

MARION KRUSE^a

The Epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos and the Eleventh-Century Xiphilinoi*

ABSTRACT: Ioannes Xiphilinos, the nephew of the eponymous patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos (1063–1075), played a critical role in the transmission of the text of the Roman historian Cassius Dio. Despite his importance, however, scholars continue to reproduce an inaccurate and arbitrary biography according to which he was a monk and the author of three works: the *Epitome* of Cassius Dio, a collection of fifty-three homilies, and a *Menologion* dedicated to Alexios I Komnenos. The current article lays out the shortcomings of the prevailing consensus before surveying the evidence for the family of the Xiphilinoi in the eleventh century and positing an identification of our epitomator informed by the testimony of lead seals and the letters of Michael Psellos. It argues that our epitomator was not a monk, but was likely a student of Psellos and a high-ranking member of the imperial administration whose only extant work is the *Epitome* of Cassius Dio.

KEYWORDS: Ioannes Xiphilinos, family Xiphilinos, Michael Psellos, Byzantine Seals, Cassius Dio

Ioannes Xiphilinos plays a critical role in the transmission of the text of Cassius Dio, a third-century Roman senator and historian whose history of Rome covered the period from the kings through the reign of Alexander Severus (r. 222–235) in eighty books. Of these, only books 36 through 60 are preserved directly, and the later books in this range contain significant lacunae. For the material before book 36, we rely on the *Epitome* of Ioannes Zonaras, a twelfth-century Byzantine administrator and later monk, while for the material after book 60 (and more realistically after 51 owing to the lacunae) we rely on the *Epitome* of Ioannes Xiphilinos, though Zonaras also preserves material from books 44–80¹. Xiphilinos' *Epitome* is the only extant witness to the later books of Dio that is drawn almost exclusively from the text of Dio. His *Epitome* is therefore crucial to our reconstruction of Dio's work, to the study of the high empire and Severan period, and to the reception of ancient Roman history in the eleventh century. Despite the importance of Xiphilinos and his work, scholars continue to reproduce an inaccurate and arbitrary biography of the epitomator. The current article lays out the shortcomings of the prevailing consensus before surveying the evidence for the family of the Xiphilinoi in the eleventh century and positing an identification of our epitomator informed by the testimony of lead seals.

The standard description of the epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos is as a monk, a nephew of the eponymous patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos (1063–1075), and the author of three works: the *Epitome* of Dio, which was produced during the reign of Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071–1078); a collection of fifty-three homilies; and a *Menologion* (a collection of brief notices about saints arranged calendrically according to their feast days) dedicated to the emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118), which survives only in a Georgian translation². Yet of these “facts” about our epitomator's life, we

^a Marion Kruse: University of Cincinnati, Department of Classics, 410 Blegen Library, PO Box 210226, Cincinnati, Ohio 45221-0226; marion.kruse@uc.edu

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¹ Additional fragments are preserved in a variety of sources, most notably in the tenth-century *Excerpta* compiled under the direction of the Byzantine emperor Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos.

² K. ZIEGLER, Xiphilinos, in: *RE IX A2*, 2132–2134; A. KAZHDAN, Xiphilinos, John the Younger, in: *ODB III* 2211; C. T. MALLAN, Style, Method, and Programme of Xiphilinos' *Epitome* of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. *GRBS* 53 (2013) 610–644 at 612–615; L. NEVILLE, *A Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*. Cambridge 2018, 147. Berbessou-Broustet identifies him as the author of the homilies and *Menologion*, but not as a monk, B. BERBESSOU-BROUSTET, Xiphilinos, abrégiateur de Cassius

can be certain only of what he himself tells us in his *Epitome*³:

λέγω γὰρ τοῦτο οὐκέτι ὡς ὁ Δίων ὁ Προυσαεὺς ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ Σευήρου καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων γενόμενος, ἀλλ' ὡς Ἰωάννης ὁ Ξιφιλῖνος ἀδελφόπαις ὦν Ἰωάννου τοῦ πατριάρχου, ἐπὶ δὲ Μιχαὴλ αὐτοκράτορος τοῦ Δούκα τὴν ἐπιτομὴν ταύτην τῶν πολλῶν βιβλίων τοῦ Δίωτος συνταπτόμενος.

I am saying this no longer as Dio of Prusa, who lived during the time of the emperors Severus and Alexander, but as Ioannes Xiphilinos, the nephew of Ioannes the patriarch, who is editing this epitome of the many books of Dio during the reign of the emperor Michael Doukas.

The idea that Xiphilinos was a monk can be traced back to Hans-Georg Beck, who is also the source of the consensus that he should be identified as the author of the homilies (which are attributed in some mss. to a Ioannes Xiphilinos) and the *Menologion*⁴. The overall image that emerges from Beck, on which virtually all modern interpretations of Xiphilinos are based, is of a bookish and primarily religious author far removed from the Byzantine court and administration. But every aspect of this biography is either incorrect or arbitrary and therefore suspect⁵.

Beck assigns a collection of fifty-three homilies to our epitomator on the basis of an argument by Albert Ehrhard that the homilies should be dated c. 1110 on the grounds of internal references to the Bogomil heresy, especially the condemnation of its leader⁶. This heresy reached a climax during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos when the Bogomil leader, Basileios, was executed c. 1117⁷. Beck, following Ehrhard, argues that we cannot assign the homilies to the patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos, who died in 1075, and must therefore assign them to his nephew⁸. This argument is logical only if we accept that the author of these homilies was named Ioannes Xiphilinos, and the manuscript evidence for such an identification is thin. Of the surviving manuscripts, nine attribute authorship to the patriarch Ioannes IX Agapetos (1111–1134), of which four explicitly reference his status as archbishop. Meanwhile sixteen manuscripts attribute the homilies to Ioannes Xiphilinos, of which ten explicitly mention his status as archbishop and an eleventh implies it through the phrase “our father among the saints.” There are also three manuscripts that list an otherwise unknown Niketas Skoutariotes as

Dion, in: Cassius Dion: nouvelles lectures, ed. V. Fromentin – E. Bertrand – M. Costelloni-Trannoy – M. Molin – G. Urso. Bordeaux 2016, I 81–94 at 81 n. 2. Treadgold expresses doubt about the identification of the epitomator with a monk and the author of the homilies and *Menologion*, but admits the possibility, W. TREADGOLD, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*. New York 2013, 310.

³ Xiphilinos 87, 6–11 (ed. U. P. BOISSEVAIN, *Cassii Dionis Cocceiani historiarum Romanarum quae supersunt*. Berlin 1901, III 526, 10–14).

⁴ H.-G. BECK, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (*HdA* 12, 2, 1). Munich 1959, 629–630. The idea that our epitomator was a monk has received some circumstantial confirmation from a seal belonging to a self-described monk, Ioannes Xiphilinos, see A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Die Familie Xiphilinos im 11. Jahrhundert. Der Beitrag der Siegel*, in: *Les réseaux familiaux. Antiquité tardive et Moyen Âge*, ed. B. Caseau. Paris 2012, 307–323 at 313–314. I will address this seal and the rest of the sigillographic record below. For an overview of the seals considered in this article, see Table 1.

⁵ As Warren Treadgold has pointed out, there is nothing that indicates that our epitomator was a monk, and we should moreover be skeptical that our Ioannes would retain the same name if he took monastic orders, TREADGOLD, *Middle Byzantine Historians* 310 n. 7. It should be noted that Beck himself challenged the stereotype of the reclusive monk and the “monkish chronicle” in Byzantium, H.-G. BECK, *Zur byzantinischen “Mönchschronik”*, in: *Speculum historiale. Geschichte im Spiegel von Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsdeutung*, ed. C. Bauer – L. Boehm – M. Müller. Freiburg – Munich 1965, 188–197 (= H.-G. BECK, *Ideen und Realitäten in Byzanz* [*Variorum Collected Studies Series* 13]. London 1972, XVI).

⁶ A. EHRHARD, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*. 1. Teil: *Die Überlieferung* (*TU* 50–52). Leipzig 1937–1952, III 531–532. Ehrhard is here following the argument of the editor of the text, S. EUSTRATIADIS, *Ὁμιλῖαι εἰς τὰς κυριακὰς τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκ χειρογράφου τῆς ἐν Βιέννῃ αὐτοκρατορικῆς βιβλιοθήκης νῦν πρῶτον ἐκδιδομένη μετὰ προλεγομένων*. Triest 1903, 15–20.

