Introduction

This is a book about the Byzantine institution of pronoia: what it was, how it originated, how it changed over time, and the effect it had on society. A pronoia was a type of grant, conferred by the Byzantine emperor from the twelfth century through the end of the empire in the fifteenth century. The term itself – *pronoia* (πρόνοια, pronounced *PRO-nee-ah*) – is a relatively common Greek word that usually means "care," "providence," "foresight." However, in certain contexts it denotes something much more specific. A few examples from the documentary sources illustrate this use of the word *pronoia*:

- In 1234 a group of monks complained to the emperor about being forced to pay taxes on a fish pond to a certain Constantine Kalegopoulos because "all the fish ponds there pay taxes to Kalegopoulos, since he holds in pronoia the rights of the river" *[5.7]*.
- A document from 1251, notes that, in order to resolve a property dispute, a soldier had convened an assembly of "all the head men of his pronoia" *[5.9]*.
- An early fourteenth-century book of mathematical problems includes one about four soldiers who had "an imperial pronoia of 600" gold coins *[8.8]*.
- In a document from 1314 two men donate some fields they held "pronoiastically" to a monastery. They state that the donation was to be valid "as long as our pronoia is held by us" *[8.55]*.[1]
- An act from 1228 describes the killing of a peasant by a man whom he had insulted. The man said he was astonished "that a peasant spoke with such impudence, shooting forth bold words toward me his *pronoiarios*" *[5.16]*.

The narrative sources also use *pronoia* in this sense:

- In the later thirteenth century the historian Theodore Skoutariotes, addressing the policies of the emperors around the middle of the

[1] Because much of the source material useful to this study is cited more than once, as a way of facilitating cross-referencing I have given some sources a number *[in brackets]* indicating the chapter and position within the chapter in which the source is presented most fully.

century, wrote, "And from this all of the taxpayers became wealthy, and those of the military lists and the magnates had many times larger revenues from the pronoiai and properties and many times the incomes supplied to them for sustenance" *[5.13]*.

- In the early fourteenth century the historian George Pachymeres writes that, after coming to the throne, Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259–82) allowed soldiers to transmit their pronoiai to their children, even if they were as yet unborn: "Loving the soldiery exceedingly, he established the pronoiai of these, should they fall in battle and die, as patrimonial property to the children, even if, for some, the mothers should have the fetus in the womb" *[6.10]*.
- In another passage Pachymeres explains that Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, in order to finance a military campaign in 1283, had levied a special 10 percent tax: "This was the tenth of the pronoia of those having pronoiai. While it was collected ostensibly from the rights of the lords, the peasants of the powerful paid everything" *[8.34]*.
- In a letter to the emperor Patriarch Athanasios I (1289–93, 1303–09) complained about bishops who had abandoned their sees for life in Constantinople: "pronoiai and residences have been granted to any bishop who wishes as an allotment, and they make merry in the capital with impunity, and seek their livelihood here" *[7.1]*.

Collating the information provided by this handful of diverse sources, we may infer, at least on the face of things, that a pronoia was a kind of grant from the emperor to soldiers, "lords," the "powerful," and bishops. The holder of a pronoia could be called a "*pronoiarios*" (*pro-nee-AH-ree-os*). Pronoia grants seem to have produced revenues that could be quantified by a cash amount and that were derived from land, the rights to a river, and the labors of peasants who were attached to the pronoiai. Further, pronoiai evidently could be taxed, shared by individuals, donated to a monastery, and inherited.

It is from sources like these that scholars have sought to define the institution associated with this word *pronoia*. It has not been easy. Few source references are any more explicit than these, and most are far less specific. Almost all assume that the intended reader knew exactly what a "pronoia" was.

The historiography of pronoia

Serious interest in the study of pronoia began, not with the study of such Byzantine sources, but with the examination of the appearance of the word

in Serbian, Bosnian, and Venetian sources. In 1860 the Russian scholar A. A. Majkov published an article entitled "On Landed Property in Medieval Serbia." There he examined the clauses dealing with property found in the Law Code (*Zakonik*) of the Serbian ruler Stefan Dušan (1331–55). Toward the end of the article Majkov wrote, "In concluding this investigation of various forms of landed property in Serbia, I direct attention to an aspect of landed property designated in the *Zakonik* by the foreign name *pronija*," the Slavic transliteration of *pronoia*. What he viewed as the precarious nature of the possession of *pronija* led him to differentiate it from patrimonial property (called *baština*). He hypothesized that it indicated a form of "incomplete possession, possibly contingent on a state obligation," and he pondered, "Was it not imperial land, placed in the power of lords and cultivated by them?"[2]

