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GREEK IN MARRIAGE, LATIN IN GIVING: THE GREEK COMMUNITY OF FOURTEENTH-CENTURY PALERMO AND THE DECEPTIVE WILL OF BONANNUS DE GERONIMO

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Abstract. This article explores some of the difficulties inherent in the discussion of medieval ethnicity. Early fourteenth-century Palermo was a city with a celebrated multi-ethnic Latin, Arabic, and Greek past, but by the 1300s, much had changed, with Latin culture eclipsing the others. However, two small Greek ethnic minorities persisted in this culture: one indigenous, descending from the ministers, notaries, and monks who thrived under twelfth-century Norman rule, and the other immigrant, composed primarily of Byzantine slaves and freed slaves. The second group is identified in the sources as *grecus*, while the indigenous Italo-Greeks cannot easily be located in the documentation.

The 1333 will of Bonannus de Geronimo appears to offer insights into the Italo-Greek population. Bonannus was not identified as a *grecus*, but this testament confirms that Bonnanus was married according to the Greek marriage rite. A close examination of his will, in the context of other Latin wills within the same notarial register, indicates that this was the will of a Latin, not an Italo-Greek. The will of Bonannus is an example of the difficulties of document interpretation with regard to medieval ethnicity, but similar in-depth document analysis is necessary to prove or disprove the Italo-Greek presence.

This article discusses the pitfalls that can occur in the study of ethnicity in the medieval period in the context of the potential existence of two separate Greek minorities—one indigenous and one immigrant—in fourteenth-century Latin-dominated Palermo, Italy. The notarial documents of the 1320s and 1330s show few connections made between these two Greek populations. The immigrant Greeks, or Byzantines, can be identified in the historical record through the use of the Latin term *grecus*, but the indigenous Greeks of Palermo, or Italo-Greeks, descendants of an ethnic Greek population who once enjoyed power and prestige in the city, remain elusive amid the Latin Palermitan milieu.¹ It is common to identify Italo-Greeks in documentation predating 1300 through their ability to write in Greek and the evidence exists to pursue

¹ Scholars often designate the Greek population of Sicily and southern Italy as Sicilian Greek, Italo-Byzantine, Italo-Greek, or “Greeks” to distinguish them as a provincial Greek population separated from the mainstream Medieval Greek culture that was centered within the Byzantine Empire. For example, see Herbert Houben, “Religious Toleration in the South Italian Peninsula During the Norman and Staufer Periods,” in *The Society of Norman Italy*, ed. G.A. Loud and Alex Metcalfe (Leiden: Brill, 2002). The terms Greek or Byzantine will be used to describe the population arriving in the fourteenth century from the Byzantine Empire, either as free immigrants or slaves. There certainly was contact between Byzantium in the East and Italo-Greek regions in the West throughout the Middle Ages; see Kenneth Setton, “The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 100 #1 (Feb. 24, 1956), 1-76, and Peter Charanis, “On the Question of

this line of study. But can we tease out knowledge of this population after the Greek language falls into disuse? Is the documentation simply too uninformative or the population too integrated to make these distinctions?

The last will and testament of Bonannus de Geronimo appears to offer a solution to this dilemma but, as explained below, is ultimately misleading. Bonannus had contracted a will according to Greek custom, but his devotions and donations to Latin religious institutions clearly identified him within the local Latin community, therefore exemplifying both Greek cultural heritage as well as heavy Latin cultural influence.² As it turns out, Bonannus was not the Latinized Italo-Greek he appeared to be, and his will is indicative of the potential dangers of medieval ethnic identification.