⁷ D. OBOLENSKY, *Basil the Bogomil*, in: *ODB* I 268.

⁸ EHRHARD, *Überlieferung* III 1, 556–559.

the author⁹. The manuscript tradition is therefore not definitive and, to the extent that it favors the authorship of *any* Ioannes Xiphilinos, it points to the patriarch. No manuscript identifies its author as a monk.

Beck and Ehrhard's attribution is also suspect on chronological grounds given that it depends on a preface with an allusion to the Bogomil heresy. However, Bonis has argued that this preface was a later addition, primarily on the grounds that it was written in a different hand in one manuscript, which he identified as the original source of the preface¹⁰. Although Ehrhard rejected this theory on the basis of the subjectivity of hand analysis, the same argument has since been made on content and stylistic grounds¹¹. Absent the preface, there is nothing that can be used to date the homilies precisely, and thus no reason to rule out the authorship of the patriarch Xiphilinos. Moreover, even if we accept the dating of Ehrhard and Beck, there was likely another Ioannes Xiphilinos active in the early reign of Alexios I Komnenos, as will be shown below. In any case, despite all of the uncertainty that surrounds these homilies, we can say one thing for certain: there is no positive argument for assigning them to our epitomator.

The identification of our epitomator as the author of the *Menologion* is similarly tenuous. The identification can be traced back to the argument of Korneli Kekelidze based on the testimony of an incomplete copy of a Georgian translation of the *Menologion* which partially preserves a postscript describing the author¹². According to this postscript, an anonymous Xiphilinos was inspired by a patriarch Xiphilinos to compose the *Menologion*, which he dedicated to an emperor Alexios.

There are several problems with this postscript. First, none of the Xiphilinoi are given first names, so the author is identified in the text only as *a* Xiphilinos and the patriarch only as *a* patriarch Xiphilinos (there were two). Likewise, the emperor Alexios is given no family name or numeration. Second, the discoverer of the manuscript, Kekelidze, who edited and translated the text into Russian, believed that the incipit of the postscript, the only section that identifies the author as a Xiphilinos, was a later addition on the grounds that the description of Xiphilinos as a “wise philosopher” and “first among the court scholars” would be uncharacteristically boastful for the author of a religious text in the eleventh century¹³. Third, Alexios I came to the throne in 1081, while Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos died in 1075, leaving at least a six-year gap between the two major figures in the postscript. Moreover, the patriarch is not described as “of blessed memory” or by any other phrase that would indicate that he was already deceased. Fourth, Kekelidze assumes a family relationship between the author and the patriarch Xiphilinos, despite his suspicions regarding the incipit, on the basis of the phrase “familiar behest” (*nat`esaobit`ic`a mc`nebay*), which is used to describe the patriarch's encouragement of the author of the *Menologion*¹⁴. Although the word for “familiar” (*nar`esaobit`i*) is derived from the root for family (*nat`esavi*), the usage here is not specific enough to indicate a family relationship¹⁵.

All of this uncertainty argues against assuming that the anonymous Xiphilinos to whom the Georgian manuscript refers is our epitomator, as does the fact that we are aware of many more Xiphilinoi

⁹ This is counting only those manuscripts in which the attribution is in the same hand as the rest of the manuscript, and therefore not likely to be a *post facto* attribution. For a survey of the manuscript attributions, see EHRHARD, *Überlieferung* III 1, 532–556.

¹⁰ K. BONIS, Προλεγόμενα εἰς τὰς “Ἑρμηνευτικὰς διδασκαλίαις” τοῦ Ἰωάννου Η' Ξιφιλίνου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (2 Ἰαν. 1064–2 Αὐγ. 1075). Athens 1937, 37–44.

¹¹ H. HENNEPHOF, Der Kampf um das Prooimion im xiphilinischem Homiliar, in: *Studia byzantina et neohellenica Neerlandica* (*Byzantina Neerlandica* 3), ed. W. Bakker – A. van Gemert – W. Aerts. Leiden 1972, 281–299.

¹² K. KEKELIDZE, Ioann Ksifilin, prodolatel' Simeona Metafrasta. *Christianskij Vostok* 1 (1912) 325–347. Kekelidze is cited by both Beck and the *ODB*.

¹³ KEKELIDZE, Ioann Ksifilin 334. A marginal note in a different manuscript dated to the sixteenth century only confirms that *menologia* were attributed to a Xiphilinos by that period, and provides no further information about the identity of the anonymous Xiphilinos, KEKELIDZE, Ioann Ksifilin 332.

¹⁴ KEKELIDZE, Ioann Ksifilin 330–331.

¹⁵ S. RAPP, Personal Communication. May 27, 2019. The normal adjectival form of *nat`esavi* is *nat`esauri*.

active during the late eleventh century than appear to have been known to Kekelidze¹⁶. There is, moreover, another possibility, one which Kekelidze does not seem to have considered, that would re-date the *Menologion* by about a century¹⁷. The patriarch mentioned in the manuscript could be Georgios II Xiphilinos, who was patriarch of Constantinople from 1191–1198, a tenure that overlapped with the beginning of the reign of Alexios III Angelos (r. 1195–1203). This identification is both plausible on its face and recommended by its ability to resolve the gap that would otherwise exist between the death of the patriarch and accession of the ruler to whom the work is dedicated. It would also fit established patterns in the Byzantine court: authors often dedicated works to emperors at the beginning of a reign in order to curry favor with the new regime. Even if this dating is not accepted (or ultimately proven untenable by subsequent investigations of the manuscript), it remains impossible to make any positive case for identifying the epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos as the author of the *Menologion*. The evidence is too slender and the Xiphilinoi active in the period are too numerous.

Although we cannot confidently attribute any works to our epitomator aside from the *Epitome* itself, we are still able to say a great deal about his life and circumstances. This is because he belonged to a relatively prominent family that is well-documented in the writings of Michael Psellos and a series of lead seals¹⁸. By examining the members of the family, we can reconstruct the life and times of Ioannes Xiphilinos. The image that emerges is not of a bookish man of God, but of an active member of the imperial administration operating close to the center of secular intellectual life in eleventh-century Constantinople, and concerned largely with secular history.

According to the funeral oration of the patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos written by Michael Psellos, who was at times a close friend and correspondent of the patriarch, Ioannes was the first member of his family to achieve any notable rank. The Xiphilinoi were originally from Trebizond, and the patriarch's anonymous parents are unknown outside of the vague praise they are offered by Psellos¹⁹. The major turning point in Ioannes VIII's career came after his arrival in Constantinople when he was appointed *nomophylax* by the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos sometime before 1047. This office was a new creation, part of a general overhaul of the legal administration in Byzantium, though its purview was perhaps mostly educational²⁰. Although this was a major development in Ioannes' career, the post of *nomophylax* was not an especially high one, ranking alongside offices such as the *droungarios tes viglas*, a legal supervisor for the thematic governors, or *kritai*, which stood eighteenth in the list of offices open to non-eunuchs according to the tenth-century Escorial

¹⁶ Kekelidze is aware of only one other Xiphilinos, Konstantinos the *droungarios tes viglas*, who is discussed below, KEKELIDZE, Ioann Ksifilin 331. It is not clear why Kekelidze prefers to assign the work to the epitomator Ioannes rather than Konstantinos, though perhaps this is because Ioannes was a known author (of the *Epitome*) and Konstantinos is not explicitly attested as a relative of the patriarch.

¹⁷ This re-dating falls within Kekelidze's range for the translation of the *Menologion* into Georgian, which he places in the second half of the twelfth century based on the existence of a thirteenth-century copy of the *Menologion* for April, KEKELIDZE, Ioann Ksifilin 339–340. It should be noted that this *terminus ante quem* is only valid if we assume that all of the unattributed *menologia* in the manuscript containing the postscript are the work of the same author.

¹⁸ For the seals of the Xiphilinoi, I rely on WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie*.

¹⁹ Michael Psellos, *Funeral Oration for the Most Blessed Patriarch Kyr Ioannes Xiphilinos* 4, 1–16 (ed. I. POLEMIS, Michael Psellos. *Orationes Funebres*. Leipzig 2014, I 119–120). We know that his father predeceased his mother from his work on the miracles of St. Eugenios of Trebizond, see Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos, *An Account of Miracles Performed by the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Eugenios of Trebizond* 1 (ed. J. O. ROSENQVIST, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou* 154 [*Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* 5]. Uppsala 1996, 174–176, ll. 102–105). The only modern biography of the patriarch has nothing to add on this topic or his family more generally, K. BONIS, *Ἰωάννης ὁ Ξιφιλῖνος. Ὁ νομοφύλαξ, ὁ μοναχός, ὁ πατριάρχης καὶ ἡ ἐποχὴ αὐτοῦ*. Athens 1937, 12–13. Although Bonis is aware of the patriarch's work on St. Eugenios, he does not bring that information to bear on his subject's biography.

