

The Hidden Secrets:
Late Byzantium
in the Western
and Polish Context



WYDAWNICTWO
UNIWERSYTETU
ŁÓDZKIEGO

Małgorzata Dąbrowska

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Małgorzata Dąbrowska – University of Łódź, Faculty of Philosophy and History
Department of Medieval History, 90-219 Łódź, 27a Kamińskiego St.

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Preface

Byzantine studies in Poland are connected with two eminent scholars. The medievalist, Oscar Halecki, Professor at the University of Warsaw since 1919, began the research on the Church union during the time of the Palaiologi. The first chair of Byzantine History at that University was created in 1935 and offered to the historian of antiquity – Professor Kazimierz Zakrzewski. Halina Evert-Kappesowa was their student. She attended Halecki's M.A. seminar and then wrote her Ph.D. on the union of Lyons in 1274 under his wing. In the meantime, she became an assistant to Professor Zakrzewski. After WW II when Warsaw was completely destroyed, she appeared among other scholars in Lodz, at the new University, founded here in 1945.

It was Professor Kappesowa who renewed Byzantine studies in Poland. Being her last Ph.D. student, I inherited her interests in late Byzantium which is reflected in this volume. I began my research with the relations between Michael Palaiologos and Saint Louis and I remained faithful to the history of the Palaiologi, especially dealing with mixed imperial marriages, exploring the role of the foreign Empress at the Byzantine court, following the vicissitudes of imperial families in 13th–15th centuries.

As a Byzantinist of Polish origin I was tempted to follow Halecki's interests in the relations between the Eastern Empire and the kingdom of Poland, and I wrote some articles which shed light on this rarely known subject in the Western scholarly milieu. The

same reason encouraged me to present the stereotype of Byzantium in the context of Polish history in the 19th century. And last but not least, I wrote a chapter about Byzantine traces in Houston, while visiting Professor at Rice University in 2005–2008.

So this is a sketch of the present volume, consisting of articles published over twenty years: 1989–2009. I am indebted to Professor Kappesowa, whose name introduced me to the world of eminent Byzantinists. My debut came in 1988 when I participated in the Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies in Nottingham. I was happy to meet Sir Steven Runciman and Professors: Donald Nicol and Anthony Bryer. They became my compass in the world of foreign research. In 1989, due to the scholarship of the French Government, I got an opportunity to pursue my studies in Paris, being affiliated to the Centre of Byzantine Civilization at College de France. Professor Gilbert Dagron was my maître de stage and I met there Professor Paul Lemerle, a legend of the French milieu of Byzantinists. He knew Mme Kappesowa from their stay in Dumbarton Oaks and he offered me much time, recommending me to the Bibliothèque Nationale to see the New Testament offered by Michael Palaiologos to Saint Louis in 1269. It seemed that Clio was sitting next to me and that Kairos appeared at the last moment, as Lemerle died in the same year, 1989.

The inspiration of the title to this volume is taken from Donald Nicol's preface to his book *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453* (1972). The author wrote: "The last period of Byzantium was less closely studied than the earlier centuries, and it still contains many secrets. . . It is now attracting more and more attention from scholars writing in specialist publications and periodicals in a babel of languages." My articles are written in English and French. The first language is a contemporary *lingua franca*, the second – still is... Let's come back to some secrets of late Byzantium. I will reveal the Polish one. In my part of the world it was not easy to conduct research abroad, even after 1989.

The publication of this book was supported by my aunt, Danuta Tarnowska, the sister of my late father, Stanisław Dąbrowski.

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“Peter of Cyprus and Casimir the Great in Cracow,” *Byzantiaka* 14 (1994), 257–67.

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“Cantacuzene – ‘The Wolf’ or Matthias Strykowski’s Recollection of Byzantium,” *Byzantinoslavica* LVI (1995), 257–67.

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“Could Poland Have Reacted to the Submission of Byzantium to the Turks in 1372–1373?”, *Captain and Scholar. Papers in Memory of Demetrios Polemis*, ed. E. Chrysos and E. Zachariadou, Andros 2009, 79–92.

Institute of History of Arts (University of Warsaw)

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Institute of Literary Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences Warsaw

“La vision moscovite de Byzance et le byzantinisme allemand de Feliks Koneczny ou Byzance sans Byzance,” *Organon* 28–30 (1999–2001), 257–68.

Lodz University Press

“Sophia of Montferrat or the History of One Face,” *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica* 56 (1996), 177–94.

“Uzun Hasan’s Project of Alliance with the Polish King (1474),” *Mélanges d’histoire byzantine offerts à Oktawiusz Jurewicz à l’occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire, Byzantina Lodziensia* III (1998), 171–85.

**Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik
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“From Poland to Tenedos. The Project of Using the Teutonic Order in the Fight against the Turks after the Fall of Constantinople,” *Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa 950–1453. Beiträge zu einer Table Ronde des XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Copenhagen 1996)*, ed. G. Prinzing and M. Salamon, Wiesbaden 1999, 165–76.

Oficyna Wydawnicza LEKSEM

“The Power of Virtue. The Case of the Last Palaiologoi,” *Cesarstwo Bizantyńskie. Dzieje, religia, kultura. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Waldemarowi Ceranowi przez jego uczniów na 70-lecie urodzin*, ed. P. Krupczyński and M. Leszka, Łask-Łódź, Leksem 2006, 9–25.

Presses Universitaires de Vincennes. Université Paris 8

“Byzance, source des stéréotypes dans la conscience des Polonais,” *Byzance en Europe*, ed. M.-F. Auzepy, Paris 2003, 43–54.

Scientific Society (Thorn)

“Byzantine Empresses’ Mediations in the Feud between the Palaiologoi (13th–15th Centuries),” *Konfliktbewältigung und Friedensstiftung im Mittelalter. Przewyciężanie konfliktów i ustanawianie pokoju w średniowieczu*, ed. R. Czaja, E. Mühle and A. Radziwiński, Toruń 2012, 227–29.

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“Hellenism at the Court of the Despots of Mistra in the First Half of the 15th Century,” *Paganism in Late Roman Empire and Byzantium*, ed. M. Salamon, *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* 1 (1991), 157–67.

“Family Ethos at the Imperial Court of the Palaiologos in the Light of the Testimony by Theodore of Montferrat,” ed. M. Salamon and A. Różycka-Bryzek, *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* 2 (1994), 73–81.

“A Byzantine Lady’s Daughters in Poland,” *Byzantium and Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. G. Prinzing and M. Salamon, *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* 3 (2001), 197–202.

Each of the successive texts originated as an autonomous article. Therefore, I did not attempt to make the spelling of proper names uniform throughout the book.

CHAPTER ONE

The Palaiologoi Themselves and Their Western Connections

L'attitude probyzantine de Saint Louis et les opinions des sources françaises concernant cette question

L'échange d'ambassades entre l'empereur de Byzance Michel VIII Paléologue (1224–1282) et le roi de France Saint Louis (1214–1270) est une des questions peu connues de l'histoire du Moyen Âge. Étant donné que l'Europe était, à cette époque, partagée entre l'Occident catholique et l'Orient orthodoxe (ce qui était causé moins par le schisme de 1054 que par la IV^{ème} croisade), ce contact de deux souverains – sinon leur entente réciproque – semble un fait particulièrement intéressant qui mérite d'être analysé en détail.

L'initiative de ces contacts a été due à Michel Paléologue, qui a réussi, en 1261, à restituer la souveraineté byzantine à Constantinople, de manière à mettre fin à la domination des Latins sur le Bosphore. La restauration de l'empire byzantin ne suffisait cependant pas à détourner le danger menaçant Byzance du côté des Français (qui, selon les Grecs, ne désignait pas seulement les Français, mais les habitants de l'Europe occidentale en général). Pendant tout son règne, Michel a essayé d'éviter l'expédition latine contre Constantinople. Cette menace est devenue plus grande, surtout lorsque Charles d'Anjou, roi de Sicile, s'est déclaré l'héritier de l'empire latin. Voulant prévenir la reprise de la IV^{ème} croisade, Michel VII était entré en négociations avec Rome pour liquider le schisme et unir à nouveau les Églises. Pourtant, pendant la vacance du Saint-Siège (commencée à la fin de 1268), il semblait que rien au monde ne pourrait

contrarier les plans angevins. Dans cette situation, Michel demanda l'aide de Saint Louis.

Le roi de France était, à cette époque, le souverain ayant l'autorité la plus grande en Europe. Il était le célèbre proclamateur de la sainte idée des croisades, il avait le prestige d'être l'arbitre de la chrétienté, et la réputation d'un pacifiste. Ses contacts diplomatiques, surtout avec le Siège apostolique, avaient aussi leur importance. Michel, s'adressant au souverain français, se rendait compte de tout cela en se souvenant avant tout qu'il s'agissait de ses relations avec le propre frère de son adversaire.

On trouve l'information de la première ambassade byzantine en France, notée en 1269, dans les "Annales Januenses." Le chroniqueur annonce d'une manière sobre que les envoyés de l'empereur, venus à Gênes, s'étaient rendus ensuite à la cour du Pape et chez le roi de France.¹ Selon F. Dölger, les messagers sont venus dans la république génoise au printemps ou en été 1269 et ont dû négocier la question de la réception de bateaux pour Byzance, vu l'imminence de la lutte avec Charles d'Anjou.² Il semble pourtant que le séjour des envoyés de Michel a eu aussi un caractère de sondage. Il est permis de supposer que le discernement initial des Grecs en ce qui concerne des contacts avec Saint Louis a eu lieu justement à Gênes, car c'était le moment des négociations concernant l'affrètement de bateaux pour les besoins de la croisade, organisée par le roi de France.³

Une partie des envoyés de l'empereur s'était remise en route pour la Curie de Rome et l'autre pour Paris. A cette occasion, il est nécessaire de corriger une faute dans la source génoise: il est évident qu'il ne s'agissait pas ici d'entretiens avec le pape (summus

¹ *Cafari et continuatorum Annales Janue (Annales Januenses)*, MGH SS vol. XVIII, éd. G. Pertz, Hannover 1863, 264, 40–44.

² *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*, vol. III (1204–1282), éd. F. Dölger, München-Berlin 1932, 1967.

³ R. Sternfeld, *Ludwigs des Heiligen Kreuzzug nach Tunis und die Politik Karls I von Sizilien*, Berlin 1896, 363–68.

pontifex),⁴ mais de négociations avec le collège des cardinaux. Car c'était la période de la vacance du Siègne apostolique après la mort de Clément IV. La visite à la Curie de Rome avait probablement pour but le renouvellement des négociations concernant l'union, commencées par Michel pendant le pontificat d'Urbain IV et continuées avec son héritier Clément IV.⁵ L'union était une carte stratégique dans le jeu politique de Michel Paléologue. En s'efforçant de revenir dans le giron de l'Église catholique, elle était pour l'Angevin son principal argument : la lutte contre les schismatiques. On savait cependant que, dans la période de la vacance du Siègne apostolique, Charles usait de son influence sur le collège des cardinaux et réussissait à bloquer l'élection papale.⁶ Les contacts avec la Curie étaient donc devenus difficiles, et on pouvait douter que les envoyés byzantins parviennent à Viterbo.

Dans cette situation, la seule espérance qui restait à Michel Paléologue était Paris. La date de l'arrivée de l'ambassade byzantine dans la capitale de la France n'a pas été fixée avec exactitude. F. Dölger suppose que cela a été au printemps ou à l'été 1269.⁷ Il n'y a aucune information concernant le représentant de Michel dans cette première rencontre de Louis avec les envoyés de l'empereur. J. D. Geanakoplos suggère que c'était un franciscain de Péra de Constantinople nommé Jean Parastron, et connu plus tard pour son activité tendant à préparer l'union de Lyon.⁸ Une note dans un manuscrit grec du XIII^e siècle, conservé dans la Bibliothèque Nationale, contient des

⁴ *Annales Januenses*, 264.

⁵ Cf. *Les registres d'Urbain IV*, vol. II, éd. J. Guiraud, Paris 1900, 295; *Acta Urbani IV, Clementis IV, Gregorii X (1261–1276)*, éd. A. Tautu, ser. III, vol. V, I, Vatican 1953, n° 3, 23, 25.

⁶ *Annales Piacentini Gibellini*, MGH SS, vol. XVIII, ed. G. Pertz, Hannover 1863, 553.

⁷ *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden...*, 1269/1968.

⁸ D. J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West 1258–1282. A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations*, Cambridge (MA) 1959, 224, not. 133.

données concernant la présence des Byzantins à Paris.⁹ Il s'agit d'un exemplaire du Nouveau Testament, richement illuminé, apporté par les émissaires en cadeau à Saint Louis. Berger de Xivrey a réussi à reconstruire le texte, d'où l'on voit que le roi de France avait reçu les envoyés de l'empereur "à cause de l'union de la schismatique Eglise des Grecs avec l'Eglise Romaine."¹⁰ Dans cette note, on trouve de même une information concernant le baptême du khan Apaga et son mariage avec Marie, fille de Michel Paléologue.¹¹ Cette nouvelle de la conversion du souverain Mongol avait – comme le souligne P. Lemerle – un éminent caractère de propagande.¹² Aux yeux de Louis, Constantinople devait être aussi un centre propageant la foi chrétienne. Etant donnée le fait que le roi de France avait jadis organisé des missions pour propager le christianisme parmi les Mongols,¹³ cette nouvelle témoigne du parfait discernement de Michel Paléologue et souligne encore une fois son art politique. Mais L'empereur voulait gagner Louis pour l'union pas seulement par cette communication. Il semble que l'offre même du Nouveau Testament ait été plus qu'un cadeau conventionnel. On sait que le roi collectionnait les livres et étudiait les écrits des Pères de l'Eglise et la Bible¹⁴ – un tel cadeau avait donc probablement fait un grand plaisir au souverain français. Michel, cependant, ne voulait-il pas aussi démontrer ainsi que la base des deux confessions était commune? En envoyant le Nouveau Testament au roi de France, Paléologue mettait de cette manière entre les mains

⁹ B. de Xivrey, *Notice d'un manuscrit grec du XIII^e siècle conservé à la Bibliothèque Nationale et renfermant le Nouveau Testament*, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres, ser. V, 4 (1983), 97–118.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 98.

¹¹ Ibidem, 99.

¹² P. Lemerle *Saint Louis et Byzance*, *Journal Asiatique* (1970), 18.

¹³ Cf. J. Richard, *La papauté et les missions d'Orient au Moyen Âge*, Roma 1977, 70.

¹⁴ Cf. Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, *Vie de Saint Louis*, éd. H. F. Delaborde, Paris 1899, 52.

de celui-ci son espoir d'éviter le conflit avec Charles d'Anjou en gagnant Louis à la cause de l'union des Eglises.

Le souverain français commença son dialogue avec Constantinople en envoyant au Bosphore son ambassade, qui arriva chez l'empereur pendant les premiers mois de 1270.¹⁵ Charles n'a pas pu empêcher ces contacts, au contraire, il a même été obligé par Louis de fournir des chevaux pour les envoyés français qui se rendaient à Constantinople.¹⁶ En ce qui concerne la documentation se rapportant à la partie postérieure des négociations entre l'empereur et le souverain français, nous disposons de deux lettres envoyées par le collège des cardinaux le 15 mai 1270. La première était adressée au roi et la seconde au légat du pape en France, Raoul, le cardinal-archevêque Albano.¹⁷ En se basant sur ces lettres, on peut reconstruire les propositions faites par Michel Paléologue à Louis, ainsi que définir l'attitude du souverain français par rapport à cette affaire. En présentant la question de l'union des Eglises au roi de France, Paléologue l'assurait qu'il était prêt, avec le clergé et le peuple grec, à se soumettre à l'Eglise de Rome et à s'unir avec lui dans une commune confession de foi.¹⁸ L'accord avec le collège des cardinaux étant impossible, Michel s'est adressé à Louis et, faisant appel à sa singulière piété, il suppliait le roi de France de vouloir prendre le rôle d'arbitre dans cette affaire.¹⁹ Le roi ne se croyait pourtant pas compétent pour résoudre la question présentée par Paléologue. Il s'est donc adressé au collège des cardinaux, afin de connaître son opinion en cette matière. Comprenant les

¹⁵ *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden...*, 1270/1971.

¹⁶ Le 17 décembre 1269, Charles destina 10 chevaux aux envoyés de Louis, allant à Byzance "pro quibusdam servitiis." Cf. *Alcuni fatti riguardanti Carlo I d'Angio dal 6 di Agosto 1252 al 30 di Dicembre 1270*, éd. C. Minieri-Riccio, Napoli 1874, 86.

¹⁷ L. Wadding, *Annales Minorum seu Trium Ordinum S. Francisco Institutorum*, vol. IV (1256-1275), Quaracchi 1931, 339-42.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 339.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 340.

difficultés que la vacance, qui se prolongeait, causait à la Curie, Louis a proposé que l'on confie les négociations concernant l'union au légat du pape en France, Raoul, le cardinal archevêque Albano.²⁰ Les envoyés spéciaux du roi, les franciscains Eustache de Attrebato (Arras) et Lambert de Cultura, avaient informé les cardinaux de cette suggestion.²¹ Il faut particulièrement souligner la question de la nomination de l'archevêque Albano, nomination qui prouvait que le roi ne s'était pas retiré des négociations de l'union, mais, au contraire, s'y intéressait. Cependant, la personne du légat du pape en France était un facteur conciliant, et témoignait de la protection du souverain français dans les tractations entre Byzance et la Curie de Rome. En réponse à l'écrit de Louis, le collège des cardinaux avait approuvé l'initiative royale, mais avait en même temps averti le souverain que les Grecs étaient des partenaires douteux dans les négociations à cause de leur manque de franchise et de leur temporisation.²² L'archevêque Albano avait pourtant obtenu de la part du collège des instructions détaillées concernant ses rapports avec Constantinople. Les cardinaux avaient exigé la convocation du concile en Orient, et que, au cours du concile, l'empereur, le patriarche de Constantinople, les notables ecclésiastiques et le reste du clergé laïque et monacal ainsi que le peuple byzantin, confirmeraient solennellement leur acception du "Credo" latin et le primat de l'Eglise de Rome.²³ Les cardinaux avaient aussi présenté le texte du serment que Michel devait prononcer. La Curie de Rome donc, malgré ses opinions préconçues envers les Grecs schismatiques, était prête à renouveler les négociations de l'union, rompues d'une manière naturelle par la mort de Clément IV en novembre 1268. Toute cette bienveillance avait été due, à l'intervention de Louis, ce qui avait

²⁰ Loc. cit.

²¹ Loc. cit.

²² Ibidem, 342.

²³ Ibidem, 340.

du reste été souligné par les cardinaux, aussi bien dans la lettre au roi que dans celle adressée à l'archevêque Albano. Une entente directe avec Rome était pourtant impossible à Paléologue. Il lui fallait l'intervention de Louis qui neutralisait les influences de Charles d'Anjou dans le collège des cardinaux.

L'appel au roi de France, concernant l'union des Eglises, était donc une excellente manoeuvre politique de Michel Paléologue. La réconciliation avec Rome devenait de nouveau actuelle, c'est-à-dire, on pouvait espérer que Charles renoncerait à son expédition contre Constantinople, s'il n'avait pas d'argument prouvant qu'il agissait pour lutter contre les schismatiques. On peut observer que dans cette première phase des contacts de Michel et de Louis, Paléologue ne parlait pas encore officiellement de ses craintes envers le roi de Sicile. On voit ici la ruse politique du Byzantin. Il voulait d'abord être approuvé par le souverain français et qu'il devienne son partenaire désirant réaliser l'union de la chrétienté. Pour pouvoir ensuite demander à Louis d'empêcher l'action agressive de Charles. Cependant, Michel a été bientôt obligé de s'adresser au sujet de ce problème au roi de France, car les préparatifs de l'Angevin concernant l'expédition contre Byzance augmentaient. Au printemps 1270, la flotte sicilienne était prête à se diriger vers la Morée, qui était une base pour attaquer l'empire.²⁴ Dans cette situation, Paléologue a dû prier Louis d'entreprendre une action plus décidée pour empêcher le conflit. La délégation grecque a été envoyée en été 1270, probablement au mois de juin.²⁵ Hélas, les émissaires n'ont pas pu rencontrer le roi en France, celui-ci étant parti pour Tunis où il était allé à la tête de l'armée des croisés. Finalement, ils l'ont rejoint dans cette ville.

La chronique grecque de Pachymère ainsi que la chronique française de Primat nous informent à ce sujet. Selon le chroniqueur byzantin, Michel Paléologue avait envoyé à Louis une

²⁴ D. J. Geanakoplos, op. cit., 222.

²⁵ *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden...*, 1270/1974.

ambassade solennelle, composée de hauts dignitaires. Il s'agissait de Jean Bekkos, chartophylax, et de Constantin Méliténités, archidiacre du clergé impérial. Le but de la délégation – écrit Pachymère – était de convaincre Louis d'écrire une lettre à Charles, de manière à empêcher – en “roi pacifique” – l'agression sicilienne contre Byzance.²⁶ Ayant atteint la côte africaine, les Byzantins sont venus au camp français près de la vieille Carthage, où ils ont trouvé le roi gravement malade. Cela implique qu'ils sont arrivés à Tunis après le 3 août, c'est-à-dire, au moment où Louis souffrait déjà de dysenterie.²⁷ Pachymère dit nettement que, aussitôt arrivés, les envoyés de Michel avaient présenté personnellement au roi les lettres impériales. Etant donné l'état de santé du roi et son intérêt à la guerre, il avait remis l'entretien avec les Byzantins à plus tard, lorsqu'il se porterait mieux.²⁸ La maladie du roi s'est aggravée, mais malgré cela il a décidé de recevoir les émissaires après un certain temps. En les traitant avec une grande bienveillance, il a promis d'organiser la paix entre Paléologue et Charles, lorsqu'il aurait recouvré la santé.²⁹ Au grand désespoir des Byzantins, il est mort le lendemain. N'ayant donc rien gagné, les envoyés de Michel sont retournés à Constantinople, apportant seulement des promesses qui n'avaient plus de chance de se réaliser.

De même, le bénédictin français Primat nous fournit des renseignements au sujet de la présence des envoyés de l'empereur à Tunis. Il dit qu'en même temps que l'ambassade de Michel, sont arrivés au camp les émissaires français que Louis avait auparavant envoyés à Constantinople.³⁰ Les délégués byzantins

²⁶ Georgios Pachymeres, *De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis*, CSHB, vol. I, éd. E. Bekker, Bonn 1835, 364, 14–18.

²⁷ Cf. R. Sternfeld, op. cit., 247.

²⁸ Georgios Pachymeres, op. cit., 362, 16–20.

²⁹ Ibidem, 363, 14–17.

³⁰ Primat. *Chronicon*, trad., par J. de Vignay. *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* (RHGF), vol. XXIII, éd. N. de Wailly et A. Delisle, Paris 1894, 73, D-E.

espéraient – écrit Primat – que le pacifique roi de France aiderait à la paix avec le souverain de Sicile et à la réconciliation! Avec l’Eglise.³¹ Ils sont restés longtemps dans le port en attendant de pouvoir être reçus, vu la maladie du roi. Lorsque ce dernier est mort peu après, les envoyés de Michel ont reçu cette nouvelle avec une grande tristesse. Primat ajoute malicieusement qu’ils pleuraient car ils savaient que Charles, après la mort de son frère et seigneur, n’aurait plus d’obstacles l’empêchant de commencer la guerre.³²

En comparant les deux relations – celle de Pachymère et celle de Primat – remarquons que le premier parle explicitement de la réception des émissaires par le roi, et que le second souligne que l’audience n’a pas réussi d’une manière convaincante, ce qui démontre que la note de la chronique byzantine est digne de foi.³³ Il est donc à souligner l’importance des sources d’information de ces chroniqueurs. Le premier, Georges Pachymère avait été, dès sa jeunesse, lié au milieu de la cour impériale, ainsi qu’avec les cercles des notables ecclésiastiques.³⁴ Le fait le plus important est pourtant que Pachymère a justement été secrétaire et homme de confiance de Bekkos, élevé au siège patriarcal en 1275.³⁵ Il avait donc des nouvelles de première main. Ce texte byzantin est une relation assez fidèle des années 1261–1308.

Quant à Primat, il était moine de l’abbaye bénédictine de Saint-Denis près de Paris. Connu jusqu’alors comme copiste, il apparaît aussi comme auteur d’une chronique de la période des règnes de Saint Louis et de Philippe le Hardi. L’oeuvre

³¹ Ibidem, E.

³² Ibidem, E. F.

³³ L. Bréhier, “Une ambassade byzantine au camp de Saint Louis devant Tunis (août 1270),” *Mélanges offerts à M. Nicolas Iorga*, Paris 1933, 139–46.

³⁴ Cf. K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur*, München 1897, 288; H. Hunger, *Die Hochsprachliche Profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. I, München 1978, 447; O. Jurewicz, *Historia literatury bizantyńskiej*, Warszawa 1984, 269.

³⁵ L. Bréhier, op. cit., 142.

de Primat n'a pourtant pas survécu jusqu'à nos jours dans sa rédaction latine originale. Le texte dont nous usons est une traduction française du XIV^e siècle, faite par Jean de Vignay, frère hospitalier du couvent de Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, conformément au désir de Jeanne de Bourgogne, femme de Philippe VI.³⁶ On pourrait juger qu'à cause de sa modeste position de moins-copiste Primat n'avait pas un tel accès aux sources d'information que son collègue byzantin. Il séjournait néanmoins dans l'abbaye de Saint-Denis, qui était en contact avec la cour royale. Depuis 1258, Mathieu de Vendôme, homme estimé par Louis, dirigeait cette communauté monacale et accomplissait la fonction de régent pendant l'absence du roi à l'époque de la croisade de Tunis,³⁷ il était au courant des préparatifs des croisés en Afrique, comme l'attestent les lettres que lui a écrites Pierre de Condé, chapelain royal, qui accompagnait le roi dans l'expédition.³⁸ Cette correspondance ne contenait pas d'information au sujet de l'ambassade byzantine, mais il est vrai que Primat pouvait avoir d'autres nouvelles venant à Saint-Denis que seulement par l'entremise de Pierre de Condé.

Tous les deux donc, Pachymère ainsi que Primat, étaient témoins des événements contemporains et avaient la possibilité d'obtenir des informations sûres. L. Bréhier souligne pourtant que la note byzantine a un caractère de relation personnelle qui était sans doute la reconstruction du compte-rendu de Bekkos. Le texte de la chronique française est cependant un témoignage indirect, présentant malheureusement des erreurs.³⁹ Car Primat dit, au commencement, que les émissaires sont venus au camp après la mort du roi, après quoi, dans le fragment suivant, il décrit leur attente dans le port, attente causée par la maladie de Louis, et en raison de laquelle ils n'avaient pas pu

³⁶ Preface, RHGF, vol. XXIII, 5.

³⁷ L. Bréhier, op. cit., 114.

³⁸ Loc. cit.

³⁹ Ibidem, 145.

être reçus.⁴⁰ En tout cas, ou bien Primat s'est trompé, en interprétant d'une manière incorrecte les informations reçues, ou bien Jean de Vignay, qui a copié le texte y a introduit des changements. Il est pourtant possible, assure L. Bréhier, que l'informateur de Primat n'ait pas su que les émissaires avaient été reçus par le roi la veille de sa mort, ainsi que le dit Pachymère.⁴¹ Selon le savant français, cette audience est possible, car Louis, jusqu'aux derniers moments de sa vie, s'est occupé des affaires de l'armée. Le témoignage byzantin a donc été considéré par lui comme plus digne de foi que la relation de Primat.⁴²

Les promesses faites par Louis avant sa mort présentaient de grandes espérances aux envoyés de Paléologue. Le roi avait promis d'influencer son frère pour empêcher l'expédition contre Constantinople. Compte tenu des précédents scrupules du roi concernant son manque de compétence dans la question de l'union, il semblerait que le problème de l'agression angevine se soit trouvé au premier plan de ses préoccupations, comme le désiraient les Byzantins. Nous pouvons donc comprendre la réaction des émissaires apprenant la nouvelle de la mort de Louis, frère et seigneur du souverain sicilien, seul homme qui pouvait influencer Charles. Les deux chroniqueurs ont souligné l'importance de cette autorité de Louis sur Charles et des liaisons familiales entre eux. Primat se moque malicieusement de l'attitude sinistre des Grecs, prouvant ainsi sa malveillance envers les Byzantins. Cette opinion ne nous étonne pas spécialement: en vrai moine latin, il n'aime pas les schismatiques et ne peut se libérer de ses préjugés. Ainsi, faut-il se poser la question: Primat ne savait-il vraiment pas si l'audience de Bekkos chez Louis avait réellement eu lieu, ou bien avait-il des raisons pour omettre cette information? L'analyse d'autres sources françaises contemporaines nous permettrait, peut-être, de trouver

⁴⁰ Primat, *op. cit.*, 73.

⁴¹ L. Bréhier, *op. cit.*, 145.

⁴² *Loc. cit.*

la réponse. Il est curieux que, parmi les nombreuses sources concernant Saint Louis, seul Primat parle de la visite des Grecs, tandis que les autres textes gardent le silence sur cette affaire. L'application de "argumentum ex silentio" est possible seulement après avoir rassemblé des informations concernant la critique extérieure. Il faut donc en recueillir de nouvelles au sujet des sources narratives qui traitent de Saint Louis, rechercher qui sont leurs auteurs, et examiner les circonstances de leurs origines.

La plus ancienne est la biographie du roi, écrite par Geoffroy de Beaulieu. C'est la première source concernant les préparatifs du procès de canonisation de Louis IX. Cette action fut commencée tout de suite après sa mort. Le pape Grégoire X, dont l'élection en 1271 avait mis un terme à la vacance triennale du Saint-Siège, prit une part active à ces préparatifs. C'est lui qui demanda à Geoffroy de Beaulieu de rappeler tous les mérites du roi.⁴³ Geoffroy, qui avait terminé cette oeuvre en 1275, était dominicain, comesseur de Louis pendant 20 ans et son conseiller spirituel. Il avait aussi pris part à deux croisades royales.⁴⁴ Dans son oeuvre, il s'est efforcé, comme il l'a écrit lui-même, de présenter les actes saints de Louis IX, pour la gloire de Dieu et pour fortifier les fidèles.⁴⁵ C'est donc un texte hagiographique typique, et les informations qui s'y trouvent, ont été recueillies selon un point de vue défini. Le chroniqueur a relaté les actes qui témoignaient de l'ardeur religieuse du roi, de sa piété et de sa miséricorde, en rappelant seulement en passant et succinctement les événements politiques. C'est de cette manière que le séjour royal à Tunis a été présenté; quant aux émissaires byzantins,

⁴³ L. Carolus-Barré, "Les enquêtes pour la canonisation de Saint Louis de Grégoire X à Boniface VIII et la Bulle Gloria Louis du 11 août 1297," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* 158 (1971), 20.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Préface*, RHGF, vol. XX, p. XXVIII.

⁴⁵ G. de Beaulieu, *Vita et sancta conversatio piae memoriae Ludovici quondam régis Franciae*, RHGF, vol. XX, éd. P. G. M. Daunou et J. Naudet, Paris 1840, 3.

pas un mot. Cependant, ce contact ayant un caractère oecuménique, il aurait pu être encore un argument prouvant la singulière attitude profondément religieuse du souverain. En même temps, Geoffroy de Beaulieu souligne que quelque instant encore avant sa mort, Louis parlait du besoin de propager la religion catholique à Tunis.⁴⁶

La biographie du souverain français, écrite probablement dans les années 1276–1280 par Guillaume de Chartres, devait être un supplément au texte cité.⁴⁷ L’auteur, dominicain lui aussi, exerçait la fonction de chapelain du roi encore avant 1248 et a accompagné Louis dans ses deux croisades. La biographie écrite par Guillaume, ainsi que le texte de Geoffroy, est une source hagiographique démontrant les qualités personnelles du roi qui témoignent de sa singulière piété. Ainsi, quant au séjour de Louis à Tunis, nous ne trouvons aucune trace de l’ambassade grecque.

Les préparatifs du procès de canonisation du roi de France se sont développés nettement pendant le pontificat de Martin IV, ami de la cour royale de France. L’enquête des témoins acommencé en mai 1282. La Siège apostolique avait distribué une sorte de questionnaire, pour faciliter le travail des enquêteurs. On a rassemblé les relations d’environ 330 personnes, dont 60 étaient considérées comme dignes de foi.⁴⁸ Pourtant, on a été obligé d’attendre pour le procès de canonisation de Louis, jusqu’au pontificat de Boniface VIII, qui a canonisé le souverain français en août 1297.

La source suivante concernant Louis IX a été écrite sur la base des matériaux de l’enquête menée dans les années 1302–1303, c’est-à-dire après la canonisation du roi. L’auteur, Guillaume de

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 23.

⁴⁷ G. de Chartres, *De vita et actibus inclytæ recordationis régis Francorum Ludovici et de miraculis quae ad eius sanctitatis declaratione contigerunt*, RHGF, vol. XX, 28–57; Cf. *Préface*, Ibidem, XXX.

⁴⁸ L. Carolus-Barré, op. cit., 25.

Saint-Pathus, était franciscain et confesseur de la reine Marguerite, femme de Saint Louis.⁴⁹ Il a écrit la biographie du souverain à la demande de Blanche, fille du roi, en présentant dans son oeuvre les hautes vertus évangéliques de Louis. Décrivant les journées de la maladie à Tunis, le biographe attire l'attention sur le grand affaiblissement du souverain, en constatant qu'il ne pouvait plus parler pendant les quatre derniers jours: il faisait seulement des signes de la main.⁵⁰ Cette description confirme la relation de Primat, déjà présentée. Cependant, dans une des lettres de Pierre de Condé, ci-dessus mentionnées, notamment dans celle écrite le 21 août, donc quatre jours avant la mort de Louis, il n'est pas question de tels symptômes, d'où la conclusion que la crise subite se déclara dans les dernières heures de la vie du roi. Si l'on accepte la description de Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, il est vraiment difficile d'admettre que le souverain aurait pu encore s'entretenir avec les émissaires byzantins. La note de Pachymère est pourtant tellement suggestive et convaincante qu'il n'y a pas de possibilité d'exclure l'effort fait par Louis pour recevoir Bekkos et Mélitèniôtès, malgré la faiblesse dont parle aussi le chroniqueur grec. Le témoignage de Guillaume prouve donc que dans les matériaux des enquêtes ne se trouvait aucune mention se rapportant aux Grecs, ni celle présentée par Primat. Mais cela peut aussi bien indiquer que cette information n'a pas été utilisée par Saint-Pathus.

L'auteur de la biographie de Saint Louis la plus connue, Jean de Joinville, a été l'un des témoins principaux au procès de canonisation du roi. Il a écrit sa chronique en 1309, étant déjà un très vieil homme.⁵¹ Il l'a fait à la demande de Jeanne de Navarre, mère du futur roi Louis X. Son oeuvre a un caractère de mémoires, et la plupart du matériel concerne la croisade de 1248,

⁴⁹ H.F. Delaborde, *Préface* à: Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, op. cit., IX.

⁵⁰ G. de Saint-Pathus, op. cit., 154.

⁵¹ J. de Joinville, "Histoire de Saint Louis," *Historiens et chroniqueurs du Moyen Age*, éd. A. Pauphilet, Paris 1952, 366.

pendant laquelle Joinville accompagnait le roi. En présentant le séjour du souverain à Tunis, l'auteur a utilisé la relation de Pierre d'Alençon, fils de Louis IX, qui avait aussi témoigné au procès.⁵² Dans son récit des derniers événements de la vie du roi, Joinville souligne qu'il ne relate pas de nouvelles dont il n'est pas sûr.⁵³ Etant donné l'absence, dans sa chronique, de toute mention de l'ambassade byzantine à Tunis, il est difficile de décider si cette information ne lui avait pas été transmise, ou bien si, la considérant comme douteuse, il ne l'avait pas admise dans son texte.

La biographie écrite par Guillaume de Nangis n'a pas ce caractère de relation directe qu'avaient les écrits précédents. Quant à l'auteur, on sait seulement qu'il était moine à l'abbaye de Saint-Denis à l'époque de Philippe III et de Philippe IV le Bel. C'est à ce dernier qu'il a dédié son oeuvre qui, selon l'intention du chroniqueur, devait suppléer les notes écrites plus tôt, entre autres celle de Geoffroy de Beaulieu.⁵⁴ Ce texte a paru probablement avant 1282, c'est-à-dire encore avant la canonisation. L'auteur, ainsi que ses prédécesseurs, souligne l'attitude évangélique du roi, au milieu des événements de cette époque. Nous avons donc ici une chronique authentique, pas seulement une hagiographie. Cependant, quand il est question des événements de Tunis, cette biographie ne contient pas d'informations concernant les délégués grecs. Etant donné qu'il avait probablement à sa disposition le texte de Primat, l'absence de l'information concernant la visite de Bekkos et de Méliténîôtès chez Guillaume de Nangis peut nous étonner. Ce qui nous frappe dans cette source, c'est la sympathie de l'auteur pour Charles

⁵² Ibidem, 364.

⁵³ Ibidem, 361.

⁵⁴ G. de Nangis, *Gesta sanctae memoriae Ludovici regis Franciae*, RHGF, vol. XX, 309–465. La partie suivante de cette source est: *Gesta Philippi III regis Franciae filii sanctae memoriae régis Ludovici* (ibidem, 466–539), besoin d'une vue d'ensemble, du sujet traité. Cf. *Préface*, RHGF, vol. XX, p. XLVIII.

d'Anjou. A cet égard, elle rappelle le texte de Primat, qui n'économisait pas non plus ses louanges envers l'Angevin. Il semble même qu'il l'appréciait plus que le saint roi de France, dont les vertus lui semblaient plutôt faiblesse que titre de gloire.⁵⁵

La plupart des sources citées ont donc été écrites suite à une demande spéciale, en relation avec les préparatifs du procès de canonisation, ce qui définit d'avance le caractère hagiographique des oeuvres. Il n'y a que les textes de Saint-Denis – de Guillaume de Nangis et de Primat – qui n'ont pas pleinement un tel caractère et qui sont, l'un et l'autre, une revue des événements politiques relatifs à la France, et non seulement une biographie. Elles ne manquent pourtant pas de certains traits hagiographiques: la caractéristique de la personnalité de Louis IX, considéré comme saint de son vivant déjà, en est la cause. Les auteurs de ces textes ont pu avoir été des témoins oculaires des événements qu'ils décrivaient, ou bien avoir eu de bons informateurs. Mais pourquoi donc seul Primat parle-t-il des Grecs? Il semblerait qu'il n'y ait que lui qui ait pu aborder ce sujet parce qu'il était le seul auteur qui ait écrit sa chronique sans aucune relation avec la canonisation. Guillaume de Nangis complétait le texte hagiographique de Geoffroy de Realieu, il n'écrivait donc pas indépendamment comme Primat. On voit, dans les sources analysées, le choix sélectif du matériel, dicté par les règles de la littérature hagiographique (exception faite pour Primat). D'où la conclusion que le contact de Louis avec Byzance et son intérêt pour l'union des Eglises ne pouvaient servir d'argument pour apprécier la sainteté du roi.

⁵⁵ Primat, *op. cit.*, 43–44. Le chroniqueur décrit un incident survenu à Cagliari en Sardaigne, où s'était arrêtée l'armée française en route pour Tunis. Les féodaux locaux empêchaient la réception de malades et rendaient difficile la distribution de la nourriture pour les croisés. Primat était sûr que si l'armée avait été dirigée par Charles, il aurait sévèrement puni les seigneurs de Cagliari. Pour Louis, il n'était pas possible de prendre une telle décision.

Cela ne veut pourtant pas dire que l'idée de conversion, d'évangélisation des infidèles, tellement chère au souverain français, n'a pas été utilisée par les auteurs. On doit mentionner ici les ambassades envoyées chez les Mongols, dont parle Joinville.⁵⁶ Remarquons aussi un long passage dans la chronique de Geoffroy de Beaulieu, consacré aux efforts de Louis pour convertir l'émir de Tunis. Cela devait être le motif décisif de la croisade. Le même auteur, ainsi que Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, écrivent en outre que, pendant son séjour au Proche-Orient, le roi s'est efforcé de gagner les enfants sarrasins à la foi chrétienne.⁵⁷ Tous ces gestes du souverain français trouvaient leur place dans le canon de sainteté, répandu à cette époque, et formaient le personnage modèle du roi-confesseur. Cela n'allait cependant pas bien avec les contacts de Louis avec des schismatiques. Les moines qui écrivaient ces textes hagiographiques ne pouvaient se défaire de leurs objections à l'égard des Grecs. Primat les a présentés d'une manière malveillante. Dans sa chronique, ainsi que dans la lettre des cardinaux à Louis, les Byzantins sont traités comme des renégats qui font dépendre leur retour dans le giron de l'Église catholique de la conjoncture politique. Il est difficile de se fier à eux dans les contacts diplomatiques, car quelles garanties présente ce partenaire efféminé et lâche, temporisateur et homme faux. Cette attitude envers les affaires grecques a déterminé – semble-t-il – les opinions des sources françaises concernant l'échange d'ambassades entre Louis IX et Michel Paléologue. Ces objections envers la Byzance schismatique trouvaient leur confirmation dans les événements politiques.

L'union entre les Églises grecque et romaine, conclue à Lyon en 1274, ne fut qu'éphémère. Les Byzantins ne pouvaient satisfaire les exigences toujours plus grandes du Siège apostolique concer-

⁵⁶ J. de Joinville, *op. cit.*, 305.

⁵⁷ G. de Beaulieu, *op. cit.*, 16; G. de Saint-Pathus, *op. cit.*, 151.

nant les décisions de l'union.⁵⁸ La conversion de Michael VIII eut un caractère personnel et n'impliquait pas l'acceptation des conditions de Rome par le clergé byzantin. Des informations selon lesquelles les églises de Constantinople n'avaient point changé le "Credo" ni les rites religieux arrivaient en Occident. Le Siège apostolique exigeait l'introduction absolue du "Filioque," en demandant aux légats de surveiller personnellement la réalisation des décisions de l'union. La situation de Michel était extrêmement difficile. Par le traité de Lyon, il risquait une guerre civile dans son pays. Le danger angevin était cependant si menaçant que l'empereur faisait tout pour entretenir les contacts avec le Saint-Siège. La situation a changé complètement au désavantage des Grecs pendant le pontificat de Martin IV (1281–1285), Français lié étroitement au roi de Sicile.⁵⁹ A ce pape, il ne fallait qu'un prétexte pour rompre l'union et pour donner un argument à l'Angevin d'attaquer Constantinople. Les difficultés de Michel quant à la réalisation des décisions de Lyon étaient une cause suffisante. Patronnant les préparatifs de Charles pour l'expédition byzantine, fixée pour le mois d'avril 1282, le pape, considérant Paléologue comme hérétique, l'avait excommunié presque le lendemain de son entrée en fonction, et il a répété cet anathème deux fois encore en 1282.⁶⁰ Il apparaissait que l'empereur se trouvait dans une situation sans issue, tandis que, en réalité, sa protection accordée à l'opposition sicilienne a apporté les effets qu'on attendait. En 1282, l'insurrection connue sous le nom de "Vêpres siciliennes" a mis fin au règne

⁵⁸ Cf. H. Evert-Kappesowa, "Bizancjum a Kuria Rzymska w okresie unii lyońskiej (1274–1282)," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Folia Historica* 14 (1983), 3–25, ainsi que l'oeuvre de cet auteur, "Une page des relations byzantino-latines," publiée dans *Byzantinoslavica*: "La société byzantine et l'Union de Lyon," 10 (1949), 28–41; "Le clergé byzantin et l'Union de Lyon," 13 (1952), 892; "Byzance et le Saint-Siège à l'époque de l'Union de Lyon," 16 (1955), 297–317; "La fin de l'Union de Lyon," 17 (1956), 1–18.

⁵⁹ S. Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers. A History of the Mediterranean World in the later Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge 1958, 190–91.

⁶⁰ H. Evert-Kappesowa, *Bizancjum a Kuria Rzymska...*, 23.

de Charles en Sicile et a porté un coup à ses ambitions de restituer la domination latine sur le Bosphore.

Les événements dont il est question, c'est-à-dire la rupture de l'union, l'excommunication de Michel Paléologue ainsi que la révolte sicilienne, ont eu lieu pendant qu'on rédigeait les écrits consacrés à Saint Louis. Rappelons que les préparatifs les plus intenses de la canonisation se sont effectués pendant le pontificat de Martin IV. L'opinion établie alors au sujet des Grecs avait aussi influé sur la littérature courante, non rédigée sur commande. Simon de Brie, futur Martin IV, dirigeait la fraction française du collège des cardinaux. Elu pape, il n'avait pas l'intention – selon S. Runciman – d'être l'arbitre de la chrétienté.⁶¹ C'est à cause de lui que Michel Paléologue s'est de nouveau trouvé hors du cercle de la "christianitas" européenne en tant que schismatique qui, essayant hypocritement de conclure l'union, restait en réalité fidèle à ses convictions, définies par Rome comme "hérésie grecque." On n'avait pas donné aux Byzantins un temps suffisant pour accoutumer l'Occident à l'opinion qu'ils étaient des chrétiens désireux de se rallier au giron de l'Eglise catholique. L'attitude des sources françaises était pour sûr influencée par la popularité dont Charles jouissait en France, et aussi par la protection que lui accordait le fils de Louis, Philippe III le Hardi.⁶² Rappelons l'enthousiasme avec lequel s'exprimaient Primat et Guillaume de Nangis, au sujet du roi de Sicile. Qui sait, d'ailleurs, si Phillippe III n'a pas même appuyé ses plans concernant Constantinople? L'envoi en Italie d'aides militaires françaises pour faciliter à Charles de dominer la situation en Sicile en 1282⁶³ semble une preuve de le lien étroit de l'Angevin avec Philippe III.

Il paraît donc que les causes du silence des sources françaises à propos du contact de Saint Louis avec Byzance devraient être

⁶¹ S. Runciman, *op. cit.*, 191.

⁶² Cf. *Ibidem*, 144–45. L'auteur souligne la faiblesse du caractère de Philippe, qui subissait l'influence de Charles.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 223.

recherchées dans les circonstances politiques qui accompagnaient la rédaction de ces textes. Les tendances des Grecs à revenir dans le giron de l'Église catholique, et même l'union, ne leur avaient pas restitué la confiance de l'Occident. L'Europe catholique ne pouvait se libérer de sa méfiance presque obsessionnelle à l'égard des Byzantins. La rupture de l'union et l'excommunication de Paléologue ont été significatives de cette atmosphère. Le monde latin protégeait plus l'action politique de Charles d'Anjou que les gestes oecuméniques de Saint Louis, dont l'efficacité ne semblait pas digne de foi. Les biographes du roi ont démontré cela dans leurs oeuvres, ne dépassant pas ainsi le modèle conventionnel de sainteté.⁶⁴ Dans ce modèle, il n'y avait pas de place pour les contacts avec les schismatiques – autrement dit, l'engagement de Louis dans les négociations concernant l'union ne pouvait servir d'argument prouvant la piété exceptionnelle du roi. L'union était, du reste, une question de prestige pour Rome, non pour la France, que cette affaire n'intéressait pas, paraît-il, quoique Primat ainsi que Guillaume de Nangis aient noté l'information sur le concile de Lyon.⁶⁵ Les Latins se méfiaient des Grecs et doutaient de la franchise de leurs projets de réconciliation avec l'Église catholique. L'histoire de Byzance confirme complètement ces doutes, en prouvant que l'union était un argument politique pour sauver Constantinople de l'attaque angevine. L'épisode byzantin tout entier a donc été omis dans la biographie de Louis, et ce d'autant plus facilement que l'opinion publique était favorable à Charles. Primat, qui n'écrivait pas sur commande, a présenté cette information sur la rencontre à Tunis, mais en y ajoutant un commentaire qui prouvait l'attitude traditionnelle des Latins envers les Grecs. Sa méfiance envers les Byzantins fait croire à une omission préméditée du rapport de l'audience de Bekkos chez Louis. Il semble cependant que Primat,

⁶⁴ Cf. A. Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, Roma 1981, 415–16.

⁶⁵ Primat, op. cit., 91; G. de Nangis, *Gesta Philippi III...*, 494.

écrivain sa chronique de jour en jour, n'avait pas autant de raisons que les autres biographes du roi pour diminuer l'importance de la rencontre du souverain français avec les Grecs. Il est pourtant possible que, dans la première phase de la diffusion des nouvelles de Tunis, l'information sur la visite des Byzantins ait été transmise en Europe sous forme inexacte. Une note dans la chronique flamande de la famille d'Avesnes, que les historiens n'avaient pas mentionnée jusqu'alors, en est la preuve. Après avoir présenté la nouvelle de la mort de Louis, on y a noté l'arrivée de quelques envoyés au camp de Philippe le Hardi: Byzantins et autres, qui espéraient trouver le saint roi vivant.⁶⁶ Le chroniqueur mentionne la réception des émissaires par l'héritier du trône français – ce qu'on doit exclure, étant donné la maladie de Philippe, ainsi que l'arrivée de Charles à Tunis le lendemain de la mort de son frère. Une prolongation du séjour des Byzantins au camp en présence du roi de Sicile était impossible. Pourtant, le chroniqueur flamand parle explicitement de la réception des envoyés; on peut donc regarder cette information comme un rapport déformé sur leur entretien avec Saint Louis. La note analysée prouve que l'information concernant les Grecs était arrivée en Europe d'une manière qui justifie l'inexactitude des données présentées par Primat. Pourtant, malgré certaines déformations, la chronique d'Avesnes prouve l'objectivité de deux textes: celui de Pachymère et celui du moine de Saint-Denis. Il s'agit aussi d'une justification de l'argumentation présentée, d'où il s'ensuit que l'information sur le contact de Louis avec Michel Paléologue pouvait trouver place dans un texte de chronique typique, qui n'était pas écrit selon les règles hagiographiques. Tel était le texte de Primat. L'omission de l'audience n'exclut pas une bonne orientation générale du chroniqueur français. En présentant la nouvelle de l'arrivée des délégués byzantins et, en même temps, des franciscains envoyés à Constantinople par Louis, l'auteur a confirmé son savoir au sujet de l'engagement du roi dans le

⁶⁶ *Extraits de la chronique attribuée à Baudouin d'Avesnes, fils de la comtesse Marguerite de Flandre*, RHGF, vol. XXI, 177.

problème de l'union. Il connaissait aussi les motifs de l'arrivée des émissaires à Tunis et leur espérance concernant l'intervention du roi. La chronique de Primat contredit donc la constatation, que suggère la lecture des biographies de Louis, qu'on ne parlait pas des Grecs à cause d'un manque d'informations.

Reste enfin la question de l'efficacité de l'intervention de Louis dans l'affaire byzantine. Grâce au souverain français, qui était alors la plus grande autorité morale en Europe du fait de la vacance du Siègne apostolique, Byzance avait enfin réussi à renouveler le dialogue rompu avec Rome. Les cardinaux, toujours grâce à Louis, avaient repris les négociations au sujet de l'union. Etant donné que celle-ci était uniquement un moyen, et non pas le but des manœuvres de Michel, les effets des actions royales visant à empêcher l'expédition de Charles contre Constantinople semblent plus importantes. On peut supposer qu'il y avait des chances que soit réalisé la promesse faite à Tunis par Louis aux émissaires grecs. La protection du souverain français était un obstacle essentiel à la réalisation des plans du roi de Sicile. Charles devait compter avec la décision de Louis. La suggestion selon laquelle Michel pouvait espérer éloigner le danger angevin jusqu'à la fin de la vie de Louis semble justifiée. Etant donné les intérêts des familles féodales françaises, attachées à maintenir leurs propriétés aux Balkans obtenues grâce à la IV^e croisade, la protection présentée par Louis à Michel semble s'opposer à une sorte de raison d'État de la France médiévale, dont le représentant était justement Charles.

Le roi de France n'était cependant pas intéressé à maintenir la domination latine sur le Bosphore, car pour lui, il fallait consacrer l'effort militaire de la chrétienté toute entière à secourir la Terre Sainte. La question de l'union ecclésiastique était pour lui un sujet proche du problème de la conversion, donc de l'idée d'évangélisation des infidèles. Hélas, par son geste oecuménique, le roi n'a pas gagné l'approbation de ses biographes, qui présentaient dans leurs oeuvres un modèle conventionnel de sainteté. Les contacts du souverain français avec le monde byzantin n'allaient pas bien avec ce modèle.

Is There any Room on the Bosphorus for a Latin Lady?

The title seems to suggest that it was Western Europe that stood on the Byzantine door-step in the role of a petitioner. But such was not the case. As a matter of fact in the time of the Palaiologoi it was the Byzantine Empire that was interested in arranging marriages with Latin ladies.¹ There was no risk of kinship because there were hardly any connections between the Western and Byzantine families (the Gattilusio and Montferrat families are an exception here). Therefore the crucial issue was the difference in Creeds, which made the papal dispensation necessary, even though the condition was sometimes ignored.

¹ This paper is a modest summary of my post-doctoral dissertation: *Lacinniczki nad Bosforem. Matżeństwa bizantyńsko-lacińskie w cesarskiej rodzinie Paleologów (XIII–XV w.)* [*The Latin Ladies on the Bosphorus. Byzantine-Latin Marriages in the Imperial Family of the Palaiologoi (13th–15th Centuries)*], Łódź 1996. I am indebted to my sister, Dr Dorota Filipczak for the English version of this article. The text summarizes the state of knowledge as it was when I was closing my dissertation (namely, in 1994). I had an opportunity to present this paper due to the invitation of Professor Andrew Louth during the 36th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies “Was Byzantium Orthodox?” As a new department has been operating at the University of Lodz for three years (its name is Department of European and Levantine History in the Middle Ages), I would like to bring this text to the reader’s attention, hoping that new developments that have been happening in the field will be informed by the awareness of my research in the first half of the last decade of the 20th century.

The Byzantine Empire did not welcome family connections with the West. But I do not need to remind the reader that Constantine Porphyrogenitus accepted marriages with the so-called Franks as people of the same religion.² Obviously, the schism of 1054 changed the status of mixed marriages. The parties involved regarded each other as heretics and schismatics. Scholars tend to point out a particular nuance, that is to say, the fact that no council ever called the Latins heretics, even though they were regarded as such.³ The temporary rapprochement between the two sides during the preparations for and the actual time of the Union of Lyons (1274) and the Union of Florence (1439) overcame the obstacles only for a short time.

Undoubtedly, the time of Palaiologoi was the apogee for mixed marriages in spite of the Fourth Crusade which should have given enough reasons to stop them. However, the situation of the Empire was particularly difficult. Threatened by the Latins in the first place and then by the Turks, the Empire could not face the danger on its own. Taking advantage of the antagonisms in the Western world, the Empire gained the support of some Latin people in conflict with other Latins. Faced with the threat of Turkish invasion, the Empire sought allies in the divided Christian world, where the schism was not considered a major obstacle.

Nine of fifteen imperial matches since Michael VIII until Constantine XI were concluded with the Latin ladies. I considered two matches of Constantine XI when he was a Despot. My research also involved marriages, which were planned and not realized (for example, the intended union of Michael IX with

² Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, vol. I, ed. Gyula Moravcsik, Budapest 1949, 70–72. Cf. J. Shepard, “Aspects of Byzantine Attitude towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 13 (1988), 67–118.

³ This is emphasized, for example, by D. M. Nicol, “Symbiosis and Integration. Some Greek-Latin Families in Byzantium in the 11th to the 13th Centuries,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 7 (1979), 122.

Catherine of Courtenay⁴). Nine other Byzantine-Latin marriages were arranged within the imperial family (Emperor's children and siblings). This gives us the total of eighteen matches. The so-called "marriage geography" is very interesting. The Latin brides for the Emperors were: Anne of Hungary, Yolanda of Montferrat, Rita of Lesser Armenia, Adelaide of Brunswick, Anne of Savoy, Eugenia Gattilusio, Sophia of Montferrat, Magdalene Tocco and Catherine Gattilusio.⁵

⁴ Byzantium needed this match in order to avoid the claims that were laid to Constantinople by the family of Courtenay, the previous rulers of the Latin Empire. The marriage was not concluded. Catherine married Charles of Valois, brother of Philip IV, King of France, which revived the French claims to Constantinople. Cf. G.Brătianu, "Notes sur le projet de mariage entre l'empereur Michel IX Paléologue et Catherine de Courtenay (1288–1295)," *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen* 1 (1924), 59–63.

⁵ Anne of Hungary was Andronikos II's (1282–1328) first wife, Yolanda of Montferrat was the second. Andronikos' son, Michael IX (1294–1320) married Rita of Lesser Armenia. Their son Andronikos III (1328–1341) had two Latin wives: Adelaide of Brunswick, and then Anne of Savoy. Eugenia Gattilusio became a wife of John VII (1390), Sophia of Montferrat was John VIII's (1425–1448) second spouse. Constantine XI (1448–1453) was married as a Despot, first to Magdalene Tocco and then to Catherine Gattilusio. As to the matches within the close imperial family, Andronikos II's niece, Maria, became a wife to a Catalan commander, Roger de Flor. His companions took over the Duchy of Athens in 1311. Andronikos' son, Theodore of Montferrat, married a Genoese lady, Argentina Spinola. Andronikos III's sister, Anna, became the second wife of a Venetian, Nicolas Orsini, Count of Cephalonia and then Despot of Epiros. Andronikos' daughter, Maria, married Francesco Gattilusio, rather a Genoese pirate than a noble. He became a lord of Lesbos. John V's (1341–1390) son, Theodore I, Despot at Mistra, married Bartholomea Acciaiuoli, daughter of Nerio, Florentine ruler of Duchy of Athens. Manuel II's (1391–1425) illegitimate daughter, Isabella, became the wife to a Genoese, Hilario Doria. Manuel's son, Theodore II, Despot at Mistra, married Cleopa Malatesta, the daughter of the Count of Rimini, connected with the papal State. Their daughter, Helena, married John of Lusignan, King of Cyprus; Manuel's youngest son, Thomas, Despot in the Morea, married Catherine, daughter of Centurione Zaccaria, Genoese Prince of Achaia. My interests overlap with the field of several scholars, but

Their origin shows that this was not exactly the most attractive choice to make. Therefore, it is particularly important to answer the question: what were the advantages of these matches. However, this is beyond the scope of my paper, later on I will go back to the problem in order to show who profited by particular arrangements. The aim of my research was to reconstruct the collective portrait of the Latin ladies. While respecting the points made by Ch. Diehl, D. M. Nicol and then by Lynda Gariano, I did not want to follow the same pattern, specifically because it consisted in retelling the biographies of particular Empresses.⁶ In the time of the Palaiologoi the Empire desperately needed political support rather than hunted dowries.⁷ The

mainly with D. M. Nicol and A. Laiou. Prof. Nicol examined the marriage policies of Epiros and proved that out of eleven women in the Epirotic dynasty, eight married Latin men. Cf. D. M. Nicol, "Mixed Marriages in Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century," *Studies in Church History*, vol. I, London 1964; *Byzantium, Its Ecclesiastical History and the Relations with the Western World*, London, Variorum Reprints 1972, TV, 160–61. A. Laiou wrote a great deal about the institution of marriage and the role of women in Byzantium. Cf. e.g., A. Laiou, "Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XI^e–XIII^e siècles," *Travaux et Mémoires* 7 (1992); eadem, *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium*, Hampshire Variorum Reprints 1992.

⁶ Ch. Diehl, *Figures byzantines*, vol. I–II, Paris 1925, 27; idem, *Impératrices de Byzance*, Paris 1959; D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady. Ten Portraits 1250–1500*, Cambridge 1994; L. Garland, *Byzantine Empresses. Women and Power in Byzantium A. D. 527–1204*, London 1999. Both Diehl and Nicol referred to Yolanda of Montferrat and Anne of Savoy, who are best represented in the sources. The latest book by L. Garland focuses on the earlier epoch, and the author imitated the model of writing chapters as biographies of successive Empresses.

⁷ The importance of dowry has been the subject of detailed analysis, to mention only: D. Herlihy, "The Medieval Marriage Market," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976) (reprint in: *The Social History of Italy and Western Europe 700–1500. Collected Studies*, London Variorum Reprints 1978, XIV, 3–27); D. E. Queller and T. F. Madden, "Father of the Bride: Fathers, Daughters and Dowries in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 46 (1993), 685–711; Ch. Klapisch-Zuber, "Le

Byzantine rulers looked out for fathers-in-law of considerable power and influence. At first glance the matrimonial geography of these matches does not seem to confirm it. But, when we explore the background, we shall see other powers involved, namely Genoese and Venetian *nouveaux-riches* who made fortunes on matchmaking.

The importance of marriages could be seen in spectacular embassies. The crucial issue was not only providing the Empire with an heir who could guarantee the survival of the dynasty. What mattered was gaining an ally on the political stage.⁸ It is possible to recreate the membership connected with particular marriage negotiations. By way of example, I will mention previous Patriarch Germanos and megadux Lascaris who escorted the Hungarian wife for Andronikos II or parakoimomenos Andronikos Tornikes and great kubikularios Jean Gibelet who negotiated the marriage of Anne of Savoy with Andronikos III.⁹ The Dominican friars often acted as interpreters for the parties

complexe de Griselda. Dots et dons de mariage au Quattrocento,” *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 94–1 (1982), 7–43. For Byzantium the dowry meant also regaining the territories that had been taken away by the Latins, for example the Kingdom of Thessalonica or the Principality of Achaia.

⁸ There is an interesting treatise on this matter by Manuel II Palaiologos, It has the form of a conversation between the Emperor and the Empress Mother. The Empress emphasizes two basic advantages of contracting a match that is having an heir and eliminating pretenders to the throne. Cf. Manuel Paleologos, *Dialogum de matrimonio*, ed. C. Bevegni, Università di Catania 1983. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, “Ought One to Marry? Manuel Palaiologos’ Point of View,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 31–2 (2007), 146–56.

⁹ Georgios Pachymeres, *De Michaele et Andronico Paleologis*, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae (further CSHB), vol. I, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1835, 318. The participation of a prominent clergyman in the embassy provided it with a particular significance. Michael Lascaris was not an accidental choice for this mission. He was Theodore I Lascaris’ brother. Theodore’s daughter, Maria, married Bela IV, King of Hungary. This couple’s son, Stephen V was now on the way to be the Emperor’s father-in-law. As for the second, Byzantine-Latin embassy. Cf. Joannes

involved.¹⁰ The obvious origin was Pera, the Latin district of Constantinople as in the case of Joannes Angelos, dispatched to France to contract the marriage between Michael IX and Catherine of Courtenay. The mission, however, was a failure not because of his fault.

Marriage contracts have not come down to us but it is possible to recreate some marital arrangements, for example, that between Yolanda of Montferrat and Andronikos II. As a result of the conquest of Thessalonica by Boniface of Montferrat during the Fourth Crusade, the Montferrat family laid claims to the city. In order to solve the problem, Yolanda gave up Thessalonica which was her dowry. In return, the Emperor paid a substantial sum of money.¹¹ Thus the marriage put an end to the conflict over Thessalonica. The actual union with Yolanda did not cause

Cantacuzenus, *Historia*, CSHB, vol. I, ed. L. Schopen, Bonnae 1928, 191–95.

¹⁰ M.-H. Congourdeau, “Notes sur les dominicains de Constantinople au debut du 14^e siècle,” *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 45 (1987), 179. The Byzantine Dominican Friars can be mentioned in the context of their role in the marriage negotiations concerning John VIII Palaiologos and Sophia of Montferrat. Cf. R.-J. Loenertz, “Les dominicains byzantins Théodore et Chrysobergès et les négociations pour l’union des Églises grecque et latine de 1415–1430,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 9 (1939), 27.

¹¹ Pachymeres, op. cit., vol. II, 87–88; Nicephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, CSHB, vol. I, ed. L. Schopen, Bonnae 1829, 167–68. Neither of them is explicit about the transfer of rights to Thessalonica to Byzantium, however, the Byzantinists are convinced. Cf. S. Runciman, *Thessalonica and Montferrat Inheritance*, *Gregorios Palamas* 42 (1959), 27–34. D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady...*, 49. The Latin chronicler is discreet in this matter but he speaks about the rights to Montferrat inherited by Andronikos’ son, Theodore. Cf. G. del Carretto, *Cronaca di Monferrato*, *Monumenta Historiae Patriae Scriptorum*, vol. 3, Torino 1848, 1163. The transfer of rights to Thessalonica seems to have been the Byzantine initiative, whereas the Latin initiative was the transfer of north-western Peloponnese to Constantine XI, at that time the Despot. Carlo Tocco, defeated by Constantine, offered these lands as a dowry of his daughter Magdalene. Cf. Georgios Phrantzes, *Annales*, CSHB, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1838, 129. This fragment of Sphrantzes is

any problem, because her father, the Marquis of Montferrat had been excommunicated by the Pope which made the dispensation unnecessary.¹² The example shows the extent to which the Latin-Byzantine unions were possible, because it was quite easy to bypass the papal authority. Still, the Latin ladies came to the Orthodox world, and were supposed to bring up their children in the religion which was not their own. Most of them had to change their Creed in the same way that they changed their names. Only very few of them such as Anne of Hungary and Sophia of Montferrat were allowed to stick to the Catholic faith but that was in the time of preparations for the Church Union.

Thus the Western ladies had to close the door of the Latin world and face Byzantinization which involved, among other things, worshipping God according to different rituals. They were not entirely unwilling to do so. What is more, some of them, e.g., Anne of Savoy, disappointed the Pope who hoped for her husband's conversion. The aggressive propaganda against Byzantium spread in the West did not help matters. But it does not seem probable that Anne was affected by the views of people like Brocardus who referred to the agreement with Greeks as the feeding of vipers and scorpions. He named Anne's husband Andronicos III a hypocrite, a liar and a drunkard who had forced Anne to enter the marriage.¹³ Obviously, this was not the case.

incorporated into Melissenos' chronicle. A. Zakythinos, *Le déspotat grec de Morée (1262–1460)*, t. I, *Histoire politique*, Paris 1932, 205.

¹² William V of Montferrat, Yolanda's father, was involved in the conspiracy which led to the Sicilian Vespers. He was excommunicated just like Peter III of Aragon but, as Runciman states, he did not feel the need to be reconciled to Rome. S. Runciman, *op. cit.*, 30–31.

¹³ Brocardus, "Directorium ad passagium faciendum," *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Documents arméniens*, II, Paris 1906, 423–31. The text was meant for Philip VI, King of France, Charles of Valois' son. Charles' wife was Catherine of Courtenay, the heiress of Latin Emperors. Brocardus propagates the expedition to Constantinople, which he considers as necessity and the question of honor. According to him, the blood of the French killed in 1261 should be avenged (*ibidem*, 445). Of

Paradoxically, Anne turned out to be the most Byzantine of all the Latin Empresses. Undoubtedly, this was partly the result of the fact that she was the regent.¹⁴ Such situations make it impossible to support the view presented by former scholars such as Villier, who attributed the break up between Sophia of Montferrat and John VIII to religious difference.¹⁵ This marriage was concluded in the time preceding the Church Union. It was not Sophia's attachment to Catholicism that proved essential but her disfigured face which resulted in her rejection. So this was the private tragedy of the couple rather than a political discord. The conclusion is that religion was not so important as diplomatic business.

The Latin community was not homogenous. Some of the newcomers arrived directly from the West, for example, the exotic lady Adelaide of Brunswick. The antipapal attitude of her family

course, he exaggerates, because most Frenchmen fled and the inhabitants of Constantinople opened the gates to Michael VIII's army.

14 The rumour that Anne went back to Catholicism cannot be proved and does not seem likely. Cf. D. Muratore, *Una principessa sabauda sul trono a Bisanzio. Giovanna di Savoia, Impératrice Anna Paleologina*, Chambéry 1909, 324–25. As a Catholic regent she would not have been able to cooperate with a Patriarch. Before her death she entered the Byzantine nunnery and changed her name to Anastasia. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady...*, 94; S. Origone, *Giovanna. Latina a Bisanzio*, Milano 1999, 49.

