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GREEK-ROMANIAN SYMBIOTIC PATTERNS
IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD:
HISTORY, MENTALITIES, INSTITUTIONS - I

Nikos Panou

ABSTRACT: The patriarchal decree validating the establishment of the Wallachian archdiocese in 1359; a series of documents pertaining to the early history of the Koutloumousiou monastery on Mount Athos; the surviving redactions of Patriarch Niphon II's lost *vita*; the proceedings of the interrogation of a Greek priest arrested by the Polish authorities on charges of conspiracy and espionage; and an emphatically digressive section in Matthew of Myra's verse chronicle known as *History of Wallachia*. This article, of which the first part is presently published, offers a discussion of these textual materials – which span four crucial centuries of Balkan history and represent an intriguing variety of discursive practices and traditions. It aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate mechanisms that generated a climate of toleration, mobility and inter-ethnic contact in the Ottoman Balkans, enabling a symbiotic relationship between Greeks and Romanians, which found its vital space in the semi-autonomous and strategically located Danubian principalities, and endured throughout the early modern period despite having been severely undermined by opposing tendencies and conflicting interests. The two sections at hand focus on the Bishop of Myra's pivotal text, as well as on written records related to the early, and yet formative, contacts between the nascent Romanian states and the late Byzantine Empire; in the two remaining sections, which will appear in the next volume of *The Historical Review*, this endeavour will be brought to a conclusion by means of a (necessarily selective) presentation of evidence dating from the period after the fall of Constantinople and up to the beginning of the seventeenth century.

At the end of the thirteenth century, Osman I (*reg.* c. 1290-1324), the emblematic founder of the Ottoman dynasty, established in Bithynia a tiny emirate, consisting probably of some 40,000 tents. This tribal chieftain was only one of many *ghazi* leaders active at that point in the ill-defined frontier zone of Western Anatolia, and his *beglik* emerged among several other similar political formations that had occurred as a result of massive invasions of Turcoman nomadic populations into the crumbling eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire from the eleventh century on.¹ Under these circumstances, it would

¹ For an informed discussion of the origins of the Ottoman state and certain crucial aspects pertaining to the early process by which “the political enterprise headed by a certain Osman in the Western Anatolian marches of the late thirteenth century was shaped into a centralized state under the House of Osman in a few generations”, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995, esp. pp. 118-154.

have been almost impossible to predict that within a few centuries Osman's ancestors would be reigning over one of the most potent and feared states in the pre-modern period. By the seventeenth century, when the military and political power of the Ottoman Empire had reached a definitive peak, its vast possessions extended from the Arabian peninsula to the Ukrainian steppe and from the Mesopotamian expanses to the northern coast of Africa, almost as far as Gibraltar, affecting, thus, directly or indirectly, the politics, economy and culture of a substantial part of the known world. Inescapably, the rapid territorial expansion both to the East and to the West, which had been a salient feature of the policy of Ottoman governments at least up to the first sultans after Suleiman the Magnificent (*reg.* 1520-1566),² brought about countless changes to crucial aspects of human existence in the areas that were found within the range of its influence, especially in the "core" provinces of Anatolia and Rumelia. Indeed, not only did the Ottoman spread give rise to new and diverse socio-political, financial and religious realities, but – mainly due to the radically heterogeneous composition of the Empire's population – it also opened up unprecedented venues and opportunities for inter-ethnic communication and exchange, be it material, institutional or cultural.

In this paper I seek to examine the presence of Greek-speaking Ottoman subjects in the Danubian principalities – especially Wallachia – in the early modern period, focusing on the intricate relational patterns that were gradually but steadily developed between them and the native populations within the peculiar, as much as inviting, circumstances that were generated in the context of Ottoman domination in the larger area of the Balkans. This multi-layered process of interaction and osmosis extended over a period of roughly four centuries, from immediately after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 until the first half of the nineteenth century, and it played an instrumental role in the modern development of both ethnic groups. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that it has attracted a certain amount of scholarly attention, there are still issues of close relevance and central importance that have not been addressed in ways that could yield fully satisfactory answers, especially with regard to those mechanisms, pragmatic or ideological, that enabled, facilitated and eventually consolidated that prolonged, if ardently opposed, symbiotic activity, but also to the various forms of ethnic affiliations in which it resulted. Here this urgent task of historiographic interpretation is undertaken by means of an analysis of