²⁰ For the schools established by Monomachos, see W. WOLSKA-CONUS, *Les écoles de Psellos et de Xiphilinos sous Constantin IX Monomaque*. *TM* 6 (1976) 223–243; Z. CHITWOOD, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition*. Cambridge 2017, 150–183.

Taktikon (a list of offices ranked by status)²¹. Nevertheless, Xiphilinos is attested as a *magistros*, a relatively high court title, by 1054²². At this point, Xiphilinos' political career suffered a setback: he had fallen out of favor at court in the early 1050s and chose to leave the capital for a monastic retirement in Bithynia in 1054. More than a decade later he was plucked from this retirement and made patriarch of Constantinople in 1063, likely owing to the resurgence of the Doukai (and Psellos) under the emperor Konstantinos X Doukas. Xiphilinos was patriarch until his death in 1075 during the reign of Michael VII Doukas, under whom his eponymous nephew, our epitomator, was writing.

The patriarch Xiphilinos is the best attested and certainly most politically successful member of the family. It is because of him that we find traces of a contemporary relative, Bardas Xiphilinos, in the historiographical record. During the final days of Konstantinos X Doukas, the emperor bound his empress Eudokia Makrembolitissa by terrible oaths to never remarry, likely in order to ensure the ascent to the throne of his two minor children, Michael and Konstantinos²³. This oath was witnessed by the court and senate and administered by the patriarch Xiphilinos. However, after Doukas' death opinion soon shifted in favor of Eudokia remarrying. The two nearest sources, Psellos' *Chronographia* and Attaleiates' *History*, remain silent about the patriarch's role in canvassing to release Eudokia from her oath. However, two later sources, Skylitzes Continuatus and Zonaras, both report that the patriarch was tricked into doing so when he was told that the empress was likely to marry his relative, Bardas²⁴. The major difference between these two accounts is the nature of Bardas' relationship to the patriarch: Skylitzes Continuatus calls him a brother (*adelphos*), while Zonaras calls him a nephew (*anepsios/adelphopais*)²⁵. Given that Continuatus wrote earlier, indeed he may have been a contemporary, I am inclined to favor his identification of Bardas²⁶. Moreover, it is possible that Zonaras has made Bardas younger in order to play into the idea that the empress Eudokia's choice of husband was dictated by lust rather than policy, a depiction that would fit with his generally negative portrayal of the man she did eventually take as her second husband, Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068–1071).

The name Bardas Xiphilinos also appears on a seal from the eleventh century and describes its owner as a *patrikios* and *strategetes* of Thessaly²⁷. Unfortunately, *strategetes* is not a formal rank and we cannot be sure of what precise military command lay behind it, though it is most likely to be identified with the rank of *stratelates*, a high-ranking command²⁸. This supposition is supported by the

²¹ For the legal organization of the empire in the eleventh century, see N. OIKONOMIDÈS, L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire Byzantin au XI^e siècle (1025–1118). *TM* 6 (1976) 125–152 at 133–135. For the Escorial *Taktikon*, see IDEM, Les listes de préséance Byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles. Paris 1972, at 302–304 for the rank of the *droungarios tes viglas*. For a survey of the office's history and evolution, see R. GUILLAND, Recherches sur les institutions byzantines. Berlin 1967, I 564–587.

²² WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Familie 309–310.

²³ The terms of the oath survive and are quite graphic, see N. OIKONOMIDÈS, Le serment de l'impératrice Eudocie (1067). Un épisode de l'histoire dynastique de Byzance. *REB* 21 (1963) 101–128.

²⁴ Skylitzes Continuatus 3, 7 (ed. E. Th. TSOLAKIS, Ἡ συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτζη. Thessaloniki 1968, 123, 1–22); Zonaras XVIII 10, 22 (ed. T. BÜTTNER-WOBST, Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri xiii–xviii [CSHB 31]. Bonn 1897, III 686, 4–10). Michael Glykas also reports the story, but copies Continuatus verbatim, except for the negative comments on Bardas' character, Michael Glykas, *Annales* 608, 1–10 (ed. I. BEKKER, Michaelis Glycae Annales [CSHB 24]. Bonn 1836).

²⁵ Although *anepsios* means cousin in Classical Greek, it had come to mean nephew by the middle Byzantine period (and still does in Modern Greek), as confirmed by Zonaras' use of both *anepsios* and *adelphopais* in the same sentence.

²⁶ The identity of the continuator of Skylitzes is uncertain, but the current scholarly consensus favors the theory that the continuator was Skylitzes himself. For a cogent summary of the debate, see C. HOLMES, Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1035). Oxford 2005, 83 n. 41. For an up-to-date bibliography on the controversy, see NEVILLE, Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing 157 n. 15.

²⁷ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Familie 311–312.

²⁸ GUILLAND, Recherches sur les institutions Byzantines I 395. There was also a *tagma* of the *stratelatai* active in the eleventh century, but this identification is unlikely due to Bardas' court title and the geographical reference to Thessaly. Unlike

fact that *strategetes* of Thessaly is best understood as a metonymy for the *strategetes* of Thessaloniki, the second city of the empire and a critical military command²⁹. Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt argues that Bardas could not have been a high-ranking commander because *patrikios* was a relatively low rank at court, but we know that the future emperor Romanos IV Diogenes was made *doux* of Serdica, a high military posting, while still a *patrikios*³⁰. If we accept that Bardas was the patriarch's brother, then his period of command most likely coincided either with Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos' initial rise in the 1040s or to the period after his appointment to the patriarchate in 1063. In either period, an officer serving in the western provinces would likely have seen active campaigning, either during the revolts of Georgios Maniakes (1043) and Leon Tornikios (1047), the invasion of the Pechenegs (c. 1047–1053), or the invasion of the Ouzoi (1064).

There are several reasons to identify the Bardas Xiphilinos attested by the seal as a brother of the patriarch. In the first place, there are no other men named Bardas attested among the Xiphilinoi in the eleventh century. Moreover, the circumstances of Bardas' command fit standard patterns: Byzantine emperors generally avoided stationing military officers in their home territories, so a Xiphilinos from Trebizond would be a natural fit for a posting to a western theme³¹. Finally, this identification lends a measure of plausibility to the story told by Skylitzes Continuatus and Zonaras. According to Attaleiates, Psellos, and Skylitzes Continuatus, the reason Eudokia wanted to remarry was the dire state of the empire's frontiers, which were under threat in every quarter, especially in the east³². If there was in fact a broad consensus that the empire needed a strong military hand at the helm, and this is a fair assumption given the eventual appointment of Romanos IV, then the Bardas who owned that seal would have been a reasonable candidate based on his presumptive military experience. Or to be more precise, the Bardas of the seal held a sufficiently high military command that his ambitious brother the patriarch, who was no political neophyte, could have been tricked into thinking he was a likely candidate for a military emperor.

In addition to Bardas, Ioannes had at least one other brother named Michael, who is attested in a collection of miracles of St Eugenios of Trebizond written by the future patriarch Ioannes VIII, perhaps even before his initial departure for Constantinople in the 1030s³³. We can say nothing of this Michael except that, according to his brother, he fell ill and was healed (twice) by the saint³⁴. These three (Ioannes, Bardas, and Michael) are the only members of the first generation of Xiphilinoi we

thematic armies, tagmatic forces were not tied to specific areas of the empire. For the tagma, see H. GLYKATZI-AHRWEILER, *Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantin aux IX^e–XI^e siècles*. *BCH* 84 (1960) 1–111 at 24–36.

²⁹ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie* 311–312. A similar metonymy is attested on twelfth-century seals of the metropolitan of Thessaloniki, A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden* (WBS 28). Vienna 2015, II, no. 2756. For the subordination of Thessaly to the military command in Thessaloniki during the eleventh century, see B. KRSMANOVIĆ, *The Byzantine Province in Change. On the Threshold between the 10th and 11th Century*. Belgrade–Athens 2008, 203–205.

³⁰ Skylitzes Continuatus 3, 6 (121, 14–16 TSOLAKIS).