Eight years later he published another article, "What is *Pronija* in Medieval Serbia?" Basing his research on a single document, an act from 1458 of the king of Bosnia Stefan Tomašević, he concluded that *pronija* was a temporary possession, analogous to the Muscovite institutions of *kormlenie* and *pomestie*, and that it "represents subsistence land [*kormežnuju zemlju*], an estate [*pomestie*] allotted by the decision of a sovereign power to someone personally, given without right of perpetual use, so that the sovereign could either take it back and give it to another or effect an exchange."[3]

Majkov's research was born amid the Balkan and agrarian questions, as well as the Slavophilism, of nineteenth-century Russia. The Crimean War had ended in 1856 and Russia's serfs were formally emancipated five years later. Another product of Slavic nationalism was the edition of Dušan's *Zakonik* that Majkov had used. It had been edited by the Pole Andrzej Kucharski, and translated into German by the Slovak Paul Šafařík and published in 1838. While Šafařík translated the *Zakonik*'s *pronijar* as simply "Grundherr" and its *pronijarska zemlja* as "grundherrliches Land," he ventured an etymology for *pronija* that Majkov echoed. Šafařík suggested that the word was Germanic in origin, equivalent to the modern *Frone* "compulsory service," from the Old High German *frô* "lord," which derived ultimately from the Gothic *frao* and *fraujana*.[4]

[2] A. Majkov, "O zemel'noj sobstvennosti v drevnej Serbii," *Čtenija v Imperatorskom obščestve istorii i drevnostej rossijskih* (1860), kniga 1, 1–30, esp. 28–29. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 2. On pronoia in the *Zakonik*, see M. Bartusis, "Serbian Pronoia and Pronoia in Serbia: The Diffusion of an Institution," *ZRVI* 48 (2011), 190–93, as well as pp. 607–08 below.

[3] A. Majkov, "Čto takoe pronija v drevnej Serbii?" *Čtenija v Imperatorskom obščestve istorii i drevnostej rossijskih* (1868), kniga 1, 227–32, esp. 231. Uspenskij, "Značenie," 1. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 2. On this document, see Bartusis, "Serbian Pronoia," 207, 210.

[4] A. Kucharski, *Najdawniejsze pomniki prawodawstwa słowiańskiego* (Warsaw, 1838), 183–84, 217 note 54. The title page of the work is trilingual: Polish, Russian, and Latin. Šafařík repeated this

Nevertheless, the origin of the Slavic word *pronija* is not Germanic, but Greek, a fact first recognized by the Serb Djura Daničić in his dictionary of old Serbian published in 1863. Independently of Majkov, but still on the evidence of Dušan's *Zakonik*, Daničić defined *pronija* as "*fundus ad usumfructum datus*" ("estate given in usufruct").[5]

After Majkov, work on Serbian pronoia was continued by Vikentij Makušev in "On Pronija in Medieval Serbia," published in 1874. While Makušev recognized the Byzantine origin of the term, he, like Majkov, focused on the appearance of the term in fifteenth-century Venetian and Dalmatian acts, concluding that pronoia in these documents was a form of precarious and conditional possession which the Venetian government granted on a broad scale to aristocrats, in compliance with Albanian customs ("*secundum consuetudinem Albaniae*"), for life and on condition of paying a certain sum and bearing mounted military service. Pronoia was inalienable and could be confiscated for the good of the treasury.[6]

In articles published in 1878 and 1879 V. G. Vasil'evskij turned the attention of Russian scholars to the Byzantine sources for the study of this phenomenon called "pronoia." He provided references to "where one meets Greek pronoia, corresponding to the Serbian," and pointed out that "pronoia must be studied on the basis of Byzantine sources, because here we encounter its earliest mention."[7]

But indeed the Byzantine use of the word *pronoia* had not gone unnoticed by earlier scholars. Prior to Daničić, philologists of Byzantine Greek had occasionally noted strange usages of the word *pronoia*. In the commentary to his 1845 edition of the fifteenth-century *Chronicle of Ioannina [7.4]* the Greek Andreas Moustoxydes wrote that *pronoiai* meant "the yearly collections of incomes which the founders leave to the church."[8] And even as early as the late seventeenth century the French scholar Charles Du Cange,

etymology in his *Geschichte der südslawischen Literatur* (Prague, 1864–65), III, 162. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 2.

