



ROLE PLAYING STRATEGIES IN DEMETRIOS KYDONES' LETTERS TO MANUEL II PALAIOLOGOS

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In contrast to the harsh political conditions during the last two hundred years of the Byzantine state, scholars were still spread quite widely over the empire. Gravitating around the Constantinopolitan court or getting protection from wealthier patrons, they rarely enjoyed a stable situation. This reality compelled them to find multiple ways of maintaining themselves socially and, as a result of this search, they established connections either among themselves or with the centers of power which could afford them an economic basis for their livelihood. In this way they constituted themselves into a distinctive social group¹ with activities that had ramifications in the political sphere. It is against this background that the present study will attempt to offer a close-up examination of the multifaceted relationship between a fourteenth-century intellectual, Demetrius Kydones, and Manuel II Palaiologos, his disciple and friend, the Byzantine emperor after 1391.

Preliminaries

What is now called the Palaiologan Renaissance in Byzantium resulted from the combined action of specific factors and conditions. Starting with the reign of Michael VIII, attempts to revive Classical patterns of education as part of a program for rehabilitating the prestige of the Eastern Roman Empire after the disaster of 1204 become more and more visible.² Intellectuals participated in scholarly activity dominated in the first years by the efforts of those who circulated works of ancient Greek authors and later by the theological debates opposing the Palamites to the promoters of a union with Rome.

¹ Thor Ševčenko, "Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century," *Society and Intellectual Life in Late Byzantium* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 69–70. For a discussion of intellectuals as a social group see Franz Tinnefeld, "Die Gruppe der literarisch Gebildeten in der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft," in Peter Matschke, Franz Tinnefeld, ed., *Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz: Gruppen, Strukturen und Lebensformen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001), 221–385.

² C. N. Constantinides, "Higher Education at Constantinople (1261–1282)," in *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1204–1310)* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1982), 31–49.



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Even if their activity did not have a significant impact on the impoverished Byzantine society in general, there were a number of individuals who, through their achievements, were more influential than others. Among these one can reckon Demetrios Kydones, who was not only a prolific writer³ but also a state official active in the turmoil of the fourteenth century.⁴ During his service he emerged as a strong advocate of the union between the Byzantine and the Latin Churches⁵ and as a fierce opponent of any kind of alliance with the Ottomans. His deep involvement in Byzantine politics and his willingness to establish more durable connections between the Latins and the Byzantines ultimately resulted in his conversion to Catholicism.

What makes him such an interesting case is the fact that he constantly included his personal judgments on Byzantine politics in his writing. The core of his *œuvre* is represented by his massive collection of letters, one of the largest in the entire Byzantine literature, which, because of this, can be used as evidence for the social reality of that period when, seemingly, establishing relations through epistles was a process which played an important part in the aggregation of a community of literati.

Kydones' collection of letters

Kydones' correspondence consists of 450 letters preserved in several manuscripts.⁶ Some of them were selected for publication by the author himself,⁷

³ Kydones translated extensively from Latin authors: Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Anselm of Canterbury, Peter of Poitiers, Ricoldo da Monte Croce, etc. He was also the author of a Platonic treatise (*De contemnenda morte*), of many *prooimia* to imperial chrysobulls, and panegyrics addressed to John VI and John V.

⁴ Very early, in 1347, he became *mesazon* in John VI's court, and continued to hold the same position with some interruptions during the reign of John V Palaiologos until 1386.

⁵ Frances Kianka, "Demetrius Cydones (1324–1397): Intellectual and Diplomatic Relations between Byzantium and the West in the Fourteenth Century" (PhD Dissertation, Fordham University, 1981).

⁶ Cod. Vat. Gr. 101, cod. Urbin. Gr. 133, cod. Urbin. Gr. 80, cod. Burneyan. Gr. 75, cod. Paris. Gr. 1213, cod. Gr. 202 (Monastery of Barlaam, Meteora, Greece), cod. Oratorian. XXII-I (Library of Girolamini, Naples), cod. Laurent. Gr. LIX-24, cod. Gr. 437 (Library of the Synod, Moscow), cod. Barberin. Gr. 181, cod. Barberin. Gr. 584, cod. Baroccian. Gr. 90, cod. Gr. 261 (National Library of Vienna), cod. Angelic. Gr. 25 (Bibliotheca Angelica, Rome), cod. Vallicellian. Gr. F. 83 (Bibliotheca Vallicelliana, Rome), cod. Gr. B. V. 33 (National Library, Turin). See R.-J. Loenertz, *Les Recueils de*



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while after his death the effort of editing them was undertaken by his disciple, Manuel Kalekas. Many problems of precise dating or identifying the addressees persist, however, to this day.

This collection of letters reflects the author's connections to people belonging to different social layers, from members of the apparatus of government⁸ to fellow scholars⁹ and intimate friends.¹⁰ Quite often these circles intercrossed each other, that is to say, many of his correspondents could be, like him, scholars employed in an administrative position. Accordingly, Kydones' correspondence illustrates a wide variety of matters from the political situation in late Byzantium to personal concerns. This was not a peculiar situation for a Byzantine intellectual who used letter-writing both for instrumental purposes and for maintaining or cultivating friendships.¹¹

As far as style is concerned, Kydones adopted the formal canons and conventions current in Byzantine epistolography, i.e., the rules already established by the rhetoricians of Late Antiquity.¹² As a result, most of his letters, written in an Atticizing idiom¹³ replete with Classical allusions, fit easily

lettres de Démétrius Cydonès (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947), XIII. (Hereafter: R.-J. Loenertz, *Les Recueils de lettres*.)

