



## Approaches to the Byzantine Family (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies)

*By Leslie Brubaker*

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### **Approaches to the Byzantine Family (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies)** By Leslie Brubaker

The study of the family is one of the major lacunas in Byzantine Studies. Angeliki Laiou remarked in 1989 that 'the study of the Byzantine family is still in its infancy', and this assertion remains true today. The present volume addresses this lacuna. It comprises 19 chapters written by international experts in the field which take a variety of approaches to the study of the Byzantine family, and embrace a chronological span from the later Roman to the late Byzantine empire. The context is established by chapters focusing on the Roman roots of the Byzantine family, the Christianisation of the family, and the nature of the family in contemporaneous cultures (the late antique west and the Islamic east). Key methodological approaches to the Byzantine family are highlighted and discussed, in particular prosopographical and life course approaches. The contribution of hagiography to the understanding of the Byzantine family is analysed by several authors; other chapters on the family and children in art and on the archaeology of the Middle Byzantine house explore the material evidence that can shed light on the Byzantine family. Overall, the diversity of families that existed in Byzantium (blood, fictive, metaphorical) is emphasised, and chapters consider the specific cases of ascetic, monastic, aristocratic and peasant families, as well as the imperial family, which is illuminated by the comparative case of a Caliphal family. The volume is topped and tailed by a Preface and an Afterword by the editors, which address the state of the field and consider the way ahead. Thus the volume is vital in putting the subject of the Byzantine Family in sharp focus and setting the research agenda for the future.

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