in diverse places, almost all historians from Eunapius in the fourth century to Theophylact in the seventh- wrote their histories in Constantinople and found their initial audience there. The major audience for any new work of history was the local cultural and political elite, in effect the civic and ecclesiastical aristocracy.¹⁸ A more precise understanding of this audience awaits further research. Meanwhile, research on the audience for Greek and Roman historical works is only now emerging and will surely cast new light on the Byzantine audience too.¹⁹ As in Roman times, an early Byzantine

¹⁶ A. Kazhdan, *La produzione intellettuale in Bisanzio* (Naples, 1983), 145–6.

¹⁷ B. Gibson, 'Learning Greek history in the ancient classroom: the evidence of the treatises on *progymnasmata*', *Classical Philology* 99 (2004), 103–29; T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 220–21; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 92–120. In the case of Libanius in the fourth century we see clearly the importance of Thucydides in the rhetor's classroom: Libanius, *Or.* 1.148–50 (the loss and rediscovery of his favourite working copy of Thucydides); focus on prose writers: *Ep.* 379.5, 9; 894.23; *Or.* 35.12, with R. Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), 144.

¹⁸ H. Hunger, 'The importance of rhetoric in Byzantium', in Mullett and Scott, eds., *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, 44–5.

¹⁹ A beginning was made by A. Momigliano, 'The historians of the ancient world and their audiences: some suggestions', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* 3/8 (1978), 59–75, repr. in *Sesto Contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome, 1980), 361–76. More recently I. O. Martin, 'Lectores y publico de la historiografia griega', *Estudios Clásicos* 44 (2002), 125–47, esp. 133–47 (on Byzantine historians); R. Nicolai, 'The place of history in the ancient world', in J. Marincola, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Oxford, 2007), 13–

historian's new work would first be shared with his closest friends and associates who had a chance to comment, cavil or compliment.²⁰ In some cases we know who sought the author's efforts in the first place. Eunapius, for instance, wrote with certain individuals in mind beginning with the emperor Julian's physician, Oribasius, who had urged him to write his history and provided helpful notes and reports. Then there were what Eunapius calls the 'most cultivated men of our age' (οἱ τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς βίου μακρῶ προεῖχον κατὰ παιδείαν), who also encouraged his work.²¹ They were the educated civic gentry of Sardis and nearby cities. Eutychianus, a relative of Paul the Silentiary, commissioned the history of Agathias²² in the 570s, and its initial circulation or reading would have been within Agathias' close circle.

Generations of Byzantine historians were influenced by Lucian of Samosata's advice in the second century on how to write history.²³ Lucian presumes the historian first reached his audience by way of a public reading.²⁴ We know that historians from the time of Herodotus, in both Greek and Latin, had their historical works declaimed publicly, sometimes winning prizes for their efforts,²⁵ although the early Byzantine evidence for this practice is slender. In the early seventh century Theophylact Simokatta's history was presented orally, perhaps to the learned circle around the Patriarch Sergius²⁶ or to an even larger audience in an auditorium (*akroaterion*) that was moved to tears by Theophylact's account of the death of the Emperor Maurice and his family.²⁷ One can

26, esp. 23–5; and J. Marincola, 'Ancient audiences and expectations', in A. Feldherr, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Historians* (Cambridge, 2009), 11–23.

²⁰ R. J. Starr, 'The circulation of literary texts in the Roman world', *Classical Quarterly* 37 (1987), 213–23; J. W. Iddeng, 'Publica aut peri! The releasing and distribution of Roman books', *Symbolae Osloenses* 81 (2006), 58–84.

²¹ Eunapius, fr. 1, fr. 15: R. C. Blockley, ed. and trans., *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* (Liverpool, 1983), 10–11, 20–21.

²² Agathias, *prooimion*, 11:5.17–22.

²³ R. Maisano, 'Il problema della forma letteraria nei proemi storiografici bizantini', *BZ* 78 (1985), 330.

²⁴ Lucian, *How to Write History*, 23, 28 (a 20-hour recitation!), 29, 39. Lucian recounts the importance of keeping one's ears open at readings of historians: *How to Write History*, 7.

²⁵ A. Chaniotis, *Historie und Historiker in den griechischen Inschriften*, *Epigraphische Beiträge zur griechischen Historiographie* (Wiesbaden and Stuttgart, 1988), 290–324.

²⁶ A. M. Taragna, 'L'écriture de l'histoire chez Théophylacte Symocatta', in Odorico, et al., eds., *L'écriture de la mémoire*, 67–84, and J. Frendo, 'History and panegyric in the Age of Heraclius', *DOP* 42 (1988), 147.

²⁷ Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, 8.12.3–4: 309, cf. Taragna, 'L'écriture de l'histoire chez Théophylacte Symocatta', 75.

easily envisage other striking set pieces being performed to an interested audience at Constantinople: Priscus' account of his journey to the court of the Hun King Attila in 449,²⁸ Procopius' account of the sieges of Naples and Rome in 536/37,²⁹ or the lawyer Agathias' account of the trial of Gubazes in 556.³⁰

The early Byzantine historians generally wrote in imitation of the ideals their teachers had promoted. A critical component of that literary process was the emphasis on rhetorical elements involving careful construction of speeches and other set pieces (expository, argumentative, encomiastic and invective) that signalled the historian's distinctive skills to a like-minded audience.³¹ That explains why speeches (and letters designed to be read aloud) form such a major part of most historical works. In Procopius' history, for instance, there are 100 speeches and 44 letters, while Theophylact included 18 speeches and 7 letters. It also explains why contemporary historians intended histories of their own times to be read aloud. At Constantinople, students, historians and audience alike would have noted the statue of Thucydides, the model historian, in the baths of Zeuxippos near the imperial palace that depicted him declaiming a speech from his history.³² No less important, however, was the reading audience for the historian, and for both listeners and readers it is important to note the precise literary strategies the historian used to engage them.

For the sake of their audience, the Byzantine historians regularly display a clear sense that the story needs to follow a defined shape usually labelled its 'logos'. Reminding the audience periodically of exactly how the 'logos' is unfolding, is an integral part of any historiographical narrative.³³ It also implies certain literary expectations on the part of the audience to which the author must consciously respond. Procopius demonstrates his authorial control and his sensitivity to the expectations of his audience when he says, for instance, that 'since the narration of the history (ὁ τῆς ιστορίας λόγος) has brought me to this point I must explain ... (4.12)', while Agathias suggests that 'at this point I should like to add for the convenience of the reader the following clarification ...' (2.27.9), Menander advises how he kept his narrative from getting too long,³⁴ and Theophylact

²⁸ Priscus, fr. 11.2: Blockley, ed. and trans., *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, 246–79.

²⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.10.36–6.2.38.

³⁰ *Historiai*, 4.1–11.

³¹ Cf. M. Fox, 'Dionysius, Lucian and the prejudice against rhetoric in history', *Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2001), 76–93.

³² *Anth. Pal.* 2.372–6.

³³ M. Hinterberger, in Ljubarskij, 'Quellenforschung', 35.

³⁴ Menander, fr. 6.2–3: R. C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool, 1985), 88–9.

pulls himself up thus: 'Therefore I must return to the continuity of the narrative, wheeling round the history that is perhaps running a little off course' (3.18.4, cf. 8.11.12). All these historians link their narrative with references to other parts of their text, referencing backwards and forwards. This narrative self-awareness is designed to help an audience keep track of the story and can be found in all Byzantine historians right down to the fifteenth century. It demonstrates the shared understanding by writer and audience about how a work of history should flow and what constitutes not only its content but also its stylistic boundaries of detail and relevance.³⁵ In writing Byzantine historical texts there were definite rules of the game and they were policed by author and audience alike.

Such criteria also apply to the emerging new models for writing history, namely church history and chronography. In literary terms all the church historians from the fourth- to the seventh century exhibit the same sense as other historians of what is appropriate to the narrative, of guarding against excesses of opinion, digression or documentation, and of alerting the reader to the unfolding story. The author himself is very much part of the history and there is a consistent awareness of the writer's audience and its expectations. Theodoret, for example, reminds his audience in the 440s that he is deliberately refraining from overwhelming them with detail (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.25, 5.21), while Socrates' narrative of the church from Constantine to Theodosius II denotes a highly literate audience because he encourages them to seek out and read works such as the treatises of Didymus the Blind (*HE* 4.25) and the sermons of John Chrysostom (6.4). He also includes a list of attendees at the Council of Nicaea in 325 because it would be appreciated by 'lovers of learning' (φιλομαθεία: 1.13), and Evagrius reticently included particulars of fifth-century buildings in Antioch but argued that such matters would be 'not without their attraction to lovers of learning' (φιλομαθέσιν: *HE* 1.18). So there is a clear understanding that the prime audience for an ecclesiastical historian was the cultured and highly literate aristocracy of Constantinople, Antioch and elsewhere; in other words, much the same audience as for Eunapius and Procopius.