⁷ According to Loenertz, Kydones started to publish his letters in chronological order beginning with 1374, during his first period of retirement from John V's service (see R.-J. Loenertz, *Les recueils*, 4). The edition I refer to in the present study is that of edited by R. J. Loenertz: *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance*, 2 vols. (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1957–1960). Hence I will use in the following the abbreviation "L." A complete translation of Kydones' letters was made by Franz Tinnefeld, *Demetrios Kydones. Briefe*, 7 vols. (Stuttgart: A. Hirsemann, 1981–2003).

⁸ In addition to the emperors themselves, Kydones also corresponded quite intensively with members of their courts: secretaries, *primikerioi*, *protobestiaries*, etc. He also wrote to other members of the ruling families: John VI's sons (Manuel and Matthew, both governors of Morea), and John V's sons (Theodore, Andronicus and Michael).

⁹ Among his addressees are both Palamites (Patriarch Isidore, Neilos and Nikolaos Kabasilas) and anti-Palamites (Nikephoros Gregoras, John Kyparissiotis, Maximos Chrysoberges).

¹⁰ Such as Rhadenos, Tarchaneiotis, George Synadenus Astras or his brother, Prochoros.

¹¹ See the discussion in Margaret Mullett, "Byzantium: A Friendly Society?" *Past & Present* 118 (1988): 3–24.

¹² G. L. Kustas, "Function and Evolution of Byzantine Rhetoric," *Viator* 1 (1970): 55–73.

¹³ In L. 432.12 he states: ἢ τίς λόγων ἐραστής οὐκ ἂν ἦδοιτο ὀνομάτων Ἀττικῶν κάλλος καὶ πλῆθος ἀκούων ("or which admirer of literature would not enjoy listening to the beauty and the abundance of the Attic words?"). The use of Latinized or vulgar



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into the formal categories defined by Aphthonius, Hermogenes or Libanius. Based on the study of the *topoi* recurrent in Byzantine texts, one can easily determine the character of letters as either friendly (e.g., L 23, 432, 445, 447), consolatory (e.g., L 220, 249, and 348), praising (e.g., L 262, 312, 306), instructive (e.g., L 21), of thanks (e.g. L 259), or of recommendation (e.g., L 231).

The ease with which he applied these rhetorical requirements not only reflects Kydones' deep knowledge of Classical norms, but is also coterminous with his ability to establish different types of relationships, either instrumental or intimate. As was only to be expected, in order to deal successfully with these relations, Kydones adopted different social roles according to the nature of the connection and the position of the addressee. As a consequence, it emerges from his correspondence that, in constructing a relation with another individual, he shifted frequently from one social role to another. In terms of modern theories of social networking this issue can be transposed to the category of *multiplexity*, a concept coined by the Manchester anthropological school, which refers essentially to the fact that two individuals can be linked simultaneously by more than one type of relationship: kinship, friendship, work, neighborhood, etc.¹⁴ This notion is generally used by sociologists dealing with network analysis to assess varying degrees of social complexity in both modern¹⁵ and pre-modern societies.¹⁶

forms is very rare; one possible exception is a *λεγάτον* in L 327.4, but even in this case the term is rather a technical one.

¹⁴ William Downes, *Language and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 118. See also the discussion on "multiplexity" as "the extent to which a link between two actors serves a multiplicity of interests" in Martin Kilduff and Wenpin Tsai, *Social Networks and Organizations* (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 33.

¹⁵ See for example Alain Degenne, *Introducing Social Networks*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 45–54.

¹⁶ For its use in the study of Byzantium, see Margaret Mullett, "The Detection of Relationship in Middle Byzantine Literary Texts: The Case of Letters and Letter-Networks," in *L'épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique: projets actuels et questions de méthodologie. Actes de la 16^e Table ronde organisée dans le cadre du XX^e Congrès international des Etudes Byzantines*, ed. W. Hörandner and M. Grünbart (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2003), 70.



The Relationship(s) with Manuel II as Expressed in Kydones' Epistolary Corpus

A straightforward case of a multiplex tie seen inside a limited group of letters is that which Kydones established with Manuel II Palaiologos, son of John V.¹⁷ Approximately a quarter of Kydones' entire epistolary *corpus* is addressed to him;¹⁸ therefore a statistical survey of the letters should form a basis for questioning the types of changes occurring in this particular part of his epistolary corpus.

As the information provided by the letters concerns mostly the nature of the relationship itself, it is crucial to find a way of decoding the significance of the themes and concepts circulated in the individual epistles. There are two ways to approach the data under investigation here. One is to track the adjectives and the nouns denoting the status of the addressee; the other is to discover the meanings associated with the literary *topoi* and themes utilized in shaping the relationship in the letters.