[5] Dj. Daničić, *Rječnik iz književnih starina srpskih*, 3 vols. (1863–64; repr. Belgrade, 1975), II, 458. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 3.

[6] V. Makušev, "O pronii v drevnej Serbii," *ŽMNP* 175 (Sept. 1874), 1–20. Uspenskij, "Značenie," 1–2. Kazhdan, *Agrarnye otnošenija*, 202. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 3. In Serbia research on pronoia remained restricted to its manifestations in Serbian sources: Stojan Novaković, "Pronijari i baštinici (spahije i čitluk sahibije). Prilog k istoriji nepokretne imovine u Srbiji XIII do XIX v.," *Glas* 1 (1887), 1–102, and *Stara Srpska vojska* (Belgrade, 1893), esp. 72–77.

[7] V. G. Vasil'evskij, "Zakonodatel'stvo ikonoborcev," *ŽMNP* 200 (1878), 127, 129 (= *Trudy*, IV [Leningrad, 1930], 232, 235), and "Materialy dlja vnutrennej istorii Vizantijskogo gosudarstva," *ŽMNP* 202 (April 1879), 415. Uspenskij, "Značenie," 2. Kazhdan, *Agrarnye otnošenija*, 202.

[8] A. Moustoxydes, *Ἑλληνομνήμων ἢ Συμμικτὰ ἑλληνικά, φυλλάδια* [parts] 1–12 (1843–53; repr. Athens, 1965), 531 note 88.

in his dictionary of medieval Greek, had translated *pronoia* as "*provisiones, pensiones annuae*" ("provisions, yearly payments").[9]

The turning point came with the publication in 1883 of Fedor I. Uspenskij's article, "The Significance of Byzantine and South Slav Pronoia." Uspenskij definitively established the Byzantine origin of pronoia, and set the tone of future research by defining pronoia as "a grant to state servants of land and other income producing property in reward for service and on condition of future service" . . . "especially," he added, "as a reward for military service and on condition to continue to undertake military service."[10]

The understanding of pronoia was becoming more sophisticated, but the veil of historicism lay heavy on Russian scholarship. The following year, 1884, Nikolaj Skabalanovič in a book entitled *The Byzantine State and Church in the Eleventh Century* wrote the following:

> The system of pronoia represented the greatest danger for the liberty and prosperity of the peasantry. The granting in pronoia of community lands directly menaced the rural community . . . the political significance of the community to the state was weakened, free peasants fell into dependence to pronoiars to whom they had to pay taxes and furnish corvées; from every point of view . . . their situation doubtlessly worsened . . . pronoia was dangerous for the peasant community and for the peasants because it increased the social power of the nobles.[11]

Russian scholars continued work along these lines up until the Bolshevik takeover of Russia in 1917. After that serious scholarship was stifled, and the pre-revolution generation passed away. Four of the more prominent Russian Byzantinists in the early years of the twentieth century, Konstantin Uspenskij, Boris Pančenko, Petr Jakovenko, and Pavel Bezobrazov, died between 1917 and 1920, at the ages of 43, 48, 50, and 59.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, scholarship, like many things, suffered in the Soviet Union. What little scholarship there was became derivative and doctrinaire. And the center of gravity of the study of pronoia, as well as of Byzantine studies as a whole, moved westward.

[9] C. du Fresne Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1688; repr. Graz, 1958), col. 1246. He cited a letter of Patriarch Michael II Oxeites from 1143, now in G. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων* (Athens, 1852–59), V, 89: καὶ τῆς ἐνδεχομένης προνοίας ἀπὸ τῆς δηλωθείσης μονῆς χάριν ψυχικῆς σωτηρίας τοῦ ἀοιδίμου κτίτορος αὐτῆς ἀξιούμενον ("And worthy of appropriate pronoia from the said monastery for the sake of the spiritual salvation of its founder of blessed memory").

[10] Uspenskij, "Značenie." Also, F. Uspenskij, "Sledy piscovyh knig v Vizantii," *ŽMNP* 231 (Feb. 1884), 315.