An audience sometimes heard a work written in instalments and revised in response to its reaction. Agathias, for instance, introduces his third book with an apology to his audience for not proceeding fast enough because his day job as a lawyer was keeping him too busy. Moreover, some of his audience had been critical of his previous books so he dismisses them with the comment that he was only writing to please himself 'just as people with no ear for music enjoy their own singing' (3.2–7). Eunapius went further and produced a whole new version of his history in response

³⁵ I. Nilsson and R. Scott, 'Towards a New History of Byzantine literature', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 58 (2007), 323.

to criticism that it was too anti-Christian in tone and content.³⁶ We may not be wrong to assume public readings of the church historians too, with each new instalment taking account of audience reaction. Socrates tells us he had to revise the first book when additional material was pointed out to him (1.1) and the prefatory explanation of style before Book 6 implies that some readers had passed critical comment, just as Book 5 is introduced by an explanation of the relevance of secular events in a church history (5.1). Readers or listeners of earlier books had evidently been critical of such material.

Greek and Roman historians and philosophers recited their works to small scholarly circles in a *theatron*, but they also performed in an auditorium for larger and less-educated groups who were no less used to formal rhetoric and found their works enjoyable.³⁷ Lucian envisaged the historian's audience as including a mixed or culturally wider range of people, the 'hoi polloi', and he encouraged historians to ensure their style was accessible to these listeners as well.³⁸ Indeed, Eunapius was aware that his history soon became known and appreciated by the 'hoi polloi', who were always clamouring for more detail, however inaccurate, and many lesser historians would oblige them.³⁹ All they were interested in was the particulars of the story. This audience would have included the large number of local and imperial officials and functionaries, as well as the military hierarchy, the generals and leading military officers around the court. They normally had a level of literacy that certainly enabled them to read the histories of Priscus and Procopius if so inclined. The imperial soldier and official Marcellinus, for example, writing in Latin for the Emperor Justinian, appears to have focused his account on a local audience of Illyrian soldiers and courtiers.⁴⁰ The Spanish general Theodosius became emperor in 379 and then spent most of his reign at Constantinople, where he was especially fond of history books,⁴¹ while another general turned emperor, Maurice, spent his evenings in the palace reading histories and he offered financial incentives to potential historians such as Menander.⁴²

³⁶ Photios, *Bibliothēke*, cod. 77 (Eunapius), I, 159.26–36.

³⁷ J. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge, 2006), 19.

³⁸ Lucian, *How to Write History*, 44.

³⁹ Eunapius, fr. 66: Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, 100–101, τοὺς πολλοὺς.

⁴⁰ B. Croke, *Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle* (Oxford, 2001), 94–101; W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (London, 2007), 234–5.

⁴¹ *Epitome de Caesaribus* 48.11, ed. M. Festy, *Pseudo-Aurélius Victor, Abrégé des Césars*, Collection des Universités de France (Paris, 1999).

⁴² Menander, fr. 1: Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, 40–41.

Theophylact notes too that the general Philippicus in the 580s was a keen consumer of military history (1.14.1).

This wider audience existed for the church historian too. Socrates seeks to justify his straightforward style by explaining that he was aiming at a much wider readership than just his rhetorically educated peers (*HE* 6, praef. 3–5). He argues that if he were to employ a highly wrought literary style his work would be inaccessible to the ‘general public and the uneducated’ (τοὺς πολλοὺς καὶ ἰδιώτας). For Socrates their main interest is simply to know about events, not to marvel at the fancy phraseology in which they are couched. So his style is pitched in such a way as to appeal simultaneously to the educated (εὐπαιδεύτοις) and the uneducated (ἰδιώτας). As for the other new early Byzantine historiographical model, the chronicle, its audience was meant to find it useful for the practical purpose of seeing the order of events in God’s time and of understanding how the present related to the past.⁴³ Most of the early Byzantine chronicles are no longer extant, but the earliest one to survive and prosper was that of John Malalas, who was an imperial government bureaucrat in Antioch in the 530s writing for a local audience.⁴⁴ It used to be thought that works such as the chronicle of Malalas and the *Chronicon Paschale* involved a distinctly different and culturally inferior audience compared to that for Procopius, namely the uneducated masses and undereducated monks.⁴⁵ Now the picture is more subtle and complex.⁴⁶

From the fourth- to the seventh century there was a core audience for works of history, comprising the cultural elite and a wider group of less educated but still relatively literate civil and military officials and others. However, there was no tightly prescribed nexus between the social and intellectual composition of this audience and the particular mode

⁴³ C. Mango, ‘The tradition of Byzantine chronography’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22/3 (1988–89), 360–72.

⁴⁴ B. Croke, ‘Malalas, the man and his work’, in Jeffreys, *et al.*, eds., *Studies in John Malalas*, 1–25, further elaborated in Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, 235–9.

⁴⁵ The classic statement is in K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, 2nd edn. (Munich, 1897), reflected in N. Wilson, ‘Books and readers in Byzantium’, in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen* (Washington, DC, 1975), 14, but effectively challenged by Beck, ‘“Mönchschronik”’, 188–97. As observed by Ljubarskij, ‘*Quellenforschung*’, 11, and ‘New trends in the study of Byzantine historiography’, *DOP* 47 (1993), 133, Beck’s corrective is usually disregarded, with a good example being S. Runciman, ‘Historiography’, in A. R. Littlewood, ed., *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music* (Oxford, 1995), 60–61. In theory, Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 253–4 is tentative, but in practice he reinforces the Krumbacher paradigm (257–78).

⁴⁶ R. Scott, ‘Malalas and his contemporaries’, in Jeffreys, *et al.*, eds., *Studies in John Malalas*, 67–85.

of presenting the past (history, church history, chronicle). We should therefore be cautious about erecting sharp boundaries of genre between these different literary modes. By around 640 this historiographical culture, based on each new generation immersing itself in Thucydides and Herodotus, and mastering their language, had come to a shuddering halt. No one continued Theophylact, nor was there a church historian to continue Evagrius, nor a chronicler to extend the story of the *Chronicon Paschale*. The combination of periodic plague along with the Persian invasion, followed by the Arab expansion that engulfed the eastern Roman world so quickly in the seventh century, totally disrupted the connected Byzantine urban economy and bureaucracy. All the activities dependent on it, education and literary production foremost among them, contracted along with the potential audience for historiographical texts.⁴⁷ It was the best part of another two centuries before the three Byzantine historiographical modes and their audiences emerged again into a changed cultural and religious landscape.

c. 640 to c. 1050

If 640 marks a decisive ending to the historiographical culture of Late Antiquity, then 800 arguably marks an equally decisive resurrection of history-writing and the audience for it.⁴⁸ In the intervening period education had shrunk severely, but it had not disappeared. There were individuals still able to impart a traditional literary education at Constantinople, while in Syria and Palestine a solid education was still available for someone like John of Damascus.⁴⁹ Even in a remote Armenian town in the first half of the seventh century, the mathematician Ananias of Shirak could find a teacher who among his collection of books had some historians, even if it was just Thucydides and Herodotus, and also chronicles, presumably Eusebius and one or more of his continuators, perhaps even Malalas.⁵⁰ Yet there was very

⁴⁷ Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, 393–9.

⁴⁸ I. Ševčenko, 'The search for the past in Byzantium around the year 800', *DOP* 46 (1992), 279–93.

⁴⁹ Documents in the Genizah archive also suggest that Greek was being taught in the eighth century well beyond the borders of the Byzantine world, as noted by C. Holmes, 'Written culture in Byzantium and beyond: contexts, contents and interpretations', in Holmes and J. Waring, eds., *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and beyond* (Leiden, 2002), 23 (hereafter, Holmes and Waring, eds., *Literacy*).