² A brief overview of the Empire's history up to 1590, focused on the major political and military developments of the period, can be found in Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp. 27-66.

suggestive textual evidence dating from the late Byzantine period, and, mainly, from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when this activity was in its formative stages, not having yet reached the gigantic proportions that it would acquire at a slightly later point. The chronological limit of this inquiry – Radu Mihnea’s reign in Wallachia (1611-1616, 1620-1623) – is regarded as representing a turning point in the history of Greek-Romanian relations. As is usually the case when it comes to historiographic periodisations of the past, this adopted boundary stemmed mostly from a methodological necessity to restrict the scope of our investigation in order to produce a coherent account of complex and elusive socio-economic, ideological and cultural phenomena. It is nonetheless true that the crucial decades from Mihnea’s reign to the beginning of the eighteenth century – known as the pre-Phanariot era in the principalities – exhibit a series of singular traits and characteristics that render them discernibly different from, though deeply rooted in, the preceding period. In consequence, they call for a detailed elucidation based on the results of a focused and individualised study.

I. An Early Seventeenth-century Testimony

At the end of December 1610, the Hungarian ruler of Transylvania, Gábor Báthori (*reg.* 1608-1613), invaded Wallachia. The local voivode,³ Radu Șerban

³ The Romanian word “voivode”, or “voyvoda”, is a linguistic loan from Old Slavonic, originally meaning “supreme commander of the army”. It is one of the terms used in Moldavian and Wallachian sources throughout the medieval and early modern periods to invoke the title of the respective ruler of the Danubian principalities. Since the imposition of Ottoman suzerainty in the fifteenth century, the Romanian voivodes played, or were expected to play, the role of provincial vassals to the Sublime Porte. Other titles had also been in use, such as “hospodar”, “domn”, “prince”, “duke”, “bey”, and, especially with the Phanariot rulers, the Greek *πρίγκιψ*, *αὐθέντης* and *ἡγεμὼν*. “Voivode” will be generally employed here, with occasional concessions to the more familiar term “prince”, which seems to have prevailed against all other versions in modern historiography. Nevertheless, as a contemporary observer, M.-Ph. Zallony, points out in his revengefully vitriolic essay on the Phanariots, the rulers of the principalities might have been presumptuously assuming the titles of “prince” or “highness” for themselves, but the only title that was officially recognised by the Porte and attributed to them upon their appointment to the throne of Wallachia or Moldavia was none other than “voivode”, on account of their being non-Muslim: “Les Fanariotes parvenus par le fait à la Vice-Royauté, se font sacrer par le Patriarch de Constantinople; mais la Sublime-Porte, malgré cette cérémonie, ne leur accorde que le titre de *Wayvode* [sic], et jamais celui de Pacha, ni celui de Vice-Roi, à cause de leur qualité d’infidèle.” Marc-Philippe Zallony, *Traité sur les princes de la Vallachie et de la Moldavie*,

(reg. 1602-1611), despite the fact that he had been repeatedly warned about Báthori's military preparations, was taken by surprise and, overwhelmed, sought refuge in neighbouring Moldavia, leaving his principality at the mercy of the rapacious intruder. Báthori proclaimed himself "Prince of Transylvania and Transalpine Wallachia",⁴ and reigned ruthlessly for three months, sinking the land into a state of terror and plunder, ravaging, raiding and looting even churches and monasteries. By March of the following year, though, Báthori was expelled from Wallachia after an armed intervention of Ottoman troops, and Sultan Ahmed I (reg. 1603-1617) installed a new voivode, the openly pro-Turkish Radu Mihnea.

In the meanwhile, Radu Șerban had returned from exile and had managed to gather around him the Wallachian aristocracy, the boyars, aiming, on the one hand, to gain their support against the recently appointed Turkophile voivode, and, on the other, to join forces with them in order to wage a retaliatory campaign against Báthori. He succeeded in both: Radu Mihnea was deposed soon after his ascension, and Șerban himself, leading a considerable number of men, crossed over into Transylvania, where Báthori had withdrawn, to win a massive victory over the warlike prince and his army in June 1611. Nevertheless, by the time he returned to Tîrgoviște, the old Wallachian capital, the overthrown Radu Mihnea had already invaded the country one more time and, under the auspices and with the military support of the Sublime Porte, had re-established himself on the throne. Șerban was chased out of the country and ended up in Vienna, where he was received by his Habsburg allies.⁵