³¹ Breaking with this pattern likely contributed to the revolts against Michael VII Doukas launched by Nikephoros Botaneiates and Nikephoros Bryennios in 1077, A. KALDELLIS, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood. The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 A.D. to the First Crusade*. Oxford 2017, 264.

³² Michael Attaleiates, *History* 16, 12–13 (ed. E. Th. TSOLAKIS, *Michaelis Attaliatae Historia* [CFHB 50]. Athens 2011, 79, 13–80, 12) Skylitzes Continuatus 3, 7 (122, 8–13 TSOLAKIS). Psellos echoes the sentiment, but puts it directly into the mouth of the empress, Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* VII 127(b6), 6–9 (ed. D. R. REINSCH, *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia* [*Milennium-Studien* 51]. Berlin 2014, I 265, 12–15).

³³ The dating of the work is tenuous and depends on the assumption that the “younger Konstantinos” mentioned is Konstantinos VIII (there were three emperors by that name between 1025 and 1059) and the implication that Xiphilinos was present in Trebizond for the reading of the work. Neither of these points is certain. I am also not convinced that the plurality of the phrase “those managing the affairs of the Romans” can be taken as a reference to the joint reign of Basileios II and Konstantinos VIII. For the date, see ROSENQVIST, *The Hagiographic Dossier* 28–29.

³⁴ Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos, *An Account of Miracles Performed by the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Eugenios of Trebizond* 1 (172, 42–43 ROSENQVIST).

can identify with certainty. The rest of the Xiphilinoi discussed here are attested due to chance and their proximity to Michael Psellos. Nonetheless, their careers and offices paint a clear picture of the family's status and circumstances in the eleventh century. Taken together, they will allow us to understand the background of our epitomator and even trace his career³⁵.

Michael Psellos mentions two or possibly three anonymous Xiphilinoi in his letters to Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos. Psellos describes the future patriarch's nephew, who was at that time his student, in a letter that Michael Jeffreys and Marc Lauxtermann date prior to 1052 based on the absence of religious language, which we would expect if either man were already a monk³⁶:

Οὐδὲν περὶ τοῦ ἀνεψιοῦ πολλάκις ἠξίωσας, ἑταῖρε Ἰωάννη, ὅπως ἄν αὐτοῦ ἐπιμελοίμην ἄρτι τελοῦντος εἰς τὰ μαθήματα; καὶ νῦν οὗτος τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ὁμιλητῶν ἐμοὶ γέγονε διὰ σέ. καὶ οὐδὲν πάνυ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀφέστηκεν, ὥς γε μοι φαίνεται· ἡδραστὰ γὰρ καὶ πλατεῖα αὐτῷ ἡ διάνοια· καὶ ἡ φύσις εἰς ὄξυ μὲν οὐ λήγει, ἴση δὲ ἐστὶ πᾶσα καὶ “ἀπὸ πρώτης γραμμῆς” εὐκυῖα ἑαυτῇ. καὶ ἵνα σοὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ποτε φίλων σχημάτων τὸ πλεῖον δηλώσωμι, τοῦ κωνικοῦ μὲν ἀποβέβηκε, κύλινδρος δὲ ἐστὶν ἀκριβής. τί οὖν μοι τὰ πολλὰ ταῦτα πεπροοιμιάσται; νῆ τὴν ἱεράν σου καὶ φιλότιμην ψυχὴν, ἵνα γράφης πρὸς ἡμᾶς χάριτας ὁμολογῶν ἢ προσθήκας ἐπιζητῶν.

“Did you not often ask about your nephew, dear Ioannes, how I have supervised him now that he is finishing his studies? Already he has become the first among my students because of you. And he has not entirely forsaken the divinity [his uncle], so it seems to me, for his broad [a pun on the name of Plato] intelligence is firmly established. Moreover, his nature does not end in a point, but is at once entirely equal and alike to itself. So that I may reveal the greater part to you by means of those once-beloved shapes, his nature diverges from the cone, but is a precise cylinder. Why have I said these many things by way of preamble? By your sacred and dear soul, so that you will write to us either granting favors or seeking help.”³⁷

Psellos' letter is characteristically riddling with a core message built around puns and allusions. The key to unravelling these is to recognize the valence of the adjective *plateios* “broad” which Psellos uses to describe the nephew's intellect (*dianoia*). At least since the third century AD, writers had noticed that Plato's name literally meant “broad-shouldered”³⁸, and here Psellos uses the word to mean “broad” with an allusion to “Platonic”. Likewise, *theios*, the word for “God” or “the divinity”, is a homonym for “uncle”. Thus Psellos' progress-report for the young Xiphilinos playfully alludes to the young man's Platonism as well as his general intelligence, while citing his resemblance to his uncle and assuring Ioannes that Psellos has not drawn the nephew away from religion and closer to Plato (a recurring concern in the sometimes tense relationship between Psellos and the patriarch). Nevertheless, there is a playful ambiguity in the use of *theios*, as the form Psellos uses (*tou theiou*) could be either masculine or neuter. In the masculine, the word could refer either to the Christian God or to Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos, but in the neuter it would refer to the abstract divinity (*to theion*) that

³⁵ I will not discuss the eleventh-century Xiphilinoi for whom we have no information but their name, such as Leon and David, WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie* 312 and 318–319.

³⁶ M. JEFFREYS – M. D. LAUXTERMANN, *The Letters of Psellos. Cultural Networks and Historical Realities*. Cambridge 2017, 293. The Ioannes of the letter is not explicitly identified as a Xiphilinos in the manuscript tradition, but the identification is likely, especially in light of its content.

³⁷ Michael Psellos, Letter KD 265 (ed. E. KURIZ – F. DREXL, *Michaelis Pselli Scripta minora magnam partem adhuc inedita* II: *Epistulae* [*Orbis Romanus* 12]. Milan 1941, 310, 8–19; St. PAPAIOANNOU, *Michael Psellus. Epistulae*, vol. 1 [*Bibliotheca Teubneriana* 2030]. Berlin – Boston 2019, 508–509 [“ante 1055”, Letter Papaioannou 195]).

³⁸ This detail famously appears in Diogenes Laertius' life of Plato, *Diogenes Laertius* 3, 4 (ed. H. S. LONG, *Diogenes Laertii vitae philosophorum*. Oxford 1964, I 122, 14–18).

appears so often in the works of Plato. This is not idle teasing: Psellos' Platonism appears to have led to a major falling out between the philosopher and the patriarch³⁹.

The final piece of the puzzle is Psellos' strange digression on cones and cylinders. This is clearly some sort of inside joke and consequently obscure, but there is one, and only one, other place in Psellos' corpus where he mentions both cylinders and cones: a discussion of lunar eclipses in his *De omnifaria doctrina*⁴⁰. In this discussion, Psellos makes the following observation: "the whirlwind is called a cone, which ends in a point from a broad base, and the shadow of the earth is of this sort. Therefore whenever some body is illuminated by a body of equal size, the shadow is cylindrical, but whenever it is illuminated by a larger body, the shadow is conical."⁴¹ Given the strong verbal correspondences, including the adjective *plateios*, it appears that, in the letter, Psellos is using these shapes to characterize his pupil as an equal to his source of illumination, that is the sort of person whose nature would cast a cylindrical rather than conical shadow because it is illuminated by a light source of equal size. In other words, the nephew's intellect is equal to that of his illuminator. The identity of that light source, whether the uncle, the divinity, or Psellos himself, is unclear from the letter, but such ambiguity complements the polysemy at the core of Psellos' teasing.

This first letter establishes that members of the patriarch Xiphilinos' family, including at least one nephew, were students of Psellos, but the second letter does not offer as much insight. Dated to c. 1053 on the basis of Psellos still being the *proedros* rather than *hypatos* of the philosophers, Psellos asks Xiphilinos to advocate on behalf of his (Xiphilinos') brother and nephew⁴². The brother is unnamed, but it is likely that he is the Bardas Xiphilinos discussed above as Michael Xiphilinos had no career that would benefit from the future patriarch's advocacy. We likewise cannot be certain that the nephew mentioned here is the same as that mentioned in the previous letter, but it is noteworthy that Psellos uses the singular, implying that the future patriarch had only one nephew or that only one nephew was pursuing a career that could benefit from Xiphilinos' support, namely a career in the imperial administration. The letter is also useful as it can be dated with certainty to the period of the future patriarch's monastic exile based on Psellos' puns on Horaia Pege, the monastery to which Xiphilinos had retired in Bithynia. We therefore have a firm *terminus ante quem* of 1063.