⁵⁰ Ananias of Shirak, *Autobiography* (trans. F. C. Conybeare, 'Ananias of Shirak (A.D. 600–650 ca.)', *BZ* 6 [1897], 572–84), cf. P. Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, trans. H. Lindsay and A. Moffatt (Canberra, 1986), 90–93.

little historiographical writing of any kind between the seventh and the ninth centuries and hardly any copying of manuscripts. Literary capability had been severely curtailed.⁵¹

By 800, interest in the past and writing about it was re-emerging in the expanding monasteries that were becoming a focus for educating monks and others who learnt to read by mastering the Psalter rather than Homer and Thucydides. The coenobitic reforms of Theodore the Studite, who had enjoyed a traditional rhetorical education at Constantinople in the 770s, gave impetus to reading and being read to together in community, as well as to copying and lending of manuscripts by monasteries. Generally, monastic education was limited and reading was confined to biblical, liturgical and hagiographical books, so the audience for old and new historical works was slender.⁵² The numerous foundation documents for Byzantine monasteries (*typika*) occasionally specify the library's contents and what they lent to each other.⁵³ Together the *typika* underscore the marginality of secular literature, not least historical texts, for a monastic audience. So too the manuscripts copied by monks in their scriptoria were almost entirely scriptural, liturgical or spiritual. It has been calculated that 89 per cent of all extant manuscripts from the ninth to the eleventh centuries are religious in content, while the remaining 11 per cent include only a tiny number of historical texts.⁵⁴ The exception that proves the rule is the monk Ephraem, who copied Polybius in 947, but he came late to monastic life as a highly educated man.⁵⁵

Taking the well-known example of Patmos, we find that in its later catalogue dated to 1200 there were no historians but there was a 'chronographer' in an 'old book' – that is, probably a sixth- or seventh century uncial manuscript without an ascribed author.⁵⁶ In the later eleventh century Michael Attaleiates' will established a new monastery, and the detailed provisions include a list of books. Among them was a copy of a 'chronikon' in Attaleiates' hand;⁵⁷ the other books donated to the library after the founder's death included one that commenced with

⁵¹ J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge, 1990), 425–35.

⁵² G. Cavallo, 'ΠΟΛΙΣ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΩΝ – Livelli di istruzione e uso di libri negli ambienti monastici a Bisanzio', *TM* 14 (2002), 95–113.

⁵³ J. Waring, 'Literacies of lists: reading Byzantine monastic inventories', in Holmes and Waring, eds., *Literacy*, 165–86.

⁵⁴ Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, 3.

⁵⁵ Cavallo, 'Livelli di istruzione', 111–12.

⁵⁶ C. Astruc, 'L'inventaire (1200) du trésor de la bibliothèque de Patmos', *TM* 8 (1981), 28.

⁵⁷ P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XI^e siècle* (Paris, 1981), 89, who takes it to be Attaleiates' own history, but it would be unusual to so describe it and its actual title appears to have been *historia*.

a 'chronikon'.⁵⁸ Then in 1132 the Norman monarch Roger II established a well-educated group of monks in a new monastery of the Holy Saviour in Messina. Its *typikon* tells us that there were 'scribes and calligraphers, and teachers of our sacred books who were sufficiently trained in profane literature'. Moreover the library included 'historical works', but we are left to guess which ones.⁵⁹ Around the same time, in his Cypriot monastery Neophytos the Recluse possessed two 'short chronicles'.⁶⁰

All these instances of anonymous 'chronicles' or 'chronographers', from the sixth to the eleventh centuries, suggest a pattern. It would appear that what is being referred to here is the sort of chronological summary we find in the '*chronographikon syntomon*' of the Patriarch Nikephoros, which is a short and simple table of rulers to 821 preserved anonymously in most manuscripts,⁶¹ like so many other similar fragmentary ninth- and tenth century chronicles.⁶² Yet each manuscript had a conscious author and a projected audience. Moreover, it was a widespread audience since there are so many extant copies and versions. In reality these chronicles functioned as a sort of reference work required for each library to accompany its scripture and other sacred literature. It was the chronological key to sacred reading and the story of the Christian nation to date. That explains the predominance of such chronographies in monasteries, but they could also be owned by others such as the middle-ranking official Eustathios Boilas in the eleventh century, whose library contained 'two chronographers'.⁶³

Besides reading and listening, monks occasionally turned their hand to composing their own historical works for some particular audience, beginning with Synkellos and Theophanes.⁶⁴ While they both will have had access at different points to the imperial and patriarchal libraries, they may also have had some texts in their own monasteries at the time of writing and had to borrow others, including Malalas and Procopius, which

⁵⁸ Diataxis, 1272, in P. Gautier, 'La Diataxis de Michel Attaliat', *REB* 39 (1981), 95.

⁵⁹ J. Thomas and A. C. Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC, 2000), 2, 645 (26: Luke of Messina).

⁶⁰ C. Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge, 1991), 23, 26–8. Neophytos may have borrowed these works rather than owned them himself.

⁶¹ C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople* (Washington, DC, 1990), 2–4.

⁶² For example, the *Ekloge Historion* in Par. gr. 854 from the time of Basil I and an extension of it to 1118 in Vindob. Theol. gr. 133 with Hunger, *Literatur*, 1, 332–3 and Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοὶ Ἱστορικοὶ*, II, 531–76.

⁶³ Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 25.

⁶⁴ Assuming, for our purposes, two separate authors well known to each other. Details in Mango and Scott, eds., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, xliii–lxiii.

Theophanes used. In his preface Theophanes explains how he laboriously composed his own work in about 816. He goes on to say explicitly that 'his readers (οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες) may be able to know in which year of each emperor what event took place'. He consciously recognizes that his readers may find his work of value or not, and expresses reservations about the reader being overwhelmed by his detailing the evil actions of the Emperor Nikephoros in 810/811.⁶⁵ At no point does he suggest a work like his might be read out loud to an audience rather than studied personally, although he may have acquired his own knowledge of certain texts such as Procopius and Theophylact from attending public readings.⁶⁶

Theophanes' audience grew, and a century later the chronicle was taken up by the Emperor Constantine VII, who utilized it in his treatise *De administrando imperio*.⁶⁷ It was continued in quite different ways by two readers, Genesios (dedicated to Constantine VII) and Theophanes Continuatus (also dedicated to the emperor but including his own contribution on Basil I), as well as by John Skylitzes. Meanwhile, later in the ninth century George the Monk followed Synkellos and Theophanes' example and produced a world chronicle to his own day. George's chronicle in effect combined more thoroughly and smoothly than Theophanes had done material previously contained separately in chronicles and ecclesiastical histories, so there were no more church histories until the lonely example of Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos in the fourteenth century.⁶⁸ George envisaged and achieved a broad audience for his work, which continued generation after generation. In particular, he considered that he was counteracting the 'high and pompous' style of previous historians by expressing the same events in a more open style.⁶⁹ This

⁶⁵ Theophanes, AM 6303 (pp. 488, 492).

⁶⁶ J. Ljubarskij, 'Concerning the literary technique of Theophanes the Confessor', *BSI* 56 (1995), 32. Theophanes does take advantage of traditional stories and refashion them to suit his own purpose and audience, as explained by R. Scott, "'The events of every year arranged without confusion': Justinian and others in the Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor', in Odorico, *et al.*, eds., *L'écriture de la mémoire*, 49–66. See also the contributions of Scott and Afinogenov in this volume.

⁶⁷ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik and trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, rev edn. (Washington, DC, 1967), 17 (80–83); 21 (84–93); 25 (102–7).

⁶⁸ D. Afinogenov, 'Some observations on genres of Byzantine historiography', *Byz* 62 (1992), 31.

⁶⁹ George the Monk, *Prooimion*: 1–5, with Maisano, 'Il problema della forma literaria nei proemi storiografici bizantini' (as in note 23), 329–43.

was a different approach, or at least a different language register, but not necessarily a different audience.⁷⁰

As culture and education revived and expanded in the ninth century, new opportunities and interest emerged in reading earlier secular and ecclesiastical literature.⁷¹ By itself the *Bibliotheca* of Photios represents a one-man historical audience, or possibly the core of a wider reading circle.⁷² What is important about the *Bibliotheca* is its testimony to what manuscripts of historical works were at least available to an educated and literary-minded person at Constantinople in the ninth century, and without too much effort.⁷³ Moreover, Photios' evaluations of individual authors provide an insight into how an historiographical audience read and compared the books of historians. Most historians who had written in Greek from Herodotus onwards could be located by Photios and read critically. In the course of his evaluative summary of so many historians, Photios reveals that the overriding criteria were literary. He demonstrates that still in the ninth century there was a shared understanding of what constituted 'the law of history'.⁷⁴ By that he means the same concerns we see in historians and church historians from the fourth century; that is, attention to scale, relevance, style, and a suspicion of innovation. These are clearly the fundamental components of a successful historical narrative and what the audience, represented here by Photios, expected.