sortis de Constantinople, connus sous le nom Fanariotes, Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1830, p. 38 (note 1); cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 27-28. For interesting information on the titles of Moldavian and Wallachian rulers, as employed in Romanian, Ottoman and Western sources, see Viorel Panaite, "Power Relationships in the Ottoman Empire: Sultans and the Tribute Paying Princes of Wallachia and Moldavia (16th-18th Centuries)", *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 37/1-2 – 38/1-2 (1999-2000), esp. pp. 52-56, and Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII* [Byzantine political tradition in the Romanian lands from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries], Bucharest: Corint, 2001, pp. 24-39.

⁴ As Mihai Viteazul – Michael the Brave – had done ten years earlier; cf. Constantin Giurescu (ed.), *Chronological History of Romania*, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1972, p. 114. For Michael's short-lived but hugely ambitious and radically pursued plans to unify the three principalities on a common front against the advances of the Ottoman Empire, see briefly Dinu Giurescu, *Illustrated History of the Romanian People*, transl. Sonia Schlanger, Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1981, pp. 159-168.

⁵ Radu Șerban's reign has been described as an "epilogue to the age of Michael the Brave". The huge material demands and the oppressive political and administrative control

This relatively short period of intense political and military activity has been recorded in a little more than 130 coupled 15-syllable verses in an almost contemporary verse chronicle written by Matthew of Myra and known as *History of Wallachia*.⁶ The author was by no means an insignificant figure of

that the Sublime Porte had imposed on Wallachia during the second half of the sixteenth century had united the nobility of the country under the same cause, which was best expressed and put into action by the political and military struggles of Michael the Brave and Radu Șerban. Nevertheless, several decades would have to elapse after Șerban's demise before another Wallachian ruler adopted an openly anti-Ottoman policy. With Radu Mihnea and his immediate successors the situation had already changed significantly; cf. Kurt Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 164-165. For a comprehensive and detailed account of the 1610-1611 events briefly described here, see Alfred Vincent, "Byzantium Regained? The *History, Advice and Lament* by Matthew of Myra", *Θησαυρίσματα* 28 (1998), pp. 286-287; for a compact chronological survey of the period in question, see C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁶ See Émile Legrand (ed.), *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire*, Vol. II, Paris: Maisonneuve, 1881, pp. 239-244 (lines 237-370). For a substantial discussion on Matthew's chronicle, see Vincent, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 291-308, with a detailed summary of its 1324 verses on pp. 285-291. The full title of the work, as published by Legrand, is *Ἐτέρα ἱστορία τῶν κατὰ τὴν Οὐγγροβλαχίαν τελεσθέντων, ἀρξαμένη ἀπὸ Σερμπάνου βοηβόνδα μέχρι Γαβριήλ βοηβόνδα, τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος δουκός, ποιηθεῖσα παρὰ τοῦ ἐν ἀρχιερεῦσι πανιερωτάτου μητροπολίτου Μυρέων κυροῦ Ματθαίου, τοῦ ἐκ Πωγωνιανῆς, καὶ ἀφιερωθεῖσα τῷ ἐνδοξοτάτῳ ἀρχοντι κυρίῳ Ἰωάννῃ τῷ Κατριτζῆ* [Another history of the events that took place in Wallachia from the reign of voivode Șerban to that of voivode Gabriel, the present ruler, composed by Matthew from Pogoniani, Metropolitan of Myra and most revered among archbishops, and dedicated to the right honourable lord Ioannis Katritzis]. The word *ἔτερα* ("another" – or "second", as Vincent translates it), which appears in the very beginning of the title, probably accounts for the fact that Matthew's text was considered, in terms of chronological coverage, as a continuation of Stavrinos Vestiaris' verse chronicle on the reign and death of Michael the Brave, written very soon after the latter's assassination in August 1601. Stavrinos' text covers a period of seven crucial years in the history of Romania, starting with Michael's revolt in 1594 and ending in 1601; Matthew, on the other hand, begins with Moise Székely's invasion in Wallachia in February 1603 and Radu Șerban's victory over the Transylvanian leader in July of that year. The chronicle goes as far as 1618 and ends with a description of the first months of the reign of Gabriel Movilă - the "present ruler" of the title. The two texts were first printed in 1638, in the same edition and one after the other, and were reprinted (always together) at least 12 times until the first decade of the nineteenth century. It is, therefore, quite possible that the title of Matthew's chronicle, as we have it today, does not exactly correspond to the actual title originally given by the author; it was probably modified and attached to the work by the anonymous editor who prepared the first seventeenth-century edition. For chronological information and the printing history of the two chronicles, see Alfred Vincent, "From Life to Legend: The Chronicles of Stavrinos and