15 M. Villier, "L'union des églises entre Grecs et Latins depuis concile de Lyon jusqu'à celui de Florence (1274–1439), VIII, Les auxiliaires de l'union." *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 18 (1922), 44. Villier is not insightful. Even the Genoese chroniclers claimed that the failure of Sophia's marriage was caused by religious differences. Cf. G. and J. Stella, *Annales Genuenses*, vol. 17, II, ed. G. Petti Balbi, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, Bologna 1975, 302. I cannot agree with this view. Sophia's disfigured face was an obvious reason for her being neglected. Ducas was most outspoken on the subject. Cf. Ducas, *Historia byzantina*, CSHB, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnæ 1834, 100–01; M. Dąbrowska, "Sophia of Montferrat or the History of One Face," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis, Folia Historica* 56 (1996), 177–94.

was a serious advantage for Byzantium.¹⁶ But other ladies were the descendants of Latin families from the Aegean region, for example, the ladies from the Genoese family of Gattilusio settled on Lesbos or from the Venetian family of Tocco connected with Epiros and Cephalonia. The Gattilusio ladies were wives of John VII and Constantine XI, while Magdalene Tocco was the second wife of the last Emperor. It can be said that the ladies born in the Aegean area had already been hellenized, which means, among other things, that they spoke Greek.¹⁷ The ones who had come from the West were supposed to learn it. They must have been pretty good at it, if Yolanda of Montferrat quarreled with her husband ignoring the courtly ritual. This is what Gregoras, the historian of those times, could not forgive her for.¹⁸ It seems therefore that when in Church, the Latin ladies

¹⁶ She was not so exotic as she might be seen. Her grandmother was Alasia of Montferrat, William V's sister and Yolanda's of Montferrat aunt. The chronicler of Brunswick calls her Adelaide. Cf. *Cronica ducorum de Brunswick, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores qui vernacula lingua usi sunt*, vol. 2, *Deutsche Chroniken und andere Geschichtsbücher des Mittelalters*, Hannover 1877, 584. Runciman thinks that it was Yolanda who arranged marriage for her stepson's son. S. Runciman, "The Marriages of the Sons of the Emperor Manuel II," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 1 (1980) = (*Miscellanea Agostino Pertusi*, vol. I, Bologna 1980), 275. The view is difficult to accept as Yolanda did not like her stepson at all. Byzantium really valued the connections of Brunswick with antipapal Hohenstaufen and the fact that Adelaide's father, Prince Henry, was excommunicated by the Pope John XXII. The Church's permission for the mixed marriage was not necessary. P. Zimmermann, *Das Haus Braunschweig-Grubenhagen. Ein genealogisch-biographische Versich*, Wolfenbüttel 1911, 2.

¹⁷ J. Chrysostomides, "Italian Women in Greece in the late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 2 (1982) = (*Miscellanea Agostino Pertusi*, vol. II, Bologna 1982), 119–32. The Author complains about the lack of sources on the so-called "colonial" women. Their knowledge of Greek seems indisputable.

¹⁸ Gregoras, op. cit., vol. I, 235. Yolanda's son, Theodore, recalls his mother reading the Bible in Greek. Cf. *Les enseignements de Theodore de Montferrat*,

understood the Byzantine liturgy.¹⁹ There is no evidence that they suffered because of cultural and religious differences. Time was an important factor here. Having left the West at a very young age, they spent most of their lifetime in Byzantium. Most of them fulfilled their basic duty. They gave birth to an heir. Their maternal role consumed most of their time. In spite of their familiarity with the Byzantine world, it was too difficult for them to see through the courtly intrigues, let alone get involved in them. The exception is Anne of Savoy, who was given a special possibility as a regent on behalf of John V but this resulted in disastrous consequences. The same situation applies earlier to Yolanda of Montferrat, who was Andronikos II's second wife, and therefore her major concern was to secure her children's rights.²⁰

It is difficult to say how the Latin ladies passed their time in Byzantium when they did not take part in the imperial or Church ceremonies. And yet each of them spent quite some time in Byzantium. The amount of time can be calculated in most cases. Anne of Hungary died after 9 years in the Empire, Yolanda spent 34 years there, Rita of Lesser Armenia – 38 years, Adelaide of Brunswick – 7, Anne of Savoy – 38, Eugenia Gattilusio – 43 years, but she was the woman from the Hellenic context so the discrepancy between the world of her childhood and the world of her adulthood was negligible. Unfortunate Sophia of

ed. Ch. Knowles, London 1983, 30. Theodore himself, transferred the knowledge of Greek to the court of Montferrat. M. Dąbrowska, "Family Ethos at the Court of the Palaiologos in the Light of the Testimony by Theodore of Montferrat," *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* 2, ed. A. Rózycka-Bryzek and M. Salamon, Cracow 1994, 73–81.

¹⁹ As early as in the 12th century the Latins spoke Greek at Manuel I's court. Choniates complains that it was far from perfect. Cf. Nicephoros Choniates, *Historia*, CSHB, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1835, 265.

²⁰ Gregoras, op. cit., 233–35. A. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1282–1328*, Cambridge (MA) 1972, 229. Cf. J. Barker, "The Problem of Byzantine Apanages during the Palaiologian Period," *Byzantina* III (1971), 103–22.

Montferrat spent only 6 years in the Empire and was the only one who left.

In spite of the silence of the sources, it can be said that the years spent in Byzantium were not a time of discomfort for the Latin ladies. Only one of them, Rita of Lesser Armenia, who retired to the nunnery after her husband's death, as was the usual custom, took the name Xene, that is the Foreign One. All the ladies were foreign so what was the reason for her feeling of foreignness? It was neither political nor religious but private. She disagreed with her own son Andronikos III, and adopted a perfect stranger, Syrgiannes, who stood up against her son. The conflict may have been connected with Cantacuzene's influence on her son, but that is another matter.²¹

Although there are gaps in the available material, it is possible to reconstruct the model of the young lady's upbringing in the West. A standard of *savoir-vivre* in the West required that the young lady should obey the customs in her husband's country and adjust to the demands connected with his post. Thus it is difficult to agree with Father Gill who believed that the Latin ladies suffered a great deal as a result of their transfer to the foreign milieu.²² The model of education they received prepared them for this experience. The relations between husband and wife were specified. One of the marriage treatises of the time enumerated four duties of the husband which were: provide his wife with instruction, correct her, live with her and provide her with financial security. In her turn, the woman was

²¹ Cantacuzenus, *op. cit.*, vol. I, 335; D. M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor. A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, ca. 1295–1383*, Cambridge 1996, 30. The Armenian court looked after the family connections with Byzantium. The example is the visit of Rita's brother, King Hetum in Constantinople in the early years of her marriage. Cf. Sempad, "Chronique du Royaume de la Petite Arménie," *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens arméniens*, vol. I, Paris 1869, 655–56.

²² J. Gill, "Matrons and Brides of Fourteenth Century Byzantium," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10 (1985), 54.

supposed to do the following: approach him with respect, serve him, obey him or remonstrate with him, if necessary. The couple should give each other love, fidelity and marital duties.²³ Such a model of Christian marriage was celebrated in literature, to mention only Petrarch's "Griseldis" which was echoed in other texts, e.g., Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The female protagonist's fate was presented as a model of a woman's imitation of Christ. She was supposed to bravely endure the sufferings inflicted on her by her husband.²⁴

"Avertimenti di maritaggio" which were very popular in the 14th–15th century, had a form of a dialogue between a mother and a daughter. The message included the following elements: the lady should cause the household cuisine to follow her husband's taste; she should not interfere with his public business; she should not do anything without her husband's consent. She should not force her husband to do anything he particularly dislikes. She should take care of her appearance, she should be young and beautiful. She should not leave her home on her own, she should not know too much, and her husband's relatives should be closer to her than her own.²⁵ Such texts were popular in the Mediterranean region. They prepared a young woman to break connections with her family background and to completely adjust to her husband's environment. The Latin ladies' life stories in Byzantium prove that each of them was ready

²³ B. de Siena, "De matrimonio," D. Herlihy and Ch. Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles. Une étude du catasto florentine de 1427*, Paris 1978, 587.

²⁴ F. Petrarca, "Griseldis," many editions. Cf. "Amour, mariage et transgression au Moyen Age," *Actes du colloque des 24/25 2* (5 et 2 mars 1983, Université de Picardie), ed. D. Breschinger et A. Crepin, Goppingen 1984, 447–54.

²⁵ "Avertimenti di maritaggio," *Strenne nuziali del secolo XIV*, ed. O. Tergoni Tozzetti, Livorno 1893. Cf. P. Certaldo, *Libri di buoni costumi*, ed. A. Schiaffini, Firenze 1948. The model promoted a submissive woman who had been brought up according to strict rules. Cf. R. Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Illinois 1956.

to follow this pattern. Yolanda of Montferrat makes a drastic exception, but this resulted from her character.

The compensation for renunciation was an attractive marriage which satisfied snobbish ambitions. No title was greater than that of the Emperor. The Latin lady arrived on the Bosphorus equipped with a role model to follow. At the same time she came from the world of troubadours' songs. The Montferrat court was the centre of Provençal poetry. Its name was made famous by Raimbaud de Vaquieras, among others. Yolanda surely knew these songs and the same goes for the other ladies.²⁶ The message of these songs did not have anything in common with Griselda's story. It was the praise of love, of great love.²⁷ And the nostalgia for this probably accompanied the Latin ladies to their destination. They expected the Emperor and the lover. They met the former but not the latter. But this was the result of marriages arranged for political reasons. They often turned out to be private disasters. Apart from the splendour of the imperial title, the Latin ladies did not enjoy any other benefits connected with their transition to a different world. Who was then the beneficiary under the circumstances? Certainly, it was the lady's family whose members welcomed the spectacular

²⁶ A. Barbero, "La corte dei marchesi di Monferrato alio specchio della poesia trobadorica. Ambizioni signorili e ideologia cavalleresca fra XII e XIII secolo," *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino* 81 (1983), 653–59. Raimbaud de Vaquieras, a poor knight and jongleur, became a confidant of Boniface of Montferrat. He accompanied him in the Kingdom of Thessalonica where he was given some land. He died in the same year as his benefactor, that is, in 1207. *Brewiarz miłości. Antologia liryki staroprowansalskiej [Breviary of Love. Anthology of Old Provençal Lyric]*, ed. Z. Romanowiczowa, Wrocław-Warszawa-Gdańsk 1963, 81–85. Cf. J. Raynauard, *Choix des poésies originales des troubadours*, Paris 1928.

²⁷ In Byzantine literature the Latin ladies met the same ideal of love. It presupposed chastity and fidelity, as mentioned above. Cf. L. Garland, "Be Amourous but Be Chaste.' Sexual Morality in Byzantine Learned and Vernacular Romance," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 14 (1990), 64–120.

promotion: they became imperial fathers or brothers-in law.²⁸ It was quite a career for Marquis of Montferrat, Count of Savoy, even King of Hungary, let alone merchants or pirates such as Gattilusio and Tocco.

Paradoxically, it was not the ladies' families that profited mostly by these arrangements but Venice and Genoa, which remained in the background. Their connections with both parties are obvious enough. What advantages could Byzantium gain by inviting the Latin Princesses? First of all, the Empire managed to avoid the scenario of the Fourth Crusade. It used marriage negotiations to buy off the territories captured by the Latins. Finally, the Empire did not want to give up an illusion of Western military assistance against the Turks. But it was only an illusion. A question can be asked whether the situation would have been different if Byzantium had allied itself with women from the Balkans and, which is more important, from the Orthodox world. However, the Balkan world could not be a powerful support. Moreover, it could be dangerous, which was proved by the attitude of Serbian rulers such as Stephen Milutin or Stephen Dusan. Paradoxically, the standard of the Balkan courts, even if modelled on the Byzantine ideal, was not regarded as suitable,²⁹ whereas the encounter with Byzantium

²⁸ In spite of political and economic troubles, the Byzantine court perfectly realized the value of the imperial title, which was explicitly expressed by the embassy sent by John V Palaiologos to Peter II Lusignan, King of Cyprus in 1372. Suggesting John's daughter as a wife for the King, the messengers said that the Emperor would be Peter's father and the King would be his son. Cf. L. Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus Entitled "Chronicle,"* d. R. M. Dawkins, vol. 1, Oxford 1932, 328. On the importance of the imperial connections: R. Macrides, "Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship," *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium on Byzantine Studies*, Cambridge March 1990, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin, London 1992, 72–93.

²⁹ Pachymeres left us the description of the Byzantine embassy that had gone to Serbia in order to take a closer look at the court of Uros I, whose son was supposed to marry Anne, Michael VIII's daughter. The envoys were to

was not a cultural shock for the Latin women. To answer the title question – there was enough room for the Latin ladies on the Bosphorus. Their presence at the court coincided with the pro-Latin attitude which was particularly noticeable in the declining years of the Empire. Demetrios Kydones is a prominent exponent of such an attitude.³⁰ Of course, anti-Latin and anti-unionist sentiments were also popular. In some circles Turkish rule was preferable to the union with the Latin world.³¹ What

familiarize themselves with the customs in Serbia in order to educate the bride. Having seen an opulent train, Uros said that his court had not been prepared to meet the demand of such a lifestyle. He pointed to a woman who was busy weaving and said that this was the way women were treated in his country. The marriage was not concluded. Cf. Pachymeres, *op. cit.*, vol. I, 251–52. Uros probably wanted to discourage the envoys and he succeeded. Mavromatis convinces us that Uros' son, Milutin, intended to imitate Byzantine customs which impressed Metochites who negotiated the marriage of Milutin with Simonis, Andronikos II's daughter. (L. Mavromatis, *La fondation de l'Empire, serbe du kralj Milutin*, Thessaloniki 1978, 43). It is well known that Milutin, who was over forty, did not wait till Simonis was of nubile age and consummated the marriage when she was about eight. Whatever could be said about sexual mores of Constantinople, it is difficult to state that Milutin imitated them. Paradoxically, when allying itself with the Balkan world, Byzantium had to overcome bigger barriers than the ones that separated it from the West. The reception of Balkan brides at the Byzantine court is a separate issue. Kyratza of Bulgaria, John VII's wife and Helena Dragas of Serbia, Manuel II's spouse, played their significant political role.

30 Demetrios Kydones, John VI Cantacuzene's secretary, came into contacts with Latin texts in his chancellery. He was taught Latin by a Dominican from Pera. This resulted among others in the translation of the works by Thomas Aquinas. Cf. M. Jugie, "Demetrios Kydones et la théologie latine à Byzance aux XIV^e siècles," *Echo d'Orient* 31 (1928), 385–402. Witnessing the collapse of their state, many Byzantine aristocrats moved to Venice, Kydones regretted that he had not stayed there. F. Kianka, "Demetrios Kydones and Italy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995), 99–110.

31 H. Evert-Kappesowa, "La tiare ou le turban," *Byzantinoslavica* 14 (1953), 245–57. It is interesting to note that in the matrimonial policy of the Orthodox world it was acceptable to marry Byzantine, Trebizondian or Serbian ladies to Mongol, Turkish or Turkmen rulers. As A. Bryer states,

remains certain is that Byzantium was lonely on the political stage.

Dealing with Byzantine-Latin matches I came to the conclusion that the Latin ladies arrived in a world which did not differ from their own. All the ladies, even Adelaide of Brunswick, who had numerous Italian connections, came from the same Mediterranean world. Byzantium had been a part of this world. The cost of separation from home had always been the case, no matter whether the bride travelled from Italy to England or from Italy to Byzantium. The home education was meant to make this cost as small as possible. It seems that in spite of religious division, the Byzantine-Latin matches were nothing extraordinary. The Latin ladies do not appear to have paid a high price for assimilation. The European elite simply exchanged their children who had been educated to suit their purposes. Everything happened within the great Christian culture, where the division into East and West did not prove to be so important as some scholars are willing to suggest.

no Orthodox is known to have married a Muslim princess. Cf. A. Bryer, "Greek Historians on the Turks: the Case of the First Byzantine-Ottoman Marriage," *The Writings on History in the Middle Ages. Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, Oxford 1981 = *Peoples and Settlement in Anatolia and Caucasus, 800–1900*, London Variorum Reprints 1988, IV, 481.

Byzantine Empresses' Mediations in the Feud between the Palaiologoi (13th–15th Centuries)

I have selected the example of three Empresses and their role at the court to illustrate the perspective of a Byzantinist analyzing the resolution of conflicts in the Eastern Empire. I will focus on three eminent female peacemakers: Eirene Asenina Kantakouzena, Helena Kantakouzena Palaiologina and Helena Dragas Palaiologina. The first Empress was of Bulgarian origin, the second came from Byzantium and the third was Serbian. All of them were Orthodox. Their belonging to the “Byzantine Commonwealth”¹ united by the same religion and culture was of great importance. They knew how to conduct themselves in the world of diplomacy familiar to them from an early age. In comparison with the imperial spouses who arrived in Constantinople from the West, they were in a better position to assess the political situation and carry out their plans either by force or by trick. The main aim was efficiency. Before telling their stories, I would like to recreate a picture of the Empire after the Fourth Crusade. What happened afterwards is very important in explaining the role of the three ladies in the mixed Byzantine-Latin world on the Bosphoros.

¹ An adequate expression of Sir Dimitri Obolensky. Cf. Idem, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe 500–1453*, London 1971.

For many historians, the Fourth Crusade in 1204 represented the end of the Byzantine Empire.² The traditional world of the proud medieval Romans was over. The Latins established their rule and they changed Constantinople into a capital of their own – a Latin Empire. Charmed by court ceremony, they quickly became its snobbish followers.³ The remnants of Byzantium were just a trace of its former glory. This glory, however, was still too powerful for Greek leaders to surrender their ambitions of reconstructing the Roman state on the Bosphoros. The main claimant to the disrupted tradition was the Nicaean Empire. In 1261, the army of Michael Palaiologos, a brave soldier and gifted diplomat, re-established Byzantine rule in Constantinople. Following victory, he became Emperor Michael VIII⁴ and founded the dynasty which survived until 1453.

The conflict began immediately as Baldwin II, the last Latin Emperor, complained to Pope Urban IV and launched aggressive propaganda against Palaiologos, using the ecclesiastical schism as an argument against the *perfidis* Greeks. The real threat arose when Charles d'Anjou became the ambitious King of Sicily and joined forces with Baldwin and the Pope. This *trio* was a mortal danger for the newly reconstructed Byzantine state. Michael VIII, whose forces were too weak to combat the enemy on the military field, turned to risky diplomacy. He made vague promises of a Church union with Rome, which was not accepted by his people, but his *raison d'État* was to avoid the repetition of the Fourth Crusade. He had no choice.⁵ The Union was finally

² Cf. K. Zakrzewski, "Historia Bizancjum," *Wielka historia powszechna*, vol. 4, 1, Warszawa 1938. Second edition as a separate volume – Kraków 2007.

³ Cf. Z. Pentek. *Cesarstwo Łacińskie 1204–1261. Kolonialne państwo krzyżowców czy Neobizancjum?*, Poznań 2004.

⁴ D. J. Geanakoplos, *Michael Paleologus and the West 1258–1282. A Study in Byzantine-Western Relations*, Cambridge (MA) 1959, still remains the most important book on this ruler.

⁵ M. Dąbrowska, *Bizancjum, Francja i Stolica Apostolska w drugiej połowie XIII wieku*, Łódź 1986, 9–28.

signed in Lyon in 1274 but did not last long as Charles d'Anjou employed everything in his power to discredit Michael in the West. The Union was broken in 1282 and the Byzantine Empire only gained sad notoriety.⁶

Having lost the Union asset, Michael began to promote mixed marriages as a form of efficient diplomacy. This was not completely new in Byzantine policy but it was against the old tradition, according to which the Byzantines (the Romans) were obliged to intermarry. The Franks (the Westerners) were tolerable as husbands for imperial daughters or nieces who were sent abroad. The time of the Komnenoi changed a great deal. Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180) introduced Latin wives into his court. His first spouse was Bertha von Sulzbach, the second – Maria of Antioch, of French origin.⁷ He continued his pro-Latin policy by marrying his son, Alexios II, off to Agnes of France, daughter of Louis VII.⁸ It seemed that the disaster caused by the Fourth Crusade changed this western tendency for good. But

⁶ The literature on the Union of Lyon is abundant. As I was the last Ph.D. student of Professor Halina Evert-Kappesowa, the founder of Byzantine Studies in Łódź, I have been allowed to mention her Ph.D. dissertation defended during WW II at the Clandestine University of Warsaw in 1942, and then published in articles in Prague. Eadem, “La société Byzantine et l’union de Lyon,” *Byzantinoslavica* 10 (1949), 28–41; Eadem, “Une page de l’histoire des relations byzantino-latines. Le clerge byzantin et l’union de Lyon (1274–1282),” *Byzantinoslavica* 12 (1952–1953), 68, 92; Eadem, “Byzance et le Saint Siege a l’époque de l’union de Lyon,” *Byzantinoslavica* 16 (1955), 297–317; Eadem, “La fin de l’union de Lyon,” *Byzantinoslavica* 17 (1956), 1–18; Eadem, “Bizancjum a Kuria Rzymska w okresie unii łyońskiej (1274–1282),” *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Folia Historica* 14 (1983), 3–25. All great syntheses devoted to Byzantium and Rome deal with this subject not speaking about particular articles and studies.

⁷ L. Garland, *Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204*, London-New York 1999, 199–209. On Mary of Antioch’s husband cf. P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143–1180*, Cambridge 1993.

⁸ M. Dąbrowska, “Agnieszka z Francji w Konstantynopolu,” *Niebem i sercem okryta. Studia historyczne dedykowane dr Jolancie Malinowskiej*, ed. M. Malinowski, Toruń 2002, 41–63.

the danger of Charles' invasion impelled Michael Palaiologos to consider marrying his son and successor Andronikos II off to a Catholic princess. Anna of Hungary became the young co-Emperor's first wife. After her death, Andronikos married Yolanda of Montferrat.⁹ The Church union was broken but the Latin marriage was still useful as a diplomatic instrument. Both sides pretended to ignore the religious obstacles. This tendency was upheld in the next generation when Michael IX and Andronikos III, son and grandson of Andronikos II respectively, also married Latin princesses. As J. W. Barker states in his still unpublished article,¹⁰ the Byzantine imperial family was becoming half Italian. This was an impressive change of tradition. The Latin ladies, who tried to adapt very quickly to the Byzantine reality, were still foreign at the court, even if they immediately converted their Creed into the Orthodox one.¹¹ They simply remained strangers.

The 14th century witnessed the emergence of a new factor in the Byzantine world. The Osmanlis, Turks, who emerged as one of the modest emirates in Western Asia Minor, conquered the last Byzantine territories there and were like a tiger ready to pounce on the European sectors of the Empire. The civil war which broke out between Andronikos II and his grandson Andronikos III (1321–1328) suited the Turkish expansion in Bithynia.¹² The court concentrated on the family feud, in which the eminent role was played by a rich and influential aristocrat,

⁹ A. E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign policy of Andronikos II (1282–1328)*, Cambridge (MA) 1972, 27, 47–48. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "Family Ethos at the Imperial Court of the Palaiologos in the Light of the Testimony by Theodore of Montferrat," *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia*, vol. 2, ed. A. Różycka-Bryzek and M. Salamon, Cracow 1994, 75–76.

¹⁰ The draft is at my disposal but the text has not been published yet.

¹¹ M. Dąbrowska, *Łacinniczki nad Bosforem. Małżeństwa bizantyńsko-łacińskie w cesarskiej rodzinie Paleologów (XIII–XV w.)*, Łódź 1996, 91–92.

¹² Laiou (as in no. 9), 247–49.

John Kantakouzenos, who allied himself with the young emperor.

He was quickly rewarded. When his master seized power, Kantakouzenos became *megas domestikos*, the commander-in-chief of the army. I do not share D. M. Nicol's opinion that he was loyal and without ambitions to rule independently. His aspirations were already visible and became very clear after Andronikos III's death.¹³ He pretended to be a regent on behalf of John V, the nine-year-old son of Andronikos III and Anne of Savoy. The Empress-Dowager also turned out to be very ambitious. When John Kantakouzenos left Constantinople for Didymoteichon, and his followers proclaimed him the Emperor there on 26 October 1341, she immediately managed to have her son crowned in Hagia Sophia as John V Palaiologos on 19 November 1341. Earlier, Kantakouzenos had offered his daughter Helena as a future wife for the young John but Anne of Savoy did not accept this.¹⁴ Helena was supposed to be a hostage of peace but this quickly proved to be a fallacy. The second civil war broke out (1341–1347). Kantakouzenos was victorious and became Emperor for the period 1347–1354. His strategic timing was a masterpiece.¹⁵

This is the appropriate point at which to present the first character of my story, John Kantakouzenos' wife, Eirene Asenina. She belonged to the Asen family ruling Bulgaria from the end of the 12th century, but the Asens were already so integrated with the Byzantines that she was more Greek than

¹³ D. M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor. A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c. 1295–1383*, Cambridge 1996, 48; Rev: M. Dąbrowska, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 104 (1997), 3, 96–101; Eadem, "The Long Farewell," *History Today*, May 1997, 58–59 (together with the review of J. J. Norwich's book, *Byzantium: the Decline and Fall*, London 1995).

¹⁴ J. Cantacuzenus, *Historia*, vol. 3, ed. L. Schoen, Bonnae 1932, 82–87.

¹⁵ M. Dąbrowska, "Jana Kantakuzena przepis na wygraną. Przejęcie władzy w Bizancjum w 1347 r.," *Zamach stanu w dawnych społecznościach*, ed. A. Sołtysik and J. Olko, Warszawa 2004, 375–83.

Bulgarian.¹⁶ Eirene was educated in Constantinople and was carefully selected as a wife for John Kantakouzenos.¹⁷ She was brave, a staunch supporter of her husband and an active protagonist in Byzantine policy. When the conflict with the Empress Dowager broke out, Kantakouzenos and his wife were about 45 years old. Married in 1318, they had two ambitious sons, Matthew and Manuel. They were seven and six years older than their opponent, John V, but the young Palaiologos had already been crowned by the Patriarch of Constantinople. During the conflict with the official dynasty, Kantakouzenos turned to Thessalonica for support but his endeavours failed and upheaval ensued. Eirene remained in Didimoteichon with her brother Manuel Asen for two years. Didimoteichon was a strong fortress at Maritza river, in the middle of Kantakouzenos' territories but its situation was difficult. Eirene implored John Alexander, the ruler of Bulgaria, to help but instead of giving support, he blocked the city.¹⁸ The only close ally appeared to be Umur, Emir of Aydin, who expelled the Bulgarians.¹⁹

Eirene's patience in supporting her husband was rewarded. After he gained Constantinople, they were crowned by the Patriarch in Hagia Sophia in 1347, which confirmed that their rule was legal. John V, already 15 years old, celebrated his marriage with Helena Kantakouzena. The two rival families were thus connected through marital ties. The war appeared to be over. However, Matthew Kantakouzenos soon saw his opportunity to become his father's successor. He did not accept Palaiologos' rights to the throne and John Kantakouzenos expressed his loyalty by naming himself John VI, giving his favor

¹⁶ I. Bozilov, "Familjata na Asenevci (1185–1460)," *Genealogia i prosopografia*, Sofia 1994, 307–10.

¹⁷ D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady. Ten Portraits*, Cambridge 1994, 71.

¹⁸ Cantacuzenus (as in no. 14), III, 336–44.

¹⁹ Nicol (as in no. 13), 66.

to John V.²⁰ The new conflict was on the horizon but Eirene intervened immediately and convinced Matthew to relent in return for receiving a territory in Thrace.²¹ In 1348, John VI conducted the expedition against the Bulgarians, who profited by the instability of the Empire. Eirene stayed in Constantinople with her son Manuel and her son-in-law Nikephoros II of Epiros. It was the time of rebuilding the Byzantine fleet. For the Genoese it meant the loss of their maritime monopoly. They attacked Constantinople but Eirene managed to mobilize the citizens to defend the capital.²² Once again she showed her strength.

It is interesting to note her extraordinary intuition. She knew when the time was not conducive to the war between the younger generation, that is, between her son Matthew and her son-in-law, John V. When these two became close neighbours in Thrace and John incited conflict, she intervened once again, gathering the bishops to persuade both sides to prevent another civil war. In 1353, John V, reigning from Tenedos island, tried to gain Constantinople, and Eirene managed to protect the city for a second time.²³ At the time of this confrontation, Matthew fulfilled his ambitions to become the Emperor in February 1354.

The work on the new dynasty was visible. John V was ignored but he had already experienced the taste of power. On 22 November 1354 John V Palaiologos entered Constantinople. John VI surrendered and withdrew to a monastery.²⁴ Eirene followed him and became a nun, according to the Byzantine tradition. Nicol underlines that John VI Kantakouzenos owed

²⁰ Idem, *The Byzantine Family of the Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100–1460. A Genealogical and Prosopographical Study*, Washington D.C. 1968, 110–11; Idem, *The Reluctant Emperor* (as in no. 13), 88.

²¹ Idem, *The Byzantine...* (as in no. 20), 76.

²² Ibidem, 77.

²³ Idem, *The Reluctant Emperor* (as in no. 13), 121.

²⁴ Ibidem, 131.

the good treatment received from his rival to his reasonable wife's intervention²⁵ but Matthew cherished his ambitions and did not surrender until December 1357. His mother left the convent with the express intention of convincing him to stop the hopeless feud.²⁶ Nicol likes to quote John VI who admitted that his wife had a strong hand.²⁷ She was undoubtedly stronger than him. Although Matthew was her favorite son, Eirene acted cautiously to protect the entire family and protect her men from their opponent's revenge. They all survived. Manuel ruled the Peloponnese from 1348 until 1380. Matthew succeeded him and reigned until 1383.²⁸ Their father, John VI, visited them as a monk in this ideal landscape. Another factor here is that John V was not keen to sever contact with his father-in-law to whom he turned many times, greatly profiting from his political experience.

During all these years, Helena Kantakouzena Palaiologina, John's wife, learned the bitter lessons of a fictitious idyllic family life. At the very beginning of her marriage she bore her husband two sons: Andronikos IV, who was intended to be a successor to the throne, and Manuel who waited for his historical opportunity for a long time.²⁹ Her marriage, arranged to end the civil

²⁵ Ibidem, 132–33.

²⁶ Idem, *The Byzantine Family...* (as in no. 20), 117–18; Idem, *The Reluctant Emperor* (as in no. 13), 137.

²⁷ Cantacuzenus, (as in no. 14), III, 336.

²⁸ D. A. Zakithynos, *Le despotat grec de Morée (1262–1460)*, vol. 1: *Histoire politique*, Paris 1932, 115–16. Matthew stayed in Constantinople till 1361, then after the plague he went to the Peloponnese.

²⁹ The huge book on John V was written by R. Radić, *Vreme Jovana V Paleologa*, Beograd 1993. Andronikos IV is waiting for his biography. His sons, John VII's life was described by S. Mesanović, *Jovan VII Paleolog*, Beograd 1996. It is interesting to mention the important Serbian contribution to the history of the Palaiologoi. See also: I. Durić, *Sumrak Vizantije. Vreme Jovana VIII Paleologa, 1392–1448*, Beograd 1984. As for Manuel II cf. J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Paleologus 1391–1425. A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1968. Helena and John V

war between John Kantakouzenos and Anne of Savoy, appears to be a diplomatic treaty without any trace of tenderness. The couple appears to have lived their lives apart but there is a scarcity of historical sources, and we have no description of John V's rule documented at the time of his reign.³⁰ A certain insight is provided by the correspondence of Demetrios Kydones, an outstanding intellectual, a secretary to John VI and Helena's long-time tutor and counsellor.³¹ It seems that the imperial couple distributed their parental favors between Andronikos, who was his father's son and Manuel, promoted by Helena. In this case it is difficult to estimate to what extent she acted as an indifferent or neutral mediator as her interventions were always favorable for the second son, Manuel, who resembled his grandfather John VI, Helena's father.

In 1356 the Osmanlis settled in Gallipoli. Their progress in conquering the European remnants of Byzantium was rapid. In 1365, they took Adrianople in Thrace which soon became their new capital. Constantinople was in mortal danger and John V sought diplomatic help from the Pope using the trump card of the Church union in the negotiations. In 1367, his wife Helena participated in the meeting with the papal envoys. In

had more children. Among the sons Theodore I Palaiologos distinguished himself as Despot of Morea (1383–1407). Cf. D. A. Zakythinis (as in no. 28), 117–65.

³⁰ O. Jurewicz, *Historia literatury bizantyńskiej*, Wrocław 1984, 273–76. Kantakouzenos wrote his story about 1369. Doukas (died in 1470), who, in a certain sense continued his oeuvre, described John V's rule from later perspective. There is no contemporary chronicle concerning this long reign.

³¹ Demetrius Cydones, *Correspondence*, vol. 1–2, ed. R. J. Loenertz, Citta del Vaticano 1956–1960. Demetrios Kydones, *Briefe*, ed. F. Tinnefeld, Stuttgart 1981–1982. On Kydones as Helena Palaiologina's tutor see: F. Kianka, "The Letters of Demetrios Kydones to Empress Helena Kantakouzene Palaiologina," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 155–64. On his support for John V cf: Eadem, "Demetrios Kydones in Italy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1995), 105–09.

1369, John V travelled to Rome and accepted the Catholic Creed.³² On his return via Venice, he was intercepted because of debts owed. These were especially incurred by his mother during the war with Kantakouzenos. *Serenissima* sought profit from the situation and demanded that the money be repaid or that he be granted rule over the strategically valuable island of Tenedos. Andronikos IV, residing in Constantinople at the time, refused to rescue his father. It was Manuel who appeared in Venice with the money. It was not a great sum but it made the return of John V possible.³³ In 1371, the Turks defeated the Serbs at Maritza river and it became evident that Byzantium was not powerful enough to defend itself against the Osmanlis. In 1372–1373, John V signed a treaty with Murad I, as a result of which the Empire yielded to the Turks. It was a form of vassalage.³⁴

The temptation of power is stronger than reason, even under difficult circumstances. Time was passing by and Andronikos IV was longing for the throne. In 1376, he arranged a *coup d'état* with his son John VII.³⁵ As the new ruler, he imprisoned his father John V, his grandfather John VI and his brother Manuel. Murad was undoubtedly pleased to see Palaiologoi so divided. Andronikos IV also incarcerated his mother, the Empress He-

³² More on these negotiations: O. Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance a Rome. Vingt ans de travail pour l'union des Eglises et la defense de l'Orient 1355–1375*, Varsovie 1930, 188–99.

³³ D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1988, 305–07.

³⁴ The only Byzantine writer who speaks about it is Laonikos Chalcocondyles. Cf. Laonikos Chalcocondyles, *Historiarum libri decem*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnæ 1843; Barker (as in no. 29), 18, points out that the chronicler cannot be reliable in his chronology. For the Polish aspect of this question see: M. Dąbrowska, “Could Poland Have Reacted to the Submission of Byzantium to the Turks in 1372–1373?,” *Captain and Scholar. Papers in Memory of Demetrios Polemis*, ed. E. Chrysos and E. Zachariadou, Andros 2009, 79–92.

³⁵ Radić (as in no. 29), 393–403.

lena. At the time of the family feud she was about 45 years old, almost the same age as her mother was when she intervened in the Kantakouzenoi matters. She had no doubts who should succeed her husband. Manuel was trustworthy and she favored him. After three years, the usurper was overthrown and John V regained power.³⁶ It was another bitter lesson in Byzantine history. It represented the perspective of a new form of civil war demanding a consolidation of forces instead of family divisions provoked by an ambitious and self-serving Andronikos IV. He died in 1385 but his son upheld his aspirations to the throne and in 1390, he overthrew and imprisoned his grandfather John V. John VII's reign was short-lived. After just a few months,³⁷ the Turks assisted the aging John V in regaining power. The many years of grotesque family conflict presented a serious threat to the survival of the Empire but Manuel's position in politics was steadily growing and the time had come to secure his succession to the throne.

The significance of Helena's role in gaining the throne for Manuel is evident in his treatise on marriage, composed as a dialogue between him and his mother.³⁸ With the ambitions of her grandson John VII in sight, she was actively encouraging Manuel to marry and have children. In contrast to his nephew, Helena considered Manuel to be the rightful and responsible successor to the state. Manuel, almost forty, was still a bachelor. This was a distinct disadvantage in comparison with the already married John VII who had a perspective for a successor.³⁹ When John V

³⁶ Ibidem, 405. Cf. R. Korczak, "Ingerencja Turków osmańskich w wewnętrzne sprawy Bizancjum za panowania Murada I i Bajazeta I," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis, Folia Historica* 80 (2005), 161–70.

³⁷ Radić (as in no. 29), 458–60.

³⁸ Manuel Palaiologos, *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage*, ed. A. Angelou, Wien 1991; Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "Ought One to Marry? Manuel II Palaiologos' Point of View," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 31 (2007), 146–56.

³⁹ On John VII's son cf. G. Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor Andronicos V Palaeologus (1400–1407?)," *Jahrbuch der Byzantinischen*

died in 1391, Helena withdrew to the nunnery but still continued to strongly support Manuel's aspirations to the throne. After his father's death, Manuel left the Turkish camp in Brusa, arrived in Constantinople and took over. He married a young lady, also named Helena, a daughter of the Serbian governor of Serres, Constantine Dragaš.⁴⁰ After the battle at Kosovo in 1389, Serbia had been defeated by the Turks and humiliated. Some princes, including Dragaš, were still hoping for revenge and this sad marriage alliance was a testimony to this. The new Empress quickly bore the first two sons to Manuel. The succession was protected and even if the danger of a confrontation with John VII still existed, the Empress-Dowager, now a nun, could be assured that the uncertain future of Byzantium was in good hands. She died in 1396, supporting Manuel to her very last day. This proved to be necessary as Bayezid, Murad's successor, organized a disastrous blockade of Constantinople in 1394 which marked the beginning of the end. The battle at Nikopolis in 1396 showed the weakness of the Christian army in confrontation with the Turks. It was only the aggression of the Mongol army in Asia Minor and the battle at Ankara in 1402 between Tamerlane and Bayezid which destroyed the Turkish power and saved Constantinople for another half a century.

The new situation was an advantage for Byzantium. The Osmanlis were waging their own war for succession. It provided the Emperor with the opportunity to regain independent status in his relations with the Turks. Manuel was no longer their vassal and his contacts with the new sultan Mehmed I (1413–1421) were friendly. He was a respected partner but already an old ruler. Manuel suffered a debilitating stroke in 1422, preventing him from any further political activity. The state had already been taken

Österreichischen Gesellschaft 16 (1967), 175–87.

⁴⁰ Barker (as in no. 29), 99–100.

over by his eldest son, John VIII Palaiologos.⁴¹ Mehmed I's successor, Murad II (1421–1451), was not so diplomatic in his dealings with Byzantium. In 1422, he started the siege of Constantinople and only the difficulties in Asia Minor thwarted his intentions. John VIII signed a humiliating treaty which once again placed the state in the position of dependence on the Turks.⁴² The fall was imminent. Unfortunately, the family situation was also far from idyllic. In 1430 the Palaiologoi managed to bring the whole Peloponnese under their rule⁴³ but fraternal conflicts flared up immediately in the context of this success. John had younger brothers: Theodore Constantine, Demetrios and Thomas. Theodore and then Demetrios neither concealed their ambitions concerning the Morea nor their aspirations to the throne in Constantinople.⁴⁴ The Empress Dowager, Helena Dragas, was following the developments with considerable concern. She favored Constantine, who kept her family name as his own and it seemed reasonable that he should succeed John VIII who was childless. However, this was an internal issue of the state. The most pressing foreign policy issue was the prevention of the imminent Turkish invasion. Once again, the only rescue was perceived to be found in papal support. The

⁴¹ I. Durić, *Sumrak Vizantije: Vreme Jovana VIII Paleologa 1392–1448*, Beograd 2008, passim.

⁴² Barker (as in no. 29), 361–71.

⁴³ A. Bon, *La Morée franque. Recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1204–1430)*, vol. 1, Paris 1969, 272. Venice managed to keep the ports Modon and Coron but the success was great. Mistra, the capital of the despots of Morea, flourished and was the great hope for those who believed in Byzantine revival on the Peloponnese, especially George Gemistos Plethon and his followers. Cf: M. Dąbrowska, "Hellenism at the Court of the Despots of Mistra in the First Half of the 15th Century," *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* vol. 1, ed. M. Salamon, Cracow 1991, 157–67; Cf. I. P. Medvedev, *Mistra. Očerki istorii i kultury pozdniewizantijskogo goroda*, Leningrad 1973, 95–122.

⁴⁴ D. M. Nicol, *Konstantyn XI, ostatni cesarz Bizancjum*, trans. M. Dąbrowska, Gdańsk 2004, 37.

Emperor resolved to go to Italy on behalf of the council and there he signed a Church Union in Florence in 1439.⁴⁵

His compatriots were divided between the loyalty to Orthodoxy and the tough *raison d'État*, which maintained that Latin protection would be necessary in the confrontation with Islam. Their hopes were high, inspired by the victory of the young Polish-Hungarian King Ladislas in the so-called “Winter War” with Murad II in 1443–1444. The truce was signed in Szegedyn on 4 August 1444, offering John VIII the comforting perspective of a ten-year peace pact. The battle of Varna on 10 November destroyed this illusion.⁴⁶ The Turks were victorious and there was nothing to prevent them from attacking Constantinople. John VIII died on 31 October 1448. Constantine Dragas was in Mistra but his brother Demetrios, residing in Selymbria, was closer to the capital and his appetite for power was great. Helena Dragas, the Empress-Dowager and a lady in a *certain age*, invested all her authority in preserving Constantinople for Constantine. For five months she managed to retain the throne for her favorite son who arrived at the Bosphoros on 12 March 1449.⁴⁷ He had already been crowned in Mistra and did not repeat the ceremony in Hagia Sophia. There was no time. Helena supported him till the end and her advice was vital. He was a two-time widower and childless. His advisers were considering a third marriage which might produce a successor to the throne but the whole concept was somewhat desperate and bizarre in the context of the impending disaster.⁴⁸ The Empress Mother died in 1450. Although, in accordance with custom, she had

⁴⁵ J. Gill, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge 1959; Idem, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and Other Essays*, London 1964, 104–24 (on John VIII).

⁴⁶ M. Dąbrowska, “Hexamilion i Warnia,” *Balkanica Posnaniensia* 8 (1997), 61–71.

⁴⁷ Georgios Sphrantzes, *Memorii 1401–1477*, ed. V. Grecu, Bucarest 1966, 72.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 76–80. The chronicler launched the idea of Constantine’s marriage to Mara Branković, Murad II’s widow.

withdrawn to the nunnery after her husband's death in 1425, she remained actively involved. She was a great authority for her "boys" and tried to temper their ambitions for the safety of the state. The last years of her life are testament to her determination and influence. Constantine XI owed the throne to her. She was fortunate not to have to witness his final confrontation with the Osmanlis. When Mehmed II gained power in 1451, the days of Constantinople were numbered. He started the siege at the beginning of April 1453 and on 29 May he conquered the Second Rome.⁴⁹ Constantine died in the final battle on the walls on that very day.⁵⁰

One can say that neither Eirene Asenina nor the other two ladies were the only mothers who saved the lives (as Eirene) or the rule (as both Helenas) of their favorite sons but the three Empresses are very good examples of women who managed to save Byzantium from family bloodshed. This is a rare achievement.

They mastered the jealousy of other pretenders and were successful at it. How does one explain their success? Three Empresses, belonging to the Byzantine Commonwealth, knew how to conduct themselves at the ceremonial court in Constantinople. They knew the language, the customs, the mentality. In comparison with them, Anne of Savoy, who fought for the throne for John V, was a foreigner.⁵¹ She started political fires as she lacked "know how" in this strange world. The three ladies knew how to extinguish conflict in a peaceful way. They were kind mediators and that is the reason why I have chosen them as the

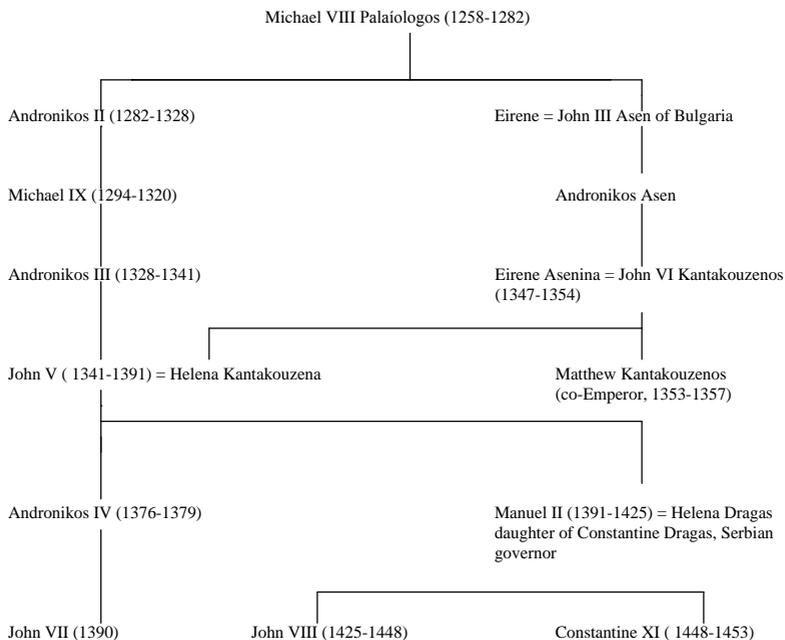
⁴⁹ F. Babinger, *Z dziejów Imperium Osmanów. Sultan Mehmed Zdobywca i jego czasy*, trans. T. Zabłudowski, Warszawa 1977, 96–108; S. Runciman, *Upadek Konstantynopola 1453*, trans. S. Dębicki, Warszawa 1968, 136–202.

⁵⁰ D. M. Nicol, *Konstantyn XI* (as in no. 44), 70–89. The author collected many versions of the Emperor's heroic death.

⁵¹ M. Dąbrowska, *Łacinniczki* (as in no. 11), 157. She distinguished herself only due to the regency.

main focus of this article. Maternal love is obviously a crucial factor in each of the three stories.

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52 After: D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium (1261–1453)*, London 1972.

Family Ethos at the Imperial Court of the Palaiologos in the Light of the Testimony by Theodore of Montferrat¹

“Il m’est venu à la main unung petit livre” – this is how Jean de Vignay, a French translator, writes about the treatise by Theodore of Montferrat in the 14th century.² Theodore was a son of Byzantine Emperor, Andronikos Palaiologos and of Yolanda, the daughter of William VII, Marquis of Montferrat, the granddaughter of Alfonso X, king of Castile. His work called “Enseignements ou ordonences pour un seigneur qui a guerres et grans gouvernemens a faire” was written in major part in 1327, i. e. in the time of the most acute conflict between Andronikos II and his grandson, Andronikos III, Theodore’s half-nephew.³

The modest and slightly long-winded treatise instructing the readers in how to wage wars, may also serve as a source for the

¹ The paper was presented during the International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Moscow in August 1991.

² *Les Enseignements de Theodore Paleologue*, ed. Ch. Knowles, London 1983, 21. All the quotations are taken from the original text, written in old French.

³ On Emperor Andronikos II and his family see: U. Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III. Palaiologos. Versuch einer Darstellung der byzantinischen Geschichte in den Jahren 1321–1341*, Amsterdam 1965; H. Constantinidi-Bibikou, “Yolande de Montferrat, impératrice de Byzance,” *L’Hellénisme Contemporain*, II ser., 4, 6 (1950), 425–42; A. Laiou, “A Byzantine Prince Latinized: Theodore Palaeologus, Marquis of Montferrat,” *Byzantion* 38 (1968), 386–410; Eadem, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II 1282–1328*, Cambridge (MA) 1972.

reconstruction of the family ethos at the imperial court in the 14th century.

In fact, Theodore's treatise has a very personal tone; it was written out of concern for the imperial rule and for the welfare of Byzantium. The author displays a strong attachment to his family whose role must have been significant in his life. The text presents a whole catalogue of values that are appreciated by Theodore and held up as models for imitation. They point to the personality traits which were of particular interest to the imperial family. "Je nourri selonc la costume des autres filz des Griex,"⁴ says Theodore in the introduction to his treatise. Let's not ask the author how to win a war then. Let's ask him what kind of ethos or set of values was handed down to Theodore in his home.

The attitude to God heads the list of recognized values. Theodore is a God-fearing person who demonstrates faith in divine assistance. "Ja soit ce que je suy non digne et non souffisant devant la presence de li,"⁵ confesses the author, but at the same time he believes in God's forbearance for his littleness. He hopes that God lends him the support he once offered to David fighting Goliath.⁶ Theodore stresses the need to study the Bible, remarking that it was his mother's frequent occupation.⁷ He advocates the purity of doctrine and warns against heresy. "Gouverneur de gens ne doie pas souffrir que aucun herege en aucun degre de la foy converse en sa compaignie."⁸ What seems rather striking is the fact that the discord between the Latin and Greek Churches is tactfully bypassed in the text. It is even more striking because Theodore knew about this discord from both sides. The author often emphasizes the need to attend the service and listen to the sermons which strengthen people and protect them

⁴ *Les Enseignements...*, 26.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 107.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 34.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 30.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 46.

from harmful influence, “car les dyables labourent continuelment a la perdición de la nature humaine.”⁹

Home fostered Theodore’s attachment to the native country and his appreciation of the glorious past, which is reflected in the treatise.¹⁰ Love for the fatherland was closely connected with love for parents and brothers. Theodore describes himself as “homme amant ses parens et sa generacion et tout le pais et la terre de Griex.”¹¹ It was the desire to serve country and family that impelled the author to create his work.¹² Writing about Greece, Theodore does not lose sight of his mother’s country where he was to rule later. He takes pride in his noble descent. “Je suis nez de tels nascions... lezquelz Diex a honores des ancien temps, et leur a donne et otroie grace entre les autres du monde.”¹³ Sensitive to the Byzantine heritage as he is, Theodore also recognizes his links with Italy and Spain.

Love for parents occupies a prominent place in the treatise. The author creates a pattern of correct relationships between himself and mother, father, brothers and half-brothers. What matters most is obedience to parents and loyalty to brothers. Theodore states that he went off to Greece “pour la cause de servir a ma nascion si que a mon pouoir je pense accomplir a l’un et a l’autre son devoir selonc le deii naturel, tant du pere comme de la mere.”¹⁴ Respect for father and readiness to help him is an overriding value in Theodore’s view on the Byzantine feud. However, he criticizes Andronikos for the uncritical acceptance of the influence that Theodore Metochites had on political decisions.¹⁵

⁹ Ibidem, 47.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 25, 36–37, 109, 111.

¹¹ Ibidem, 109.

¹² Ibidem, 37.

¹³ Ibidem, 25.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 37.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 109.

The mother is depicted as a paragon of feminine virtues. “Elle fu moult tres debonnaire et moult pitiable,”¹⁶ says the author. He adds that she was always merciful not only for people but also for animals which were well looked after.¹⁷ One of the passages depicted in the work focuses on the moment when the envoys from Italy arrive at the court to tell Yolanda that her brother, John of Montferrat, died without an heir. Theodore is pleased to remark that his mother, grieved as she was, soon mastered the situation.¹⁸ The throne of Montferrat was given to Theodore who was then fourteen. The author stresses his eagerness to comply with his mother’s wishes: “je vueil obe’ir aus commandemens de ma mere du tout en tout, sanz moy estendre en aucune chose autre qui ne li plaisoit pas.”¹⁹ Theodore also displays loyalty and respect for his brothers. The late John Palaiologos is described as better and more worthy of the throne of Montferrat.²⁰ Theodore deplores his untimely death. He speaks tenderly of his youngish brother Demetrios, and he is respectful when talking about his half-brother Michael IX Palaiologos. He points out that Michael’s reign was free from the unrest that was stirred up later by his son, Andronikos III.²¹ The family pattern is enriched with the portrayal of the relationship between Theodore’s parents, i.e. Andronikos II and Yolanda-Eirene. The author is not so malicious as Gregoras. Unlike the chronicler,²² he never mentions marital arguments. He omits the facts which do not suit the family model created by him. According to the treatise, Yolanda sought her husband’s advice when the future of

¹⁶ Ibidem, 29.

¹⁷ Loc. cit.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 30.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 33.

²⁰ Ibidem, 31.

²¹ Ibidem, 109.

²² Nicephorus Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, vol. I, ed. L. Schopen, Bonnae 1829, 233, 14–238, 5.

Montferrat was in question. She followed her husband's choice and stayed with him instead of accompanying Theodore to her country.²³ To sum it all up, love for parents and brothers, and obedience and loyalty are the prominent features of Theodore's family model.

The treatise also presents a catalogue of characteristics that should mark out a ruler who is, in a sense, father to his subjects. Elements that are worth highlighting may have been a substantial part of the family education. They are the three theological virtues: faith, hope and love. Hope is regarded as the most important. "Premièrement espérance, pour ce que desespoir est la pire chose que nous puissions cognoistre."²⁴ Next to it, Theodore mentions mercy and pity; he also speaks about the spiritual strength that is needed to resist satanic temptation.²⁵ Dwelling on the love of one's neighbour, he gives as an example the love that is shown to a stranger, which makes a good deed even more praiseworthy.²⁶ Theodore raises the subject of chastity, saying that lust blinds people. Men yield to it, and as a result they are easily influenced by the families and friends of their mistresses.²⁷ "Je conseille que les gouverneurs aient bonnes meurs au monde et que il hantent avec les hommes bien enseignés et aornés des bonnes meurs."²⁸

Theodore makes quite a few remarks which can serve as a basis for the partial reconstruction of savoir-vivre at the table. Tossed in casually, they testify to a careful home education. Theodore advocates eating and drinking with moderation. He recommends eating three or four meat courses at the most.

²³ *Les Enseignements...*, 31.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 59.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 60–61.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 62.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 63.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 64

They should be served with bread and wine.²⁹ “Ne il n’aftert pas trop parler en mengant,” because incessant talking bores the listeners and makes the meat dishes cool.³⁰ One should not overeat “car quant les hommes ont l’estomac plein, les fumosités et les vapeurs si occupent le cervel et empeëschent le courage.”³¹ Theodore disapproves of people who shun company, since “boire, mengier et couchier ensamble aprivoisent moult les gens l’un a l’autre.”³² To be precise, he means feasting and camping with brothers in arms. Theodore offers advice on how to entertain guests and make conversation at the table. He remarks that it is rude to doubt the interlocutor’s statement.³³

The major part of the treatise is devoted to the conduct at the battlefield. I am not going to focus on a model of ideal leader. Instead, I will dwell on the principles that were passed down in the family. Theodore places a crucial emphasis on honour. It is better to die a dignified death rather than be a coward, “car vault miex seigneur mort a honneur que vif, déshérité a honte.”³⁴ If conflicts arise, peaceful solutions should be tried first. If war cannot be prevented any longer, enemies should be held in respect.³⁵ They should not be denied dignity when they are captives. The dead soldiers of the enemy forces have the right to proper burial.³⁶

While Theodore was writing his treatise, the reality of the Byzantine court diverged rather strongly from the ideal model. Andronikos III stood up against Andronikos II, that is to say, the grandson declared war on the grandfather and the country was

²⁹ Ibidem, 70.

³⁰ Loc. cit.

³¹ *Les Enseignements...*, 52.

³² Ibidem, 70.

³³ Loc. cit.

³⁴ Ibidem, 91.

³⁵ Ibidem, 81.

³⁶ Ibidem, 95.

thrown into turmoil. Exploring the causes of evil, the author also presents a set of negative characteristics, hubris being the darkest end of the spectrum. “La greigneur partie des hommes n’aiment pas les orgueilleux,”³⁷ writes Theodore. That is why the author often asserts that he is not writing the treatise out of the desire for vain glory.³⁸ Vanity as the chief vice is ascribed to Theodore Metochites, the counsellor of Andronikos II.³⁹ The author disapproves of acting on the spur of anger which blinds human nature.⁴⁰ “Envie qui vient de haine est racine de lous mauz,”⁴¹ he goes on to say. Envy and hatred give rise to conflicts which is illustrated by the family quarrel of both Andronikos. Metochites also serves as an example in the author’s criticism of greed. Theodore says that “avarice aveugle les hommes et leur oste le senz.”⁴² He denounces cruelty and dishonesty towards enemies. “Je conseille que vous ne leur demonstres nulle cruauté ou felonnie.”⁴³

The text is an example of Christian didacticism. The catalogue of virtues adopted by the author contains three theological virtues and four cardinal virtues. Negative features are in major part cardinal sins. Theodore describes himself as “escrivain crestien,”⁴⁴ invoking the basic ethical values of Christianity that were passed on to him in home education. The author was 36 when writing the text, so it was a mature work. In his treatise Theodore admits that his departure for Montferrat as a young man brought him a rather difficult experience. He had to get used to the country that was so different “tant en meurs

³⁷ Ibidem, 88.

³⁸ Ibidem, 24, 35.

³⁹ Ibidem, 108.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, 53.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 60.

⁴² Ibidem, 52.

⁴³ Ibidem, 105.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 43.

comme en language.”⁴⁵ The source proves that in spite of all the discrepancies between the Greek world that he left and the Latin world that he encountered, Theodore expresses a strong attachment to universal moral patterns which were respected throughout the Christian world regardless of political or religious divisions and differences in manners. The text yields to analysis from a variety of angles, e.g., it abounds in examples borrowed from the Old and New Testaments or from the history of ancient Greece. Its message could also be compared with *Consuetudines feudorum* so as to find out to what extent the treatise follows the feudal code of contemporary Europe. The percentage calculation of Greek and Latin share in the shaping of the text is not relevant to the analysis. Whatever the size of components in the cultural hybrid, the most important thing is Theodore’s interpretation of cross-cultural Christian code and of the recognized *savoir-vivre*. Linguistic analysis of the text in terms of an author’s vocabulary is a rather tricky exercise. The work survived in French translation exclusively, whereas Theodore’s actual text in Greek and Latin versions was lost. Jean de Vignay, the French translator would insert his own remarks, which makes the actual text even more elusive.

It would be worthwhile to seek analogy between *Enseignements* and the message offered by *Les Miroirs des Princes*. In this way, Theodore’s models might be provided with a richer background. Such research would be essential if one wanted to focus on the paragon of leader and ruler. Since I am more interested in family relations, I’d rather compare the treatise with *Enseignements* by Saint Louis. Amazingly, both works revolve round similar concerns, even though they vary in size and they spring from different circumstances. *Enseignements* by the French king is a succinctly formulated set of injunctions addressed to his son Philip the Bold. Written in 1267, at the end of

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 33.

Louis's life, the text is a record of the king's experience.⁴⁶ Louis speaks about the love of God and the need to listen to God's word. "Chier fils," he says "la premiere chose que je t'enseigne si est que tu mets tout ton cuer en Dieu amer, quar sans se nus ne se puet sauver."⁴⁷ He also adds: "écoute volontiers les sermons et en apert [which means "in official way"] et en privé."⁴⁸ The king advocates the practice of good deeds and urges the son to abstain from every evil: "aime tout bien et hé tout mal en quoi que se soit."⁴⁹ He advises Philip to welcome good fortune and accept adversities with humility. "Se Dieu tenvoie aversite, sueffre la en bonne grace et en bonne pacience. . . . Se il te donne prospérité, si l'en merci humblement."⁵⁰ Louis stresses respect for parents. "A ton pere et a ta mere dois tu honneur et reverence a parler et garder leurs commandemens."⁵¹ He asks his son not to wage wars against Christian rulers. Also he praises peaceful solutions: "guerres et contens, soient tien, soient a te sougies apaise ou plus tost que tu pourras."⁵²

In comparison with Louis's work, the treatise is a longer text that reflects a different attitude. We can, however, detect the principles of a family code phrased in a similar way as the French king's advice. The shared basis of the upbringing, i.e. the Bible, was the source of universal values that operated both in the Catholic West and the Orthodox East. Thus, Theodore of Montferrat's text does not anticipate Machiavelli's *Prince* whose chief task was to show the ways of retaining limitless power. The treatise is basically concerned with family

⁴⁶ G. de Beaulieu, "Les Enseignements de Saint Louis," *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. XX, ed. P. G. M. Daunou and J. Naudet, Paris 1840, 26–27.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 26 B.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 26 D.

⁴⁹ Loc. cit.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 26 B–C.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 27 A.

⁵² Ibidem, 27 A–B.

advice perpetuating suitable patterns of behaviour in a community. *Les Enseignements* by Saint Louis is a set of a father's injunctions. "Chier fils, je te doins toutes les beneicons que bon pere et piteus puet donner a fis."⁵³ *Les Enseignements* by Theodore of Montferrat reflects the son's endeavour to mitigate the conflict between the grandfather and grandson. What pervades the work is the need to restore the family ethos of the Palaiologos which turned out to be an ideal model rather than actual reality during the civil war. None of the chroniclers who were well-disposed towards the court presents a model of conduct that would be comparable to the image in Theodore's work.

Theodore, an offspring of a mixed marriage, is treated by specialists as a completely latinized prince. In the light of his text, however, he seems to be equally devoted to Byzantium and to the West. He inhabits both worlds, and he is not troubled by the schism. Home education proved powerful enough to let the affection for the East and the West prevail. Theodore's treatise is of great importance for the scholars who deal with mixed marriages and their effect on children's upbringing. The text shows that the principles of Christian ethics were a firm bond in the combination of Western and Eastern cultural patterns. The encounter of both worlds was not such a shock as other sources might suggest. In fact, the narrative sources often emphasize the cultural shock of Latin princesses who were married off to Byzantine princes. Still, texts like Theodore's treatise prove that assimilation was possible, largely due to the Christian code of moral principles respected by the West and the East, and transformed into the basis of a family ethos.

The reading of Theodore's treatise implies that it was the mother's behaviour rather than the father's that shaped his vision of a good ruler. Describing Yolanda's response to the events at Montferrat, Theodore stresses the quickness of decision,

⁵³ Ibidem, 27 B.

consistency in action and political wisdom. Exposed to the classic Byzantine upbringing and also to the distinct influence of a Latin mother, Theodore was able to cope with the political mission of ruling Montferrat. Yolanda was convinced about it. She could send the son off to Italy where he would not be a complete stranger. The spirit of western civilization was familiar to him, due to her. The education he had received at the Byzantine court included respect for the universal code of principles observed throughout Christendom regardless of the Church schism. Due to such patterns, both worlds were not as alienated from each other as is sometimes thought.

The patterns of conduct presented by Theodore proved to be too important a set of values to be destroyed as a result of the civil war. Theodore got involved in the struggle purposefully. He wished to voice his viewpoint, stressing the fact that the conflict should never have happened. Grandson should have obeyed grandfather according to the principle of respect and obedience towards one's elders, which was an element of the Christian code.

Ironically enough, this set of principles was written down by the man who diverged from the ideal. At odds with vassals in his own country, beset by financial difficulties, not to say debts, Theodore envied Metochites his far reaching influence at the court. But as Max Scheler wittily put it, no one expects the signposts to follow the way they show.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Cf: M. Ossowska, *Ethos rycerski i jego odmiany (The Knights' Ethos and Its Modifications)*, Warszawa 1986, 12.

Ought One to Marry? Manuel II Palaiologos' Point of View*

If one wants to learn something about Byzantine marriage, Manuel's dialogue on the subject is a very discouraging source. The text concerns marriage, but Manuel's wife does not appear in it at all.¹ The editor established the date of composition between 1394 and 1397. Manuel was already married and had fathered a successor (1392). It was a time of serious troubles for Byzantium. The blockade of Constantinople by Bayezid I had started in 1394, and the battle of Nikopolis (1396) proved disastrous for the Christians. Manuel wrote his text after these events, and dedicated the dialogue to Demetrios Kydones, a friend of the imperial family, who died in 1397. The dedication gives us

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¹ The crucial book on Manuel's reign is by J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1968.

a precise *terminus ante quem*.² The historical circumstances explain Manuel's mood and his skepticism concerning the prospects of saving the empire without considerable assistance from the Latins, greater than that offered at Nikopolis. He must have been aware that his successor might soon have no empire to rule. The fate of Byzantium, however, is not discussed in Manuel's text. Its subject is marriage and its ethical aspects. It is presented in the form of a dialogue between the emperor Manuel and his mother, the dowager empress Helena Kantakouzena, wife of John V Palaiologos.

The witty introduction does not reveal any serious problem. It gives the reader the impression of a friendly discussion between the emperor, in his forties, and his mother. Let me quote a sample: "You seem to be joking," Helena says. "Oh, no, Mother, I am not joking," replies the emperor. To this his mother responds: "I am sure you are, you cannot be serious!"³ The dialogue sounds informal. Many examples from the text create the impression that the conversation is a private one or a rhetorical exercise, which is almost impossible to summarize. Yet we should not be misled by the conventional form. We are dealing with a text written by a very sophisticated emperor. Barker calls him "a philosopher King," who was "unique among his fellow Basileis."⁴ From the very first line, we can see that the emperor had talked to his mother about marriage before, and he was afraid that she had formed a mistaken opinion about his views. The text sounds like a recollection of a conversation which must have taken place before Manuel's wedding, that is, before 1392.⁵ In this context the

² A. Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos, Dialogue with the Empress-mother on Marriage*, Vienna 1991, 20 (Introduction).

³ A. Angelou, *Dialogue*, 60, 61. The edition has a facing-page English translation. I cite Angelou's translation in my text.

⁴ J. W. Barker, *Manuel II*, 84 and 421, respectively.

⁵ The Russian archimandrite Ignatios of Smolensk witnessed Manuel's coronation and that of his Serbian wife, Helena Dragas. See *Le Pèlerinage d'Ignace de Smolensk, 1389-1405*, ed. B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires*

whole dialogue becomes comprehensible. The mother's aim is to persuade Manuel to get married. She speaks of the succession and his duty to the state, stressing the rivalry between his and his brother's line.

Manuel Palaiologos was born in 1350. His parents, John V Palaiologos and Helena Kantakouzena, were ill-matched. Their wedding was supposed to put an end to the civil war between the regency government of the dowager empress, Anne of Savoy, ruling on behalf of her minor son John V, and John Kantakouzenos, the best friend and first minister of her deceased husband, who also claimed to be a regent.⁶ The war lasted from 1341 until 1347, and ended with the victory of John Kantakouzenos, who became the co-emperor. The victory was strengthened by

res russes en Orient, St Petersburg 1889, 143–47; cf. G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Washington D.C. 1984, 108–10. Only one Greek source (Vat. gr. 162) states that Helena was “one-eyed but prudent by nature.” See R.-J. Loenertz (ed.), *Chronicon breve de Graecorum imperatoribus, ab anno 1341 ad annum 1453 e codice Vaticano graeco 162*, EEBS 28 (1958), 209, 65–66; J. W. Barker, *Manuel II*, 99, no. 24. Barker compares this description with the famous portrait of Helena with Manuel and their three sons in the manuscript of Dionysius Aeropagite, stating that there are no traces of deformity in Helena's face. I was privileged to see this miniature at the Louvre in 1996, courtesy of J. Durand. It is so conventionally painted that one cannot rule out Helena's defect, although no other chronicler mentions it. On the other hand, Manuel's blue eyes are only too distinct. The political context of Manuel's wedding has most recently been discussed by S. W. Reinert, “Political Dimensions of Manuel II Palaiologos' 1392 Marriage and Coronation: Some New Evidence,” ed. C. Sode and S. Takács, *Novum Millennium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck*, Aldershot 2001, 291–303.