By the end of the ninth- and into the tenth century it seems that the audience for history-writing was growing once more as the Byzantine world recovered lost territory and acquired new wealth and confidence. Literacy was expanding. Historiography too was transformed.⁷⁵ The move from uncial to the bureaucratic minuscule script facilitated copying

⁷⁰ Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 257–8 is generally disposed to consider Byzantine chronicles as being designed for 'the broad public of the average Byzantine' (cf. 263). He sees George's audience as essentially monastic (347) and his simpler language level as customized to the capability of this audience (350); modified by Afinogenov, 'Some observations on genres of Byzantine historiography', 13–33.

⁷¹ Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, 130–35, 197.

⁷² Wilson, 'Books and readers', 14; L. Canfora, 'Il "Reading Circle" intorno a Fozio', *Byz* 68 (1998), 222–3; *idem*, 'Le "cercle des lecteurs" autour de Photius: une source contemporaine', *REB* 56 (1998), 269–73.

⁷³ Explained in detail in B. Croke, 'Tradition and originality in Photius' historical reading', in Burke, *et al.*, eds., *Byzantine Narrative*, 59–70.

⁷⁴ Photios, *Bibliotheka*, cod. 77 (Eunapius), 159.18–19: ὁ τῆς ἱστορίας ... νόμος.

⁷⁵ A. Kazhdan and A. W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, CA, and London, 1985), 204; R. Scott, 'The classical tradition in Byzantine historiography', in Mullett and Scott, eds., *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, 61–74.

of manuscripts for a new audience. The earliest extant manuscripts of both Thucydides (*Laur.* 69.2) and Herodotus (*Laur.* 70.3) date from the tenth century, as does that of Cassius Dio.⁷⁶ They have been identified as having been copied from the manuscripts in the imperial library used by Constantine Porphyrogennetos in his vast project of compiling categories of extracts from historians.⁷⁷ Each manuscript itself represents the conscious act of production for one or more readers, but most of the time we have no way of knowing who they were although literary men as different as Arethas of Caesarea and Leo the Mathematician evidently owned manuscripts of Thucydides,⁷⁸ while the imperial soldier and official Kekaumenos recommended reading historians and appears to have been familiar with Dio and Procopius.⁷⁹ He had completed at least the earlier stages of a traditional education.⁸⁰

While Thucydides and later historians such as Procopius were now increasingly being read and copied, they had no imitators. There had not yet been any successor to the history of Theophylact in the early seventh century, unless we count Nikephoros whose *Breviarium* follows Theophylact in a key manuscript (*Vat. gr.* 977).⁸¹ One way of making more digestible the considerable bulk of the ancient and early Byzantine historians still available was to extract and summarize them systematically. That was a key purpose of Constantine VII's project to compile extracts from the major historians under different categorical headings – on embassies, on conspiracies, on sayings. The volumes of extracts are large and unwieldy,

⁷⁶ A. Diller, 'Notes on Greek codices of the tenth century', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 78 (1947), 186.

⁷⁷ J. Irigoin, 'Survie et renouveau de la littérature antique à Constantinople (IXe siècle)', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 5 (1962), 301; *idem*, 'Centre de copie et bibliothèques', in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen* (Washington, D.C., 1975), §19; Martin, 'Lectores', 137.

⁷⁸ Arethas: Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, 270 and 301 (citing links to manuscripts of Xenophon, Diodorus and Cassius Dio); Leo: R. Browning, 'Byzantine Scholarship', *Past and Present* 28 (1964), 8 (repr. in *Studies on Byzantine History, Literature and Education* [London, 1977], study XIII).

⁷⁹ C. Roueché, 'The literary background of Kekaumenos', in Holmes and Waring, eds., *Literacy*, 113; M. Mullett, 'Writing in early medieval Byzantium', in R. McKitterick, ed., *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), 166; G. Cavallo, 'Alfabetismi e lettura a Bisanzio', in B. Mondrain, ed., *Lire et écrire à Byzance* (Paris, 2006), 106–7; G. Buckler, 'Writings familiar to Cecaumenos', *Byz* 15 (1940–41), 133–43, but unnecessarily reluctant to concede that Kekaumenos knew Procopius (133–4).

⁸⁰ Roueché, 'The literary background of Kekaumenos', in Holmes and Waring, eds., *Literacy*, 112, and *idem*, 'The rhetoric of Kekaumenos', in Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, 37.

⁸¹ Nikephoros, *Short History*, 19–23.

and would not be used other than by the same educated audience for the original histories. Interestingly, Constantine makes no literary or categorical distinction between Diodorus and Procopius on the one hand, and Malalas and George the Monk on the other. They are lumped together as ‘chronicles’ for a single audience.⁸² Yet the project appears to have failed. Certainly it did not expand or diversify the Byzantine historiographical audience at all.

By the later tenth century an audience for more recent histories had reappeared, although most of the new histories are now lost except for Genesios, Kaminiates, Theophanes Continuatus (preferably, *Scriptores post Theophanem*), Symeon the Logothete, and Leo the Deacon. Genesios enjoyed a courtly audience, having been invited to write his history by Constantine VII because no one had recounted the empire’s story from the time of Leo V (813–20): ‘I have completed this book of history as you commanded, O emperor, after much study and great labours’, so he notes.⁸³ It would have been a similar audience for the various *Scriptores post Theophanem*, where a consistent aristocratic and imperial bias has been detected. In a later section of the *Scriptores*, possibly the work of Theodore Daphnopates who was a leading official at the court of Romanos I and a prolific writer, an audience of listeners is implied.⁸⁴ Kaminiates, on the other hand, wrote his account of the Arab capture of Thessalonike in 904 very soon after but for a provincial audience. He explains that it was a letter from a certain Gregory, a member of a well-off clerical family, that prompted him to write as an exile in Tarsus where he found his immediate audience.⁸⁵ Occasionally during what is cast as an epistolary reply Kaminiates directly addresses Gregory and the account was probably written to be read out in Gregory’s circle, just as Eustathios recited his account of a later capture of Thessalonike in 1185.

Genesios addresses his audience directly (‘O listeners, ὦ ἀκροαταί’),⁸⁶ in noting what the patriarch John the Grammarian says in declining to give

⁸² Cf. E. Patlagean, ‘Discours écrit, discours parlé. Niveaux de culture à Byzance aux VIIe-XIe siècles’, *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 34 (1979), 268–9.

⁸³ Genesios, *On the Reigns*, ed. A. Lesmueller-Werner and I. Thurn (Berlin and New York, 1978), praef., with Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 367–71, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοὶ Ἱστορικοὶ*, II, 475–91, and A. Kaldellis, *Genesios: On the Reigns of the Emperors* (Canberra, 1998), ix–xxviii (for a critical overview of author and context).

⁸⁴ Theophanes Continuatus (*Vita Basilii*) ch. 56:294.4–5: τὰς τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων ἀκοάς.

⁸⁵ Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 357–9; D. Frendo and A. Fotiou, *John Kaminiates. The Capture of Thessalonike* (Perth, 2000), xxvii–xl.

⁸⁶ Genesios, *On the Reigns*, 4.3, translated by Kaldellis, *Genesios*, 74, as ‘readers’, relying on D.M. Schenkeveld, ‘Prose usages of ἀκούειν “to read”’, *Classical Quarterly*

up his position after the restoration of icons in 843, and in dealing with the deposition of Patriarch Ignatios. The patriarch was confined in the tomb of the seventh-century emperor Constantine IV Kopronymos, who had died of dysentery, so Genesios says bluntly: 'All of you know what his pain was like who have experienced dysentery and other afflictions brought on by cold'.⁸⁷ Indirect traces of the tenth- and eleventh-century audience can also be identified in the historians' narratives. The signalling to the audience of events yet to be told, or previously recounted, which had always been an integral part of any Byzantine historian's narrative strategy, emerges prominently in the history of Leo the Deacon.⁸⁸ It is also frequent in the various *Scriptores post Theophanem*,⁸⁹ but less so in Symeon the Logothete.⁹⁰ Likewise, the traditional sense of what the historian can and cannot do, and what content is 'noteworthy' or not, is embedded in the unwritten compact between author and audience. Leo the Deacon has a clear appreciation of the proper sequence of an historical narrative (καθ' εἰσμὸν τοῦ λόγου).⁹¹ One of the *Scriptores post Theophanem* is likewise conscious of indicating to his audience the importance of treating particular events within the framework of the narrative,⁹² and Kaminiates reminds his audience of this central task.⁹³

From the ninth century Byzantine historiography saw a changing interest on the part of the writer and audience in the human and personal

42 (1992), 129–41. However, here as elsewhere in the Byzantine historians, the plain meaning of 'hear' makes perfect sense and should be preferred.

⁸⁷ Genesios, *On the Reigns*, 4.18.

⁸⁸ E.g. Leo the Deacon, 1.5:12.2; 2.1:17.2; 4.7:66.12–13; 5.1:75.1; 6.1:93.1–2; 9.12:157.23.