The use of the singular by Psellos is valuable in light of the attestation of two other potential nephews by a lead seal. This seal identifies a Georgios and a Michael who claim to be nephews of "lord Xiphilinos" (*despotes Xiphilinos*) and who, based on their joint seal and shared relationship, are likely brothers⁴³. Interestingly, these two men do not identify themselves as Xiphilinoi, raising the possibility that they are distaff nephews, which would in turn explain their decision to emphasize their relationship to the anonymous *despotes* (which would otherwise have been accomplished by their family name alone). Wassiliou-Seibt takes this *despotes Xiphilinos* to be the patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos, which is plausible. However, the term *despotes* was commonly used for both patriarchs and bishops in Byzantium⁴⁴ and the Xiphilinoi remained active in the Church after the

³⁹ On the basis of a surviving letter dated to 1054 that Psellos wrote in his own defense, which opens with the incredulous question "My Plato?!" (Michael Psellos, Letter Papaioannou 202, 1 [527], "post a. 1054 et ante 1.1.1064"). For a translation, see A. KALDELLIS – I. POLEMIS, Psellos and the Patriarchs. Letters and Funeral Orations for Keroullarios, Leichoudes, and Xiphilinos. Notre Dame 2015, 168–176.

⁴⁰ Based on a word search for all related words in the corpus of Psellos available on the *TLG*.

⁴¹ Michael Psellos, *De omnifaria doctrina* 129 (ed. L. G. WESTERINK, Michael Psellus. *De omnifaria doctrina*. Nijmegen 1948, 68, 95, 4–7): κώνος δὲ ὁ στρόβηλος λέγεται, ὅστις ἀπὸ πλατείας βάσεως εἰς ὄξυ ἀπολήγει· τοιαύτη δὲ καὶ ἡ τῆς γῆς ἐστὶ σκιά· διότι ὅταν τι σῶμα ὑπὸ ἰσομεθέθους φωτίζεται σώματος, κυλινδρική γίνεται ἡ σκιά· ὅταν δὲ ὑπὸ μείζονος, κωνοειδής.

⁴² Michael Psellos, Letter M 7, 16–19 (ed. E. V. MALTESE, Epistole inedite di Michele Psello. II. *SIFC* 80 [1987] 214–223 at 219, 16–19; ed. 510, 20–22 PAPAIOANNOU ["ante 1055", Letter Papaioannou 196]). Date and location in JEFFREYS – LAUX-TERMANN, Letters of Psellos 301.

⁴³ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Familie 315–316.

⁴⁴ A. KAZHDAN, Despotes, in: *ODB* I 614.

eleventh century, eventually producing a second patriarch, Georgios II Xiphilinos (1191–1198), so we cannot be certain of the identity of the *despotes*. Nonetheless, there are onomastic grounds on which to assign Gregorios and Michael to the second generation of Xiphilinoi: Ioannes VIII's brother was named Michael and the name could have been passed down to his son, who would be Ioannes' nephew, a reconstruction that accords with the dating of the seals⁴⁵. In any case, none of these men (the two Michaels and Georgios) is attested as holding any position in the Byzantine administration, and there is no indication that this branch of the family left Trebizond. Moreover, there is Psellos' curious use of the singular in his two letters. Taken together, these considerations suggest that neither Georgios nor Michael is the student mentioned by Psellos.

There is one final Xiphilinos mentioned in the letters of Psellos, a Konstantinos Xiphilinos who is identified as a *droungarios tes viglas*. Responding to a request from this Konstantinos for a summary of Aristotle's *Logic*—a reference to a Byzantine collection known as the *Organon* that included works such as *Categories* and *Prior Analytics*—Psellos demurred, citing the difficulty of the project⁴⁶. The letter makes clear that the pair had corresponded before; Psellos opens the letter by saying “you are imposing this second, most grievous struggle on me.”⁴⁷ The letter is undated and we cannot say how Konstantinos related to the rest of the family⁴⁸, but its existence indicates the dense links that existed between the Xiphilinoi and Psellos. Owing to the absence of any reference to Konstantinos as a student (a trope that Psellos frequently belabors in his correspondence), it is likely that Konstantinos did not study with the philosopher and is not the anonymous nephew found in Psellos' other letters. This supposition is supported by the nature of the request itself: the *Organon* was a foundational text in Byzantine logic and survives in more than a hundred manuscripts preserved from the tenth through sixteenth centuries, making it the third best-attested Byzantine text after the Bible and the works of Ioannes Chrysostomos⁴⁹. The request for an abridged version of the *Organon* implies that Konstantinos was not familiar with the work, which would likely place him outside the school of the “consul of the philosophers”. This would explain the mocking tone of Psellos' response, which takes the form of an extended list of impossible feats, including the slaying of the Hydra by Herakles—Aristotle, Psellos claims, is no weaker than the regenerating Hydra against which even Herakles needed Iolaos' help!—and the birth of Dionysos from Zeus' thigh.

Konstantinos' letter suggests that the Xiphilinoi were in contact with Psellos even outside of formal professional or educational relationships. The identification of Konstantinos as a *droungarios tes viglas* is similarly informative. As mentioned above, the *droungarios* was a legal position that took over some of the legal responsibilities of the eparch of the city under Konstantinos IX Monomachos. It was one of a cluster of higher legal offices and held a moderate rank in the administration. Konstantinos demonstrates that the Xiphilinoi were broadly associated with Michael Psellos, which we might

⁴⁵ Michael Xiphilinos, the brother of the patriarch, is not mentioned in Wassiliou-Seibt's reconstruction of the family in the eleventh century.

⁴⁶ For the *Organon*, see S. KOTZABASSI, Aristotle's *Organon* and its Byzantine Commentators. *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 65 (2002) 51–62. For logic in Byzantium, including the foundational role of Aristotle, see C. ERISMANN, Logic in Byzantium, in: *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kaldellis – N. Siniossoglou. Cambridge 2017, 362–380.

⁴⁷ Michael Psellos, Letter S 205 (ed. K. N. SATHAS, Μιχαήλ Ψελλοῦ ἱστορικοὶ λόγοι, ἐπιστολαὶ καὶ ἄλλα ἀνέκδοτα. [*Mesaionike Bibliothekhe* 5]. Venice – Paris 1876, 499, 8; not included in the new edition of St. Papaioannou, Michael Psellus. *Epistulae*, vol. 1–2 [*Bibliotheca Teubneriana* 2030]. Berlin – Boston 2019): Δεύτερον τοῦτον ἄθλον ἐπιτάπτεις βαρύτατον.

⁴⁸ JEFFREYS – LAUXTERMANN, Letters of Psellos 413–414. The date of the letter is uncertain, but likely predates the reign of Michael VII Doukas who changed the title of the office to *megas droungarios tes viglas* and who appointed another Konstantinos, this time the nephew of the patriarch Keroularios, to the post, GUILLAND, *Recherches sur les institutions byzantines* 573–575.

⁴⁹ KOTZABASSI, Aristotle's *Organon* 51–52.

have anticipated given the close links between the *nomophylax* and the consul of the philosophers, as well as with legal positions in the administration.

The Xiphilinoi surveyed so far have established the general parameters of the family's status in the eleventh century, whose salient features are their service in the western themes (Bardas), their association with legal positions and the imperial administration (Konstantinos and the patriarch), and their close ties to Psellos (the patriarch and at least one nephew). These parameters are broadly confirmed by the other Xiphilinoi attested in the eleventh century, who include an Ioannes Xiphilinos attested by two seals as an *anagrapheus* and *krites* for Thrace and Macedonia and who held the rank of *magistros*⁵⁰; a Ioannes Xiphilinos identified as a monk by his seal⁵¹; an anonymous Xiphilinos, who was the *pronoetes* of Lakedaimonia and held the rank of *protoproedros*, attested in a letter to an otherwise unknown correspondent⁵²; a Ioannes Xiphilinos who was a *protoproedros* and *krites*⁵³; a Ioannes Xiphilinos recorded in attendance at the trial of Ioannes Italos in 1082 with the rank of *vestarches* alongside a Nikolaos Xiphilinos who held the rank of *protovestis*;⁵⁴ an Euthymios Xiphilinos, a monk and copyist attested by a subscript in 1091⁵⁵; and a Niketas Xiphilinos, who served as *koiaistor* as well as *krites* and *anagrapheus* of Boleron, Strymon, and Thessaloniki with the rank of *magistros* in the final decade of the eleventh century⁵⁶.