Greeks, pagan and Christian, classical and medieval, have had a long and important relationship with the history of Sicily. By the fourteenth century, Sicily had experienced a Greek presence extending back two millennia. The strength and influence of that community grew and declined repeatedly over time. After the conquest and domination of Sicily by Arabs in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, the Greek population was confined to the northeastern third of the island, centering on the city of Messina. The most celebrated and well-documented period for the Greek community occurred after the Norman Conquest. Under Norman rule in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Greek population of the island enjoyed resurgence. Greek notaries and elites occupied a prized position in the administration of the Sicilian kingdom, the Greek language became the language of the royal chancery, and Greek churches and monasteries enjoyed growth and patronage. Italo-Greek migrants to Palermo, the Norman capital, revitalized the city's Greek community.³ The era of the Norman Kings of Sicily and Southern Italy is well known for its cultural synthesis of Latin, Greek, and Islamic elements. The documents from the Norman period (1061 – 1187), often in Greek, testify to the Greek minority of Palermo. This minority of court ministers, scribes, and officials to the Norman kings, patrons of Greek rite monasteries and churches, helped to rejuvenate their culture on the island.⁴ After the failure of the Norman dynasty in the late twelfth century, Sicily was a coveted prize to the dynasts of Western Europe. Latin dynasty followed Latin dynasty, and the island

¹ Hellenization of Sicily and Southern Italy During the Middle Ages," *The American Historical Review*, 52 no. 1 (Oct. 1946), 74-86. Michael McCormick points out that while the Italo-Greek could be distinguished from the Latin populations of Southern Italy, differences between Italo-Greeks and Byzantines were not easy to identify in the early Middle Ages. This integration was due in large part to the connection of the regions to Byzantine religious and administrative organization; Michael McCormick, "The Imperial Edge: Italo-Byzantine Identity, Movement and Integration, A.D. 650-950," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. Hélène Ahrweiler and Angeliki Laiou (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998), 42-45.

² My use of the term Latin is very broad but indicates the predominantly Latin (Western, Catholic) rite population of the island. I occasionally will use the term "Sicilian" to refer to the population at large, but with the understanding that Palermo has a long history of immigration from other portions of Italy, such as Campania and Lombardy, and in the fourteenth century from Iberia. The term Latin is used generally for the large number of Sicilian inhabitants who have no further distinctions of ethnicity or geographic origins in the notarial documents.

³ See Vera Von Falkenhausen, "The Greek Presence in Norman Sicily: The Contribution of Archival Material in Greek," *Society of Norman Italy*, ed. G.A. Loud (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2002), 258-261.

⁴ Von Falkenhausen, "Greek Presence," 281-282.

experienced an intensifying Latinization through the thirteenth century.

The Greek cultural resurgence had run its course by the reign of Frederick III (1296-1337). Latin culture had ascended over both Greek and Muslim cultures. The Greek monasteries were in serious decline.⁵ The Greek ministers and courtiers of eleventh- and twelfth-century Palermo had vanished, replaced by notaries and knights of Latin heritage and culture.⁶ However, fourteenth-century Palermo was not without a Greek population. Some continuity existed in the Greek population of Palermo from the Norman period to the early fourteenth century, but it was limited largely to Greek priests of the remaining orthodox churches of Palermo.⁷ As the number of Greek documents and signatures rapidly decreased in the thirteenth century, the Italo-Greek population quickly disappeared from the historical record. During the reign of the Catalan King Frederick III, the Greeks of Palermo were not royal ministers or notaries.

The decline of scholarly interests in the Greek population of Palermo mirrors the decline in extant documentation in the Greek language. The studies of the Italo-Greek minority by Vera von Falkenhausen and Joseph Siciliano conclude at the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁸ Salvatore Fodale believes, due in large part to the rise of the mendicant orders, that Palermo was completely Latinized by 1282.⁹ Mario Scaduto discusses the fourteenth-century Greek Church in Palermo, noting the decay of the Greek religious and education system, but it was not the purpose of his work to explore the interactions of the secular population.¹⁰ In the large corpus of works by Henri Bresc, fourteenth-century Greeks appear with some frequency. Yet, Bresc, in his article "La formazione del popolo Siciliano," argues that the early fourteenth century was an important period for the construction of a Sicilian identity and only turns to the island's Greek minority briefly to name the group as an impediment to the formation of a Sicilian people.¹¹ He claims that the influx of Byzantine Greeks into Sicily during the fourteenth century fortified a failing indigenous Greek population against absorption by the Latin majority, but he fails to provide justification of his assertion.¹² Therefore, the end of the Italo-Greek population in fourteenth-century

⁵ Clifford Backman, "The Papacy, the Sicilian Church, and King Frederick III (1302-1321)," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1991), 243-244.