⁶ The conflict is described by John Kantakouzenos himself and by a high official at the court, Nikephoros Gregoras. See Ioannes Cantacuzenus, *Historiae*, ed. L. Schopen, Bonn 1828, 11, *passim*, and Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, Bonn 1830, 11, *passim*. The latest book on this subject is D. M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, ca. 1295–1383*, Cambridge 1996.

the marriage of Kantakouzenos' daughter with John V. Unfortunately, it did not make peace between the two ambitious families, and John VI Kantakouzenos was forced by his son-in-law to abdicate in 1354. Then John V started his reign independently, and the fifty years of his rule turned out to be a disaster, although he did his best to show that the salvation of the empire, threatened by the Turks, was his main goal. According to Doukas, he devoted even more time to women.⁷ His wife, Helena Kantakouzena, was a notable exception.

Manuel was the second son of this couple. He did not have hopes of succeeding to the throne as his elder brother, Andronikos IV, was made co-emperor. It seems that the parents divided their love and care for the children between them. Andronikos was favoured by his father, while Manuel enjoyed the love of his mother.⁸ John V treated Manuel as a pawn in international politics. At the very beginning of John's reign, in 1355, when the emperor was looking for assistance in the West, he asked the pope for help and offered to send the five-year-old Manuel to the papal court to receive a Latin education. The pope declined the offer, thus depriving the young Manuel of a chance to learn Latin in Latin lands.⁹ Then, in 1370–1371, during John's stay in Venice,

⁷ As stated explicitly by Ducas, *Historia Byzantina*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1834, 44. The chronicler adds his negative opinion about the quality of John's mind.

⁸ This was far from the idealized pattern of family relations created in the treatise by Andronikos II's son. See M. Dąbrowska, "Family Ethos at the Imperial Court of the Palaiologos in the Light of the Testimony by Theodore of Montferrat," *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* 2 (1994), 73–81.

⁹ O. Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance a Rome. Vingt ans de travail pour l'union des Eglises et pour la defense de l'empire d'Orient 1355–1375*, Warsaw 1930, 33. Halecki uses the expression "le pere adoptif" for the pope, which is repeated by Nicol and gives a very peculiar image of John V's political intuition and his paternal feelings. Innocent VI did not need a surrogate family, and his expectations were strictly political. See D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1993, 258. Halecki, *Un empereur*, 32, was convinced that John deserved more sympathy. On

when it turned out that the emperor had no means to pay for his bed and breakfast, he left the twenty-one-year-old Manuel as a hostage of the Venetian government, while he tried to change his situation as a humiliated debtor.¹⁰

For Manuel this rather long stay was sweetened by an encounter with a mysterious woman whose name is unknown to historians.¹¹ He fell in love with a Venetian woman, and fathered an illegitimate daughter, Zampia, taking care of her as long as he lived.¹² The story of the Venetian woman is extremely

John V, see J. Radić, *Vreme Jovana V Paleologa (1332–1391)*, Belgrade 1993. This huge study does not really change general opinion on John's policy. The author's devotion to details and to the Balkan context should be stressed.

¹⁰ The stay in Venice concerned Byzantine financial obligations for the Serenissima. See D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1988, 304–07. It was the first visit of a Byzantine emperor to Venice. In the 14th century relations between the two powers were drastically changed. Byzantium became a permanent debtor of the republic. In this unfortunate situation for the emperor, it was not Andronikos IV but Manuel who appeared in Venice to help his father in the negotiations. Then he was left in Venice for some months in 1371; he received pocket money, 300 ducats, from the Venetian senate. As a hostage, Manuel was a pawn in Venetian hands. See R.-J. Loenertz, *Jean V Paleologue à Venise (1370–1371)*, *REB* 16 (1958), 217–32; J. Chrysostomides, “John V Palaiologos in Venice (1370–1371) and the Chronicle of Caroldo: a Reinterpretation,” *OCP* 31 (1965), 76–84. This article presents a view different from Halecki, *Un empereur*, 228–31.

¹¹ Cf. M. Dąbrowska, *Łacinniczki nad Bosforem. Małżeństwa bizantyńsko-łacińskie w cesarskiej rodzinie Paleologów (XIII–XV w.)* [*The Latin Ladies on the Bosphoros. Byzantine-Latin Marriages in the Imperial Family of the Palaiologoi (13th–15th Centuries)*], Lodz 1996, 98, 114. I follow Barker, *Manuel II*, 474, who wrote in an e-mail on 5 October 2006: “Zampia was born in the 1370s, which might rule out her resulting from a liaison in Venice, though not for sure.” As we cannot rule out the possibility, I would like to suggest it.

¹² I deal with Zampia in a project begun at All Souls College in 2001: “The Double Life of the Emperor: the Illegitimate Children of the Paleologoi and Their Careers.” Zampia, a daughter of Manuel II Palaiologos, was married

obscure. The actual duration of the relationship is difficult to establish. She was probably dead by the time of Manuel's marriage. Since Manuel was excluded from the dynastic policy of the court, he was in charge of his family life, and thus remained a bachelor until his forties, which was rare in Byzantium. His brother Andronikos was betrothed at a young age to a Bulgarian princess – in 1355, the year when Manuel was supposed to start his education at the papal court. By the year of Manuel's stay in Venice, 1371, Andronikos had already had a son, the future John VII. In these circumstances, with a clear prospect of succession through Andronikos IV to his son, John VII, the grandson of the old emperor John V, the latter seemed unperturbed by Manuel's unmarried state.

An interesting passage in Chalkokondyles' chronicle, accepted by only a few historians, suggests that his father made an attempt to arrange a marriage for Manuel. According to the chronicler, John V decided to marry the thirteen-year-old Manuel to the daughter of the Trebizondian emperor. When she arrived in Constantinople, the whole court – and most of all, her prospective father-in-law – was dazzled by her beauty. With such a rival, Manuel had no chance. Whatever the case, the woman was no longer considered his bride-to be.¹³ As his

to a Genoese, Hilario Doria, who acted as Manuel II's envoy in diplomatic missions. See Barker, *Manuel II*, 158. Andronikos IV could have been sure of his position, as he married Maria-Kyratza from Bulgaria, who bore him the future John VII. See S. Mesanovic, *Jovan VII*, Belgrade 1996. "The Double Life of the Emperor" will be part of a book or an article. I suspended work on it due to my stay at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

¹³ Chalkokondyles, *Historiarum libri decem*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1843, 81. See R.-J. Loenertz, "Une erreur singulière de Laonic Chalcocondyle: le prétendu second mariage de Jean V Paléologue," *REB* 15 (1957), 176–81. A. Bryer supports this view: "Greeks and Turkmen: the Pontic exception," *DOP* 29 (1975), 140. Eudokia was a daughter of Alexios III of Trebizond and of an unknown mother, a widow of Emir Tacedin. M. Carroll does not exclude John's interest in the woman in analyzing the text of Sphrantzes that alludes to this liaison. See M. Carroll, "A Minor Matter of Imperial Importance in the

mother's beloved son, who bore a resemblance to his grandfather, John Kantakouzenos, Manuel was a rival, rather than a political partner, for his father. Life taught John V a bitter lesson when his son Andronikos IV rebelled against him, using a disagreement in the Osmanli family. The sultan, to whom John V had been a vassal since 1372–1373, asked the emperor to punish his son. Andronikos was disinherited. It was Manuel who remained loyal and was awarded the imperial title in 1373. He was more loyal to his father than his father deserved. This situation did not last long, since Andronikos usurped power in 1376 and put his father and brothers, Manuel and Theodore, into prison. John V regained his position in 1379.¹⁴

Leaving aside this *coup d'état*, it should be said that there was no matrimonial policy of the court in the case of Manuel. In fact, he was not considered a successor. Therefore, Manuel was free to find the woman of his choice or, perhaps, she found him. Whatever the case, the woman became the mother of Zampia and probably of his other children, who died early, and to whom Manuel and his mother allude in the dialogue.¹⁵

Sphrantzes' 'Chronicle,'" *B* 49 (1979), 88–93. I find her arguments plausible. John V's wife lived until 1396, but this is not a counter-argument. He did not divorce her and marry off John to the Trebizondian lady. The history of the Byzantine court knows such triangular situations, e.g., the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, his wife Zoe, and his mistress Maria Skleraina. See M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204: A Political History*, London 1984, 46. This "trio" is described by Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, II, ed. E. Renauld, Paris 1928, 50–60.

¹⁴ Manuel was crowned in Thessalonica at the age of twenty-three and this ceremony could have been seen as a good omen. He was quickly disappointed by Andronikos' rebellion and then by his father's behaviour after regaining the throne. Embittered, Manuel withdrew to Thessalonica. He lived away from the Constantinopolitan court. See D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries, 277–83*; G. T. Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica 1382–1387*, Rome 1960.

¹⁵ A. Angelou, *Dialogue*, 96–97: "...why should we add further to the welter of our anxieties and divide the mind into two, into things mutually

I would conjecture that Manuel, unlike his profoundly Palaiologos brother, was too much of a Kantakouzenos for his father to consider him his successor. This distrust testifies to a prolonged rivalry between the two families even after the abdication of John VI Kantakouzenos and his son Matthew. Helena Kantakouzena, the wife of John V Palaiologos, conducted her own policy by promoting the Kantakouzenoi through her children, although they had already become Palaiologoi. The eldest son, Andronikos, was under his father's tutelage, but the younger sons, Manuel and Theodore, were neglected by him. As a result, they remained under the influence of the mother. Manuel and Theodore, the future despot at Mistra, became best friends.¹⁶ After Theodore's untimely death, Manuel mourned him deeply, expressing his grief in his funeral oration.¹⁷

The whole milieu, consisting of the empress mother, Manuel and Theodore, was greatly influenced by Demetrios Kydones, an intellectual and mentor of Helena and Manuel. Demetrios was in close contact with Manuel, and they exchanged many letters. Being pro-Latin, Demetrios preferred to stay in Venice from 1371 rather than return to Constantinople.¹⁸ The emperor

opposing; on the one side, arms and wars and, to be brief, their usual outcome; and on the other side, the education and upbringing of children, and all the other cares and arrangements to be made for them and for the house; let alone illnesses and deaths of children, mourning for them and following them to their graves." See Barker, *Manuel II*, 474.

¹⁶ On Theodore's reign in Mistra in 1383–1407 see D. A. Zakythinos, "Le despotat grec de Morée 1262–1460," *Histoire politique*, Paris 1932, 125–65. After 1379, when John V regained illusory power, his sons had also shared his illusion: Andronikos IV and his son reigned on the north coast of the Sea of Marmara, while Manuel was in Thessalonica and Theodore in Mistra. D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 283, calls them puppets in Turkish or Italian hands.

¹⁷ Manuel II Palaeologus, *Funeral Oration on his Brother Theodore*, ed. and tr. J. Chrysostomides, Thessalonike 1985.

¹⁸ Demetrius Cydones, *Correspondance*, ed. R.-J. Loenertz, 2 vols., Vatican 1956–1960; Demetrios Kydones, *Briefe*, ed. F. Tinnfeld, 1.1, 2,

Manuel's letters to Kydones and other friends show him to be a melancholy man, without any prospects for his own future or that of the empire. In a letter to Manuel Chrysoloras written during the emperor's stay in the West, Manuel says that he does not see any point in writing, and his mood is clearly shown by the remark that sad birds do not sing.¹⁹

The historical scene having been set, we can return to the dialogue on marriage. The structure of a dialogue involves the continual exchange of opinions. The old empress Helena Kantakouzena argues for marriage, while her son, Manuel, argues against it. Only fortunate circumstances allowed him to inherit the throne after the death of Andronikos in 1385, but he himself had no legitimate successor. On the other hand, there was Andronikos' son, John VII, already betrothed, if not married, in 1390.²⁰ Manuel was convinced that his line of succession was threatened with extinction. This anxiety about succession can be found in the pages of the dialogue. He admits that "the *kairos* was not for marriage"²¹:

Stuttgart 1981–1982. G. T. Dennis, *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus*, Washington D.C. 1977. The comments of the editors are very useful for analyzing the political context of Manuel's and Kydones' statements. On Kydones' devotion to Helena Kantakouzena, see F. Kianka, "The Letters of Demetrios Kydones to Empress Helena Kantakuzene Palaiologina," *DOP* 46 (1992), 155–64. Kydones accompanied John V to Rome in 1369 and was in Venice in 1370–1371. He returned to the republic in 1390, where he was granted Venetian citizenship in January 1391. He regretted his decision to return to Constantinople because of the political situation. He finally left Constantinople after the disaster at Nikopolis in 1396 and went to Venice, and then to Crete, where he died in 1397–1398. See F. Kianka, "Demetrios Kydones and Italy," *DOP* 59 (1995), 107–10.

¹⁹ G. T. Dennis, *Letters of Manuel Palaeologus*, no. 39, 105, 14–15. "Sad birds" is an allusion to Plato.

²⁰ For John VII's marriage see J. W. Barker, *Manuel II*, 463–64. For his child: G. T. Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor, Andronikos V Palaeologus (1400–1407)," *JOB* 16 (1967), 175–87.

²¹ A. Angelou, *Dialogue*, 55 (Introduction).

I did get married and quickly looked upon children. But, I was not able to eliminate with the blessings of marriage all the everyday cares of married life. These cares come one after the other, and there is never an end in sight. On the other hand, to tell the truth, being a bachelor was a bit of a storm; only being married has not been a calm either.²²

The ruler should, however, give a good example. “You see,” the empress says, “you cannot be in a position to regulate well the lives of your subjects, unless you show yourself as though having been all shaped up before.”²³ She justifies her attitude thus: “I was not at all to blame for urging you to marry.” She continues, “But you, my dear, as it happens, are a statesman; and not just that – you are a ruler, too, and you ought to be the model and standard for those who live as citizens under you.”²⁴ Helena does not stop warning her son against the danger of his unmarried state, which puts him in a difficult position in his confrontation with John VII, his strong nephew. “You will have a successor, you will eliminate John VII.” “If you had children,” she says, “you would have fewer plots than if you had not.”²⁵ He agrees that the civil war is gangrenous. “A disaster,” she answers.²⁶ Apparently she did not love her grandson, who was so much a Palaiologos and so little a Kantakouzenos. Manuel on the whole accepted her point of view; his opposition to her argument was typically philosophical: why should I marry when the state is in such dire straits? Why should I have children and see their misery, illnesses and looming death?²⁷ This particular excerpt of the dialogue merits special attention. Ma-

²² Ibidem, 71.

²³ Ibidem, 69.

²⁴ Ibidem, 87.

²⁵ Ibidem, 117.

²⁶ Ibidem, 111.

²⁷ Ibidem, 96–97. The text is quoted above in no. 15.

Manuel must have suffered because of the loss of his children. Helena tries to make Manuel think about the good aspect of marriage and a happy future for the children.²⁸ At the end of this verbal duel Manuel admits that he has been defeated. “Come on, then,” he says to his mother, “the winning argument is on your side.”²⁹

Manuel’s pessimistic attitude towards marriage is not evident only in this work. It can also be found in the treatise on Islam, written in the winter of 1391 or 1392, when he was a vassal of the Turkish sultan and stayed in his camp near Ankara.³⁰ This conversation with a Muslim was written for Theodore, his brother. Let us concentrate on the passage where Manuel and his interlocutor talk about marriage. From the Muslim point of view, a man cannot be alone. Celibacy is unthinkable.³¹ The Muslim asks: “What is a man without a woman?” This question is put indirectly, as the conversation concerns general differences in the religions.

Why did Manuel write a dialogue on marriage after the battle of Nikopolis or even earlier? He was already married, and his first son, the future John VIII, had been born at the end

²⁸ Ibidem, 51–55 (Introduction). Uncertain about the future of his successors, Manuel is recollecting the loss of the children he had with the Venetian woman.

²⁹ Ibidem, 117.

³⁰ Manuel II Palaiologue, *Entretiens avec un musulman: 7e controverse*, introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par T. Khoury, Paris 1966. The whole treatise discusses various aspects of Islamic religion, and only the seventh dialogue, which is devoted to Islamic law, touches upon the problem of marriage, stating only that it is a necessity for a man. See the new edition: *Kaiser Manuel II Palaiologos, Dialog über den Islam und Erziehungsratschläge*, ed. W. Baum, trans. R. Senoner, Vienna 2003.

³¹ Ibidem, 86. Manuel cites the opinion of Tabarsi a Shi’a, a writer, who says: “De votre monde j’ai aimé les femmes et les parfums,” and stresses that “mon délice est dans la prière.” This opinion seems to have been shared by Manuel, yet marriage was not necessary for him to enjoy those “délices.”

of 1392. Taking this fact into consideration, the whole dialogue seems out of place; and yet it makes sense. Even with a wife and a child, Manuel still doubts whether he did well to marry and have children. His mother's recurrent warning is the danger of losing the throne to his nephew, John VII. She encourages her son to think in a responsible way about the family.

Helena died in 1396. Kydones, to whom the treatise was dedicated, passed away one year later, and Theodore, the beloved brother, died in 1407. Manuel became even lonelier. Manuel's funeral oration for Theodore is so full of sorrow and grief that it is difficult to read. He says that he is weeping rather than writing. Miserable as he was, he managed to write more than a hundred pages (in the modern edition). It is not a small oration, but a very personal and moving reaction to a family disaster. Manuel had lost his last friend. "We were created for ourselves," he writes, "one for another."³² Their fraternal bonds were very strong. Manuel remained a bachelor much longer than his brother, who married the beautiful Bartolomea Acciaiuoli, daughter of the Florentine Duke of Athens, in 1384.³³ It did not weaken their relations as best brothers. "We were one in success and misfortune, in comfort and in sorrow."³⁴

To sum up, it is clear that the first version of the dialogue was composed not to discuss marriage per se but to justify marrying for dynastic reasons, the need to have male heirs in order

³² Chrysostomides, *Funeral Oration*, 162.

³³ The Duchy of Athens, a product of the Fourth Crusade, was ruled by the Burgundian family, de la Roche, then by the Catalans, who were introduced to the political scene in Constantinople by Roger de Flor, a notorious adventurer. See K. M. Setton, *Catalan Domination in Athens (1311–1388)*, Cambridge (MA) 1948. Finally, the Duchy was taken over by the family of Florentine bankers, the Acciaiuoli, who had begun their career in Naples. Bartolomea was a good asset of this rule. Theodore hoped that his father-in-law would offer him rights to Athens, but the Duchy remained in Latin hands until the Ottoman conquest.

³⁴ Chrysostomides, *Funeral Oration*, 218.

to compete with the nephew John VII. Still, a most interesting question remains unanswered. Why did Manuel revise his dialogue and delete some passages? The exact date of this revision is unknown. Angelou considers the whole period from 1417 to 1425, but he is inclined to date the revised version to 1417, basing his arguments on philological considerations. It would hardly have been possible for Manuel to write it in his last years when he was really old, given that he became paralyzed three years before his death.³⁵ I would like to argue that the revised version was meant for his son John VIII.

John was born in 1392.³⁶ His childhood was spent in precarious circumstances. The blockade of Constantinople by the Turks started in 1394. The battle of Nikopolis in 1396 was inconclusive. Manuel decided to look for help in the West. He left Byzantium at the end of 1399. Afterwards, he regretted that he had done so, leaving his infant son behind in the Peloponnese.³⁷ Tamerlane's victory at Ankara in 1402 changed the situation. The Turks were completely defeated. The spirit of Manuel soared. In 1414 he started to think about strengthening the Peloponnese by building the Hexamilion, a great wall on the Isthmus of Corinth, which was to protect the peninsula against Turkish invasion.³⁸ Manuel profited from Ottoman dynastic conflicts at that time; he had

³⁵ In 1422 Manuel had his first stroke, which eliminated him from active political life. John VIII became the actual ruler. See Barker, *Manuel II*, 381.

³⁶ On John VIII, see I. Durić, *Sumrak Vizantije: Vreme Jovana VIII Paleologa 1392–1448*, Belgrade 1984. Presenting a panorama of the last years of the empire, this book can be compared with the work on John V by Radić: from the Belgrade school of Byzantinists.

³⁷ J. Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and other Essays*, Oxford 1964, 105. The author confuses Cleopa Malatesta, Theodore II Palaiologos' wife, with Sofia of Montferrat, calling the latter Sophia Malatesta, which was not the case: Gill, *Personalities*, 108.

³⁸ D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: the Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans*, Cambridge 1992, 24. For the role of the Hexamilion during John's rule see M. Dąbrowska, "Hexamilion

high hopes for the future. John was to be his successor; unfortunately, however, John was not interested in marriage. He passed his time in the Peloponnese in 1413–16 without any interest in his young bride who had come from Moscow in 1414 and eventually died in Constantinople in 1417.³⁹ Their union was probably not consummated. There was still no successor, and John was already twenty-five years old. It cannot be ruled out that Manuel was revising his text as early as 1414–1415, because John was in no hurry to start a family life.

Circumstances suggest that the dialogue was revised to encourage John to marry, and the authority of his grandmother was to guide him. Marriage was necessary. The rival, John VII, died in 1408, and his son Andronikos V had died even earlier, but the succession was not secure. Manuel politely eliminated all the passages concerning John VII and the family quarrel.⁴⁰ The text was meant to offer advice. We do not know whether

i Warna” (“Hexamilion and Varna”), *Balkanica Posnaniensia* 8 (1997), 61–70.

³⁹ Anna was a daughter of the Great Duke Basil I of Moscow. After Manuel’s coronation in 1393, Basil dared to say that the Orthodox, and not the emperor, “had Church,” and Manuel’s name was not commemorated in the Moscovite churches. Patriarch Antonios IV calmed the situation. Anna’s appearance in Constantinople is a proof of the great political ambitions of Basil, who was still dependent on the Mongols. See D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 299.

⁴⁰ As an example, I quote a bitter passage from the end of the treatise. The emperor addresses his mother: “Perhaps you remember the time when he [John VII] used to say he regretted what he had done – it was a sham – and when he used to commend peace warmly in his words and promise that in future he would be as a loving son. And he did all these things as though in secret, while he slyly confided to our worst and impious enemies then at peace with us and under a treaty. His plan was to make them angry at us and cause the present war [the siege of Constantinople, which began in 1394]. He would thus vent his hostility, which he had been fostering for a long time against us. You know, Mother, how I believed him then” (A. Angelou, *Dialogue*, 111). It is evident that the emperor wanted to eliminate the traces of family dispute from the text. John VII was no

John VIII took the advice to heart. He married for the second time in 1421. According to Doukas, his wife, Sophia of Montferrat, turned out to be so ugly that the marriage was probably not consummated because of his revulsion.⁴¹ At the time of John's second marriage, Manuel had little to say, as he had become old and very ill. It seems to me that the revised version of the dialogue might have been composed in 1414 or later, in order to persuade John to think about the future of the dynasty, in which he did not seem interested. Angelou points out that Manuel's dialogue is extraordinary in the sense that it is not about marriage but about a concrete family situation. He is right, but he concentrates on the first version. The message of the second version remains the same, but the addressee is evident: John VIII, who had five brothers with ambitions similar to his own.

It is interesting to compare Manuel's work with a text on a similar subject by Philippe de Mézières, a writer connected with the Cypriot court of the Lusignans. He wrote his *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage* between 1385 and 1395, almost at the same time as Manuel wrote his dialogue.⁴² This is a religious treatise, and love is seen in the context of Christ's

longer alive, and relations with the Turks were good. Thus the emperor was concerned about the future of the dynasty.

⁴¹ Sophia's disfigured face was described by Doukas, 100–01. See M. Dabrowska, "Sophia of Montferrat or the History of One Face," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis, Folia Historica* 56 (1996), 177–94. John VIII divorced Sophia in 1426, and in 1427 he married the beautiful Maria of Trebizond, who became the lady of his heart. A rumour spread in Constantinople that she had more than family connections with her brother Alexander. John's third marriage was childless, and he did not leave any illegitimate children. His infertility was his tragedy, as was that of his brother Constantine XI, who succeeded him and died on the walls of Constantinople on the last day of the siege, on 29 May 1453. See D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor*, passim.

⁴² P. de Mézières, *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage*, ed. J. Williamson, Washington D.C., 1993.

passion. Paradoxically, Manuel's dialogue has no religious message, which is surprising both for Byzantine literature, so much concerned with religion, and for Manuel himself, who had theological interests. The difference in tone between the two texts may be explained by the difference of their implied readers. Philippe's treatise is written as a "réconfort des Dames mariées," who were unhappy in their marriages.⁴³ The example of Christ is shown to them all the time, and the important virtues such as patience, understanding and submission to the husband are promoted.⁴⁴ The treatise was written with Isabelle de Bavière, the wife of king of France, Charles VI the Fool, in mind. Her marriage to the insane Charles was unhappy. There were rumours that she was comforted by the king's brother, Louis of Orleans.⁴⁵

Manuel's text differs greatly from Philippe's. It is more interesting, more original, more unusual. In no way does it compare with the treatise by an earlier emperor, Theodore II Laskaris, which is a show of rhetorical skill on the uselessness of remarriage.⁴⁶ Manuel's dialogue makes one think about a certain

⁴³ P. de Mézières, *Livre*, 43.

⁴⁴ Before P. de Mézières, Boccaccio, in his story of Griselda in the *Decameron*, promoted such a paragon of a faithful wife, ready to sacrifice herself for the family. Petrarch made a Latin translation of Boccaccio's story, and Chaucer based "The Clerk's Tale" in *The Canterbury Tales* on Petrarch's version.

⁴⁵ There is no direct evidence for Isabelle's liaison with Louis of Orleans. It is known that he paid her many visits and that he was murdered near the queen's apartments in Paris. See *Chronique du religieux de Saint Denis contenant le règne de Charles VI de 1380 à 1422*, III, ed. M. L. Bellaguet, Paris 1842, 730. The supposed or true love affair was treated as an excuse for Jean the Fearless to kill Louis, his political rival: R. C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI, 1392-1420*, New York 1986, 4.

⁴⁶ Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris, "Ad amicos qui ipsura hortabantur ut uxorem duceret," *Opuscula rhetorica*, ed. A. Tartaglia, Munich 2000, 109-18. John III Vatatzes' second wife's lady-in-waiting was dearer to him than the political profits from this marriage. On Vatatzes' marriage

Polish gentlewoman who was getting married during the First World War and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. She felt so uncertain about her own and her family's future that she ordered her clothes and linen to be embroidered, and her china to be marked with the philosophical question: "Δὶ τί" ("What for?"). This perennial question seems to have been shared by Manuel, too. For both of them the *kairos* was not for marriage.

to Constance (Anna) of Hohenstaufen see A. Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea: The Story of an Empire in Exile*, London 1912, 308.

Sophia of Montferrat or the History of One Face

Faced with the epoch of late Byzantium, the historian cannot complain about the lack of data concerning the Emperors. By way of contrast, there seems to be no material on the ladies who accompanied the Palaiologoi. Apart from a few exceptions, the lives of women were eclipsed by the politics which always acted as a matchmaker for their marriages. An eligible candidate that was chosen on the marriage market was supposed to bring in particular diplomatic assets. Such was the case of Sophia of Montferrat who played the role of political hostage in the negotiations between Byzantium and the Papacy.

In the first half of the 15th century Byzantium found itself at the mercy of fate or rather the Turks. But for Timur's invasion on Asia Minor and his victory over the Turks at Ankara in 1402, Byzantium would have fallen. After a brief political respite for the Empire, the Turkish revival became a fact. During the reign of Sultan Mehmed I (1413–1421) the relations with the Byzantine neighbour were quite correct. Mehmed succeeded to the throne due to the support offered by Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, who sided with him in the conflict with other pretenders to the rule. He did not attack. Manuel II profited by the time of agreement and he took care of the Byzantine possessions in the Peloponnese, where they bordered on the Latin ones. The Latins had settled down there as a result of the Fourth Crusade in 1204; their presence had nearly been accepted. Byzantium had relied

on trade links with Venice and Genoa for quite some time then. Serenissima gained conspicuous advantage due to the Fourth Crusade whereas Genoa obtained great privileges after the restoration of Byzantine rule in Constantinople in 1261. Located on the bank of Golden Horn, Pera, a distinguished Latin district of Constantinople had in fact a status of a separate political organism.

Byzantium would have liked to get rid of an unwanted co-habitator. Still, financially and economically weak as it was, the Empire depended on the Latins. The dependence increased when Byzantium had to seek a military ally against the Turks in the Latin camp. Caught between the Latin Scylla and Ottoman Charybdis, the Empire found itself in a precarious political position. When the Turkish aggression became more than apparent, the Byzantine diplomacy sought Western support and turned to the Pope, whose authority might have been a factor in gaining the help of Christendom. The Emperor promised a Church Union in return. Rome was ready to welcome the attractive proposal even though its sincerity was doubtful. The reservations proved to be well-based because the proposal of union functioned as a political argument in a game for political survival and did not express the Byzantines' real need for the union with Rome. All the endeavors became less and less marked as the Turkish grip on the Byzantine future weakened. Such was the case this time. After Mehmed I had succeeded to the throne, Byzantium had a moment's rest before the next confrontation. At that time the Papacy was trying hard to regain its political authority. In 1414 the Council gathered in Constance and put an end to the Western Schism by electing Martin V the Pope in 1417. A Byzantine delegation put an appearance at this Council. Its presence in Constance is not easy to understand. Relations between the Turks and Byzantines were correct, Manuel II strengthened fortifications in the Peloponnese. Why did he attempt to seek papal support? Did he anticipate another conflict with the Turks?

Manuel was 65 years old at that time.¹ He was famous as a diplomat and respected as an intellectual. He saw his eldest son John VIII as an heir to his legacy. John was born in 1392. His political education started very early. Some historians are prepared to assume that he gained the status of co-Emperor as early as in 1407 or even in 1403.² This is a significant correction of the story offered by the chroniclers of those times, who claimed that John had been promoted to this dignity as a result of his marriage to Sophia of Montferrat in 1421. At that time Byzantium profited by the financial support of Moscow which had been persuaded to act as the saviour of the Second Rome.³ The first marriage of John to Anna, daughter of Moscovian Prince Basil I, was the expression of these links. Some time later (the marriage was concluded in 1414) the young wife reached Constantinople and died there as a result of pestilence in 1417. Being aware of the political role of his son's marriage, Manuel began to consider another match for the young widower. Political advantages were supposed to follow as a result. Also, an heir to the throne was expected. Manuel had other sons too, but only John's descendant was entitled to the legacy.

In the meantime Manuel hoped for the end of the conflict between Venice and Hungary. As he wanted to distract the attention of Venice from Hungary and gain Serenissima's support, the Emperor sent an embassy to Constance to mediate in the

¹ On Manuel II see: J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1968.

² After the death of Theodore I Palaiologos, Despot at Mistra (1407), Manuel II went to the Peloponnese, leaving in Constantinople John VIII as his representative. It seems that John was already a co-Emperor.

³ Cf. D. Obolensky, "Some Notes Concerning a Byzantine Portrait of John VIII Palaiologos," *Eastern Churches Review* 4 (1972), 142. The view clashes with that of J. Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence*, Oxford 1964, 106, who follows F. Dölger, "Die Krönung Johanns VIII. zum Mitkaiser," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* Bd. 36 (1936), 318–19. According to them, a coronation took place in 1421.

Hungarian-Venetian conflict. He also came up with the proposal of Church Union even though the political situation did not warrant it. Hence the Emperor's initiative meets with surprise; there is no adequate interpretation of such a move in literature on the subject. As a result of the Byzantine mission to Constance, the Pope agreed to accept marriages of Manuel's sons to Catholic ladies.⁴ Was it Manuel himself who turned to the Pope with such a request? Or, was it Martin V who, on his succession to the papal throne in 1417, came up with the conciliatory initiative himself in order to make the Union possible? The Pope recommended two ladies: Cleope Malatesta and Sophia of Montferrat. The names were not prominent on the Italian political stage but they were not insignificant either. The papal protection promoted them. Putting aside Cleope's case, I would like to focus on Sophia. It was by no means the first appearance of the Montferrat family on the political stage. The Marquisate of Montferrat was located in the area around the upper river Po, at the foothills of the Alps, in north-western Italy. Situated on the way from Germany to Italy, it had often been in the centre of attention of Roman-German Emperors. They wanted to secure Montferrat's support in case of a conflict with the papacy.

The links between Montferrat and Byzantium date back to the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, i.e. the second half of the 12th century. However, they did not result from the constraints of the political cohabitation which fell to the lot of the Byzantines after the Fourth Crusade. In 1176 Manuel Komnenos was defeated by the Turks at Myriokephalon. Soon afterwards he found himself threatened by the alliance of the Turks and Roman-German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. It was then that Manuel made an appeal to Montferrat, hoping the Marquisate would attract the attention of Barbarossa to northern Italy. In return, Renier

⁴ O. Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, XVIII, Roma 1659, ad anno 1418, no 17. The Pope addressed six imperial sons.

Montferrat married Manuel's daughter Maria.⁵ The father-in-law promised him Thessalonica as a kind of western feud. The promise gave rise to the claims voiced by Boniface, Renier's brother, one of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade.⁶ When the participants of the crusade started to divide the Byzantine territories they had conquered in 1204, Boniface claimed Thessalonica. He became its King as a result. The Kingdom had been governed by him and his son Demetrios till 1224, i.e. till the moment when the ruler of Epiros put an end to this ephemeral state.⁷

At the same time, William, Boniface's son from the first marriage, held sway over Montferrat. It was this family branch that gave birth to Yolanda who was married to Andronikos II Palaiologos in 1284. Arranging this marriage, Andronikos had an occasion to raise the question of Montferrat's hereditary claims to Thessalonica. In fact Yolanda brought the city in her dowry. In return, the Emperor gave a large sum of money to her father.⁸ After Yolanda's brother had died heirless, Montferrat was given to Theodore, her son by Andronikos II. Theodore created the new family branch called Palaiologos-Montferrat.⁹ He married Argentina Spinola, who represented one of the most

⁵ Ch. Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West 1180–1204*, Cambridge (MA) 1968, 19.

⁶ Apart from Renier and Boniface, William and Conrad Montferrat also made a political career in the East, reaching for the crown of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Cf. S. Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, London 1965, vol. 2, 411; vol. 3, 64. The same author remarks that the sources do not mention the fact that Thessalonica was given Byzantium to Montferrat family. Cf. Idem, "Thessalonica and the Montferrat Inheritance," *Gregorios 'o Palamas* 42 (1959), 28.

⁷ D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros*, Oxford 1957, 63.

⁸ D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady. Ten Portraits 1250–1500*, Cambridge 1994, 49. I am indebted to D. M. Nicol, who kindly let me use the typescript of his book.

⁹ A. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronikos II 1282–1328*, Cambridge (MA) 1972, 48.

powerful Genoese homes. The Palaiologos-Montferrat embraced Catholicism and yielded to Latinization.¹⁰ They held sway over the Marquisate till 1533 and their names testified to the Byzantine connections of the family. The tradition is reflected in typically Greek names like Theodore and Sophia. The links between Montferrat and Genoa were particularly strong, which was echoed in the fact that Theodore II Montferrat became the Genoese ruler in 1409. He only managed to keep his position till 1413. After a brief period of independence Genoa was captured by Philip of Visconti who ruled there till 1435.¹¹

Sophia of Montferrat was Theodore II's daughter and she belonged to the Palaiologos-Montferrat branch.¹² Sophia's marriage to John VIII was the result of papal policy after the end of the Western Schism in 1417. The historians who deal with that matter, S. Runciman and I. Durić, say that Sophia and Cleope, the wife of Theodore II Palaiologos, were chosen on the Pope's explicit suggestion.¹³ What could be the wider political background for these endeavours? What factors guided Byzantium in its choice, and what did Marquisate of Montferrat hope for? The exact date of Sophia's birth is not known. However, genealogical testimony indirectly suggests that she was born in 1394. The same data let us infer that she was engaged to Philip of Visconti from Milan in 1405 but the marriage was not arranged.¹⁴ In 1420 she was chosen

¹⁰ A. Laiou, "A Byzantine Prince Latinized: Theodore Paleologos, Marquis of Montferrat," *Byzantion* 38 (1968), 368–410.

¹¹ T. O. De Negri, *Storia di Genova*, Milano 1968, 544.

¹² Theodore of Montferrat, son of Yolanda and Andronikos II, and at the same time grandfather of Theodore II, look over the Marquisate in 1305.

¹³ S. Runciman, "The Marriages of the Sons of the Emperor Manuel II," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi, Miscellanea Agostino Pertusi* 1 (1980), 276–77. I. Durić, *Sumrak Vizantije. Vreme Jovana VIII Paleologa 1392–1448*, Beograd 1984, 215.

¹⁴ M. D. Sturdza, *Grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople. Dictionnaire historique et généalogique*, Paris 1983, 540.

as John VIII's wife. She was 26 years old, and her future husband was nearly her age. A mature bride was a rarity in Byzantine customs – women got married much earlier.¹⁵ However, in the West marriage at this age was by no means extraordinary. The fact that the Empress's age was ignored by the Byzantines raises the question of political advantages connected with this match.

Tempted by the proposal of the Union, Pope Martin V wrote to Manuel's sons in 1418, encouraging them to marry Latin ladies on condition that their Catholic Creed would be respected.¹⁶ What made the Pope choose Sophia of Montferrat? After all, Montferrat was the leader of the Ghibelline party, i.e. the Roman-German Emperor's allies, traditionally opposed to the Guelfs, the papal partisans. Was it the Pope's goal to secure the Italian Ghibellines' support, when he asked for Sophia as an eligible candidate? The Avignon crisis and the Western Schism undermined the Pope's authority. As a result, the Ghibellines gained the conspicuous advantage. The fact that the Marquisate found itself in the Pope's camp suggests that it had changed its political allegiance. This in turn may have resulted from the crisis of western imperial power which could no longer offer reliable support. The papal choice of Sophia raised the prestige of Montferrat in the eyes of the Byzantines. Even though Byzantium was in a very precarious political situation, the *éclat* of imperial title was not diminished. The promotion to a high dignity satisfied Montferrat's expectations anew, and secured an ally for the Pope. It is rather difficult to fully accept Runciman's claim that Emperor Manuel wanted to secure Genoa's support due to the marriage of his son John with Sophia.¹⁷ The Republic was politically divided. The fact that Theodore, Sophia's father,

¹⁵ Women were regarded as nubile starting from the age of twelve. Cf. E. Patlagean, "L'enfant et son avenir dans la famille byzantine (IV^e–XII^e siècles)," *Annales de la démographie historique, Enfant et sociétés* (1973), 86.

¹⁶ Raynaldus, op. cit., ad anno 1418, no 17.

¹⁷ Runciman, *The Marriages...*, 277.

was deprived of his rule there in 1413 proves that he had had quite a few opponents in Genoa. It cannot be ruled out that the Pope wanted to gain the favours of Montferrat against the Visconti whose expansion threatened the Church state. It should be stressed that there had been links between Montferrat and the Visconti from Milan due to the planned marriage of Sophia with Philip Maria Visconti. However, the links were quickly severed. In 1412 Philip married the widow of the condotier Facino Cane, who had ruled over the territory adjacent to the Genoese possessions. Such advantages naturally prompted him to pursue his policy of expansion at the cost of Genoa, among others. By breaking up the engagement, the Visconti found themselves in the opposition against Montferrat, which in turn slid into the role of the Pope's ally.¹⁸ It is difficult to state what were the political options of the Genoese who inhabited Pera in Constantinople or Crimean Caffa. However, it can be assumed that at least a substantial group looked at Sophia's marriage favourably.

The political background lets me suppose that the West could derive greater advantages from the marriage than Byzantium. What was in it for Manuel who looked for a wife for his son? In 1420 the Pope urged the European rulers to join the crusade against the Turks, specifically he made an appeal to the King of Hungary, Sigismund of Luxemburg. The appeal let the Byzantines hope that Hungary would give up its argument with Venice and that both powers would fight against Islam. Still, at that time Mehmed was loyal to Byzantium, so no threat seemed to loom on horizon. What counted in the matrimonial policy was the bride's position and connections, and that might have been

¹⁸ I did not manage to get hold of all the editions that present detailed history of Genoa, Milan and Montferrat in this particular period of time. I do not think that I would revise my views on reading the materials that are unavailable at the moment. However, I reserve the right to reexamine certain questions anew if the need arises.

instrumental in Manuel's decision.¹⁹ Sophia represented the connections between Montferrat and some powerful families of Genoa, moreover, she was supported by the Pope, whose status Manuel could not ignore.²⁰

Marriage negotiations were probably conducted by Sophia's younger brother, John James, who inherited Montferrat after his father's death in 1418. Sophia's mother was dead at that time. Michael Eudajmonojoannes negotiated on behalf of Byzantium. The meaning of his name is, nomen omen, Lucky John. However, his participation in the delicate mission did not bring anybody good luck. The phrasing of marriage contract probably concluded in 1420 is not known. It can only be assumed that the treaty ensured freedom of Creed for Sophia in accordance with the papal explicit wish. As for Cleope, she was entitled to the services of her chaplain and her Italian ladies-in-waiting.²¹ The same must have gone for Sophia. Is there anything that throws light on the 26 years of Sophia's life before she actually faced her marriage? Is it possible that she spent some time at the court in Milan as Visconti's fiancée?²² The engagement might have been arranged "per procura" and broken so early that Sophia never reached Milan. The court of Montferrat did not reject

¹⁹ Cf. R. Macrides, "Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship," *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin, London 1992, 264–80.

²⁰ papal support for the rescue of the Peloponnese was at stake in the first place. John's marriage seemed to be kept in the background. Cf. R. Loenertz, "Les dominicains byzantins Théodore et André Chrysobergès et les négociations pour l'union des Eglises grecque et latine de 1415 à 1430," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 9 (1939), 31.

²¹ D. A. Zakythinos, "Le déspotat grec de Morée (1262–1460)," t. 1, *Histoire politique*, Paris 1932, 189.

²² Cf. H. Brèse, "L'Europe des villes et des campagnes XIV^e–XV^e siècles," *Histoire de la famille*, ed. A. Burgière, Ch. Klapisch-Zuber, M. Segden, F. Sonabend, vol. 1: *Mondes lointains, mondes anciens*, Paris 1986, 414: "Les documents attestent que, dans le cas des fiançailles d'enfants, la fillette est en effet conduite dans la maison de ses beaux-parents 'afin de l'apprendre et de l'endoctriner.'"

the new cultural ideas which had been in circulation in Italy for some time. The new trend was reflected in education of ladies, too. Nothing can really be said about Sophia's education. It can only be suggested that Sophia was familiar with the code of manners. It was reconstructed for Florentine ladies by D. Herlihy and Ch. Klapisch-Zuber for the years 1422–1429, which overlapped with Sophia's own lifetime. Young Italian ladies were supposed to read or listen to texts by ancient authors and manuals of *savoir-vivre*. Some of them learnt Greek, too.²³ Such education could prove quite useful for Sophia, not only because of snobbery, but first of all because she was to marry a Byzantine. The court of Montferrat might have fostered a Byzantine tradition connected with Sophia's great-grandfather, Theodore I of Montferrat, Andronikos II's son. Still, it was a Latin milieu, and it is difficult to say whether Greek was actually taught there. However, such a possibility cannot be ruled out. After all, Sophia descended from the Latinized Greeks. The model of woman held up for imitation in the code involved modesty, self-effacement and moderation.²⁴ Sophia's Byzantine experience was to confirm this lifestyle. However, the ideal of *savoir-vivre* manuals was far from everyday behaviour of Italian women. In fact, they wanted to step forward and take an active part in social life. Commenting on Cleope, Plethon, a Byzantine intellectual, praises her for abandoning Italian liberties and adjusting to the severity of Greek customs.²⁵

It is not known what Sophia obtained from the Emperor as a wedding gift. Bearing in mind the convention of the epoch, it can be assumed that the gift consisted of dresses, coats, ornaments;

²³ D. Herlihy and Ch. Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles, Une étude du catasto florentin de 1427*, Paris 1978, 566.

²⁴ R. Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Illinois 1956, 44.

²⁵ Plethon, "Monody," *Palaiologeia kai Peloponesiaka*, vol. 4, ed. S. Lambros, Athens 1930, 167, v. 3–6. The Savoyard chronicler points out that the Byzantine life was far from severity that was held up as a model. Cf. *Chronique de Savoie*, ed. G. Paradin, Lyon 1852, 245–46

the above items were also a standard element of the bride's trousseau.²⁶ Sophia was destined to face the legend epitomized by Byzantium with the glamour of the imperial title. She followed in the footsteps of her ancestors, i.e. Boniface of Montferrat, the hero of the Fourth Crusade and Yolanda of Montferrat, Andronikos II's wife. This is how Sophia fulfilled the dynastic ambitions of her family. Sophia's father Theodore II was fascinated by the East, which may have sprung from the tradition preserved in troubadour songs. They glorified famous deeds of Boniface of Montferrat in Byzantium.²⁷ He might have been influenced not only by the songs but also by the legend about the beautiful Giordana. Its traces survived in the local chronicle and they are worth mentioning. Giordana was to have married Alexios, Manuel I Komnenos' son. The information is completely fictitious; it only proves that Montferrat's attention was still directed towards Byzantium even in the 14th–15th centuries. The legend spread a powerful conviction that the lady of Montferrat family had been a Byzantine Empress as early as in the time of the Komnenoi.²⁸

Sophia and Cleope were brought to Byzantium on board a Venetian ship. Sophia reached Constantinople in autumn 1420.²⁹ The project of her marriage to John VIII was criticized by the bishop of Thessalonica, who was afraid of Latinization.³⁰

²⁶ D. Herlihy, *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia. The Social History of an Italian Town 1200–1430*, New Haven 1967, 265.

²⁷ A. Barbero, "La corte dei Marchesi di Monferrato allo specchio della poesia trobadorica. Ambizioni signorili e ideologia cavalleresca fra XII e XIII secolo," *Bolletino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino* 81 (1983), 663.

²⁸ W. Haberstumpf, "Continuità di rapporti fra Bisanzio et la corte de Paleologi di Monferrato nei secoli XIV–XVI: realita e leggende," *Studi Piemontesi* 15 (marzo 1986), fasc. 1, 77–80. Giordana was to have been Renier of Montferrat's sister.

²⁹ Only Sphrantzes gives us an exact date, i.e. November 1420. G. Phrantzes, *Annales*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1838, 110, v. 22.

³⁰ Runciman, *The Marriages...*, 278. Thessalonica had evolved a long tradition of Latin rule, to mention only Boniface of Montferrat, Yolanda of Montferrat, Andronikos II's wife, Anne of Savoy, Andronikos III's wife.

He probably was not alone in his critical attitude; still it was decided that the marriage had to be concluded, and the wedding, as well as coronation ceremonies were held on 19 January 1421.³¹ Sophia did not change her name which came from the Greek calendar. Besides, the freedom of Creed had been guaranteed for her. John VIII, who had been crowned earlier, now crowned his wife himself.³² The coronation ceremony as such had been recorded by Pseudo-Kodinos. Accompanied by his court, the Emperor went out to welcome Sophia. The ladies-in-waiting dressed her in ceremonial robes and put the purple shoes on her feet, as a sign of the highest dignity. In Hagia Sophia the Emperor crowned his Empress himself.³³ According to the etiquette, the bride's relatives were supposed to be present at the ceremony but Sophia was an orphan. Even if her parents had been alive, it is doubtful whether they or their relatives would have come. Therefore during the ceremony she was surrounded by the eunuchs. Coronation and marriage ushered Sophia into the sacred dimension of Byzantium. From that moment onwards she was to enjoy the imperial dignity. After the ceremony the Empress customarily received Communion.³⁴ It is not known whether Sophia was given Communion in accordance with the Roman ritual. When the ceremony was over, she had

For Greeks there was no formal obstacle that could prevent the ruler from marrying a Latin lady. No Council termed the Latins heretics – who they were in fact in the light of Byzantine religion, though the epithet was never officially applied to them. Cf. D. M. Nicol, “Mixed Marriages in Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century,” *Studies in Church History* 1 (1964), reprinted in *Byzantium: Its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World*, chap. 4, London 1972, 171–72.

³¹ Phrantzes, op. cit., 111, v. 1–2.

³² S. Runciman, “Some Notes on the Role of Empress,” *Medieval Woman. Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M. T. Hill on the Occasion of Her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. D. Baker, Oxford 1978, 119.

³³ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, ed. J. Verpeaux, Paris 1966, 261, v. 3–21.

³⁴ Ch. Diehl, *Etudes byzantines*, Paris 1905, 228.

to appear in front of the people, as was the custom. According to Pseudo-Kodinos, feasts and festivals lasted a few days longer.³⁵ Sphrantzes confirms the fact, mentioning the celebrations which involved a great number of participants.³⁶

In spite of the dramatic financial situation of the Byzantine state, coronation ritual was still sumptuous. Sophia must have been impressed. But she may have been disappointed by the city. The descriptions of contemporary travellers prove that it was sparsely populated, and inhabitants were rather sad and poor.³⁷ Filelfo, a young Italian humanist who visited Constantinople, remarks that streets are badly lit; he also mentions women's isolation – they were rarely seen in the streets, and if they showed up at all, they had to be veiled. Filelfo noticed the good points about it – isolated women certainly preserved the purity of Greek language.³⁸ However, in the opinion of A. Laiou, the isolation did not have modesty as its purpose; it sprang from down-to-earth economic factors. Poverty eliminated the possibility of social life.³⁹ A very observant traveller, Pero Tafur, notices that the imperial palace was in a deplorable state and only a part of its interior was fit for human habitation. The imperial family occupied a severely limited space

³⁵ Pseudo-Kodinos, op. cit., 270, v. 13; 272, v. 10.

³⁶ Phrantzes, op. cit., 111, v. 4–5.

³⁷ Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435–1439*, ed. and trans. M. Letts, New York-London 1926. After A. Vasiliev, “Pero Tafur. A Spanish Traveller of the Fifteenth Century and His Visit to Constantinople, Trebizond and Italy,” *Byzantion* 7 (1932), 113.

³⁸ J. Gill, “Matrons and Brides of Fourteenth Century Byzantium,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* Bd. 10 (1985), 39; S. Runciman, “Women in Byzantine Aristocratic Society,” *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX–XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold, Oxford 1984, 17. Filelfo's observation marks him out as a stranger to a Byzantine world which presupposed the natural separation of men from women illustrated by the existence of gynaikion.

³⁹ A. Laiou, “The Role of Women in Byzantine Society,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik XVI Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress. Akten*. Bd. 1, II. 1 (1981), 260.

which was the reason for John VIII's frequent complaints.⁴⁰ Still, the traveller was greatly impressed by the library which seemed to be the only thing that resisted the flow of time. Tafur emphasizes the great liveliness of Pera, mostly inhabited by the Genoese. The buildings were nearly as elegant as in Genoa, which he notices with appreciation.⁴¹ Sophia was going to face a world of such contrasts, but she remained completely alienated from it.

The reason for the social ostracism was most delicately put by Sphrantzes, who said that the Empress's face was not marked by beauty.⁴² Chalkokondyles paid attention to Sophia's proper lifestyle but he did not hide the fact that her appearance was very unpleasant, not to say disgusting.⁴³ The third chronicler, Doukas, goes even further in his sincerity when describing Sophia's appearance. He admits that the Empress was perfectly made; she had a shapely neck and yellowish hair which went down to her ankles in curls, sparkling like gold. Her back was well-formed and so were her shoulders, breast and arms. Her palms attracted his attention because he even compared Sophia's fingers to crystal. However, her face was deformed in all its elements, for he enumerates: eyes, eyebrows, nose and lips.⁴⁴ The Empress's figure was dismissed by a brief comment: "From the back she looked like Easter, from the front like Lent."⁴⁵ Further descriptions of Byzantine chroniclers are more or less precise accounts of the repulsion that never let John VIII know his wife. Doukas says that the

⁴⁰ Vasiliev, op.cit., 112.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 116.

⁴² Phrantzes, op. cit., 122, v. 20–21.

⁴³ L. Chalcocondyles, *Historiarum libri decem*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1843, 205, v. 11–12.

⁴⁴ M. Ducas, *Historia Byzantina*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1834, 100, v. 9–16.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 100, v. 16–17. I do not know the reasons which brought about disfigurement in Sophia's face. It may have been congenital defect or the result of disease. We can only speculate.

Emperor did not love her, and Sphrantzes adds that there was no cordiality, love or peace between them.⁴⁶ Sphrantzes also says that the Emperor loved other women.⁴⁷ Chalkokondyles makes it obvious that John did not live with his wife.⁴⁸ Doukas says openly that the Emperor did not share the bed with Sophia.⁴⁹ She lived in loneliness because the Emperor was filled with disgust towards her.⁵⁰

This is how the private drama of two people is unfolded; their marriage was probably never consummated. Why did not John remove Sophia as the bride? After all, the ugliness of her face was conspicuous at the first meeting. He need not have crowned her as his Empress, which would have made the annulment of marriage possible.⁵¹ Doukas adds that the thought of removing the Empress was on John's mind but he did not dare to do it because of his father Manuel II.⁵² Was this personal disaster a necessary sacrifice on the political altar? Further circumstances were favourable to Sophia's stay at the court as she was a token of papal support. In 1421 Mehmed I died and he was succeeded by young and militant Murad II. In 1422 he started to besiege Constantinople which he fortunately gave up in the autumn of the same year. This year marks John's correspondence with the Pope, in which the Emperor mentions the stay of papal nuncio in partibus Graeciae and comments on the conditions of the Union. The question of marriage to Sophia is discreetly overlooked.⁵³ In the autumn of 1423 John went to Hungary to seek help. It was

⁴⁶ M. Ducas, op. cit., 100, v. 8; Phrantzes, op. cit., 122, v. 17–19.

⁴⁷ Phrantzes, op. cit., 122, v. 19–20.

⁴⁸ L. Chalcocondyles, op. cit., 205, v. 12–13.

⁴⁹ M. Ducas, op. cit., 100, v. 20.

⁵⁰ L. Chalcocondyles, op. cit., 205, v. 16.

⁵¹ S. Runciman, *Some Notes...*, 120.

⁵² M. Ducas, op. cit., 100, v. 21–22; 101, v. 1.

⁵³ Raynaldus, op. cit., ad anno 1422, no 15.

also an opportunity to avoid his unattractive wife.⁵⁴ He came back a year later. In 1425 the old Emperor Manuel died. John finally gained full independence. Time came for the change, especially change in his bedroom. Sophia of Montferrat left Constantinople in August 1426. Nothing can be said about the five years of her stay in Byzantium. Silence of the sources finds explanation in the account by Doukas, who describes Sophia as a model on display. Rejected by the Emperor and his milieu, which seemed to sympathize with him, Sophia was destined to taste solitude. In contrast to Cleopatra's situation, we can find no trace of the attempt to convert Sophia to Orthodoxy. This probably did not spring from the respect for papal wishes but rather from the circumstances. There was no room for Sophia in the world of the Greek aesthetic order, thus there was no point in winning her over to Orthodoxy. Did Sophia do anything for the Church Union because she had been sent by the Pope himself? There is no evidence for that. Her face could only discourage. Byzantine Empresses were famous for their beneficial actions for the nunneries. There is no trace of Sophia's activity of that sort, not even in Catholic Pera. The Orthodox nunneries would not have accepted the donations anyway. It is difficult to say who accompanied her apart from eunuchs. She might have kept some Italian ladies-in-waiting but she also had to accept the company of Byzantine statesmen's wives. The lady who took care of the imperial wardrobe

⁵⁴ K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, vol. 2: *The Fifteenth Century*, Philadelphia 1978, 25. Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary, could offer no support because he was involved in the conflict with the Hussites in Bohemia. During his journey in 1424, John went to Venice and to Milan. This second visit is interesting for me. It concerned Philip-Maria Visconti, since 1421 Lord of Genoa and former fiancé of Sophia. I wonder whether they ever talked about her. In 1424 Venice gained Visconti as its ally against the Turks but for a short time. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1988, 364–67.

was closest to the Empress, as she had the right to dine with her.⁵⁵ But could this Byzantine possibly share the humiliation of the rejected Empress? It seems that Sophia was able to resort to Pera, which was not only a trade centre but also an intellectual one, because of the Dominican activity. Sophia's confessor was Friar William from Pera, supposedly her spiritual guide.⁵⁶ After all, the arrangement was customary for Empresses. However, everything seems to confirm the assumption that in spite of her Byzantine-Latin connections she was a stranger in that world, deprived of company, separated from others by her ugliness. It is impossible to accept the traditional view voiced by M. Viller who claimed that it was the difference of Creed that had brought about the conflict between Sophia and John.⁵⁷ The reason was different. It can be said that Doukas was the mediator between Pera and Byzantine court, because he was the secretary to John Adorno, Genoese podesta of Pera since 1421.⁵⁸ Doukas might have played a role in Sophia's contacts with the fellow-countrymen from Pera. Therefore it is not surprising that he offered the most detailed description of the Empress, as well as an account of her departure in 1426. The Genoese from Pera helped her to leave Byzantium.

⁵⁵ S. Runciman, *Some Notes...*, 121.

⁵⁶ M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise XII – début XV siècle*, Rome 1978, 322–23. M. Viller, “La question de l’union des Eglises entre Grecs et Latins depuis le Concile de Lyon jusqu’à celui de Florence,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 18 (1922), 44.

⁵⁷ M. Viller, loc. cit.

⁵⁸ According to M. Balard, there occurred a substantial emigration from Montferrat to the East. It is difficult to say whether Sophia's milieu included any member of this group. The essential thing, however, is that she went to the country her fellow-countrymen had visited before. Cf. M. Balard, “L’emigrazione monferrino-piemontese in Oriente (secc. XII–XIV),” *Dai Feudi Monferrini e dal Piemonte ai nuovi mondi oltre gli oceani*, ed. L. Balletto, Alessandria 1993, 249–61.

Sophia's departure could not be thought of as an escape. Estranged from her husband, she must have reckoned with the possibility of return. Her voyage to Italy could have taken place earlier. Still, she did not want to leave Byzantium of her own accord, in spite of humiliations she had experienced. It can be suggested that John was the real author of the idea of departure. Besides, Sophia may have been afraid of seclusion in Constantinople and she preferred then to face it in Italy. Manuel, her protector, was dead. The Genoese from Pera prepared a farewell celebration for her. Her forehead uplifted, she did not manifest her humiliation to the public.⁵⁹ On the basis of Sophia's words noted by Doukas it can be inferred that the Emperor presented his ex-Empress with a substantial sum of money by way of redress. Supposedly she said that the most important thing she was taking away was the glamour of the imperial diadem she had worn during the coronation ceremony.⁶⁰ It was only Doukas, as the well-informed person, who described the scene of departure, otherwise ignored. The account is essential for two reasons. It proves that the Byzantine crown had kept its importance under western eyes, even though the Empire was in decline. Also, it points to the marriage contract which involved the financial commitments undertaken by husband.

The Genoese annals recorded Sophia's arrival in Genoa on board the ship that belonged to the Spinola family. The account suggests that the ex-Empress was given a warm and dignified welcome. Riders escorted her ceremonially to the house of Spinola which had been connected with her own family throughout the centuries.⁶¹ Sophia enjoyed their hospitality for four days and then she went away to meet her brother John

⁵⁹ M. Ducas, op. cit., 101, v. 7-11.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 102, v. 1-3.

⁶¹ G. J. Stella, *Annales Genuenses*, ed. G. Petti Balbi, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 17, fasc. 2, Bologna 1975, 302.

James. The Genoese chronicler stated that Sophia had been repudiated by her husband who was schismatic and the adherent to the Greek Creed.⁶² Such was then the official version spread on the Latin side. The source never mentions Sophia's defects but it blames the dissolution of marriage on John, implying that as a schismatic he could not be reliable anyway. Difference of Creed was emphasized; the fact that Sophia did not meet her husband's aesthetic needs was completely ignored. However, it is difficult to make an assumption that the aesthetic views presented by Byzantium and the West respectively differed so greatly. Sophia was destined to spend the rest of her life in the nunnery though it is not known whether she joined it immediately after her return to Italy.⁶³ At that time the nunnery functioned as a refuge for quite a few ladies who were not happy in their marriages.⁶⁴ Sophia died in Trino near Casale in 1437, when she was nearly 43 years old.⁶⁵ Till the very end of her life, ugliness had been her greatest burden. It can be assumed that it was the lack of beauty and not political circumstances that proved decisive in the break-up of her engagement with Philip Visconti. Contemptible to men, unfulfilled in her marriage to John VIII, she left the political stage where she could no longer play any role.

In 1427, a year after her departure, John VIII finally met the woman of his life. He married beautiful Maria Komnena, daughter of Alexios IV, Emperor of Trebizond.⁶⁶ The Patriarch gave his blessing to the marriage even though in the

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ M. Ducas, op. cit., 102, v. 7–9.

⁶⁴ A. M. Talbot, "Late Byzantine Nuns: By Choice or Necessity!", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 3d. 9 (1985), 109.

⁶⁵ M. D. Sturdza, op. cit., 540. Additional evidence might be necessary because there are some mistakes in the genealogical tables, for example – the wrong date of Sophia's marriage to John VIII.

⁶⁶ M. Ducas, op. cit., 102, v. 9–12. Cf. *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. E. Trapp, fasc. 9, Wien 1989, 75 (21–397).

light of Byzantine canonical law the third match was badly seen. The Patriarch's attitude proves that the matrimonial custom of imperial court had changed by that time.⁶⁷ John VIII was made happy by the company of his wife, whose beauty was generally praised.⁶⁸ Still, he seems to have been rather unfortunate in his relations with women. Pero Tafur spread a suggestive gossip implying that Maria showed more than sisterly affection to her brother Alexander who came to Constantinople from Trebizond.⁶⁹ Whatever was the case, Maria was the lady of imperial heart and after her death in 1439, the Emperor mourned her deeply. He never married again, even though he was only 47. He did not leave an heir, and it was his brother Constantine who took over the crown, as the last of the Emperors.

During the negotiations over the Church Union at the Council in Ferrara and Florence in 1438–1439, the Emperor may have met the relatives of Sophia – her family connections reached far. Did he ever think about her drama? Did her ugly face prevent him from having at least one pleasant memory? Did Sophia ever enter his thoughts when he heard about beautiful Ricciarda of Montferrat, married to Marquis d'Este, the owner of Ferrara? Ricciarda was so young and glamorous that she won the heart of her stepson, which caused the father to stand up against the son.⁷⁰ Yet, the associations could only lead to the conclusion that Sophia's looks could not be an object of rivalry.

⁶⁷ R. Guiland, "Les noces plures à Byzance," *Etudes byzantines*, Paris 1959, 261.

⁶⁸ B. de la Broquière, *Le voyage d'Outremer*, ed. C. H. A. Shefer, Paris 1892, 156–57.

⁶⁹ A. Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, 98.

⁷⁰ L. Chalcocondyles, *op. cit.*, 288, v. 9; 290, v. 22. Cf. M. D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, 541.

Was there any political advantage that could possibly atone for Sophia and John's marital drama which lasted five years? If Sophia's stay in Constantinople was meant as an argument for the Church Union, there is no evidence suggesting that such was a case. Pope Martin V set his heart on the union. He was ready to offer financial advantages to make it real. However, when in 1426 the Turkish danger became less tangible, Byzantium preferred to postpone the matter.⁷¹ Martin V was destined to put an end to the Western Schism and reunite Latin Christendom. Therefore it can be stated that his dream was to finish the Eastern Schism, thereby fulfilling the biblical ideal of unity. Sophia's presence in Byzantium did not seem to be instrumental in supporting anti-Turkish activities either. Those who caused John to marry Sophia, i.e. the Pope himself and probably a group of Genoese, soon realized that it was bound to be a disaster. There was no political bargain in it for John so he need not have made such a sacrifice. Sophia did not distinguish herself in any sense even though she did not lack ambition. The scene of her departure seems to be a sufficient proof.

This marriage was a total failure for Byzantium. It did not bring political advantages, not to mention an heir to the throne. It was an unfortunate union of two people whose lives had been dominated by *raison d'État*. Apart from Sophia's ugliness, there

⁷¹ The Pope was preoccupied with the idea of the Union Council to the extent of suggesting year 1422 as the appropriate time. His plan was disrupted by the Turkish siege of Constantinople. Thus, there exists ample evidence that points to the Pope as originator of mixed marriages, his Union project being another argument. Cf. R.-J. Loenertz, op. cit., 51, 58. In 1424 when Sigismund of Luxemburg was prepared to start hostilities against the Turks, the Genoese, led by Prince of Milan, expressed their disapproval. No wonder then that Sophia's involvement in politics during her stay in Constantinople proved useless. Clearly, she spoke on behalf of the least influential political faction. The association actually occurred to me in the course of discussion on the battle of Varna in History Department of the University of Poznań in November 1994.

is no trace of this marriage. This leaves room for historians' speculations. Sophia's character may have been full of advantages but nobody took trouble to discover that. The absence of visible beauty meant unkind soul for John himself. The defects in the Empress's looks could not be hidden in the East. Her duties involved participation in official celebration at her husband's side. For the Byzantines, the imperial couple embodied the state. Thus the lack of beauty was not only the Empress's private disaster. Marriage with Sophia was a great mistake on the part of Byzantine diplomacy; its leaders seemed to have forgotten about the old-time tradition of the bride shown when the Emperor chose the most beautiful lady – his wife to be. Did the pressure of Papacy mean so much that it was decided to put the young Emperor to an ethical and aesthetic test?

The cognition of beauty gives love – such was the conviction voiced by the Byzantine intellectual Nicolas Kabasilas. He pointed out that it was difficult to love good not seeing its beauty.⁷² John VIII was the follower of this view, for he never tried to seek good behind the ugly façade of his wife. The obstacle did not lie so much in the absence of good will, as in the mere physical repulsion. The story of this marriage is a record of Sophia's personal failure, as she only played the role of the hostage in the political relations between Byzantium and the Pope. It is a story of absence of love, humiliation and loneliness. The political matches cover up individual human vicissitudes of frequently ill-assorted couples. Sophia's story is indeed a story of one face which survived in the memory of history because of its ugliness. It is also a contribution to the debate on human cognition, based mostly on the sensory perception of physical characteristics. The innermost values remain hidden from view. The point can be illustrated by

⁷² After V. V. Bychkov, "Vizantijskaja estietika v XIII–XV vv.," *Kultura Vizantii XIII – piervaja polovina XV v.*, ed. G. G. Litavrin, Moskva 1991, 435.

a poem of W. B. Yeats. Let it be a conclusion to Sophia's unfortunate story. "Yellow hair" evoked by the poet is a symbol of physicality, perceived through the senses. Says the man:

Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-coloured
Ramparts at your car,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair

The woman answers:

But I can get a hair-dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair

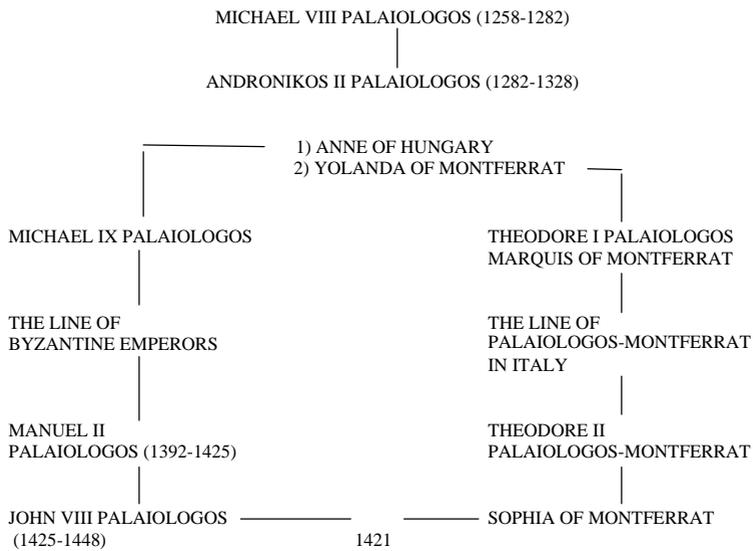
The man's answer does not leave any doubts:

I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair.⁷³

John VIII Palaiologos would have subscribed to this.

⁷³ W. B. Yeats, "For Anne Gregory," *Collected Poems*, London 1973, 277. I was inspired by the book by J. Bronovski, *Źródła wiedzy i wyobraźni (The Origins of Knowledge and Imagination)*, trans. from English S. Amsterdamski, Warszawa 1984, 17–18.