the period. Born in Epirus around 1550, Matthew spent several years of his life in Istanbul, where he served at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but had also travelled extensively in the Balkans, and as far as Moscow, usually in the context of some ecclesiastical mission. In 1605 he was presented with the honorary title of Metropolitan of Myra, and around the same time he settled in Wallachia. A little later, Radu Șerban appointed him abbot of the prosperous Dealu monastery outside Tîrgoviște, where he remained until his death in 1624.⁷

The fact that Matthew was living right in the middle of things in Wallachia in the first two decades of the seventeenth century had given him direct access to the majority of the events relayed in his chronicle. It had also put him in a position to experience on a personal level the immediate consequences, the social and psychological effect, often deeply agitating and violently distressing, that the endless warfare and ever-recurring political upheavals had upon the everyday life of his contemporaries. Autobiographical references in this and other works of his indicate clearly that he was not writing *in vitro*. In another historiographic endeavour of his, for instance, preceding but not unrelated to the *History*, he offers an emotionally charged description of how he himself was forced to flee when Báthori invaded Wallachia at the end of 1610, seeking refuge and protection in a cave up in the mountains of Bistrița together with the abbot of a local monastery.⁸

Reasonably, then, the narration takes at times a personal tone, as is the case in the section of the chronicle that concerns us here. After having described the events that led to Radu Mihnea's second enthronement, Matthew goes on to talk about his peaceful and conciliatory reign, praising the magnanimity the ruler had exhibited in pardoning his former enemies among the boyars and his

Palamidis on Michael the Brave", *Θησαυρίσματα* 25 (1995), pp. 168-170, and A. Vincent, "Byzantium Regained?", pp. 275-277.

⁷ For further ergo-biographical information on Matthew, who had also been a highly skilled manuscript illustrator, see Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, *L'Épire et les Pays Roumains*, Ioannina: Association d'Études Épirotes, 1984, pp. 163-168; and, mainly, A. Vincent, "Byzantium Regained?", pp. 282-285, with updated bibliography. Vincent dates Matthew's establishment in Wallachia to 1606-1607, but it is also possible that he had moved there at some point between 1603 and 1605, as it has been arguably suggested by Dan Simonesco in his "Le chroniqueur Matthieu de Myre et une traduction ignorée de son 'Histoire'", *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 4 (1966), p. 83.

⁸ Cf. A. Vincent, "Byzantium Regained?", p. 282; see also D. Simonesco, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 83-86, with interesting information on the distinguished status that Matthew had acquired in Wallachia as a "représentant marquant de l'aristocratie cléricale", and the role he played in the religious and political life of the country.

determination to bring a spirit of loyalty, cooperation and mutual trust to the country. In fact, the reader cannot fail to observe that the chronicler tends to be fairly sympathetic to the new voivode, to the extent that it is with a certain amount of indignation that he comes to describe how the grand stolnic Bărcan conspired with eight other Wallachian nobles to overthrow and kill Mihnea.

Admittedly, an attempted rebellion against the ruling prince is not a particularly surprising occurrence in the political history of the Danubian principalities. A climate of constant tension and political instability, conflicting interests and never-ending factions had affected and regulated the quality and the internal rhythm of the political life in the area since the time of Vladislav I and Mircea the Old, generating a series of more or less grave cases of dissension, discord and subversive intrigue. Indeed, a tradition of uneasy and intensely antagonistic relations between the respective central government and the local nobility had been firmly established by the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the situation had not changed at all by the time Radu Mihnea suddenly discovered that he was about to lose both the throne and his life.⁹

There is a point in Matthew's narration of the specific civil conflict, however, that puts the whole thing into a different perspective, of a particular interest to us here. The author takes special care to have it mentioned in the text that, besides killing Mihnea and installing their own protégé, a certain dignitary called Michael, the grand stolnic and his accomplices were *also* planning to slaughter the merchants and appropriate their possessions, as well as to extinguish τὸ γένος τῶν Ῥωμαίων, all the Greek people living or doing business in the country:

⁹ In Dinu Giurescu's *History of the Romanian People*, for instance, one comes across the following passage, which, despite the fact that it focuses on the political situation in the sixteenth century, can be applied to the period and events that Matthew recounted almost a century later: "The internal political life [in the principalities] was characterised by repeated conflicts between the central authority (the prince) and the boyars' parties: deceit, the pretender's plot and capital execution followed at short intervals. The repressions spared neither children nor women, nor even priests; certainly they did not spare the leaders. In the course of seven years (1529-1535) the princes Radu de la Afumați, Vlad Vintilă and Moise were killed in Wallachia; in Moldavia, the princes Ștefan Lăcustă, Ștefan Rareș and Despot Eraclid were murdered, whereas Prince Ștefăniță had to fight with his men the rebellious boyars." (p. 150; cf. also p. 227). Still in the context of the passage quoted here, but a little further down, Giurescu makes a passing reference to the sort of situation that Matthew is reacting against, as we shall soon explain: "There were also often conflicts between the 'old', 'autochthonous' nobility and the new one (especially made up of Greeks settled in the principalities from the seventeenth century on)." (p. 229).

Τον Ῥάδουλ βόδα ἤθελαν ἔξαφνα νὰ σκοτώσουν,
 Μιχάλην καμαράσιον ἀφέντην νὰ σηκώσουν·
 395 καὶ παρευθὺς νὰ δράμουσιν εἰς τοὺς πραγματευτάδαις,
 ἐκείνους νὰ σκοτώσουσι, νὰ πάρουν τοὺς ταφτάδαις,
 καὶ νὰ ἐξολοθρεύσουσι τὸ γένος τῶν Ῥωμαίων,
 ὅσ' εἶναι εἰς τὴν τζάρα τους νὰ μὴ φανοῦσι πλέον,
 ἄρχοντας καὶ ἀρχόμενους καὶ τὴν πτωχολογίαν,
 400 ποῦ θρέψουσι τὰ σπίτια τους ὅλοι μὲ πραγματεῖαν·
 ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς δὲν ἤθελε σὰν ἤθελαν ἐκεῖνοι,
 ἀμμὴ μὲ τὴν αἰτίαν τους ἤθελε νὰ τοὺς κρίνη·
 ἔτσι τοὺς ἀποφάσισε κατὰ τὸ ζήτημά τους
 πάντοτε οἱ ἐπίβουλοι νᾶχουν κακοὺς θανάτους·
 405 διότι, σὰν τὸ ἔμαθεν ὁ Ῥάδουλ βοεβόδας,
 τὰς κεφαλὰς του [ς] ἔκοψε τότε κατὰ τῆς ὥρας¹⁰

As a matter of fact, the terms *πραγματευτάδαις* [merchants] and *τὸ γένος τῶν Ῥωμαίων* [the Greek community]¹¹ are seemingly used in the quoted text

¹⁰ É. Legrand, *op. cit.*, p. 245 (lines 393-406): “They suddenly wanted to kill Prince Radu, / planning to appoint Michael, the treasurer, to the throne, / and then haste straight to the merchants, / and slaughter them, and confiscate their merchandise. / They intended to exterminate the Greek community, / so that all Greeks living in their land would vanish, / nobles and subordinates and the poor alike, / the very people who provide their households with wares and goods. / But God did not want what they wanted, / and He judged them according to their crime: / thus, He decided for them / that, as always, malevolent people should meet ghastly deaths; / for when Prince Radu found out about the plot, / he had their heads cut off without any delay;” Unless otherwise indicated all translations of quoted passages are mine. Legrand’s omission of the final [ς] in the possessive pronoun of line 406 must be a typographical mistake.