⁶ Von Falkenhausen, "Greek Presence," 282; Joseph Anthony Siciliano, "The Greek Religious and Secular Community of Southern Italy and Sicily During the Later Middle Ages," Unpublished PhD Dissertation. (Rutgers University, 1983), 261.

⁷ Von Falkenhausen, "Greek Presence," 283-284.

⁸ See Vera Von Falkenhausen, "Friedrich II und die Griechen im Königreich Sizilien," *Friedrich II: Tagung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom im Gedenkjahr 1994*, ed. Arnold Esch and Norbert Kamp (Tübingen: Niermeyer, 1996.); Von Falkenhausen, "Greek Presence," and Siciliano, "Greek Religious and Secular Community."

⁹ Salvatore Fodale, "L'encadrement Latin ou les orders mendicants," in *Palermo 1070-1492: Mosaique de peuples, nation rebelle: la naissance violente de l'indétité sicilienne*, ed. Henri Bresc and Geneviève Bresc-Bautier (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1993), 141.

¹⁰ Mario Scaduto, *Il Monachesimo Basiliano Nella Sicilia Medievale* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1982).

¹¹ Henri Bresc, "La formazione del popolo Siciliano," *Tre millenni di storia linguistica della Sicilia, Atti del Convegno della Società italiana di Glottologia* (Pisa: Giardini, 1985); reprint *Politique et société en Sicile, XIII-XV siècles* (Hampshire, Great Britain: Varionum, 1990), 243-265.

¹² Bresc, "La formazione," 253.

Palermo remains a largely unexplored issue with scholars making assumptions about its survival or decline without extensive verification from available sources.

Beginning in the first decade of the fourteenth century, new Greeks began to arrive in Sicily, as the Sicilian kingdom began piratical and expansionist policies in the Aegean Sea.¹³ The notarial registers of the 1320s and 1330s show a new influx of Eastern Greeks into Palermo. These Greeks were slaves, freedmen, immigrants and visitors. They were not even from Sicily but were *de partibus Romaniae*.¹⁴

These new Greeks are found often in the notarial registers and are easily identifiable. The notaries called them *grecus* or *greca* from parts of the land of the Romans or, as we say today, the Byzantine Empire. Medieval notaries were the record keepers of their day. Working in royal, noble and urban circles, notaries kept records of business transactions such as bills of sale, loans, work contracts, and the payment of debts. Marriage contracts, slave manumissions, and wills were also recorded by notaries, and a few precious registers of this everyday, urban interaction survive to offer insights into medieval life. Thus we find Maria, an eight-year-old Byzantine Greek, being sold at market by one Catalan from Majorca to another Catalan from Barcelona in the Sicilian city of Palermo.¹⁵ A number of Byzantine Greeks, formerly slaves now freedmen, were working as farm laborers on local vineyards, like Constantine *grecus de Romania*, freedman, working for seven and a half *tari*¹⁶ per month on the vineyard of Symon de Cisano.¹⁷ The registers also preserve records of free Greeks who were voluntary immigrants to Palermo. Nicholas de Andrea and Basil, two Byzantine Greeks attested to in the registers, made a living in Palermo by selling linens to men like the Latin priest Peter de Heraclia.¹⁸

These three instances illustrate the common interaction between the Byzantine Greeks and the city they shared with the Latin population. Greek slaves were bought and sold by Latins and, indeed, freed by Latins. Greek laborers contracted themselves to work for Latins, and enterprising Greeks bought and sold products to and from Latins. The notarial registers also provide evidence for Byzantine Greek interaction within their population, like the example of Nicholas and Basil mentioned ear-