Geographically, we find a concentration of the Xiphilinoi in the western themes, with specific postings to Thrace, Macedonia, and Lakedaimonia. Likewise, there is a preponderance of administrative and legal positions. A *krites* was an administrator in charge of a theme as well as a judge in legal disputes⁵⁷. The post was often combined with that of *anagrapheus*, a type of tax official responsible for maintaining the property measurements upon which the tax system was based prior to the reforms of Alexios I Komnenos⁵⁸. A *pronoetes*, meanwhile, was a somewhat obscure post possibly of ecclesiastical origin that acted as a financial overseer and tax collector generally charged with the administration of specific properties and often associated with the post of *anagrapheus*⁵⁹.

In addition to their offices, most of the attested Xiphilinoi also held court dignities. Unfortunately, the hierarchy of these dignities in the eleventh century is obscure due to the absence of a contemporary *Taktikon* or similar source⁶⁰. Moreover, the second half of the eleventh century was a politically unstable period in Byzantine history, with eleven rulers and several significant revolts between 1041 and 1081. This political instability took place against a background of mounting military threats on

⁵⁰ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie* 312–313.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 313–314.

⁵² A. PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, Ξιφιλίνος, πρωτοπρόεδρος και προνοητής Λακεδαιμονίας. *BZ* 14 (1905) 563–567. Papadopoulos-Kerameus suggests that this is Konstantinos Xiphilinos, the *droungarios tes viglas* at an earlier stage in his career, but that is unlikely based on the exceedingly high court title of *protoproedros*, which is discussed below.

⁵³ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie* 317–318.

⁵⁴ J. GOUILLARD, Le procès officiel de Jean l'Italien: les actes et leurs sous-entendus. *TM* 9 (1985) 133–174 at 145, ll. 160–162. The *ODB* mistakenly identifies him as Niketas Xiphilinos, A. KAZHDAN, Xiphilinos, in: *ODB* III 2210–2211.

⁵⁵ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie* 320.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 320–322. For the administrative unification of this region, see KRSMANOVIĆ, Byzantine Province 201–203.

⁵⁷ For the *krites* in the eleventh century, see OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes* 322–323; IDEM, *L'évolution* 148–149; GLYKATZI-AHRWEILER, *Recherches sur l'administration* 67–75.

⁵⁸ A. KAZHDAN – M. W. TRACZ, *Anagrapheus*, in: *ODB* I 84.

⁵⁹ A.-K. WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Der Terminus προνοητής in der byzantinischen Verwaltung. *ZRVI* 50 (2013) 149–162; N. BĂNESCU, La signification des titres de πραιτωρ et de προνοητής à Byzance aux XI^e et XII^e siècles. *StT* 123 (1946) 387–398 at 395–398; T. WASILEWSKI, Les titres de duc, de catépan et de pronoëtès dans l'Empire byzantin du IX^e jusqu'au XII^e siècle, in: *Actes du XII^e congrès international d'études Byzantines*, Ochride 10–16 septembre 1961. Belgrade 1964, II 233–239; OIKONOMIDÈS, *L'évolution* 149–150.

⁶⁰ The closest is the Escorial *Taktikon* dating to the last quarter of the tenth century, for which see OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes* 255–277.

all of the empire's frontiers, territorial retrenchment, and corresponding fiscal pressures⁶¹. Under these circumstances, various emperors attempted to buy support for their regimes by granting titles, resulting in an inflation and devaluation of high court titles. Titles that would have been outstanding under Basileios II (r. 976–1025), had become relatively commonplace by the time Alexios I Komnenos came to the throne in 1081⁶². So while it remains possible to establish the general order of precedence among dignities in the eleventh century, the precise value of these titles was fluid and depreciated over the course of the century. In order from highest to lowest, the dignities of interest to us are: *proedros*, *magistros*, *vestarches*, *vestes*, and *patrikios*⁶³. For many of these titles, such as *proedros*, the prefix “*proto*” was added to indicate first-class status inside a group whose membership was losing value because of inflation, but these proto- titles often became so common that they assumed the function of a distinct class of dignity.

The Xiphilinoi achieved high dignities in the imperial administration. Bardas was the lowest-ranking member of the family, being attested only as a *patrikios*, though if this is the brother of the patriarch, then the earlier date lends greater weight to that title. Ioannes the *krites* of Thrace and Macedonia was a *magistros*, as was his much later relative Niketas, who held the post of *krites* of Thessaloniki, Boleron, and Strymon. Another (?) Ioannes the *krites* was a *protoproedros*, as was the anonymous *pronoetes* of Lakedaimonia. The lowest-ranking Xiphilinoi were Ioannes and Nikolaos, who held the ranks of *vestarches* and *protovestes* respectively, but Niketas' rank of *magistros* suggests that we should not read this as a sign that the Xiphilinoi had fallen out of favor under the Komnenoi. By comparing the offices and titles held by these men we can gain some sense of their relative chronology based on the ongoing devaluation of titles. Thus, Ioannes the *magistros* and *krites* of Thrace and Macedonia would likely have an earlier date given the correspondence between that rank and that office, while the anonymous *pronoetes* is certainly later given the formerly high title of *protoproedros* that goes with his relatively low-ranking office. That Niketas was also a *magistros* suggests a stable relationship through the late eleventh century between that rank and postings as thematic *krites*.

We therefore have a sketchy picture of the family and circumstances of the Xiphilinoi during the lifetime of our epitomator. They were well-educated, with close links to Psellos and legal careers, the latter being unsurprising given Ioannes VIII's role as *nomophylax*. They held high ranks in the court across several reigns as well as high positions in the administration of the western themes, with only one member of the family attested in a military command. They were, in short, a well-connected family of bureaucrats operating primarily in the middle ranks of the administration, with exceptional members, such as the patriarch and Ioannes the *krites* and *protoproedros*, occasionally achieving higher ranks.

Can we reconstruct the career of our epitomator from the Xiphilinoi attested in the eleventh century? Any such reconstruction must necessarily be speculative, but a strong case can be made that our epitomator was the anonymous student of Psellos discussed above and the Ioannes *krites* who held the rank of *magistros* and *protoproedros* (on my reconstruction these are the same person)⁶⁴.

The biography of our epitomator begins with his eponymous uncle. According to Psellos' *Funeral Oration*, the patriarch was a bit older than Psellos, who was born in 1018. So we may assign the pa-

⁶¹ For the narrative of this period, see KALDELLIS, *Streams of Gold*.

⁶² Alexios continued the inflation. For an amusing and illustrative outline of this problem, see the discussion of the title *sebastos* in OIKONOMIDÈS, *L'évolution* 127.

⁶³ J.-C. CHEYNET, *Dévaluation des dignités et dévaluation monétaire dans la seconde moitié du XI^e siècle*. *Byz* 53 (1983) 453–477 at 473–474.

⁶⁴ Treadgold has also speculated about the possible career of our epitomator, linking him to the *vestarches* mentioned in the trial of Ioannes Italos in 1082, TREADGOLD, *Middle Byzantine Historians* 310. For reasons explained below, I find this identification unlikely.

triarch's birth between 1010 and 1017⁶⁵. If we assume that the patriarch's sibling, our epitomator's father, was born within five years of him in either direction, and if we assume a generational gap of twenty-five years, we get a range of possible birthdates for our epitomator of 1030 to 1047. These dates are not meant to be definitive, only to establish a likely range. We can narrow this range further by recalling Psellos' letter, dated before 1052, in which he says that the future patriarch's nephew was finishing his studies. This suggests that the nephew was around twenty or twenty-five years of age, and falls on the earlier side of our hypothetical birth range. The careers of the Xiphilinoi during the middle of the eleventh century are likely to have benefitted from the patronage of the *nomophylax* and patriarch Ioannes Xiphilinos during his periods in favor at court, so we can reasonably look for major advancements in the second half of the 1040s or the period after 1064. Given the relative timing of our epitomator's education, we can expect him to have finished his studies by the time of his uncle's promotion to patriarch, at which point he would have been in his early to mid-thirties. Our epitomator would therefore have been well-positioned for a role in the imperial administration in the mid-1060s, which is within the range of dates assigned to the two seals of Ioannes Xiphilinos the *anagrapheus*, *krites*, and *magistros*⁶⁶. In fact, it is possible that the two seals attest two different moments in our epitomator's career, an initial appointment as *anagrapheus* followed by a promotion to *krites* of Thrace and Macedonia. His rank of *magistros* was justified by his connection to the patriarch and his high position in the administration.