⁸⁹ E.g. Theophanes Continuatus, 2.3:42.7–8; 2.6:45.8–9; 2.12:55.11; 3.1:84.16; 3.35:132.2; 4.22:174.1; 4.23:176.5; 5.35:264.9–11; 6.16:409.10–11; 6.1:436.18–19.

⁹⁰ E.g. Symeon the Logothete, 136.83:339.639.

⁹¹ Leo the Deacon, 2.6:24.10–11; 2.10:31.14: πρὸς τὸν εἰσμὸν; 4.10:70.3–4; 4.11:72.18–19: τὸν λόγον τοῦ εἰσμοῦ; 5.4:81.10–11: τὸν λόγον ... τοῦ εἰσμοῦ; 5.9:91.20–23: verbose writers unduly stretch out their narratives; 9.5:148.1; 10.10:176.12–13: κατὰ μέρος εἰς τοὺς ἑαυτῶν καιροὺς.

⁹² Theophanes Continuatus, 2.8:49.17–19; 3.41:139.15–17; 4.17:167.17; 4.27:185.15–16; 4.44:210.16–17; 5.47: 280.9–10; 5.51:288.11–12; 5.72:314.3–5; 5.73:316.13–14; 5.87:329.4–5; 6.42:428.3: ἄξιον δὲ διηγήσασθαι; Constantine Porphyrogenetos, 6.17:448.15–16; 6.18:449.4; 6.33:456.4; 6.48:463.8–9; Romanos, 6.2:470.19–20.

⁹³ John Kaminiates, *De expugnatione Thessalonicae*, ed. G. Böhlig (Berlin and New York, 1973), 74; *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, trans. Frendo and Fotiou, 125: 'If I wished to furnish a detailed narrative of the hardships and overcrowding to which we were continually subjected during that voyage, most people would think that I was romancing and departing from that strict adherence to truth that I promised at the outset of my account would be the guiding principle of my writing'.

agent in history, and it is widely considered to be a distinguishing mark of historiography and the expectations of its audience.⁹⁴ By the mid-eleventh century it was clear that the relatively large audience enjoyed by Procopius and Agathias in their day had gone. Likewise the overlapping audiences for history, church history and chronicle had now dissolved into one as the boundaries of the different literary modes had loosened and converged, although some specialist chronicles were still compiled. Yet the educated historiographical audience still shared the culture and literary background of the author and had a set of expectations, reinforced by tradition, about length, balance, style and relevance within which the author consciously worked.

c. 1050 to c. 1300

The 'Golden Age' of Byzantine historiography and its audience was the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, before and after 1204, which produced the works of Psellos, Eustathios, Attaleiates, Skylitzes, Bryennios, Anna Komnene, Manasses, Glykas, Zonaras, Kinnamos, Choniates, Akropolites, Pachymeres and others. Almost all these writers of histories were, as they always had been, highly educated literary figures and public officials who happened to produce an historical work among many others such as speeches and encomia, *ekphraseis*, philosophical and theological treatises, poetry and letters. They learnt their skills in the schools of the capital, now complemented by the higher institutions of philosophy and law in which some of them were directly involved. Moreover, their pattern of education in grammar and rhetoric was as heavily based on Homer and Thucydides as it had been in the fifth and sixth centuries, and each new generation of students devised and practised their *progymnasmata* and other exercises on historical topics.⁹⁵ The intellectual Michael Italikos

⁹⁴ Scott, 'The classical tradition', 61–74; A. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), 192; J. Ljubarskij, 'Man in Byzantine historiography from John Malalas to Michael Psellus', *DOP* 46 (1992), 177–86; Macrides, 'The Historian in the History', 205–24; A. Markopoulos, 'Byzantine history writing at the end of the First Millennium', in P. Magdalino, ed., *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden, 2003), 186. However, when one considers the corresponding engagement of the early Byzantine historians such as Priscus and Agathias in their own histories, as well as the church historians such as Socrates, Sozomen and Evagrius, then the novelty of this feature in the ninth century may well be over-emphasized.

⁹⁵ G. Cavallo, 'Le tracce per una storia della lettura a Bisanzio', *BZ* 95 (2002), 423–44, at 438.

in the 1150s was part of a circle that read Herodotus and Thucydides,⁹⁶ while his formidable scholarly contemporary John Tzetzes enjoyed a deep knowledge of Thucydides and other historiographical writers.⁹⁷ The learned bishop Theophylact of Ochrid recommended to his friend the bishop of Pelagonia the reading of ancient histories, presumably meaning at least Herodotus and Thucydides.⁹⁸ By now, too, manuscripts of the historians and chroniclers were being acquired by the Athonite monasteries.⁹⁹ What readers of Thucydides learnt, at least in the case of Psellos in the eleventh century, was 'innovation in diction, tightly packed meaning, ungraceful but intellectual quality, composition which is not revolutionary, variety in the formulation of his thoughts'. For Gregory of Corinth, it was Procopius who was the recommended rhetorical model because 'in his political and deliberative oratory [he] has a competitive and elaborate quality and is not simply a narrator'.¹⁰⁰ The wars of Athens and Sparta and of Justinian were clearly incidental.

Despite greater authorial intervention by Byzantine historians and chroniclers, they are not always forthcoming about their intended audience. It helps when a particular work is commissioned by or dedicated to someone. Attaleiates dedicated his history to Nikephoros Botaneiates,¹⁰¹ perhaps responding to an imperial commission. Anna Komnene relates that the empress Eirene Doukaina commissioned the history of Nikephoros Bryennios and encouraged others to write up the deeds of her husband Alexios (*Alexiad* 15.11), while Manasses dedicated his chronicle to the *sebastokratorissa* Eirene (wife of Andronikos Komnenos) and he may well have recited it, wholly or partly, in her *theatron*.¹⁰² Most commissions and

⁹⁶ Michael Italikos, *Lettres et Discours*, ed. P. Gautier (Paris, 1972), Ep. 18, with Cavallo, 'Tracce', 429.

⁹⁷ N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London, 1982), 191. In his *Chiliades* or *Historiae*, Tzetzes cites not only Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, but also Ctesias, Ephorus, Theopompus, Dionysius, Diodorus, Dio Cassius, Malalas, Procopius and Theophylact Simokatta. On one occasion he refers to Diodorus and Ephorus and 'all the *chronographoi*' (*Hist.*, 12.253). Elsewhere he refers anonymously to '*chronikoi*' (1.321; 2.88; 3.57, 324, 349; 4.224; 12.253, 254). One early manuscript of Thucydides (Palatinus Heidelbergensis gr. 252) contains marginalia by Tzetzes.

⁹⁸ M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid* (Birmingham, 1997), 101.

⁹⁹ S. Rudberg, 'Les manuscrits à contenu profane du Mont-Athos', *Eranos* 54 (1956), 174–85.

¹⁰⁰ Psellos, 'Essay on learning literature', quoted in Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, 173, cf. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, 4–5; Gregory: quoted in Wilson, *Scholars*, 186.

¹⁰¹ Attaleiates, *Historia*, 2–4.

¹⁰² M. Mullett, 'Aristocracy and patronage in the literary circles of Comnenian Constantinople', in M. Angold, ed., *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX–XIIth Centuries*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, 221 (Oxford, 1984), 179, cf.

dedications were more local and personal. Michael Psellos ascribes the impetus for his *Chronographia* to 'senators and clerics' who were concerned at the loss of any record of important events¹⁰³ and directly addresses Constantine Leichoudes, 'O dearest of friends' (*Chron.*, 6.73). Zonaras says he was encouraged to write by friends when they saw that he now had time in his isolated monastic life.¹⁰⁴ A special category of historical commissions is formed by those particular manuscripts that are illustrated or prepared in a more deluxe form. Skylitzes and Manasses come immediately to mind, and each of these expensive productions would have had their own imperial or aristocratic patron.¹⁰⁵

A more complex problem is determining exactly how a new historical work was communicated to its audience in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The final third, at least, of Attaleiates' history had been proposed for oral presentation,¹⁰⁶ which may be so, and Eustathios took four hours to declaim his linguistically sophisticated account of the capture of Thessalonike in 1185, noting that the historian can choose his words 'to please the listener' (πρὸς χάριν ἀκοῆς) but be fearful of misleading the 'future listener' (ἀκουσόμενον).¹⁰⁷ The hint of oral delivery keeps obtruding in the historians' texts. Psellos (*Chron.*, 6.21) once says he has some brief preliminary comments 'for the friendly listener' (πρὸς τὴν φιλήκοον ἀκοήν), and Kinnamos notes that the Byzantine soldier Hikanatos 'achieved feats worthy of telling and hearing'.¹⁰⁸ As a listener, on the other hand, Psellos suggests that individuals could remember particularly striking incidents or anecdotes they once heard recounted but without being able any longer to recall the precise author. For instance, in his *Historia syntomos* he says he heard from some writer or other (τινος ... τῶν συγγραφέων ἤκουσα) about the death of Gallienus, and later how in the 960s the empress Theophano decided to support Tzimiskes against her husband Nikephoros Phokas (ἀκούω δέ τιμος τῶν συγγραφέων).¹⁰⁹

Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance*, 42–3. In one manuscript (Vind. Phil. gr. 149) he is depicted presenting his work to Eirene (details in Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, 158).

