

Acknowledgments

To my family

Every book has its own history. The story of this book is one of many hours of deep conversation and plentiful good advice without which this study would never have taken shape. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for all these gifts of time and energy.

First of all, I would like to thank my two supervisors Johannes Pahlitzsch and Alexander Beihammer, who shared their expertise generously but at the same time gave me the freedom to pursue my own ideas in writing this book.

Many thanks go to my colleagues at Johannes Gutenberg-University, the Leibniz ScienceCampus Mainz/Frankfurt »Byzantium between Orient and Occident«, and the University of Cyprus, who have made writing this book an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. Among this group, there are some who deserve special mention. My first teacher Günter Prinzing, who has always followed my endeavors with unwavering interest and benevolent suggestions. Zachary Chitwood and Bettina Krönung have been most generous with their advice and aid. Benjamin Fourlas has always had an open ear for the many questions I had. And Angel Nicolaou-Konnari, who stepped into the breach in a crucial moment and has been generously supportive ever since.

Warmest thanks are also due to the special people of the Young Academics Network in Mainz, especially Fadia Abou Sekeh, Peter Bibinger, Laura Borghetti, Kai Chang, Joao Vicente de Medeiros Publio Dias, Max Ritter, Jessica Schmidt, Tristan Schmidt, and Antje Steinert. Their faithful companionship, many, many meals in good company, wonderful teamwork and innumerable sessions of thinking-out-loud together have made for the best working context anyone could wish for.

Several colleagues from different strands of life have taken interest in my work out of their own volition, and I am espe-

cially grateful for their support and friendship. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller showed me the ropes in Social Network Analysis and has answered any question on that topic ever since with admirable speed. Nikos Coureas supported my research with an inexhaustible supply of knowledge and reading material. Christina Kaoulla kindly shared her as yet unpublished work with me. And I would especially like to thank Despoina Ariantzi for many wonderful conversations over coffee, her sound advice, and her humane perspectives on the academic world and the people in it.

My PhD thesis received generous financial support. The Leibniz ScienceCampus Mainz/Frankfurt »Byzantium between Orient and Occident« awarded me not one, but two scholarships. The German Study Centre in Venice (Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani/Deutsches Studienzentrum in Venedig), too, supported my work with two fellowships (2015 and 2016) that enabled me to visit the Venetian archives. I would like to thank the Centre and its team for their warm welcome and their helpfulness in matters both big and small. Special thanks are due to Romedio Schmitz-Esser, then director of the Centre, for listening at a crucial moment of my thesis and encouraging me to let my ship sail.

Very particular thanks go to my dancer friends at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, with whom the phrase dancing through life acquires a real meaning, and who balanced my writing endeavors with many a waltz.

Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful family, who know best how much they have done for me. Special thanks are, however, due to both Ian and Marion, who not only read and re-read my work but also helped me improve my writing in English.