¹³ Backman, *Decline and Fall*, 282, and Daniel Duran I Duelt, "La Companyia Catalana i El Comerç d'Esclaus Abans de l'Assentament Als Ducats D'Athens i Neopatria," in *De l'esclavitud a la llibertat: Esclaus i lliberts a l'Edat Mitjana. Actes del Colloqui Internacional celebrat a Barcelona del 27 al 29 de maig de 1999*, eds. María Teresa Ferrer i Mallo i Josefina Mutge i Vives (Barcelona: Consell Superior d'Investigacions Científiques, Institució Milá i Fontanals, Departament d'Estudis Medievals, 2000), 564-566.

¹⁴ *Romanie* refers to the lands that once constituted the heart of the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire, which called itself the Roman Empire and its Greek subjects Romans, was a shadow of its former self in the fourteenth century. "*De partibus Romaniae*," those predominantly Greek areas from coastal and western Asia Minor through the southern Balkans, Greece, and the Aegean islands, to the Adriatic coast of present day Albania, was fractured after the Fourth Crusade into a number of Byzantine and Crusader states.

¹⁵ Archivio di Stato di Palermo [hereafter ASP], Notai Defunti, Reg. 77, 72r.

¹⁶ There were three basic Sicilian monetary distinctions: the ounce, or "uncia" (never actually minted), the *tari*, or "tarenus," and the grain, or "granus." An ounce was worth thirty *tari* and a *tari* worth twenty grains.

¹⁷ ASP, Notai Defunti, Reg. 76, 24r.

¹⁸ M. Silvana Guccione, *Le imbreviature del notaio Bartolomeo de Alamannia a Palermo, 1332-1333* (Rome: Roma Centro di Ricerca Pergamene Medievali e Protocolli Notarili, 1982). doc. 255, p. 370.

lier, and George, a Greek freedman, who convinced his former master to provide the funds for Nicholas, a Greek slave, to purchase his freedom.¹⁹

Enough evidence exists for the study and analysis of the new Greek population. However, the descendants of the indigenous Greek population are far more difficult to ascertain. Without the distinction of *grecus*, this population cannot be easily distinguished from the surrounding Latin population. A popular method for studying ethnicity, onomastics, or the study of names, is very difficult for fourteenth-century Palermo. Some names were common to Greeks, such as Demetrius or Theodore, and some names common to Latins, like Roger or Francis, but some names were also used by either population, such as Andrea, John, or Nicholas. The problem of name identification is compounded even more by a tendency in Sicily since the time of the Norman Conquest for names to be shared across ethnic or religious lines.²⁰

For example, a papal tax list from the early fourteenth century provides a detailed listing of Greek-rite churches, monasteries, and priests from across Sicily. The names found in this record, which identified Greek priests uniformly as *presbyter grecus*, are indicative of the problem of using onomastics to sort and identify the Sicilian population. In addition to traditional Greek names that we expect to find, such as Basil, Leo, and Theodore, and names that are used for either tradition, such as John and Nicholas, we find names that we would not expect from a Greek priest, like William, Dominic, Roger, and Richard.²¹ The search for Italo-Greek identity in the fourteenth century is difficult, and the naming patterns make it all the more confusing.

The will of Bonannus de Geronimo, at first glance, appears to be a valuable insight into the elusive world of the indigenous Greek population. Bonanno made the declaration in his will that he had contracted a marriage with his current wife according to the custom of the Greeks.²² The will of Bonanno seems to be a document that could be analyzed and provide insight into the life and society of the descendants of the Italo-Greek elite of the twelfth century, definitively proving that these descendants were extremely Latinized and practically indiscernible from their Latin neighbors, although maintaining a trace of their heritage. Bonannus had identified himself in his will with an aspect of Greek culture, a marriage by Greek custom instead of Latin custom. However, the Greek marriage custom was not limited to the Latin population, and the will of Bonanno de Geronimo is not evidence of the Italo-Greek population but, rather, is indicative of the problem of identifying such a group.