¹⁰³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, 6.22.

¹⁰⁴ Zonaras, *Epitome*, I, 4.7–11.

¹⁰⁵ See the article by Elena Boeck in this volume.

¹⁰⁶ Martin, 'Lectores', 129. On one occasion (*Historia*, 201.24–5) Attaleiates worries that his audience (ἀκροατῶν) will think he is eulogizing rather than describing.

¹⁰⁷ Eustathios, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, trans. J.R. Melville Jones, Greek text ed. S. Kyriakidis (Canberra 1988), prooimion 2.17; 18.6.

¹⁰⁸ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, 155.13–14.

¹⁰⁹ Psellos, *Historia syntomos*, 47 (ed. W. J. Aerts [Berlin and New York, 1990], 30.25–6) on Gallienus and 104 (98.69) on Theophano. In both cases Aerts

Choniates advises that he has decided to withdraw parts of his history because they would have been repetitive and 'would only satiate those who are fond of listening', and again 'the reports of the impious acts perpetrated in the Great Church are unwelcome to the ears'.¹¹⁰ Then, finally, there is Glykas, who in the preface to his chronicle advises that it is not lengthy otherwise it would 'overload the ears of listeners'.¹¹¹

In all these cases an oral audience is envisaged so it is no surprise to find a manuscript designed specifically for public reading. The famous Madrid manuscript of Skylitzes has clear and exaggerated punctuation marks that reflect Skylitzes' aural sense, and its neat semi-uncial script lent it to public reading in a way that the usual minuscule of that time did not.¹¹² If Skylitzes was considered apt for such a reading then Kedrenos who virtually copied him would perhaps qualify too.¹¹³ At the same time, the historians' prefaces also envisage an audience of private readers. Skylitzes says that reading his history can only help the remembering of it and as he progresses he is prepared to reiterate something said earlier 'to make it clearer for the reader',¹¹⁴ while Psellos offers some examples of plots against Constantine IX then leaves others to his readers¹¹⁵ – that is, he assumes they would know. On another occasion he speculates that one day his history will be read by Constantine, son of Michael VII.¹¹⁶

The revival of rhetoric in the eleventh century created many new opportunities to hear polished performances by well-educated officials, and sometimes these were historical accounts. Students under the tutelage of the *maistores* at Constantinople numbered 200 to 300 at any one time and the immediate audience for a new history would have been in the tens, not hundreds.¹¹⁷ These officials, teachers and students arguably constitute the

unnecessarily avoids translating ἀκούω in its plain sense as 'heard', preferring 'understood' and 'learn from' (99); cf. Psellos, *Chronographia*, 1.4 (Basil II): τῶν ... περὶ ξυγγραφέων ἤκουσα (listening to more recent historians on Basil II).

¹¹⁰ *Historia*, 125.42–5; 573.13–14.

¹¹¹ Glykas, 4.1–2: καὶ πάννυ καταβαρύνει τὰς ἀκοάς.

¹¹² J. Burke, 'The Madrid Skylitzes as an audio-visual experiment', in Burke, *et al.*, eds., *Byzantine Narrative*, 145–6.

¹¹³ As proposed by R. Maisano, 'Note su Giorgio Cedreno e la tradizione storiografica bizantina', *Rivista Internazionale di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 3 (1983), 237–54.

¹¹⁴ Skylitzes, *prooimion* 4.51–4, 93.44–5.

¹¹⁵ Psellos, *Chronographia*, 6.134: τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσι.

¹¹⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.13 (Michael VII): ἀναγνώσεται μου τὸ σύγγραμμα.

¹¹⁷ Wilson, 'Books and readers', 1–15, with A. Markopoulos, 'De la structure de l'école byzantine. Le maître, les livres et le processus éducatif', in Mondrain, *Lire et écrire*, 86–7.

total readership for any new historical work.¹¹⁸ In fact, we can probably now say that as Choniates was writing his history he knew exactly who he was writing for, and may have personally known almost all of the individuals who would make up his immediate audience. Moreover, as the prosopographical tools become more available and familiar the historians' circle of listeners and readers may be able to be defined in more detail. Further, histories were made public in the same way as other works – that is, through circulation to patron and associates or even a special public reading in a local literary circle (*theatron*) where groups of friends and courtiers met regularly to hear new works being promulgated. This meant inevitably that the immediate audience for history was not necessarily different from the audience for letters, encomia and poetry.¹¹⁹ According to Psellos, there were distinct cultural levels in eleventh-century Byzantium: the advanced students of the language (λόγιοι ἄνδρες περιττοί), the educated 'listeners' (ἐλλόγισμοι ἀκροαταί) and the less cultivated ones (ιδιώτιδες ἀκοαί).¹²⁰ They reflect similar levels already noticed in the fifth century, but they are not necessarily mutually exclusive audiences for historical works. Indeed, Psellos himself seems to have produced his high-style *Chronographia* and his lower-style *Historia syntomos* for the same audience,¹²¹ while the *sebastokratorissa* Eirene had requested, so Manasses tells us, 'a work that is simple and easy to understand'.¹²² This is surely another signal of diverse historiographical forms or styles for the same educated audience, rather than a lower-level one.¹²³ In the mid-thirteenth century Akropolites sought to make his history 'intelligible to everyone'

¹¹⁸ Mullett, 'Aristocracy and patronage in the literary circles of Comnenian Constantinople', 174–80.

¹¹⁹ Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid*, 39–40.

¹²⁰ Psellos, 'Encomium on Symeon Metaphrastes', elucidated in G. Cavallo, 'Lo scritto a Bisanzio, tra comunicazione e ricezione', in *Communicare et significare nell'alto medioevo. Settimane di Studio* (Spoleto, 2005), 1–4.

¹²¹ Assuming Psellan authorship of the *Historia syntomos*, cf. Macrides, 'The Historian in the History', 211, and C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* (Oxford, 2005), 122–3, n. 3.

¹²² Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1837), vv 7–9. The conscious linguistic discipline of Manasses' chronicle partly explains its popularity and its wide range of readers, cf. E. M. Jeffreys, 'The attitude of the Byzantine chroniclers towards ancient history', *Byz* 49 (1979), 236.

¹²³ Cf. I. Nilsson, 'Discovering literariness in the past: literature *vs.* history in the *Synopsis Chronike* of Konstantinos Manasses', in Odorico, *et al.*, eds., *L'écriture de la mémoire*, 15–31, esp. 17, n. 9.

(τοῖς πασὶν εὐγνώστος) and Skoutariotes' chronicle was aimed at a well-educated audience.¹²⁴

Historiography, like other rhetorical genres, was essentially interactive,¹²⁵ so Byzantine historical authors in this period are forever interjecting, pontificating, cautioning, speculating, directing and elucidating as they engage with their audience. These authorial interventions could profitably be collected, catalogued and analyzed under headings like these. For present purposes, it will suffice to focus on certain specific dimensions of this process of narrative engagement between author and audience. The audience is made most immediate when the historian addresses it directly, as do Psellos¹²⁶ and Anna Komnene (*Alexiad*, 11.3, 12.9). On many occasions Michael Glykas addresses his son (usually γινώσκει δέ, ἀγαπητέ, ὅτι),¹²⁷ while Skoutariotes also addressed his readers directly.¹²⁸ Then there is the Byzantine historian's preoccupation with the narrative structure which scholars have occasionally dismissed as pedantic or too fussy.¹²⁹ However, it is a characteristic inherited from the classical tradition but deployed in a distinct way by each historian. Some are more closely occupied with guiding their audience than others, especially Skylitzes in the eleventh century and Kinnamos in the twelfth. Indeed, Kinnamos would appear never to leave the reader time to work things out for herself. He is regularly noting, 'now I am going to explain this', 'now I will show how that happened', or retrospectively – 'But let the narrative return to its previous subject'.¹³⁰ Psellos takes note of returning to his main narrative (*Chron.*, 5.10), while Anna is also conscious that, as she put it on one occasion (*Alexiad*, 1.16), 'these speculations have carried me off the main

¹²⁴ K. Zafeiris, 'Narrating the past: elements of littérature in the *Synopsis Chronike*', in Odorico, et al., eds., *L'écriture de la mémoire*, 34.