Once having gathered these types of data, the attributes of the addressee and the meanings embedded in the letters of Kydones to Manuel, a plurality of roles played by the sender emerges. The roles were not confined exclusively to a strict chronological course, but sometimes they were expressed in one and the same letter. Thus, three major roles Kydones played can be detected according to the type of relationship which he established: teacher-disciple, subject-emperor, and friend-friend. These three types are constructed corresponding to three different spheres of activity in Byzantium: intellectual, official, and intimate.

The roles Kydones played were influenced by varying sets of themes or concepts also recognizable in other letters. Thus, a teacher-disciple relationship is identifiable in L 437 addressed to Manuel Kalekas.¹⁹ Much better represented is, understandably, the subject-emperor type: almost all the twenty-three letters

¹⁷ On Manuel II as a political figure there exists an extensive monograph by John W. Barker, *Manuel Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969). A more recent overview of his activity is to be found in Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 296–338.

¹⁸ L 21, 23, 79, 80, 82, 84, 120, 132, 192, 203, 212, 214, 218, 220, 231, 236–239, 243, 244, 247, 249, 250, 253, 258, 259, 262, 271, 276, 277, 282–284, 294, 299, 302, 394, 306, 308, 309, 312, 315, 318, 320, 326, 327, 342, 348, 363, 365, 367, 368, 370, 372–374, 379, 380, 381, 383, 388, 391–393, 395–398, 401, 401*, 410, 424, 429–432, 444, 445, 447, 450.

¹⁹ See, for instance, the didactic encouragement in line 15: τὸ γὰρ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς κάλλος σαφῶς παρεδείκνυ (“for you have clearly shown the harmony of the letter”).



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addressed to John VI and John V contain allusions to the correspondent's status often associated with encomiastic phrases.²⁰ Furthermore, this category is articulated on elaborated rhetorical structures²¹ or by assuming various traditional concepts of traditional Byzantine political thinking such as the representation of the emperor as an embodiment of the highest virtues,²² the only hope for the people's salvation,²³ or the *lex animata*.²⁴ Finally, the correspondence with Rhadenos brought into play a friend-friend pattern constructed by using a subjective tone present in all thirty letters sent to him.²⁵ In comparison to such letters, those sent to Manuel display first of all a much larger diversity of themes and subject matter. Therefore, in order to detect the changes that affected the two men's relationship one has to tally carefully the different types of data mentioned above.²⁶

²⁰ See, for instance: δικαιοτάτε βασιλέων – “you, the most righteous of emperors” (L 117.30), πραότατε βασιλέων – “you, the mildest of emperors” (L 117.8), ἄριστε βασιλέων – “you, the best of emperors” (L 139.8).

²¹ καί σοι συγχαίρουσι τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις καὶ νῆσοι καὶ ἤπειροι, καὶ τὴν μὲν σὴν φύσιν ὑμνοῦσι. (“peoples and cities and islands and lands rejoice with you in your dominion and praise you”)

²² L 6.23: ὁ βασιλεὺς ἔσται τοῖς ἀρχομένοις παράδειγμα. (“the emperor should be a model for the one he rules”). This entire letter fits in the category of praising letters as defined by Libanius.

²³ L 8.21: ἐλπὶς μία σύ, καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐντεῦθεν μόνον ἐλπίζεται τὸ σωθῆναι (“there is only one hope: you! and only from you can the public good/state hope for salvation”).

²⁴ L 7.4: παρὰ θεοῦ μὲν εἰς σέ, παρά σου εἰς ἡμᾶς ἦκε τά εἰωθότα (“the laws came to you from God, and to us, from you”).

²⁵ In spite of the numerous letters Kydones sent to Rhadenos, little is known about the latter. As most of the information is preserved in these texts, we know that he was born, like Kydones, in Thessalonica around 1350. One of Kydones' favorite disciples, he later traveled to Constantinople, Lesbos, and Thessalonica where he entered the service of Manuel II Palaiologos during the siege of the City between 1382 and 1387. See *Prosopographische Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, vol. 10 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), 192–193, and Franz Tinnefeld, “Freundschaft und Paideia: Die Korrespondenz des Demetrios Kydones mit Rhadenos (1375–1387/8),” *Byzantion* 55 (1985): 210–44.

²⁶ These elements can also be understood in terms of the tripartite division of data current in social network analysis: *attribute data*: status, attitudes, opinions, and behavior of agents, *relational data* comprising information on contacts, ties and connections, and *ideational data* regarding meanings, motives, definitions, and typifications; see John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), 2–3.