In the four notarial registers dating from 1326 to 1333, no Byzantine Greek immigrant carried the name Bonannus, and the name was not among the common names used by fourteenth-century Byzantine Greeks.²³ In fact, the name is derived from the

¹⁹ ASP, Notai Defunti, Reg. 77, 25v-26r.

²⁰ See Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the end of Islam* (New York: RutledgeCurzon, 2003), 74-98, for Muslim, Greek, Latin name mixtures.

²¹ Scaduto, *Il Monachesimo*, 309-320. Scaduto provides a summary of the Greek presence in the documents. For published edition of complete tax register see *Sicilia: Rationes Deciarum Italiae nei Secoli XIII e XIV* ed. Pietro Sella (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), and for Palermo see pages 9-21.

²² Guccione, *Le imbreviature del notaio Bartolomeo de Alamanna*, doc. 261, pp. 376-378.

²³ Angeliki Laiou, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Social and Demographic Study* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

Latin *bonus annus*, or “good year.” However, Bonannus was still an uncommon name for a Latin, and as mentioned previously, the first name is not a good indicator of ethnicity in fourteenth-century Palermo. His surname makes a stronger case for Italo-Greek heritage. Geronimo, or Jerome, was a Latin name, but could have been a rendering of the Greek name Hieronymus. His wife, Francesca, carried a name commonly reserved for Latins, but mixed marriages were common in the medieval Mediterranean. The names of his youngest children and heirs, Allegranzia and Johanuccio, were ethnically neutral names, as was the name of his granddaughter, Margarucia. His eldest son, Andrea de Geronimo, bore a name very common among Greeks, but which occurred in the Latin population too. When the Bonannus name and the names of his family members are taken into consideration, his choice of marriage custom remains the most convincing piece of evidence. Bonannus is still acceptable as an Italo-Greek.

The next important details are the religious donations that Bonannus declared in his will. Medieval wills reflect the earthly concerns of their makers. These included their fears for the inheritances of their children and their outstanding debts, which either had to be paid or collected, but the primary concern of the average medieval testator was the well-being of his soul in the hereafter and the proper burial of his body. Bonannus’s religious legacies were very Latin. He chose the Church of St. Augustine for his burial, bequeathing to the church three *tari* for its works. For the right of burial, for making the grave, and for ringing the bells, he granted St. Augustine’s an additional four *tari*. Bonannus showed a more personal connection with the friars of St. Augustine’s. When he requested masses be sung (undoubtedly in Latin) by the brothers of St. Augustine’s, Bonannus singled out a Brother William of Palermo by name to lead them, granting them the tidy sum of ten *tari* and five grains. This monastic was also present at the creation of Bonannus’s will. His name is first among the witnesses recorded at the bottom of the document. Most importantly, though, Bonannus made Brother William an executor of his will, together with his wife Francesca, illustrating the trust he must have felt for the friar. The will indicates that Bonannus’s ties with Brother William, a Latin monk, must have been close.

Two more instances of religious donations must be mentioned. We know from his will that Bonannus’s parish church was St. Hyppolitus’s. For various rights and works, Bonannus bequeathed a total of eight *tari* and ten grains to the church of St. Hyppolitus. The two churches, St. Augustine and St. Hyppolitus, were the only churches to receive grants of money from Bonannus. Bonannus’s final request concerning the religious life was that a Brother Hyppolitus of St. Mark’s church accompany his funeral procession. These churches and donations mean little unto themselves, but when placed in the context of the other wills from the same notarial register, a pattern develops.