¹²⁵ M. Mullett, 'Rhetoric, theory and the imperative of performance: Byzantium and now', in Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric*, 153.

¹²⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia*, 5.9 (Michael V): ὅπως ἂν μὴ θαυμάζητε; 6.37 (Constantine IX): καὶ μοι συμμαρτυρήσετε οἱ τήμερον τὸν λόγον ἀναγινώσκοντες. Cf. Macrides, 'The Historian in the History', 216–17.

¹²⁷ E.g. Glykas, 312.3, 423.9, 429.11, 430.11, 431.6, 440.4, 443.19, 457.12, 464.5, 465.9, 471.3, 488.1, 492.9, 492.21, 495.14, 499.6, 502.9, 505.9, 506.16, 551.15, 576.14.

¹²⁸ *SynChron*, 3.13 with Zafeiris, 'Narrating the past', 36, 45–6.

¹²⁹ E.g. Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 370 on a 'certain pedantry' in Leo the Deacon's 'anxious effort' to keep his chronology intact.

¹³⁰ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, 128.23. Some specific instances in Kinnamos are: 'It was this Frederick who ruled the Germans after Conrad for reasons which will be related in the subsequent narrative' (72.1–3); 'we shall make much account [of Roger II, Norman king] in the following books' (37.15–16); 'I shall at once show why the Hungarians clashed with the Romans' (104.23–4) and on Raymond of Antioch 'who had departed from mankind in a way which I will now relate' (122.2–3); and 'what the facts of Andronikos' flight were I shall now relate' (232.12).

road of my history. We must get my horse back on the right path again' (cf. 2.2; 2.6; 6.6, 11.6). Anna also speaks of it being incumbent on the historian to summarize deeds and decrees of an emperor with some care ('not crassly', 3.6) and has a clear notion of those events that form the proper subject of history (deploying the standard phrase of earlier historians (ὁ τῆς ἱστορίας λόγος, 3.8). Reflecting on her mother's interest in theology and philosophy Anna is prompted to say more but the 'law of history' (θεσμὸς ἱστορίας) prevents her.¹³¹ Similarly, Choniates is preoccupied on occasion with the need to guide the reader through his unfolding story, 'to proceed with the sequence of my narrative', as he says, and 'let the narrative take us back once again to the turning point so that we may continue with our history'. He is concerned with what he calls the 'sequence of this history' and its 'original design'.¹³² Akropolites employs the same narrative signposts for his audience and the same literary devices,¹³³ as does also Manasses.¹³⁴

Another frequent literary device of Byzantine historians that reflects awareness of their audience is the decision to include or exclude some episode or fact on the grounds that it is, or is not, of interest to an audience. The traditional word is 'axion', and such phrases have a formulaic flavour about them. Kinnamos, for example, claimed it was 'worthwhile' to describe the manner of the emperor John Komnenos' demise in 1143, and later 'I come to a recollection of this woman's deed which is still worthy of admiration'.¹³⁵ Niketas Choniates is able to say, 'let the following events which are worthy of narration and remembrance be recorded in this history', and then, 'I have omitted those actions not worthy of the telling.' Later on, in relation to a prophecy, he confesses that 'I must not neglect to record another noteworthy event', and of the Emperor Andronikos 'for the sake of continuity it will be best not to omit anything noteworthy'.¹³⁶ We find this

¹³¹ *Alexiad*, 5.9. Cf. G. Buckler, *Anna Comnena. A Study* (Oxford, 1929), 24–5 on use of 'logos' in history.

¹³² *Historia*, 645.84–8; 580.85–6. See the article of Athanasios Angelou in this volume.

¹³³ Akropolites, *History*, §15:27.15–16: awareness of length; §37:57.16–20: however winding, the narrative is following a clear course – *dromos*; §32:50.6–8: continuing narrative; §65:138.19–20: authorial control as the narrative moves in sequence – καθ' εἰρμόν τὰ τῆς ἱστορίας. There are backwards and forwards references pointed out to the reader, as well as geographical transitions in the narrative: to east (§68:143.21–2), to west (§8:12.22–4), to Constantinople (§27:44.6–7; §37:57.16–18), to emperors (§15:26.10–11), to Bulgaria (§20:32.25); cf. R. Macrides, 'George Akropolites' Rhetoric', in Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric*, 201–11.

¹³⁴ Manasses, *Synopsis Chronike*, 1472–5; 2230: τοῦ δρόμου καὶ τοῦ λόγου; 2553–4: τὸν λοιπὸν δρόμον τῆς ἱστορίας; 6722.

¹³⁵ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, 24.9–10; 37.4–5; also 62.22.

¹³⁶ *Historia*, 114.15; 125.42–5; 219.71–2; 225.60–226.63.

feature also in Attaleiates,¹³⁷ Anna Komnene,¹³⁸ Akropolites,¹³⁹ and even in the verse chronicle of Manasses.¹⁴⁰ Psellos provides an important witness to this central feature of the historian's engagement with his audience. In describing the death of Zoe in 1050 (*Chron.*, 6.70) he says that he will desist with the detailed reaction to her passing, but that it is a tension in history to include the right amount of detail. Following the precepts of Lucian of Samosata in his essay on how to write history, Psellos claims historical narrative (ὁ λόγος τῆς ἱστορίας) has no boundaries around these things, but the historian should always return quickly to his narrative flow. All historians are aware of the need to ensure the audience that their work is balanced and not unduly lengthy. Choniates speaks for them all in reducing his account of Alexios III – 'to make a long story short, lest I be guilty of saying too much and thus exposing my work to censure'.¹⁴¹

The sequence and shape of the narrative dictates an appropriate point at which particular events can be treated. Audiences would be well aware of this and happy to be reminded. Psellos tells us that he saw the empress Zoe towards the end of her eventful life and 'about her I will write at the appropriate point in my history' (*Chron.*, 2.5); similarly for John the Eunuch, 'whom I will discuss at the appropriate point in my history' (4.4, cf. 4.19). Kinnamos points out how the emperor Manuel's deeds are magnified by accounts at court and panegyrics, '[b]ut the history will describe this at the right moment, at present let us keep to what lies before us'.¹⁴² Virtually the same phraseology is used by Choniates,¹⁴³ as well as earlier by Skylitzes¹⁴⁴ and Anna Komnene.¹⁴⁵

All these different sorts of narrative signposts for the reader or listener are an integral part of the historian's self-awareness and overall literary strategy. They are found in almost all Byzantine historians and chroniclers, but their frequency means they are simply taken for granted by modern readers. Yet their function is important precisely because they are so frequent and because they indicate the author's preoccupation with ensuring the audience is following the shape of the story being narrated. This has been demonstrated recently for texts as different as those of

¹³⁷ *Historia*, 70.14, 229.4–12, 223.19, 303.4, 303.4.

¹³⁸ *Alexiad*, 1.13.

¹³⁹ *History*, §39:63.15–64.1.

¹⁴⁰ Manasses, 854, 4197.

¹⁴¹ *Historia*, 483.45–6.

¹⁴² *Epitome*, 192.22–193.1.0

¹⁴³ For example, in speaking of John Komnenos he advises that more will be said 'at the proper time': Choniates, *Historia*, 107.30–31; cf. 87.94–5; 171.41–2.

¹⁴⁴ Skylitzes, 11.68–9; 28.17–18; 118.50–52.

¹⁴⁵ E.g. *Alexiad*, 6.8, 10.8, 10.11, 13.6.