PALAIOLOGOS-MONTFERRAT CONNECTIONS



“Vasilissa, ergo gaude...” Cleopa Malatesta’s Byzantine CV¹

“Empress Cleope, rejoice, for you are worthy of all praise” – sang Guillaume Dufay to commemorate the wedding of an Italian lady to Theodore II Palaiologos, the Despot in Mistra on the Peloponnese, the second son of the Byzantine Emperor, Manuel II. Dufay was a gifted musician from Cambrai in northern France, hired by different European courts in the first half of the 15th century. Well-paid, he glorified his benefactors, mainly the nouveaux-riches families like Malatesta from Pesaro and Rimini. His colleague, Hugo de Lantins from Liege did the same, commending the ancient Sparta, that is Mistra, for choosing “divine” Cleopa Malatesta as the wife of its ruler.² They probably exaggerated in flattering Cleopa, which makes their compositions

¹ I am very grateful to my sister, Dr Dorota Filipczak, for her kind correction of my English. This paper was presented on 22 March 2005 at the conference *Unities and disunities in the late medieval eastern Mediterranean world*, organized by Dr Catherine Holmes at the University College in Oxford.

² Dr Margaret Bent, interested in my research on the Latin ladies in the Byzantine imperial family, drew my attention to the two composers, especially to Dufay. In this way I found a common field of studies with the eminent authority in medieval music. Dr Bent’s French collaborator, Mr Thierry Grandemange shared with me the results of his studies on the compositions of Hugo de Lantins. I much appreciate the exchange of opinions with both scholars.

difficult to analyze for historians who doubt the objectivity of such sources. But, paradoxically, texts of itinerant musicians reconstruct the emotional context of this event. Typical narrative sources are very scant. The archives in Rimini treasure little information about Cleopa's wedding.³ The same can be said about Byzantine historians, who only noted the joint arrival of Cleopa Malatesta and Sophia of Montferrat from Italy to Constantinople to marry Theodore II Palaiologos and his brother, the future Emperor John VIII respectively.⁴ The idea of two weddings at the Byzantine court came from Pope Martin V, who took the opportunity offered by the old Emperor Manuel II, seeking moral and military assistance in the West against the Turks.

The political relations between Byzantium and Osmanlis were quite correct during the reign of Mehmed I (1413–1421), who owed much to Byzantine protection in the fratricidal conflict after the disaster at Ankara (1402).⁵ Fourteen years of his

³ I owe much to Professor Anna Falcioni, who kindly sent me the copies of manuscripts containing the information about Cleopa's Byzantine marriage. Cf. Biblioteca di Rimini, Schede Garampi, ins. 206, no. 77; Biblioteca Chiveriana di Pesaro, ms 1063, f. 221. Professor Falcioni prepares with Mr Bruno Ghigi a great edition of Malatesti Studies (24 volumes, 18 of them already published). I am also grateful to Professor Silvia Ronchey, who deals with the vicissitudes of Malatesta family.

⁴ Only Pseudo-Sphrantzes, that is Melisseonos' chronicle from the 16th century gives the exact date of their arrival on the board a Venetian ship in November 1420. Cf. G. Sphrantzes (i.e. Pseudo-Sfrantzes), *Annales*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnæ 1838, 110, 22.

⁵ The treaty signed in 1403, after Turkish defeat at Ankara gave back to Byzantium its political independence, lost in 1372–1373, when the Empire became "the vassal" of the Turks. Now, the Osmanlis were submitted to the Emperor. Cf. G. Dennis, "The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* XXXIII (1967), 72–88. I am aware that some footnotes concerning Byzantine political life are banal for the specialists of the epoch. I hope, however, that we do not write for the hermetic milieu, which would deprive the wider audience of the important background of the events.

rule could not however put Manuel's vigilance to sleep. His intuition was perfect. Mehmed's successor, Murad II, quickly showed his hostility towards Byzantium. Being aware of the permanent Turkish danger, Manuel II looked for assistance in the West. His first western voyage to Italy, France and England in 1399–1403 was very disappointing but he did not give up.⁶ He counted mainly on the papal authority but the situation was complicated by the Great Western Schism, the result of which was the election of two Popes. One resided in Rome, the other in Avignon. During his first mission Manuel tried to gain the support of both, but without result. Three Popes, who appeared on the political scene after the Council in Pisa in 1409, would have been an even greater an obstacle for him, but, fortunately, he did not need to seek their protection as the Osmanlis were plunged in their fratricidal war. When the information of the Council in Constance in 1414 reached Manuel, he immediately sent his embassy to keep his imperial finger on the political pulse. The strategy of the Empire was always the same. Devoted to religious independence, it played a card of the Church Union only in the time of great danger.⁷ Its first intention was, as always, to look for money in the Venetian wallet and, at that time, to distract the Republic from the conflict with Hungary. Constance was well-chosen to address and Manuel II could kill two birds with one stone. The Hungarian and German ruler, Sigismund of Luxemburg, was the initiator of the gathering of the Council in Constance. His intention was to put an end to the schism as he surely counted on the coronation as a Holy Roman Emperor

⁶ J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1968, 167–99.

⁷ Manuel's father, John V failed in his politics as his personal acceptance of the Catholic Creed in 1369 showed only papal helplessness in Byzantine searching for western military assistance. Cf. O. Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance à Rome. Vingt ans de travail pour l'union des églises et pour la défense de l'empire d'Orient 1355–1375*, Varsovie 1930, 188–99. Still useful, as it is written from the perspective of western sources.

by a newly appointed Pope. The main task of Manuel's envoys was to observe the situation. The Council lasted four years and in 1417 the new Pope, Martin V, was elected. Sigismund was not crowned, which is another story, but the Byzantine delegation discovered immediately that the true political pulse was not in Luxemburg's or Venetian veins but in Martin V's circulation. To gain his friendly attitude and to show their good intentions, they asked the Pope for the permission to arrange marriages between Latin princesses and Manuel's adult sons: John VIII and Theodore II respectively. Martin, in his generosity, gave his permission to all the six imperial sons.⁸

Cardinal Odo Colonna, that is Martin V, belonged to a noble, old Roman family. In the time of his election he was almost fifty years old, which does not lessen sensitivity to female charm. His choice of the Latin fiancées seems however to deny this argument. As an Empress for the future John VIII, already a co-Emperor, Martin suggested Sophia of Montferrat, from a family well connected with the Byzantine court. She was not a teenager as it was typical for a fiancée at that time. Sophia was already 26 years old, had a nicely shaped body and golden hair, but her face was drastically disfigured which could have been the result of a mascaron illness in her childhood, but we can only speculate.⁹ John VIII, 28-year-old widower, married her in January 1421 and crowned her as an Empress but avoided her because of physical repulsion. From the point of view of dynastic policy, her choice as an Empress was a diplomatic disaster. John VIII tolerated her while his father, old Manuel II, was alive.

⁸ O. Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, XVIII, Roma 1659, ad annum 1418, no 17.

⁹ The dramatic description of Sophia's face was given by Doukas, *Historia Bizantina*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnæ 1834, 100, 9–16. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "Sophia of Montferrat or the History of One Face," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Folia Historica* (1996), 186–87; I presented Sophia's vicissitudes on the meeting of Polish Medical Society (2002) and some participants suggested mascaron illness.

Sophia was a guarantee of the papal protection for Byzantium in the time of Turkish threat. For the Pope this marriage and that of Cleopa was a naïve perspective of a future union of the Churches. Martin expected that the two ladies would keep their Catholic faith and gain their husbands for it.

Cleopa arrived in Mistra with her chaplain and Italian ladies-in-waiting.¹⁰ Her husband, Theodore II Palaiologos, ruled there as a Despot, which was the highest rank at the Byzantine court after the Emperor. Theodore was sharing the Peloponnese with the Latins settled there from the time of the Fourth Crusade, and was afraid of Turkish invasion, as were his father and brother in Constantinople. In the unforgettable year 1420, when he saw his fiancée and his future sister-in-law, he was 21. We do not know what Cleopa looked like. In comparison with her companion, Sophia, she was not so ugly, but probably not beautiful either, otherwise the chroniclers would have written it. We also do not know how old she was. The modern detailed prosopographical edition by E. Trapp does not give her date of birth.¹¹ Dealing with Latin wives of the Byzantine Emperors, whose age was unknown, I suggested with great caution that they were at least 12–13 years old, taking into consideration the nubile age of women according to the canon law.¹² I would rather keep this point of view for Cleopa's case, but to my surprise I found her date of birth in David Fallows's book devoted to her admirer, the French musician Dufay. The author does not give the source of his information but he states that Cleopa was born approximately in

¹⁰ D. A. Zakythinos, "Le despotat grec de Morée (1262–1460)," t. 1, *Histoire politique*, Paris 1932, 189.

¹¹ *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. E. Trapp, Bd. 9, Wien 1989, no 21459.

¹² M. Dąbrowska, *Łacinniczki nad Bosforem. Małżeństwa bizantyńsko-łacińskie w cesarskiej rodzinie Paleologów (XIII–XV w.)* [*The Latin Ladies on the Bosphoros, Byzantine-Latin Marriages in the Imperial Family of the Palaiologoi (13th–15th Centuries)*], Łódź 1996, 51.

1388.¹³ This is rather difficult to accept, as it would mean that she was 11 years older than her husband, which, however, cannot be excluded. Being 32 years old, she was not an attractive match; her family background was not attractive either. She came from Malatesta of Pesaro, which was a younger branch of Malatesta of Rimini. The family was quite new on the political stage but connected with Colonna, as Cleopa's brother, Carlo, was a fiancé to Vittoria Colonna, niece of Pope Martin V.¹⁴ This is the key to her promotion in Byzantium by the Pope. We know nothing about her childhood and youth. Was she betrothed to anybody else, as was Sophia to Philippo Visconti, who then married another lady?¹⁵ Malatesta of Pesaro was a very young family and it seems that they gained their position due to Odo de Colonna whose election they supported. They had their possessions in the papal State. Byzantium did its best to gain Martin's friendly attitude, announcing in the chrysobulle of 1419 that Cleopa's Catholicism would be accepted by her Orthodox husband. In case of Theodore's death she had a choice of staying in Byzantium or coming home. Venice was not worse in its kindness and financial assistance. It offered one galley for transferring two ladies and their retinues from Italy to the Empire.¹⁶ The fiancées appeared in Constantinople probably in autumn 1420 and their weddings took place probably at the same time, that is on 19 January 1421. What was the reaction of John VIII to Sophia we already know. His sacrifice was great but he was already a politician and knew that gaining supporters had its price. He paid well. If Cleopa was really 32 and eleven years older than Theodore, it must have been a difficult challenge to cope with, for he quickly discovered his vocation to the monastic life.

¹³ D. Fallows, *Dufay*, London 1987, 252.

¹⁴ G. Franceschini, *I Malatesta*, Varese 1973, 283.

¹⁵ M. Dąbrowska, "Sophia of Montferrat...", 182.

¹⁶ Laonicos Chalcocondyles, *Historiarum libri decem*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1843, 206. D. M. Zakythinis, op. cit., 189.

The perspective of dynastic development for John and Theodore seemed to be ruined from the very beginning of their marital life. Both men despaired but their spouses showed the exemplary determination in their mission and Cleopa became a paragon of true patience. She just waited. The couple could not have children for some years but fortunately in 1427 she bore a daughter called Helena. Paradoxically, in the years 1427–1428 Theodore, already a gentleman of 28–29, still thought to withdraw to monastery.¹⁷ The information that he became a father may have changed his mind. According to a contemporary Greek author, Cleopa was young, however we cannot estimate her age.¹⁸ If we take a risk and accept her mature age, this motherhood was rather late. Helena was her only child. It seems that Cleopa Malatesta gained her husband's feelings due to her conversion to Orthodoxy. It is suggested that she was forced to convert. Knowing only some details about her character we can assume that it was her own will and the only good move in this stalemate situation. She was spied on by one of her ladies-in-waiting, her cousin, Battista Malatesta de Montefeltro, who wrote a letter to the Pope asking him to help Cleopa in the religious conflict with Theodore.¹⁹ If she really needed to write anything, it would have been better to draw Martin's attention to the Turks. Battista addressed the Pope's vain ambitions of gaining Byzantium over to Catholicism. The letter is undated but it must have been sent in the time when the Latins kept their privileged position on the Peloponnese.²⁰ Martin promoted them and the manifes-

¹⁷ George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of Byzantine Empire*, trans. by M. Philipides, Amherst 1980, 33.

¹⁸ Nikephoros Cheilas, "Monodia epi Kleope Palaiologine," *Palaiologea kai Peloponesiaka (PP)*, t. IV, ed. S. Lambros, Athenai 1930, 149.

¹⁹ D. A. Zakythinos, op. cit., 189.

²⁰ Zakythinos (l. cit.) accepts N. Iorga's opinion that the letter must have been written before 1431, that is before Martin's death, which is an unconvincing explanation if one takes into account the political situation on the Peloponnese. Cf. N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire*

tation of his attitude was the appointment of Pandolfo Malatesta, Cleopa's brother, as archbishop of Patras in 1424. Pandolfo reached his destination at the age of 34 and Cleopa could surely feel his support in the Byzantine milieu. But the sky was darkening over the peninsula. In 1423 the Turks had broken the walls built across the Isthmus of Corinth and devastated Morca. The Latin ruler of Cephalonia, Carlo Tocco, had occupied the northwestern side of the Peloponnese in 1426. The new Emperor, John VIII, who in the meantime managed to send his ugly wife back to Italy, entered Morea with his brother Constantine and won Tocco in 1428.²¹ They did not stop at that and attacked Patras in 1429, supported by the youngest brother, Thomas. Theodore remained in Mistra, loyal to his brother-in-law. The Byzantine coalition turned out to be very effective. Pandolfo was desperate and went to Italy to seek assistance. He even alarmed Turks, complaining about his situation. Sultan Murad II did not accept Byzantine victory. Venetians also protested but in vain. Patras surrendered to Constantine in 1430. In the same year, the other Latin ruler, Centurione Zaccaria, was defeated.²² The Peloponnese was taken by the Palaiologoi in a spectacular way. It was a total disaster of papal dreams. Pandolfo came back to Italy where he died in 1441.²³ He left his sister completely hellenized, which was to be foreseen. Mistra became her home. Her husband's court was a great intellectual center, surely more re-

des croisades au XV siècle, t. I, Paris-Bucarest 1899, 197. The tone of the letter deserves to be quoted: "Sanctissime Pater, consurge in defensionem constantissime filie, que tibi sanguine et spiritu coniuncta est..."

²¹ D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor. The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans*, Cambridge 1992, 8.

²² A. Bon, *La Morée franque. Recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1204–1430)*, t. 1, Paris 1969, 292.

²³ Cf. Pandolfo's picturesque CV in: A. Falcioni, "Pandolfo Malatesti arcivescovo di Patrasso (1390–1441)," *Bizantinistica. Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, serie secunda, I (1999), 73–89.

fined that her nouveau-riche Pesaro. Taking into consideration the Latin expansion, one has to admit that Cleopa and Pandolfo Malatesta arrived in Byzantium too late. Paradoxically, at the end of its existence, the Empire found force to put an end to the depressing memory of the Fourth Crusade. So, the Latins were defeated but the name of Malatesta remained in history, however not in the circumstances that the Pope might have wished for. It seems that his policy failed, but the Byzantines, aware of the Turkish danger, strove for his support. John VIII's envoy was sent to Martin V in the same year, 1430, assuring him about the readiness for the Church Council.²⁴ Byzantium did not have any other way out, and signed the Union in Florence in 1439.²⁵

Cleopa died in 1433 and was buried in Mistra.²⁶ Theodore did not marry once again. He gave up his inclination for the monastic life and got involved in politics. As a result, he changed his place and settled in Selymbria near the capital, counting on scraps of imperial power. He died in June 1448, four months before John VIII. Their brother Constantine XI became the winner and the last Emperor of the Romans. All of them witnessed Helena's marriage to John Lusignan, the King of Cyprus, in 1442. At that time Cleopa's daughter was about 15 years old and became the second wife of John.²⁷ She bore him two daughters: Carlotta (probably after her Italian uncle's name) and Cleopa, which seems to be a short version of Cleopatra, after her mother's name. Although Helena married a Latin ruler, she remained attached to the Orthodox background and offered a shelter to

²⁴ Raynaldus, *op. cit.*, XXV, ad annum 1430, no 8.

²⁵ The details in. J. Gill, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge 1959.

²⁶ She was buried in the monastery of Christ Zoodotes. The archeologists discovered well-preserved "mummy" of Mistra. Cf. S. Ronchey, "Malatesta/Paleologhi. Un'alleazza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio vel quindicesimo secolo." *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 93 (2000), 521–67. Professor David Jacoby informed me that according to Professor Falcioni, abortion might have been the reason of Cleopa's death.

²⁷ N. Iorga, *La France de Chypre*, Paris 1931, 195–96.

many Byzantines after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. She died five years later.

Cleopa Malatesta remained in history due to literary sources. When she died, George Gemistos Plethon, the most eminent scholar at the Mistra court, wrote a pretentious funeral oration extolling to the skies her extraordinary virtues. He mentioned that many people underline their merits and need to be flattered all the time. Unlike them, Cleopa was modest, beautiful, intelligent, magnanimous, kind, but mainly pious. He stressed that she left frivolous Italian customs and accepted a severe way of Byzantine lifestyle. She properly prayed with the court and fasted.²⁸ Bessarion, the other intellectual, wrote not only a monody but also a poem for her.²⁹ The point is that the first of the flatterers was a clandestine pagan, who wanted to convince the Byzantine people to revert to the ancient polytheism. The latter became a cardinal of Roman Church.³⁰ Whatever one can say about their objectivity, we must admit, that they did their best in praising Cleopa. Unfortunately, Byzantinists based their image of Cleopa on Byzantine sources only, mostly the ones connected with funeral.

The Malatesta family employed many people of art who flattered their snobbery. The famous court painter of Pandol-

²⁸ “Plethonos tou sofotatou monodia epi te aoidimo Basilidi Kleope,” *PP*, t. IV, Athenai 1930, 167.

²⁹ “Bessarionos Stichoï Epitymbioi Iambikou epi to tafo tes makaritidos Basilisses kyras Kleopes tes Paleiologines,” *Ibidem*, 176.

³⁰ On Plethon and his religious system see: C. M. Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon. The Last of the Hellenes*, Oxford 1986. On Bessarion: J. Glll, *Personalities of the Council of Florence*, Oxford 1964, 45–54. Plethon was so much venerated by the contemporary elite that Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini encouraged him to join his court, which did not happen. Plethon died in 1452. When the Turks captured Mistra in 1460, Sigismondo transferred the remains of the philosopher to a sumptuous tomb in Rimini. C. M. Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, 228. On Sigismondo’s great career see: *Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta e il suo tempo*, ed. F. Arduini, G. S. Menghi, F. Panvini Rosati, P. G. Pasini, P. Sanpaolesi, A. Vasina, Rimini 1970.

fo Malatesta, Cleopa's brother, was Gentile de Fabriano, who worked for him in Brescia. Pope Martin V wanted Fabriano to work in Rome but finally the artist settled in Florence in 1420. He could have painted Cleopa's image for Theodore but there is no evidence for it.³¹

From the texts of western medieval musicians we can reconstruct the atmosphere of Pesaro court at the time of Cleopa's departure to an unknown future. Hugo de Lantins in his motet, "Tra quante regione," reminds the audience that Sparta, which was the fatherland of beautiful Helena, will now receive a more divine person, Lady Cleopa Malatesta. Everybody can see how privileged Constantinople is gaining such an eminent support (of House of Pesaro).³² One should appreciate Hugo's efforts to flatter his patron and to earn some money. The composer underlined the splendour of Italian connections.

In comparison with him, Dufay was great and subtle master, who encouraged Cleopa in her mission and stressed the position which was waiting for her. He called her Basilissa, which also means the lady of the ruler, not only the Empress, but we should forgive him this explosion of enthusiasm. The text of the motet goes as follows:

Empress Cleope, rejoice, for you are worthy of all praise, renowned for the deeds of your family, the Malatesta, great and noble princes in Italy! You are even more renowned by virtue of your husband, for he is nobler than all, the lord of Greeks whom the whole world reveres, born in the purple and sent from God in heaven. Flourishing in your youth, possessed of

³¹ I am grateful to Dr Piotr Michałowski who tried to help me in finding any trace of Cleopa's painting by Fabriano. On the painter see the important monograph by E. Micheletti, *L'opera completa di Gentile da Fabriano*, Milano 1976.

³² I owe the French translation to Mr T. Grandemange, sent in 2003. My own translation is not so fine.

beauty, abounding in talents, eloquent in both tongues, you are more renowned for your virtues than all the others.³³

Dufay did not fail to show his knowledge of Biblical quotations: “The King has desired your beauty. For he is your Lord.” He surely received a nice fee for these words. They are very interesting for historians because of the political propaganda of Malatesta’s court and the great attraction of Byzantine titles, still magical, even at the time of decadence. Life corrected Dufay’s wishful thinking, as, after the first glance on his fiancée, the Despot in Mistra desired monastic solitude rather than his wife’s problematical beauty. It is more probable that Cleopa really enjoyed the perspective of wedding a young porfirogenetus, son of the Byzantine Emperor, born in the purple. How long this joy lasted – we cannot say...

³³ See the folder attached to the disc: “Venice, splendour of the world. Music for Popes and Doges from the 15th-century Italy,” performed by The Dufay Consort, Dervogilla Ltd, Oxford 1995. The author of the translation into English is not mentioned. I am particularly grateful to M. Bent for lending me this disc and other great pieces of medieval music during my stay as Visiting Fellow at All Souls College in Oxford in autumn 2001. On papal musical patronage see: M. Bent, “Early papal Motets,” *Papal Music and Musicians in Late Medieval and Renaissance Rome*, ed. R. Sherr, Oxford 1988, 5–42. I hope that one day Italian scholars and historians of medieval musical manuscripts will discover Cleopa’s date of birth.

Hellenism at the Court of the Despots of Mistra in the First Half of the 15th Century

This paper does not dwell on the philosophy of George Gemistos Plethon. His views have been studied by many experts, therefore I am going to limit myself to presenting the fundamentals of his religious system. What is of greatest interest to me, is Plethon's influence upon the milieu in which he existed. Did the period of his stay in Mistra generate some particular intellectual ambiance? Who supported him as a philosopher drawing on Platonism? Who defended him from the attacks of the Church? Did Plethon's paganism leave any traces in the Peloponnese? Did he have any followers? What was the attitude towards Plethon as a philosopher and Plethon as the author of new religion?

Based on the polytheism of ancient Greece, Plato and neoplatonic philosophy, Plethon's views clashed with the official Church doctrine. It had long been forbidden to read Plato. Byzantine Orthodoxy, however, used some elements of ancient philosophy. They came from Aristotle's system to a large extent, and the Church only adopted the thoughts which could be reconciled with Christianity. The closing down of the Platonic Academy in 529 meant putting an end to the free propagation of pagan philosophy in Byzantium.

In the eleventh century Michael Psellos attempted to revive Plato's philosophy. Despite his strong position in the court, he was suspected of paganism by the clergy who made him

say the Creed publicly.¹ His disciple, John Italos, was banished. Emperor Alexios Komnenos, the defender of Orthodoxy, prevented pagan thought from spreading. Subsequently, philosophy was replaced by theology. It appears that schism with Rome made the stand of Orthodox Church much more adamant. Byzantium emphasized its loyalty to the principles of the Councils and defied any new philosophical ideas which might endanger Orthodoxy.

George Gemistos Plethon was a long-lived Byzantine philosopher, and his creative years spanned the reign of Emperor Manuel II and that of his sons. Born about 1360,² Plethon descended from the family of a Church dignitary. He made his views known relatively early, taking advantage of the favourable atmosphere that was due to his friendship with Manuel, the Emperor compared to Marc Aurelius and Constantine Porphyrogenitus.³ As Plethon's views were rejected by the Church authorities, he was sent away from the capital by Manuel, who issued that order to please the clergy.⁴

Gemistos went to the Peloponnese in the first years of the fifteenth century and he stayed in this place till his death in 1452. It was there that he created his philosophical and religious notions, and analyzed them in memorials, treatises etc. He enjoyed the intellectual atmosphere of the court of Despots in Mistra. He particularly associated with Theodore II Palaiologos, Manuel II's son, and he kept in touch with other members of the imperial family: Emperors – John VIII and Constantine XI, Despots – Thomas and Demetrios. In recognition of merits, Theodore II

¹ O. Jurewicz, Preface to: *Michał Psellos, Kronika czyli historia jednego stulecia Bizancjum (976–1077)*, [Michael Psellus, *Chronicle*, trans. and ed. O. Jurewicz], Wrocław–Warszawa–Gdańsk 1985, IX.

² F. Masai, *Plethon et le platonisme de Mistra*, Paris 1956, 54.

³ J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425). A Study in the Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1968, 420.

⁴ F. Masai, op. cit., 59.

rewarded Plethon with endowments, which was confirmed by John VIII in 1428. In 1449 Constantine XI added new territories to Plethon's property.⁵ It was already under the reign of Kantakouzenos family in the fourteenth century that Mistra came to play a significant role as a cultural centre. However, the era of Palaiologos rulers was definitely in its heyday, and Plethon's presence largely contributed to it.

The first document testifying to Gemistos' activity in Mistra is a memorial written on the occasion of Theodore I's death in 1409. The last of his works produced subsequently is a memorial addressed to Demetrios on the occasion of his reaching agreement with his brother Thomas.⁶ Memorials written in 1415–1418 for Emperor Manuel and Despot Theodore II provide us with the material concerning reforms of the state.⁷ Plethon's religious system was presented in a treatise *On the Laws*. The work was not propagated during his lifetime, and after his death it was in great measure destroyed.⁸

Following Plato, Plethon indicates that the welfare of the state depends on the rules of governing. Monarchy can only function well when it is based on just laws and a ruler follows the advice of his councillors chosen from among the educated representatives of the middle class.⁹ He also suggests

⁵ D. A. Zakythinis, "Le despotat grec de Morée 1262–1460," *Histoire politique*, Paris 1932, 207, 240.

⁶ J. Longnon, "La renaissance de l'hellénisme dans le despotat de Morée," *Journal des Savants* (Juillet-septembre 1954), 131.

⁷ D. A. Zakythinis, op. cit., 175–77.

⁸ F. Masai, op. cit., 393–404. Cf. Plethon, *Traité des Lois*, ed. C. Alexander, Paris 1858; Russian Translation: I. P. Medvedev, *Vizantijskij gumanizm XIV–XV v.*, Leningrad 1976, 171–241; English translation: C. M. Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon. The Last of the Hellenes*, Oxford 1986, 322–56. I obtained this new book on Plethon after the conference, due to Dr M. Whitby. I take the opportunity to thank him here.

⁹ A. E. Vacalopoulos, *Origins of the Greek Nation. The Byzantine Period 1204–1453*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1973, 127.

launching military and fiscal reforms and making trade more effective.¹⁰

Gemistos' Hellenism originated from the bias against the Roman tradition of the Empire. His famous statement, "We are Hellenes by race and culture," is a key to his doctrine.¹¹ He claimed that the destruction of Byzantium lay in the fact that it renounced the former Greek tradition and was steeped in the Roman tradition. Plethon wanted to resurrect the former positive meaning of the word "Hellene," which had become a synonym of a pagan, and hence assumed a negative quality.¹²

Plethon's new religion was guided by reason, not faith. He claims that philosophy broadens your mind if it is freed from dogma. His dislike of Aristotelism resulted from its being adopted by Christian theology.¹³ In his picture of the Universe, Plethon presents a neoplatonic framework. Gemistos' world comprises beings grouped in a hierarchy according to the degree of perfection. They include: gods, demons, human souls and material elements. According to Plethon, Zeus, the Prime Principle, is the head of the Universe. It is a being that comprises all other beings. Accepting the Platonic idea of emanation, Plethon goes on to say that all beings necessarily emanate from the Prime

¹⁰ Georgios Gemistos Plethon, "Ad principem Theodorum de rebus peloponnesiacis oratio II, Patrologiae cursus completus," *Series graeca*, vol. 160, col. 852C.

¹¹ Idem, "Ad regem Emannuelem de rebus peloponnesiacis oratio I," *PG*, vol. 160, col. 821B.

¹² Although in the time of Nicean Empire (1204–1261) efforts were made to restore the positive meaning of the word "Hellene," yet, as M. Angold observes: "it was a usage limited almost entirely to 'Belles-Lettres.'" It became part and parcel of rhetorical convention. In common use the word was synonym with the 'pagan.'" Cf. M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile. Government and Society under Lascarids of Nicaea 1204–1261*, Oxford 1975, 30.

¹³ J. W. Tylor, *Georgius Gemistus Pletho's Criticism of Plato and Aristotle*, Menasha (WI) 1921, 8.

Principle and the process of emanation is eternal.¹⁴ In accordance with the neoplatonic model, the order of emanation is the order of diminishing generality and perfection. Poseidon is the first to emanate and he rules the Universe. Other gods and demons emanate earlier than human souls. Sense and immortality are the attributes of both gods and souls. What separates them is human yielding to evil and corporal union. Material elements are the last beings to emanate from the Prime Principle. In Orthodox Creed, God created material world out of nothing; in Plethon's theory, matter is also eternal. This basic contradiction with Christian Orthodoxy incurred resentment of Church authorities.

The most creative criticism was levelled by George Scholarios, the later patriarch Gennadios. He compared Gemistos with Emperor Julian Apostate.¹⁵ The scathing attacks took place after Plethon's death. But also during his lifetime, Scholarios criticized Gemistos' philosophy based on Plato. For him and for George of Trebizond Plethon's heresy was unquestionable. The others could not detect the heterodox ideas in his teaching.

Plethon could not preach his religion openly. His philosophical views did harm to his reputation as early as in his youth in Constantinople. The Emperor had to send the philosopher away from the capital. Indiscretion on the part of disciples is to be blamed for that. Gemistos enjoyed more freedom in Mistra, whose political and economic independence was conducive to

¹⁴ F. Masai, op. cit., 208–25. Z. Kuksewicz, *Zarys filozofii średniowiecznej. Filozofia bizantyńska, krajów zakaukaskich, słowiańska, arabska i żydowska (An Outline of Medieval Philosophy. Byzantine, Georgian, Slavonic, Arabic and Jewish Philosophy)*, Warszawa 1982, 237.

¹⁵ M. Jugie, "La polémique de Georgios Scholarios contre Plethon," *Byzantion* 10 (1935), 524; Cf. "Le manuscrits de Julien et le mouvement neopaien à Mistra: Demetrius Rhallis et Gemiste Plethon," *Byzantion* 5 (1929), 730–36; S. Runciman, *Ostatni renesans bizantyński (The Last Byzantine Renaissance)*, trans. J. Marzęcki, Warszawa 1973, 89.

the development of his doctrine. He was, however, more cautious. Even though he had many disciples, few of them were familiar with the essence of his views. It was a real intellectual conspiracy.¹⁶ We only know a few names of its members. We cannot even state whether the most renowned disciple of his, Bessarion, who listened to the master's lectures in 1431–1436, was initiated into all secrets.¹⁷ The fact that one of Gemistos' disciples expresses his grief at not being admitted into the sect proves that only a narrow group of his listeners could boast their knowledge of Gemistos' doctrine.¹⁸

At the same time Plethon manifested his Orthodox attitude in Florence in 1439. He had gone there as a member of the delegation with the view to signing the Union with Rome. During the session of the Council he criticized the "Filioque" formula of the Latins. Accompanied by Despot Demetrios, he left earlier and avoided signing the Union which he was not willing to accept.¹⁹ How does this attitude relate to his philosophy and religion, which he had outlined in front of Cosimo de Medici and Italian intellectuals?²⁰ During the meeting described by George of Trebizond, he expounded his religious system and expressed the hope of his posthumous triumph.²¹ He was, therefore, aware that he could not propagate his opinions in Byzantium officially during his lifetime.

¹⁶ F. Masai, *op. cit.*, 300.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 309.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 300, no. 2. The new book on Plethon by Woodhouse widens Gemistos' secret circle to a small extent. The author searches for the participants among the Peloponnesian aristocracy and even the monks. Woodhouse reaches the conclusion that only three of Plethon's disciples could be identified with absolute certainty, i.e. Mark Eugenikos, Bessarion and Chalkokondyles. They listened to Gemistos' philosophy rather than his religious views. Cf. C. M. Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, 32–33.

¹⁹ I. P. Medvedev, *op. cit.*, 76–77.

²⁰ J. W. Taylor, *op. cit.*, 20.

²¹ L. P. Medvedev, *op. cit.*, 78.

This double aspect of Plethon led to discussions. His participation in the Council and Orthodox attitude should not be overrated. With a typical Greek astuteness Plethon put on protective colouring so as not to aggravate his dealings with the clergy whom he accompanied on the expedition to Italy. It is interesting whether or not he wore the same protective colouring in his relations with the imperial family? To what extent were they familiar with Plethon's religious views? Manuel, a philosophically minded Emperor, favoured the master and was fully conscious of his liking for Plato and neoplatonists. Gemistos' preferences were quite obvious in memorials calling for the reforms of state. Theodore II acceded to power in Mistra in his boyhood. Accordingly, Plethon always enjoyed an enormous advantage of age over Theodore and his brothers. In a memorial to Theodore, a fifty-five-year-old man, addressed a twenty-year-old Despot. Plethon played the role of an aged master to them. He was their trustworthy councillor. Did they share all his thoughts? Were they awake to the fact that Gemistos' teaching flew in the face of the official state religion? Theodore II's wife Cleope Malatesta died in 1433, and Plethon who had a funeral speech, emphasized the fact that she had embraced the Greek faith, and praised her for abiding by the principles of Orthodox religion.²² Yet, it is known that Theodore had originally granted his wife the freedom of Roman Catholic worship but he did not keep his promise and made her accept Orthodoxy. These facts cast more light on Plethon's stand in the court; he acted on behalf of the official religion. We have no data which could prove that he attempted to win Cleope or the Despot himself for his religious projects. The independence he achieved was not full enough for him to voice his views openly. What bears out this assumption is the fact that he did not dare to have his work *On the Laws* propagated. After his death, this book happened to be read by Despot

²² Georgios Gemistos Plethon, "Dominam Cleopem Divinissimi Principis nostri uxorem oratio funebris," *PG*, vol. 160, col. 940–52.

Demetrios. Revolted at the content, the Despot sent the text to the patriarch Gennadios who ordered it destroyed.²³ Hence, only a few fragments were handed down to us; 85 chapters out of 101 were devoured by the flames. Was Demetrios astonished at the content of the manuscript? Could his reaction mean that he did not know Gemistos' religious views? The fact remains that Demetrios was loyal to Orthodoxy, opposed to the Union and willing to recognize the Turkish rule, which he did, joining the sultan's court after the fall of Morea in 1460. When two Despots, Thomas and Demetrios, quarrelled in their rivalry for the Peloponnese, Plethon seemed to back up the latter. Thomas could not possibly secure his support because of his admiration for the Latin world. It is obvious, however, that Gemistos did not disclose the secrets of his doctrine in front of Demetrios. Accordingly, he did not provoke ideological discussions within the imperial family. It seems that he was accepted as a philosopher commenting on the ancient systems, even controversial Platonism, yet he could not reveal his religious convictions in front of his protectors.

Plethon's views did not provoke any response in Byzantium. His political proposals met with complete indifference on the part of Despots and Emperors who were not eager to introduce any changes in spite of the fact that some ideas, for example a kind of mercantilism, were quite reasonable, though behind the times. Kept in secret, the project of instituting a new religion was circulated among very few people. Plethon's pagan attitude was accepted by the chosen élite, educated in the atmosphere of ancient tradition, in spite of the ruling Orthodox religion. Plethon did not find followers among his listeners. Even Bessarion, who was really outstanding and intellectually independent, did not go that far in his conception. He resorted to a compromise, attempting to fuse the elements of Platonism

²³ M. Jugie, *op. cit.*, 524–25.

and Aristotelism, so as not to defy Orthodoxy which drew on Aristotle's thoughts.²⁴

Also, the works of Byzantine historians who give an account of contemporary times, namely the chronicles of Sphrantzes, Chalkokondyles and Doukas,²⁵ do not point to Plethon's crucial role. They do not mention his name in either a positive or negative context. They do not record his defence of Orthodoxy at the Council of Florence. Neither do they reveal his pagan views. Only Doukas writes about Plethon's participation in the Council delegation.²⁶ The latter two do not even touch upon it. Spanning the period of ninety years Gemistos Plethon's life did not leave any trace on history written down by the three chroniclers. It is even striking in view of the fact that both Sphrantzes and Chalkokondyles knew Plethon personally. Sphrantzes, Constantine XI's friend, had been at the court of Mistra during Constantine's reign as a Despot, and became the governor of Mistra in 1446. Chalkokondyles was even closer to the master, as about 1445 he became his disciple in Mistra.²⁷

Although Plethon's philosophy had an impact upon the intellectuals, his paganism did not attract any followers. Even if historians discover the names of some other participants of the religious conspiracy, it will not provide an image of the movement which had a considerable impact upon the élite which could endanger Orthodoxy. A question arises whether it is possible to fulfill the tenet once expressed by C. Mango that "much more

²⁴ Z. Kuksewicz, op. cit., 225–26.

²⁵ Georgios Sphrantzes, *Annales*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1838; Laonicos Chalcocondyles, *De origine ac rebus gestis Turcorum*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnae 1843; Michaelis Ducae Nepotis, *Historia Byzantina*, Bonnae 1834.

²⁶ M. Ducas, 214, 1.

²⁷ O. Jurewicz, *Historia literatury bizantyńskiej (History of Byzantine Literature)*, Warszawa 1984, 274, 276–77. Cyriac of Ancona remarks that he met Chalkokondyles, the most brilliant disciple of Plethon, at the court of Mistra in 1447. Cf. H. Hunger, *Die Hochsprachliche Profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1, München 1978, 485.

investigation is yet needed before we can appraise the meaning of these phenomena”²⁸ (i.e. Hellenism and its interpretation by Plethon). The latest book on Gemistos by Woodhouse showed that, similar to his predecessors, the author could not overcome the barrier imposed by the shortage of information.

Besides, Plethon’s system was by no means capable of rescuing the Empire. According to Medvedev’s exaggerated comment, Byzantium needed its Joan of Arc, not Gemistos.²⁹ George of Trebizond’s assertion that Plethon wanted to convert the whole of mankind to paganism was an overstatement.³⁰ There was nothing to be afraid of. It is true that when people felt threatened, they pinned their hopes on Orthodox religion rather than the Hellenic system. Nicol says that in that epoch Plethon was “an odd man out,”³¹ a person whose views could not be accepted because they were not realistic. A question is whether at any time in the history of medieval Byzantium paganism could affect the ideology of state and society inseparably bound to Orthodox religion. Plethon’s Platonism aroused some interest in the West. Influenced by his views, Cosimo di Medici founded a Platonic Academy in Florence.³² Marsilio Ficino, a philosopher, used to light a lamp in front of Plato’s bust in the Florentine Grove of Academos. So much for the response of the West.³³ In his native country, however, Plethon did not play the role of

28 C. Mango, “Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes XXVIII* (1965), 33 = Idem, *Byzantium and Its Image*, Variorum Reprints, London 1984.

29 L. P. Medvedev, *Mistra*, Leningrad 1973, 113.

30 C. M. Woodhouse, op. cit., 273.

31 D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453*, London 1973, 362.

32 On Renaissance Platonism cf. B. Kieszkowski, *Platonizm renesansowy (The Renaissance Platonism)*, Warszawa 1935. C. M. Woodhouse (op. cit., 364) claims that Plethon’s Platonism was skin-deep in Italy. Only a small group of Greek emigrants retained the memory of his philosophy.

33 H.-G. Beck, *Das Literarische Schaffen der Byzantiner*, Wien 1974, 16.

a prophet. For the West, the revival of ancient standards meant freedom from the stiff rules of Catholic ideology. For the East, a departure from Orthodoxy would have been tantamount to the loss or serious weakening of national identity. The Greeks, however attached to ancient traditions, could never agree to it. Plethon's Hellenism was bound to fail in Byzantium. The progressiveness of the last Emperors and Despots and Plethon's cautiousness contributed to the fact that he did not have to recant his views, unlike Psellos who had done it in the eleventh century.

The Power of Virtue. The Case of the Last Palaiologoi¹

“Bayezid, Manuel’s enemy, had once remarked that even if one did not know the emperor, Manuel’s appearance would make one to say: ‘This man must be an emperor.’”² Two important factors of my story are very clear in this small quotation. First, that Byzantium was in great danger because of the Osmanlis Turks, and second, that Manuel II Palaiologos kept his personal dignity in spite of this danger and the humiliating situation of the Empire.

Byzantium, which was also called the Second Rome, enjoyed power and the respect of the world throughout the centuries. The Fourth Crusade in 1204 introduced the Latin occupation of Constantinople for almost 60 years and for a much longer time in other Byzantine territories such as Beotia, Attica and

¹ This text was written during my stay at Rice University in Houston, and presented at the Thirty-Third Sewanee Medieval Symposium devoted to “Power in the Middle Ages” on 7 April 2006. At Rice I had lectures about contemporary Polish poetry, and Herbert’s poem inspired me to draw the attention of my audience to other power than economic and political ones. I was the only Byzantinist among forty speakers, dealing with history of the Middle Ages in general. This is why I included some data which are obvious to specialists from my field of studies.

² George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire 1401–1477*, trans. M. Philippides, Amherst 1980, 28.

the Peloponnese.³ This was the beginning of the end. In 1261 Michael VIII Palaiologos managed to restore the Byzantine rule on the Bosphoros but he was too weak to reconstruct the Empire from before 1204. Worse still, he risked the repetition of the Fourth Crusade since many Western authorities could not agree with the loss of Constantinople. To avoid the invasion, Michael offered to sign the Church Union. It was a very smart move, as the agreement with Rome deprived the aggressors of such argument as the fight against the schismatics.⁴ The union of Lyons, signed in 1274, did not last long but it saved the life of the Empire for almost two centuries. For all that time, till the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Byzantium had been ruled by the dynasty of Palaiologoi. The Osmanlis in Asia Minor, who emerged from a small emirate to a great power, became their mortal enemy. After getting Gallipoli in 1356, they settled in Europe and soon conquered Adrianople, the main town in Thrace.⁵ It was only three days away from Constantinople. The verdict was ready. Its fulfillment was only a question of time. John V Palaiologos was desperately looking for military help in the West, and he needed the Pope's authority for promoting a crusade against the Turks. Yet his personal conversion to the

³ There are numerous works about the crusade of 1204. Among them: D. Queller, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople 1201–1204*, Pennsylvania 1977; J. Godfrey, *1204: The Unholy Crusade*, Oxford 1980. As to the Latin Empire and the Principality of Achaia, one cannot overestimate J. Longnon, *L'Empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée*, Paris 1949, and A. Bon, *La Morée franque*, vol. I-II, Paris 1969–1972.

⁴ Cf. D. J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West 1258–1282: A Study in Late Byzantine-Latin Relations*, Cambridge (MA) 1959; H. Evert-Kappesowa, "Byzance et Saint Siege a l'époque de l'Union de Lyon," *Byzantinoslavica* XVI (1955), 297–317, and other articles on Lyon by this author; B. Roberg, *Das Zweite Konzil von Lyon (1274)*, Padenborn 1990.

⁵ D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453*, 2nd edition, Cambridge 1993, 274.

Roman faith in 1369 did not bring about any expedition.⁶ In the meantime, the Ottomans demonstrated their power. In 1371 in the battle on the Marica river, they defeated the Serbian army. Neither Western nor Balkan forces proved effective in the Byzantine case then. Facing this disappointment, John V submitted to the Turks in 1372–1373.⁷ Both he and his son, the future Manuel II, became Sultan Murad's vassals.

From the perspective of the Byzantine philosophy of the state, where the Emperor was God's representative on Earth, this situation was humiliating and unbearable, but there was no other way out. Manuel II Palaiologos tried to do his best to gain the support of the West for his cause. The tragic events which happened at the beginning of his reign paradoxically helped him. Manuel, as a forty-year-old man, succeeded his father in March 1391, escaping from the Turkish camp, where he had served the Sultan. Then, unfortunately, he was obliged to return as a good servant, trying to calm the anger of Bayezid. Next year, the Emperor was invited by him to Serres and, to his surprise, he met all the members of his family. The Sultan was ready to eliminate the Palaiologian dynasty, but he changed his mind the next day and allowed everybody to go back home, offering gifts as a consolation after such a "clinical" stress.⁸ This was a good lesson for the well-mannered Emperor. He refused to

⁶ On John V's efforts concerning the support of the Papacy cf. the classical work by O. Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance a Rome. Vingt ans de travail pour la defense de l'empire d'Orient, 1355–1375*, Varsovie 1930, and general observations – J. Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy 1198–1400*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1979; K. M. Setton, "The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)," vol. I, *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, Philadelphia 1976.

⁷ There is still a discussion among the scholars when this treaty of submission was signed. Anyway, at the beginning of 1373 John V served already as a vassal in Sultan Murad's camp and was obliged to pay tribute to him. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *op. cit.*, 277.

⁸ J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1968, 112–18.

serve the emotionally unstable Sultan, to which Bayezid reacted by the blockade of Constantinople in the autumn of 1394. In the meantime he conquered Bulgaria, taking its capital, Veliko Tărnovo, in 1393. These events frightened Hungary and provoked the international expedition, led by its King, Sigismund of Luxemburg. He had family connections in France, so many nobles from there joined him, but the army was defeated by Bayezid at Nikopolis in 1396. Then the Sultan asked for the surrender of Constantinople, which Manuel refused. Next year Manuel sent his envoys to the Pope, and the rulers of France, England and Aragon. He also appealed to the Orthodox Prince of Muscovy. He counted particularly on the testimony of the French nobles, taken as prisoners at Nikopolis and released after paying a great ransom. His calculation did not disappoint him, but the results were not so great as he expected. Only sick Charles VI of France responded and sent a support of 1200 armed men, who overcame the blockade and were received in Constantinople with enthusiasm.⁹ This assistance, however, was not sufficient. Therefore, Manuel decided to go to the Western courts by himself, and he started his long journey at the end of 1399. It is a good moment to quote a Polish poet, Zbigniew Herbert:

Be courageous when the mind deceives you, be courageous
In the final account only this is important (...)
Beware however of unnecessary pride
Keep looking at your clown's face in the mirror
Repeat: I was called — weren't there better than I am.¹⁰

Manuel was called, as “there were no better...” Actually, he was the best. There is no time at the moment to prove that he was one of the most interesting Byzantine rulers. Intelligent and

⁹ Ibidem, 160–64.

¹⁰ Z. Herbert, “The Envoy of Mr. Cogito,” *Mr. Cogito*, trans. J. Carpenter and B. Carpenter, Hopewell (NJ) 1993, 61.

well-educated, he distinguished himself by his noble appearance and physical agility. This was Bayezid's view of him, and this was the reaction of the Western chroniclers, especially the French, who noticed how much Manuel impressed people. A very detailed report was given by an anonymous monk from the Abbey of Saint Denis. "The Emperor, dressed in his imperial garb of white silk, seated himself on the white horse presented to him by the King (Charles VI of France) during his journey, mounting it nimbly without even deigning to set a foot upon the ground (i.e. in transferring himself from his own horse to the white one). And those who – while marking his moderate stature, distinguished by a manly chest and by yet firmer limbs, though under a long beard and showing white hair everywhere – yet heed of the grace of his countenance, adjudged him indeed worthy of imperial rule."¹¹ He was begging for help but he did not behave like a beggar. Neither in his relations with the Turks, to whom he refused to surrender Constantinople, nor during his western journey, when a question of military and financial support was frequently stated, did he give an occasion to humiliate him. This does not mean that he did not feel upset and powerless when he was alone with his mind. Due to his letters written to Byzantine intellectuals, among others to Manuel Chrysoloras, teaching in Florence, we have an interesting testimony of the difficulties he was coping with. "Often have I wished to write to you. But the fact that I did not yet have such things to write by which you would be pleased held back my hand. For the route was troublesome, and the events along it were not particularly pleasant. And, in addition, there was the change of language, which did

¹¹ *Chronique du Religieux de Saint Denis contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*, vol II, ed. M. G. Bellaquet, Paris 1842, 756; English translation J. W. Barker, op. cit., 397. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "Fałszywy patriarcha Konstantynopola i prawdziwy cesarz Bizancjum w Paryżu u schyłku XIV w." ("Le faux patriarche de Constantinople et le vrai empereur de Byzance à Paris à la fin du XIV^e siècle"), *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Folia Historica* 44 (1992), 75–90.

not allow contact with men who are quite admirable and quite desirous of pleasing me.” Then Manuel turns to describe his stay in France and warm welcome from the king and his court. This friendly attitude of Paris allows him to write: “unless the customary envy of evil fortune should oppose, and unless some dreadful kind of unexpected obstacles should suddenly appear, there is great hope of my returning speedily to our homeland, for which, as I know, you on your part are praying, and against which on their side our enemies are praying.”¹² Like the whole stay of Manuel in the West, this letter proves that he did not waste his time and wanted to come back as soon as possible but not with empty hands. Therefore it is unacceptable to treat the Emperor’s journey as a tourist holiday. J. W. Barker is against such an interpretation, and so am I.¹³ Manuel did not gain much, as his supposed protectors created hope for great help which turned out to be vain. This was exactly the impression that Manuel had in London. He wrote that king Henry IV Lancaster “established a virtual heaven for us in the midst of a twofold tempest – both of the season and of the fortune – in himself and in his gestures toward us who have come into his port. And he appears very pleasant in his conversations, gladdening us in all ways and honoring us as much as possible. . . . He furnishes us with a military assistance of men-at-arms and archers and money and ships which will convey the army

¹² *Lettres de l'empereur Manuel Paleologue*, ed. E. Legrand, Paris 1893, 50–51 (later: *Lettres*); translated by J. W. Baker, op. cit., 175. Unfortunately, I have no access here to the new edition of this fascinating correspondence. Cf. *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus: Text, Translation and Notes*, ed. G. T. Dennis, Washington D.C. 1977.

¹³ J. W. Barker (op. cit., 193) confronting mainly G. Ostrogorsky’s statement that “it almost looked as though Manuel felt that he could not face the return, for he broke his journey in Paris and stayed there for nearly two years, although he could have no illusions about the possibility of getting any help.” G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. from German J. M. Hussey, New Brunswick (NJ) 1957, 494; M. Dąbrowska, op. cit., 90.

wherever it is necessary.”¹⁴ This proved to be a great disappointment. Manuel came back to Paris with gifts and some money. His humiliating situation met with the sympathy of the English chronicler: “I thought myself, what a grievous thing it was that this great Christian prince from the farther east should perforce be driven by unbelievers to visit islands of the west, to seek aid against them. My God! What dost thou, ancient glory of Rome?”¹⁵ After Manuel’s return, the French lost their first enthusiasm and remembered that the emperor was Orthodox, that is schismatic, however, at that time France was in its own schism with the papacy.¹⁶ He avoided any promise of the Church Union, as he was very attached to his faith. On the other hand, however, there was no serious necessity to discuss this question as a condition of western support, because the papacy was divided, and so was western Christianity. The battle of Ankara of 1402, where Bayezid was defeated by Tamerlane, changed the situation of Byzantium completely. The emperor was not a Turkish vassal any more. Manuel II Palaiologos returned home in 1403, full of hopes and with the supply of 1200 French soldiers, offered to him by Charles VI of France.

The Empire enjoyed peace from the Ottoman State till 1421. Byzantium profited by the time of internal troubles of the Osmanlis, using one of Bayezid’s sons against another, but this did not last long. The new sultan, Murad II, did not tolerate any Byzantine interference and in response to it, he besieged Constantinople in 1422. At that time Manuel was very old and sick because of a stroke. He transferred the rule to his son, future John VIII. The young emperor had illusions of western

¹⁴ *Lettres*, 51–52; English translation J. W. Barker, op. cit., 179–80.

¹⁵ Adae de Usk, *Chronicon, A.D. 1377–1421*, ed. and trans. E. M. Thompson, 2nd ed., London 1904, 219.

¹⁶ M. Dąbrowska, “Francja i Bizancjum w okresie wielkiej schizmy zachodniej” (“France et Byzance dans le temps du grand schism de l’Occident”), *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica* 48 (1993), 127–41.

support, but when his hopes connected with Venice and Hungary turned out to be vain, he signed a treaty in 1424, according to which Byzantium became the Turkish vassal once again.¹⁷

In the meantime the papacy recovered from the great schism and could offer a support but under the condition of the Church union. This was the traditional Byzantine card in a political game but now there was no time to play it in order to gain a delay. The pressure was too strong. Manuel, however, was consistent in encouraging his son to make negotiations as long as possible. He was happy that he would not face the union himself. “The infidels are very worried that we might unite and come to agreement with the Christians of the west,” he said but his advice was not to put the union into practice as “our people are not in the frame of mind to discover a way of uniting with the Latins.”¹⁸ Manuel II died in 1425. John and his brothers, among them Constantine, the last Byzantine emperor, managed to recover the Peloponnese from the Latins by 1430.¹⁹ The Turks, however, did not tolerate such independent moves of their vassals, and in the same year they conquered Thessalonica, the second city of the Empire. Then, in the very same year, Ioannina, the important town in Epiros, surrendered to them.²⁰ The days of Constantinople were numbered. On the one hand, the Palaiologoi enjoyed the restoration of the Byzantine rule in the Peloponnese, protected by the fortress

¹⁷ D. M. Nicol, op. cit., 334.

¹⁸ *Chronikon minus. Georgios Sphrantzes Memorii 1401–1477. In anexa Pseudo-Phrantzes. Macariae Melissenos. Cronica 1258–1481*, ed. V Grecu, Bucharest 1966, 320; English translation D. M. Nicol, op. cit., 358. Sphrantzes’ short chronicle was translated into English by M. Philippides (cf. no. 1), Melissenos still waits.

¹⁹ Only Venetians managed to keep their three ports. Cf. D. A. Zakythinos, “*Le despotat grec de Morée*,” *Histoire politique*, vol. I, Paris 1932, 219–21.

²⁰ D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros 1267–1479. A Contribution to the History of Greece in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1984, 202–03.

called Hexamilion, which was not an obstacle for the Ottomans.²¹ On the other hand, they realized that the Church Union could be the only rescue in the imminent disaster. In 1430 John VIII started negotiations with the Papacy. He was aware of a possible negative reaction of the Byzantines, but had no other way out. Finally, at the end of November 1437, he, the Patriarch, bishops and the rest of the huge delegation left Constantinople for the Council in Ferrara. They arrived in Venice at the beginning of March the next year. The sea voyage was made in winter, in difficult conditions. “The Patriarch and the other aged prelates, and sometimes the Emperor too, neither ate nor drank nor slept, except in port. So, if there had not been numerous islands with harbors under the domination of Venetians or of the Greeks themselves, assuredly they would not have been able to reach the port of Venice.”²² Apparently, the voyage of a nearly fifty-year-old John VIII was as difficult as the one made by his father Manuel II, who was the same age when he left for the West. The Venetian reception of John was truly imperial. The Doge met the Emperor’s ship in his ceremonial barge. The oarsmen wore caps with the emblems of Venice and the dynasty of Palaiologoi. After a pompous reception, the delegation left for Ferrara. John, suffering from gout, rode on horseback and, in accordance with the Byzantine etiquette, he did not want to dismount, that is, to touch the ground in front of the papal residence. He was carried discreetly through the

²¹ Cf. M. Dąbrowska, “Hexamilion i Warnia,” *Balcanica Posnaniensia* VIII (1997), 61–70. Analysis of Byzantine and Western sources allows to prove that Byzantium was very attached to the idea of independent Peloponnese, trying to omit Latin pretensions to this territory. It seems that the Church Union was necessary for this purpose, as well as for protecting Constantinople from the Turks.

²² “Relation of the Bishop of Digne,” *Fragmenta protocoli, diaria privata, sermones*, ed. G. Hofmann, Romae 1959; trans. J. Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and Other Essays*, New York 1964, 17.

rooms up to his throne.²³ After some more protocol complications, the negotiations started and Ambrogio Traversari noted: “There are among them (i.e. the Greeks) many learned men, excellently disposed towards us. But the Emperor and the Patriarch surpass them all in such disposition.”²⁴ At the end of 1438 the Council was transferred to Florence, where finally the Union was signed on the 5 July in 1439. One-and-half-year negotiations prove that it was not easy.²⁵ After such sacrifice, the Byzantines could have expected real military help, as they ceased to be schismatics for the western world. Pope Eugenius IV, who financed in great part the stay of 700 Greek delegates in Italy, could not supply troops. He launched a crusade and sent his ambassadors to European courts. The only response came from the Polish-Hungarian king Ladislas, who defeated the Turks in the winter war of 1443–1444, and signed a truce with Murad II, but then broke it, stood up against the Sultan, and was defeated at Varna on the 10 of November in 1444.²⁶ John VIII could only congratulate his enemy on the victory. In the same year his brother, the future Constantine XI, rebuilt the Hexamilion wall on the Isthmus of Corinth and gained control over the Duchy of Athens, which was in Latin hands.²⁷ Disappointed by the Union, and aware of the fact that it was unacceptable to many of his subjects, the Emperor did not proclaim it in Constantinople. In 1446 the Sultan invaded Morea and reduced it to a tributary province. The dreams of an independent Peloponnese did not last long. The Union

²³ Ibidem, 24.

²⁴ *Ambrosii Traversari latinae epistolae*, ed. L. Mehus, Firenze 1759; trans. J. Gill, op. cit., 25.

²⁵ The details – J. Gill, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge 1959.

²⁶ D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries...*, 362–63.

²⁷ D. M. Zakythinos, op. cit., 226–31; D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor. The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans*, Cambridge 1992, 23–29. Polish translation of that book by M. Dąbrowska, Gdańsk 2004; M. Dąbrowska, “Hexamilion...,” 61–70.

turned out to be fruitless. John, however, remained faithful to his Florentine signature. He died on the last day of October in 1448, and was buried without Orthodox funeral. Childless, he left the crown to his brother, Constantine. Troubled by his illness, long Italian voyage, and equally long negotiations, John VIII managed to preserve his image full of personal dignity and normal courtly life. There is a nice testimony by Nicolas Notaras who wrote: “because besides the other high qualities that God has given him is his frequent exercising of young men in the chase by often going out for that purpose, which gives not only that pleasure and satisfaction, but is by its nature an introduction to almost all military training and soldierly experience.”²⁸ Probably the best recollection of Italy were the hounds, which the Emperor brought from his journey.

Go where those others went to the dark boundary
for the golden fleece of nothingness your last prize
go upright among those who are on their knees...²⁹

These words by Herbert would be an adequate comment on John VIII's efforts.

After his brother's death, Constantine left Morea and reached Constantinople in early March of 1449. He was proclaimed the Emperor at his court in the Peloponnese, but there was no traditional coronation. He immediately paid his homage to Murad and asked for a treaty of peace. The Sultan profited by the disagreement between Constantine's brothers, Demetrius and Thomas, promoting the first one against the latter, and against

²⁸ *Palaiologeia kai Peloponesiaka*, ed. Sp. P. Lambros, t. II, Athenai 1912, 184; trans. J. Gill, *Personalities...*, 113. There is a very good contemporary book about John VIII by I. Durić, *Sumrak Vizantije. Vreme Jovana VIII Paleologa 1392–1448*, Beograd 1984, also translated into French. It was inaccessible for me here.

²⁹ Z. Herbert, op. cit., 61.

the Emperor himself. The new Byzantine ruler managed to prevent the fratricidal war at the end of 1450, but the tension remained.³⁰ At the beginning of the next year Murad II died in Adrianople, and his nearly twenty-year-old son, Mehmed II, succeeded him. The conquest of Constantinople had always been his dream. His enemy, Constantine, was about twenty years his senior, and like his predecessor on the throne, he was childless. Whether he had a successor or not, his confrontation with the Turkish power had little chance for victory. There was no time to discuss whether the Union had been a mistake. On the 12 of December in 1452 Catholic and Orthodox liturgy was celebrated in Hagia Sophia. It was high time to forget about the trauma left by the Latins after the Fourth Crusade. The Emperor marshaled his people and prepared the city for defence. 700 soldiers under Giustiniani Longo from Genoa joined him. About 30 Venetian ships were in the Golden Horn ready to fight. Cardinal Isidore, the papal legate, appeared in Constantinople with 200 Neapolitan archers hired by him. This was a symbolic consolidation of Europe against the Turks. Mehmed surrounded Constantinople on Easter Monday, 2 April 1453. The first bombardments of the famous walls started 4 days later. The proportion of forces did not leave any illusions. Outside were approximately 80 thousand attackers, inside seven thousand defenders.³¹ At the end of April Constantine sent his envoys to the Sultan asking for peace. In return, he received an offer to surrender the City. He refused. His advisers asked him to escape and create a conspiracy in exile. He refused. On the 28 of May, a day before the final assault, he organized a solemn procession with icons and then delivered an unforgettable speech to his court. “Gentlemen,” he said, “illustrious captains of the army, and our most Christian comrades in arms: we now see the hour of battle approaching... that this is the day of your glory – a day on which, if

³⁰ D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor...*, 36–37.

³¹ S. Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453*, Cambridge 1965, 85.

you shed but a drop of blood, you will win for yourselves crowns of martyrdom and eternal fame.”³² Constantine died the next day, fighting on the walls like an ordinary soldier. Kritoboulos of Imbros wrote that the Emperor “was a wise and moderate man in his private life and diligent to the highest degree in prudence and virtue, sagacious as the most disciplined of men. In political affairs and in matters of government he yielded to no one of the Emperors before him in preeminence. Quick to perceive his duty, and quicker still to do it, he was eloquent in speech, clever in thought...”³³

Constantine looked for death, for he did not want to be taken alive. He cried: “Is there no one among Christians who will take my head from me?” He was abandoned and alone. Then one of the Turks struck him in the face and wounded him. He in turn struck back. But another gave him a mortal blow from behind. This is an account by a Byzantine chronicler, Doukas, who added that Constantine was not recognized, since he fought as a common man. Then, when the Turks discovered whom they killed, Mehmed ordered to cut off the Emperor’s head, hang it on the column, peel the skin off the body and stuff it with straw.³⁴ According to Melissenos, who compiled the memoirs of George Sphrantzes: “The Sultan was delighted (when Constantine was identified) and commanded some Christians to bury the body with due honor.”³⁵ The great contradiction is

³² Three accounts of the speech survived. Leonardo of Chios’ testimony proved to be the most reliable and was translated by D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor...*, 67–68. Cf. S. Runciman, *op. cit.*, 130–31.

³³ *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, ed. D. R. Reinsch, Berlin-New York 1983, 80–82; English trans. C. T. Riggs, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Kritovoulos*, Princeton (NJ) 1954, 81. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor...*, 70.

³⁴ M. Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, trans. H. J. Magoulias, Detroit 1975, 324sq; D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor...*, 85.

³⁵ Sphrantzes, *Chronicon maius. 428–430*, trans. D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor...*, 86.

visible even in these two descriptions. We do not know where Constantine was buried, probably without respect for his body. The Turks did not find his regalia, “for the Lady, the Mother of God, took them with her to keep until such time as there would be mercy for the wretched race of Christians.”³⁶ This story remained in the legends of the Greeks, who blamed themselves for their sinful behavior which was punished by Heaven:

They will reward you with what they have at hand
with the whip of laughter with murder on a garbage heap, ³⁷

the poet will say.

Manuel II Palaiologos and his sons John VIII and Constantine XI showed power, which had nothing in common with military or economic strength. They neither had the army to protect the Empire nor the money to hire mercenaries or pay tribute to the Sultan. They could not count on the West. Still, they considered and then signed the Church Union, which did not save them. Their situation was lamentable, but there was something in their behavior that could be called invisible power, although their State was visibly powerless. This was the power of virtue, this particular value, so unfashionable today, which allowed them to pass into history in an honorable way. History challenged them and they answered this challenge.

Go because only in this way will you be admitted to the company of old skulls

³⁶ “Anonymi Monodia,” *Monodiai kai threnoi epi te alosei tes Konstantinopoleos*, ed. Sp. Lambros, *Neos Ellenomnemon* 5 (1908), 248–50; trans. D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal...*, 90.

³⁷ Z. Herbert, op. cit., 62.

to the company of your ancestors: Gilgamesh Hector Ro-
land
the defenders of the kingdom without limit and the city of ashes
Be faithful Go³⁸

And so, they went.

³⁸ Loc. cit.

Le roi de France, aurait-il pu acheter Byzance?

Avant de parler de ce marché, faisons connaissance de Byzance à la fin du XIV^e siècle. L'empire n'est plus qu'un reliquat de ce qu'il a été lors de son ancienne gloire. Son territoire est limité aux environs de Constantinople: la ville elle-même et une partie du Péloponnèse. Son heure est venue. Les Turcs Osmanlis, qui avaient déjà conquis une grande partie de l'Asie Mineure, s'étaient déjà installés dans la partie européenne de Byzance. Leur capitale se trouvait à Andrinople en Thrace, ville située à trois jours à cheval de Constantinople. Ils rassemblent leurs forces pour attaquer.

L'empereur Jean V Paléologue attend de l'aide de l'Occident, mais la bataille sur la Marica dissipe ses illusions. Au moment où Jean V est persuadé d'avoir associé la papauté à ses projets en se convertissant à la confession romaine, et lorsqu'il cherche de l'aide auprès de Venise, les Turcs battent les Serbes sur la rivière Marica en 1371. Les Balkans sont à prendre et l'Occident reste inactif. Jean V se décide à faire un acte humiliant, mais il croit que cela va lui assurer de survivre: en 1372 ou 1373, il devient le vassal de Murât I, et s'engage à payer un tribut annuel et à accorder une aide militaire aux Turcs. Contre qui? Contre les confrères des Balkans et l'ancienne population de l'Empire en Asie Mineure, subordonnée maintenant aux Osmanlis. Une décision tragique. Elle permettra aux Turcs de se mêler des affaires de l'Empire, mais, il faut le dire, le fils aîné de Jean V, Andronic, les y encouragera en s'engageant dans le conflit intérieur

des Osmanlis contre Murât. Le sultan exigera de son vassal un châtement pour cette insubordination en demandant d'aveugler Andronic et son fils Jean. L'empereur est dans l'impasse. L'exécution est simulée et ni le révolté ni son fils ne perde la vue. Andronic, prévu pour la succession, est déshérité et, en 1373, l'empereur désigne comme successeur son fils cadet Manuel. Mais Andronic n'attend pas longtemps. A l'aide de Murât, il détrône son père en 1376 et devient l'empereur Andronic IV en honorant son fils, le petit Jean VII, de la dignité de coempereur. Les deux soignent leur dessein, Jean V et Manuel II sont en prison. Byzance a quatre empereurs, mais aucune force réelle. En 1379, Jean V et Manuel II sont libérés à l'aide de Murât. Ils s'engagent à payer un tribut plus grand. On comprend bien qui décide dans ce jeu et qui est vainqueur. Le père pardonne à Andronic et celui-ci se contente du droit au pouvoir pour son fils Jean VII.

Les conflits familiaux des Paléologues et l'engagement des Turcs dans ces conflits affaiblissent encore plus la faible Byzance. Le drame balkan arrive à sa fin. Les Turcs battent les Serbes à Kosovo Polje en 1389 et attaquent la Bulgarie pour en faire une des provinces de leur empire. Murât périt à Kosovo Polje, mais son fils Bâyezîd I prend le pouvoir. Jean VII lui demande de l'aide pour restituer son pouvoir. En 1390, il s'oppose à son grand-père Jean V et exerce son règne à Constantinople pendant quelques mois. Jean V revient sur le trône, mais pour peu de temps. Il meurt en 1391 et c'est Manuel II qui va régner après s'être échappé en cachette des mains des Turcs auprès desquels il faisait son service militaire en tant que vassal. Bâyezîd ne peut pas le lui pardonner. Il lui impose un tribut si grand que Byzance ne peut plus payer, et Venise, auquel les empereurs empruntent, ne veut plus avancer d'argent. Manuel, en tant que vassal, est obligé, de revenir auprès des Osmanlis pour terminer ses engagements militaires. Bientôt, il ne peut plus supporter de telles humiliations, mais l'honneur exigera un défi ouvert aux Turcs. En 1394, Bâyezîd met le siège devant Constantinople.