This reconstruction is recommended by the logic of the Xiphilinos family tree. We are told that Ioannes VIII was the first member of his family to establish himself in Constantinople, so older generations of Xiphilinoi are likely not attested by these seals. We can likewise assume that Ioannes VIII was the only one of his siblings named Ioannes, and no (potentially eponymous) cousins of the future patriarch are attested, only his brothers Bardas and Michael and, possibly, a third anonymous brother recorded in the letters of Psellos. Therefore, the Ioannes Xiphilinos who was *krites* in Thrace and Macedonia must have belonged to the second generation of Xiphilinoi after the future patriarch. Moreover, since the patriarch is never mentioned as having children (there was no taboo against this in the Byzantine Church, especially as some men joined the clergy late in life, as Ioannes VIII himself did), this *krites* must have been a nephew. It is, of course, possible that the future patriarch had many nephews named Ioannes, but only one is securely attested and there are no grounds to needlessly multiply them. Finally, in light of the repeated use of the singular "nephew" in the letters of Psellos, it seems that there was only one such person who studied with Psellos. A minimalist approach therefore recommends identifying the *anagrapheus*, *krites*, and *magistros* Ioannes Xiphilinos with our epitomator.

If this identification is accepted, then several other pieces begin to fall into place. In particular, we can probably identify the *krites* and *protoproedros* Ioannes Xiphilinos with our epitomator as well. His seal is dated to the last quarter of the eleventh century, and his promotion to the high rank of *protoproedros* (the highest rank attested for any Xiphilinos save the patriarch) can be attributed to the inflation of titles as well as the close association between the Xiphilinoi and the Doukai, who were in power under Michael VII Doukas and prominent under Alexios I Komnenos, who was married to Eirene Doukaina⁶⁷. This identification of our epitomator undermines attempts to connect him to the *vestarches* attested at the trial of Ioannes Italos in 1082, an identification suggested by Warren Treadgold, because *vestarches* was a significantly lower rank than *protoproedros*, lower even than

⁶⁵ Following KALDELLIS – POLEMIS, *Psellos and the Patriarchs* 185 n. 25.

⁶⁶ Wassiliou-Seibt dates these seals between 1060 and 1090, WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie* 312–313.

⁶⁷ For the prosopography of the Doukai, see D. I. POLEMIS, *The Doukai. A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*. London 1968.

*magistros*⁶⁸. In order for this to be our epitomator, we would need to assume a significant fall from grace sometime before the reign of Alexios I Komnenos. While certainly not impossible, the likelier explanation is that this is a different Ioannes, probably belonging to the third generation of Xiphilinoi in Constantinople.

This reconstruction leaves several Xiphilinoi unaccounted for, in particular Konstantinos the *droungarios tes viglas*, the anonymous *protoproedros* and *pronoetes*, and the monks Ioannes and Euthymios. Too little is known to say anything with reasonable certainty about these men, save for the monk Ioannes. There is only one Ioannes Xiphilinos whom we have any reason to believe was a monk: the patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos in the years 1054–1064. Moreover, his period of monastic retirement overlaps with the dating of the seal on which the name and title are found. It is likely that this seal belonged to the uncle and not our eponymous epitomator⁶⁹.

Rather than being a monastic outlier, then, the epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos belongs in the mainstream of Byzantine historiography in the late eleventh century. His professional background matches that of Michael Attaleiates, while his ties to Psellos have been discussed. His work and background also demonstrate marked parallels with his later contemporary Ioannes Skylitzes. Like many Xiphilinoi, Skylitzes served as a legal official in the Byzantine administration, specifically holding the posts of *droungarios tes viglas* and city *eparch* under Alexios I Komnenos⁷⁰. Like our epitomator, Skylitzes composed a historical work by editing and compressing previous sources⁷¹. Xiphilinos, moreover, was composing his epitome at precisely the moment, the reign of Michael VII Doukas, when Psellos was engaged in a similar project, the composition of the *Historia Syntomos*, by which point Attaleiates had completed his *Ponema Nomikon*, tracing the history of Roman law from its monarchical foundations, and was finishing the first draft of his *History* with its extended digression on ancient and contemporary Romans⁷². The precise date of the *Epitome*'s composition cannot be fixed, though it must have been published after 1071 and likely before 1075, but the intellectual matrix from which it emerged can nevertheless be established with confidence⁷³.

One final feature of Xiphilinos' biography should be noted: he was born into a Byzantine empire close to the height of its power and territorial extent, but was writing during the reign of the emperor who effectively lost control of Asia Minor, which had been the empire's heartland since the seventh century and was the point of origin for his own family. In 1071, the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes famously lost the battle of Mantzikert. While scholars no longer view the battle itself as an irrecoverable disaster, the civil wars it set off occupied the majority of Michael VII Doukas' reign and their mismanagement ultimately doomed the Byzantine heartland in Asia Minor⁷⁴. Even Trebizond, the homeland of the Xiphilinoi, fell to the invaders in the 1070s, only to be reclaimed by the quasi-au-

⁶⁸ TREADGOLD, *Middle Byzantine Historians* 310.

⁶⁹ It is conceivable that the Euthymios Xiphilinos attested as a monk and scribe in 1091 is our epitomator operating under his monastic name, however there is no evidence to support this identification and a large number of other candidates. Even if this identification were correct, it would merely confirm that our author was not a monk when he composed his *Epitome*.

⁷⁰ HOLMES, *Basil* 80–85; TREADGOLD, *Middle Byzantine Historians* 329–332; NEVILLE, *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing* 156–157.

⁷¹ For Skylitzes' method, see HOLMES, *Basil* 91–119.

⁷² For Attaleiates' revision of his *History* in response to the accession of Nikephoros III Botaneiates in 1078, see D. KRALLIS, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*. Tempe 2012, 142–157.

⁷³ 1075 is a likely, though not definitive, *terminus ante quem* for the *Epitome* because, when mentioning his uncle the patriarch, our epitomator does not add the phrase “of blessed memory”, TREADGOLD, *Middle Byzantine Historians* 310. In any case, the deposition of Michael VII Doukas in 1078 remains a firm *terminus ante quem*.

⁷⁴ The revisionist view of Mantzikert began with J.-C. CHEYNET, *Mantzikert. Un désastre militaire? Byz* 50 (1980) 410–438; see also, M. WHITTOW, *The Second Fall of Rome. The Place of the Eleventh Century in Roman History*, in: *Byzantium in the Eleventh Century. Being in Between*, ed. M. Lauxtermann – M. Whittow. London 2017, 109–126. For the period after Mantzikert from the Byzantine perspective, see KALDELLIS, *Streams of Gold* 252–266; from the Muslim-Turkish perspective, see A. D. BEIHAMMER, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia. ca. 1040–1130*. New York 2017, 198–243.

tonomous general Theodoros Gabras⁷⁵. The reign of Michael VII Doukas was not only witness to this collapse, it was the moment when this period began to crystallize in historical memory as the catastrophic culmination of a long decline. We find this perspective clearly in Psellos' *Chronographia* and Attaleiates' *History*, and, given Xiphilinos' close ties to the intellectual and professional circles of those two men, we can expect that he was exposed to and to some extent engaged in this emerging historical consensus. This intellectual and professional context helps to explain the approach Xiphilinos took to the text of Cassius Dio, a topic I plan to explore in a future article.

⁷⁵ Anna Komnene, *Alexiad VIII 9* (ed. D. R. REINSCH – A. KAMBYLIS, *Annae Comnenae Alexias [CFHB 40]*. Berlin 2001, I 255, 20–257, 83); J.-C. CHEYNET, La résistance aux turcs en Asie Mineure entre Mantzikert et la première croisade, in: ΕΥΨΥΧΙΑ. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler (*Byzantina Sorbonensia* 16). Paris 1998, I 131–147 at 132–133.