The wills of eight other testators, four men and four women, are recorded in the register of Bartolomeo D’Alemania. Four of these testators were from Bonannus’s parish, St. Hyppolitus. Four testators, including Bonannus, requested burial in St. Augustine’s, thus making it the most common burial site among the surviving wills. Three others, all women, chose to be buried in St. Hyppolitus’s. Five of the eight made a gift of some kind to St. Augustine’s or to a brother of the church. Palerma, wife of Matthew Platia, made the Prior of St. Augustine’s, Brother Berrardo, an ex-

ecutor of her will.²⁴ Sybilla, wife of Pisano de Perrivechio named a Brother Lawrence of the Augustinians as her executor.²⁵ Four other testators made donations to St. Hyppolitus. Other wills document religious donations to many other churches, such as the Palermitan Cathedral, but the churches of St. Augustine and St. Hyppolitus are the most prominent recipients of such donations. Further overlaps occurred in religious bequests. John de Taberna and Margarita, wife of Berrardo Arrasunati, also requested the presence of Brother Hyppolitus of St Mark's.²⁶ Bonannus's executor, Brother William of St. Augustine's, was remembered by Margarita in her will and she provided a donation of one *tari* to the prior, Brother Berrardo, and another Augustinian, Brother Walter, witnessed her will.

The religious giving of Bonannus's will differed little from that of the other testators. St. Augustine's Church, the most popular burial site among the wills, would be his final resting place, and the brothers of that church were the most popular recipient of legacies. His residence within the parish of St. Hyppolitus indicates that the majority of the testators were Bonannus's neighbors, and his association with the Church of St. Hyppolitus was reflected by his fellow parishioners. Even his preference shown to Brother Hyppolitus was echoed in other wills.

Despite the weakness of the Greek Orthodox Church during this period, had Bonannus been adamant in his attachment to Greek orthodoxy, he could have located a Greek rite church or monastery for his donations. A summary of the church census of 1308-1310 mentioned three Greek-rite religious institutions in Palermo: the monastery of St. Mary de Gucta of the order of St. Basil, the church of St Thomas of the Greeks, and a church of St. Peter near Caccamo, a town east of the city. The census listed three Greek rite priests, identified as *presbyter grecus*, operating in the archdiocese of Palermo for those years²⁷. A Greek priest, Jordan of St. Mary's of the Admiral in Palermo, was still signing documents in Greek as late as 1323.²⁸ These instances predate Bonannus's will, but Henri Bresc maintains that the Basilian Monastery of St. Mary of the Crypt operated in Palermo through the 1330s.²⁹ Even disregarding donations to Greek religious institutions, Bonannus could have made a general proclamation of Greek giving as occurred among fourteenth-century Greeks from Venetian Crete. On Latin-ruled Crete, a Greek testator could request that a donation be put toward the *usum grecorum*, or "the custom of the Greeks."³⁰

²⁴ Guccione, *Le imbreviature del notaio Bartolomeo de Alamannia*, doc. 19, pp. 25-28.

²⁵ Guccione, *Le imbreviature del notaio Bartolomeo de Alamannia*, doc. 179, pp. 270-272.

²⁶ Guccione, *Le imbreviature del notaio Bartolomeo de Alamannia*, doc. 11 pp. 14-16; Guccione, *Le imbreviature del notaio Bartolomeo de Alamannia*, doc. 321, pp. 457-459.

²⁷ Scaduto, *Il Monachesimo*, 320. Vera von Falkenhausen concluded that the 1308-1310 taxation list is not always exhaustive of institutions and clergy, and the possibility of more Greek priests exists. Von Falkenhausen, "Greek Presence," 283.

²⁸ Von Falkenhausen, "Greek Presence," 284.

²⁹ Henri Bresc, *Un monde Méditerranéen: économie et société en Sicile, 1300-1450*, 2 vols. (Palermo: Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 1986), 591.

³⁰ Sally McKee, *Wills from Late Venetian Crete, 1312-1420* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1988) 537-538, doc. 414. Nicola, son of the late papas Hermanuel Agapito. For more instances of specific Greek Orthodox requests of the fourteenth century see Sally McKee, *Uncommon Dominion: Venetian Crete and the Myth of Ethnic Purity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 109-112.