C'est le début de la fin. Venise offre l'asile à Manuel. Il ne l'accepte pas. L'Occident apprend les nouvelles sur le drame de Constantinople. L'Europe est bouleversée, mais elle ne peut rien faire. La Péninsule Ibérique et surtout la Castille est occupée par la Conquête et ses propres problèmes. L'Angleterre et la France mènent leur propre guerre que l'on appellera la guerre de Cent ans. La papauté est touchée par le grand schisme, et son autorité est divisée entre Rome et Avignon. Le Reich n'entrait pas en compte. Le règne de Wenceslas IV de Luxembourg finira mal. Son frère Sigismond de Luxembourg, roi de Bohême, essaie de sauver l'honneur de la famille.

La Bohême, après les victoires des Turcs sur les Balkans, est particulièrement exposée à leurs attaques. Sigismond organise une expédition dans laquelle prennent part des personnes connues de l'Europe, entre autres le fils cadet du duc de Bourgogne, le futur Jean sans Peur. Il est à la tête de l'armée française. La bataille de Nicopolis en 1396 finira par une défaite totale de cette armée "mixte." Sigismond de Luxembourg s'enfuit et Jean sans Peur devient prisonnier de guerre. Il semble que c'est la fin, mais Manuel II ne se soumet pas. Il envoie à Paris une délégation avec Théodore Cantacuzène pour demander de l'aide pour Constantinople assiégée. La France, en raison de son engagement à Nicopolis, semble être un destinataire convenable. Elle comprend le drame de Byzance, mais est maintenant obligée de payer la rançon pour son chef bourgignon et d'autres seigneurs. Il y a parmi eux Jean Boucicaut, un guerrier courageux qui est prêt à aller au secours de Byzance. Le roi de France Charles VI lui donne 1200 soldats qui arrivent par la mer à Constantinople en 1399. Paris commence à s'intéresser davantage à ce qui se passe sur les bords du Bosphore, car, depuis 1396, Charles VI est suzerain de Gênes et cette ville possède de nombreux territoires dans le monde égéen. Les Génois sont particulièrement attachés à Péra, un quartier de Constantinople qu'ils habitent depuis longtemps et où ils mènent leurs affaires. Il est difficile de dire s'ils étaient liés émotionnellement

à Byzance. Ils rivalisent plutôt avec Venise qui promet de l'aide à Manuel. Dans ce chaos politique, le destin de Byzance se décide, Byzance qui n'aurait pas pu être sauvée si les Turcs n'avaient pas été battus par Tamerlan près d'Ankara en 1402. Ce coup dur porté aux Turcs sauve l'Empire et retarde sa défaite définitive d'un demi-siècle. Mais où, dans tout cela, est la proposition faite au roi de France d'acheter Byzance? Lequel des quatre Paléologues en conflits les uns avec les autres, a fait cette offre? Jean V et Andronic étaient déjà morts, Manuel a résisté courageusement jusqu'à la fin, mais où était son neveu Jean VII? Celui-ci, qui avait déjà goûté au pouvoir impérial, menait toujours un duel discret contre son oncle. Trentenaire, il a une vision du destin byzantin complètement différente de celle de Manuel II qui va vers ses 50 ans. En 1397, par l'intermédiaire des Génois de Péra, il propose au roi de France le droit au trône de Byzance en contrepartie de 25 000 florins de pension par an et d'un château bien fortifié en France. Quelle idée! Pour voir si une telle offre était réalisable, voyons maintenant comment le problème se présente du côté français.

La France est en conflit contre l'Angleterre depuis 1337. A la fin du XIV^e siècle, elle est en position de faiblesse bien que le règne de Charles V ne l'ait pas laissé prévoir. Charles VI prend le pouvoir en 1380, après son père, Charles V le Sage. Charles le Sage avait tout fait pour que la France oublie son déshonneur de la bataille de Poitiers et le traité de Bretigny de 1360, et selon lequel il fallait payer une grosse rançon pour Jean le Bon, roi de France, fait prisonnier par les Anglais.

En 1380, Charles VI a pu profiter de la politique raisonnable de son père. Il n'avait pourtant que 12 ans et ses oncles tuteurs étaient très puissants. Parmi eux, on trouve Philippe le Hardi, le père du futur Jean sans Peur. Les autres sont Louis d'Anjou et Jean duc de Berry. C'est Philippe le Hardi qui a marié Charles VI à Isabelle de Bavière, issue d'une riche famille de Wittelsbach. Cette belle femme va séduire non seulement son mari, mais aussi toute la cour. Elle va s'engager dans des liaisons

qui ne lui apporteront pas une belle renommée. Charles VI se fait prendre au début par les plaisirs d'une vie joyeuse que sa femme aime tant, mais en 1388, il se libère de la tutelle des oncles et s'entoure de nouveaux conseillers. Il aurait pu développer ses capacités de monarque autonome, si une grave maladie ne l'avait pas frappé. La première attaque l'atteint lors de son séjour en Bretagne en 1392. Il est frappé par la démence, devient fou, ne reconnaît pas son entourage et s'enfonce dans l'apathie. Les oncles profitent de l'occasion pour reprendre le pouvoir, accompagnés du frère du roi, Louis d'Orléans, qui flirte ouvertement avec sa belle soeur Isabeau de Bavière. Personne ne veut accompagner le roi malade, hormis Odette, une jeune femme entrée au couvent et qui est maintenant chargée des soins auprès du roi. Odette n'a pas peur de lui, elle apaise ses angoisses. Il se sent beaucoup mieux avec elle. Quand il apprend les nouvelles sur Constantinople, assiégée par Bâyezîd, il encourage Sigismond de Luxembourg dans son idée d'expédition contre les Turcs. Le fils de Philippe le Hardi, Jean sans Peur, se met à la tête de l'armée. Cette expédition est coûteuse. Philippe ordonne un impôt pour armer son fils aîné et gagne de cette façon 120 000 couronnes d'or. 60 000 viennent de ceux qui ne peuvent pas partir. Une armée somptueuse part pour Nicopolis où la bataille contre Bâyezîd se termine en 1396 par leur défaite. Avant cela, Odette meurt en mettant au monde une fille que l'on connaîtra plus tard sous le nom de Marguerite de Valois. La mort d'Odette provoque le retour de la maladie de Charles.

Donc, en 1397, quand les nouvelles sur l'offre de Jean VII arrivent au roi de France, il n'est plus un destinataire convenable. Il est difficile d'évaluer quel était son propre capital. Il est suzerain de la riche ville de Gênes et c'est sur cela que compte peut-être Jean VII. Le trésor français est vide. L'argent est parti pour les plaisirs d'Isabeau de Bavière et de son amant, Louis d'Orléans, le frère du roi. La riche Bourgogne fait des dépenses pour payer la rançon en contrepartie de la liberté du fils de

Philippe le Hardi et d'autres chevaliers. C'est un vrai drame pour la France, gouvernée par Charles VI le Fou, un roi malade, mais le Bien-Aimé de ses sujets. Revenons à la proposition qui a été l'une des dernières fantasmagories byzantines. Est-il plus sûr de s'installer dans un château en France, quand le pays vit une période difficile? Pour Jean VII, apparemment oui. A Byzance, il est dangereux de vivre, mais Jean VII n'est plus à Constantinople puisqu'il a obtenu un domaine à Selymbria sur la mer Marmara mais il aimerait le quitter pour la France. Combien coûte un bon château? La même somme que la pension désirée, ce qui donne ensemble une somme de 50 000 florins. Peut-être que, malgré tous ces problèmes, Charles le Fou aurait pu se payer Byzance, mais qu'est-ce que cela lui aurait donné? Il a voulu écouter Théodore Cantacuzène, envoyé par Manuel II, et le secourir avec 1200 chevaliers, le maréchal Boucicaut à leur tête. Cela devait coûter beaucoup, mais du point de vue de Charles le Fou, c'était plus raisonnable. Paradoxalement, à la fin du siècle, on peut observer plus de raison chez le roi malade que chez son frère Louis d'Orléans, amoureux de sa belle-soeur et voué aux danses et plaisirs. Cette attitude déplaira bientôt à Jean sans Peur, mais la préoccupation de l'honneur de la cour ne sera qu'un prétexte pour supprimer un rival politique qu'était le beau duc d'Orléans, aimé par la reine. Il périra dans une ruelle obscure en 1407. En même temps, Manuel essaiera de profiter de la défaite des Turcs près d'Ankara et de renforcer avec peine son État affaibli par le siège de Constantinople. Jean VII mourra en 1408. Son petit garçon mourra avant lui et c'est ainsi que la lutte de Manuel contre son neveu finira. Une rivalité difficile à comprendre, si l'on prend en considération ses circonstances.

Presque cent ans plus tard, en 1494, Charles VIII, le roi de France qui s'engagera dans les guerres italiennes, achètera à André Paléologue les droits de Byzance. Cela pourtant ne lui donnera rien, ni à lui, ni à Byzance qui ne rescucitera plus après la chute de Constantinople en 1453. Qui était André

Paléologue et pourquoi s'est-il adressé à Charles VIII, c'est là un autre sujet. Notre histoire concernant la fin du XIV^e siècle est depuis longtemps terminée. Nous y entendons le vacarme des armes turques et les disputes des derniers Paléologues au sujet de ce pouvoir tellement illusoire. Nous entendons aussi les bruits des fêtes parisiennes et les chuchotements secrets d'une belle femme et de ses adorateurs, et surtout d'un adorateur. Nous entendons enfin le roi Charles le Fou sursautant dans l'attaque d'une fièvre malade qui ne le quitte plus depuis son expédition en Bretagne.

CHAPTER TWO

Byzantium and the Polish Kingdom in 13th-15th Centuries

A Byzantine Lady's Daughters in Poland

A Byzantine lady, the wife of the Hungarian King, did not want her daughter to marry a Polish prince.¹ Did she know anything about Poland? Did she have other plans for her children? We do not know. However, because of this piece of information, she entered Polish history. From the perspective of Polish genealogy, this seems to be an accidental connection between Poland and Byzantium. But the presence of the Byzantine lady at the Hungarian court was natural enough in those times. The presence of Maria Lascaris was the result of the following circumstances.

The throne of the Latin Empire in Constantinople, which had existed since the Fourth Crusade, became vacant in 1217.² The King of Hungary, Andrew II, hoped to gain it. It was only the choice of Peter of Courtenay that frustrated his plans.³ At that time the King was involved in the crusade not due to his affection for the Holy Land, but rather from the fact that he wanted the crown of Constantinople. His hopes were boosted by past events in Hungary. His father, Bela III, had been engaged to the

¹ "Vita et miracula Sanctae Kyngae ducissae Cracoviensis," ed. W. Kętrzyński, *MPH* vol. IV, Lwów 1884, 685.

² J. Longnon, *L'Empire Latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée*, Paris 1949, 157–60.

³ Z. J. Kosztołnyik, *Hungary in the Thirteenth Century*, New York 1996, 60.

daughter of Manuel Komnenos and was supposed to become Byzantine Emperor. However, after some time a son was born to Manuel and Bela was excluded from succession.⁴ Nevertheless, the situation boosted Hungarian aspirations. Even though Andrew II did not manage to gain the throne of Constantinople, he connected his family with the Byzantine dynasty. On his way back from the Holy Land he visited the Nicean Empire and took home a bride for his son.⁵ In this way, Maria, daughter of Theodore Lascaris, came to Buda in 1218.⁶ From then on the Hungarian court was in charge of her upbringing. She was to marry Bela IV, the heir to the throne. The moment she left the Byzantine world, the door was closed and the connection with her motherland was severed. It is as difficult to define the attitude of Theodore Lascaris to this match as it is to fathom what Andrew expected. The only thing Acropolites says is that Theodore Lascaris did not have a son but had married off three daughters successfully.⁷ The eldest daughter's husband, John Vatatzes, was supposed to come to the Nicean throne.⁸ We can only speculate that Andrew might have hoped for that throne, if Vatatzes' successors had not lived long enough. Could Bela IV have been interested in such an outcome? His own politics do not show that, even though he saw the object of his father's aspirations.

⁴ Cf. G. Moravcsik, "Pour une alliance byzantino-hongroise. Seconde moitié du XII^e siècle," *Studia Byzantina* (1967), 305–13; F. Makk, "Les relations hungaro-byzantines aux X–XII^e siècles," *European Intellectual Trends and Hungary*, ed. F. Glotz, *Etudes Historiques Hongroises* 4 (1990), 20–21.

⁵ On the Nicean Empire see: A. Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea. The Story of an Empire in Exile*, London 1912; M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile. Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204–1261)*, Oxford 1975.

⁶ Z. J. Kosztolnyik, *Hungary*, 68.

⁷ Georgios Acropolites, *Annales*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1837, 12 = Georgii Acropolitae, *Opera*, vol. 1, ed. A. Heisenberg, Lipsia 1903, 10.

⁸ They married in 1212. Cf. D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai. A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, London 1968, 108.

In 1220 Robert of Courtenay, the future Latin Emperor of Constantinople, was staying in Buda; his aunt Yolanda of Courtenay was the Queen of Hungary at that time. Bela joined Robert in his trip to Constantinople and was present during the crowning ceremony in 1221. His presence seems to prove that he had no signs on the Constantinopolitan throne. He came along as a cousin.

It is noteworthy that the connection between Hungary and the Byzantine Emperor in exile displeased Andrew, so he tried to break the engagement.⁹ On the other hand, there is a note in the sources stating that after two years of marriage, Bela was separated from his Byzantine wife because of his “bad counsellors.”¹⁰ The Pope requested that Bela should accept his wife again, which happened after some time.¹¹ The marital consent provoked Andrew’s anger which made the couple escape to Austria. Many barons took Bela’s side and Andrew might have feared rebellion.

Thus Maria Lascaris lived in a situation that was far from a kindergarten idyll. Staying in Buda, she was involved in a purely Hungarian policy and we do not know whether she had any direct contact with Nicea and Constantinople then. (There may be Hungarian materials on the subject but I do not have access to them.) Maria’s first child was born before Bela became an independent sovereign in 1235. The Hungarian court was a mixture of bon-vivant style, typical for Andrew, and ascetic morality propagated by the Franciscan friars. Paradoxically, it was Andrew’s daughter, Elisabeth of Thuringia, who was

⁹ Z. J. Kosztołnyik, *Hungary*, 69.

¹⁰ Z. J. Kosztołnyik, *Hungary*, 86.

¹¹ Z. J. Kosztołnyik, *Hungary*, 87. On the previous intervention into Hungarian family affairs see: C. M. Rousseau, “Kinship Ties, Behavioral Norms, and Family Counselling in the Pontificate of Innocent III,” *Women, Marriage and Family in Medieval Christendom. Essays in Memory of Michael M. Shenan CSB*, ed. C. M. Rousseau and J. Rosenthal, Kalamazoo (MI) 1998, 332–37.

canonized in 1235 because of her ascetic merits.¹² Thus, she became famous and her lifestyle affected the Hungarian court. It is clear that Maria Lascaris was also influenced by this atmosphere. If it is true that one of Bela's sisters-in-law asked Maria to discipline her, then the Hungarian court was completely different from Byzantine gaiety. We can only guess that this was a chasm for Maria if she remembered Nicea at all. In Hungary she became a strict and demanding queen.

Her strong will manifested itself in her objection to the marriage between Kynga and a Polish prince. Her consent was only given on the request of Salome, the prince's sister and Bela's sister-in-law.¹³ Whom she saw in the role of Kynga's husband, we do not know. Whatever her plans may have been, Kynga left Buda at the age of 5 and was brought to Cracow in 1239. In order to complete the image of Maria, we should stress that in 1241, during the Tartar invasion, Bela entrusted Maria with the custody of crown jewels and saints' relics, and provided her with the safe refuge.¹⁴ We also know that in 1259 her husband gave her the fortress of Vysegrad, which she restored at her own expense. She may have been the reason why Hungarian troops supported Michael Palaiologos in the battle of Pelagonia in 1259.¹⁵ Bela IV died in 1270 and Maria followed him soon. She was buried in a Franciscan monastery in Esztergom, beside her husband. All this means that in her lifetime she identified herself with the Hungarian *raison d'État* and she was a Latin. I would like to stress this point, because despite the fact that Kynga and her sister were born to a Byzantine mother, they came to Poland

¹² Z. J. Kosztolnyik, *Hungary*, 87.

¹³ Salome was the wife of Koloman, Bela's younger brother. On Salome's influence see: "Vita et miracula Sanctae Kyngae," 685.

¹⁴ Z. J. Kosztolnyik, *Hungary*, 168.

¹⁵ E. Darkó, *Byzantinisch-ungarische Beziehungen in der zweiten Hälfte des XIII. Jahrhunderts*, Weimar 1933, 8–19 (Kap. 1: *Ungarische Hilfe für die Byzantiner in der Schlacht von Pelagonia*).

as Latin ladies, probably oblivious of their Byzantine heritage. Their mother may have been right in thinking that Poland was not a place to go to. The country had been divided into principalities for about one hundred years. Kynga was to marry the prince of Cracow, who was in charge of Little Poland, and Yolanda, her sister, was to marry the prince of Gniezno, who was in charge of Great Poland. (I realize that the description is rather sketchy but I do not want to go into details.)

Let us take a closer look at Kynga. Her husband Boleslas hoped that the marriage would strengthen his position in the contacts with his opponent Conrad of Mazovia.¹⁶ In this he shared his sister Salome's hope. In 1239 he was 13 and Kynga was 5. We do not know when they got married. If they waited until she reached maturity, the match took place in 1246.¹⁷ Salome, who returned to Poland after her husband's death in 1241, certainly influenced Kynga in her upbringing. The girl was well-educated, being able to read and speak Polish, Hungarian and Latin.¹⁸ She was brought up in the Franciscan spirit, which had a lasting influence on her personality. Even as a child she was regarded as a saint and as a future wife she vowed chastity. She brought in a large dowry, from which Boleslas profited while reconstructing his country after the Tartar invasion. Kynga had quite a status at the Polish court. She was offered a territory at Sącz, on the border with Hungary, which gave her an independent position.¹⁹ As a result of his connection with Hungary, Boleslas took part in many military operations, initiated by Bela.²⁰ This is how he was involved in the war of the

¹⁶ Joannes Dlugossius, *Annales seu Cronicae Incliti Regni Poloniae*, liber VI, Varsoviae 1973, 284–85.

¹⁷ A. Witkowska, "Vita Sanctae Kyngae ducissae Cracoviensis' jako źródło hagiograficzne," *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 10 (1961), 111.

¹⁸ "Vita Sanctae Kyngae," 687.

¹⁹ Cf. A. Rutkowska-Plachcińska, *Sądeczyzna w XIII i XIV wieku. Przemiany gospodarcze i społeczne*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1961, 143.

²⁰ Joannes Dlugossius, *Annales*, liber VII, Varsoviae 1975, 94.

Babenberg succession in Austria, which is beyond the scope of this paper. The fight started in the year of his wedding, which took place in 1246.

Kynga tried to strengthen Cracow's authority by promoting the canonization of Bishop Stanislas of Szczepanów, which took place in 1257.²¹ Polish Franciscan custody developed within the Hungarian Franciscan province as a result of Kynga's influence.²² She had her own chancellery and issued her own documents.²³ As a result of her matchmaking, her sister Yolanda came to Poland in order to marry another Polish prince.²⁴ Yolanda was eight years her junior. An explanation that is sometimes provided, that she was a surrogate of Kynga's daughter, may be true. Yolanda was brought up in Cracow. However, after some time the sisters separated and Yolanda went her own way. She married Boleslas in 1256. Unlike Kynga's marriage, Yolanda's match did not give any spectacular profit to Hungary. Her husband was a strong personality, a mature man of 25, and he did not allow himself to be swayed. His country had different enemies and different *raisons d'État*. Kynga was a role model for Yolanda just as Salome had been for Kynga. Cut off from politics, Yolanda followed the Franciscan ethos. She promoted the Franciscan monasteries and nunneries in her principality.²⁵ She gave birth to three daughters, which probably did not satisfy her husband; he wanted an heir. It is striking, however, that when her husband died, Yolanda went to the nunnery, leaving her children behind. The eldest was already married, the second was 13 and the youngest was three years old.²⁶ Her husband's

²¹ Ibidem, 95–96.

²² Cf. K. Kantak, *Franciszkanie polscy*, vol. I (1237–1517), Kraków 1937.

²³ *Kodeks Dyplomatyczny Małopolski*, vol. II, ed. F. Piekosiński, Kraków 1886, 127, 128, 132, 138, etc.

²⁴ Joannes Długossius, *Annales*, liber VII, 108.

²⁵ K. Kantak, *Franciszkanie*, 32.

²⁶ Joannes Długossius, *Annales*, liber VII, 205–206.

nephew became their custodian. What is most interesting here is that the second daughter was later married to Ladislas the Short, the future King of Poland.

During their life, Kynga and Yolanda visited Hungary at least once, in 1266, for a family reunion in Buda.²⁷ We do not know whether they ever had any closer contact with their mother. It would be interesting to know how she felt about Kynga's unconsummated marriage, which was completely against the Byzantine mentality. Byzantine women had two options: one was marriage and childbirth, the other was to enter a nunnery.²⁸ There was no third way. She could not be a nun at the court while being married. Even more striking is that, in her devotion to God, she resisted the temptation even though she shared a bedroom with her husband. Boleslas did not object, earning himself the nickname Boleslas the Bashful, and they adopted a son as a solution. His brother-in-law, Boleslas of Gniezno, waited for his first child for eight years. He accepted his wife's saintly attitude and got the nickname Boleslas the Pious. Just like her sister, Yolanda went to the nunnery and they both lived there till their deaths: Kynga's in 1292 and Yolanda's in 1298. Each of them stayed in their principalities.²⁹ During their long life they could see the decadence of the Hungarian dynasty, which died out in 1301. At that time, Polish principalities were progressing towards reunion and were on the way to forming a kingdom. Far away from this area, in their motherland, Constantinople regained its Byzantine identity. Whether it bothered them at all is a great question. They lived their lives outside this world. This testifies to the power of Franciscan ideology, which

²⁷ *Kodeks Dyplomatyczny Małopolski*, vol. II, ed. F. Piekosiński, Kraków 1886, 127. The later documents prove Kynga's travels to Hungary.

²⁸ Cf. A. M. Talbot, "Women," *The Byzantines*, ed. G. Cavallo, Chicago 1992, 117–43.

²⁹ More about their activity: Z. Budkowa, "Kunegunda," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. XVI, Wrocław 1971, 186–89; O. Łaszczyńska, "Jolanta," *Ibidem*, vol. XI, Wrocław 1964–1965, 264–65.

spread to the secular domain. Such an intrusion of the Sacred into the Profane would have been rather incomprehensible to the Byzantine court.

Długosz praises Kynga for her lifestyle and very rarely mentions the name of her mother, who appears in the source as the Greek Emperor's daughter. The author of *Vitae* stresses that Kynga's mother was descended from emperors whose origin went back to Nero. He does it in order to provide Kynga with an ancient and honourable pedigree. It is also important in light of the fact that Kynga's role-model was Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a paragon of the virgin saint.³⁰

Feminists may say that Kynga was cut off from her own body and its needs. Having been denied genuine contact with her mother, she never developed the maternal instinct. Kynga and Yolanda tried to assert themselves as independent women, who chose God in order to evade the patriarchal male influence.³¹ Women scholars who deal with similar cases in other countries but who do not define themselves as strong feminists would probably say that Kynga represented the ideal of maidenhood, which is described by chastity, being desired and intact.³² Thus Kynga might be a model girl for them. But the features of maidenhood in early years, generally youth, seem out of place in a mature woman of Kynga's political position. We do not know whether Kynga could have had children, as she denied her husband that possibility. And it was not merely a question of her private life, but also a public matter and Polish *raison d'État*. Alienated from her Byzantine background, Kynga never brought Byzantine heritage into Poland. This was not new, because her

³⁰ "Vita Sanctae Kyngae," 684.

³¹ Perhaps N. Partner would say it. Cf. N. Partner, "No Sex, No Gender," *Speculum* 68 (1993), 389–443.

³² K. M. Phillips, "Maidenhood as the Perfect Age of Woman's Life," *Young Medieval Women*, ed. K. J. Lewis, N. J. Menuge, K. M. Phillips, New York 1999.

mother also broke her connections with Byzantium. Due to their merits in the Latin world, Kynga was canonized some years ago and Yolanda is a blessed lady of the Church.

When faced with Prof. Salamon's question as to whether Byzantine and Latin influences met in Poland, I can say "yes" from the genealogical point of view. But I would say "no" if I consider the biographies of the two ladies. The only Byzantine trace may be seen in the icon of Our Lady preserved in the Franciscan nunnery in Cracow. This icon was once shown to us by Prof. Różycka-Bryzek. It seems to be an object which was brought to Poland from Byzantium via Hungary through the aforementioned connections. This is certainly something of note for a Byzantine scholar.

Peter of Cyprus and Casimir the Great in Cracow

For Polish people in the Middle Ages* Cyprus seemed an exotic place. The mention of the Cypriot king in Polish medieval sources does not really present this encounter as very unusual. However, Peter's visit to Cracow in 1364 was by all means an astonishing event and as such it deserves attention. The writings that are devoted to Cyprus and Peter's crusading policy do not treat his stay in Poland as a significant episode. Accordingly, the importance of the rally in Cracow has not been duly emphasized. Polish writings concerning this problem are ample but the language barrier makes them inaccessible to foreign scholars. As a result, the dominant opinion in historiography related to this fact has been formed by such influential historians as N. Iorga and R. Hill.¹ Basing their insights on Guillaume de Machaut,² they offer an opinion that the initiative of the Cracow congress

* The article follows from the lecture that I had a pleasure to deliver for the students at the University of Thessaloniki on 15 May 1992

¹ N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières et la croisade au XIV^e siècle*, Paris 1896; G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, vol. II, *The Frankish Period 1192–1432*, Cambridge 1972.

² G. de Machaut, "La prise d'Alexandrie ou chronique du roi Pierre I de Lusignan," éd. M. L. de Mas Latrie, Geneve 1877. *Publications de la Société de l'Orient latin. Série historique* I, 39–42. Polish translation: S. Zajączkowski, "Wilhelm de Machaut i jego wiadomości do dziejów Polski i Litwy w XIV w.," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 43 (1929), 225–26. ("Guillaume de Machaut and His

rested with Charles IV of Luxemburg, which would imply that the congress followed from Peter's crusading attempts. Yet, this was not really the case.

When Peter I arrived in Poland in September 1364, in the company of Charles IV, Polish king Casimir the Great was not any more "prince assez faible et malhereux" as Iorga has it.³ According to this scholar, the poor position of the Polish king was due to the fact that the Polish army had been defeated by the Moldavians. As for his apparent misery, it was supposedly caused by famine, which affected Poland in 1362.⁴ Jan Długosz recorded the Moldavian expedition under the year 1359 but contemporary historians are inclined to see this fact as an expedition of Polish-Hungarian king Louis the Great.⁵ It seems that the importance of this military failure and of famine was blown out of proportion in Iorga's comment. I would like to argue that Casimir the Great's image was far more complex.

Casimir succeeded to Polish throne after his father Ladislas, who had managed to reunite the Polish state after the long period of disintegration. In the moment of takeover followed by his crowning in 1333, Casimir was 23 years old and faced with grave political problems.⁶ In 1335 the truce with the Teutonic Knights and with the Luxemburg House in Bohemia was about to expire. The alliance of these two powers was a serious threat to Polish state. During the rally in Wyszehrad in the same year, the Bohemian king renounced his claims to Polish throne

News Concerning History of Poland and Lithuania in the 14th Century," *Historical Quarterly*).

³ N. Iorga, op. cit., 197.

⁴ Ibidem, 197, no. 1.

⁵ J. Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great)*, Warszawa 1986, 98.

⁶ Writings on the subject of Casimir's rule are ample. He occupies a prominent place in the surveys of Polish history. The latest work on that problem is the book by Wyrozumski, quoted in my text.

for a substantial sum of money.⁷ Casimir was not in position to regain Silesia, therefore he had to face the incorporation of this territory into Bohemia in 1348. His contention with the Teutonic Order was settled by the peace treaty in 1343, as a result of which a part of disputed territories was restored to Poland. Pomerania, however, was still in Teutonic hands. The alliance with the Hungarian House of Anjou was formed to counterbalance the Teutonic-Bohemian coalition. As early as in the reign of Casimir's father who made a clever use of the conflict between Bohemia and Hungary, Casimir's sister, Elisabeth was married off to Charles Robert, king of Hungary. This unequal alliance was to safeguard Casimir's position in politics. In 1339 it was decided that in case Casimir did not leave an heir, the Polish crown would be given to Charles Robert or his sons. This move was to secure Hungarian support for Poland. The fact that the Polish state was not in position to regain Pomerania and Silesia brought about a greater interest in the Eastern border. In 1340 Casimir the Great inherited the possessions of the last prince of Halicz. Hungary and Lithuania also laid claims to this legacy. Eventually though, in 1366 most of the principality of Halicz and Włodzimierz became Casimir's. Hungary was stopped from attempting to seize the Ruthenia of Halicz because of the hope for the Polish throne. As early as in 1350 Hungary reserved the right to buy Ruthenia from Poland in case the Anjou did not succeed to Polish legacy. In the political situation that was difficult to handle, Casimir managed to save his authority. In his domestic politics he made repeated efforts to reinforce the central power within the state. A new system of local government was organized in the former principalities which had become parts of the Polish Kingdom. Important administrative posts

⁷ The House of Przemyslid died out in 1306. Marrying Elizebeth, the daughter of Vaclav II, John of Luxemburg took over the privilege of the dynasty, now extinct. The privilege included the claim to the Polish crown, which was seized by Vaclav II in 1300.

were given to the King's devoted supporters. Codification of law was the King's major achievement. The statutes set up principles of state organization and legal norms. Special regulations were provided for military service. It was a time of rapid urban development in the state. The King supported trade and carried out the vast economic programme that was to strengthen the country. In Casimir's times metalurgy and salt mining were greatly fostered. Craftsmen's guilds were becoming increasingly popular. A population boom occurred in spite of the pestilence ravages. Finally, the King founded the University of Cracow, the second University in central Europe after Prague. Unfortunately, Casimir did not create such a powerful state for his dynasty. He did not leave an heir and after his death in 1370, Polish throne was inherited by his nephew, Louis of Hungary.

Arriving at the Polish court in 1364, Peter of Cyprus met a fifty-four year old king, whose rule had made Poland's position stable over thirty years. Peter was not really invited to the rally organized on Casimir's wish. The Polish King acted as a mediator between Charles IV of Luxemburg and Louis of Hungary. Polish historiography termed this conflict "the war for woman's honour."⁸ Charles IV publicly offended Elisabeth, Louis's mother, when the Hungarian envoys arrived in Prague.⁹ Still, Louis would use offensive terms in his letters to Charles. In 1362 the Hungarian King made an alliance with Rudolph IV of Habsburg against Charles IV. For obvious reasons, Casimir was on the Hungarian side. Yet, the hostilities did not follow. Supposedly then, in May 1363 both sides resorted to Casimir's mediation.¹⁰ Before signing the peace treaty, Charles IV married

⁸ R. Grodecki, *Kongres krakowski w roku 1364 (Cracow Congress in 1364)*, Warszawa 1939, 105–07; J. Wyrozumski, op. cit., 130–32.

⁹ J. Wyrozumski, op. cit., 130.

¹⁰ The dispute must be seen in a wider political context. It concerned the conflict between Louis the Great and Rudolph IV of Habsburg over Aquileia, among other things.

Elisabeth, Casimir's granddaughter. In 1364 the joint mediation of Casimir and Bolko, the prince of Świdnica, resulted in peace and the monarchs' reunion in Cracow. This mediation proved that the Polish ruler had a significant position. It also guaranteed peace in central Europe. The problem of Peter's crusading plan appeared out of the blue because of his sudden visit to Cracow.

Peter succeeded the throne in Cyprus in 1359 as a thirty-year-old man. He was descended from the family of Lusignan who had made a political career during the crusades. They had ruled the island since the end of the 12th century. After the fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Cyprus became the easternmost outpost confronted with the Muslim world. Unlike his father Hugh IV, whose politics with Egypt were peaceful,¹¹ Peter I was taken with the idea of crusade and he attempted to dispose other European authorities in favour of his project. He set out from Paphos on 24 September 1362, accompanied by Philippe de Mézières, a great supporter of his crusading plan.¹² After a stay in Rhodes, where he gained the support of Hospitallers, Peter went to Venice and he stayed there till the beginning of 1363. He spent February and March in Genoa and at the end of March he came to Avignon, where he met pope Urban V and gained the support of the French king John II the Good. John declared himself head of the crusade which made it a French venture basically.¹³ The pope supported the expedition by means of appropriate letters to the European rulers. Peter's journey did not end in France though. He went off to England in October hoping to gain the English king's approval. Still the only things he got were tournaments and gifts. On his return to France in February

¹¹ G. Hill, *op. cit.*, 302.

¹² The description of the journey is provided by N. Iorga. Cf. also: G. Hill, *op. cit.*, 324–29; H. Luke, "The Kingdom of Cyprus 1291–1369," *A History of the Crusades*, vol. III, ed. H. Hazard, Madison 1975, 353–56.

¹³ N. Iorga, *La France de Chypre*, Paris 1931, 167.

1364, Peter could not really profit by his excellent arrangement with John the Good who died soon and was succeeded by Charles V. Sometime after the crowning ceremony of the latter, Peter set off to Prague, so as to meet the emperor Charles IV. From there he made for Cracow where he came across Casimir the Great and Louis of Hungary.

Polish sources do not express any astonishment because of that exotic guest. “Rex Cypriensis” is mentioned next to Charles IV, Louis and the king of Denmark.¹⁴ The presence of other participants than Peter seems obvious because of political and geographical reasons. It is not stated that the king of Cyprus was actually Charles’ guest, with whom he appeared in Cracow to everybody’s amazement. Janko of Czarnkow, who describes the rally in Cracow in 1363, emphasizes the glamour of the encounter and confesses that he is not up to conveying everything.¹⁵ He also says that the participants of the rally promised “mutuam amicitiam.”¹⁶ Apart from the fact that Casimir might have wanted to show off, the purpose of the meeting is not clear. In the *Annals of Saint Cross*, under the year 1363, we find the mention of the wedding of Elisabeth with Charles IV in the presence of eminent guests, king of Cyprus included.¹⁷ The main Polish historian Jan Długosz, who wrote in the 15th century, puts together two pieces of information but he is in raptures over the splendour of the party. He particularly

¹⁴ Janko z Czarnkowa, “Kronika” (Janko of Czarnkow, “Chronicle”), *Monumenta Poloniae Historica MPH*, vol. II, ed. A. Bielowski, Warszawa 1961, 630; “Rocznik świętokrzyski” (“Annals of Saint Cross”), *MPH*, vol. III, Warszawa 1961, 80.

¹⁵ Janko z Czarnkowa, op. cit., 631, 1–3: “Huic convivio quanta laetitia, magnificentia, gloria et habundantia fuit, describi non potest.”

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 631, 6.

¹⁷ “Rocznik świętokrzyski...,” 80, 4–7: “Anno domini 1363 Carolus imperator Romanarum et rex Bohemie Cracoviam veniens, contraxit matrimonium cum Elizabeth . . . presentibus hiiis regibus: Lodovigo Ungarie, Kazimiro Polonie . . ., rege de Cipro.”

highlights the elegant feast that took place in the home of Wierzynek, a Cracow burgher who dazzled the guests with exquisite dishes and gifts.¹⁸ Długosz states that the participants of the congress swore eternal alliance,¹⁹ which is dismissed by contemporary historiography as the strengthening of friendly links after the treaty of Brno signed on 13 February 1364 between Louis and Charles IV.²⁰ In a document dated 22 September 1364, Louis promised to observe the peace agreement.²¹ Writing his chronicle from a certain distance, Długosz says that Casimir's name was made famous and his splendour became widely known.²² Iorga, who mentions Polish sources in his work, only quotes the 16th century texts of Miechovita and Cromer who used Długosz profusely.²³

Polish historians skilfully dissociated the rally in Cracow from Elisabeth's wedding celebrations which had taken place earlier. During the kings' encounter in 1364, Charles' spouse was staying in Prague. Casimir was looking around for a new wife. Women did not take part in the rally because the host queen was missing.²⁴ Undoubtedly, the congress brought together five crowned celebrities and a few distinguished princes. Grodecki claims that the purpose of the meeting was to save

¹⁸ Jan Długosz = Joannes Długossius, *Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae*, liber IX, Varsoviae 1978, 318–21. Cf. S. Kutrzeba, "Historia rodziny Wierzyneków" ("The History of Wierzynek Family"), *Rocznik Krakowski (Cracow Annals)* 2 (1899), 58–61.

¹⁹ J. Długosz, op. cit., 321: "Diebus autem convivii, qui usque in vicesimam diem tendebantur, peractis, firmata Inter se reges et principes amicitia, et icto perpetue pacis fadere sacramenti iuramento confirmato."

²⁰ R. Grodecki, op. cit., 94.

²¹ Ibidem, 95.

²² J. Długosz, op. cit., 321: "Pro ea autem tempestate Kazimiri Polonie regis famosum et celebre erat nomen in singulas gentes ex eo tempore diffusum."

²³ N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières...*, 173.

²⁴ R. Grodecki, op. cit., 65–66.

peace in central Europe and Peter's unexpected proposal directed attention of the disputing parties toward the same goal.

From Peter's perspective Poland was certainly an exotic place. The French chronicler, Guillaume de Machaut, who described Peter's visit to Cracow, had already been familiar with Poland from the earlier period. His text proved useful for the exact dating of the rally, i.e. September 1364. Guillaume had served John of Luxemburg and took part in his expeditions to Silesia in 1327 and to Prussia in 1329.²⁵ Because of his connections, Guillaume shares the Luxemburg view of situation. It is on the basis of his text that Charles' initiative in the rally was mistakenly assumed. Poland was beyond the emperor's sway and Charles could not possibly convene a meeting in Cracow.²⁶ However, Guillaume de Machaut can be excused because he did not participate in the rally and his knowledge of it was second hand. The text by Guillaume, *La prise d'Alexandrie*, does not mention the actual purpose of the rally. The work is in fact full of propaganda in favour of Luxemburg and Lusignan; it presents Charles IV as the major figure, definitely superior to Casimir and Louis.²⁷

Guillaume attempts to depict Peter's journey in detail. Not all the place names can be identified nowadays. Yet the text indicates that Peter and Charles set out from Prague and made for Cracow via Silesian towns.²⁸ The news about the exquisite feast reached Guillaume. He comments on the items of the menu, i.e. wine, poultry, game, fish, other meats.²⁹ Basically, Guillaume seems to have

²⁵ Cf. S. Zajączkowski, op. cit., 219; "W. Voiseé Guillaume de Machaut w Polsce i o Polsce" ("Guillaume de Machaut in Poland and about Poland"), *Muzyka* vol. X nr 3 (1965), 53–54.

²⁶ R. Grodecki, op. cit., 20.

²⁷ S. Zajączkowski, op. cit., 222–23.

²⁸ The confirmed stay in Wrocław. Cf. "Kronika książąt polskich" ("Chronicle of Polish Princes"), *MPH*, vol. III, 526: "Karolus recolende memorie domino regi Cypri, cum secum esset in Wratislavia."

²⁹ G. de Machaut, op. cit., v. 1280–84: "Comment il furent receu/Honneur, servi et peu/De pain, de vin et de vitaille/De toute volille et d'au-

retained the information about the fabled feast of Wierzynek. According to the latest historical assumptions, the feast was organized by the city authorities in Cracow and Wierzynek held it as one of them.³⁰ The tournament was organized to please the participants. Peter was certainly the winner.³¹ The honour was not only due to the normal principles of hospitality but also to the fact that the king of Cyprus was a renowned knight.

What about the crusade, then? The idea of launching it was not new. In 1363 pope Urban V addressed the European rulers on this point, but without any response.³² According to Guillaume de Machaut, the debate in Cracow was public and as such it attracted a numerous audience. It may have been held in the cathedral or in the town hall, as was the general custom.³³ Guillaume says that he is not able to give a detailed report of the sessions; he only mentions the final decisions. Therefore, we are not familiar with Peter's speech that was delivered before the participants of the rally as a plea for their help. It may be assumed that he sounded as persuasive as in Prague where he had one great approval.³⁴ Peter seems to have impressed his audience this time too, because the emperor was the first to offer support. Charles promised to turn to the electors in the

maille/ De poissons et d'autre viande." The memory of this meeting is still alive in Cracow even today. Located in the market place, the restaurant "At Wierzynek" cultivates the exquisite tradition of Polish cuisine.

³⁰ J. Wyrozumski, op. cit., 136–37.

³¹ G. de Machaut, op. cit., v. 1363–64: "Mais l'estrangle roy ot le pris/Com des armes li mieus apris."

³² Cf. J. Dudziak, *Dziesięcina papieska w Polsce średniowiecznej (papal Tithe in Medieval Poland)*, Lublin 1974, 86. The author's research implies that Polish clergy did not have to submit the tithes for Peter's expedition. Polish tithe was meant to perpetuate the papal rule in Rome. Urban V was the first pope who managed to transfer the papal seat from Avignon to Rome, yet, for a brief period of time.

³³ R. Grodecki, op. cit., 76.

³⁴ G. de Machaut, op. cit., v. 1203–10.

Reich and to the pope with the request for their assistance. Louis of Hungary also promised his support, saying that he and his army would join the crusade when necessary.³⁵ Last but not least, the Polish king also expressed his offer of help. Guillaume implies that all the rulers present in the gathering took an oath to confirm their intentions.³⁶ Thus, the text by Guillaume de Machaut certainly fills in the gap in Polish sources which present the ceremonial side of the congress, not mentioning the crusade. However, only these crusading plans seemed to explain Peter's participation in the congress. Louis of Hungary certainly expressed the greatest interest in the plan. Casimir's promise or even oath could not possibly be fulfilled. It was an act of kindness. The situation of the Polish state made it impossible for the king to get involved in the crusade. The danger of the Teutonic Order's invasion and conflicts with Lithuanians claimed total attention. The ideology of the crusades could only attract individuals who might be interested in the situation of the Muslim East. It might be worth remembering that Ladislas the White, prince of Gniewków, had made his pilgrimage to the Holy Land exactly in the years 1363–1364.³⁷

Having extracted the promise of help, Peter set out for Vienna and then to Venice, where he arrived in November 1364. He stayed there till June 1365. At that time the pope made his second plea for assistance in the crusade, but Europe turned a deaf ear to it. A lot of insignificant knights arrived in Cyprus and this is how the King managed to set up a large army. The expedition that he led landed in Alexandria on 9 October 1365 but it met a dismal end.³⁸

³⁵ Ibidem, v. 1329–35.

³⁶ Ibidem, v. 1342–44: “Et tuit li prince qui la furent/Que volontiers y aideront/Et que leur pooir en feront.”

³⁷ R. Grodecki, op. cit., 64.

³⁸ S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. III, *The Kingdom of Acre*, London 1965, 445–49; G. Hill, op. cit., 331–34; H. Luke, op. cit., 356–57.

Polish historiography owes a lot to Guillaume de Machaut then. The right date of the rally could be posited due to his text. Polish sources mistakenly dated it for 1363, combining the event with the wedding ceremony of Charles IV with Casimir's granddaughter. As is now well known, the wedding took place earlier. Accordingly, the rally in Cracow attracted people who were somehow related to one another. In fact, Peter faced the family circle so it is not amazing that its participants presented their promise in unison. However, it should be emphasized that the purpose of the rally was not to support the crusade but to put an end to strife in central Europe. The issue of the crusade arose due to complete coincidence, i.e. Peter's unexpected arrival in Cracow. The congress was certainly a prestigious venture. Casimir's court entertained representatives of the distinguished families which played a crucial role in Europe at that time, i.e. the Luxemburg, the Anjou, the Lusignan. Also king of Denmark, Waldemar IV, came in person. It might be assumed that it was during this rally that Casimir announced the opening of the University in Cracow. Indeed, the occasion suggested itself.

Peter of Cyprus appeared in Cracow with scanty or non-existent knowledge of Poland. Did he really hope for Poland's participation in his plan? He might have used his presence in Cracow to influence Charles IV and Louis of Anjou in favour of the crusade. The King of Denmark did not seem to have any relevance for Peter. It appears that Charles who brought Peter to the rally may have wanted to spread propaganda in Hungary or even in Poland rather than in his own state. He was not that interested in the crusade. Negotiations in Prague and the suggestion of Peter's visit to Cracow were just an expression of courtesy and a skillfull political move. Promising his help, Charles wanted to demonstrate the power of his state but the commitment was never fulfilled.

Polish sources may give rise to the mistaken impression that Peter arrived in Cracow to witness the ceremony of Charles IV.

Mistaken dating aside, the sources inspire such a view. The crusade against the Muslim power seemed quite exotic from the Polish perspective. It sounded too much out of this world to win general approval. The northern neighbour of Poland, i.e. the Teutonic Order, had already laid bare the mechanism of the holy war. Casimir's state lived a long way from the areas of tension between the Christian and Muslim world. This tension was particularly felt in Byzantium and Cyprus. Even though the rapprochement with the Byzantine Church was achieved due to the incorporation of Ruthenia, Poland was far from getting involved in the conflict with the Muslim world.

Peter was a knight errant of the vanishing epoch and also a miserable lover as if out of medieval romance. In contrast, Casimir the Great was a realistically thinking politician. Peter was the last supporter of the holy war but he never found prominent partners. The idea no longer interested monarchs and it could only attract robbers, who brought great discredit on Peter by their shameless conduct in Alexandria. Peter was trying to save the old order that was nearly gone. Casimir systematically created a new situation in central Europe by fostering alliances, which guaranteed security on the large territory. In spite of completely different political biographies, Casimir and Peter had something in common. Both of them had a soft spot for women. Beautiful mistresses incurred the envy of Peter's wife, who supposedly supported the barons' conspiracy which put an end to Peter's life in 1369. Casimir died as a result of a hunting accident a year later. Even though he had been surrounded by charming women, none of them gave birth to an heir. His kingdom was taken over by Louis the Great and Poland formed the personal union with Hungary.

Could Poland Have Reacted to the Submission of Byzantium to the Turks in 1372–1373?

Historians complain that there are no Byzantine narrative sources describing the second half of the 14th century, when Byzantium became a Turkish vassal-state. As for the other 15th century chroniclers of the dying Empire, only one of them, Laonikos Chalkokondyles, noted briefly that “John entered in alliance with Murad who had recently crossed over Europe.”¹ Due to the lack of sources, we do not know what Byzantines felt when they learnt that “the Emperor exchanged envoys with King Murad and sent his younger son (Manuel) to the Sultan’s court, asking Manuel to serve Murad, as well as he could and to follow his troops wherever he was ordered, to respect his opinions and to take sufficient care not to offend the King in future.”² We do not know the Byzantine reaction, but we know the circumstances that led Byzantium to this humiliating situation.

Osmanlis, which seemed to be a small emirate in the second half of the 13th century, soon became a real power. In the first

¹ Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *A Translation and Commentary of the Demonstrations of History* (Books I, II, III), trans. A. Nicoloudis, Athens 1996, 131. Quotation courtesy of Adam Szczepański.

² Ibidem, 149. Chalkokondyles is not very reliable when it comes to the chronology of the events. Historians cannot say when exactly Byzantium became a Turkish vassal. It must have happened in the years 1372–1373: G. Ostrogorsky, “Byzance état tributaire de l’empire turc,” *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 5 (1958), 49–58.

half of the 14th century Byzantium lost its territories in Asia Minor to the Turks, but when they took control of Gallipoli in 1354, the first city on the European continent, the danger for Constantinople became inevitable. In 1361 Murad's army entered Thrace, and later it settled in Adrianople, where the Turks transferred their capital from Brusa.³ Now they were three days of horse riding from Constantinople. The siege of the Byzantine capital was only a question of time.

In this situation John V Palaiologos, who had been reigning since 1354, left for Hungary in 1366. Louis the Great was a powerful Catholic neighbour, connected with the Papacy, and Byzantine diplomacy counted on his support. It was the first time that the Byzantine Emperor paid a visit to a foreign monarch. As D. Nicol has it: "It has always been assumed that it was the part of lesser princes to pay their respects to the one true Emperor in Constantinople. But the time had changed," adding that "the precedent had been set."⁴ The King of Hungary had earlier been involved in the project of the crusade launched by Peter I of Cyprus, promoting his idea in Western Europe and then in Poland, when his arrival in 1364 gathered in Cracow Charles IV of Luxemburg, King of Bohemia, and Holy Roman Emperor, Louis Anjou, King of Hungary, and Casimir the Great, King of Poland. The rally in Cracow did not bring any support for Peter's *idée fixe*, so strongly promoted by the Pope.⁵ His expedition failed in Alexandria in 1365. Instead of joining Peter, Louis

³ I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "La conquête d'Andrianople par les Turcs," *Travaux et Mémoires* 1 (1965), 439–61; E. A. Zachariadou, "The Conquest of Adrianople by the Turcs," *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970), 211–17; H. Inalcik, "The Conquest of Edirne," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 3 (1971), 185–210.

⁴ D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1993, 266.

⁵ Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "Peter of Cyprus and Casimir the Great in Cracow," *Byzantiaka* 14 (1994), 257–67; P. W. Knoll, "Louis the Great and Casimir of Poland," *Louis the Great. King of Hungary and Poland*, ed. S. B. Vardy,

of Hungary turned against the Bulgarian province of Vidin. Its ruler, Prince John Stracimir, was accused of supporting the heretical Bogomils, and imprisoned. The Franciscan mission followed the Hungarian army in order to convert and re-baptize the Bulgarian neighbours. This idea was suggested by Pope Urban V and Louis's mother, Elisabeth of Poland, King Casimir's sister.⁶ There was little chance for John V's success in these circumstances. He could have expected that demands would be made on him in return for military help, but he had no choice and appeared in Buda in 1366, accompanied by his two sons, Manuel and Michael, and his chancellor, George Manikaites, already Catholic, which made a good impression at the Court. Louis seemed to be ready to lead the crusade under the condition of the Church Union. The messengers were sent to Avignon, and on 29 June 1366 they informed the Pope on the friendly relations between Louis and the Emperor. Urban V answered immediately, thanking the Hungarian King for encouraging John V to convert, and expecting his action against the Turks.⁷ One cannot say that Louis was enthusiastic about the project of attacking the Turks, but the Royal

B. G. Groschmid and L. S. Domonkos, New York 1986, 105–27. This is a very general but important survey.

⁶ J. P. Ripoche, "Louis le Grand et l'Orthodoxie," *Louis the Great*, op. cit., 94–95.

⁷ O. Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance à Rome. Vingt ans de travail pour l'union des Eglises et pour la défense de l'Empire de l'Orient 1355–1375*, Warsaw 1930, 116–20. The author based his profound analysis on the registers of papal correspondence treasured in the Vatican Archives and on Venetian documents analyzed in Venice. Despite many years that have passed since his research, his meticulous analysis is still valuable, even though it shows John's situation from the Western point of view. Much of the papal correspondence was preserved in the so-called Raynaldus collection, on which I worked in Paris. I decided to omit the references to these sources, since in distant Texas even my notes of Raynaldus are out of my reach. Cf. Odoricus Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, Rome 1648–1659.

Court and the Queen Mother were.⁸ Gaining the Byzantines for Catholicism was a prestigious idea of the Papacy, and Urban V appealed especially to the Queen Mother, Elisabeth of Poland. In every political case concerning Louis, the Roman Curia addressed her, which is significant for this article.⁹ As for Louis himself, he was more interested in his Balkan-Dalmatian policy than in helping Byzantium. Halecki may have been right in his suggestion that the Hungarian King asked the Pope in confidence to free him from the promises of military assistance for John V.¹⁰ The author stresses *méfiance réciproque* of the two rulers.¹¹ Due to this attitude and modest knowledge about this visit, “it seems still difficult,” writes J. W. Barker, “to have a definitive opinion on the timing of John’s decision to convert to Catholicism. Clearly, he was pressured by Louis the Great in Buda to negotiate directly with the Pope and it seemed possible that the idea of his own conversion might at least have been discussed then.”¹² But the Hungarian military expedition

⁸ J. P. Ripoche, op. cit., 96. The author gives his opinion, referring to: *Vetera Monumenta Historica Hungariam Sacra*, ed. A. Theiner, t. II, reed. O. Zeller, Osnabrück 1968, no. 140, 74. It seems that Halecki’s work based on papal documents has often been neglected or misinterpreted.

⁹ O. Halecki, op. cit., 124. Cf. J. Dąbrowski, *Elżbieta Łokietkówna 1305–1380 (Elisabeth of Poland)*, Kraków 1914, 37. It is interesting to notice that those two Polish authors are still the most important for examining the relations between Papacy, Byzantium and Hungary. Unfortunately, the books by Dąbrowski were written in Polish and are not quoted in the international literature. The Hungarian historiography is very poor when it comes to the Angevin period. Cf. A. Por, *Nagy Lajos (Louis the Great)*, Budapest 1892, treated as out of date.

¹⁰ O. Halecki, op. cit., 132. There is no room to consider here Louis’s ambitious political plans. Cf. J. Dąbrowski, *Ostatnie lata Ludwika Wielkiego (The Last Years of Louis the Great)*, Kraków 1918, 79–86.

¹¹ O. Halecki, op. cit., 135.

¹² E-mail from J. W. Barker dated 9 January 2007. Cf. his excellent book: J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, New Brunswick (NJ) 1969, 7.

did not follow these discussions. Empty handed, John V went back home, but he was stopped by the Bulgarians, who were afraid of the supposed Hungarian-Byzantine alliance. The assistance came from his cousin, Amadeo of Savoy, who in 1366 regained Gallipoli from the Turks with papal blessing, and rescued John V from the Bulgarian trap. Amadeo appeared in Byzantium as the papal emissary.¹³ According to O. Halecki's precious investigation, Urban V counted very much on the Savoyard prince, and was not disappointed. John promised to go to Rome.¹⁴ I share J. W. Barker's opinion that Amadeo, who was the Emperor's kinsman, could have been the one to make the strongest argument for a personal gesture such as conversion. "I certainly think," writes Barker, "that John would not have journeyed personally to Rome if he had not already made up his mind to accept conversion publicly at that time. Otherwise, he could have dealt with the Pope on broader issues of Church Union through emissaries."¹⁵ John appeared in Rome on 18 August 1369, received the hospital of the Holy Spirit as his residence, and did not meet the Pope before accepting the Roman Creed. Then there was a pompous religious ceremony, well known from the literature.¹⁶ This ceremony, however, changed the papal attitude to Byzantium. The Pope delivered an encyclical which was meant to draw the attention

¹³ Amadeo's father was a half brother of Anne of Savoy, John's mother. For the information about Anne at the Byzantine court cf. M. Dąbrowska, *Łacinniczki nad Bosforem. Malżeństwa bizantyńsko-łacińskie w cesarskiej rodzinie Paleologów (XIII–XV w.)* [*The Latin Ladies on the Bosphoros. Byzantine-Latin Marriages in the Imperial Family of the Palaiologoi (13th–15th Centuries)*], Łódź 1996, 95–96. I have no access here to the book on John V by R. Radić, *Vreme Jovana V Paleologa (1341–1391)*, Belgrade 1993. The author did not reply to my email.

¹⁴ O. Halecki. op. cit., 141–44.

¹⁵ J. W. Barker, quoted e-mail.

¹⁶ O. Halecki, op. cit., 199.

of the whole Catholic world to John V's situation.¹⁷ First of all, the Pope counted on Louis the Great, and he might have been more efficient in supporting Byzantium but for his death in December 1370. Before his death, Urban V managed to support the Byzantine-Venetian alliance, the result of which was John V's visit to Venice. This stay turned out to be a disaster. John offered the island of Tenedos instead of his debts to the Republic, but his son, Andronikos IV, the regent in Constantinople, preferred to give the island to Genoa. As a result of this political quarrel, the Emperor could not repay his debts and was blocked in Venice till 1371, when his son, Manuel, came with money and freed him.¹⁸ John V returned to Constantinople in the same year, just after the battle on the Marica river, where the army of two Serbian princes was crushed by the Turks, and Constantinople became seriously threatened. In 1372–1373 the Emperor signed a treaty with Murad and submitted to him. This submission was the result of a total failure in the relations with Hungary. What prevented Louis the Great from helping John V, now Catholic? He might have been afraid of John's alliance with Venice in 1370, but such was not the case.

In the same year Louis the Great became the King of Poland. In September 1370 Casimir the Great, the Polish ruler, had had a hunting accident and did not recover from it. He died on 5 November 1370.¹⁹ Married four times, he did not leave an heir; he had no brother, but he had a sister, Elisabeth of Poland. Queen of Hungary, and her son, Louis the Great, became his successor according to the old agreement between

¹⁷ Ibidem, 201.

¹⁸ D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1988, 305–08.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz III Wielki (Casimir the Great)*, Wrocław 1982, 217–18.

Casimir and Louis's father.²⁰ Contemporary Polish chronicler, Janko of Czarnkow, complains that Casimir listened to his advisers and accepted Louis. He underlines that the Hungarian ruler was faced with an obligation to regain the access to the Baltic Sea which Poland lost to the Teutonic Order in 1308. Moreover, Louis was not supposed to appoint foreigners to positions of authority, or to impose new taxes. In return, Polish clergy and gentry promised to be his faithful subjects.²¹ Louis arrived in Poland immediately after Casimir's death and crowned himself before the funeral. Janko does not hide his disapproval of the new ruler, and emphasizes the fact that during the funeral ceremony people openly mourned their King Casimir, as his rule had been very peaceful. They were afraid of the foreigner (i.e. Louis) who might want to change Polish tradition and introduce strangers to the court.²² Jan Długosz noticed that Queen Elisabeth, Louis's mother, appeared in Poland immediately after her brother's death in order to secure the succession. She did her best to exclude from inheritance Casimir's daughter, the fourth wife of Charles IV of Luxemburg, who was greatly interested in ruling Poland. Elisabeth exerted pressure on the Pope, who acknowledged her rights to the Polish crown, and then those of her son.²³ Poland was not interested in a Bohemian or Hungarian king. Długosz describes a very picturesque scene in Buda, when Polish envoys encouraged Louis to come to Cracow. The hypocritical ruler who knew well that the Kingdom had been promised to him,

²⁰ The Polish-Hungarian treaty was supposedly signed by Casimir and Charles Robert of Hungary in 1339, but Wyrozumski questions this date. J. Dąbrowski, *Ostatnie lata*, op. cit., 116, 134; J. Wyrozumski, op. cit., 63.

²¹ "Kronika Janka z Czarnkowa," ed. J. Szlachetkowski in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica (MPH)* vol. II, ed. J. A. Bielowski, 637. I am grateful to Dr Tadeusz Grabarczyk for supplying me with necessary Latin quotations.

²² *Ibidem*, 649.

²³ J. Dąbrowski, *Ostatnie lata*, op. cit., 166.

behaved like a naive boy, saying that one shepherd could not protect against wolves the two herds so widely separated from one another. According to Długosz, he also said that it was inconvenient for one man to pledge himself to two women, or for one bishop to look after two sees!²⁴ After lavishing such brilliant aphorisms on the Poles, he decided to come over. “It would have been better,” says Długosz, “if the Poles and the Hungarians had left the King to his thoughts. Poland would not have suffered the damages caused by his rule.”²⁵

Unfortunately for Poland and for Byzantium, Louis appeared in Cracow. Though his mother was Polish, he was an Anjou, and a perfect stranger. Casimir’s death meant the end of the long rule of the Piast dynasty, reigning in Poland for four centuries. A radical change was coming. Louis was supported by the diplomatic milieu of the so-called Lesser Poland, but Greater Poland, which was the cradle of the Polish state, was not enthusiastic about his arrival. According to Janko of Czarnkow, Louis did not pay much attention to his new Kingdom and quickly went back to Buda. His Hungarian companions made

²⁴ Jan Długosz, *Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Polomae*, lib. X, Varsavie 1985, 14: “aliquando tempore recusavit, ignorare asserens utrosque quid suaderent satisne dubitans, si sanirent, cum utrumque regnum ad periculum ilia suasionem traherent astruens non convenire duos greges locis distantibus ab uno pastore probe a morsibus luporum servari nec uni viro duas uxores legitime posse coniungi nec duos pontificatus in unum rite conferri.” This is a very tasteful quotation if one takes into consideration that the King suffered from a sexually transmissible disease and could not have children for a long time. It is interesting what was Długosz’s source of information about the quoted dialogue, as Janko does not write about it. Without any doubt, both of them did not like the Angevin rule in Poland and treated it as a disaster.

²⁵ Długosz, op. cit., 14–15: “Quodsi illum tam Poloni, apud quos regnatura erat, quam Hungari, apud quos iam regnabat, suis ingeniis uti passi fuissent, latius et tunc et hactenus regnum Poloniae, quod eo regnante in pluribus suis provinciis, in clenodiis, in thesauris spoliatum et mutilatum fuit, presidenciae suae funiculos extendere valuisset.”

a terrible impression, robbing people in their houses. None of the harmed could complain, as the Hungarians blocked access to the ruler.²⁶ Louis left in Cracow his mother, Queen Elisabeth, who called herself “Regina Poloniae,” and whose rule was even worse than her son’s.²⁷ Janko says that nothing was stable or certain. If somebody appealed to the Queen, she sent them to her son, who, in turn, sent them back to her, so there was no end to the case, unless it suited her taste.²⁸ This relation sounds very malicious, and one can say that Janko was not objective. And yet he was, because he became the witness of that time.²⁹ The correspondence between the Papacy and Queen Elisabeth proves that Louis was not independent, and he reckoned with every single opinion of his mother. Let us remember the negotiations concerning John V’s conversion started in Buda. It seems that what disappointed Polish

²⁶ “Kronika Janka z Czarnkowa,” op. cit., 649: “Hoc vero fiebat, quod Ungari sui per villas eundem sequentes, frangebant domos habitantium et res eorum violenter rapientes secum asportarunt, nulli autem pauperi, ad regem praedictum injuriam passo, Ungaris prohibentibus aditus patebat.”

²⁷ J. Dąbrowski, *Ostatnie lata...*, op. cit., 185. The author, obviously, disagrees with Janko’s “black legend” of Elisabeth of Hungary.

²⁸ “Kronika Janka z Czarnkowa,” op. cit., 649: “In ipsiuque absentia dilecta genitrice sua. nomine Elizabeth. Ungariae regina, regnum Poloniae gubernante, pejora fiebant quam antea, quia nulla stabilitas seu constantia in ipso regno viguit seu viget ad presens. Nam cum ad matrem recursus haberetur remisit ad filium et filius ad materem vice-versa, sique nullus finis in negotiis nisi sibi beneplacitis haberi potuit seu potest.”

²⁹ J. Kłoczowski, “Louis the Great as King of Poland as Seen in the Chronicle of Jan of Czarnkow,” *Louis the Great. King of Hungary and Poland*, op. cit., 138–41. The author compares two opposite attitudes to the chronicler, expressed by Polish historians: J. Dąbrowski, who showed the Angevin rule in good light and O. Halecki, who did not like Louis’s policy. Therefore the first questioned Janko’s testimony, the latter was far from condemning him. J. Kłoczowski expects some more comparative research, which does not seem to change the general opinion that despite Janko’s dislike for Anjou, he can be reliable as he was the witness of the time.

subjects most was the fact that Elisabeth, who ruled Poland, did not feel Polish herself. She realized the great plans of Anjou in Hungary. If one looks at the map presenting Louis's realm after the union with Poland, it looks very impressive. Hungary with Dalmatia, Poland with Ruthenia of Halicz! Here you have the Central European Empire with the access to the Adriatic and Black Seas. Only the access to the Baltic is missing and this was the problem that Polish statesmen concentrated on in contrast to the Anjou whose great interests were in the south, not in the north. But even with such discrepancy, the country had a great economic and military potential, if only the King would have bothered about John V's vicissitudes in 1370–1371. But he did not. Polish chroniclers did not notice the Emperor's conversion or the Pope's appeals to organize the expedition against the Turks. One can say it was not the Polish *raison d'État*, but one should take into consideration that there were no independent Polish interests at that time. Louis the Great and his mother combined them with their Angevin perspective. Therefore Długosz is right in his statement that Louis did not think about strengthening Poland, or about regaining the territories lost to Bohemians, Saxonians (Brandenburgians M.D.) and the Teutonic Order. He did not care about the prosperity of Poland. On the contrary, he tried to dismember and weaken the State.³⁰ Therefore the Poles looked back with nostalgia to Casimir the Great's rule and treated Louis's reign as God's punishment.³¹ Elisabeth surrounded herself by her

³⁰ Długosz, *op. cit.*, 18: "Nihil pensi de Regno Polonie stabiliendo aut de his, que illi a Bohemias, Saxonibus et Cruciferis abstracta erant, vindicandis habuisse neque de illis profectu et incremento, sed de dismembracione cogitaciones et curas intendisse."

³¹ *Ibidem*, 21: "Ex cuius morte (i.e. Casimir's) genus vetustum regum Poloniae, in ea usque tempora continuatum, extinctum est, quantum ad reges et diadema regni Polonie a veris, iustis et naturalis principibus, ob varias prevaricaciones et dolos in alienigenas et externos iusto Dei permittente indicio translatum."

own milieu and turned a deaf ear to Polish problems.³² She clearly belonged to those Queen-Mothers who dominated their sons and daughters-in-law. The situation changed when Elisabeth of Bosnia, Louis's wife, who married him in 1353, finally gave birth to their child in 1370. It was Catherine, followed by Maria, born in 1371. The first one died quickly, the latter was betrothed to Sigismund of Luxemburg, Charles IV's son, as early as 1372.³³ It is visible that both of them, Elisabeth of Poland and Louis, cared about the succession to the Kingdom. He still hoped for a son. But the third child was also a girl, Jadwiga, born in 1373. These dates are very important from the perspective of the Byzantine Empire and papal appeals for the crusade.

Urban V was succeeded by Gregory XI who was really shaken by the battle of Marica. On 14 May 1372 he delivered a bulla in which he urged Louis and both Elisabeths, the Old Queen and Elisabeth of Bosnia, Louis's wife, to help Byzantium.³⁴ He promised the assistance of Venice and intended to gather Byzantines and Latins in Greece for a rally in Thebes, where the details of the expedition were to be settled. One cannot lose sight of the fact that the Pope acted as the protector of the Latins settled on the previous Byzantine territories since the Fourth Crusade (1204), but at the same time he had consideration for his new brother in faith, the Catholic Emperor John V for the reasons connected with prestige, and despite the awkward situation. The Latins never gave up their dreams about coming back to the Bosphoros. The inheritors of the last Latin ruler there still treasured the title of the Emperors of Constantinople. The present ruler of Achaia at that time, Philip II of Taranto, was just a titular Emperor. The Pope asked him to come to Thebes as his territories at the Peloponnese

³² Ibidem, 25.

³³ Ibidem, 31.

³⁴ Halecki, op. cit., 252. Cf. *Vetera Monumenta Historica*, op. cit., I, no. 230.

were also threatened by the Turks.³⁵ And here we may have the explanation of the Hungarian attitude towards the supposed assistance for John V. Since 1370, Philip of Taranto had been the husband of Elisabeth of Slavonia, the niece of Louis, and the beloved granddaughter of Elisabeth of Hungary.³⁶ This particular question does not appear in Polish sources, but as the countries were united, Philip of Taranto, the titular Emperor of Constantinople, was closer to the Hungarian-Polish State than John V, a true Emperor of Byzantium, who converted to Catholicism in vain.