Table 1: The Eleventh-Century Xiphilinoi according to A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt and the current author⁷⁶

K. no.	W.-S. no.	Name and Title(s) or Relation(s)	Date	Attestation(s)	Seal Legend	Interpretation by W.-S.	Proposed Interpretation
I	1	Ioannes, <i>illoustrios, krites</i>	Before 1047	One seal (DO BZS.1955.1.3879).	Metrical	Future patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos in the early stages of his career.	Identification by W.-S. accepted.
II	2	Bardas, <i>patrikios, strategetes</i> of Thessaly	1040–1060	One seal (V. LAURENT, <i>Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine</i> . Athens 1932, 526).	Metrical	Most likely the brother of Ioannes.	Identification by W.-S. accepted.
III	n/a	Michael	1030s? (Before 1075)	Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos, <i>An Account of Miracles Performed by the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Eugenios of Trebizond 1</i> (172, 42–43 ROSENQVIST).	n/a	Not mentioned.	Brother of Ioannes (I).
IV	3	Leon	1050–1100	One seal (DO BZS.1958.106.977).	Non-metrical	Otherwise unknown. Portrait of St Ioannes Prodromos may suggest a link to Ioannes (I).	Not discussed.
V	8	Anonymous, nephew of an anonymous Ioannes (thought to be Ioannes [I])	Before 1052	Michael Psellos, Letter KD 265 (310, 8–19 KURTZ – DREXL = 508–509 PAPAIOANNOU [P 195]).	n/a	Identified as either Georgios (XIII) or Michael (XIV).	The epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos.
VI	n/a	Anonymous, brother of Ioannes (I)	c. 1053	Michael Psellos, Letter M 7, 16–19 (219, 16–19 MALTESE = 510, 20–22 PAPAIOANNOU [P 196]).	n/a	Not mentioned.	Possibly Bardas (II), Michael (III), or a third anonymous brother of Ioannes (I).
VII	n/a	Anonymous, nephew of Ioannes (I)	c. 1053	Michael Psellos, Letter M 7, 16–19 (219, 16–19 MALTESE = 510, 20–22 PAPAIOANNOU [P 196]).	n/a	Not mentioned.	The epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos.
VIII	4	Ioannes, <i>magistros, anagrapheus</i>	1060–1090	Two seals (G. SCHLUMBERGER, <i>Sigillographie de l'Empire byzantin</i> . Paris 1884, 165, 7).	Non-metrical	Identical to Ioannes (IX), possibly identical to Ioannes (XVIII).	The epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos.

⁷⁶ The plan of the table closely follows the information in WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie* and excludes explicit mentions of the Patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinos, which are too numerous to list. The W.-S. number refers to the entries in that article, while the K. number enumerates each individual Xiphilinos attested by our sources, making no judgement as to identification. When individuals are attested only by seals, I have cited the most readily available example of that seal that contains all of the relevant information. For full sigillographic citations, see WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Familie*.

K. no.	W.-S. no.	Name and Title(s) or Relation(s)	Date	Attestation(s)	Seal Legend	Interpretation by W.-S.	Proposed Interpretation
IX	4(a)	Ioannes, <i>magistros, krites</i> of Thrace and Macedonia, <i>anagrapheus</i>	1060–1090	One seal (Unedited).	Non-metrical	Identical to Ioannes (VIII), possibly identical to Ioannes (XVIII).	The epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos.
X	5	Ioannes, monk	1066–1100	Three seals (DO BZS.1947.2.1354).	Non-metrical	A nephew of Ioannes (I), the epitomator of Cassius Dio and author of fifty-three homilies and a <i>menologion</i> .	Likely Ioannes (I).
XI	6	Anonymous, <i>protoproedros, pronoetes</i> of Lakedaimonia	1075–1110	One letter (563–567 PAPAPOULOS-KERAMEUS).	n/a	Otherwise unknown; insufficient evidence to identify with Konstantinos, the <i>droungarios tes viglas</i> (XVII).	Otherwise unknown.
XII	7	Michael	1075–1120	One seal (Unedited).	Metrical	Possibly identical to Michael (XIII), nephew of Ioannes (I).	Not discussed.
XIII	8	Georgios (and Michael), “Nephews of <i>despotes</i> Xiphilinos”	1064–1075	One seal (Zacos [BnF] 1126).	Metrical	Nephew of Ioannes (I).	Potentially a nephew of Ioannes (I), but could also belong to a later period. Likely the brother of Michael (XIV), but unlikely to be the singular nephew mentioned by Psellos.
XIV	8	(Georgios and) Michael, “Nephews of <i>despotes</i> Xiphilinos”	1064–1075	One seal (Zacos [BnF] 1126).	Metrical	Nephew of Ioannes (I).	Potentially a nephew of Ioannes (I), but could also belong to a later period. Likely the brother of Georgios (XIII), but unlikely to be the singular nephew mentioned by Psellos.
XV	9	Bardas, brother of Ioannes (I)	1067	Skylitzes Continuation 3, 7 (123, 1–22, TSOLAKIS).	n/a	Most likely identical to Bardas (II), brother of Ioannes (I).	Identical to Bardas (II), possibly identical to anonymous (VI), brother of Ioannes (I).
XVI		Bardas, nephew of Ioannes (I)	1067	Zonaras XVIII 10, 22 (III 686, 4–10 BÜTTNER-WOBST).	n/a	Most likely identical to Bardas (II), brother of Ioannes (I). Zonaras is mistaken about the relationship.	Identical to Bardas (II), possibly identical to anonymous (VI), brother of Ioannes (I). Zonaras is mistaken about or has misrepresented his relationship to Ioannes (I).

K. no.	W.-S. no.	Name and Title(s) or Relation(s)	Date	Attestation(s)	Seal Legend	Interpretation by W.-S.	Proposed Interpretation
XVII	10	Konstantinos, <i>droungarios tes viglas</i>	c. 1070	Michael Psellos, Letter S 205 (499, 8 SATHAS; not included in Papaioannou).	n/a	Otherwise unknown. Surveys three theories and dismisses all for lack of evidence.	Did not study with Psellos and thus is not the nephew of Ioannes (I) mentioned in the letters of Psellos.
XVIII	11	Ioannes, <i>protoproedros, krites</i>	1075–1100	Six seals: five of Type A (DO BZS.1958.106.3219) and one of Type B (DO BZS.1958.106.3047).	Metrical	Possibly identical to Ioannes (XIX).	The epitomator Ioannes Xiphilinos at a late stage in his career. Unlikely to be Ioannes (XIX) due to <i>vestarches</i> being a significantly lower court title than <i>protoproedros</i> .
XIX	12	Ioannes, <i>vestarches</i> , member of the Senate	1082	Acts of the Trial of Ioannes Italos (145, 160–162 GOUILLARD).	n/a	Possibly identical to Ioannes (XVIII).	Likely a member of the third generation of Xiphilinoi due to his low rank and late appearance.
XX	13	Nikolaos, <i>protovestes</i> , member of the Senate	1082	Acts of the Trial of Ioannes Italos (145, 160–162 GOUILLARD).	n/a	Possibly related to Ioannes <i>vestarches</i> (XIX).	Likely a member of the third generation of Xiphilinoi due to his low rank and late appearance.
XXI	14	David	1080–1100	Two seals: one of Type A (G. R. DAVIDSON, Corinth: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Volume XII, the Minor Objects. Princeton 1952, no. 2718) and one of Type B (Unedited).	Metrical	Otherwise unknown.	Not discussed.
XXII	15	Niketas	1090–1125	One seal (DO BZS.1958.106.2523).	Non-metrical	Otherwise unknown; no arguments linking him to Niketas (XXIV) or Niketas (XXV).	Not discussed.
XXIII	16	Euthymios, monk and copyist	1091	Codex subscript (I. SPATHARAKIS, Corpus of Dated Illuminated Greek Manuscripts to the Year 1453 [<i>Byzantina Neerlandica</i> 8]. Leiden 1981, I 36 no. 110).	n/a	Otherwise unknown.	Not discussed.

K. no.	W.-S. no.	Name and Title(s) or Relation(s)	Date	Attestation(s)	Seal Legend	Interpretation by W.-S.	Proposed Interpretation
XXIV	17	Niketas, <i>krites, koiaistor</i>	1098	Four seals: three of Type A (DO BZS.1947.2.1352) and one of Type B (V. LAURENT, <i>Le corpus des Sceaux de l'Empire byzantin</i> . Paris 1900, II 1116); Testament of the Nun Maria 72 (ed. J. LEFORT, N. OIKONOMIDÈS, and D. PAPACHRYSSANTHOU, <i>Actes d'Ivion</i> , 2. Du milieu du XI ^e siècle à 1204. Paris 1990, I 183).	Metrical	Identical to Niketas (XXV).	Not discussed.
XXV	17(a)	Niketas, <i>koiaistor</i>	1090–1120	Three seals (DO BZS.1955.1.4018).	Metrical	Identical to Niketas (XXIV).	Not discussed.