[11] N. Skabalanovič, *Vizantijskoe gosudarstvo i cerkov v XI v.* (Saint Petersburg, 1884), 266.

In 1923 Peter Mutafčiev published a monograph, in Bulgarian, on the Byzantine army in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This contained a long chapter on pronoia with an extensive analysis of the sources.[12] Despite the often seriously flawed aspects of Mutafčiev's work, a new chapter in the study of pronoia was opened, for the book came into the hands of the great German Byzantinist Franz Dölger, who was able to read Bulgarian. During the 1930s, as Dölger edited texts and wrote commentaries, the subject of pronoia became known to western European and American scholars.[13] This was fortified by the work of Russian expatriates – Alexander Vasiliev in the United States, and Alexander Solovjev and George Ostrogorsky in Yugoslavia – who kept alive the tradition of Russian Byzantine scholarship and exported it westward.[14]

After World War II, a new generation of western Byzantinists, such as Peter Charanis in the United States, emerged who began to take up the issue of Byzantine agrarian relations and pronoia. At the same time a slightly more relaxed climate in the Soviet Union produced a new and better caliber of Byzantine scholar, of whom the sterling example was Alexander Kazhdan, who raised an unending string of questions about all matters Byzantine.[15]

But this was all prelude to what was to come. In 1951 the Russian George Ostrogorsky, director of the newly established Byzantine Institute in Belgrade, published, in Serbian, a monograph entitled *Pronoia: A Contribution to the History of Feudalism in Byzantium and in the South Slavic Lands.*[16] Ostrogorsky was a brilliant, first-rate scholar. But while conditions in eastern

[12] P. Mutafčiev, "Vojniški zemi i vojnici v Vizantija prez XIII–XIV v.," *Spisanie na Bŭlgarskata Akademija na naukite* 27 (1923), 1–113, repr. in P. Mutafčiev, *Izbrani proizvedenija*, I (Sofia, 1973), 518–652; the chapter on pronoia: pp. 37–61 (pp. 561–89 in the reprint). This chapter on pronoia appeared as an article: "Pronijata v Vizantija i otnošenieto u kjum voennata služba," *Izvestija na istoričeskoto družestvo v Sofija* 6 (1924), 1–30.

[13] E.g., Dölger, *Beiträge*, 65, and "Die Frage des Grundeigentums in Byzanz," in Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Ettal, 1953; repr. Darmstadt, 1964), 14.

[14] E.g., A. A. Vasiliev, "On the Question of Byzantine Feudalism," *Byz* 8 (1933), 584–604; Solovjev–Mošin, *Grčke povelje*, 486; P. Lemerle and A. Solovjev, "Trois chartes des souverains serbes conservées au monastère de Kutlumus," in Lemerle, *Le monde de Byzance* (London, 1978), no. XIX; and G. Ostrogorsky, "Agrarian Conditions in the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages," *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, 2nd edn., ed. M. Postan, I (Cambridge, 1966), 226–28, and "Vizantijskie piscovye knigi," *Byzantinoslavica* 9 (1948), 286.

[15] P. Charanis, "The Aristocracy of Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century," in *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allan Chester Johnson*, ed. P. R. Coleman-Norton (Princeton, 1951), 336–55; "Monastic Properties"; and "Social Structure." Kazhdan, *Agrarnye otnošenija*; *Derevnja i gorod*; and "Formen."

[16] G. Ostrogorski, *Pronija, prilog istoriji feudalizma u Vizantiji i u južnoslovenskim zemljama* (Belgrade, 1951). He introduced his work on the subject three years earlier: G. Ostrogorsky, "Le système de la pronoia à Byzance et en Serbie médiévale," *Actes du VIe Congrès international d'études byzantines, Paris 1948* (Paris, 1950–51), I, 181–89.

Europe after World War II were far less hostile to independent scholarship than those in the Soviet Union since the Bolshevik coup, he nevertheless had to be comfortable with arriving at conclusions in accord with Marxist doctrine. Thus, he argued that the function of the institution of pronoia, which first appeared in the middle of the eleventh century, was to raise a feudal army and its effect was to create a feudal aristocracy that exploited a subject, dependent peasantry. A pronoia was, more or less, a fief, and the existence of pronoia therefore was further proof of the ubiquity of the feudal mode of production during the Middle Ages.