Elisabeth of Hungary married Charles Robert in 1320. She was fifteen and he was twenty two. Born in 1305, she was a perfect nubile age. In the years 1321–1332 she bore him five sons, which was a nice perspective for the dynasty. The first two boys died soon, while Louis was designated as an heir to the throne. After losing his next brother, Andrew, the husband of Joanna of Sicily, he was left with Stephen, Duke of Slavonia, whose only child was Elisabeth, the beloved granddaughter, mentioned above. This young lady, born in 1353, in the year when her childless uncle Louis the Great married for the second time, and a year before her own father's death, became an attractive bride. Three important men were taken into consideration as her suitors before she married Philip III Anjou, Prince of Taranto, in 1370. He was twenty-four years older than her. His five children by the first wife did not survive. Elisabeth bore him a son in 1371, who also died very quickly.³⁷

In this decisive time for Byzantium, it was clear that Elisabeth of Hungary had quite different ambitions than supporting John V. When her son, Louis, finally became the father of Maria

³⁵ Ibidem, 256.

³⁶ I have not been able to find any article on Elisabeth of Slavonia, of whom so little is known.

³⁷ "Filippos III" (als Fürst of Tarent), in *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, fasc. 12, ed. E. Trapp, Vienna 1994, no. 29867, 116–17.

(1371), the dynastic policy of the Polish-Hungarian Kingdom was evident. One can admire the determination of the Old Queen and her son. They wanted to keep Hungary and Poland for the Angevin dynasty at all cost. He was a forty-five-year-old sick man, and his daughters, Maria and then Jadwiga, became his great hope.³⁸ But after the battle of Marica he was afraid for the safety of his realm and started to consider the crusade against the Turks, but only under the condition that the Pope would exempt his clergy from paying the tithe.³⁹ This tithe, by the way, was needed to support the papal estates against Barnaba Visconti of Milan, rather than to organize military assistance against the Turks. Visconti was so powerful that the Pope insisted on having his way. As the problem concerned the Polish-Hungarian Kingdom, the papal appeal was made public in Poland, and the tithe was finally paid, but it went to the Italian war.⁴⁰ Time was passing. Instead of attacking Osmanlis, Louis turned against Venice, together with the Habsburg, with whom he connected his family, betrothing his younger daughter, Jadwiga, to William.⁴¹ Then all his effort was made to ensure the succession to the Polish throne for one of his daughters. To persuade the Polish elite of this idea, he granted a privilege in Koszyce in 1374, due to which Polish gentry was almost freed from taxes in return for accepting one of the Hungarian princesses as a future King (sic!) of Poland.⁴²

So, if one looks at Poland from the perspective of Turkish danger and Byzantine fate, one will easily find out that these questions do not appear in Polish sources, even though Poland

³⁸ J. Dąbrowski, *Ostatnie lata...*, op. cit., 397–98.

³⁹ O. Halecki, op. cit., 266–67.

⁴⁰ J. Dudziak, *Dziesięcina papieska w Polsce średniowiecznej (The papal Tithe in the Medieval Poland)*, Lublin 1974, 88–92.

⁴¹ O. Halecki, op. cit., 270; J. Dąbrowski, *Ostatnie lata...*, op. cit., 338.

⁴² For the privilege of Koszyce see *Kodeks dyplomatyczny Wielkopolski (The Code of Documents of Great Poland)*, vol. III, ed. I. Zakrzewski, Poznań 1879, no. 1079, 425–27; J. Długosz, op. cit., 23–24.

was connected with Hungary by a personal union. And one cannot be surprised. We shall not find any trace of the treaty which connected Byzantium and the Turks as vassal and senior. Only the Pope called it the “imperium negotium.”⁴³ At that time Elisabeth ruled Poland on behalf of her son, and she did it with great success according to J. Dąbrowski, who appreciated the Angevin rule.⁴⁴ She was a strong woman, eclipsing her son, Louis, and she ruled for sixty years, which is a real record for a queen.⁴⁵ She was nice, kind, pious and devoted to the Franciscan order. She made a generous donation for the reconstruction of the Mulvian Bridge in Rome.⁴⁶ At the same time, she behaved like “Rex feminus.”⁴⁷ As a young woman she did not hesitate to defend her husband against the assault at the court. During this accident she lost four fingers of her right hand.⁴⁸ Though Polish by birth, she did not feel Polish, perfectly realizing the interests of her Angevin empire.⁴⁹ She was not interested in the fight for the access to the Baltic Sea or against the Teutonic Order. To her surprise, her late born granddaughter, Jadwiga, realized Polish expectations. She accepted the wish to break the betrothal with William of Habsburg, though not without

⁴³ O. Halecki, *op. cit.*, 301.

⁴⁴ J. Dąbrowski, *Elżbieta...*, *op. cit.*, 107–09, and *idem*, *Ostatnie lata...*, *op. cit.*, 404.

⁴⁵ Cf. M. Saghy, “Aspects of Female Rulership in Late Medieval Literature: The Queens’ Reign in Angevin Hungary,” *East Central Europe* 20–23 part 1 (1993–1990), 71–77.

⁴⁶ J. Dąbrowski, *Elżbieta...*, *op. cit.*, 34–41.

⁴⁷ M. Saghy, *op. cit.*, 81.

⁴⁸ This is connected with the unfortunate love affair of Casimir, her brother, with Klara Zach, her lady-in-waiting. Klara’s father attacked Charles Robert at the Court, and Elisabeth stood between them. Even though S. Sroka dismisses the whole story, the handicap of Elisabeth remains obvious. With her strong hand without the four fingers she ruled the great Kingdom. Cf. S. Sroka, *Elżbieta Łokietkówna*, Bydgoszcz 1999, 19–25.

⁴⁹ J. Dąbrowski, *Elżbieta...*, *op. cit.*, 128.

anger or even fury. She married the Lithuanian Prince Ladislas Jagiełło, much older than she was. and they created the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was definitely a more successful union from the Polish point of view.⁵⁰ But Elisabeth of Hungary did not live to see it; she died in 1380, and her son, Louis, followed her two years later.

Elisabeth's will contains interesting information, which is very important for the conclusion of this article. Strong and ruthless as she was, the Queen had a soft spot for Elisabeth of Slavonia. In her last words she stated that a substantial sum of money should be devoted to the transportation of the remains of the Slavonian Princess to Buda. Her husband, Philip of Tarranto, had died in 1373. She came back to Hungary. The date of her death is unknown, but it happened shortly before the Old Queen's death. The note about Elisabeth of Hungary's decision is very brief, but it shows how much she cared for her beloved granddaughter and was impressed by her title, as it is clearly written that: "Fifty golden florens should be spent on the rites during the funeral and then on the funeral itself of our once famous Elisabeth, the former Empress of Constantinople."⁵¹

But one should be fair in judging this Queen. We cannot accuse her of distracting the attention of Polish diplomacy from Byzantium. She was as pragmatic as were her Lithuanian successors, who avoided being involved in Byzantine troubles, offering, for example, as a solution the transfer of the Teutonic Order to the famous Tenedos island. Getting rid of the knights and

⁵⁰ For the information on Jadwiga see O. Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou and the Rise of East Central Europe*, ed. T. Gromada, Highland Lakes (NJ) 1991; J. Wyrozumski, *Królowa Jadwiga między epoką piastowską i jagiellońską (Queen Jadwiga at the Turn of the Piast and Jagiellonian Times)*, Kraków 1997.

⁵¹ Elisabeth of Poland's will was made in Buda on 6 April 1380. It was translated into Polish by B. Sobilo in S. Sroka, op. cit., 75, on the basis of *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, t. IX, ed. G. Fejer, Budaë 1832, 5.

gaining access to the Baltic Sea was the Polish *raison d'État*. Then, when the Venetian diplomacy, using the Uzun Hasans project, tried to involve Poland in the war against the Turks, Casimir the Jagellonian remained as adamant as earlier when he refused to take part in any expedition and was only willing to get rid of the Teutonic knights.⁵²

Politics is a tough game. John V knew it perfectly well and preferred to sign a treaty with the Turks instead of waiting for the promises that would never be fulfilled. We can only speculate whether he realized that Elisabeth of Hungary, his powerful neighbour, cherished the hope for the imperial future of her granddaughter, the wife of the titular emperor of Constantinople.

⁵² M. Dąbrowska, "From Poland to Tenedos. The Project of Using the Teutonic Order in the Fight against the Turks after the Fall of Constantinople," *Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa 950–1453. Beiträge zu einer Table Ronde des XIX Congress of Byzantine Studies (Copenhagen 1996)*, ed. G. Prinzing and M. Salamon, Wiesbaden 1999, 165–76; eadem, "Uzun Hasan's Project of Alliance with the Polish King (1474)," *Mélanges d'histoire byzantine offerts à Oktawiusz Jurewicz à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire, Byzantina Lodziensia III* (1998), 171–85.

Uzun Hasan's Project of Alliance with the Polish King (1474)*

We might have got Constantinople. This is what the reader could think while reading the account of Polish chronicler Długosz. He gave us a detailed description of the proposal that was made to the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Casimir the Jagiellonian by Uzun Hasan, the ruler of Turcoman tribe Ak-Koyunlu (White Sheep). The knowledge of this fact has been confined to one statement written by O. Halecki. Babinger also mentions it but cursorily.¹ Such is the fate of borderline topics.² Thus, nobody has written a detailed analysis of the event, let alone examined the account by Długosz.

Długosz says that on 6 February 1474 two Venetian envoys visited the Polish King. Paul who went by name of Omnibene and Anthony offered some damask embroidered with the gold-

* The main points of this text were presented on the Fifth Pontic Day in Birmingham on 3 May 1997. I am most grateful to Professor Anthony Bryer for his inspiring remarks and particularly for drawing my attention to Catherino Zeno's account.

¹ O. Halecki, "La Pologne et l'Empire Byzantin," *Byzantion* 7 (1932), 66. F. Babinger mentions Zeno's stay in Poland but he does not say anything about Hasan's proposal. F. Babinger, *Z dziejów Imperium Osmanów. Mehmed Zdobywca i jego czasy*, trans. T. Zabłudowski, Warszawa 1977, 327.

² I alluded to that in my article: "From Poland to Tenedos. The Project of Using the Teutonic Order in the Fight against the Turks after the Fall of Constantinople," (to be published by G. Prinzing).

en thread as a gift for Casimir. One of the envoys was going to depart to Uzun Hasan's country via Caffa. The latter who had been sent by the Pope was bound for Moscow. The King provided them with bodyguards. Approximately at the same time a Venetian named Catherino Zeno appeared at the Polish court. He brought a letter from Uzun Hasan written in Chaldean. Pointing out his own successes in the campaign against the Turks, Uzun insisted that the King should start the war against Mehmed II in the spring of 1474. Uzun Hasan volunteered to provide the army that could consist of ten times one hundred thousand soldiers. Długosz says that Catherino Zeno had previously stayed at Uzun Hasan's court for three years as the Venetian envoy. The chronicler highlights the fact that Zeno was present during the victorious battle of Uzun Hasan at Erzincan. He goes on to say that Zeno had also been sent as an envoy to the Pope, France, Naples, Hungary and Venice. According to Długosz, the mission contained a confidential message. Uzun Hasan offered his elder daughter born by Catherina of Trebizond to one of the royal sons. He added that she would be baptized. As dowry he offered the whole Greek State (omne Graecorum Imperium) which would become Casimir's property after expelling Mehmed from Constantinople. He promised to support the King in his conflict with Matthias Corvinus of Hungary and he acknowledged the King's rights to Bohemia and Hungary. Długosz expresses his delight at the proposal which was so friendly, and he voices his astonishment at the King's indifference. Casimir said he would send the reply via his own envoy and he sent Catherino to Hungary with an escort.³ That is the end of the passage.

Around February 1475, while the King was staying in Lithuania, another envoy from Uzun Hasan appeared before him in the company of twelve riders. It was Isaac of Trebizond, of Greek

³ "Ioanni Długossii Historiae Polonicae," libri XII, *Opera omnia*, vol. 14, ed. K. Przeździecki, Kraków 1878, 601–02.

origin but of Muslim religion. He asked the King to kindly start the war in the spring of that year. This time Uzun Hasan offered three times one hundred thousand soldiers. He emphasized the fact that Mehmed's power had already been undermined. Providing him with some gifts the King sent the envoy to Cracow because it was Isaac's dream to see it. The envoy spent the whole month there which surprised Długosz. Afterwards, Isaac went to Hungary and Venice. That is the end of the second passage.⁴

Once again the King demonstrated his independence towards the matter. Since nothing came out of it, the historians never explored the issue. However, it is interesting to see what chances there were for this undertaking and why it came to nothing. First of all, we have to analyze the source. Długosz lived in the time of the above events. He worked in the royal diplomacy, he taught the royal sons. Even if he did not witness the arrival of envoys, he must have seen the letters which he quotes.

The fight against Mehmed had long been on the chronicler's mind. He followed the situation in Asia Minor and noted down the victory of Uzun Hasan over Mehmed in 1473.⁵ However, he failed to mention Hasan's defeat which took place a week later.⁶ His information came from Zeno who must have concealed the fact of the defeat for propaganda reasons. In his account of the first battle Długosz is precise enough to mention Uzun Hasan's sons who took part in the fights. He estimated Hasan's military power as one hundred fifty thousand soldiers.⁷ The whole account links up with the earlier information from 1472 when Długosz wrote

⁴ Ibidem, 626.

⁵ Ibidem, 589–90.

⁶ F. Babinger, op. cit., 316.

⁷ J. Długosz, op. cit., 590. Cf. *Rozbiór krytyczny "Annalium Poloniae" Jana Długosza z lat 1445–1480*, vol. 2, ed. S. Gawęda, K. Pieradzka, J. Radziszewska, supervised by J. Dąbrowski, Warszawa-Kraków 1965, 307–08.

about Uzun Hasan's alliance with the Pope and Venice against Mehmed.⁸

In the light of the Polish chronicle the initiative of the alliance in 1474 came from Uzun Hasan who had been well up on the political situation in Central-Eastern Europe and he had regarded Casimir as a suitable partner for his plans. If one looks at the map, s/he will see that the result would be an outflanking manoeuvre for Mehmed's Empire. If one also considers the fact that the Jagiellons ruled in the Kingdom of Poland, the Great Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Bohemia and held sway over Moldavia and even Caffa on the Crimean, the whole idea seems very tempting. Let us have a look at the facts. The analysis of Turkish sources by a prewar Polish scholar, E. Zawaliński, shows that the issue of the supposed alliance between Uzun Hasan and Casimir had not left any trace.⁹ Sphrantzes managed to write only about the fight between Uzun and Mehmed in 1473. The *Anonymous Greek Chronicle* from the 16th century describes the career of Uzun Hasan and his family but does not mention any Polish episode.¹⁰ The silence of Eastern sources seems to reflect the actual state of things. In fact, it was not Uzun Hasan, but Venice which came up with the proposal of alliance. In 1470 Venice lost Negroponte and realized that it was no longer possible to flirt with Mehmed.¹¹ Uzun Hasan as a po-

⁸ J. Długosz, op. cit., 569. Długosz's library has not come down to us. But it is known to have been very rich and it might have included some works on the Turks. This is probably why he was so well-informed about the Turkish issue. Cf. W. Swoboda, "Głosy tureckie do rozbioru krytycznego 'Annalium' Jana Długosza," *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 27 (1983), 80.

⁹ E. Zawaliński, *Polska w kronikach tureckich XV i XVI w.*, Stryj 1938.

¹⁰ Georgios Sphrantzes, *Memorii 1401–1477*, ed. V. Grecu, Bucarest 1966, 142; *Emperors, Patriarchs and Sultans of Constantinople 1373–1513. An Anonymous Greek Chronicle of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. M. Philippides, Brookline (MA) 1990, 124–30.

¹¹ N. Housley, *The Later Crusades. From Lyons to Alcazar 1274–1580*, Oxford 1992, 110.

tential ally had drawn the attention of the Serenissima much earlier. Besides, the slogan of an anti-Turkish crusade had been in circulation in Europe especially since the fall of Constantinople. It was particularly propagated by the Papacy which wanted to involve Poland in the matter already at that stage.¹² The geographical location seems to suggest that Hasan's participation in the enterprise was a big advantage. Uzun Hasan ruled in the vast areas of Iran (Długosz calls him the Persian King). Being the ruler of the tribe of White Sheep, he had good European connections. Due to his marriage to the daughter of John IV of Trebizond, he was connected with Byzantine and Italian families. Catherino Zeno was his wife's relative.¹³ Thus Casimir was visited by somebody who knew a lot about everything that was happening in the East and the West. The same goes for Isaac, the other envoy who also came from Trebizond and seems to have been well-informed. The Empire of Trebizond fell in 1461. Mehmed took the last ruler David II to his court, but when he noticed the captive's contacts with Uzun Hasan, he had him executed.¹⁴ Mehmed wanted to sever the emotional links between Trebizond and Uzun Hasan. Still, Uzun aspired to recapture his wife's fatherland from Mehmed. So, the actual course of events was that it was Venice which sent Catherino Zeno to Uzun Hasan, organizing a great political action after the loss of Negroponte. Venice formed a coalition with the Pope and the Kingdom of Naples. Sixtus IV, the Pope from 1471, supported the crusade which included 89 galleys. The allied forces under

¹² M. Dąbrowska, "From Poland to Tenedos...", *passim*.

¹³ The White Sheep competed with the Black one and Uzun Hasan was the winner. His state was hardly civilized but it held sway over a large territory. His wife's sister was the spouse of Niccolo Crispo, the ruler of Archipel. Their daughters were married off to Venetian nobles, Violanta becoming Catherino Zeno's wife. Thus for Hasan's wife, Zeno was her niece's husband.

¹⁴ W. Miller, *Trebizond. The Last Greek Empire*, London 1926, 105–12; E. Janssens, *Trebizonde en Colchide*, Bruxelles 1969, 160–62.

the leadership of Cardinal Caraffa and Doge Mocenigo set off towards the East. They attacked Smyrna and Attaleia. However, the expedition was disrupted by the conflict between Venice and Naples.¹⁵ The crusade was made to take place at the same time as Hasan's invasion in the East. In 1473 Uzun defeated Mehmed at Erzincan but a week later he was beaten as had already been said.¹⁶ It shows that Italy was not able to create a military movement against Mehmed. No wonder that Venice turned its attention to the North, especially to Poland. The Papacy did the same, sending Marco Barbo who appeared at the Polish court on 4 August 1472. His mission continued the previous military action of joined papal-Venetian forces. Marco Barbo was to put an end to the conflict between Casimir and Corvinus of Hungary and encourage Casimir to join the anti-Turkish coalition.¹⁷ But the political option of the Polish King was quite different.

Uzun Hasan's forces were dispersed but not completely defeated if the next year, that is in 1474, he came up with the proposal of alliance with Poland which might have been suggested by Venice. The propaganda spread by both embassies stressed Hasan's victory and showed Mehmed as the one who could be defeated. The idea seemed very attractive to Długosz. He pointed out that the vicinity of Moldavia made it impossible to avoid the conflict with the Turks in the long run. He was right. Also the Lithuanians whose Ruthenian territories bordered upon Moldavia encouraged the King to prepare the war. However, the

¹⁵ E. Armstrong, "The Papacy and Naples in the Fifteenth Century," *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 8, ed. C. W. Previle-Orlon and Z. N. Brooke, Cambridge 1936, 192.

¹⁶ I. Czamańska, *Moldawia i Wołoszczyzna wobec Polski, Węgier i Turcji w XIV i XV wieku*, Poznań 1996, 135, claims that Uzun was eliminated from the fight in 1473 but I disagree with that opinion. Hasan was still seen as a potential and necessary ally against Mehmed.

¹⁷ M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz Jagiellończyk. Zbiór studiów o Polsce drugiej połowy XV wieku*, Warszawa 1987, 289.

King did not share their anxiety. What was the reason for that lack of response?

Moldavia certainly played the role of a decisive factor. Prince Stephen the Great appealed to Polish and Hungarian protection so as to avoid Mehmed's invasion. This politics necessarily involved Casimir in the Turkish issues which he had wanted to postpone.¹⁸ The King did not intend to attack the Turks which is why he sent the Hasan's envoys back. In 1475 the Turks got hold of Caffa which had also treated Casimir as its protector but he was not willing to take that role. A question can be raised why Casimir allowed Mehmed the liberty whose result was the capture of Kilia and Akkerman, the main Moldavian harbours, in 1484?

It should be stressed that ambitious Moldavia tried to gain Wallachia and wanted to involve Casimir in these efforts. In fact, Stephen of Moldavia did not want to attack the Turks. However, his invasion of Wallachia was an indirect challenge to the Turks. In the autumn of 1473 Stephen attacked Radu, the Wallachian ruler. Radu escaped to Turkey which provoked its immediate response. Radu regained his throne and the conflict between Moldavia and Wallachia turned into one between Moldavia and Turkey.¹⁹ Stephen started to appeal to Casimir at the beginning of 1474 reminding him of the sovereign's duties.²⁰

¹⁸ I. Czamańska, op. cit., 135.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 135–36; Z. Kiereś, "Zagadnienie konfliktu polsko-tureckiego w drugiej połowie XV wieku. Kwestia czarnomorska w okresie rządów Kazimierza Jagiellończyka (do 1484)," *Śląskie Studia Historyczne* 3 (1977), 46. The author points out that Stephen did not take advantage of Mehmed's fight with Uzun Hasan and did not attack Radu in Wallachia. Radu was to send 12 thousand soldiers to support Mehmed. The attack on Radu in the autumn 1473 was pointless because Mehmed might have taken his side which he did. Kiereś sees Venice's influence in that. As early as in 1471 Venice considered Moldavia as a potential ally against Turkey.

²⁰ I. Czamańska, op. cit., 136. See also: B. Stachoń, "Polska wobec Turcji i akcji antytureckiej do utraty Kilii i Białogrodu," *Archiwum Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie*, Wydz. II, 7 (1930), 2, 171.

Poland did nothing. At that particular moment Uzun Hasan's envoy appeared at the court with no result. The Turks invaded Moldavia at the beginning of 1475. Stephen was not completely defeated but he became involved in the Black Sea conflict. In the spring of 1475 Stephen lent his assistance to Caffa in the time of siege, but on 6 June the city was taken. The Turks were joined by Mengi Girej's Tartars from the Crimean Horde which was rather dangerous for Moldavia.²¹ Stephen turned to the Hungarian King and only that caused Polish anxiety. The result was that the Polish gentry insisted that Moldavia should not be handed over to the Turks. Thus, Poland launched a military action in 1476 which had been preceded by the embassy sent to Mehmed. Casimir pointed out that the sultan had attacked his vassal.²² But this did not stop Mehmed from invading Moldavia. The Sultan did not want Poland to get involved in the conflict so he sent a conciliatory message to the King.²³ It is essential to note that the Turks did not regard Poland as their opponent. They realized it was Moldavia that wanted the Polish King to join the conflict.²⁴ Evidently, Casimir did not want to stand up against Turkey. He did not and could not do it. His refusal to take Hasan's side must be considered in this context. At the same time he turned down the Venetian proposal. Casimir wanted to keep his position in Moldavia but he avoided

²¹ Z. Kiereś, op. cit., 52; I. Czamańska, op. cit., 136.

²² In 1476 Casimir stood up for Moldavia, recruiting levy in mass from Ruthenia. The army gathered near Kamieniec. But the fight never took place because the Turkish army managed to disappear. Z. Kiereś, op. cit., 56; B. Stachoń, op. cit., 181. Casimir must have approved of that as he did not want to get involved. Długosz regrets that the King never took advantage of Turk's weakness. Instead, the King went hunting which Długosz bitterly resents. J. Długosz, op. cit., 646.

²³ As early as in 1475 Mehmed assured Casimir that he hoped for the brotherhood and friendship with Poland to last long. Cf. *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 3, ed. A. Lewicki, Cracoviae 1894, no. 204.

²⁴ E. Zawaliński, op. cit., 54.

the conflict with the Turks. His attention was not focused on the southern-eastern areas.

Let us consider the situation of the Polish Kingdom at that time. Casimir the Jagiellonian had been ruling in the united state of Poland and Lithuania since 1447. As early as the beginning of his reign he was preoccupied with the issue of regaining Pomerania of Gdańsk from the Teutonic Order. As a result, he got involved in the Thirteen Years' War with the Knights. He was not supported by the Roman Curia which took the side of the Teutonic Knights.²⁵ The long struggle ended with the treaty of Thorn in 1466 but the Papacy agreed to accept it on condition that Casimir would defeat George of Podebrady and the Hussites.²⁶ Casimir's dynastic plans took Bohemia into account. Accordingly, in 1471 after George's death, Casimir made his eldest son, Ladislas, King of Bohemia. The young ruler was 15 years old.²⁷ This did not meet with the approval of Matthias Corvinus from Hungary who also claimed rights to Bohemia. Because of his marriage to Elisabeth of Habsburg, Casimir thought he was entitled to both thrones. Elisabeth was Albrecht's daughter, who was the ruler of Germany, the King of Bohemia and Hungary.²⁸ As Ladislas was quite young and did not have substantial income, Casimir had to take the burden of maintaining Jagiellonian rule in Bohemia. The Polish state was considerably weakened by the war with the Teutonic Order. The treasury had incurred debts, the army that consisted of levy in mass was badly trained and lacked discipline. Corvinus was in a much better situation. The revenue of his state was greater. At that time – four hundred thousand Hungarian zlotys whereas Poland had eighty

²⁵ M. Biskup and K. Górski, op. cit., 189–215.

²⁶ Ibidem, 287.

²⁷ K. Baczkowski, *Walka Jagiellonów z Maciejem Korwinem o koronę czeską w latach 1471–1479*, Kraków 1980, 37–45.

²⁸ M. Biskup and K. Górski, op. cit., 175.

thousand zlotys, that is five times less.²⁹ Thus Corvinus had the funds to recruit the soldiers who were well-trained. Since he disapproved of the Jagiellonian rule in Bohemia, he aimed at the military confrontation which actually took place in the autumn 1474. These data are invaluable to realize the position of Poland when Uzun Hasan sought its help. What could he possibly count on? Theoretically Poland united with Lithuania was a great country and had a military potential at her disposal. Practically it was weakened by the war with the Teutonic Order and threatened by Corvinus. Uzun could not therefore count on Casimir whose attention was turned to the southwest. Even Mehmed realized that he was safe from the danger of Polish or Hungarian invasion because the two countries were in great conflict.

It is interesting to note that Venice carried on a very clever policy, using Uzun Hasan in negotiations with Poland. Allied with the Papacy, Venice was very suspect to Poland. The King was constantly aware of the fact that the Pope might take back his approval of the treaty of Thorn which would make Poland lose its access to the Baltic Sea. Casimir feared all the connections that might lend the Teutonic Order additional support. Corvinus was soon to adopt such a role.³⁰ In 1474 a war between Poland and Hungary broke out in Silesia. It was obviously a war for the claim to Bohemia, and Silesia was its military theatre. Poland recruited about fifty thousand armed men which was the maximum of its military capability. The army was mainly recruited from the territory of Poland as the King did not want to involve Lithuania in the conflict. The reason was his fear that

²⁹ K. Baczkowski, *op. cit.*, 34. Poland and Lithuania had separate treasuries. The King borrowed money from the nobles and the city of Cracow. The yearly board of a thousand mercenary riders cost 24 thousand Hungarian zlotys which was one third of the Polish Kingdom's income. Thus the King could only use the army for a short time which made the long campaigns impossible.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 134

the Lithuanian nobles might demand a separate ruler as their Duke. Corvinus had fewer soldiers (ten thousand) but they were very well-trained.³¹

Poland did not have a proper army to speak of. The gentry had not taken part in a war for more than ten years. Casimir himself did not have any military skill. Only ten thousand men in the Polish army were equipped in a Western fashion. Besides, the war was waged for Bohemia but the King had to wait for the Bohemian army. The Polish gentry was ill-disposed to the Silesian war. Even before their departure the nobles asked the King for gratification. Długosz writes that the gentry was dissatisfied with what was going on in Podolia which faced the Tartar danger.³² Thus it can be inferred that the gentry might have been encouraged to fight in the East if the King had not been opposed to it. The Silesian war ended with the defeat of Poland but Ladislas managed to keep Bohemia.³³

In February 1475 the Turks attacked Hungary. Matthew spread the successful propaganda which was supported by Pope Sixtus IV. On 15 February 1476 Matthew defeated Turks at Subocz but he returned to Buda on 1 March. The Curia was disappointed.³⁴ Corvinus did not stop his hostilities against Poland. It was under his influence that the papal nuntio excommunicated King Casimir on 15 January 1478 and declared Pomerania and the Teutonic Order free from the Polish rule.³⁵ Trying to disrupt the Hungarian-Teutonic alliance, Casimir led to the treaty at Buda where Ladislas and Corvinus were placed

³¹ Ibidem, 106–07.

³² J. Długosz, *op. cit.*, 607–09.

³³ K. Baczkowski, *op. cit.*, 120. I bypass all the diplomatic relations between Poland and German princes. They played an important role in the conflict between Casimir and Corvinus.

³⁴ Ibidem, 134.

³⁵ Ibidem, 157–58.

on equal footing as Bohemian rulers.³⁶ Each side had now the same rights in the fight for Bohemian throne.

These events can be a comment on the years 1474–1475 when the envoys from Uzun appeared. Indeed, Poland did not have time for Hasan. Besides, the dynastic policy of the Jagiellons was difficult to carry out. Elisabeth of Habsburg's rights were not favourably looked at by the Polish gentry. The only advantage was that Poland managed to save Bohemia for the Jagiellons. Because of the weak army Casimir was a loser in his conflict with Corvinus. The same thing might have happened in the case of Polish-Turkish confrontation. However, it is not altogether impossible that the war against the Turks would have seemed more attractive to the gentry. Let us mention the gathering of the levy in mass from Ruthenian territories of Lithuania for the war in Moldavia. Obviously, we can only speculate because the Turks did not attack Poland directly. What is more, they were willing to support Casimir's claim to Hungary which certainly placed them in a better light.³⁷

It is evident that Venice disapproved the Polish attitude to the Turkish question. The proof for that can be found in a treatise written by Philippe Buonaccorsi called Callimachus, an Italian diplomat who served at Casimir's court. The text is a good depiction of the Polish court's attitude to the anti-Turkish propaganda. The title itself is quite striking: *On Venetian Attempts to Use Persians and Tartars against Turkey*.³⁸ Callimachus mentions Uzun's victory and Catherino Zeno's embassy pointing to the Papacy and Venice as responsible for the anti-Turkish opinions.³⁹ He emphasizes the fact that Venice tried to gain the

³⁶ Ibidem, 163.

³⁷ Z. Kiereś, op. cit., 60.

³⁸ Ph. Callimachi, *De his quae a Venetis tentata sunt Persis ac Tartaris contra Turcos movendis*, ed. A. Kempfi et T. Kowalewski, Varsoviae 1962.

³⁹ Ibidem, 40–42.

Tartars' assistance in the fight. This made the Polish King and his Council very anxious because they feared that the Tartars might invade Poland if they were made to feel more confident.⁴⁰ It was believed that Venice wanted to steer clear of the war and let it happen somewhere else. "One cannot count on unreliable Tartars. They can just as well take the side of the Turks who might later attack Poland."⁴¹ Opponents of this opinion claimed that alliance with Venice in the defence of Christendom would be an honourable thing.⁴² Callimachus may be voicing his own stand here. Aware of his limitations, the King did not want to get involved in the conflict. Besides, he realized that the Tartars were not seen as trustworthy supporters. This was soon to be demonstrated by the facts. It was rather absurd to take part in the war side by side with Venice while other political powers remained passive, for example the Empire of Frederick III. Callimachus clearly advocated the Venetian project and showed the Polish court as people who sit on the fence. In fact Callimachus was more loyal to Venice than to Poland. He used a secret code in his correspondence with Serenissima. Casimir was right not to trust him.

In 1475 the Turks captured Caffa and the Crimean Tartars accepted the Turkish support. At the beginning of the same year Uzun Hasan sent his second envoy to Casimir but with no result. Only the sack of Caffa made him realize the danger. In May 1476 Mehmed received the Polish embassy and assured them that he was going to continue his peaceful relations with Poland. It was to happen at the expense of Moldavia which turned out to be less important.

Having achieved hardly anything, Venice concluded a treaty with Mehmed in 1479. It accepted the fact that Negroponte had been lost. Besides, it had to give up a part of Albania and pay

⁴⁰ Ibidem, 50.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 70.

⁴² Ibidem, 74.

ten thousand ducats in return for the right to the trade within the Ottoman Empire.⁴³ Its selfish policy became apparent at that moment. Accordingly, the Polish King did right when refusing to ally himself with Uzun, that means – with Venice. In 1489 Poland drew up its own treaty with the Turks. It granted Polish merchants the right to trade in the Black Sea region.⁴⁴ Both Poland and Venice saved their respective interests, however each did that independently.

Uzun Hasan died in 1478. His death did not put an end to the power of Ak-Koyunlu. Although his Trebizondian wife provoked the domestic war against Uzun's son by the first wife, the state was bound to last much longer.⁴⁵ It was only sultan Selim (1512–1520) who defeated Uzun Hasan's grandson. Thus, Ak-Koyunlu was a potential ally for Casimir. But the Polish King could only find this ally exotic. Hasan could not attract the King by flaunting his Trebizondian and Byzantine connections which left Casimir indifferent. The fact that Uzun offered Byzantium to Poland can only be seen as history's joke. The same goes for the beautiful Trebizondian fiancée. We can only speculate who might have been the beauty's partner? Ladislav of Bohemia, the eldest son was eighteen, Casimir, the later saint, was sixteen, John Albert was fifteen, Alexander – thirteen, Sigismund and Frederick were too young – seven and six respectively. Uzun's daughter was about twelve, perhaps.⁴⁶ Casimir's six sons constituted a rich matrimonial offer but nobody wanted to sacrifice

⁴³ N. Housley, op. cit., 110. Housley uses the expression: Casimir of Lithuania Poland (111) which is not precise. Casimir was the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania.

⁴⁴ M. Biskup and K. Górski, op. cit., 251.

⁴⁵ *Emperors, Patriarchs...*, 124.

⁴⁶ His eldest daughter was already married in 1472. He had two other daughters: Eliel and Eziel. The elder might have been twelve then. Cf. M. Kuršanskis, "Autour de la dernière princesse de Trébizonde: Théodore, fille de Jean IV et épouse d'Uzun Hasan," *Archeion Pontou* 34 (1977–1978), 86.

any of them in the Turkish war, even if Constantinople were to be a reward.

Casimir was a very pragmatic ruler. Had this appeal been directed to John Albert, a great enthusiast, things might have taken a different course. This one, however, lost his own battle with the Turks in 1497. Still, the Byzantine connections reached Poland. Alexander, Casimir's fourth son and the future Polish King, married Helen, daughter of Ivan III of Muscovy and Zoe Palaeologina. But they were childless so the Byzantine blood never got into the Jagiellons' veins. It is interesting to ask whether Mehmed reckoned with the possibility of Poland's participation in the anti-Turkish campaign. He was preparing Stambul for defence in 1473–1474,⁴⁷ but he probably did not expect the Polish forces to attack it. Poland could only invade Stambul from the land since it had no fleet. But Venice had its fleet so if they had formed an alliance and if Uzun Hasan had joined it, who knows what would have happened? This is, however, an alternative history.

Casimir, whose relations with the Curia, that is Venice's main ally, were a bit strained because the Teutonic Order did not want this alliance. He did not want to involve Poland in the conflict with the Turks, and he did not want to involve Lithuania either. He knew he would pay a high political price for it. He promoted his dynasty in central Europe which yielded fruit after Corvinus' death in 1490. Then Ladislas the Jagiellonian who was already ruling in Bohemia became the King of Hungary. Still, it must be stressed that Poland united with Lithuania constituted a great power and therefore it was a target of diplomatic attempts by many states. Only a person who was well up on the Polish situation could be aware of the shortcomings in the army.

So far it is a nice story which allows for a flight of imagination. But what if Uzun Hasan's offer was fictitious? Venetian

⁴⁷ F. Babinger, *op. cit.*, 319.

sources prove particularly useful since they throw a great deal of light on the matter. Uzun's proposition arouses suspicions since he offers an absolutely astounding number of soldiers to the Polish King. Moreover, his matrimonial proposal and the dowry are simply incredible. It is difficult to state that the letter sent to Casimir had been faked. Długosz definitely comments on a letter written in Chaldean. It must be admitted, however, that such forgeries had not been uncommon in Europe before. The example can be provided by a letter urging Christendom to the crusade allegedly written by David II, Emperor of Trebizond.⁴⁸ According to Długosz, the name of Hasan's wife was Catherina and not Theodora which was actually the case. However, her Christian name does not appear in the sources. Even the Venetian sources call her Despina Caton.⁴⁹

Accordingly, if the message to Casimir was written in Chaldean, it certainly should not have referred to the lady in question as Catherina. This fact makes the reader approach Długosz's account with reservation. The question whether the letter was genuine or faked must be raised. Doubtless, the whole plan sprang from Venetian initiative. The envoys of Serenissima had been penetrating into other countries, Poland included, for quite some time then. Their accounts throw light on the message by Długosz.

The Venetian source implies that Uzun sent Zeno to Poland soon after his defeat in 1473.⁵⁰ Catherino Zeno's post at Hasan's court was soon taken by Josefata Barbaro and Ambroggio

⁴⁸ The forgery was brought to light by A. Bryer, "Ludovico da Bologna and the Georgian and Anatolian Embassy of 1460–1461," *Bedi Kartlisa* 19–20 (1965) = *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos*, London 1980, chap. X, 196–98.

⁴⁹ M. Kuršanskis, op. cit., 77. Despina Khatun is not the name but the title.

⁵⁰ C. Zeno, "Travels in Persia," *A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, trans. Ch. Grey, undated, 1–69.

Contarini.⁵¹ They also had to traverse Poland and met Casimir in order to transmit the message to him. Zeno claims that Polish and Hungarian ambassadors had been present at Hasan's court up to the moment of his defeat when he sent them back, because he did not want them to witness his humiliation in the war with Mehmed. The text suggests that they were accompanied by Catherino.⁵² The identity of Polish ambassador at Hasan's court remains unknown. In the light of Zeno's account the Polish King was busy fighting the Hungarians. It is important that Venice realized the conflict. Ignoring the King's policy, Zeno stressed the potential Turkish threat on behalf of Uzun Hasan. "The King heard him graciously and replied that on the account of the war with Hungary, he could not fight against the Turks with whom he was in league."⁵³ Thus Zeno emphasizes the main motive behind the embassy which was the threat of Mehmed's invasion, and this converges with Długosz. Still, Zeno never mentions any matrimonial plans. An assumption can be made, however, that these plans could have been discussed in a separate letter which may or may not have been genuine.

In his account Zeno tells us that he persuaded the King to put an end to the war with Hungary and join the expedition against Mehmed. Even if the King promised to do so, which Długosz does not say, he never kept his word as he was soon to reopen hostilities against Hungary in Silesia.⁵⁴ When Zeno

⁵¹ *Travels to Tana and Persia by Josefata Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini*, trans. W. Thomas and S. A. Roy, New York, undated. Polish translation of Contarini's text was done by J. U. Niemcewicz, "Podróż Ambrożego Kontaryniego przez Polskę do Persji 1474–1477," *Skarbiec historii Polski*, vol. 1, ed. K. Sienkiewicz, Paris 1839, 1–15; and repealed by J. Gintel, *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce. Relacje i opinie*, vol. 1, Kraków 1971, 104–11. The historians, however, do not revert to it.

⁵² C. Zeno, op. cit., 31.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 33–34.

⁵⁴ K. Baczkowski, op. cit., 92. The truce between Poland and Hungary was signed in Stara Wieś on 21 February 1474, that is at the time of

and other Venetians arrived at the King's court, Długosz was not around; he was then accompanying Ladislas in Bohemia. The royal sons were taken care of by Philippe Buonaccorsi, that is Callimachus, the Venetian.⁵⁵ Zeno says that while staying in Poland he actually met Paolo Omnibene, who is also mentioned in Długosz's chronicle. Zeno goes on to talk about his stay at Matthias Corvinus' court in Hungary.⁵⁶ The whole account closely corresponds to Długosz's chronicle. Zeno certainly paid a visit to King Casimir openly encouraging him to start the war against Mehmed. Still, nothing is really said about the matrimonial offer. From Zeno's account it can be inferred that the actual initiative was taken up by Venice, which suggested that Uzun Hasan had been in the foreground while Serenissima operated in the background.

Another Venetian envoy, Contarini, provides an excellent sequel to Zeno's message, whereas Barbaro, who had visited Poland earlier, does not mention any negotiation with Casimir.⁵⁷ Contarini arrived in Poland in April 1474. He was received by the King in Łęczyca at Easter. The King gave him a black damask coat as a gift. Contarini in turn delivered his present and told the King his business.⁵⁸ What they spoke about remains unknown. It can only be assumed that the Venetian pressure on the King was kept up. Contarini's account testifies to a typical spying mission which focuses on the details of Polish geography. If this was the case, we can raise the question about the content of Contarini's conversation with Callimachus whom he met in Lublin. Callimachus was staying there with the royal sons. Contarini tells us that it was the King who insisted on this encounter;

Venetian missions to Poland. Casimir started the war in the autumn of that year.

⁵⁵ M. Biskup and K. Górski, op. cit., 126.

⁵⁶ C. Zeno, op. cit., 34.

⁵⁷ *Travels to Tana... by Josef at Barbaro...*, 35.

⁵⁸ *Travels to Tana... by Ambrogio Contarini...*, 110.

he wanted Contarini to meet the young princes.⁵⁹ We cannot exclude the possibility that what took place was really a confidential talk of the secret agents. As I have said, Buonaccorsi represented the Venetian *raison d'État* and was interested in Casimir's involvement in the war. Evidence for this can be found in his own text analyzed above. Obviously, Contarini does not mention the topic of his conversation with Callimachus and the royal sons. What is certainly known, is that he later went to Caffa where he had a clandestine meeting with Paolo Omnibene.⁶⁰ Everything seems to indicate that Poland and the neighbouring countries were explored by Venetian secret service.

Later on, Contarini set off to Uzun Hasan's court. On his way there he saw friar Lodovico, whom A. Bryer reveals as a fraud.⁶¹ Lodovico had already been to Poland in 1465, when he presented himself as a patriarch of Antioch, which was completely false.⁶² Contarini's encounter with Lodovico arouses doubts concerning authenticity of Uzun Hasan's proposals. Thus, we may be faced with a next forgery, which was connected with the Italian political circles. On his way back via Moscow Contarini was received by Casimir again in February 1476. Długosz never mentions it. Ambroggio Contarini informed the King about his visit to Uzun Hasan's court which he had apparently reached. The King listened to him for half an hour. As Contarini states, "the King said that he had heard with great interest about Uzun Hasan and the Tartars, and that he felt sure that what I said was true; and he added that he never before met with anyone who had told him the truth."⁶³ This would imply that Casimir was not completely uninterested in what Hasan had said, but the message is very mysterious and it is difficult to state whether it

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 111.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 115.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 144. A. Bryer, *op. cit.*, 194–95.

⁶² J. Długosz, *op. cit.*, 423–24. Cf. *Rozbiór krytyczny...*, 189.

⁶³ *Travels to Tana... by Ambroggio Contarini...*, 167.

concerned the common action against Mehmed and if it still included the matrimonial offer. The King certainly cared for good relations with Venice. At least, this is what Contarini's account suggests on that point. Finishing his report, Contarini avers that his goal was not an elegant language but truthfulness. The basis for this is an analysis of his *Brief Account on the Dominions of Uzun Hasan*.⁶⁴ It looks like a typical report submitted by a spy. The report seems to suggest that Uzun Hasan, then 70 years old (he was 50 actually⁶⁵) was involved in a civil conflict with his son by his Kurdish wife. Contarini claims that Uzun had only 50 thousand soldiers at his disposal and that he did not want to wage war with Mehmed. The earlier hostilities were only due to Karaman.⁶⁶

This suggests that Uzun Hasan was only a pawn in the game played by Venice. It was Venice which created his public image, showing him as the one who was eager to attack Mehmed. It was this image that reached the Polish court. Thus, the very existence of the matrimonial offer can be questioned. Still, it is impossible to explain the goal of Isaac of Trebizond's visit to Poland in 1475. Did he also play the role of the Venetian secret agent and that of Hasan's envoy?⁶⁷ There are too few available data to answer this question. And what about Casimir's interest in Uzun Hasan's court expressed by the King during his second meeting with Contarini in February 1476?

Whatever was the case, the King was not interested in joining the anti-Turkish project. What remains obvious is the Venetian diplomatic initiative. It is plausible to assume that Venice may

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 172–73.

⁶⁵ M. Kuršanskis, op. cit., 86.

⁶⁶ *Travels to Tana... by Ambrogio Contarini...*, 173.

⁶⁷ The number of the soldiers mentioned by Isaac (three hundred) seems more probable than the million from the letter brought by Zeno. Such numbers were common in the sources of those times. Thus Isaac may have acted on Hasan's behalf which does not exclude the possibility of him being used by the Venetian diplomacy.

have gone to such lengths as to fake Hasan's letter which promised Byzantium to Poland. One more thing is clear: Venice was more than willing to attack Mehmed, but as it realized Hasan's weakness, it looked for a powerful ally, that is Poland. Whoever may have been the author of the fabulous promise concerning Byzantium and the marriage with Uzun Hasan's daughter, the Polish King turned a deaf ear to it. Only Długosz, who lamented the fall of Constantinople in 1453, could have been deluded by it.⁶⁸ Casimir was a very pragmatic ruler and never really responded to the supposed Uzun Hasan's project, promoted by Venice. The King can be best characterized by an anecdote. Once Casimir sent some gifts to his son Ladislas in Bohemia. They included hounds. All of that was seized by one of the Silesian princes who was hostile to the Jagiellon. Having learnt about it, the King said: "Make him return the dogs! He can keep the other things."⁶⁹ Reality was important. Byzantium, too, was a gift, but one from the world of legend, whereas Casimir was a man of facts. This actually made him similar to Mehmed.

⁶⁸ J. Długosz, op. cit., 142–45. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "Cantacuzene – 'The Wolf' or Matthias Strykowski's Recollection of Byzantium," *Byzantinoslavica* LVI (1995), 257–258.

⁶⁹ Miechowita, *Chronicon Regni Poloniae*, Kraków 1519, 326–27. After: M. Biskup and K. Górski, op. cit., 341.

From Poland to Tenedos. The Project of Using the Teutonic Order in the Fight against the Turks after the Fall of Constantinople

The research into the relations between Byzantium and Central Europe have been gaining momentum lately. As far as Poland is concerned it seems essential to complete Halecki's important text on Byzantium and Poland.¹ In spite of his/her attempt of objectivity, the Byzantinist necessarily becomes a Byzantine ally. Whatever the facts, we must put aside the patriotic favouritism connected with Byzantium and Poland respectively.

The fall of Constantinople was beneficial for Poland and its King Casimir the Jagiellonian. It distracted the Pope's attention from the Prussian cause and the Teutonic Order which had been supported by the Papacy. Rome focused its attention on Eastern Europe, where the Turkish territorial expansion

¹ O. Halecki, "La Pologne et l'Empire Byzantin," *Byzantion* 7 (1932), 41–67. G. Prinzing and M. Salamon have already started to do it. See: G. Prinzing, *Bizantyńskie aspekty średniowiecznej historii Polski (Byzantine Aspects of Polish Medieval History)*, Poznań 1994 = *Xenia Posnaniensis* 5 (1994); M. Salamon, "'Amicus' or 'hostis'? Boleslav the Valiant and Byzantium," *Byzantium and Its Neighbours. From the Mid-9th till the 12th Centuries. Papers Read at the Byzantinological Symposium, Bechyně 1990*, ed. V. I. Vavrinek, Praha 1993 = *Byzantinoslavica* 54 (1993), 114–20.

started to loom large. So as to gain advantage from the solution of the Prussian problem, the Polish diplomacy suggested that the Teutonic Order should be transferred on to the isle of Tenedos. However fantastic the idea might seem, it becomes a handy pretext for exploring the relations between Poland and South-Eastern Europe, including the remnants of the Byzantine state.

The fate of this political project has never been studied in the western literature. Neither do we know who its author was. As for Polish sources, Długosz is the only chronicler to mention this fact. Some contemporary Polish historians briefly refer to the question without solving it. Halecki ignores it completely.

In 1453 Casimir IV was 26 years old. He had been reigning for six years. Unlike his brother Vladislav III, King of Poland and Hungary, Casimir does not seem to have received adequate education.² This does not imply however that he did not pay any attention to the fall of Constantinople. As a child he was much brighter than his brother, therefore thorough education was neglected in his case. He was brought up to be a tough calculating man who did not share the humanistic emotion over the fall of the Second Rome.³ Consequently, he

² For the data concerning Casimir IV the Jagiellonian see: M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz Jagiellończyk. Zbiór studiów o Polsce drugiej połowy XV wieku (Casimir the Jagiellonian. Studies on Poland of the Second Half of the 15th Century)*, Warszawa 1987. Casimir was a brother of Vladislav III, killed in the battle of Varna.

³ This does not mean that he did not appreciate the humanists. His interests are reflected in the correspondence with Lorenzo de Medici (addressed as “Magnificus Laurentius de Medici, amicus meus observantissimus”) and in the fact that the royal sons were educated by humanists: Philip Buonaccorsi, called Callimachus, among others. See: J. Skoczek, *Wychowanie Jagiellonów (The Education of the Jagiellons)*, Lwów 1932, 10. Incidentally, it is worth noting that Poland was perceived as a country similar to Byzantium. The evidence for that can be found in the fact that a certain Demetrios from Constantinople was recommended

did not lose his head for Byzantium as his brother Vladislav III had literally done. Therefore it would be very difficult to agree with a contemporary historian⁴ who claims that the general mourning became a fact in Poland after the fall of Constantinople. Only Długosz and some annalists spared a tear or two on this tragedy, but especially Długosz wrote about it after considerable time.⁵ The King himself learned about the fall of Constantinople in September 1453 while his envoys were staying in Moldavia.⁶

The fall of the Byzantine capital did not signify the end of Byzantium. The Palaiologoi had still been ruling in the Peloponnese (till 1460) whereas their allies, the Gattilusio, were still living on Lesbos.⁷ Before the Turks attacked Negroponte in

to the Polish ruler at the Council in Basel in 1439. Its participants said that the Polish Kingdom was “quite close to the Greek lands.” This is why the study of Greek in the Academy in Cracow was considered important. It was supported by Zbigniew of Oleśnica, then the bishop of Cracow. J. Skoczek, *Stosunki kulturalne Polski z Zachodem w XV w. (The Cultural Relations between Poland and the West in the 15th Century)*, Lwów 1938, 60; O. Halecki, “La Pologne” (see no. 1), 60; G. Prinzing, *Bizantyńskie aspekty* (see no. 1), 23.

⁴ A. F. Grabski, *Polska w opiniach Europy Zachodniej w XIV–XV w. (Poland under Western Eyes in the 14th–15th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1968, 445.

⁵ Jan Długosz (Joannes Dlugossius), *Historia Polonica*, lib. XII, vol. V, ed. A. Przeździecki, Cracoviae 1878, 142–45.

⁶ Z. Kiereś, “Zagadnienia konfliktu polsko-tureckiego w drugiej połowie XV w. Kwestia czarnomorska w okresie rządów Kazimierza Jagiellończyka (do 1484)” (“The Problem of the Polish-Turkish Conflict in the Second Half of the 15th Century. Casimir the Jagiellonian in the Face of Turkish Expansion in the Black Sea”), *Śląskie Studia Historyczne* 3 (1977), 40. Voivod Alexander promised to pay homage to Poland. It took place in September 1453 and then the royal envoys were informed about the fall of Constantinople. Poland consolidated its influence in Moldavia as a result of agreement with the voivod Stefan in 1459.

⁷ D. Zakythinos, “Le déspotat grec de Morée 1261–1460,” t. I, *Histoire politique*, Paris 1932, 241–84. The conflict between two brothers: Thomas and Demetrios Palaiologoi was tragic for the Peloponnese. Lesbos was

1470 even the Venetians hoped to maintain their commercial prosperity in the Aegean World.⁸ The Byzantine-Latin community was still existing as something to fight for. Since 1453 the Pope's attention had concentrated on the East. Also the German-Roman Emperor Frederick III who had been ruling since 1440 showed interest in this matter. However, he was a hopelessly weak personality. If anyone was able to lend a hand to the vanishing Byzantine Empire without the capital, it was certainly the Pope.

In the meantime in February 1454 an insurrection broke out in Prussia. The inhabitants, ruled by the Teutonic Order, turned to the Polish King for assistance.⁹ The Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire immediately took the side of the Teutonic Order.¹⁰ But Casimir agreed to incorporate Prussia into Poland on the grounds that a major part of this territory had previously belonged to the Polish State. Not wanting to incur the displeasure of the Papacy and the German-Roman Emperor, Poland promised to take part in the campaign

captured in 1462. The event had been preceded by the fratricidal fight between Nicoló and Domenico Gattilusio which encouraged the Turkish invasion. Cf. W. Miller, "The Gattilusj of Lesbos (1355–1462)," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 22 (1913), 435–42.

⁸ The sack of Negroponte was Mehmed II's prestigious victory. The news that the island was seized resulted in despair and hysteria among the inhabitants of Venice who realized that they had lost one of the most important sites in the Levant. Cf. F. Babinger, *Z dziejów imperium Osmanów. Sultan Mehmed Zdobywca i jego czasy (Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit)*, trans. T. Zabłudowski, Warszawa 1977, 284–88.

⁹ M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 186. Polish gentry and townspeople organized the so-called Prussian Association whose aim was to regain the delta of the Vistula River and to promote the Baltic trade there. The Grand Master of the Teutonic Order Ludwig von Erlichshausen made Emperor Frederick III declare the Association invalid in 1453, which gave rise to the uprising the next year.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 189.

against Turkey by invading the Tartars.¹¹ Lutek from Brzezie, Polish chancellor and actual instigator of foreign policy, took a stand on that matter during the Regensburg Imperial Diet.¹² Lutek had also carried out on his diplomatic activities in Rome where the Teutonic prosecutor Jodok Hohenstein attempted to undermine Polish strategy.¹³ In this context Lutek put a special emphasis on the Polish contribution to the defense of Christendom. He had Vladislav III in mind. The German influences managed to gain advantage at Regensburg. The Emperor demanded that Poland should give up its Prussian project and join the crusade. Casimir rejected this claim and sent the envoys away.¹⁴ The King's diplomats pointed out that the Prussian territories had never been reigned by the Holy Emperor and now they should be subjected to the Polish Kingdom. This policy resulted in the outbreak of the Thirteen

¹¹ The promise was a bit of a stratagem. After the fall of the Golden Horde in the middle of the 15th century, the Tartars split up into independent khanates. The Crimean Khanate accepted the Turkish superiority only in 1475. In the period under consideration the dispersed Tartars did not pose a threat to Poland. There was no need to attack them. Therefore the Polish promise seems to have been a trick rather than a real political plan. The problem deserves a separate study.

¹² B. Janiszewska-Mincer, "Działalność polityczna Jana Lutka z Brzezia" ("The Political Activity of Jan Lutek of Brzezie"), *Zeszyty Naukowe WSP w Opolu Historia* 6 (1967), 65–66. Jan Lutek's diplomatic efficiency can be seen in the fact that he managed to persuade the Pope not to denounce the Prussian Association, even though the Teutonic Knights had been trying to influence Nicolas V against Poland. Having gained nothing in Rome, the Teutonic Order turned to Emperor Frederick III who had the Association abolished. In Regensburg Lutek skilfully emphasized the dangers Poland faced on the Teutonic and the Tartar side. The latter was a political red herring. The supposed attack on the Tartars was meant to prevent them from allying themselves with Mehmed II.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 67.

¹⁴ The embassy included the representatives of the Reich princes and of Philip the Good, involved in the preparation for the crusade.

Years' War with the Teutonic Order and spoiled the relations between Poland and the Holy See. The Teutonic prosecutor brought about the faking of bulla which put an end to the Prussian Association connected with Poland.¹⁵ This was convergent with the policy of Calixtus III who had been trying to force Poland to join the crusade since 1457.¹⁶ The pressure indicates that Poland was highly valued as potential military ally. In fact the Polish State seemed to acquire the leadership in the crusading project.

After the death of the bishop of Varmia in Prussia, the Pope placed Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini on the bishop's throne.¹⁷ Aeneas had already made a spectacular political career. He had worked in Frederick III's chancellery since 1443.¹⁸ He was strongly anti-Polish and he denied Vladislav III all the success in his winter war with the Turks in 1443–1444.¹⁹ Poland could not be happy when Aeneas was elected the Pope as Pius II in 1458. The moment that he came to the throne Pius II was a supporter of the crusade against the Turks. He needed Poland for these plans, therefore he attempted to reconcile Casimir with his "beloved Son the Grand Master

¹⁵ On the subject of the war see: M. Biskup, *Trzynastoletnia wojna z Zakonem Krzyżackim 1454–1466 (The Thirteen Years' War against the Teutonic Order)*, Warszawa 1967. Jodok took advantage of the new Pope Calixtus III's interest in the crusade and made him confirm the faked bulla of Nicolas V valid. The faked document dissolved the Prussian Association. The Polish diplomacy was not able to prevent it.

¹⁶ M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 200. The King was not willing to dispatch envoys to the council in Rome concerning the matter. As a result, the Association was excommunicated.

¹⁷ Casimir the Jagiellonian was opposed to it and demanded that Jan Lutek should be made bishop of that precarious diocese.

¹⁸ I. Zarębski, *Stosunki Eneusza Sylwiusza z Polska i Polakami (The Relations of Aeneas Sylvius with Poland and the Poles)*, Kraków 1939, 8–9.

¹⁹ Aeneas was indignant at the Polish influence in Hungary. He thought that the proper leader of the crusade would be Emperor Frederick III and not the Polish-Hungarian King. *Ibidem*, 11.

of the Teutonic Order and the Brethren.”²⁰ At the same time he conducted the policy in favour of the Teutonic Order and he offered a bishopric of Varmia to Paul Legendorf,²¹ the ally of the Order. Under those circumstances Casimir did not hasten to swear obedience to the Pope.²² He only decided to do that in the autumn 1459 when he sent Jakub of Sienna to the Congress at Mantua.²³

At that time the Palaeologi in the Peloponnese were trying to protect their possessions. However, the tragic thing was that instead of fighting the Turks they were fighting one another. While Demetrios favoured the Turks, Thomas looked forward to the Latin help.²⁴ It was expressed in the fact that he sent the embassy to Mantua, but it is not known who acted as his representative there.²⁵ What remains certain is that Pius promised Western assistance to Byzantine Peloponnese in 1459 he did not take a definitely anti-Polish attitude. He waited for the King to give his consent to the raising of funds for the crusade. At that moment the King was so busy that he could not

²⁰ *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. III, ed. A. Lewicki, Kraków 1894, 84–86. M. Biskup, *Trzynastoletnia* (as in no. 15), 557.

²¹ K. Górski, “Legendorf Paweł, hr. Stango (1410 (1420)-1476),” *Polski Słownik Biograficzny (Polish Biographical Dictionary)*, vol. XVII, Wrocław-Warszawa 1972, 13; Legendorf took the side of Poland only after Poland’s victorious war with the Teutonic Order.

²² M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 202.

²³ F. Kiryk, “Jakub z Sienna 1413–1480,” *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. XV, 365. The Pope convened the huge assembly to Mantua so as to promote his plan of a gigantic crusade. He hoped for 88 thousand participants. On the Mantua assembly see: *Sacrorum Conciliation Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, vol. 35, ed. J. D. Mansi et consortes, Paris 1902, 106–34. On the prepared crusade: N. Houssey, *The Later Crusades 1274–1580. From Lyon to Alcazar*, Oxford 1992, 105–09.

²⁴ D. Zakythinos, “Le despote” (as in no. 7), 262–74.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 262.

even turn up for his decoration with the Order of the Garter in Windsor.²⁶

Jakub of Sienno spent the whole month travelling from Poland to Rome. He was accompanied by a magnificent cortege subsidized by the Polish clergy.²⁷ It is not known who else took part in the mission. The clothes and the caps with feathers worn by the delegates attracted the attention of Pius himself.²⁸ Jakub was not a mediocrity. He represented the educated Polish élite. He had studied in Rome and worked at the chancellery of Casimir IV. He was the nephew of Zbigniew of Oleśnica, the late bishop of Cracow.²⁹ Jakub loved the ancient writings and history and Pius regarded him a “vir doctus.”³⁰ Długosz comments on Jakub’s speech in Mantua concerning the campaign

26 Cf. H. Zins, “Ze stosunków polsko-angielskich w połowie XV w. Sprawa Orderu Podwiązki dla Kazimierza Jagiellończyka” (“On the Polish-English Relations in the Middle of the 15th Century. The Question of the Order of the Garter for Casimir the Jagiellonian), *Zapiski Historyczne* 33 (1968), fasc. 1, 33–58. England was not involved in the anti-Turkish project which made it Poland’s natural ally. In 1455 Casimir informed Henry VI that he had made Prussia obey the Polish rule. At the same time he asked the English King to extend his protection to the Polish citizens living in England. In his letters to Henry VI, Philip the Good and the Hanse Casimir stressed that the Prussian cities were beyond the German-Roman Emperor’s rule.

27 F. Kiryk, “Jakub” (as in no. 23), l. cit.; I. Zarębski, *Stosunki* (as in no. 18), 81. Aeneas appreciated the fact that Jakub of Sienno was the nephew of Zbigniew of Oleśnica. It was under Zbigniew’s influence that Aeneas changed his attitude to Poland which he had earlier treated as uncouth country, where beer and not wine was served. (I. Zarębski, 77–80). Eminent benedictine monks may have taken part in Jakub’s embassy. See: M. Derwich, *Benedyktynski klasztor Świętego Krzyża na Łysej Górze (Benedictine Monastery of the Holy Cross on the Bald Mountain)*, Warszawa 1992, 478.

28 I. Zarębski, *Stosunki* (as in no. 18), 81.

29 After Zbigniew of Oleśnica’s death, Jakub became the administrator of the diocese in Cracow. He was one of the richest prelates in Poland.

30 After: I. Zarębski, *Stosunki* (as in no. 18), 81.

for “Constantinopolis recuperari.”³¹ The phrasing indicated that at that time the fall of Constantinople was not considered a lost cause.

According to the research, Jakub spoke in Mantua for the second time. This time he appeared in the company of Poland’s permanent advocate in the Curia – Andrea of Santa Croce.³² Deploring the conflict between Poland and the Teutonic Order he suggested that the Order should be transferred on to Tenedos so as to be closer to the infidel.³³ I have not found more detailed information on Andrew of Santa Croce. Was he, personally, the author of the project? Andrew gained the support of several cardinals for the Polish cause, but could it possibly mean the approval of the transfer of the Order on to Tenedos? Andrew had a brother, Honorius Tricarico, whose future cardinal’s hat was the objective of Casimir’s diplomatic efforts.³⁴ Consequently, there was a pro-Polish party in the Curia. A question arises whether Jakub set out for Mantua

³¹ J. Długosz, *Historia* (as in no. 5), 299: “Maximo insuper studio et cura preafati iacobi de Senno regit nuntii laboratum et certatum est, ut Ordo Cruciferorum de Prussia penitus hinc tolleretur, ne Reges catholicos, quibus confinabat, domestico bello involveret, et transferetur ad insulam Tenedon, ut illic, iuxta suae professionem regulae, militiae in barbaros vacans, Turcos bello lacesseret.”

³² M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 202. After Lutek’s initial success in Rome, the Teutonic Brothers proved to be more effective since they had secured the support of the cardinal-protector, whereas Poland could only afford advocates. Since 1455 Andrea de Santa Croce had been one of them. He won some cardinals over for the Polish cause, as for example the cardinal of Rouen, Guillaume d’Estouteville, who was known to be a friend of Poland. *Ibidem*, 225.

³³ Długosz claims that Jakub talked about Tenedos in Rome, however no mention of it can be found in *Codex epistolaris...*, 193–95. Still Jakub is known to have spoken twice on the matter in Mantua.

³⁴ M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 225. On Andrea de Santa Croce’s speech see: *Matriculation Regni Poloniae Summaria contexterunt*, vol. V, p. II, ed. J. Płocha, A. Rybarski, I. Sulowska, Warszawa 1961, nr 536.

specifically with this goal in mind or whether he included the idea of the Tenedos project in his speech on the spot. Who could have supported this project? The documents of the reunion edited by Mansi indicate that it included representatives of the Holy Empire, the Italian towns, Savoy, Burgundy etc.³⁵ None of these parties could be satisfied with the project. Whose idea was it then? Długosz ascribes it to Jakub, but did Jakub present this idea as his own? Understandably enough, the project provoked the response of the Teutonic prosecutor.³⁶ The Pope denounced Casimir's action in Prussia, which was meant to force the King to obey. Clearly, he did not want to give up Poland as an ally, which stresses the Polish State's military assets.

But whose idea was it? It is known that even before Jakub arrived at Mantua, the representatives of Hospitallers initiated the discussion on the possible fusion of their and the Teutonic Order.³⁷ They thought that the Teutonic Order was no longer necessary in Prussia as it fought against Christian Poland. The discussion was completely blocked by Hohenstein at the cardinals' meeting.³⁸ The rumour of the possible transfer of the Teutonic Order on to Tenedos is said to have appeared in a letter of the inhabitants of Marienburg in 1458.³⁹ Paul Legendorf, the Teutonic advocate and bishop of Varmia, could not possibly be the author of the project, as is sometimes claimed.⁴⁰ The Pope himself had an idea of creating a new order of Our Lady

³⁵ *Sacrorum conciliorum* (as in no. 23), 108–13.

³⁶ M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 202.

³⁷ M. Biskup, *Trzynastoletnia* (as in no. 15), 558.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Rozbiór krytyczny "Annalium Poloniae Jana Długosza z lat 1445–1480"* (*Critical Analysis of "Annales Poloniae"*), vol. II, ed. S. Gawęda, K. Pieradzka, J. Radziszewska, supervised by J. Dąbrowski, Warszawa–Kraków 1965, 125.

⁴⁰ *Regesta historico-diplomatica Ordinis S. Mariae Teutonicorum*, ed. E. Joachim, W. Hubatsch, pars I, vol. 2 Göttingen 1950, 140 (nr 15375).

of Bethlehem.⁴¹ The Order was to have been placed in Lemnos so as to fight against the Turks as the Hospitallers did. The Hospitallers may have had a share in the project concerning Tenedos.⁴² Apart from Rhodes which was their headquarters, it would have been the next outpost for the fight with the Turks.

However, Tenedos was hardly a no man's land. Prof. Nicol had already shown the history of Venetian-Genoese rivalry for the island.⁴³ Small in size, Tenedos had a very good location at the entry to the Straits of Dardanelles. Anybody who wanted to get to the Marmara Sea and then to the Black Sea was bound to pass it. However, the idea of transferring the Teutonic Order from a huge state on the Baltic Sea on to the small island seems absurd. In all probability the idea was born in the course of the debates and it was to distract the Pope's attention from Poland. The possible transfer of the Teutonic Knights had already been considered in Poland, but it was connected with a large part of

⁴¹ F. Babinger, *Z dziejów* (as in no. 8), 177. The Order was to be found according to the Hospitallers model from the Isle of Rhodes. Its role was to protect the Greek waters against the Turks.

⁴² The Hospitallers tried to be independent from Mehmed II and to keep the influences on Cyprus. It cannot be doubted that the Teutonic Knights might have been very helpful as their allies in maintaining independence. The question is whether the protection of Christendom was really at stake or whether they thought about their own business. On Hospitallers at that time see: E. Rossi, "The Hospitallers of Rhodes 1421–1523," *A History of the Crusades vol. III, The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. H. W. Hazard, Madison (WI) 1975, 321–22.