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Concerning the status and education of the two, the available sources leave little room for interpretation. Kydones steadily followed the typical political career of a high functionary. Manuel, as a member of the ruling house of the Palaiologoi, held the office of despot until 1373, when he was appointed co-emperor. He rebelled in Thessalonica (1383–1387) and for a short period lost much of his power, being exiled to Lemnos, and choosing afterwards to live for a time on the island of Lesbos. From 1391 he became emperor of Byzantium and remained in power until 1425. Given these circumstances, the long period covered by the letter-exchange between Kydones and the Palaiologan emperor also favors the study of a development inside the relationship, from more formal to more intimate.

a. The *teacher-disciple* relationship

The first contacts between Kydones and Manuel, John V's son, were established very early in their lives because Kydones, as a member of the court with a thorough Classical education, was entrusted with Manuel's education. It is probable, therefore, that many of the future emperor's rhetorical works are indebted to the influence of his early preceptor. Nevertheless, epistolary traces of this relationship are not frequent, partly because the pedagogical context in which the two met presupposed non-mediated contacts and partly because Manuel entered a public position at a young age. Even if it is difficult to assess this type of tie, at least one letter offers a good image of what such a relationship implied. L 21, sent to Manuel in his early youth, is constructed around a series of traditional values held up as paradigmatic for the younger addressee. The vocabulary in this case was carefully selected and the ideas do not diverge in any significant way from official Byzantine ideology or common customs. The emphasis falls on providing models of behavior appropriate for a younger person: *σὺ καὶ ἄρχειν οἶσθα καὶ ὑπακούειν ἐπίστασαι* (4) ("you know well both how to rule and to submit yourself"). Then Kydones set two main landmarks for the emperor's son: *νόμιμον βασιλεῖ πείθεσθαι καὶ γονέας τιμᾶν ὄσιον* (8–9) ("it is lawful to obey the emperor and a sacred duty to honor your parents"). Finally, an exhortation to a pupil is indicated in paragraphs 18–19 by the use of the verb *διδάσκειν* ("to teach").

b. The *subject-emperor* relationship

The first signs of constructing the role of an imperial subject in relation to Manuel appear after 1373, the date of his coronation as emperor. In L 82.64, probably written in 1373, Kydones addressed his younger correspondent by



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referring to his status as βασιλεύς²⁷ (“emperor”). Such a way of addressing, sometimes cast in religious terms, is recurrent in the collection and confined especially to the ending of letters, as in L 214.92, L 220.29, L 262.90, L 294.31, L 306.57, or L 309.67. Rarely does the vocative of βασιλεύς appear in the incipit, as in L 283.4, or in the body of the letter, as in L 238.35. In addition to the vocative case, Kydones also used indirect references, like in L 312.27²⁸ and L 401.18.²⁹

Alternative appellatives circumscribed to the same type of relationship are used in L 244.20,³⁰ sent in 1382, that is, at the beginning of Manuel’s stay in Thessalonica, and in L 192.55–57,³¹ where he introduces a stronger religious tone by equating divine with imperial power.³²

²⁷ δὸς δὴ, Σῶτερ, τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἐν οἷς λέγει τὴν τοῦ Πλάτωνος καὶ Δημοσθένους φωνήν, τὴν δε τοῦ Μακεδόνοσ τύχην ἐν οἷσ στρατηγεῖ. (O Savior, give the emperor in everything he says the voice of Plato and Demosthenes, and in all his military undertakings the fortune of [Alexander] the Macedonian”).

²⁸ γένοιτο δέ, Σῶτερ, πολλοὺς παρ’ ἡμῖν γενέσθαι τοὺς μιμουμένους τὰ σά (“May it come to pass, O Savior, that many be born among us who will imitate your deeds!”).

²⁹ τὸν θαυμαστὸν βασιλέα (“the wondrous emperor”).

³⁰ ἀλλ’ ἐκείν ἰδοίμεν, Ἐλευθέριε, τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐν ἣ στεφανώσομεν τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ δημοσίᾳ θύσομεν ὑπὲρ ἐλευθερίας Θεῶ. (“May we see, Eleutherios, the day in which we will crown the angels and we will offer sacrifice to God for our freedom!”)

³¹ εἴη δέ σοι, Σῶτερ... οὕτω γάρ ὅμοιος ἔσῃ Θεῶ, πρὸς ὃν βλέπειν ἀνδρὶ βασιλεῖ μάλιστ’ ἂν φαίην εἶναι προσήκον (“May you be granted, o Savior, so that in this way you will become similar to God, towards whom one may say it is very much an emperor’s duty to look”).

³² The idea of equating divine and imperial power is very old in Byzantium and it survived until the end of the empire, at least in the ceremonial address to the emperor. Its origins can be found in Hellenistic ideology; the first one who introduced it seems to have been Eusebius, who attached it to the idea of the Old Testament’s fulfillment of prophecies. The argument is that because the empire of Constantine is the imitation of the Kingdom of Heaven and God appoints only one emperor, there has to be a strong connection between them. For a discussion of this notion see Donald M. Nicol, “Byzantine Political Thought,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 52–53 (henceforth: Nicol, “Byzantine Political Thought”). For the use of such concepts resulting from the combination of Hellenistic and Christian ideas see also Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–10 and Averil Cameron, “How Many Rhetorics,” in *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 15–46.