Had Ostrogorsky's book remained in a Serbian edition it would have had no more influence than Peter Mutafčiev's Bulgarian monograph on the Byzantine army thirty years earlier. But in 1954 the work was translated into French by Henri Grégoire and published in Brussels, together with a translation of another of Ostrogorsky's works, as *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*.[17] Western scholars and students now had, more or less, direct access to a century of Slavic research on Byzantine agrarian relations. Even today George Ostrogorsky is the first scholar that Byzantinists think of when the subject is pronoia. His emphasis on the military role of pronoia has left a profound imprint on all later research.

And much research there was. From the late 1950s on, agrarian relations became a popular topic among western European and American Byzantinists as researchers became more interested in social and economic questions. The same social conditions that gave rise and prominence in the 1960s to the *Annales* school and to the New Social History made the institution of pronoia a staple topic in modern Byzantine historical studies.

Numerous works have been written which deal with agrarian relations in Byzantium which, even if their focus was not the institution of pronoia *per se*, have illuminated the social and economic context in which pronoia operated. Particular mention should be made of the work of Paul Lemerle, Hélène Ahrweiler, Nicolas Oikonomides, Jacques Lefort, Ksenia Hvostova, Angeliki Laiou, and David Jacoby. This is not the place to discuss the historiography on pronoia since the 1950s. There are good treatments of this elsewhere, and I will be evaluating this scholarship in detail in the course of this study.[18]

[17] G. Ostrogorskij, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*, trans. Henri Grégoire, with Paul Lemerle (Brussels, 1954). The translation of *Pronija* (pp. 1–257) is followed by "Les praktika byzantin" (pp. 259–368), a translation by M. C. de Grünwald, reviewed by P. Lemerle, and reviewed and revised by Ostrogorsky himself, of "Vizantijskie piscovye knigi."

[18] For the publications of these scholars, see the Bibliography of Works Cited. For extended treatments of the history of the study of pronoia since the 1950s, see G. R. Ross, "A Survey

The approach

That much said, do we know what a pronoia was?

The study of pronoia began with Russians studying the Serbian sources, then moving on to Venetian and Dalmatian sources, and only after that settling in with the Byzantine sources. But no matter what the Byzantine sources had to say about pronoia, the evolving understanding of the institution would be colored by the non-Byzantine sources, even if this had no bearing on the Byzantine institution. I'll cite two important examples: the standard question of how pronoia fit into the distinction between hereditary or patrimonial property and conditional holdings is a legacy from Slavic historiography. Nineteenth-century Russian scholars were fascinated by the question of how, during the rise of Muscovy, patrimonial landholdings (or *votchina* in Russian) were gradually transformed into conditionally held estates (*pomestie*, or "service estates" as they are often called in English). And so when nineteenth-century Russian scholars saw that the Serbian sources made a distinction between *pronija* and patrimony (*baština* in Serbian), they concluded that pronoia was a parallel to the *pomestie* and they linked it to the creation of a dependent peasantry. Thus, the questions that emerged were, first, how is pronoia to be distinguished from hereditary property, and, second, how bad did the peasants have it under the sway of pronoia?

In similar fashion, the Venetian sources that mention pronoia led scholars into the world of feudalism, a dangerous place. Now the questions were: To what extent was a pronoia a fief? Did administrative and judicial rights follow the granting of seigneurial rights? And to what extent did the granting of pronoiai lead to the feudalization and political fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire?

The non-Byzantine sources from areas and cultures that experienced the diffusion of pronoia (as both term and institution) – Serbia, Bosnia, the Venetian Levant, the Frankish Morea – provide interesting information, but in the end, with the important exception of the Serbian sources, they tell us little about the original institution and usually just confuse things.

of Pronoia in the Historiography of Byzantium," *The New Review: A Journal of East-European History* 10 (1970), 1–29; A. Kazhdan, "*Pronoia*: The History of a Scholarly Discussion," in *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. B. Arbel (London and Portland, Or., 1996), 133–63, originally published in *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10, no. 1–2 (1995); and I. Karayannopoulos, "Ein Beitrag zur Militärpronoia der Palaiologenzeit," in *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. W. Seibt (Vienna, 1996), 71–89. It is unfortunate that T. Maniati-Kokkini, *Ο Βυζαντινός θεσμός της πρόνοιας: συμβολή στή μελέτη του χαρακτήρα του*, Diss. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1990, has not been polished and published as a monograph.