⁴³ D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1988, 296–316. The strategic location of the island was noticed by a traveler Pero Tafur, who said that Tenedos boasted one of the finest harbours in that part of the world. He also made some others, less important remarks on the amount of rabbits and the destroyed vineyards. Cf. Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435–1439*, trans. and ed. M. Letts, New York-London 1926, 113–14.

Podole near the “pagan territories.”⁴⁴ This project was definitely more realistic but also without perspective.

In this context it does not seem essential to try to find out who first came up with the idea of Tenedos project. It played the role of an ephemeral political idea. All the parties involved were probably aware of its impossibility. Only Długosz expressed his delight for the idea as if he had not known the actual size of the island. But, on the other hand, whoever was the author of the Tenedos question, he should have been aware of the attractiveness of the island.

The documents suggested that not only Germans but also Venice must have been opposed to the project since Tenedos was an object of Venetian appetite. The Venetian Republic did not really want to get involved in the fight even though it agreed to participate in the crusade.⁴⁵ Was Jakub so unaware of the situation that he used somebody’s territory as an argument?⁴⁶

As a result of Mantua meeting, the Papacy took the side of the Teutonic Order against Poland.⁴⁷ Poland, however, was not

⁴⁴ Lutek came up with the project during the negotiations in Sztum in 1458, but it was obviously rejected by the Teutonic Order. The reaction is not surprising. Cf. M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 203.

⁴⁵ F. Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Age. Le développement et l'exploitation du domaine colonial vénitien (XII^e–XV^e siècles)*, Paris 1959, 387; F. Babinger, *Z dziejów* (as in no. 8), 181. Venice had mixed feelings about the crusade. On the one hand, it was to provide the fleet; on the other, it was eager to see the failure of the project. It changed the attitude only after the outbreak of its own war with the Turks.

⁴⁶ J. Friedberg, “Zatarg Polski z Rzymem w czasie wojny trzynastoletniej” (Poland’s Conflict with Rome during the Thirteen Years’ War”), *Kwartalnik Historyczny* (1910), 427. The author calls the project concerning Tenedos exciting. Without analyzing the problem he suggests that the idea was “born” in Italy, on the spot, and not in the royal chancellery in Cracow.

⁴⁷ M. Biskup and K. Górski, *Kazimierz* (as in no. 2), 202. In 1460 the Pope excommunicated once again the Prussian Association and even the Polish King.

going to yield to the pressure. It did not want to irritate the Turks whose political interest was convergent with Polish in Moldavia. Poland pressed for the solution of the conflict with the Teutonic Order and the goal was achieved. In 1464 the Pope managed to bring together the armies ready for the crusade (without Polish official participation) but he died of fever and the expedition did not set out.⁴⁸ Two years later Poland signed a peace treaty with the Teutonic Knights and gained an access to the Sea.⁴⁹ Poland was interested in the Baltic, not in the Bosphoros or the Aegean.

Nobody has gone into the Tenedos project in Polish research because it is not a subject in itself. Tenedos is but a keyhole through which we can have a glimpse of the Polish attitude to the fate of the Byzantine remnants. In my story the Peloponnese of Paleologoi has receded from view. And this agrees with the facts. For apart from Pius II⁵⁰ nobody really believed in the

⁴⁸ N. Houssey, *Later Crusades* (as in no. 23), 109. Having learnt about the Pope's death, Philip the Good withdrew his participation in the crusade. He died in 1467. His promise of the crusade was empty.

⁴⁹ It was the peace treaty in Toruń in 1466. Poland regained the former Pomerania of Gdańsk, now called the Royal Prussia, the land of Chełmno and Michałowo, the bishopric of Varmia and the towns: Malbork (Marienburg) and Elbląg (Elbing). The remaining part of the Teutonic State, that is the Teutonic Prussia with the capital in Königsberg, became the Polish fief. The cause was won. No wonder that nobody cared for the Byzantine's lament then.

⁵⁰ As long as Byzantium was there, Italy did not fear the Turks. Mehmed II, however, planned the invasion on the Apennine Peninsula. The Roman Curia was really afraid of the threat. Apart from Philip the Good, the Pope believed to be supported by David II Emperor of Trebizond, who was to conceive fantastic plans of expelling the Turks from Constantinople. Cf. A. Bryer, "Ludovico da Bologna and the Georgian and Anatolian Embassy of 1460–1461," *Bedi Kartlissa* 19–20 (1965), 178–98; Repr. A. Bryer, *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos*, London 1980, art. X. The author quotes David II's supposed letter to Philip of Burgundy, faked in Italy: "Therefore, we are ourselves ready: and we await your arrival against the infidel . . . which you, Latin Princes went

possibility of regaining Constantinople and the resurrection of the Byzantine spirit. In the world of realistic politicians, which included Polish King Casimir IV,⁵¹ this possibility was out of the question.

to discuss in the Council of Mantua” (A. Bryer’s translation). David’s ally mentioned in the document is Uzun Hasan, Chieftain of the Tribe of the White Sheep. The Curia believed in this great mystification which is a separate problem.

51 The King’s political stand did not depend on the Byzantine cultural influences in the Eastern hinterland of Poland. It reminds us of Jagiello’s fondness for orthodox art, which was not the same as the readiness to lend help to the Eastern Christians. The union of Churches was to be the condition of this assistance. Cf. G. Prinzing, *Bizantyńskie aspekty* (as in no. 1), 20–21. The idea of involving Casimir the Jagiellonian in the project of regaining Constantinople from the Turks came up again in 1474. This time its proponent was Uzun Hasan, the main enemy of Mehmed II in Anatolia. He offered his daughter, born from the Trebizondian princess as a wife to one of Casimir’s sons. The dowry was to be the Byzantine Empire! It is interesting to speculate what size of the State he had in mind. Casimir IV was getting old but he remained a practical man and chose more reasonable matches for his children. One of Casimir’s sons became a saint. This may not have happened if he had seen Uzun Hasan’s daughter, who was probably as beautiful as her mother. Cf. J. Długosz, *Historia* (as in no. 5), 601–02; O. Halecki, “La Pologne” (as in no. 1), 66. Uzun’s letter as the whole proposal might have been faked. Let us assume that it was genuine which was the assumption made by King Casimir. See: M. Dąbrowska, “Uzun Hasan’s Project of Alliance with the Polish King (1474),” *Mélanges d’histoire byzantine offerts à Oktawiusz Jurewicz à l’occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire, Byzantina Lodziensia III* (1998), 171–85.

Cantacuzene – “The Wolf” or Matthias Strykowski’s Recollection of Byzantium

It seems that Polish chroniclers from the 16th century do not share Długossius’ (Jan Długosz) lament on the fall of Constantinople, so conspicuous in his text composed in the 15th century. Matthias of Miechow (Miechowita) and Martin Cromer, who based their accounts on Długossius, removed some essential details while narrating the story of the Turkish conquest of Byzantium. Matthias Strykowski, who worked on the history of Lithuania united with Poland from 1385, derived his information from the three texts mentioned above. His own version of history includes a chapter on the fall of Constantinople; its length exceeds Długossius’ relation considerably. The text resulted from the author’s experience during his visit to Constantinople in the years 1574–1575. Interesting though it seemed, especially from the Byzantinist’s point of view, the text was published only in 1978 by J. Radziszewska.¹

¹ M. Strykowski, “O wzięciu Konstantynopola albo Carogroda, najślawniejszego miasta stołecznego cesarzów greckich i patrijarchy, przez Mahometa Wtórego, carza tureckiego, roku Pańskiego 1453, a według rachunku ruskiego od stworzenia świata 6061, za króla polskiego Kazimirza Jagiełłowicza, wielkiego księcia litewskiego,” idem, *O początkach, wywodach, dzielnościach, sprawach rycerskich i domowych sławnego narodu litewskiego, ziemijdzkiego i ruskiego, przedtem nigdy od żadnego ani kuszzone, ani opisane, z natchnienia Bożego a uprzejmego doświadczenia* (“On the Seizure of Constantinople or Carogrod, the Most Renowned Capital of Greek Emperors and Patriarch by Mehmed II the Turkish Sultan, A.D. 1453

In the Polish-Lithuanian State the readings of national history, both Polish and Lithuanian, were in great demand. Miechowita and Cromer were able to profit by the invention of print quite skilfully. Basing their insights on Dlugossius and competing with him at the same time,² the two authors attempted to present their own vision of history. According to them, the fall of Constantinople was a historical event, already remote. Miechowita, who had his text published in 1519, shortened Dlugossius' account referring to 1453. In the fragment about the fall of the City he mentioned the death of Constantine XI, the last Emperor of Byzantium. The plight of women who were victims of violence and rape was dismissed in one sentence. Finally, he went on to say that the cross had served as a target for the enemy arrows. As for Pera, the Genoese district of Constantinople, it surrendered to the Turks.³ Martin Cromer, who had his text published in 1555, wrote that the Sultan had not kept the promise given to the Byzantine Emperor. As a result of his decision, a fortress on the straits (Rumeli Hisar) was constructed. It was meant to prevent the Greeks from sailing these freely. Cromer also mentioned the mission of metropolitan Isidore who had been dispatched abroad to seek help for Byzantium. Still, the besieged City fell prey to Mehmed II, because of the betrayal committed by a Greek called Gierluka (Kyr Lukas – i.e. Lukas

and by the Ruthenian Order in 6961 since the Creation of the World, in the Reign of Polish King Casimir, Jagiello's Son, the Great Prince of Lithuania," *The Origins and Exploits of Famous Lithuanian, Samogitian and Ruthenian Nation hitherto Neglected, Described, on Divine Inspiration and Own Experience*, ed. J. Radziszewska, Warszawa 1978, 459–77.

² H. Barycz, "Dwie syntezy dziejów narodowych przed sądem potomności. Losy *Historii* Jana Długosza i Marcina Kromera w XVI w. i w pierwszej połowie XVII w." ("Two Syntheses of National History in the Face of Posterity. The Story of *Accounts* by Dlugossius and Cromer in the 16th Century and in the First Half of the 17th Century), *Pamiętnik Literacki* 43 (1952), 208.

³ Maciej z Miechowa (Miechowita), *Chronica Polonorum*, Kraków 1986, CCCXXIX.

Notaras). Cromer says that Emperor Palaiologos was killed but death also fell to the lot of the traitor.⁴

The above data were derived from Dlugossius' chronicle.⁵ The author was known to base his account on Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini.⁶ Both Miechowita and Cromer thought it necessary to comment on the fall of Constantinople as an essential event in their vision of history. Their texts however lack the vividness that is so striking in Dlugossius' account. Unlike their predecessor, they comment on the year 1453 briefly and with detachment. They do not share Dlugossius' pain over the loss suffered by Christendom which was deprived of "one eye and one arm."⁷ In contrast, we can find a very emotional description of the fall of Constantinople in the text by Strykowski, who was influenced by the impressions from his journey to the East, and therefore was more sensitive to Dlugossius. Besides, he also drew on *Janissery's Memoirs* and on Ruthenian chronicles (ictopisy⁸). Strykowski's account became much more than just a chapter of a chronicle; it is in fact an independent text.

Matthias Strykowski was born in Stryków near Łódź in 1547. In his youth he was hit by a church-bell, which caused

⁴ Marcin Kromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX = Kronika polska*, vol. II, Sanok 1857, 1033.

⁵ Jan Długosz (Joannis Długossi), *Historia Polonica*, lib. XII, vol. V, ed. A. Przeździecki, Cracoviae 1878, 142–45. Dlugossius was only published in the 18th century. Strykowski and other chroniclers knew him from manuscripts. Cf. W. Swoboda, "Bizancjum w przekazach Jana Długosza" ("Byzantium in the Accounts of Dlugossius"), *Balkanica Posnaniensia IV* (1989), 48–51.

⁶ W. Swoboda, op. cit., 52–53. Cf. I. Zarębski, *Stosunki Eneasza Sylwiusza z Polską i Polakami (Relations between Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Poland and Poles)*, Kraków 1939, 150.

⁷ J. Dlugossius, op. cit., 145.

⁸ *Pamiętniki Janczara czyli Kronika turecka Konstantego z Ostrowicy (Janissery's Memoirs or The Turkish Chronicle by Constantine of Ostrowica)*, ed. J. Łoś, Kraków 1912, 70–76.

him to stammer through the rest of his life.⁹ His writerly commitments atoned for the handicap. He wrote profusely in Polish. In 1565 he went to Lithuania, where he enrolled in the army. He may have learnt to make plans and drawings of castles and fortresses at that time.¹⁰ In 1572–1574 he often stayed in the Polish Realm, especially in Cracow. He was attached to powerful noble families.¹¹ He witnessed changes on the Polish political scene. In 1570 Sigismund August, the last of the Jagiellons, died. The next king succeeded to the throne due to election. The first ruler was Henry of Valois, the future King of France, Henry III. His reign in Poland was short-lived; he preferred his legacy in France to the experience of gentry democracy. After his escape, a period of interregnum set in. It ended when Stephen Batory, Prince of Transylvania, was elected the King of Poland at the end of 1575.

Matthias Strykowski described Henry of Valois' arrival in Cracow and his coronation. Supposedly, this poetic text, as well as other works, account for his promotion to the rank of a delegate in Andrew Taranowski's embassy to Stambul in 1574. He went there as a secretary and military illustrator, possibly also as a secret agent.¹² The awareness of the Turkish threat had already been conspicuous in Poland. One of the first experts was an Italian Philip Buonaccorsi called Callimachus. Having left Rome, he stayed on the isles of the Aegean Sea and in Constantinople in

⁹ Z. Wojtkowiak, *Maciej Strykowski, dziejopis Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (Matthias Strykowski – Historiographer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania)*, Poznań 1990, 55; J. Radziszewska, *Maciej Strykowski: historyk-poeta z epoki Odrodzenia (Matthias Strykowski: Historian and Poet from Renaissance Epoch)*, Katowice 1978, 16.

¹⁰ Z. Wojtkowiak, op. cit., 61.

¹¹ He dedicated his work *The Origins* to his protector in Lithuania George Olelkowicz.

¹² In the introduction to *The Origins* the author says that he explored Greece with “Ulysses’ skill.” Cf. M. Strykowski, op. cit., 35. J. Radziszewska, op. cit., 21; Z. Wojtkowiak, op. cit., 12.

1459. Then he put in an appearance at the court of Jagiello's son Casimir, where he profited by the information gained in the East.¹³ After the defeat of Hungary at Mohaç in 1526, Poland faced the immediate danger of Turkish invasion. Therefore, Polish diplomacy aimed at preserving correct relations with Turkey; at the same time, it tried to probe the Turkish attitude in many political questions like their opinion on the succession to the throne in Poland. Italian was instrumental in the exchange of diplomatic correspondence. The original Turkish document was provided with Italian translation so that both sides could communicate. The court of the last Jagiellons saw the need of educating diplomatic staff that would specialize in Turkish and Arabic, the latter being the language of Sultan's chancellery. The visits of young people to Stambul were meant to serve the purpose. On their arrival they could easily find guides speaking their language as there were quite a few Turkicized Poles over the Bosphoros.¹⁴ There were also representatives of other nations who started their new life in the East after they had gone through the experience of Turkish captivity.

The defeat of Turks at Lepanto in 1571 was widely echoed in Europe, but Poland did not stop being alert to the moves of the Muslim partner. After Valois' escape from Poland in 1574, Stambul warned Poland not to elect a ruler who would be unfriendly towards the Turks.¹⁵ Andrew Taranowski's embassy who arrived in Stambul in winter 1574 was to probe the Turkish attitude

¹³ T. Sinko, *Polscy podróżnicy w Grecji i Troi (Polish Travellers in Greece and Troy)*, Kraków 1925, 5.

¹⁴ B. Baranowski, *Znajomość Wschodu w dawnej Polsce do XVIII w. (The Knowledge of the East in Former Poland till the 18th Century)*, Łódź 1950, 55.

¹⁵ H. Wisner, "Dyplomacja polska w latach 1572–1648," *Historia dyplomacji polskiej* ("Polish Diplomacy in 1572–1648," *History of Polish Diplomacy*), vol. II, 1572–1795, ed. Z. Wójcik, Warszawa 1982, 15; M. Serwański, *Henryk III Walezy w Polsce (Henry III of Valois in Poland)*, Kraków 1976, 241.

to the problem. Murad III explicitly voiced his expectations; in their light, the Polish throne should go to one of the Polish noble men, Swedish Prince or the Prince of Transylvania.¹⁶ As a result, Turkey supported Batory and threatened Poland with war in case of electing Maximilian II the King.¹⁷ Turkey feared the Habsburgs and wanted to avoid their rapprochement with Poland.

Andrew Taranowski, a skillful diplomat, set out on 29 September 1574 and returned after Easter of the following year, i.e. after 3 April 1575.¹⁸ He was to consolidate the alliance between the Sultan and the Polish Realm, as well as explain the reasons for Valois' departure.¹⁹ It was not his first visit to Stambul. His first stay took place at the end of Sigismund August's rule. It is preserved in an account which omits the description of diplomatic routine but contains comments on the arsenal in Galata, the Sultan's palaces and zoo.²⁰ Taranowski gleaned his information as a secret agent; he may have given the same role to Strykowski when the latter went with him to Constantinople in 1574. Strykowski was known for his drawing skills. Apparently, he had good guides in Stambul. In his text he mentions the exiled bishop of Nicaea, Basil, "a good Greek, Italian and Latin," from whom he gained the data on the history of Constantinople.²¹ Strykowski stayed in his company in Galata. Nothing else is known. It seems that the terms, Italian and Latin, referred

¹⁶ J. Pajewski, *Turcja wobec elekcji Batorego (Turkish Attitude Towards Batory's Election)*, Kraków 1935, 5.

¹⁷ K. Dopierała, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski z Turcją za Stefana Batorego (Diplomatic Relations between Poland and Turkey in the Reign of Stephen Batory)*, Warszawa 1986, 26.

¹⁸ Z. Wojtkowiak, op. cit., 74.

¹⁹ M. Serwański, op. cit., 233.

²⁰ B. Baranowski, op. cit., 28.

²¹ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 462. I did not manage to find more precise data on Basil. I would like to thank Prof. D. Apostolopoulos from Athens for his kind assistance in this question.

to the skills in both languages that they probably used. The essential fact is that Basil ushered Strykowski into the history of Byzantium which yielded to the Turks. The second cicerone to the Polish envoy was Murad, a Turkicized Hungarian ex-monk who initiated the Pole into Turkish chronicles.²² The acquaintance was probably made due to Christopher Dzierżek, who was Strykowski's first guide in Stambul. At the age of 16 Dzierżek was dispatched to Constantinople at the cost of Sigismund August in 1569–1570. His task was to learn Arabic and Turkish so as to be qualified for the diplomatic service.²³ Dzierżek was an unofficial informer for the Polish court during the first and second interregnum, which means that he informed Polish authorities about Turkish intentions.²⁴ The three figures influenced Matthias' view of the City and his interpretation of Byzantine history. He got to know it from the Greek perspective via Basil, as well as the Turkish one via Murad. Also, he may have exchanged opinions with Dzierżek. As a representative of a country that was menaced by Turkish expansion, he deeply sympathized with the Greeks' plight. His text opens with the comment that it has been 124 years since Constantinople was captured by the Turks.²⁵ He voices his admiration for the ancient walls which were not strong enough to resist the invasion. His text is meant as a warning and a didactic message for other nations. The author is guided by his fear of the prophecy which said that in 1600 the Turks would rule in Germany and Italy.²⁶ In spite of the correct relations between Turkey and Poland, Strykowski makes the reader aware of the Turkish danger. Apparently, the defeat at Lepanto did not alleviate fear. "If we do not want to fall into captivity like Greeks, Albanians, Bulgarians and Serbs,

²² B. Baranowski, *op. cit.*, 21.

²³ *Ibidem*, 62.

²⁴ *Loc. cit.*

²⁵ This may be the basis for dating a manuscript written in 1577.

²⁶ M. Strykowski, *op. cit.*, 461.

we have to work on our future today,” such is Strykowski’s warning.²⁷ He stresses the fact that Europe, religiously divided and lost in internal conflicts, provides an excellent background for the Turkish invasion.

Delving into the origins of Byzantium, which he got to know due to Basil, Strykowski starts his account with the narrative of Greek-Persian wars to focus later on Constantine the Great and the transfer of the capital of the Roman Empire on to the Bosphoros.²⁸ He stresses the fact that Constantine propagated Roman building technique in Constantinople and he complains about the Turkish accretions to this architecture. His comment seems to transmit Basil’s nostalgia for the Byzantine history of the City. Strykowski is greatly impressed by the *éclat* of Constantinople which is called “the most famous city of the Greek Emperors and Patriarch.”²⁹ He admires buildings made of costly marble and alabaster. He goes on to mention numerous columns, some of which were destroyed. He gives the Turks some credit for strengthening other columns with metal bands to prevent further ruin.³⁰ He appreciates Constantine for having about 200 churches erected all over the city and he notes that the most magnificent one, Hagia Sophia, has been converted into a mosque.³¹ Strykowski ignores the fact that the actual creator of Hagia Sophia’s magnificence was

²⁷ Loc. cit.

²⁸ Ibidem, 463. J. Radziszewska does not interpret the text from the Byzantinist’s point of view. Cf. J. Radziszewska, “Opowieść Macieja Strykowskiego ‘O wzięciu Konstantynopola albo Carogrodu’” (“Matthias Strykowski’s Story ‘On the Seizure of Constantinople or Carogrod’”), *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego*, no. 72, *Prace Historyczne* IV, Katowice 1975, 27–46.

²⁹ The names that Strykowski uses with reference to the Byzantine Empire deserve our attention: e.g., Constantinopolitan Empire (466), Greek Empire, Greek State (l.cit.), Christian Empire (472).

³⁰ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 464

³¹ Loc. cit.

Justinian the Great. He makes it obvious that Constantine made Constantinople not equal to but even greater than Rome. The Patriarch of Constantinople “multiplied Christian faith with the Roman Pope.”³² The account makes it evident that Basil’s influence on the interpretation was substantial. Even though the fragment concerns history of the Church before the Eastern Schism, it does not occur to Strykowski to act as a spokesman of the Latin attitude towards the Orthodox Church which repealed the union with Rome in 1484. In fact, Strykowski seems to have come to Constantinople with a favourable opinion on the Orthodox Church, which resulted from the fact that he mixed with the Orthodox milieu of his noble Lithuanian protector George Olelkowicz.³³ In his narrative Matthias appears to identify with the Orthodox point of view. At the same time, he speaks as a Roman-Catholic who tries to justify the intervention of the West in the guise of the Fourth Crusade. According to him, the military operation conducted by Frenchmen and Venetians was caused by numerous murders, mutilations and banishments at the Byzantine court.³⁴ Correct, though brief, the author presents accessions to the throne in chronological order, Baldwin I, Henry I, Peter of Courtenay and Robert I, omitting only Baldwin II. Next, he presents the rule of the Palaiologoi and here his interpretation invites further comments. According to Strykowski, the cruelty of Michael VIII Palaiologos made the people refuse to bury him after his death.³⁵ If this vision of history springs from Basil’s inspiration, it may be suggested that the collective memory did not preserve the reason for Michael VIII’s cruel conduct or left it open to speculation. Attempting to secure Byzantine independence, the Emperor decided on the Union with Rome,

³² Loc. cit.

³³ Z. Wojtkowiak, op. cit., 132–34.

³⁴ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 465.

³⁵ Loc. cit.

and was ready to punish its opponents severely. As a follower of the Union, he was denied the right to an Orthodox burial.³⁶ His public image that lingered on in Greeks' memory in the second half of the 16th century presented him as a cruel ruler and the causes of such conduct were thought irrelevant. Strykowski goes on to say that when on his deathbed Andronikos III (called Andronikos II by mistake) entrusted John Cantacuzene with his son John V, giving a "lamb to a wolf," because Cantacuzene seized power for himself.³⁷ Strykowski stresses the fact that the Byzantine people sided with John V as a legal heir. Lacking support, Cantacuzene turned to the Turks for help. The chronicler incorrectly mentions the name of Murad, Orchan's son; it is well known that the alliance with Orchan himself was the case.³⁸ The author points out that Cantacuzene made way for the Turkish expansion when he brought the enemy to Gallipoli Peninsula. John VI Cantacuzene is an antiparagon for the Polish chronicler. He is a villain whose egoistic politics incurred misfortunes for Byzantium. Strykowski's narrative denounces the practice of flirting with the Turks. Again, the attitude seems to echo the talks with Basil rather than with Murad, the Turkicized Hungarian. It can be inferred that Greek public opinion in the 16th century perpetuated the image of Cantacuzene as guilty of the State's fall. Modern Byzantinists' works were needed to see Cantacuzene in a different light and show him as an outstanding statesman. In his chronicle Strykowski prolongs Cantacuzene's rule implying that all the Turkish conquests took place in his reign, the transfer

³⁶ D. J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West 1258–1282. A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations*, Cambridge 1959, 370.

³⁷ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 465.

³⁸ Z. Okniński, "Jan Kantakuzen, cesarz wschodnio-rzymski" ("John Cantacuzene, Eastern Roman Emperor"), off-print from: *Księga ku czci Oskara Haleckiego wydana w XXV-lecie jego pracy naukowej*, Warszawa 1935, 10.

of the Turkish capital being one of them.³⁹ The author states that Cantacuzene ruled thanks to the Turks, without Byzantine support, and after his death the Empire was finally taken over by John V. The ample comment on Cantacuzene may have been provoked by the fact that Strykowski saw Cantacuzene's palace in Constantinople. He recollects the descendant of John VI, David Cantacuzene, who was a merchant attached to the Sultan's court and went by the name "Saitan Ogli," Satan's son.⁴⁰ Strykowski thinks the term appropriate because the Cantacuzenes "shamelessly sold Greece and other states to the Turks."⁴¹ The story about terrible Cantacuzene sets off the brighter vision of the Palaiologoi, the defenders of the Empire. Here the author mentions only Emperor Manuel II and John the Elder, i.e. John VIII who "visited Eugenios the Pope in Rome."⁴² It seems that Matthias got his information about the Union from the undertones. He does not say a word about the Union of Florence signed by John VIII in 1439. The assumption arises that the descendants of former Byzantines, for whom Basil played his role of porte-parole, erased all the traces of negotiations between Constantinople and Rome. The version may have been influenced by the Moscovite Orthodoxy which never recognized the Union in Florence. Strykowski goes on to mention the last of the Palaiologoi, Constantine XI, who was replaced by Mehmed II after the fall of Constantinople. The conquest was easier due to disputes and internal conflicts in the Christian camp. Again, the author conveys a discreet message to the Polish reader of Byzantine history. It is a warning against feuds which weaken the resist-

³⁹ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 466.

⁴⁰ Loc. cit. In fact, the nickname refers to Michael Cantacuzene, whom Strykowski mistakenly calls David. Cf. *Megale Ellenike Enkyklopaideia* w. l. XIII, Athenai, undated, 713.

⁴¹ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 466.

⁴² Loc. cit.

ance to the enemy. Strykowski admits that Mehmed was an outstanding ruler and calls him a “man of great heart who always wanted to achieve something new.”⁴³ He adds that the Sultan captured many territories not only through violence but also through craftiness and ingenious stratagems.⁴⁴ The admiration for the Conqueror seems to be a trace of the opinions spread by the Turkish chronicles which were presented to Strykowski by Murad the Hungarian.

Describing the fall of Constantinople, which was the actual subject of Strykowski’s text (as its title proves), the author pays attention to the alliance between Greeks and Turks, broken by Mehmed.⁴⁵ Following the message of earlier Polish chroniclers, he stresses that Mehmed slyly justified the construction of Rumeli Hisar persuading the Greeks that it was also to their advantage. In fact, the fortress proved treacherous for the Byzantines and their allies. Commenting on the fall of Constantinople, Strykowski glorifies Greek resistance which gave way only in the face of the Sultan’s enormous military power. According to the chronicler, Mehmed managed to gather 400 thousand soldiers (the number exceeds the actual data by four times) so as to fight against nine thousand defenders of the City (this information is nearly correct).⁴⁶ Strykowski’s account preserves the legend which glorifies indomitable defenders of the City. The chronicler mentions the Emperor’s heroic attitude, as well as the betrayal of Gierluka – Lukas Notaras.⁴⁷ He makes it explicit that Mehmed attacked the place indicated by the traitor. Only then did the drama of the City start. The interpretation entails an obvious conclusion: but for the treachery, first of Cantacuz-

⁴³ Ibidem, 467

⁴⁴ Loc. cit.

⁴⁵ Loc. cit.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 467, 469, Cf. S. Runciman, *Upadek Konstantynopola 1453 (The Fall of Constantinople 1453)*, trans. A. Dębicki, Warszawa 1968, 128.

⁴⁷ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 471–72.

ene, then of Gierluka, Eastern Christendom would have managed to defend itself. Strykowski's text offers a moral message which emphasizes the danger and disgrace of betrayal. The author may have been particularly influenced by Dlugossius and the *Janissery's Memoirs* but the sources do not account for the exaggerated number of the attacking Turks.

Further description of the fall of Constantinople resembles the fragments from Dlugossius, Miechowita and Cromer. It mentions rapes and desecration of the cross.⁴⁸ An interesting excerpt concerns the capturing of the Seven Towers' Castle – Jedi Kulle. The Turks were to have found plenty of gold, silver and money there.⁴⁹ A mythical image of Byzantine richness is at work here because apparently the state finances were in an appalling condition.⁵⁰ It cannot be ruled out that Strykowski's image of rich Constantinople came from Basil's story. In the context of this information, the chronicler notes that Turkish financial system is very efficient. He appreciates the fact that those who do not pay taxes to the treasury are punished.⁵¹ Reverting to the description of the City, he deplors the fact that Mehmed destroyed many churches.⁵² Others were converted into mosques, stables and zoos. The author himself saw lions, leopards, monkeys and even rhinoceroses inside. He thought it obscene and expressed his grief because many imperial possessions had been converted into hotels, inns, baths and pigsties.⁵³ The anti-Turkish comment leads to the conclusion that Strykowski visited the places in Basil's and even Dzierżek's com-

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 472.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, 473.

⁵⁰ Among other things, Byzantium ran up enormous debts in Venice. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1988, 388–89.

⁵¹ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 473.

⁵² Ibidem, 474.

⁵³ Loc. cit.

pany. The author is sorry to see only two Christian churches in operation: the first is the Greek Patriarch's seat, the other the seat of the Armenian Archbishop.⁵⁴ Strykowski visited about 70 churches which were converted into mosques. He may have been very observant himself or Basil and Dzierżek may have drawn his attention to the walls and to the tombstones with Greek inscriptions.⁵⁵ Strykowski says that three palaces of former Byzantine Emperors were preserved; one of them was located near the Patriarch's seat and each Sultan was supposed to destroy it symbolically, thereby vowing to ruin other Christian castles (during the author's visit to Constantinople, Murad III repealed the act). The second castle, Jedi Kulle, housed the treasures of Porta and the third one which was surrounded by the beautiful orchard on the Bosporos became the Sultan's place. Strykowski also visited Pera-Galata inhabited by Italians and Greeks who had retained their religious ceremonies. The author notices with delight the opulent Franciscan monastery with Our Lady Church and Dominican churches, Saint Sebastian's and Saint Dominic's.⁵⁶ He must have visited them in person. He reminds the reader that during the siege of Constantinople Galata got in touch with Mehmed, and only thanks to this submission it was not destroyed. Strykowski took part in the services in Galata's churches; he notes the fact that church bells are not used and the Holy Communion is received in silence.⁵⁷

“And as I was watching the sorrowful cases in that glorious city of Constantinople, wrested from Christian hands, I also asked after Athens, the old and famous city destroyed by Mehmed the Tyrant.”⁵⁸ The quotation conveys the perspective

⁵⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, 474.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, 475.

⁵⁷ Loc. cit.

⁵⁸ Loc. cit.

of a historian and humanist who was at home with classical education and the knowledge of former Athenian prosperity. Strykowski's guide told him a meaningful story about a widow of Nerio II Acciaiuoli, the Florentine ruler of the city. Mehmed accepted her rule in Athens, however, she was not able to appreciate it. She had a love affair with a Venetian and prevailed on him to divorce his wife and marry her. She reached her goal but the newlywed husband started to persecute the local people on his accession to the rule in Athens. Mehmed was asked for help. He had the Venetian killed, and since the dispute went on in Athens, he invaded the principality and incorporated it in his own State.⁵⁹ Strykowski listened to the story of Chiara Zozzi, Nerio II's widow, and her love for the Venetian Bartolomeo Contarini, as well as its consequences.⁶⁰ Basil may have been the author of the story. It was for the third time that the figure of a culprit was created; this time it was Contarini, a Latin.

In the conclusion to his story of Constantinople, Strykowski called this city, as well as Galata, Athens and Thebes "the cradle of liberated arts." "I brought it to light because I had been a sorrowful witness of the decline of those ancient cities."⁶¹ The author expects the readers to be moved by the image of destruction, and he hopes they will give up the internal discord which causes the fall of powerful kingdoms. Strykowski explicitly advises Poles to be alert and thoughtful and to appreciate the freedom that can become an easy prey to the Turks.⁶² What I find crucial in his interpretation is his vision of Byzantine history. Its message is clear. The treachery of Cantacuzene, Gierluka and the widow of Acciaiuoli, the ruler of Athens, proved decisive in the disaster of the Byzantine world. Strykowski may have

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 476.

⁶⁰ K. M. Setton, *Catalan Domination of Athens 1311–1388*, Cambridge (MA) 1948, 209.

⁶¹ M. Strykowski, op. cit., 476.

⁶² Ibidem, 477.

obtained the information about Gierluka from Polish sources which emphasize the Greek's betrayal. Framed by an adequate comment, Cantacuzene's treachery and Chiara Zozzi's episode point to Basil as the main interpreter of a Byzantine tradition that was still alive. The message leads to the conclusion that the 16th century Greeks had already turned their past into a myth. They would have saved their State but failed for the Judas-like, satanic treacherous deeds. They provide the background for the spotless Byzantine community, staunch supporters of John V or courageous defenders assisting Constantine XI; Strykowski's account bears traces of Greek interpretation of the Byzantine past.

Interestingly, Strykowski did not let himself use the term "apostates" with reference to the Greeks. He may not have felt any need to do that. He knew that it was the Greeks who had broken the Church Union; he was able to read about that in Dlugossius.⁶³ Still, he was satisfied with the account offered by Basil, who avoided the subject of the Union. Strykowski did not put him right; in this way he presented himself as a modern citizen of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic which had brought together the Catholic and Orthodox population, as well as the post-Reformation community, the contribution resulting in freedom of Creed. In 1573 the Warsaw treaty was signed. It guaranteed freedom of denomination which made Poland an exceptionally tolerant country in the context of religious conflicts in Europe. As he came from a multinational and multireligious country, Strykowski was naturally open to religious issues. He was interested in the plight of humiliated Greeks and not in their connection or severance with Rome. Besides, he is full of admiration for their architecture and ecclesiastical art.

In the work that includes the comment on Byzantium, Strykowski also presents the history of Lithuanian origins, cre-

⁶³ J. Dlugossius, *Annales seu chronicae incliti regni Poloniae*, 1. VII et VIII, Varsoviae 1975, 187.

ating a legend about their Roman origin. Lithuanians were to have been descendants of Pompeius' soldiers who had wandered off into the far North after having lost the battle with Caesar.⁶⁴ The snobbish preoccupation with the noble origin of young Lithuania also testifies to Strykowski's interests in the antiquity. Weren't they instrumental in a particularly friendly attitude towards Byzantium which continued the tradition of the Roman Empire? Strykowski was not unique in his approach to Byzantium. As early as in the 15th century the change in European attitude towards the Christian East had been observed. The seizure of Constantinople by the Turks awoke compassion for the Orthodox.⁶⁵ As a visitor from Lithuania, inhabited also by Orthodox people, Strykowski was more favourably disposed to this religion. It is assumed that he met Jacob Palaiologos of Chios who came to Lithuania to consider the attempt of rapprochement between the Reformation and Orthodoxy.⁶⁶

Strykowski's text under analysis makes it difficult to conclude that the author went to Stambul with a diplomatic and secret mission, so as to spy on the functioning and defence of the Turkish State. A good secret agent as he was, he probably kept that information for a confidential conversation at the court. In his text he focused on that which was Byzantine, treating the Turk as an illegal owner of the previous imperial domains. Taranowski's account from his earlier journey to the East concentrated on those parts which were Turkish and therefore it presents the actual condition of the Sultan's state. By way of contrast, Strykowski's text is a quest for the past, probably conducted in the company of the learned Greek, Basil. It was

⁶⁴ M. Strykowski, *O początkach*, 69–71. Cf. M. Zachara-Wawrzyńczyk, "Geneza legendy o rzymskim pochodzeniu Litwinów" ("The Origins of the Legend of the Roman Descent of Lithuanians"), *Zeszyty Historyczne Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego* III (1963), 29.

⁶⁵ P. Lemerle, "Présence de Byzance," *Journal des Savants* (juillet-décembre 1990), 248.

⁶⁶ Z. Wojtkowiak, *op. cit.*, 102.

Basil's narrative that proved more relevant to the chronicler's story than the talks to Murad the Hungarian or Dzierżek, both of them free from the emotional comment which must have haunted Basil's story. Strykowski's text about Byzantium gains prominence when juxtaposed with the works by the above mentioned chroniclers. His description of the Byzantine events is original because he knows the city from his own experience. Dlugossius, Miechowita and Cromer did not have any emotional attitude towards Constantinople. They used secondhand materials, and therefore were more concise in their description. The influence of the Greek guide is also apparent in Strykowski's use of the name Constantinople instead of Stambul. The author uses the name interchangeably with the term *Carograd* accepted in the Slavonic territories. Following the story of his Greek cicerone, the chronicler lacks criticism in his judgement on the Byzantine past. He does not attempt to see whether Cantacuzene's deed justifies a powerful accusation and whether the Palaiologoi were indeed an early spotless dynasty. Strykowski does not check whether anyone else sought the Turks' support apart from Cantacuzene. Therefore, his sleek and cherished image of the dynasty remains intact. In fact, it was not only Cantacuzene but also the Palaiologoi who tried to secure Turkish support for themselves.⁶⁷ The post-Byzantine collective memory refrained from associating the Palaiologoi with treachery. In spite of the opportunity to present an objective view of the Byzantine past, i.e. from the perspective of victorious Turks and defeated Greeks, Strykowski embraced the Greek point of view. The interviews with Murad or Dzierżek probably served as a basis for confidential reports only. As a result, the text conceals the true intention of the mission. Strykowski got interested in the past of Constantinople, and Basil, his talented guide, instilled compassion and sentiment for Byzantium in his mind. Pol-

⁶⁷ John V's mother, Anne of Savoy, also secured the help of the Turks. D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453*, London 1972, 211.

ish literature contains comments on the fall of Constantinople but their message is detached. Strykowski, who visited the ghost of the Empire, was able to write with genuine emotion.

Strykowski's text is not a conventional lament on the fall of the City, which was in fact Długossius' option 100 years earlier. The story of Byzantium is at the same time a great warning for the generation contemporary to Matthias. It is marked by the fear of Turks and by the moral duty to make the fellow-citizens aware of the Turkish danger.⁶⁸ The fall of Byzantium is meant to be a memento and warning against treacherous politicians similar to Cantacuzene or Notaras. It is open to speculation whether Strykowski had in mind particular figures of the Polish establishment and alluded to them. Embracing the identity of "antemurale Christianitalis," Poland in a way became an heiress to the legacy of the Christian East, which did not manage to defend its possessions from Islam. Byzantine history was read by Strykowski as a challenge for his own country. Describing his stay in Constantinople in 1574–1575, he travelled in time and space, creating the impression that he was in fact a visitor to Byzantium rather than to the Turkish State whose rulers set up their capital in the defeated City of Roman Emperors on the Bosporos.

⁶⁸ The fear can be justified by the economic potential of the Ottoman Empire whose budget was twenty times bigger than that of the Polish-Lithuanian State, inhabited by the population whose number was three times smaller. Cf. D. Kołodziejczyk, "Imperium Osmańskie w XVI wieku – kilka uwag o potencjale demograficznym i gospodarczym" ("The Ottoman Empire in the 16th Century – Some Remarks on the Demographical and Economic Potential"), *Przegląd Historyczny* 3 (1987), 391–92.

CHAPTER THREE

Byzantium Viewed from the
Contemporary Polish
and Texan Perspective

La vision moscovite de Byzance et le byzantinisme allemand de Koneczny ou Byzance sans Byzance

Avec le plus grand respect pour l'idée de la pluralité des civilisations,¹ il m'échoit de polémiquer avec les conceptions de Feliks Koneczny sur Byzance. Je me rends compte simultanément de l'importance de la littérature sur le sujet utilisée par l'auteur. Car il ne recourait pas aux sources. Cela permet aussi de constater à quel point la byzantinologie s'est développée depuis les années trente. Feliks Koneczny puise surtout dans les travaux de Ch. Diehl et de L. Bréhier et dans la synthèse polonaise de l'histoire de Byzance due à K. Zakrzewski,² avec lequel il n'est d'ailleurs pas d'accord.

Zakrzewski, ce sont les débuts de la byzantinologie polonaise. Quand on a fondé pour lui la chaire à l'Université de Varsovie en 1935,³ une quinzaine d'années venait de s'écouler depuis la destruction de la grande église orthodoxe que les Russes avaient

¹ F. Koneczny, *O wielości cywilizacji* (*De la multiplicité des civilisations*), Cracovie 1935.

² Ch. Diehl, *Figures byzantines*, Paris 1906; idem. *Histoire de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1924; L. Bréhier, *L'art byzantin*, Paris 1924; K. Zakrzewski, "Dzieje Bizancjum od 395 do 1204 r." ("L'histoire de Byzance de 395 à 1204"), *Wielka historia powszechna* (*Grande histoire universelle*), t. IV, Le Moyen Age, Première partie: Byzance et le haut Moyen Age, Varsovie 1938.

³ Cf. H. Evert-Kappesowa, "Rozwój studiów bizantynistycznych" ("Le développement des études byzantines"), Introduction à G. Ostrogorski,

dressée sur la Place de Saxe à Varsovie. Cette immense église et plusieurs autres devaient témoigner de la présence russe sur les bords de la Vistule. “L’église sentait la myrrhe, on entendait les tons harmonieux du choeur byzantin, les chasubles dorées des prêtres sur fond de l’iconostase doré et dorés aussi les uniformes des officiers battant leur coulpe.”⁴ Dans la même Varsovie, le Palais de Staszic, connu pour sa façade classique, fut rebâti à la mode byzantine.⁵ Si j’en parle, c’est à bon escient, car avant la guerre, Byzance était perçue à travers Moscou et avait donc dans la population une mauvaise connotation. Les chants byzantins, la façade Byzantine du Palais de Staszic. . . Rien de tel n’existait. Il s’agissait en fait de chants orthodoxes, de bâtiments de style russe. Mais pour le grand nombre, tout cela était byzantin. Or, que savait-on de Byzance à l’époque? Quand Mme Evert-Kappesowa, la fameuse byzantiniste de Łódź, est devenue juste avant la guerre assistante de Zakrzewski, le choix d’une telle spécialisation était rarissime. Byzance était automatiquement associée à la Russie. Qui songeait à cette Rome sur le Bosphore? Aujourd’hui, quand j’emmène mes étudiants à l’église orthodoxe pour les familiariser avec la liturgie byzantine, je me demande ce qu’on en aurait dit avant la guerre? Les gens se souvenaient encore du grand nombre d’églises orthodoxes élevées en Pologne et de la plus grande, inscrite dans le paysage de Varsovie: l’église orthodoxe de la Place de Saxe, tellement douloureuse pour les yeux qu’on l’a démolie dans les années vingt. Les émotions ont été plus fortes que l’admiration pour l’architecture, évidemment “byzantine.”

Il aura fallu beaucoup de temps pour séparer ce regard “moscovite” sur Byzance du regard indépendant, pour séparer la

Dzieje Bizancjum (Histoire de Byzance), traduction sous la direction de H. Evert-Kappesowa, Varsovie 1967, 38.

⁴ Cf. A. Tuszyńska, *Rosjanie w Warszawie (Les Russes à Varsovie)*, Varsovie 1992, 42.

⁵ Ibidem, illustration de la page 131.

Deuxième Rome de la Troisième et s'occuper de l'histoire de façon neutre, sans associations immédiatement politiques. Mais Byzance n'avait toujours pas de "chance." Dans l'oeuvre de Feliks Koneczny intitulée *La Civilisation byzantine*,⁶ l'histoire de l'Empire sert à démontrer à quel point l'Allemagne de Bismarck avait pris pour modèle la civilisation byzantine et combien cela lui a été funeste. Les auteurs contemporains qui essaient de tirer de l'oubli les travaux de Koneczny, soulignent l'originalité de l'auteur pour ce qui est du pluralisme des cultures. Ce sont des choses connues, aussi je ne vais pas m'attarder sur des choses évidentes, me contentant de constater que dans l'optique de Koneczny, la civilisation byzantine n'est guère appréciée. Je me propose de regarder cela de l'oeil d'un byzantiniste, ne prenant en considération que l'histoire de Byzance depuis Constantin le Grand jusqu'à la chute de Constantinople, sans chercher de rapprochements avec l'Allemagne de Bismarck. Pour Koneczny la civilisation byzantine est intéressante seulement dans la mesure où il peut l'opposer à la civilisation latine. Son oeuvre, commencée dans les années trente et terminée en 1945, est marquée par les événements de ce temps: la fin de la guerre et la défaite du nazisme.

Je laisse de côté l'histoire ancienne de l'Orient dont l'auteur s'occupe au début de son livre. En parlant de la chute de Rome, Koneczny refuse aux Byzantins le droit de se nommer Romains. Il accentue le trait singulier du byzantinisme, la statolâtrie, le respect de l'Etat, ce qui se traduit par l'extrême développement de ses structures administratives. "En effect, l'ordre dans les papiers administratifs forçait l'admiration,"⁷ écrivait-il. "La corruption régnait et les fonctionnaires affamés fixaient des taxes diverses pour des faveurs accordées et veillaient au grain, pour

⁶ F. Koneczny, *Cywilizacja bizantyjska (La Civilisation byzantine)*, Varsovie 1996. Reprint Londres 1973.

⁷ Ibidem, 128.

assurer des postes lucratifs à leurs fils.”⁸ Toute la vie publique est soumise au maintien des structures rigides de l’État. Dans la Byzance de Koneczny, il n’y a pas d’individualités. Si Théodose II a “réussi” avec le code Théodosien, cela a été le fait du hasard. De quoi peut être capable un homme dont la seule ambition est une belle écriture?⁹ Théodose cisèle ses lettres tandis que ses fonctionnaires créent le mythe de la capitale. Koneczny souligne que les étrangers ne connaissaient pas l’empire mais uniquement Constantinople et que c’est à partir de là qu’ils se faisaient une idée de l’État. Idée forcément fausse. “C’est ici qu’est né le préjugé de la capitale, funeste pour l’Europe jusqu’à nos jours,”¹⁰ écrit-il. Byzance était pour lui l’une des “premières capitales-sangsues.”¹¹ De plus, est souligné l’immensité des édifices publics et le luxe des vêtements. Ainsi est promulgué le second trait caractéristique du byzantinisme: la prédominance de la forme sur le fond, la prétention et l’immobilisme des us et coutumes. L’uniformité en sera le troisième trait. Cependant Byzance distille un charme, et “le charme est doué d’une grande force d’inanition. Il se multiplie et se répand de lui-même. Autour du charme naît une tradition.”¹² Rapelons encore une fois que ses informations sur Byzance, Koneczny ne va pas les chercher aux sources. Il prend chez Zakrzewski et les autres tout ce qui peut servir à ses constructions.

Se rapportant aux temps de Justinien, lequel avait vainement essayé de ressusciter l’Imperium Romanum sous son sceptre, Koneczny aperçoit déjà très nettement la division des deux mondes. La civilisation latine est sauvée et édifiée par

⁸ Ibidem, 139.

⁹ Ibidem, 144: “Et ainsi le ‘Calligraphe’ est entré dans l’histoire du droit comme s’il était lui-même un grand jurist.”

¹⁰ Ibidem, 151.

¹¹ Loc. cit. Dans mon texte j’utilise le nom de Byzance pour tout l’empire.

¹² Ibidem, 152.

des gens tels que Cassiodore, savant romain, collaborant avec les Ostrogoths qui ont occupé l'Italie. "Il s'était rendu compte," écrit Koneczny, "qu'entre la Ravenne des Goths et le byzantinisme il y a un précipice, que ces *Romaioi* (le nom grec désignant les *Romains*), c'est quelque chose de très différent."¹³ Cassiodore était persuadé que le césaropapisme de Byzance était incompatible avec le catholicisme. Cassiodore est donc pour Koneczny le père de la civilisation latine contraire à la byzantine. Un Romain contre des Romains! Et, ironie suprême, descendant d'une famille originaire de Syrie.¹⁴ Originaire d'Orient il est contre l'Orient! Koneczny résume en une seule phrase les réussites de Justinien. Il ne reste de lui que le code et Hagia Sophia. L'empereur est pour lui un "orgueilleux dilletante voulant concilier l'impossible: l'Est et l'Ouest."¹⁵ A chaque pas on voit déjà pointer l'orientalisme "avec la Syrie à sa tête."¹⁶ Je remarque que Cassiodore en a trahi la tradition en se posant en ennemi de l'Orient.

Je suis curieuse de savoir à quoi ressemblerait une discussion de Koneczny avec Halecki¹⁷ et Zakrzewski, ses contempo-

¹³ Ibidem, 163.

¹⁴ Comme on le sait, Cassiodore était lié à la cour de Théodoric, roi des Ostrogoths qui ont conquis l'Italie à la fin du Ve siècle. C'est à Théodoric et à ses successeurs qu'il doit sa carrière administrative. Pour Koneczny, ce n'est pas ce fragment biographique qui importe, mais le fait qu'en 540, pendant la guerre que les Ostrogoths menèrent contre Byzance, Cassiodore fonda à Vivarium en Calabre une communauté religieuse occupée à recopier les anciens incunables. Cf. J. Strzelczyk, *Goci. Rzeczywistość i legenda* (Les Goths. Réalité et légende), Varsovie 1984, 163.

¹⁵ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 167.

¹⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁷ H. Evert-Kappesowa souligne que o Halecki a été le premier historien en Pologne à considérer les études byzantines comme un domaine scientifique à part. Il s'est attaché surtout à l'histoire de l'union ecclésiastique entre Byzance et Rome, le plus connu de ses travaux sur le sujet étant: *Un empereur de Byzance à Rome. Vingt ans de travail pour l'Union des Eglises et pour la défense de l'Empire d'Orient 1355-1375*, Varsovie 1930.

rains pourtant, mais je pense que Koneczny n'avait nul besoin d'une telle confrontation. Il suivait son chemin, édifiant des constructions mentales conformes à l'idée qu'il voulait promouvoir. Il s'en explique en quelque sorte: l'histoire de l'État ne l'intéresse guère, car le destin de la civilisation se joue ailleurs.¹⁸ C'est une idée de nature à attirer les chercheurs. Cependant, afin d'illustrer la civilisation, Koneczny recourt à l'histoire de l'Empire et là il n'évite pas les guet-apens. En écrivant que le costume byzantin en imposait aux rois Visigoths au point de l'adopter, il montre l'illusion du charme extérieur. "La distance culturelle est plus grande qu'aujourd'hui entre Berditchev et Paris."¹⁹ Ce sont des comparaisons qui sonnent très bien mais ne signifient rien, surtout de nos jours où plus personne ne sait où se trouve Berditchev.²⁰ Koneczny se gausse des illusions des savants qui se penchent affectueusement sur Byzance, mais "ce qui se passait réellement dans cet Empire, nul ne le savait."²¹ On aimerait demander à l'auteur ce qui s'y passait réellement. Après Cassiodore, les "créateurs" successifs de la latinité sont les Lombards qui ont aidé la papauté à instaurer une civilisation latine.²² Là, plus d'une constatation de Fauteur est sujette à discussion, même à la lumière de l'ancien travail de Diehl sur l'exarchat de Ravenne,²³ que Koneczny néglige, lisant les autres. Passant trop vite sur l'histoire de Heraclius, Koneczny constate que l'Asie prédomine déjà à Byzance. L'empire est devenu un état asiatique.²⁴ A la lumière des recherches contempo-

¹⁸ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 171.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 175.

²⁰ Berditchev est une ville en Ukraine. Dans l'ancienne Pologne, c'était un lieu de commerce très populaire. Chaque année, beaucoup de marchands s'y rendaient. La métaphore illustre qu'écrire à Berditchev était difficile.

²¹ Ibidem, 176.

²² Ibidem, 179.

²³ Ch. Diehl, *Etudes sur l'administration byzantine dans l'exarchat de Ravenne (568-751)*, Paris 1888.

²⁴ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 182.

raines cette opinion est indéfendable, mais Zakrzewski non plus n'y aurait pas consenti.²⁵ Plus d'éléments réunissent ces deux mondes: le byzantin et l'occidental, qu'il n'y en a qui le divisent, je pourrais moi-même apporter de nombreux exemples, particulièrement pour la période tardive.²⁶

Selon Koneczny, Byzance n'offre aucune résistance à l'islam, ce qu'il explique par le déclin de la mentalité byzantine entre le VII^e et le IX^e siècle.²⁷ Le professeur Salamon aurait ici beaucoup plus à dire.²⁸ En fait, l'historiographie contemporaine apporte des conclusions totalement différentes. Après la perte des provinces byzantines telles que l'Égypte ou la Syrie, conquises par les Arabes, de nombreux intellectuels ont trouvé refuge à Constantinople.²⁹ Or Koneczny prétend que l'Occident jusqu'ici peu éclairé, commence à devancer les Byzantins. L'auteur cite l'exemple d'un moine byzantin, accusé d'hérésie, qui pour prouver son innocence, se fit fort de ressusciter un mort.

²⁵ K. Zakrzewski, op. cit., 78–79. L'auteur parle du rayonnement de la culture de l'Orient chrétien, donc grecque, syrienne et arménienne à Rome. Il cite en exemple la constitution dans la Ville Etemelle de nombreux couvents réunissant des moines originaires de l'Orient. Dans ce contexte les influences orientales ont une connotation positive.

²⁶ Cf. M. Dąbrowska, *Łacinniczki nad Bosforem. Matżeństwa bizantyńsko-łacińskie w cesarskiej rodzinie Paleologów (XIII–XV w.)* [*Les dames latines sur le Bosphore. Mariages byzantino-latins dans la famille impériale des Paléologues (XIII–XV ss.)*], Łódź 1996.

²⁷ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 196. L'auteur ne discute pas la thèse de Zakrzewski (op. cit., 72), lequel entrevoit les causes de la conquête relativement facile dans les dissensions religieuses qui ont divisé l'Orient chrétien (monophysisme, monothéisme).

²⁸ M. Salamon, "Historycy upadku Cesarstwa Rzymskiego (schyłek IV w. – pierwsza połowa VII w.)" ["Les historiens de la chute de l'Empire Romain (déclin du IV^e – première moitié du VII siècles)"], *Historia i Współczesność*, t. 6, 45–64.

²⁹ Cf. W. Wolska-Conus, "Stéphane d'Athènes et Stéphanos d'Alexandrie: essai d'identification et de biographie," *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* vol. 47, 1998, 5–89.

Il posa sa confession de foi sur le cadavre et se mit à lui souffler des mots à l'oreille!³⁰ Le lecteur voudra bien se rappeler le pape Formosus, tiré de son cercueil au IXe siècle par son successeur et ensuite jugé posthumément. Le cadavre a été placé sur son trône et on lui a coupé les doigts dont il bénissait le peuple de son vivant.³¹ C'est prendre un avantage facile en discutant avec Koneczny aujourd'hui, quand on sait tant de choses sur Byzance, mais cet exemple prouve à quel point la latinité est chère à son coeur. Car Koneczny ne cite pas la suite du récit sur le moine dont l'attitude a été condamnée à Byzance. Deux poids et deux mesures!

L'auteur affirme que les Byzantins avaient pris le nom de *Romaioi* sans comprendre ce que cela voulait dire.³² La romanité n'est due qu'aux Occidentaux. L'auteur dénie la qualité de Romains aux Byzantins. Or ils se considéraient comme des Romains, sujets de l'empereur et du patriarche, car c'était une seconde Rome, bien que parlant grec. Ensuite, Koneczny aborde l'époque de Photius, lequel inagure la statolâtrie cosmopolite parce que Byzance est différencié du point de vue ethnique mais tend à l'uniformité. C'est le troisième trait caractéristique de cette civilisation, pas très explicite bien qu'à plusieurs fois répété. La construction se présente donc ainsi: Cassiodore se rend compte de la situation distincte de la latinité et rejette le byzantinisme qui fait son apparition en Italie. Les espoirs de Justinien dans la construction d'un monde commun s'avèrent vains et Photius rompt définitivement avec "les illusions d'une

³⁰ L'auteur se réfère à Ch. Diehl et G. Marçais, *Le monde oriental de 395 à 1081*, Paris 1936; F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 196.

³¹ M. D. Knowles and D. Obolensky, *Historia Kościoła (Histoire de l'Église)*, t. II, 600–1500, trad. A. Turzyński, Varsovie 1988, 56. Les auteurs doutent des détails de cette histoire macabre. D'un autre avis est R. Fischer-Wolpert, *Leksykon papieży (Le lexique des papes)*, trad. B. Białecki, Cracovie 1990, 56–60, décrivant avec précision le "synode cadavérique" (appellation admise dans l'historiographie).

³² F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 197.

synthèse religieuse. La haine de Rome et de la latinité constitue dorénavant le premier article de foi.³³ Rappelons que dans sa controverse avec le pape, Photius utilise un argument dogmatique, contestant la formule du “Filioque” qui est apparu dans le Credo occidental sans consultation avec l’église d’Orient.³⁴ “La haine de Rome” n’est donc pas un facteur dominant. Paradoxe suprême, il “extirpe” du milieu byzantin les apôtres des Slaves: Cyrille et Méthode, disant qu’ils se retournent contre la civilisation byzantine. L’auteur prétend qu’ils fuyaient la liturgie byzantine pour se libérer de la civilisation byzantine et quand ils ont introduit leur propre liturgie, ils ont abandonné le grec.³⁵ Ils fuyaient la civilisation, c’est-à-dire la statolâtrie, le luxe, l’uniformité? Ces traits qui caractérisent pour lui cette civilisation pouvaient-ils être perçus ainsi par les frères “séparés”? Nous nageons en plein ahistoricisme. Koneczny ne ce qu’on a appelé la renaissance macédonienne, car que pouvait-il advenir de bon du “gouvernement du palefrenier Basile 1er”?³⁶ Il se lamente que les Bulgares qui se trouvaient à cette époque dans la sphère de la civilisation byzantine, aient ainsi raté la chance d’appartenir au monde latin. “Peut-être, écrit-il, le sentiment national se serait-il réveillé alors en premiers en Europe chez les Bulgares.”³⁷ Je laisse aux balkanistes la réfutation de cette thèse pour le moins curieuse.

³³ Ibidem, 206; Zakrzewski (op. cit., 116) parle de la formule Filioque ce qu’omet Koneczny.

³⁴ F. Dvornik, *Le schisme de Photius*, Paris 1950.

³⁵ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 207.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 210. Cependant Zakrzewski (op. cit., 132) écrit: “L’humaniste Photius, généreux, mais péchant par une ambition peu chrétienne et raffiné (sic!) dans sa culture ne pouvait espérer trouver de la popularité dans l’Occident ‘barbare’ du IX^e siècle, dont l’ignorance crasse lui répugnait.” Décidément, le dialogue de Koneczny et Zakrzewski dans l’au-delà ne doit pas manquer d’humour.

³⁷ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 210.

Somme toute, Byzance est d'une ignorance crasse! Photius reproche au clergé de ne pas comprendre les psaumes qu'il chante.³⁸ Nous sommes au IX^e siècle. A la fin du VIII^e, il fallait à l'Occident examiner le clergé latin sur la connaissance du Pater et du Credo!³⁹ Les mêmes phénomènes ont lieu des deux côtés. Mais Koneczny n'en voit qu'un. Aussi, que règne à Byzance "l'ex-palefrenier (Basile 1er) ou le philosophe (Léon VI), il y avait toujours des scandales publics relatifs aux problèmes les plus intimes, les problèmes des femmes."⁴⁰ L'auteur parle ainsi du X^e siècle, il serait intéressant de savoir ce qui se passe alors à Rome. Rappelons-nous la fille du sénateur romain, Marosia, plus importante que le pape.⁴¹ Vraiment, aucune comparaison ne tient dans ce domaine. Au déclin intellectuel de Byzance, l'auteur oppose immédiatement le milieu de la réforme religieuse de Cluny.⁴² "Si Byzance s'était résignée au respect de la moralité publique et avait abandonné le césaropapisme, qu'en serait-il resté?" demande-t-il. Et il se donne lui-même la réponse: "Cela aurait été la ruine de cette civilisation."⁴³ Voici donc apparaître un nouveau trait caractéristique du byzantinisme: l'amoralisme.

³⁸ Ibidem, 211.

³⁹ Cf. P. Riche, *Życie codzienna we Francji w czasach Karola Wielkiego (La vie quotidienne en France au temps de Charlemagne)*, trad. E. Bąkowska, Varsovie 1979, 181.

⁴⁰ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 211. L'auteur fait allusion à la discussion sur l'origine de Léon VI, à savoir s'il était le fils de Michel III ou de Basile 1er. Les doutes ont été dissipés par A. Vogt, *Oraison funèbre de Basile 1er par son fils Léon VI le Sage*, Paris 1932, 10.

⁴¹ Marosia était la maîtresse du pape Serge III. Par ses mariages, elle a acquis de telles influences à Rome qu'à partir de 928 c'est elle qui pratiquement exerçait le pouvoir. Serge III éleva son fils à la papauté (futur Jean XI). Cf. M. D. Knowles and D. Obolensky, op.cit., 57.

⁴² F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 221.

⁴³ Loc. cit.

Koneczny en vient enfin au point culminant de son argumentation: le couronnement d’Otton le Grand comme empereur est pour lui un nouveau byzantinisme. “Nous sommes là au berceau du byzantinisme allemand,” dit-il.⁴⁴ Dans cette situation, la papauté devait entrer en conflit avec les Allemands. Theophano, la mère d’Otton III, propage le byzantinisme à la cour. Son influence est plus grande que celle d’Anne, la femme byzantine de Vladimir le Grand à Kiev. A la suite d’Anne sont venus des architectes et des peintres et c’est tout.⁴⁵ La religiosité de la Ruthénie influencée par Byzance est proprement raillée: “Un des moines s’affamait, un autre se taisait le soir, un troisième s’est enfermé, un autre encore s’estropiait. Tout cela ensemble donnait l’impression d’un délire religieux.”⁴⁶ “L’ascèse,” selon Koneczny, “exige de la culture religieuse, autrement elle dégénère en une dévotion stupide.”⁴⁷ Je laisse l’appréciation de cette thèse aux spécialistes.

La rupture entre Rome et Constantinople était inévitable et bien qu’effectuée par Cerularius en 1054, elle a eu pour effet d’éloigner Byzance de la papauté, le byzantinisme constituant toujours un danger sous la forme des souverains allemands. “S’il n’y avait pas eu Cluny, l’Europe aurait plongé dans le byzantinisme allemande.”⁴⁸ Il n’y aurait pas eu de schisme si le patriarcat de Constantinople n’avait pas tendu à l’autonomie politique, dirait un historien, au temps de Koneczny comme au

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 225.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 228. D’un tout autre avis sont les chercheurs contemporains qui contestent l’influence prépondérante de Theophano à la cour d’Otton. Cf. K. Leyser, “Western and Eastern Emperors in the Late Tenth Century,” *The Empress Theophano Byzantium and the West in the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. A. Davids, Cambridge 1995, 1–27. M. Dąbrowska, “Pamięć lubi legendy. Teofano i Otton III” (“Mémoire aime la légende. Theophano et Otto III”), *Tygiel* 4–6 (2000), 6–12.

⁴⁶ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 229.

⁴⁷ Loc. cit.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 239.

nôtre. Il n'y aurait pas eu de schisme si Rome n'avait pas aspiré à avoir plus d'influence en Orient, poursuivrait-il. A la fin du XI^e siècle, Byzance, pour Koneczny, c'est uniquement le développement de la joaillerie et des mosaïques.⁴⁹

Les croisades auraient réussi si l'empereur de Byzance avait été catholique, mais il ne l'était pas!⁵⁰ Voilà où mène la fantaisie de l'auteur. Il s'agissait d'une lutte politique d'influences et l'unité religieuse n'avait rien à faire en la matière. Elle n'a pas protégé des conflits les latinistes de l'Orient. "Ce fainéant d'Alexis a gaspillé les plus belles vues qu'ouvrait devant lui la croisade."⁵¹ Pourquoi parler de fainéantise, si les croisés édifiaient leur propre monde et n'avaient pas l'intention de tenir leurs engagements envers Byzance. Quelles vues pouvaient se découvrir devant Alexis?⁵²

Koneczny évite l'écueil que constitue l'interprétation de l'accord conclu par la papauté avec l'empire romain de l'Occident à Sutri en 1111, quand dans le conflit des investitures on a proposé au clergé l'abandon des privilèges, ce à quoi il n'a pas consenti. Pour Koneczny, cela veut dire que l'Eglise craignait de perdre son lien organique et sa force intérieure. "Ils avaient besoin d'une force matérielle dans les revirements des relations réelles ici-bas."⁵³ Appréciez cette interprétation unilatérale! "Sutri marque la fin de l'essor de la pensée catholique lié à Cluny," écrit-il. Le concordat de Worms n'est plus que le triomphe de la culture allemano-byzantine. C'est pour l'auteur le point culminant de l'expansion du byzantinisme.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibidem, 242.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 246.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 245.

⁵² En parlait déjà F. Chalandon, *Essai sur le règne d'Alexis I Comnènes (1081-1118)*, Paris 1900.

⁵³ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 248.

⁵⁴ Loc. cit.

En observant parallèlement l'histoire de la Ruthénie, l'auteur souligne les liens de celle-ci avec la civilisation tourane.⁵⁵ L'Église orthodoxe est le bastion du byzantinisme, ce qui n'équivaut pas, selon l'auteur, à la présence de la civilisation byzantine. Revenons au début de mon argumentation. En démolissant sur la Place de Saxe le symbole du byzantinisme, on aurait fait sauter en fait un symbole tourane!

Poursuivons l'histoire de l'empire d'Occident. L'empire de Barberousse ne pouvait exister qu'avec les antipapes. "Avec un roi et un empereur absolu, le pape ne pouvait être qu'un aumônier."⁵⁶ Cette construction peut être admise si on partage la conviction de l'auteur des avantages de la suprématie du pouvoir religieux sur le pouvoir laïque. Cette phrase laisse aussi supposer que le patriarche de Constantinople joue un rôle d'aumônier auprès de l'empereur, ce qui est une simplification qui va décidément trop loin.

Décrivant la fin du règne des Comnènes, Koneczny affirme que ça a été la période la plus pénible dans l'histoire de Byzance, "dont nous ne décrivons pas l'horreur et la luxure, car nous ne les connaissons que trop bien et rien de nouveau ne viendrait enrichir notre sujet."⁵⁷ Rien de nouveau, car le tableau dépeint par l'auteur est statique. Byzance c'est l'anti-exemple qu'il s'agit d'battre. Rien donc d'étonnant que Koneczny sympathise avec le doge Dandolo qui mobilise une coalition contre Byzance. La IV^e Croisade est montrée comme une attaque justifiée.⁵⁸ Comment entendre dans ce contexte les mots de l'historien byzantin Choniates que "les Sarrasins auraient fait montre

⁵⁵ Selon la conception de l'auteur la civilisation tourane est une civilisation asiatique des steppes.