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However, if one compares the occurrences of βασιλεύς statistically in the correspondence to Manuel with those in the letters to John VI or John V, a very different picture emerges; in this latter case, such a use appears to be more restricted. The situation must once again be placed in the context of political changes, since the letters containing explicit mention of Manuel's status are mostly those sent before and during the latter's stay in Thessalonica. After 1387, when even Kydones disapproved of some of the emperor's actions, this manner of address almost disappeared, surviving only in indirect references like that in L 383.5: ὡς παρὰ βασιλέως ἐπιστολὰς ἀπαιτεῖν ("that one may ask for a letter from the emperor"). Attached to the nouns denoting the status of the emperor are adjectives which do not raise problems of interpretation as they contain no particularities when compared with the traditional manner of address and they are also used for the other two emperors. This is the case with L 220.30 and L 249.32, where the emperor is addressed with βασιλέων ἄριστε ("you, the best of emperors"), or in L 424.4: κράτιστε βασιλέων ("you, the most powerful of emperors").³³

The themes and the abstract notions used by Kydones in addition to the direct naming of imperial status are more interesting, however, for the construction of this relationship. One way to add meaning to his assertions was, as in many other cases, the use of Classical allusions. Comparisons with Alexander the Great or other ancient heroes were common for Kydones.³⁴ The most instances when Kydones used a large number of topics connected directly with his understanding of the emperor's role can be found in the group of letters sent during Manuel's stay in Thessalonica between 1382 and 1387. This segment of Kydones' correspondence deserves special attention since it is actually the most extended in the whole collection of eighty letters to Manuel, comprising thirty-one pieces.³⁵ These letters seem to record a certain amount of indirect information³⁶ concerning the evolution of the ongoing military activities in which Manuel was involved; this situation was also reflected in the use of topics such as that of the emperor as a model for others (παράδειγμα).

³³ In the same category can be included the official form of address found in L 282.4: πρὸς τὴν σὴν κεφαλὴν ("towards your [noble] person").

³⁴ See L 397.27 or L 82.65.

³⁵ L 80, L 203, L 243, L 244, L 247, L 249, L 250, L 253, L 258, L 259, L 262, L 271, L 276, L 277, L 282, L 283, L 284, L 294, L 299, L 302, L 304, L 306, L 308, L 309, L 315, L 318, L 312, L 320, L 326, L 327, L 342.

³⁶ R.-J. Loenertz, "Notes sur le règne de Manuel II à Thessalonique," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 50 (1957): 391–396.



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The first occurrence of this topic in this group is in L 203.11–14.³⁷ In this case the model theme is given more strength through contrast; on the one hand, Kydones speaks about παράδειγμα τῆς ἀνδρίας (“a model of bravery”), seen as the prerogative of mythical characters (L 203, 11: ἐν τῷ μύθῳ “in the myth”). On the other hand, Manuel is invested with the power of they intellect, which shapes human actions and influences state decisions even more than physical force (τὴν δικαιοσύνην...τὸ σὸν σύμβολον “righteousness is your identifying mark”). The same theme is developed in the following passage in terms of an imperial authority based on the superior use of rhetoric as a tool for action.³⁸

The issue of rhetoric as an instrument of power is connected with the prevalent idea of human excellence expressed in the repeated appeal to the royal ἀρετή (virtue); but Kydones uses it in the case of Manuel in a different way, obvious if one compares the use of ἀρετή in the letters addressed to John VI and John V. In the relationship with them, the *mesazon* used ἀρετή in a panegyric key.³⁹ In contrast, when addressing Manuel, he placed this notion in a more intellectually determined setting, populated by allusions to Classical themes and imbued with the idea of rational capacity added to military excellence. Thus, a particular kind of virtue becomes visible in L 220.29: καὶ ὅλως ἀρετῆς παράδειγμα τοῖς δυναμένοις (“and it is a model of virtue for the capable ones”). This sentence is part of a longer passage encompassing Manuel’s qualities in both his state duties and his intellectual capacities.⁴⁰ The very same structure appears in L 249.30–33, when Kydones refers to the military situation in Thessalonica.

Apart from the presence of the *virtue* theme, it is important to bear in mind the reasons for the distribution and the different uses of the *paradeigma* topos; they concern the situation which Kydones had in mind when addressing

³⁷ Οἱ δ’ ἰσχυρίζονται τῆς ἀνδρίας οὕτω καὶ νῦν τοσοῦτον εὐρηθῆσαι παράδειγμα. Τὴν δικαιοσύνην δέ τις εἰπὼν τὸ σὸν ἔδοξε σύμβολον εὐρηκέναι. (“There are some who contend strongly that even to this day a similar model of manly courage cannot be found. Should one say ‘justice,’ well, then, that one has found your identifying mark!?”) παράδειγμα also appears in one of the early letters, L 23.37: γένοιτο σοι ... τοῖς ἐσομένοις ἀρετῆς παράδειγμα (“may it be so that you become a model of virtue for the ones to come”)

³⁸ L 203, 13–16.

³⁹ See especially L 15.36 and L 221.50.

⁴⁰ τοὺς νόμους τηροῦντα, σώφρονα ἐν νεότητι, δίκαιον ἐν ἀπορίᾳ, μεγαλόψυχον ἐν χρήμασι, λόγους τιμῶντα, ἀμαθίαν ἐλέγχοντα (“Respecting the laws, self-restrained during the years of youth, righteous when lacking resources, generous with goods, respecting learning, censoring ignorance”).