By analogy, one might think of the law codes of the Crusaders, from the Holy Land, as well as from the Frankish Morea, which define the meanings of feudal concepts so much more clearly than they were ever applied back home in western Europe, the land of their origin.

If the word *pronoia* was unusual or appeared only in particular contexts, it would be rather easy to study its meaning. But it is neither unusual nor is its use restricted to particular contexts. Or if we could at least restrict ourselves to this word alone, its uses and meanings for the Byzantines, the following study would be quite brief. We would gather all the references to this word, arrange them in categories, and draw conclusions. Unfortunately, the concepts that the word *pronoia* involves extend beyond the word itself. They embrace a number of other words and phrases which themselves have a variety of simple and more complex meanings.

Further, throughout this investigation it is necessary to hold to several principles. (a) Because no society is static, attention must be paid to chronology as reflected in institutional changes as well as in the changing fashions of literary expression. Technical senses of words, or even general meanings, may change over time, perhaps decades, certainly centuries. (b) Attention must also be paid to the cultural milieu that produced each historical source. The institutions and terminology appropriated by men who lived within Serbian, Venetian, Bosnian, Frankish, or Turkish cultural spheres may reflect but dimly their Byzantine antecedents. (c) Attention must also be paid not only to the differences between the major categories of sources (documentary, narrative, epistolary, etc.), but to the differences in the uses of terminology even within each genre. I am thinking, for example, of the distinctions between the language of George Pachymeres' history and John Kantakouzenos' memoirs, and of the sometimes significant differences in the terminology of documents issued by an emperor and those issued by provincial officials. (d) Finally, as a kind of palliative to the foregoing and to keep us grounded in the real world of human beings, it is important not to force distinctions and seek precision where these may not have existed. While acknowledging, for example, that the documentary sources tend to display more of a regularity than the literary sources, it should never be assumed that the authors of documents possessed the same concern for legal precision as do legal scholars of our or any age.

And there is one further consideration. As the foregoing discussion has already made clear, the institution of pronoia comes to us with a lot of baggage. For well over a century scholars have been studying the institution in earnest, identifying source material dealing with pronoiai and forming conclusions about the institution based on this material. At times they

arrived at conclusions that, I think, have to be revised, and at times they formed conclusions based on source material that, I think, has nothing to do with the institution of pronoia. Some might say I ought to ignore such baggage, turn a corner, and start fresh. Certainly, omitting discussion of interpretations other than my own and omitting all reference to source material that I think has nothing to do with pronoia despite the views of earlier scholars would make the book a lot shorter. But then, knowledgeable readers would be left wondering how I would respond to earlier interpretations or even whether I was aware of them, and those same readers might wonder why I had ignored or even whether I was aware of evidence that earlier scholars thought important.

Years ago, Alexander Kazhdan told me there was good reason why no one had written a monograph on the subject since George Ostrogorsky. A new book on the subject, he said, would have to be much longer than Ostrogorsky's book on pronoia because, not only would it have to reexamine every piece of evidence that Ostrogorsky examined, but it also would have to take into account all the source material, as well as all the scholarly interpretations, published since then. In this book I have tried to incorporate every piece of evidence ever cited by anyone as a reference to the Byzantine institution of pronoia, either to use it to increase our understanding of the institution, or to dismiss it as irrelevant or too ambiguous to be of much use. It is the latter cases that the reader might find unsatisfying, to read a page or two discussing a passage from a document which ultimately I conclude has no connection to the institution of pronoia. But there's no way around this.

Thus, I approach this subject in several stages. First, I consider the word *pronoia*, offering a survey (as a historian with no pretensions of being a skilled philologist) of the various meanings that the word *pronoia* had in the Byzantine era. I feel obliged to apologize in advance for delaying the jump into the actual subject matter of this book, but this preliminary chapter is essential. It is absolutely necessary, to the extent possible, to distinguish "technical" uses of the word *pronoia* from simple "non-technical" uses, and to exclude the latter from further consideration. At times this distinction can appear arbitrary, but, in order to develop a group of data, the basic principle I follow is that, unless there is some strong reason to think the contrary, any passage in which a single English word, such as "care," "foresight," or "provision," can reasonably be substituted for "pronoia" should not be considered a technical use of the word. Once non-technical or uncertain