Who was Bonannus de Geronimo? Was he a Latin Sicilian or a Latinized Italo-Greek? Bonannus went to Catholic churches, fraternized with Catholic monastics, and included both in his will, but he chose to identify himself with a Greek custom – a choice that raises a number of questions. Could this be reflective of a family tradition, stemming from Italo-Greek heritage? Could his Latin giving be explained by the influence of his Latin wives and Latin neighbors? We can never be certain about these aspects of Bonannus's life, but other contextualizing evidence from the period suggests that he did not need to have Italo-Greek heritage or influence to choose a Greek marriage.

A marriage conducted according to Greek custom was not a religious or cultural distinction at all. Instead, the difference between Latin and Greek marriage customs was economic. The surviving law codes of the medieval city of Palermo, called the Customs of the Happy City of Palermo, date to the late fifteenth century but have their roots in customs and laws created in the early fourteenth century.³¹ This communal law code described the particulars of Latin and Greek marriages. In Latin marriages, the dowry brought to the marriage by the woman would be mixed with the property of the husband and their property as a couple.³² In Greek marriages, the dowries remained distinct entities and were not joined with the property of each respective spouse. The chapter of the law code on Greek marriages went further and declared that the parties to the contract could be a Greek and a Greek, a Greek and a Latin, or indeed a Latin and a Latin.³³ It cannot be assumed that even one party involved in a Greek marriage chose this rite because of his or her cultural heritage. Instead, marriage was primarily an economic decision. Perhaps the theory that Bonannus de Geronimo was a Latinized Italo-Greek could have remained a viable, if contentious, argument before, but once any ethnic identification is removed from the all-important Greek marriage custom, the argument is no longer viable. Bonannus did not make an ethnic statement by declaring to the notary that he had contracted a marriage according to the Greek custom but, rather, an economic statement.

The will of Bonannus is a potential trap for the unwary scholar. This discussion has not sought to dismiss the presence of a population descended from the Italo-Greek elite of the Norman period, but to illustrate the problems with indentifying and treating it as a distinct group. It is difficult to discuss what cannot be pulled from the historical record, what is missing, or what might be found, yet the fate of the Italo-Greeks should be pursued through a close assessment of the existing Latin sources of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The presence, or disappearance, of this minority should not be assumed or inferred, but explored. Bonannus's will ap-

³¹ Vito La Mantia, introduction to *Antiche Consuetudini delle città di Sicilia*, ed Vito La Mantia (Palermo: Antonio Reber, 1900), clxxxvii-cxc.

³² La Mantia, *Antiche*, 190-191. Chapter 43 entitled "De dotibus et hereditatis divisione." Bolds are editor's emphasis: "**Bona viri et uxoris**, tam que tempore consumati matrimonii, quam et que postmodum per eos acquisita sunt, undecumque provenientia, elapso anno a tempore consumati matrimonii vel **natis filiis, confunduntur et unum corpus efficiuntur**, quorum bonorum **tertia pars debetur patri, altera matri, reliqua** vero **tertia filio vel filiis.**"

³³ La Mantia, *Antiche*, 192-193. Chapter 47 entitled "De iure docium et hereditate Grecorum Panhormi, et eorum qui contrahunt iure Grecomum." The recognition of this custom has been previously noted by Matteo Gaudio, *La schiavitù in Sicilia dopo i normanni*. (1926; repr., Catania: Libreria Musumeci, 1979), 138, and Siciliano, "Greek Religious

pears to be a more concrete account of this culture, reflecting a very Latinized Italo-Greek individual. The examination of the document and its context tells us he was a Latin, but a part of a culture with characteristics absorbed from a Greek tradition. A closer examination of the extant sources could yield greater detail of the final years of the Italo-Greek minority but, at the very least, will certainly aid in our understanding of late medieval Sicilian culture in general.

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