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Manuel. As was noted above, the latter was caught during these years in the battles around Thessalonica. Although in the beginning Manuel seems to have been successful, soon afterwards the situation degenerated and subsequently the continuation of Manuel's career as leader of the Byzantine state was put in doubt, a fact reflected by Kydones' reluctant attitude.⁴¹

Another frequent theme which reveals the emphasis on Manuel's imperial status is that of freedom, *ἐλευθερία*, a crucial notion for the collapsing fourteenth-century Byzantium. This theme has a pervasive presence in the collection, for the first occurrence, in L 79.16 is followed by many others.⁴² As in the case of the *paradeigma* pattern, this theme is confined especially to the letters sent during the siege of Thessalonica. Kydones seems also to have linked this idea to that of *τύχη* (fate), as an explanatory cause for the political difficulties which Byzantium was facing.⁴³ One explanation for the frequent occurrences of *τύχη* seems to be the increased interest of the Palaiologan authors in Greek Classical writers. The increased use of the aforementioned themes, signals, in my opinion, a decrease in the influence of traditional Byzantine political ideas which had a different consistency in the letters addressed to John VI and John V. Thus, the idea of the emperor as the incarnation of divine law does not appear when addressing Manuel; in such cases, for instance, *νόμος* ("the law") has a very low frequency⁴⁴ and *δίκη* ("righteousness") is used mainly in neutral contexts.⁴⁵

⁴¹ R.-J. Loenertz, "Démétrius Cydonès et Manuel Paléologue. Remarques sur leurs correspondances," *Échos de l'Orient* 36 (1937): 271–287 and 474–487. Hereafter: Loenertz, "Démétrius Cydonès."

⁴² L 244.20, L 247.38, L 259.10, L 262.32, L 284.41, L 302.20, L 320.13, L 327.21, L 365.11, L 398.6.

⁴³ L 82.65, L 203.29, L 243.11, L 244.6, L 247.5, L 249.10, L 250.14, L 259.11, L 262.74, L 277.8, L 299.26, L 306.18, L 312.6, L 342.99, L 348.11, L 393.36. In the same context one could list the occurrences of the hope theme: L 203.30, L 220.30, L 249.50, L 294.28, L 299.71, L 306.46, L 348.19, L 365.18. These themes show Kydones' increased interest in the ongoing political process, which in his letters receives the treatment any politician trained as a rhetorician could offer; see L 203.30: *ταύτην ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ πίθῳ μόνην ἐλπίδα ἢ τύχη κατέλιπεν, καὶ τοῦτο μόνον τοῖς τῶν πόλεων νοσήμασιν εὐρίσκομεν φάρμακον* ("fate left us only this hope, and we can find no other remedy for the diseases that plague our cities").

⁴⁴ The use of *νόμιμον* ("legal, lawful") encountered in L 21 is rather singular in this group of letters.

⁴⁵ L 202.26, L 236.14/ L 220.26, L 231.9, L 237.8, L 244.29, L 249.9, L 262.10, L 282.47, L 299.57, L 306.46, L 327.19, L 388.7.



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Another component used in the crystallization of the subject-emperor pattern regards the person of the sender himself. In such cases, Kydones positions himself as a rather “humble” individual by making use of the modesty topos. In three instances the epistolographer shows himself especially diffident towards the significance of his own acts or sayings; as a result, in L 193 and 315 he refers to his problems as being μικρά (“unimportant”),⁴⁶ while in L 326.5 he speaks about what he calls τὰς ἐμὰς φλυαρίας (“our silly talks”).

On the other hand, what makes the greatest difference in the approach to the three emperors is another sort of abstract value added to this position, which is thus extended in a totally different direction. This concerns the intellectual side of Manuel’s activity, reflected in the use of the concept of “philosopher-king.” The notion is plainly expressed in two instances; in L 259.23: ...τὸν φιλόσοφον βασιλέα, ὃ μόνον Πλάτων λέγει παύσειν κακῶν (“the philosopher king, about whom Plato says that he is the only one capable to put an end to the evils”), and L 239.14, immediately after Manuel’s return from Thessalonica: καὶ νῦν ἡμῖν σαυτὸν, ὃν ἠΰξαστο Πλάτων ἔδειξας, τὸν φιλόσοφον βασιλέα (“and now you showed yourself in our eyes as the one whom Plato wanted, the philosopher king”).

Kydones’ correspondence challenges this concept through another one, that of the rhetor-king, a reflection of the intellectual environment in which both correspondents were active. In L 309 he clearly replaces the virtues of the philosopher with those of the orator in an attempt to persuade the king concerning a political decision.⁴⁷

One finds displayed here an important principle that Kydones tried to follow in his political endeavors, that of combining the Byzantine need of political salvation with the need of the politician to have a more active scholarly life. This emerges most clearly in the letters which he sent to the young Manuel

⁴⁶ L 193.53: ταῦτα σοι, βασιλεῦ, ἀνεισφέρω μικρὰ μὲν ὑπὲρ μεγίστων (“I report to you, emperor, these unimportant events instead of the significant ones”) and L 315.4–5: μικρὰ περὶ μικρῶν τῶν ἐμῶν λόγων οἰόμενος (“I have small thoughts about my own small affairs”).