⁵⁶ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 251.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 254.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 256.

de plus de miséricorde.”⁵⁹ Mais Koneczny ne se soucie pas de ce qui est arrivé à Byzance. Il exulte, la IV^e Croisade marque la fin de l’empire. Koneczny prend modèle sur Zakrzewski, tout en répudiant ses vues enthousiastes sur le niveau culturel de l’Empire. Pour Koneczny il est impossible de comparer Byzance à la Grèce du temps de Périclès, comme le fait Zakrzewski.⁶⁰

Déniant l’humanisme des Comnènes, l’auteur n’essaie même pas de juger la littérature byzantine. Quelle qu’elle ait été, “personne ne la lisait hors de Byzance.”⁶¹ Donc, pour Koneczny, c’est comme si elle n’existait pas. Selon l’auteur, ce n’est pas la peine de se pencher sur l’Empire Latin, créé à l’issue de la IV^e Croisade.⁶² Pourquoi? Il est vrai que dans les rues de Constantinople

⁵⁹ La science estime que ce n’est pas tant le schisme de 1054 que la IV^e Croisade qui a creusé le fossé d’inimitié entre l’Orient et l’Occident. Choniates, qui décrit les viols et les rapines des Latins à Constantinople, rend bien compte de l’état des choses par la phrase plus haut citée. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, *Bizancjum. Francja i Stolica Apostolska w drugiej połowie XIII wieku (Byzance, la France et le Saint Siège dans la seconde moitié du XIII siècle)*, Łódź 1986, 6–7.

⁶⁰ K. Zakrzewski, op. cit., 248. “Pendant de longs siècles, l’Occident a déprécié le rôle de Byzance. Les préjugés nés encore au temps du grand conflit, seul fruit hélas des croisades, l’ont empêché d’apprécier à sa mesure le rôle de Byzance dans le développement de l’Europe médiévale. C’est seulement le savoir historique du XIX^e et du XX^e qui a permis de rendre hommage aux valeurs apportées par Byzance. Les recherches ardues des spécialistes ont eu pour effet ‘La découverte de Byzance,’ leurs résultats nous obligent aujourd’hui à reconnaître que dans l’empire byzantin s’est manifesté le même génie grec que nous saluons bien bas. Pensant à la Grèce classique, la Grèce de Périclès et de Phidias.” Voici un autre passage de Zakrzewski que Koneczny a nécessairement lu sans le discuter. Il a réfuté seulement la dernière phrase, concernant la comparaison de Byzance à la Grèce de Périclès (Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 258). Dans la note 62, Koneczny ajoute qu’il rend compte de tels jugements, c’est-à-dire du jugement de Zakrzewski parce que “les omettre serait peut-être déloyal”...

⁶¹ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 257.

⁶² Ibidem, 258.

on entendait parler français, comme à Paris.⁶³ Mais on sait aussi avec quelle peine l'Empire Latin se maintenait sur un sol hostile et tout ce qu'il avait dû emprunter au cérémonial byzantin et à la chancellerie byzantine. Les recherches, menées surtout par des Belges (les empereurs latins étaient originaires des Flandres), parlent explicitement de ces influences byzantines.⁶⁴ Elles en parlent d'ailleurs avec fierté et dans un sens très positif. Tout dépend donc de la définition que nous adopterons du byzantinisme. "Les Latins et les Byzantins soumis vivaient après 1204 les uns à côté des autres, sans qu'il y ait aucune communication entre leurs cultures," souligne l'auteur.⁶⁵ Koneczny est fort satisfait de cette image de la chrétienté divisée et n'essaie même pas de chercher les preuves de quelque osmose culturelle.

Frédéric II Hohenstauf, empereur qui refusait de se soumettre à la papauté, était contemporain de l'Empire Latin. S'il avait accepté de devenir le vassal du Saint Siège "un État dynastique aurait pu surgir du Jourdain jusqu'au Rhin."⁶⁶ Heureusement, Koneczny lui-même avoue que c'est une vue utopique. Est-ce qu'un État universel comme celui-ci n'engendrerait pas la statolâtrie? Alors elle deviendrait un trait positif et ne serait plus rattachée à la civilisation byzantine. Pour Koneczny, les Chevaliers Teutoniques prennent en ce temps-là la relève du byzantinisme. Il sont en effet des Byzantins parce qu'ils n'ont aucune moralité. Quand la civilisation byzantine décline en Allemagne, l'Ordre la ranime.⁶⁷ L'époque des Paléologues, champ de mes investigations, est pratiquement inexistante dans le livre de Koneczny. Il clôt cette période en 1204, en suivant en cela l'exemple de Zakrzew-

⁶³ Ibidem, 259.

⁶⁴ Cf. W. Prevenier, "La Chancellerie de l'Empire Latin de Constantinople 1204-1261," *The Latin Empire*, ed. V. D. van Aalst and K. N. Ciggaar, Hermen 1990, 63-81.

⁶⁵ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 259.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, 261.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, 263.

ki. Pourtant, jusqu'en 1453, il y a encore de quoi parler, ne serait-ce que de l'hellénisme, idée que Koneczny effleure. "Le patriotisme hellénistique" est positif, parce qu'il a des racines latines,⁶⁸ selon l'auteur. Mais est-ce que Koneczny savait que le créateur de cette renaissance hellénistique, Plethon, était un néopaien et que son hellénisme n'était rien d'autre qu'un retour au panthéon grec? Les idées de Plethon n'avaient aucune chance de réalisation, car les Byzantins ne voulaient pas trahir la religion orthodoxe qu'ils assimilaient à leur patriotisme. Cela ressort très nettement des dernières recherches⁶⁹.

Mon désaccord avec Koneczny n'empêche pas la recherche d'un point de vue commun: si les Chevaliers Teutoniques sont des Byzantins, la Guerre de Treize Ans était celle de la civilisation byzantine contre la latine et se livrait sur les côtes de la Baltique! Il m'est arrivé d'affirmer que la chute de Constantinople "arrangeait bien" Casimir le Jagellon, parce qu'elle absorbait le pape dans l'organisation d'une ligue anti-turque et détournait l'attention de Rome de la lutte polonaise pour la Poméranie, dans laquelle les Chevaliers Teutoniques cherchaient à se concilier l'appui du pape.⁷⁰

Koneczny s'insurge contre l'idée que Zoe Paléologue ait pu, en tant qu'épouse d'Ivan III, importer à Moscou le cérémonial byzantin. Tout Moscou baigne dans la civilisation tourane et

⁶⁸ Ibidem, 287.

⁶⁹ Cf. C. M. Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon, the Last of the Hellenes*, Oxford 1986. L'auteur cite diverses vues sur l'attitude de Plethon. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "Hellenism at the Court of the Despots of Mistra in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century," *Paganism in Late Roman Empire and Byzantium*, ed. M. Salamon, *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia*, Cracow 1991, 157–67.

⁷⁰ M. Dąbrowska, "From Poland to Tenedos. The Project of Using the Teutonic Order in the Fight against the Turks after the Fall of Constantinople," *Byzans und Ostmitteleuropa 950–1453. Beiträge zu einer Table Ronde des XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, ed. G. Prinzing und M. Salamon, Wiesbaden 1999, 165–76.

elle a emprunté le cérémonial des khans tatars.⁷¹ Mais que faire de Philotée qui peu après promettait au tzar que Moscou deviendrait la Troisième Rome et qu'il n'y en aurait plus de Quatrième.⁷² Koneczny affirme que le byzantinisme s'est emparé de la Russie mais regrette que cela ait été sans la "science byzantine et son esprit de cour."⁷³ Là, il se contredit car auparavant il niait la science byzantine et considérait l'esprit de cour comme un pompeux *decorum*. Maintenant, il découvre une civilisation pire que la byzantine, c'est la tourane dont le principal trait caractéristique sera l'ivrognerie. "C'en est venu au point que personne ne veut recevoir les envoyés moscovites à la maison à cause de leur funeste habitude." "Où est donc passée la civilisation byzantine?"⁷⁴ demande Koneczny. Il regrette donc de ne pas en trouver trace! Les restes du byzantinisme, il les trouve encore dans l'art, invoquant l'exemple de Théophane le Grec.

Pour terminer j'aimerais dire, comme jadis S. Runciman: Constantinople est tombée en 1453 et ne me demandez pas ce qui s'est passé après. C'est la fin de Byzance, le reste n'a pas d'intérêt pour moi. Koneczny pourtant m'oblige à le suivre plus loin, lorsqu'il démontre à quel point le protestantisme s'est imbu des idées byzantinistes, comment elles sont revenues en Russie avec Pierre 1er à la fin du XVII^e et comment elles ont ressurgi dans l'empire allemand du temps de Bismarck.⁷⁵

Feliks Koneczny a consacré un livre à Byzance, mais un livre très superficiel. Il repète souvent que "l'acide byzantin a attaqué toute l'Europe" mais que la recette de cette mixture reste illisible. Il semble que nous ayons affaire à un livre dépassé qui ne

⁷¹ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 289.

⁷² M. Dąbrowska, "Dekadencja Bizancjum i losy spadku po Drugim Rzymie" ("La décadence de Byzance et le destin de l'héritage de la Seconde Rome"), *Znak* 3 (1994), 23–29.

⁷³ F. Koneczny, *Civilisation*, 293.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 294.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, 296–344; 376–84.

peut plus intéresser que les historiens de l'historiographie. Paradoxalement pourtant, le vieux Feliks Koneczny incite les historiens de la fin du siècle à préciser les traits caractéristiques de la civilisation byzantine. Mais c'est le sujet d'une autre discussion. L'historien s'intéresse à ce que Koneczny sait sur Byzance et il doit avouer que cette science est bien mince. Il serait évidemment malhonnête de polémiquer avec l'auteur dans la perspective de ce que nous savons aujourd'hui sur Byzance. Mais il faut reconnaître aussi que Koneczny n'a pas utilisé au mieux la littérature dont il disposait en son temps. Pauvre Byzance! Ou bien on la regardait par le prisme de Moscou et l'image de Constantinople était voilée par les coupes de l'église orthodoxe sur la Place de Saxe, ou bien on l'observait à travers le prisme allemand où les casques à pointe des soldats de Bismarck ont caché à Koneczny les Romains sur le Bosphore, ces Romains dont il contestait obstinément la romanité. A juste titre?⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Aujourd'hui je ne serais pas tellement sévère à Koneczny si j'avais l'opportunité de comparer ses idées sur Byzance avec l'époque de Bismarck où l'auteur voyait la statolatrie byzantine de laquelle il parle. C'est le leitmotif de son discours.

Byzance, source de stéréotypes dans la conscience des Polonais

Pendant les longs siècles de son histoire, la Pologne a été un pays frontière, situation dont les conséquences, positives et négatives, se font sentir encore aujourd'hui. L'une d'entre elles est la rencontre sur le territoire de l'État polono-lithuanien, du catholicisme romain avec la religion orthodoxe, rencontre qui a engendré des stéréotypes chez les Polonais ainsi que chez leurs voisins. L'objet de cet article* est d'étudier la façon dont Byzance est intervenue dans cette rencontre, longtemps après que l'empire byzantin a disparu.¹

L'empire byzantin n'existait plus depuis longtemps mais, en Pologne, l'adjectif "byzantine" – qui avait d'ailleurs perdu toute connexion avec la Seconde Rome sur le Bosphore – avait toujours cours: employé comme épithète, il avait pris le sens de

* Je remercie M^{me} Wanda Conus-Wolska pour ses précieuses remarques et ma cousine M^{me} Katarzyna Grabowska-Bilicka, qui a bien voulu traduire ce texte. Je suis consciente que ce n'est qu'une ébauche qui pourrait servir de point de départ à d'autres recherches.

¹ J'ai déjà abordé ce sujet quand, pendant la session consacrée à Feliks Koneczny, j'ai présenté son attitude envers Byzance par le biais de l'histoire de l'Allemagne. Feliks Koneczny était un "Toynbee polonaise" et s'occupait aussi d'une multitude de civilisations. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, "La vision 'moscovite' de Byzance et le byzantinisme allemand de Koneczny ou Byzance sans Byzance," *Organon. Revue annuelle d'histoire, de philosophie et de méthodologie des sciences* 28/30 (1999–2001), 257–68.

“russe,” et avait une connotation pejorative.² Nous avons donc affaire à un transfert de sens auquel ont contribué les partages de la Pologne: la Russie y avait eu une part importante en occupant, à la fin du XVIII^{ème} siècle, la grande majorité du territoire de la “Federation polono-lituanienne.” Quoique l’Est eût été lié à la Pologne depuis des siècles, il est devenu alors pour elle le symbole du mal: il a été associé au pouvoir, à son style, à sa façon de penser, etc. Ce mal était russe, mais était appelé byzantin. Les deux notions se confondaient et aboutissaient à de fausses interprétations.

Je me limiterai à un seul exemple: l’architecture. Après de longues années de domination sur les territoires polonais, la Russie a laissé beaucoup d’églises et d’édifices laïques dont l’aspect était défini comme byzantin. Ces constructions “byzantines,” ou au moins les reconstructions de façades en style “byzantin,” comme on disait, irritaient tellement les Polonais que certaines d’entre elles ont été démontées dès que la Pologne est redevenue indépendante en 1918. Ca a été le cas entre autres de l’église orthodoxe en style byzantin construite Place Saski à Varsovie et de la façade byzantine du palais Staszic, autrefois le siège de l’Association des Amis des Sciences de Varsovie³ qui seront l’objet de cet article. Ces actes visaient non seulement ce qui était russe, mais aussi ce qui était byzantin et qui était confondu avec ce qui était russe. La russification intensive de la fin du XIX^e siècle, que symbolisaient ces deux constructions, était toujours présente dans la conscience des Polonais.

En 1815, la création du Royaume de Pologne ne satisfaisaient pas les aspirations nationales, car une grande partie des

² Un ouvrage récent sur la Russie en tant que Troisième Rome: B. Uspienski, *Car i patriarcha. Charyzmat władzy w Rosji. Bizantyński model i jego nowe rosyjskie ujęcie (Tsar et patriarche. Le charisme du pouvoir en Russie. Le modèle byzantin et sa nouvelle conception russe)*, trad. H. Paprocki, Katowice 1999.

³ Stanislas Staszic avait été le président de cette association et avait prévu d’installer son siège sur la parcelle qu’il avait achetée.

territoires orientaux de la République était passée sous l'autorité directe de la Russie. Dès 1830, les Polonais ont organisé une insurrection, appelée "de novembre," qui s'est transformée en guerre régulière polono-russe et a abouti à la défaite des Polonais. Le tsar a instauré l'état de guerre. Les participants à l'insurrection ont été emprisonnés, déportés en Sibérie, ou incorporés dans l'armée russe. Les écoles supérieures ont été fermées et l'éducation contrôlée par Pétersbourg. En Lituanie, Biélorussie et Ukraine, la situation était pire encore. Des milliers de familles ont été déportées au fin fond de la Russie et en 1839, l'Église uniata a été supprimée. La répression a diminué après la guerre de Crimée et après la mort de Nicolas Ier auquel a succédé Alexandre II.⁴ L'état de guerre a été levé, mais les Polonais n'ont pas récupéré leurs libertés, situation que le tsar a scellé, dans son fameux discours à Varsovie en 1856, d'une phrase célèbre: "Point de rêveries, Messieurs! Point de rêveries!" Les sentiments patriotiques se sont renforcés dans le royaume et ont entraîné le rétablissement de l'état de guerre en 1861.

En 1863, la nouvelle insurrection de janvier, matée, elle aussi, par les Russes, a été suivie d'une répression sévère. Le fait d'avoir participé à l'insurrection était puni de mort ou de déportation en Sibérie. Le nom de "Royaume de Pologne" a été remplacé par celui de "Privislanskij Kraj," "Pays de la Vistule." L'état de guerre n'a jamais été levé.⁵ Les prêtres catholiques subissaient

⁴ Sur son règne en Russie: J. Kucharzewski, *Od białego caratu do czerwonego*, t. III. *Lata przelomu. Romanow, Pugaczow czy Pestel (Du tsarisme blanc au tsarisme rouge)*, t. III. *Les années du tournant. Romanov, Pougatchev ou Pestel*, sous la direction d' A. Szwarc et P. Wiczorkiewicz, Varsovie 1999. Sur les conceptions politiques polonaises concernant la Russie: A. Nowak, *Jak rozbić rosyjskie imperium. Idee polskiej polityki wschodniej (1733–1921)* [*Comment briser l'empire russe? Les idées politiques polonaises envers l'Est (1793–1921)*], Cracovie 1999; ID., *Polacy, Rosjanie i Biesy (Polonais, Russes et Diables)*, Cracovie 1997.

⁵ Sur l'histoire de l'occupation russe, il existe une énorme littérature et sur les questions ci-dessus on peut lire par exemple le manuel académique de

des vexations et beaucoup d'entre eux ont été déportés au fond de la Russie.⁶ L'Église uniate a été supprimée et les uniates obligés de se convertir à la religion orthodoxe.⁷ S'ils essayaient de se réfugier dans l'Église romaine, ils étaient encore plus persécutés. L'action contre les Polonais s'est manifestée aussi par la confiscation des propriétés foncières de la noblesse polonaise. L'attaque contre la langue polonaise a été particulièrement douloureuse. Après l'insurrection de janvier, on a imposé dans les écoles l'éducation en langue russe (hormis les leçons de catéchisme). Les élèves étaient surveillés pour savoir s'ils ne parlaient pas entre eux en polonais. Dans cette politique de russification ont excellé le gouverneur général Osip Khourko (1883–1894) et le curateur scientifique Alexandre Apoukhine (1879–1897),⁸ dont je vais parler.

Dans des brochures anonymes, publiées en dehors de la Russie, on peut trouver la description de ce qui se passait à cette époque-là. Par exemple, une certaine baronne XYZ cite la réponse d'un haut fonctionnaire russe qui, interrogé sur la possibilité d'un allègement du régime répressif, a répondu en français: "soyez sûre que cela n'arrivera jamais"⁹ (le français était une langue neutre, utilisée par la haute société). La baronne précise: "Apoukhine n'exige de ses subordonnés qu'une

S. Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski 1795–1918 (Histoire de la Pologne 1795–1918)*, Varsovie 1976, 113–16; 297–300.

⁶ Plus largement sur ce sujet, l'ouvrage toujours actuel de A. Baudou, *Stolica Święta a Rosja. Stosunki dyplomatyczne między niemi w XIX wieku (Relations diplomatiques entre le Saint-Siège et la Russie au XIX^e siècle)*, trad. Z. Skowrońska, I–II, Cracovie 1928.

⁷ Sur les uniates des territoires polonais: W. Kolbuk, *Duchowieństwo unickie w Królestwie Polskim 1835–1875 (Le clergé uniate dans le Royaume Polonais 1835–1875)*, Lublin 1992.

⁸ A. Tuszyńska, *Rosjanie w Warszawie (Les Russes à Varsovie)*, Varsovie 1992, 38–39; 67–68.

⁹ A. Zaleski, *Towarzystwo warszawskie. Listy do przyjaciółki przez Baronową XYZ (Société de Varsovie. Lettres à une amie par la Baronne XYZ)*, Cracovie 1886, 159.

chose: une révérence à l'église et une haine profonde envers les Polonais."¹⁰ Et Aleksander Kraushar, écrivant sous un pseudonyme, parle du professeur Tsvetaiev, suppôt d'Apoukhtine, qui "pour de l'argent a décidé de russifier même le passé polonais et de falsifier les souvenirs témoignant des triomphes des armes polonaises. C'est lui qui eut l'idée de dissimuler la vérité concernant la chapelle dite moscovite, qui existait auparavant à l'endroit de l'actuel Palais Staszic."¹¹

Cette chapelle avait été construite sur l'ordre du souverain polonais pour commémorer la victoire de l'armée polonaise sur l'armée russe en 1610. Elle avait ensuite reçu la dépouille du tsar Vassili Chouiski, destitué en Russie et qui avait fini ses jours en Pologne en 1612. "Conjointement avec Apoukhtine, Tsvetaiev transforma le splendide Palais Staszic en église orthodoxe auprès du collège russe."¹² Kraushar souligne que c'était une offense pour la population et pour le sens esthétique. Il dit encore que "Apoukhtine avec le général-gouverneur Khourko remplit la ville d'églises orthodoxes."¹³ C'est à ce moment-là qu'on a construit la cathédrale sur la place Saski. "La cathédrale russe témoigne de façon visible que la Russie règne ici, qu'elle considère cette ville comme son patrimoine indéniable, que l'on ne peut avoir ici aucun espoir qu'elle renonce aux droits qui sont les siens," écrivait-on dans *Varchavskij Dnievnik*

¹⁰ Ibidem, 194.

¹¹ A. Kraushar, *Czasy szkolne za Apuchcina. Kartka z pamiętnika (1879–1897)* [Les années d'école au temps d'Apoukhtine. Feuilles d'un journal intime (1879–1897)], Varsovie 1915, 7.

¹² A. Kraushar, *Czasy*, cité note 11, 7. Les dépouilles de Chouiski et de ses frères ont été rendues à Moscou en 1635. La chapelle moscovite est restée en l'état jusqu'en 1668, puis a été intégrée à une église dominicaine. Cet ensemble architectural fut détruit en 1818 pour construire le palais Staszic. Cf. H. Wisner, *Król i car. Rzeczpospolita i Moskwa w XVI i XVII w. (Le roi et le tsar. La Pologne et Moscou aux XVI et XVII siècles)*, Varsovie 1999, 94–95.

¹³ A. Kraushar, *Czasy*, cité note 11, 8.

(*Journal de Varsovie*), publié en russe.¹⁴ Et encore: “L’Église orthodoxe doit non seulement satisfaire les besoins spirituels d’un Russe orthodoxe, mais aussi soutenir son esprit national.”¹⁵

En 1894, année de la pose de la première pierre de la cathédrale orthodoxe Alexandre Nevskij sur la place Saski,¹⁶ Varsovie avait 560 000 habitants dont 19 000 orthodoxes.¹⁷ La population orthodoxe, donc les Russes, un groupe de militaires et de fonctionnaires, constituaient un peu plus de 3% des habitants de la ville. Les églises orthodoxes, au nombre de neuf avant 1910, n’étaient pas proportionnées à leurs besoins religieux. À ce chiffre, il faut encore ajouter neuf églises orthodoxes militaires construites dans les casernes et aussi les chapelles orthodoxes dans les écoles et les hôpitaux. Après 1910, neuf nouvelles églises ont été construites.¹⁸ La construction avait sans aucun doute un caractère de propagande. “Autant d’églises orthodoxes, autant de sceaux confirmant notre propriété: nous ne sommes plus ici les nouveaux venus, des conquérants passagers, mais les maîtres,” écrivait-on dans la presse russe.¹⁹ Or, dans la conscience des Polonais, toutes ces églises n’étaient pas de style “russe” – cette dénomination n’était presque pas employée – mais de style “byzantin.” Le style “byzantine” était donc associé à Moscou et, au vu du faible nombre de personnes qui fréquentaient ces églises, il était sur-représenté dans la ville.

Il serait intéressant de savoir si les Polonais en Galicie, c’est-à-dire dans les territoires occupés par les Autrichiens,

¹⁴ *Warszawskij Dniwnik (Varchavskij Dniwnik)* cité d’après Tuszyńska, *Rosjanie*, cité note 8, 37.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Les habitants des maisons environnantes ont boycotté cette célébration, en fermant les rideaux des fenêtres qui donnaient sur la Place Saski. Cf. H. Duninówna, *Odeszlo-żyje (Passé-vivant)*, Łódź 1961, 57–58.

¹⁷ Cf. *Przewodnik ilustrowany po Warszawie, Łodzi i okolicach fabrycznych (Guide illustré de Varsovie. Łodz et régions industrielles)*, Varsovie 1897, 8.

¹⁸ A. Tuszyńska, *Rosjanie*, cité note 8, 39–41.

¹⁹ Cité d’après Tuszyńska, *Rosjanie*, cité note 8, 38.

confondaient également l'Église orthodoxe – ou surtout le rite uniate dépendant de Rome – avec Byzance. C'est aussi un sujet qui mériterait d'être analysé. Nous pouvons seulement mentionner qu'à Lvov au XIX^{ème} siècle, le rite byzantin uniate était celui de la population ukrainienne, appelée les Ruthéniens, et qu'il n'avait pas le même aspect péjoratif que le rite byzantin orthodoxe, moscovite, observé à Varsovie. En Galicie, la religion uniate était liée à la population autochtone, habitant depuis des siècles les anciens territoires de l'État polono-lithuanien. Ce n'était pas la religion de l'occupant, comme c'était le cas à Varsovie et dans toute la partie de la Pologne occupée par les Russes. Là, c'était une réalité étrangère. Benedykt Hertz écrivait: "Malgré le son mélodieux des cloches des églises orthodoxes, je savais qu'en tant que Polonais je ne devais pas l'aimer."²⁰ Par crainte de l'opinion publique, il n'était pas convenable d'entrer dans une église orthodoxe, ne fut-ce que par curiosité.

Cependant, on ne peut pas généraliser en disant que le dégoût pour ce qui était russe entraînait automatiquement le dégoût pour ce qui était byzantin. Les Polonais éduqués essayaient de définir plus précisément le style appelé byzantin. Pour Kraushar, la façade soit-disant byzantin du palais Staszic faisait plutôt penser à un café turc, et pour Balinski, le même bâtiment ressemblait aux serviettes de toilettes multicolores de Iaroslavl.²¹ Il n'y a pas là-dedans de définition péjorative du byzantinisme, mais du style que l'on voyait sur cette nouvelle façade. Cependant, cette position est rare. Généralement, dans les légendes de photos ou dans les guides, la notion de "byzantine" est utilisée pour définir un style étranger et rejeté. C'est de ce stéréotype qu'il s'agit, et son aspect négatif est la conséquence des circonstances politiques que je viens d'exposer.

²⁰ B. Hertz, *Na taśmie 70-lecia (Sur la "bande" des 70 ans)*, éd. B. Grzeniewski, Varsovie 1966, 35.

²¹ I. Baliński, *Wspomnienia o Warszawie (Souvenirs de Varsovie)*, Edinbourg 1946, 29.



1. La façade « byzantine » du palais Staszic (1892-1893).



2. Photographie aérienne de la cathédrale orthodoxe de la place Saska.



3. La cathédrale orthodoxe de la place Saski à Varsovie.



4. Proposition de transformation de la cathédrale orthodoxe de la place Saski par l'architecte Szyller.



5. Le nouveau Palais Staszic (1926)
détruit pendant la seconde guerre mondiale et reconstruit à l'identique.

Avec l'indépendance de la Pologne, dans la jeune capitale du nouvel État, a commencé la discussion concernant l'affectation des deux constructions les plus spectaculaires: la cathédrale orthodoxe de la place Saski et celle qui était située dans l'ancien palais Staszic, autrefois le siège de l'Association des Amis des Sciences. L'église orthodoxe, située au centre même de Varsovie, suscitait des émotions particulières. Démolir ou garder? On a rappelé que la République avait des problèmes beaucoup plus importants à résoudre. Mais la discussion a continué et sa ferveur est compréhensible. "L'église orthodoxe place Saski, construite dans notre capitale par la Russie, blesse les sensibilités polonaises. Le gouvernement occupant construit ce temple non pas pour de réels besoins religieux, mais pour humilier les ambitions nationales des Polonais," écrivait-on dans le populaire *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (*Hebdomadaire Illustré*) en 1920. "Les Russes la construisirent," affirmait-on, "exprès très haute et dans la partie centrale de la ville pour que sa grandeur et son emplacement écrasent l'aspect polono-européen de cette ville. Ce temple est né d'une volonté mauvaise."²² D'autre part, on discutait sur les mosaïques en tant qu'oeuvre d'art, on attirait l'attention sur le coût élevé de la démolition éventuelle, on proposait sa reconstruction de sorte que l'église devienne le symbole du triomphe de la Pologne sur la Russie.²³ Un partisan de la reconstruction, l'architecte Stefan Szyller, a affirmé que "l'église orthodoxe à plan central dans son intégralité n'était pas moscovito-russe, le plan intérieur du temple étant byzantin, et que cela était connu en Europe Occidentale," mais cela n'a pas eu d'effet. La légende de la photo aérienne, qui accompagnait

²² Au sujet du "temple de la place Saski," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (*Hebdomadaire Illustré*) 61 (1920) n° 18, 356. Je suis reconnaissante à M. le Docteur P. Krupczyński d'avoir attiré mon attention sur cet article et pour d'autres remarques. Pour une vue d'ensemble de Varsovie et de la place occupée par la cathédrale, voir: la fig. 2.

²³ Ibidem, 357.

l'article et illustre la place prise dans la ville par l'église orthodoxe de la place Saski, entretenait le stéréotype byzantin, identifié au caractère russe.²⁴ L'architecte Szyller a proposé d'ôter les dômes moscovites criards mais la discussion est restée ouverte.

C'est le Parlement qui devait décider du destin de cette église. L'opinion de Szyller a été exprimée en mai 1920, mais au mois d'août, l'armée bolchevique arrivait près de Varsovie et menaçait le jeune État polonaise.²⁵ Après deux ans d'indépendance de la Pologne, la Russie manifestait de nouveau sa présence dans l'histoire de ce pays. L'agression a été repoussée et, après un certain temps, on a pris la décision de démolir l'église orthodoxe de la place Saski. Cette décision était aussi liée au nouveau statut de l'Église orthodoxe en Pologne, qui a reçu en 1924 la confirmation de son autonomie de la part de Constantinople.²⁶ L'église Marie Madeleine du quartier de Praga, construite aussi à l'époque du tsarisme, est devenue la nouvelle cathédrale orthodoxe. Les travaux de démontage de l'église de la place Saski ont commencé en 1924 et ont fini en 1926.²⁷ Ils ont duré longtemps, non seulement à cause des dimensions de l'édifice, mais

²⁴ Légende de la photo parue dans *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (*Hebdomadaire Illustré*): "Aspect byzantin actuel de la place Saski." Le qualificatif "byzantine" est attribué non seulement à l'église, mais à l'ensemble de la place (ibidem, 356). Légende du dessin de la reconstruction proposée par Szyller "L'une des reconstructions possibles de l'édifice byzantin en temple aux lignes occidentales" (ibidem, 357).

²⁵ Le livre le plus intéressant sur cette guerre: N. Davis, *Orzeł biały, czerwona gwiazda. Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919–1920* (*Aigle blanc, étoile rouge. La guerre polono-bolchevique 1919–1920*), trad. A. Pawelec, Cracovie 1997.

²⁶ E. Przybył, *Prawosławie* (*Religion orthodoxe*), Cracovie 2000, 45. L'auteur déplore le démontage de nombreuses églises orthodoxes, sans y voir un contexte politique.

²⁷ M. Orłowicz, *Ilustrowany przewodnik po Warszawie i okolicy* (*Guide illustré de Varsovie et ses environs*), éd. III, Varsovie 1937, 68.

aussi faute de moyens pour financer l'entreprise.²⁸ En 1925 un journaliste de *Gazeta Warszawska* enregistre les progrès des travaux en manifestant sa joie: "Avec les apports de l'esprit étranger, on enlève les signes visibles du passé douloureux. Sur le ciel polonais, les dômes byzantins nous choquaient, mais on ne peut nier de belles proportions à cette construction monumentale."²⁹ Il n'avait pourtant pas de doute sur le fait que "l'on démolissait le monument de l'esclavage." La place Saski a été aménagée pour redevenir le lieu des fêtes nationales et des défilés militaires.

Le rétablissement de l'ancienne façade empire du Palais Staszic a suscité moins d'émotions. Comme je l'ai dit plus haut, c'était l'église orthodoxe auprès du collège russe. Les travaux ont commencé en 1924, l'année où ont débuté aussi les travaux de l'église de la place Saski, et ont fini en 1926 pour le centenaire de la mort de Stanislaw Staszic. L'architecte qui dirigeait les travaux, Marian Lalewicz, mentionne qu'une partie du riche équipement de l'église avait été emporté par les Russes avant l'arrivée des Allemands à Varsovie en 1915. Il n'y avait plus d'iconostase ni d'icônes. Il est difficile de dire ce qui avait été dévasté par les Allemands. En tout cas, la façade "byzantine" ne constituait pas une oeuvre d'art, même pour le milieu artistique de Pétersbourg.³⁰

²⁸ "Sobór na placu Saskim" ("Église orthodoxe de la place Saski"), *Gazeta Warszawska* (*Gazette de Varsovie*), 24.05.1925, 14. L'article concerne la grève des ouvriers, provoquée par le retard de paiement pour les travaux de démontage.

²⁹ G. Taube Jr., "Place Saski," *Gazeta Warszawska* (*Gazette de Varsovie*), 07.08.1925, 7. Les mosaïques de l'église place Saski ont été transportées au Musée national à Varsovie, puis à la cathédrale orthodoxe Marie Madeleine. Je remercie M. le Professeur Marek Kwiatkowski de cette information et de son autorisation de reproduire les photos de son livre. *Wspomnienie dawnej Warszawy* (*Souvenirs de l'ancienne Varsovie*), Varsovie 1993.

³⁰ M. Lalewicz, *Pałac Staszica w Warszawie. Zarys historii budowy, przebudowy i odbudowy* (*Le palais Staszic à Varsovie. Esquisse de l'histoire de construction, transformation et reconstruction*), Varsovie 1932, 22.

Le “nettoyage” du passé russe est resté en Pologne dans des limites raisonnables. Un autre souvenir de la méchanceté d'Apoukhtine existe encore de nos jours: le lourd bâtiment de la bibliothèque de l'Université de Varsovie, construit spécialement pour dissimuler l'ancien palais du roi Jean Casimir.³¹ C'est dans cette Université qu'a été fondée en 1935 la première chaire d'Histoire de Byzance en Pologne, dirigée par Kazimierz Zakrzewski, spécialiste du Bas-Empire. A son séminaire participait Halina Evert-Kappesowa qui a créé la byzantinologie d'après-guerre à Lodz. Les préjugés ont disparu. On a commencé à distinguer clairement Byzance de Moscou. Et moi, qui vais tous les ans avec mes étudiants dans l'église orthodoxe de Lodz pour leur montrer la liturgie byzantine, je me dis que c'est une génération qui a la chance d'être libre de ce type de superstitions politiques. Cette église est maintenant en travaux de reconstruction. Cette rénovation fait le pendant à l'achèvement de l'église catholique, construite à Moscou avec l'argent des Polonais rue Malaïa Gruzinskaïa (Petite Géorgienne). Ce sont les symboles de la nouvelle époque.

³¹ A. Kraushar, *Czasy*, cité note 11, 9.

Byzantine Frescoes Chapel from Lusignans' Cyprus in Houston*

But their eyes were holden that they should
not know him.
(Luke 24:16)

If the Byzantine frescoes were still in Lysi, a small village on Cyprus, they would not attract so much attention, as there is nothing special about them. The whole island is full of churches with interesting interiors.¹ But when the frescoes from Lysi

* This article was written when I was a Visiting Professor at Rice University as a Fellow of the Kościuszko Foundation. I am very grateful to Mrs Susan de Menil for the exchange of views in a telephone conversation, and for the hospitality of the Menil Collection where I worked in the archives due to the kindness of Dr Josef Hofestein, The Director of the Collection, and the two ladies: Ms Geraldine Aramanda and Ms Heather Kushnerick. I am particularly indebted to Heather, who was my discreet companion in January 2008, when I was bent over the boxes with the necessary materials. I am very grateful for the photographs of the frescoes and of the chapel, as well as for the opportunity of receiving many important photocopies. I also owe a great deal to Dr Nora Laos, who shared with me the draft of her article on the frescoes, presented at the conference of American Byzantinists in Saint Louis in November 2006, in which I was happy to participate. As usual, I extend my warm thanks to my sister, Dr Dorota Filipczak, who corrected my English. The archival research, however, was necessary for the last stage of my writing. I started with the literature of the subject which seemed to be abundant but it was only an illusion. There are many books on Cyprus, but not very original because of repetitions. I will therefore refer to the most recent publications, especially those which change the stereotypical interpretation of the Cypriote history.

¹ A. Stylianou and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus. Treasures of Byzantine Art*, London 1985; E. Hein, A. Jakovljević, B. Kleidt,

appeared in Houston, they became unique. They are said to be the only specimen of this kind in the Western hemisphere. Why are they here near the Mexican Gulf, which is known for the numerous oil rigs that are a source of wealth? There is a direct connection between the Byzantine paintings and the rigs. The art connoisseurs, Dominique and John de Menil, who owed their fortune to the oil business, saved the exquisite masterpieces from Cyprus. Paradoxically enough, these frescoes are not so well-known even in Houston, not to mention the whole world. Let us make them famous. Here is their story.

Years will pass before anybody emulates the excellent description of the vicissitudes of medieval Cyprus provided by Peter W. Edbury,² whose text definitely eclipsed a classic publication by Sir George Hill.³ Edbury stresses the importance of the geographical position of Cyprus which was a privilege but

Cyprus. Byzantine Churches and Monasteries: Mosaic and Frescoes, trans. into English J. M. Deasy, Ratingen 1998; *Medieval Cyprus. Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki*, ed. N. Patterson Sevcenko and Ch. Moss, Princeton 1999.

2 P. W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191–1374*, Cambridge 1991. Cf. Idem, *Franks in Cyprus, Society and Culture 1191–1374*, ed. A. Nicolaou-Konnari and Ch. Schabel, Leiden-Boston 2005, 63–101. In the preface to the first book Edbury reminds us of the merits of J. Richard and Count W. H. Rudt de Collenberg, which are, obviously, unquestionable (Edbury, *The Kingdom...*, XI). It is enough to mention two basic titles out of so many others: J. Richard, “Le peuplement latin et syrien en Chypre au XIII^e siècle,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 6 (1979), 157–73; W. H. Rudt de Collenberg, “Les Lusignans de Chypre,” *Epeteris tou Kentrou Epistemonikon Ereunon* X (1980), 85–119.

3 G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, vol. I–IV, Cambridge 1940–1952. The second volume is devoted to the Lusignan rule. I am not very original in mentioning all these names. Carolyn L. Connor does the same in the note 4 to her article “Female Saints in Church Decoration,” *Medieval Cyprus...*, 212. It means that we reached the limit to our knowledge, which I mentioned in my review of the volume *Byzantium and Italians in the 13th–15th centuries*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers XLIX* (1995), published in *Byzantinoslavica LVTH* (1997), fasc. 1, 196.

also a trouble for the island. Attractive for many neighbours, Cyprus was an object of their political desire. An authority on the history of art, Annemarie Weyl Carr, dated the frescoes from Lysi to the 13th century,⁴ though not without problems. Accordingly, it is necessary to recreate the political atmosphere of that time.

Byzantine art flourished on Cyprus especially in the Komnenian epoch, but Constantinople lost control over the island during the unfortunate reign of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–1185), when his cousin, Isaac Komnenos, became the independent governor on the island in 1184, and remained powerful during the reign of Isaac Angelos, Emperor of Byzantium since 1185. The Angeloi were not strong enough to attach the rebellious Cyprus back to the capital.⁵ The situation in the Middle East was additionally complicated by Saladin's victory over the Latin army at Hattin in 1187. Guy de Lusignan, King of Jerusalem, was defeated. Another crusade, the third one, was organized to help the Holy Land. Its main leader, Richard the Lionheart, King of England, played the crucial role in changing the political course of Cyprus. He defeated Isaac in May 1191, and a month later he moved on to Acre. While fighting against Saladin, he managed to sell the island to the Templars who kept it until April 1192, and then made their deal with Guy de Lusignan, selling Cyprus to him.⁶ From that moment

⁴ A. Weyl Carr and L. J. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered, the Thirteenth Century Murals of Lysi, Cyprus*, Austin 1991, 71. Cf. other publications, in which A. Weyl Carr analyzes the art of Cyprus and refers to Lysi: Eadem, *Cyprus and the Devotional Arts of Byzantium in the Era of the Crusades*, Aldershot 2005; Eadem, "Art," *Cyprus. Society and Culture 1191–1374*, ed. by A. Nicolaou-Konnari and Ch. Schabel, Leiden-Boston 2005, 285–328.

⁵ Ch. Brand is still unquestionable authority on the description of the Byzantine state under the Angeloi. Cf. Idem, *Byzantium Confronts the West 1180–1204*, Cambridge (MA) 1968.

⁶ R. Edbury, *The Kingdom*, 5–12.

onwards, the island found itself under the rule of a petty noble family from Poitou, who due to Guy's connections with the Kingdom of Jerusalem became powerful enough to establish their dynasty there. This dynasty survived till 1474. Such data confuse the art historians, who call the Latin rule "occupation" but at the same time admit that "the Cypriot monumental decoration was independent of unusually broad scope."⁷ This myth of Latin domination was finally challenged by Chris Schabel, who stated that the "Greek Orthodoxy survived the Frankish period not so much of a successful national struggle against complete absorption as the Greeks always remained the majority and neither the Franks nor the Latin Church ever attempted any Latinization."⁸ He named Christianity "the Unifier of the People"⁹ which I am pleased to quote as this is my point of view which I expressed in the book on mixed Byzantine-Latin marriages.¹⁰ This is the context we need in order to grasp the significance of the frescoes from a modest church of a mysterious St. Themanianos in a small village, Lysi, located in the central part of the island, to the south-east of Nicosia, on the way to Famagusta.¹¹ The territory was already under Frankish control, yet nobody objected to people worshipping in a Byzantine way. However, in 1196 the Latin archbishop was designated in Nicosia,

⁷ C. L. Connor, "Female saints..."

⁸ Ch. Schabel, "Religion," *Cyprus. Society and Culture...*, 210. He adds that the Greek clergy was obliged to swear an oath of allegiance to the Latin Church, but its religious rites remained the same.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 212.

¹⁰ M. Dąbrowska, *Łacinniczki nad Bosforem. Małżeństwa bizantyńskolacińskie w cesarskiej rodzinie Paleologów (XIII-XV w.)* [*The Latin Ladies on the Bosporos. Byzantine-Latin Marriages in the Imperial Family of the Palaiologoi (13th-15th Centuries)*], Łódź 1996, 158. The general idea of the book is summed up for the sake of the foreign reader in my article: "Is There any Room on the Bosporus for a Latin Lady?", due to appear in *Byzantinoslavica* (2008), fasc. 2.

¹¹ Cf. the map in A. Weyl Carr and L. J. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece*, 34.

with suffragans at Paphos, Limassol and Famagusta. Guy's brother, Aimery, became the king of Cyprus (1196–1205) and then his son, Hugh I, succeeded him (1205–1218). The status of the kingdom was granted by the German-Roman Emperor, Henry VI of Hohenstaufen, which boosted the position of the house of Lusignan for centuries.¹² The Byzantines did not manage to react to these events, as the Fourth Crusade which was meant to strengthen the Frankish Syria against the Muslims, put an end to the Byzantine rule in Constantinople for almost sixty years.

The frescoes at Lysi were therefore created in the period of transition, but as the time of Aimery's and Hugh's respective rules is remembered as peaceful for Cyprus, the frescoes continued the great Byzantine tradition. Looking at them, one can think that nothing happened, nothing had changed. Moreover, one can admire them breathlessly if they are the only representation of Cypriot art to be seen. In comparison with other paintings, however, they lose their value, as the viewer is spoiled by the beauty of frescoes in such places as the churches of Panagiatis Asinou at Nikitari or Panagia Araka at Lagoudera, both to the south-west of Nicosia, on the way to the Troodos mountains.¹³

I am not speaking about the other masterpieces disseminated all over Cyprus. These two should be mentioned as they are the main reference point for A. Weyl Carr in her dating of the paintings at Lysi.¹⁴ It is clear that it was not an easy task for this experienced art historian. Her hesitation is visible, and finally, she decides to attribute the frescoes at Lysi "not so much to the final chapter of Cyprus's twelfth-century art, but as the evidence

¹² E. Edbury, *The Kingdom*, 31.

¹³ A. Stylianou and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches*, 114–40, 157–85; E. Hein, A. Jakovljevic, B. Kleidt, *Cyprus*, 55–60 and 71–76 respectively.

¹⁴ A. Weyl Carr and L. J. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece*, 70–79.

of a renewed vitality in the fifteenth.”¹⁵ The author states that “the precise decade of Lysi mural’s paintings remains ambiguous, but, in the end, it is not fundamental.”¹⁶ If so, a historian can still wonder whether they were a product of nostalgia for the fallen Empire, or an expression of satisfaction with the Byzantine revival under Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1261. It is impossible to know whether the actual artist had any emotional connections with Constantinople.

Anyway, A. Weyl Carr maintains that the frescoes are “purely Byzantine”¹⁷ even if they were created in the time when the Lusignan power in Cyprus was established for good. It would cover the rule of Hugh I’s only son, Henry I (1218–1253), and that of his grandson, Hugh II (1253–1267). The latter had no male offspring, which provoked a political dispute between the claimants. Finally, the Cypriote legacy was taken over by the son of Hugh I’s daughter, Isabella, who became Hugh III (1267–1284).¹⁸ He was from Antioch which connected the Syrian and Cypriot lines of the family.

In the 13th century the history of Cyprus was not so serene as at the beginning of the Lusignan rule. The Byzantine Empire revived, and at the same time the Latin states in the Middle East, *la France d’Outremer*, were approaching their bitter end. However, the troubles of Michael VIII Palaiologos who strove to remain in power and avoid the repetition of the Fourth Crusade did not allow him even to dream about winning Cyprus back for his state. On the other side, the Frankish remnants in the

¹⁵ Ibidem, 110.

¹⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁷ A. Weyl Carr, “Art in the Court of the Lusignan Kings,” *E Kypros kai oi Stauroforias. Cyprus and the Crusades*, ed. N.Cureas and J. R. Smith, Nicosia 1995 = chapter VII in *Cyprus and the Devotional Era...*, 252, note 2.

¹⁸ P. Edbury, *The Kingdom*, 35–36. One of his famous successors was Peter I who visited Cracow in order to persuade the Polish King to participate in the crusade against the Muslim. Cf. M. Dąbrowska, “Peter of Cyprus and Casimir the Great in Cracow,” *Byzantiaka* 14 (1994), 257–67.

Middle East were desperately defending themselves against the Muslims, and after their fall, many inhabitants found shelter on Cyprus. Those events had no impact on the Cypriot art, of which Lysi is a good example. Latin art flourished under the Lusignans but they did not block the development of Byzantine, i.e. Orthodox art. It illustrates the cohabitation of the two cultures rather than the conflict, even if A. Weyl Carr uses the expression of the “Lusignan regime.”¹⁹

The Lysi murals would not have attracted attention but for the Turkish invasion. I am not referring to the one from the 16th century, but that of 1974. Let us remind the reader that Lusignans kept the island till 1489, when the widow of James II Lusignan, Catherine Cornaro, abdicated and transferred the rights to Cyprus on to Venice. The Ottoman Turks conquered it in 1571. In 1878 the Turks gave up the administrative rights to Cyprus, and England took over the island. After so many centuries of different reigns, the island, being then a British colony, preserved its Orthodox identity. In January 1950 the Cypriot Church organized a referendum concerning union with Greece. This was boycotted by the Greek Cypriot Left and by the Turkish Cypriots. The results, however, were favorable for the union. The British offered local autonomy, but the majority of Greek Cypriots turned against them in 1955. The independent Republic of Cyprus was finally proclaimed in 1960. The troubles lasted, as the Greeks constituted the majority but the Turkish minority was strong. Cohabitation was tense and in 1974 it ended with the Turkish occupation of the north-eastern part of the island and the division of Cyprus into two zones. The situation was complicated by the fights between Greeks themselves – some of them supported the Archbishop Makarios, President of the Republic, some, connected with the Athenian

¹⁹ A. Weyl Carr and L. J. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece*, 86 – for example.

Junta, acted against him.²⁰ Everything was warmed up by the rumors about vast oil deposits under the Aegean Sea. Every side involved showed its interest in them. Superpowers, who from the very beginning were discreetly involved in the conflict, were also shaken by this revelation. Who wouldn't be? It is enough to quote Dimitrios Ioannides, the Greek prime minister, in the taped phone conversation with "his man" in Nicosia in March 1974, just before the coup: "Tell Makarios, we'll buy him a gold throne like the Queen of Sheba's. . . . Up to now we were a Cinderella state, now we'll be Americans."²¹ In this climate of euphoria, disappointment and permanent tension, one day the frescoes from the church in Lysi, which found itself in the Turkish

²⁰ There is a rich literature on this complicated subject, when one should take into consideration the points of view of all the sides involved. It also means that it was a risky business to enter the Cypriot market of art, which Dominique de Menil and her advisers realized quickly. Leaving this question for later let me quote only some important titles: J. Koumoulides, *Cyprus in Transition, 1960–1985*, London 1986; Ch. Ioannides, *In Turkey's Image: the Transformation of Occupied Cyprus into a Turkish Province*, New Rochelle (NY) 1991; N.Uslu, *The Cyprus Question as an Issue of Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish-American Relations, 1959–2003*, New York 2003; C. Yennaris, *From the East: Conflict and Partition of Cyprus*, London 2003.

²¹ M. Drousiotis, *Cyprus 1974. Greek Coup and Turkish Invasion*, Mannheim 2006, 160. The end of Greek-Turkish conflict is far from being resolved. The last sentences of this book are striking: "The first Clerides-Denktaş [Greek and Turkish Cypriot authorities, respectively – M.D.] talks began in Vienna, in January 1975. Up the present day (2002), they are still talking..." (267). The history of contemporary Cypriot events is very interesting *per se*, but Drousiotis relation is extraordinary due to his personal archives and documents taken from various collections. It is a perfect background for the vicissitudes of Lysi frescoes. New generation of writers and artists try to change the division on the island from "a Wall into a Bridge." Cf. Y. Papadakis, "Memories of Walls, Walls of Memories," *Chypre et la Méditerranée Orientale*, ed. Y. Ioannou, F. Metral, M. Yon, Lyon 2000, 231–39.

zone, were stolen, chopped into pieces and offered to the art dealers on the black market.

Andreas and Judith Stylianou wrote about Lysi on the basis of notes and photographs taken before the Turkish invasion. The small church of St. Euphemianus (the historians of art attributed it to St. Themonianos) is overshadowed by high eucalyptus trees. "This idyllic chapel is a single-aisled vaulted building with a dome over the center and arched recesses in side walls. Vaults and arches are slightly pointed. It is built of local white limestone."²² They dated the remnants of wall-paintings for the 14th century. Leaving this aside, let me concentrate on the fragments which were stolen. The first one is the painting of the Mother of God of Blachernitissa type, attended by Archangels Michael and Gabriel, which they described as fine.²³ The second best surviving fresco was that of Christ Pantocrator in the dome, surrounded by angels. The authors were not delighted by this picture. "The eyes of Christ are not very successful; they look at the beholder without focusing,"²⁴ they stated delicately, which by no means disqualified the painter. According to the Orthodox canons of presenting the holy images, he failed. The Stylianou described purple and blue clothes of Jesus Christ and paid attention to "the Preparation of the Throne inside the oval aureola, guarded by angels and attended by the Mother of God and St. John the Baptist, on either side of intercessors, alluding to the Last Judgement."²⁵ This description became the

²² A. Stylianou and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches*, 492.

²³ Blachernitissa – a special canon of the portrayal of Our Lady, called after a picture in the church devoted to the Virgin Mary, founded in 450 in Blachernai, in north-western part of Constantinople. "The Mother of God faces the observer frontally, before her breast is suspended a medallion (like a shield) with the Christ child." Cf. E. Hein, A. Jakovljević, B.Heidt, *Cyprus*, 188.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 493.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

basis for the restorers when the decision of saving Lysi frescoes cut into 38 pieces was made.

Dominique de Menil, already widowed by her husband, received the information on this discovery and without much hesitation decided to act. However, her preferences were much more connected with contemporary art. Max Ernst was her and her husband's friend, paintings by Ferdinand Léger and Andy Warhol decorated their residence in the prominent district of River Oaks at Houston.²⁶ This couple of art patrons is very interesting. Dominique, née Schlumberger, born in 1908, inherited her family oil-equipment fortune. In 1931 she married John Menu de Menil four years her senior. They lived their life in Paris, then in New York, running their family business but also collecting objects of art. Their scope of interest was vast: from African art through Surrealist paintings from Europe and works of American abstract expressionists.²⁷ These details give an impression that they were not particularly interested in religious art. On the contrary, Dominique de Menil was Catholic. She sponsored the Mark Rothko Chapel in Houston which was meant to be Roman Catholic, now it is non-denominational. Rothko worked on the project in 1964–1967. It was open to the public in 1971 after Rothko's suicide a year earlier.²⁸ The artist's personal drama probably switched him

²⁶ I was delighted to visit it on 19 March 2008, upon the invitation of the Menil Foundation.

²⁷ Cf. The Menil Collection, *A Selection from the Paleolithic to the Modern Era*, New York 1987. De Menils were interested in Russian post-Byzantine icons, but pure Byzantium was rather distant to them. The Menil Collection Museum was opened to the public on 7 June 1987. See also: M. Brennan, *A Modern Patronage: de Menil Gifts to American and European Museums*, New Haven 2007.

²⁸ Marcus Rothkowitz, aka Mark Rothko (1903–1970), was a Latvian-born American painter of Jewish origin. In 1913 his family emigrated from Russia to the US, avoiding pogroms which became cyclical after the Revolution of 1905. On his art: A. Chave, *Mark Rothko, 1903–1970: A Retrospective*, New Haven 1989; J. E. B. Breslin, *Mark Rothko – A Biography*, Chicago–London

from the Roman Catholic and Byzantine inspiration to the darkness so visible in this piece of art, gloomy, and without windows. It is a sign of the times that this monument of self-destruction became the great attraction of Houston, eclipsing The Byzantine Frescoes Chapel, the last achievement of Dominique de Menil, to which she paid so much attention not only as a connoisseur of art but as a person of spiritual sensitivity.²⁹ She did not hesitate to get involved in this professional business which occurred to be an adventure with a criminal plot.

It is interesting for me, as a historian, to compare the documents from the de Menil archives with the official information published in the press, looking both for facts and sensation.³⁰ It is even more interesting to see the evolution of the family's point of view on the matter after Dominique de Menil's death in 1998. We know for sure that the frescoes from Lysi were stolen after the Turkish invasion in 1974, but we do not know exactly when. From their miserable state we can guess that they were stored in terrible conditions. During her stay in Paris in June 1983 Dominique de Menil got the photographs of wall paintings from Yani Petsopoulos, the art dealer in London, known to her. At that time their provenance was unknown, therefore the confidential investigation began, directed by Professor Bertrand Davezac, curator in the Menil Foundation, and the attorney from New York City, Herbert Brownell, who was engaged to represent the Foundation. Petsopoulos, Davezac and Walter Hoops, Menil Collection director, went to see the originals,

1993. There is a great literature about the Rothko Chapel and Dr Nora Laos is making her contribution to it right now.

²⁹ Cf. K Shkapich, *Sanctuary; the Spirit in/of Architecture*, Houston (TX) 2003; B. Davezac, *Four Icons in the Menil Collection*, Houston (TX) 1992.

³⁰ Cf. for example Patricia C. Johnson who in her article "The Menil Pays 'Ransom' to Restore Frescoes," *Houston Chronicle*, Sunday Jan. 8 1989, 14, claims that frescoes came from the St. Themonianos chapel but in... Famagusta. Sounds better. Lysi is so difficult to find on the map...

which happened to be in Munich stored by Aydin Dikmen, an antique dealer from Konya (Turkey) who appeared to be a smuggler of stolen icons out of churches in Turkey.³¹ The way in which he stored the frescoes is, therefore, not surprising. The angels surrounding Christ Pantocrator from the dome had been cut as separate fragments. The heads of Christ, of Mother of God, and of Christ on her breast were also in pieces.

Thirty-eight objects – good as items for separate sales. There was no doubt of their authenticity. However abused, they were still attractive as the dome was restored by Cypriots in the 1960s as was known later. Petsopoulos undertook the investigation to find out where the frescoes were stolen from. In September 1983 the Embassy of Cyprus in Washington D.C. stated that the frescoes were Cypriot. Brownell acting on behalf of his veiled client and Petsopoulos himself arranged a visit of Dominique de Menil on Cyprus in November. She appeared in Nicosia accompanied by Hopps, Petsopoulos and Brownell to talk to the officials of the Republic of Cyprus. Then the Cyprus Counsel of Ministers received an offer that the Menil Foundation will restore the frescoes on its behalf and it was proposed that Cyprus should allow their loan to the Menil Foundation in Houston for a display for a public. The Menil funds in a Swiss bank were earmarked for this purpose. As the frescoes were the church monuments, the Archbishop of Cyprus approved the project. In July 1984 the restoration was devoted to the laboratory of Laurence Morocco in London in consultation with engineer Peter Rice from Ove Arup, London and Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, a restorer from the Menil Foundation. The restoration lasted till Spring 1988. In April that year the frescoes reached

31 Fax of 31 May 1989 from William Constantine Crassas from Consulate of the Republic of Cyprus in Houston to Mrs Susan Davidson, from the Menil Collection, 2. Menil Archives, Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum (MA 2007-001, BFCM), Box 4.

Houston safely.³² In the meantime the agreement between the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus and the Menil Collection was signed according to which the frescoes were to remain with the Menil family for fifteen years starting from 1986.³³ The meticulous reconstruction of the frescoes was described by Morrocco in the book on the Lysi frescoes written together with Weyl Carr. To reconstruct the monument the styrofoam dome was built. “In order to reshape the fragments as they were originally, we needed to remove the unstable animal-glue/canvas backing which was supporting them, and apply a facing support on the front,” wrote Morrocco.³⁴ Then a wooden frame structure was built to protect the work. Peter Rice suggested adding glass fiber skin as a final support.³⁵ All fragments matched so perfectly that there were only small empty spaces between them. Morrocco and his team made a masterpiece. Then the question arose how to present the frescoes to the public. The project offered by Chris Wilkinson, the architect from London, followed the shapes of Byzantine constructions. However, modernized to suit contemporary standards, it did not suit the imagination of Dominique de Menil.³⁶ Considering this one and others, she decided to turn to her son, Francois, a filmmaker, and a graduate in architecture. It is worth quoting in extenso:

“Dear Francois: I need you. I need your help to design a building for the Cypriot frescoes. We have to be ready to

³² Chronology of events concerning 13th-century Byzantine Frescoes involving Cyprus and the Menil Foundation, July 1988, 6. Photocopy of the typewritten document from the Menil Archives..., Box 5.

³³ Agreement between the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus and the Menil Foundation, 7, signed by Dominique de Menil on 3 March 1987 and His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus, Chrysostomos, on 24 March 1987. Menil Archives..., Box 2.

³⁴ A. Weyl Carr and L. J. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece*, 132.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 145.

³⁶ Letter of 18 March 1987 from Chris Wilkinson to Paul Winkler from the Menil Foundation with sketches enclosed. Menil Archives..., Box 2.

build ‘a chapel’ if the Archbishop of Cyprus reminds us of our contract. The plans we have developed have been justly criticized: without being a replica of the Lysi chapel they are reminiscent of it, and it has been argued that it would smack of ‘Disneyland.’”³⁷ She admitted that her intention was to reconstruct in Houston a chapel similar to the one from which the frescoes had been ripped off. Bertrand Davezac suggested a museum presentation with frescoes at the eye level. “It leaves out their spiritual importance, and betrays their original significance. Only a *consecrated chapel* [my italics], used for liturgical functions, would do spiritual justice to the frescoes,” she continued. “For the first time important fragments of a religious building are not considered only as antiquities. They are approached also as relics and consideration is given to their religious nature.”³⁸ Then in the next paragraph, Dominique de Menil switches from the idea of the consecrated building to the Rothko Chapel and shows it as a model to imitate: “We touch here a subtle domain involving psychology and spirituality,” she writes, paradoxically, without thinking that these domains are incompatible. “You know that Rothko created a truly sacred space. Restored to a living situation the frescoes would correspond to the Rothko panels. Seven centuries apart, Rothko and the painter of the frescoes expressed the same human aspiration to reach the ineffable.”³⁹ It looks like Dominique de Menil was thinking about Rothko in the context of the first stage of his project in 1964 when he really knew what a sacred space meant. But then, in his madness, he created something completely opposite. He did not like himself, he did not like the world, he showed it in his Chapel. I am not the only person who does not like Rothko’s aesthetics. Simon

³⁷ Letter of 25 April 1989 from Dominique de Menil to Francois de Menil. Menil Archives..., Box 2.

³⁸ Loc. cit.

³⁹ Loc. cit.

Schauma, a famous and very tolerant art historian, presenting his program on Mark Rothko in Houston PBS, said about this chapel: “Do we feel bright and beautiful? I am not sure.”



Fig. 1, 2. Houston, Texas. The Byzantine Chapel Fresco Museum. General view (exterior and interior)

But the question was solved, and Francois de Menil began to think about a shelter for the chapel, creating A Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum (fig. 1, 2, I, II). Before her final decision, Dominique de Menil already started fundraising and she addressed the Levantis Foundation for support. She stated that the Menil Foundation had spent already almost one million dollars to recover the frescoes. “The estimated cost to build a well air-conditioned and technically adequate chapel is estimated at \$ 900,000.00. The Menil Foundation cannot carry this new load.”⁴⁰ She needed money for the Collection, opened a year before. She offered a deal to split the sum into three shares: \$ 300,000.00 each among Cypriot Greeks or Americans of Greek origin. “The extraordinary beauty of the frescoes, saved from destruction, on loan in the United States, could offer an occasion to remind the world of the plight of Cyprus,” she ended.⁴¹ The City of

⁴⁰ Letter of 9 May 1988 from Dominique de Menil to C. Levantis in London. Menil Archives..., Box 4

⁴¹ Loc. cit.

Houston offered a space for the building.⁴² On 19 November 1990 Dominique de Menil invited the Council, the friends and special guests of The Menil Collection to a viewing of frescoes.⁴³ They were presented in the “Davezac” way, as the building was still to be erected. The costs occurred to be much higher – \$ 2,442,000 with possible small deductions.⁴⁴

The construction of the Fresco Chapel appeared to be a challenge. The lawyers started to discuss the question of prolonging the loan agreement, maybe to 50 years. What is more, they wrote: “We need to look at certain other legal issues such as, who is the Archbishopric and is he or it a ‘church’? We need to further scrutinize the meaning of ‘consecration’ of the Chapel as an Orthodox church and its effect, if any, on the alternative choices discussed herein.”⁴⁵ These pragmatic words put an end to the great idea that Dominique de Menil had in mind. “The Byzantine Fresco Foundation was established as a non-profit organization dedicated to the creation of the Byzantine Fresco Chapel in Houston. The Chapel will be the repository for the only examples outside the Orthodox world of frescoes from the Byzantine Period. Together the Chapel and the frescoes from Cyprus will serve as symbols in the United States of the magnificent cultural and spiritual legacy of the Byzantine period.”⁴⁶ It was seductive for the Orthodox officials from Galveston, not to mention His Grace, Bishop Isaiah of the Diocese of Denver..⁴⁷ In this document, of 1994, Francois de Menil pre-

⁴² Letter of 8 December 1993 from Donna Kristaponis from Planning and Development Department of City of Houston to Paul Winkler, Director of Menil Foundation. Menil Archives..., Box 2.

⁴³ Invitation. Menil Archives..., Box 5.

⁴⁴ Letter of 14 April 1992 from Barbara Coats on behalf of Paul Winkler to Francois de Menil. Menil Archives..., Box 5.

⁴⁵ Memorandum of 21 January 1992 from Singleton & Cooksey to Menil Foundation Inc. Menil Archives..., Box 5.

⁴⁶ The Byzantine Fresco Chapel Campaign, Progress report, fall 1994, 8. Menil Archives..., Box 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 1.

sented his project “showing how the glass panels enclosing the frescoes will appear from within the containing building of steel. The panels will be held together and stabilized by a system of metal clips and tension rods, the latter replacing – and suggesting – the vaulting pendentives typical for Byzantine architecture.”⁴⁸ It meant that the fundraising was quite efficient. The Foundation campaign was looking for \$3.4 million – \$2.4 million for construction costs and \$1 million to provide funds for annual maintenance. Completion of the project of the chapel was expected by June 30 1994.⁴⁹ The work was delayed but finally the Byzantine Chapel Fresco Museum was opened on 8 February 1997. Special brochures were published. Weyl Carr was quoted: “The Byzantine icon does not stare at its viewer, this figure of Christ does not glare at or threaten the viewer. Before the viewer, he simply is.”⁵⁰ Yes, he simply is and he attracts our sight, however, as Stylianou stated, Christ’s eyes weren’t expressed correctly.

Whatever our impression is, Dominique de Menil managed to see her dream. Fortunately, the explication of A. Weyl Carr did not connect this great idea with the Rothko Chapel, which was completely different in its message. The journalists expressed their enthusiasm: “De Menil has created a spiritual space that brings the visitor’s attention to the reinstalled frescoes, the only Byzantine wall paintings in the Western hemisphere. Magnificent relics of an age of faith, they are larger in spirit than their relatively small size should suggest,” wrote David Boetti in his article “Resurrecting Byzantium.”⁵¹ De Menil described this experience as “a place and time where the painter and observer

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 2.

⁴⁹ Project to create the Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum. Draft Proposal without date. Menil Archives..., Box 5.

⁵⁰ The Byzantine Frescoes Chapel, Houston 1997, 4. Menil Archives..., Box 5.

⁵¹ D. Boetti, “Resurrecting Byzantium,” *San Francisco Examiner*, Sunday Aug. 30, 1998, C5. Menil Archives..., Box 4.

meet.”⁵² “Such paintings are not just for decoration,” Mrs de Menil said for *The Dallas Morning News*. “Their function is in glory and the praise of God.” In the chapel “they have recovered their function,” she said.⁵³

Dr Nora Laos from the very beginning questioned the choice of locking the chapel into the museum built by Francois de Menil. “The frescoes are represented in Houston as an isolated object of art.” She called his explanation of this way of presenting the frescoes “Hegelianque,” quoting the architect: “The immaterial materiality of the infill glass panels intensifies the absence/presence of the original site and transforms the glass structure into an apparition constantly fluxing as one moves through it.”⁵⁴ “The frescoes themselves are not visible from the entrance,” she wrote. “As relics, literally, ‘those that remain,’ the frescoes are now safely protected in their Texan refuge. However their meaning has irrevocably changed.”⁵⁵ At the end Nora Laos worries about the fate of frescoes if one day they will be taken to Cyprus. I would not worry so much about it, as on the UNESCO list from 1985 there are 176 monuments from Cyprus of first quality and 184 of the second. Lysi belongs to the second category.⁵⁶ It is in the interest of Cyprus to keep the paintings in Houston.

If they were taken, however, what would happen to the building which resembles Rothko’s architecture? Well, it will suit the postmodern landscape which was more important for de Menils than even a modest imitation of a Byzantine construction. Many

⁵² J. Makichuk, “Byzantine Frescoes,” *Texas Journey*, May/June 1998, 25. Menil Archives..., Box 4.

⁵³ B. Nichols, “Fresco Museum Opens in Houston,” *The Dallas Morning News*, March 31, 1997. Menil Archives..., Box 4.

⁵⁴ N. Laos, “Byzantium in Texas: The Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum in Houston.” The paper delivered at Byzantine Studies conference. Annual meeting, St. Louis (MO), Nov. 11, 2006, 6 (draft).

⁵⁵ Loc. cit.

⁵⁶ “UNESCO Protection of Cultural Property,” 1985, 18–38. Menil Archives..., Box 5.

churches on Cyprus today are small, flat, covered by pitched roofs. But this model did not suit here. I cannot forget the first idea of Dominique de Menil, who wanted to build a home for God represented in the frescoes. Then she changed her mind, and her successors have a completely different point of view. As I am writing this paper at the time of Easter, when in the Roman Catholic Church the description of the road to Emmaus is read, I can't stop thinking about the quotation I used as an epigraph to this fascinating story. I will also add: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us?" (Luke 24:32). Dominique de Menil's heart probably was burning when she saw the paintings. During my stay in Houston, I visited the chapel several times and I observed the reaction of the guests, but "their eyes were holden" like in Luke's Gospel.