Skylitzes and Skoutariotes.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps it is a hallmark of the oral narrative that remains in the historian's text even if the main audience are readers, not listeners. This particular feature of Byzantine narrative would repay more extensive investigation. Likewise, the distorting effect of the shared contemporary perspective of author and audience, at least for Skylitzes, Choniates and Anna Komnene, is only now being properly understood.¹⁴⁷ Whether Choniates or any of the other 'Golden Age' historians ever succeeded in reaching the intended blacksmiths, soldiers and women cannot be known, but it definitely should not be ruled out.¹⁴⁸

1300 to 1460

Byzantine society and culture may have contracted severely by the beginning of the fourteenth century, but it still clung to the cultural practices and apparatus that characterized its more glorious past. Certainly, a strong engagement with hearing, reading and writing about that past ensured the survival of the Byzantine historiographical audience. In fact, most of the extant manuscripts of Greek and Byzantine historians date from this period or have been preserved because they were owned and studied by Palaiologan scholars. Despite enduring lengthy periods of intense religious conflict and civil war, discovering and promoting the past glories of Hellenic and Roman culture and history was the preoccupation of a range of literary groups at Constantinople. Most notable were those around Nikephoros Gregoras (1290/91–1358/61) and Demetrios Kydones (1324–98), as well as the bookish emperors John VI Kantakouzenos (1295–1383) and Manuel II Palaiologos (1350–1425).¹⁴⁹ All of them were actively engaged in the political struggles of their day with one eye on the example of Thucydides. Demetrios Kydones, for instance, tells us he used to gather friends around to listen to readings about 'the wars of the Romans and

¹⁴⁶ Skylitzes: C. Holmes, 'The rhetorical structures of Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historion*', in Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric*, 191; Skoutariotes/*SynChron*: Zafeiris, 'Narrating the past', 41.

¹⁴⁷ Holmes, *Basil II*, 171–239 (on Skylitzes); P. Magdalino, 'The pen of the aunt: echoes of the mid-twelfth century in the *Alexiad*', in T. Gouma-Peterson, ed., *Anna Komnene and her Times* (New York and London, 2000), 15–43 (on Anna), and *idem*, 'Aspects of twelfth-century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*', *Speculum* 58 (1983), 326–46 (on Choniates).

¹⁴⁸ Cf. H. Hunger, 'Überlieferungsgeschichte der byzantinischen Literatur', in M. Meier et al., ed., *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Zurich, 1964), 450.

¹⁴⁹ Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 245; Cavallo, 'Tracce', 430–31; *idem*, *Lire à Byzance*, 72–4.

the histories of the Greeks told by Thucydides',¹⁵⁰ while Kantakouzenos produced 'one of the masterpieces of Byzantine literature'¹⁵¹ by emulating the Athenian model in his own history that is so replete with speeches.¹⁵²

The great polymath Maximus Planoudes (1260–1330) worked in the imperial palace as a scribe and taught at the Chora monastery at Constantinople. He read and annotated manuscripts of Zosimus (Vat. gr. 176) and Thucydides (Monac. gr. 430), while also using Xiphilinos' copy of Dio.¹⁵³ He will have particularly influenced Gregoras, who was also a prodigious scholar. Gregoras' activity was focused on his school and library at the Chora, and among the extant autograph manuscripts of Gregoras as annotator is found Herodotus (Angel. gr. 83) and Zosimus (Vat. gr. 176), as well as Polybius, Diodorus (Par. gr. 1665) and Arrian.¹⁵⁴ At the request of Manuel Kantakouzenos, son of John VI, he also transcribed Thucydides, whom he tellingly labelled a 'rhetor', not a historian.¹⁵⁵ In addition, Gregoras wrote a lengthy (37 books) and detailed history from 1204 to 1359. At one stage he was a protégé of Theodore Metochites (1270–1332), who was another of the great students of the Hellenic tradition and whose wealth had been instrumental in rebuilding the Chora and its library, where he spent his final years. Both Gregoras and Metochites were senior officials at the court of Andronikos II, and while Metochites evidently never wrote history himself he considered Thucydides the greatest of all authors.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, Gregoras' learned friend at Thessalonike Thomas Magistros (1275?–1347) regarded Thucydides as his favourite author.¹⁵⁷ Two of his pupils, Demetrios Triklinios (fl. 1300–1325) and Gregory Akindynos, included an interest in the historians in their repertoire. In fact, there are

¹⁵⁰ R. J. Loenertz, *Démétrius Cydonès Correspondance*, Studi e Testi 186 (1956), Ep. 98:135.26–30.

¹⁵¹ W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, CA, 1997), 830.

¹⁵² A. Kazhdan, 'L'Histoire de Cantacuzène en tant qu'oeuvre littéraire', *Byz* 50 (1980), 279–335.

¹⁵³ C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries, 1204–c.1310* (Nicosia, 1982), 76.

¹⁵⁴ Details in D. Bianconi, 'La biblioteca di Cora tra Massimo Planude e Niceforo Gregora, una questione di mani', *Segno e testo* 3 (2005), 416–34, with manuscripts itemized at 412–18.

¹⁵⁵ Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, 260.

¹⁵⁶ Details in I. Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, Chora et les courants intellectuels de l'époque', in *Ideology, Letters and Culture in the Byzantine World* (London, 1982), study VIII, 28.

¹⁵⁷ F. Tinnefeld, 'Intellectuals in late Byzantine Thessalonike', *DOP* 57 (2003), 158–9.

two extant manuscripts of Herodotus (Angel. gr. 83, Laur. 70.6 – copied in 1318) associated with Demetrios.¹⁵⁸

Over the same decades there were several others around the imperial court who were no less engaged in reading, annotating and copying the works of earlier historians. Nikephoros Moschopoulos (d. 1322–32) owned a large library at Constantinople that included many historians, and in the following century another prolific scholar and writer with diverse literary interests, John Chortasmenos (1370–1437), who owned a Choniates manuscript. Moreover, the histories written at this time demonstrate the influence of the Byzantine tradition by employing the characteristic literary ways of acknowledging and interacting with the writer's audience. Gregoras, for instance, carefully guides the reader/listener with references forwards and backwards to earlier and later events,¹⁵⁹ as well as advising on the value of including or excluding certain content from his narrative (logos),¹⁶⁰ while Kantakouzenos' more intense and subjective account of a narrower period (1320–56) clearly signals for his audience the direction of the narrative.¹⁶¹

The Byzantine historiographical audience may have become narrowly restricted by the fourteenth century, but in the literary and court circles of Constantinople and Thessalonike it remained active and focused on preserving its distinguished tradition from the fifth- to the thirteenth century. Scholars still gathered in their *theatra* to listen to each other's new work or earlier works.¹⁶² As Byzantium disappeared its historiographical audience was busy borrowing, studying and replicating manuscripts of historians, and utilizing their reading to describe and explain their own circumstances. The histories of Chalkokondyles and Kritovoulos written after the demise of Byzantine Constantinople in 1453 are in some ways the most Thucydidean of all. The survival of much of the Greek tradition of historiography that later so influenced the west is owed to the attentive and productive Byzantine historiographical audience of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but they also had their favourites among later Byzantine historians.

¹⁵⁸ Martin, 'Lectores', 144.

¹⁵⁹ E.g. (Books 1 to 5 only): Gregoras, I, 35.14–15; 28.9–10; 62.3–4: 'My advancing narrative will show this'; 117.3; 144.7–10; 180.15; 209.15.

¹⁶⁰ E.g. (Books 1 to 5 only): Gregoras, I, 80.13–14: 'after the history has reached this point it is not proper to be silent on the Scyths. We will discuss them as the narrative progresses'; 62.3: 'my history almost passed over ...'; 68.7–8; 123.1–3: need 'to repeat so as not to interrupt the flow of the narrative'; 148.19; 171.4–5.

¹⁶¹ References conveniently collected in Kazhdan, 'Cantacuzène', 323.

¹⁶² Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 150.

Conclusion

From the fourth century to the fifteenth, most Byzantine history writing emerged from, and primarily for, a small highly educated and self-contained cultural elite around the court and government at Constantinople, Nicaea and provincial centres. They accessed historiographical works by attending readings in a private salon (*theatron*) or public auditorium, or by borrowing copies from friends, patrons or libraries, civic and monastic. Historical writers worked within the literary tastes and expectations of their audience, which differed considerably from a modern one. It is therefore considered 'a sad commentary on the taste of the Byzantine public' that the *Chronographia* of Psellos has survived in but a solitary manuscript, whereas there are numerous extant manuscripts of what are deemed lesser works such as those of Kedrenos and Zonaras.¹⁶³ Certainly it is true that Psellos and Leo the Deacon would be lost to us were it not for Par. gr. 1712, while the *Scriptores post Theophanem* and Bryennios owe their present existence to a single manuscript. However, there are numerous Byzantine manuscripts of the whole of Herodotus and Thucydides, and much of Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Cassius Dio, Polybius and Arrian, while among Byzantine writers the best preserved are George the Monk (more than 30 manuscripts) and Manasses (more than 70).¹⁶⁴ The relative popularity of different historical works with a Byzantine audience highlights their enduring preference for the best-told stories of Byzantium's Greek, Roman and Christian heritage and a comprehensive compendium of the period between then and the living present.

¹⁶³ Quote from C. Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980), 246; cf. Patlagean, 'Discours', 274, lamenting that there is only one manuscript of the *Scriptores post Theophanem* but numerous ones of Symeon Metaphrastes' saints lives.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 243.