⁴⁷ “Regarding the exhortation to stay and not to move there is a piece of advice appropriate both for an emperor and a rhetor; for a rhetor could take from here many good reasons, telling the citizens that they must preserve the faith in their country, and an emperor, who has the duty to save the cities, what other kind of reasons more appropriate to him could he choose than those by which he persuades the citizens to stay in town and confront the dangers and prefer to take the risks together with him instead of fighting abroad. Taking such advice you proved a skillful orator, and, as an emperor, you showed great care for the cities.”



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in the last years of the Thessalonica siege and immediately after his defeat. The latter's conflict with John V, especially his exile to Lemnos, is, according to Loenertz, first recorded in Kydones' correspondence.⁴⁸

c. The *friend-friend* relationship

The introduction of a strong intellectual dimension in a rather official relationship is a plain indication that the tie between the two sometimes took on a different consistency. In this connection, the frequent references to contemporary scholarly issues are the consequence of an increase in the degree of intimacy between the correspondents. This relationship is not, however, as easy to reconstruct as the official one. Several lexical structures are helpful, as for example the indirect reference to Manuel's role in L 250.28: δέϊ γὰρ ὑμᾶς τῶν μὲν πολεμίων ὄπλοις κρατεῖν, τοὺς δὲ φίλους εὐεργεσίαις νικᾶν ("For you must vanquish enemies by means of arms, but you must conquer your friends through benefits").

If one looks at the quantity and the quality of the abstract content included in the epistolary text, however, a friendly relationship can surely be reconstructed. Referring only to this intellectual aspect and indicating the common interests which linked the correspondents in a relationship which surpassed the official sphere, one needs to consider the common cultural idiom in circulation identifiable by the ubiquitous Classical quotations.

The most valuable information for assessing this relationship comes from the analysis of the changes in tone and attitude perceptible in the collection; thus, a more intimate tie is usually expressed by means of subjective statements. In many cases the messages Kydones sends to the emperor contain direct references to his personal situation. This is expressed especially when he speaks about his personal journeys. Thus, L 382 contains a long introduction where the prevailing information concerns the writer himself, who starts in first person narrative style: ἐγὼ χθὲς ἀναχωρῶν ἀπὸ σοῦ... ("after I left you yesterday...") and continues in the same style. Subjectivity becomes more visible in the last letters, written after 1390, where the epistolographer devotes much more space to private facts than to questions of public activity.

Another concern which emerges from this group of letters regards Kydones' health problems. Such subject matter was not a novelty in Byzantine epistolography, as it recurs in early Byzantine epistolography. At some points, like for example in the eleventh century, sickness was rather a constructed epistolary theme than a real fact, representing a common element in an epistle

⁴⁸ Loenertz, "Démétrius Cydonès, 119.

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and having the role of stressing separation or friendship.⁴⁹ Was this situation the same in Kydones' correspondence to Manuel? Rather not, possibly because of the different circumstances in the fourteenth century when, in his role of high official, Kydones enjoyed freedom of movement without coming up against major obstacles. Whatever the reason, references to medical issues are not so frequent in the whole epistolary corpus.⁵⁰

Therefore, the two letters addressed to Manuel in which Kydones describes his sufferings are rather unique among the epistles addressed to the emperor. Both associate sickness with an intense expression of friendship.⁵¹ L 410 proceeds thus from a very detailed description of the physical situation⁵² to an expression of great affection for the emperor.⁵³ L 445, starting with the dramatic exclamation, ἰού, ἰού ("alas"), even using an image with a touch of self-irony: γέλωτα κινήσω τοῖς θεαταῖς, οὕτω παρὰ μέλος βαίνων καὶ νοθρῶς τὰ μέλη κινῶν ("I will provoke the laughter of the spectators walking in this way and sluggishly moving my limbs") (35–36). In this case the relationship between sickness and the absence of his friend is underscored by the meaning of the medium by which it is transmitted: the epistle.⁵⁴

L 445 reflects Kydones' preoccupation in the correspondence to Manuel with the nature of the letter as support for his message. The inclusion of this

⁴⁹ Margaret Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid. The Letters of an Archbishop* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1997), 104–105.

⁵⁰ G. T. Dennis gives an analysis of all these instances, focusing on the descriptions of illnesses in L 73. 16–19, L 78.9, L 108.4, L 110. 31–46 and on the letters mentioning doctors (5.119, 73.14, 108.5, L110. 44 etc): "Reality in the Letters of Demetrius Cydones," in *Porphyrogenita. Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, ed. Charalambos Dendrinos *et al.* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 402–403.

⁵¹ A parallel to this can be found in L 100, where Kydones uses the medical vocabulary with a reversed meaning: ἡμῖν ἐν γράμμασι συμμαχίαν κατὰ τοῦ πάθους ("we found in the letters an ally against suffering").

⁵² L 410.6–13: οὕτως ἡ κάκιστ' ἀπολουμένη με διέθηκεν ὀφθαλμία καὶ ἡ μετ' ἐκείνην ὅλον μου τὸ σῶμα καταβαλοῦσα κακοχυμία...καὶ κάθημαι δὴ κατακεκλεισμένος, καὶ κατὰ τοὺς λίθους ἀκίνητος ("and thus the worst and devastating eye-illness affected me and, after it, a bad disposition struck my entire body; and now I lie here enclosed, motionless as the stones").

⁵³ L 410.23–24: εἰ δέ τις εἰρήνης καὶ τὸ σῶμα μοι τύχοι, ὄψομαι σε κἀν τοῖς πόνοις κἀν τοῖς στεφάνοις. ("if I had a body without any trouble, I would see you both amidst labors and amidst triumphs")

⁵⁴ L 445.11: νῦν δὲ τὸ θαῦμα τοῦτο παρὰ τῆς σῆς ἐπιστολῆς εἰς ἔργον ἐξέβη ("and now this wonder became reality through your letter").



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kind of discourse, which I would call meta-epistolary, has to do with strengthening the intimate relationship between the two. Letters as mere objects thus play an important role in Kydones' discourse, being held not only as neutral media of communication, but also as a pretext for the expression of his personal stylistic choices. This situation arises from a series of similar assertions, recurrent in many sections of the collection, which introduce a much more personal tone into the letter; letters are thus praised for their power to bring people together by means of their natures. Once, the letter is *γενναία* ("noble"),⁵⁵ other times Kydones praises its virtues, as in L 304.14, τὸ γὰρ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς κάλλος πολλῆς ἡσυχίας τὸν δημιουργὸν αὐτῆς ἀπολαύειν ἐβόα ("for the harmony of your letter suggests that its writer enjoyed much tranquility") or declares in L 309.7: ἀλλά με τὸ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς κάλλος ἔπεισεν ("but the artistry of your letter persuaded me"). Letters are also used in the *topos* of regretting the absence of any news from his friend, as in L 244.14: ἀλγοῦμεν δὲ μήτ' ἀγγέλων μήτε γραμμάτων ἐκεῖθεν ἠκόντων ("we suffer because neither messengers nor letters come from there"); for, as he says in L 388.7, addressed to Manuel, sending letters is a *παρὰ σοῦ φιλεῖσθαι τεκμήριον* ("a proof of your love").

Conclusion

Reading the letters, one can grasp a continuous process of constructing various ties. The existence of such ties is attested, on the one hand, in other letters addressed to other people from Kydones' network; the evidence coming from such texts fits very well into the category of relational data which supports the configuration of the subject-emperor type of relationship. Not a few cases pose problems of referentiality; in L 106.22, an epistle sent to Demetrius Palaiologos in Thessalonica, Kydones refers to Manuel, at that moment still a despot (local ruler), as ὄλως πάντα ἄριστος δεσπότης ("the very best despot"). At other times the epistolographer speaks about the young emperor⁵⁶ or simply about the emperor, to whom he applies the conventional epithets.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ L 276.5. See also L 244.19: νικηφόροι ἐπιστολαί (victory-bringing letters), L 304.16: Διὸς ὄρνις ("Zeus' bird").

⁵⁶ L 133.6 (addressed in 1373 to a friend in Constantinople).

⁵⁷ L 133.21, L 134.22 (θειότατος βασιλεύς ("most divine emperor"), L 137.36, L 138.12, L 143.4 (ὁ πάντα ἄριστος βασιλεύς ("the very best emperor"), L 166.21, L 167.14, L 270.19 (ὁ θαυμαστὸς βασιλεύς ("the wondrous emperor"), L 93.55



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On the other hand, Manuel's epistolary corpus records in its turn these types of ties in the letters he sent to Kydones.⁵⁸ His twenty-two letters attest in this case exclusively the friend-friend relationship, for Manuel's correspondence seems to focus on the intellectual side of the relationship. Thus, the emperor seems to use the epistolary form as support for his many reflections, theological or philosophical, in most of his letters.⁵⁹ The emperor also speaks frequently about the friendly relationship they have, but in a rather over-intellectualized phrasing.⁶⁰

All in all, the data furnished by Kydones' letters reflect the existence of different bases for developing a certain relationship. Each of these ties can be evaluated and ascribed to a particular sphere of social activity: intellectual, official, and intimate. They indicate not only the mobility of a scholar-politician, but also his flexibility in approaching individuals in a historical and social context which required a series of concerted efforts to acquire concrete results. Kydones, as an active *ζῶον πολιτικόν*, was compelled to operate in this way.

(ὁ θαυμαστός βασιλεύς, L 334.18, L 335.19, L 421. 34 (addressed to Theodore Palaiologos: ἀδελφός καὶ βασιλεύς ("brother and emperor"))

⁵⁸ Manuel II Palaiologos, *Letters*: 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 36, 38.

⁵⁹ One interesting feature of this correspondence is that it partly records the circulation of books between the two correspondents. See Letter 3 and 4 about one of Plato's manuscripts.

⁶⁰ "You said, as you know, and you said it very correctly: for those who have arrived at perfection nothing further can be added. Still, there are wise men who assert that nothing in life remains absolutely unchangeable. Granted that our friendship has reached perfection, and that you are right in saying that nothing further can be added, is it not likely that this friendship will of necessity decline?" (*Letter 3*, tr. G. T. Dennis).