¹¹ As far as the author of this paper is concerned, it is impossible to translate the phrase *τὸ γένος τῶν Ῥωμαίων* into English in a way that would be literally accurate while retaining the conceptual and referential scope of the original Greek. The closest equivalent to the slippery word *γένος*, as employed by Matthew, would be “race”, designating a group of people unified on the basis of a broad sense of kinship usually drawn upon a number of shared interests, habits or characteristics. In order to avoid certain modern connotations of the term that are not present in Matthew’s use of it, I have chosen to translate the word as “community” in line 397, since in that particular context it is specified as referring exclusively to Greeks who reside in Wallachia; and as “people” in all other cases (lines 415-416), intending to convey the sense of a body of persons linked by a common language, institutions or beliefs, and not necessarily constituting a politically organised entity. On the other hand, a literal translation of Matthew’s *τῶν Ῥωμαίων* would inevitably result in a suggested presence of “Romans” in early seventeenth-century Wallachia. The term *Ῥωμαίοι* represents a denomination that has been in use for several centuries within a particular linguistic context in order to denote what would today be described as “the Greek people”. I have, therefore,

as if they were designating two separate and unrelated target groups of the potential insurgents. A little further on, however, Matthew's phrasing implies that, at least in this particular context, the two terms converge, not only in the sense that most Greeks residing in Wallachia were merchants, but also in that the vast majority of traders in the principality were of Greek origin: the chronicler warns that wiping out the Greeks would be tantamount to getting rid of the very people who have undertaken the indispensable task of supplying Wallachian households with products of commerce and daily goods.¹²

It is true, of course, that later on, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ethnonymic epithets denoting Greekness were employed to signify not only merchants of an actual Greek origin, but all kinds of Orthodox traders active in the Balkans regardless of their ethnic background; "Greek" had gradually become a generic term with religious and economic but not necessarily ethnic connotations. Traian Stoianovich has already pointed to this striking socio-linguistic phenomenon in "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant", where he elaborates on the reasons and historical conditions that led to this contextually and geographically transgressive development.¹³ In this case, however, it seems to be rather unlikely that

translated it accordingly. It should be made clear, however, that the words "Greek" and "Greeks" are employed throughout my text without the nationalist connotations that they are commonly imbued with at present. In the context of this study, a "Greek" is a Greek-speaking subject of the Ottoman Empire, whose religious, cultural and ideological standards or points of reference were predominantly derived from within the large (and deep) pool of post-Byzantine Orthodox civilisation. For a detailed discussion on the background and the complex socio-historical circumstances that led to the eventual imposition of the highly controversial term Ρωμαίοι and its widely used linguistic variant Ρωμιόι, see Maria Mantouvalou, "Romaïos-Romios-Romiosyni. La notion de 'Romain' avant et après la chute de Constantinople", *Επιστημονική Επετηρίς της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών* 21 (1979-1985), Athens, 1985, pp. 169-198, although the period that concerns us here is left out of the author's consideration; see, however, pp. 186-187 and 192 (note 58), with observations on the concepts of γένος and έθνος in relation to those of Ρωμαίοι and Έλληνες, respectively; cf. also Maria Mantouvalou, "Ρωμαίος-Ρωμιός και Ρωμιόσύνη. Κριτική βιβλιογραφία" [Romaïos-Romios and Romiosyni: critical bibliography], *Μαντατοφόρος* 22 (1983), pp. 34-72, where a selective group of nineteenth- and twentieth-century secondary sources on the topic is critically presented.

¹² See É. Legrand, *op. cit.*, p. 246 (esp. lines 423-424); cf. below, note 18; and A. Vincent, "Byzantium Regained?", p. 303.

¹³ Cf. Traian Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant", in *Between East and West: The Balkan and Mediterranean Worlds*, Vol. II: *Economies and Societies: Traders, Towns, and Households*, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1992, p. 50: "For a full

Matthew's *Ρωμαίοι* is used in the broad, ever-expanding sense that the ethnonym Stoianovich is commenting upon had acquired in the eighteenth century. To my knowledge, there is no historical evidence that could justify modern historians in accepting that the linguistic superimposition of the specific ethnic denomination had been effective as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century. In addition to that, Matthew's own phraseology, the logic of his arguments, and the focused scope of his narration leave no doubt that when he talks about, and later includes himself in, τὸ γένος τῶν Ῥωμαίων he is referring to a Greek ethnic group, that is, to people of a distinct Greek origin.

At any rate, Matthew describes the whole incident in dramatic overtones, and the salvation of thousands of Greeks (rich and poor, nobles and commoners) from certain death is attributed to divine providence: God did not agree with the plans of the insolent boyars – especially since their dark intentions for subversion and bloodshed extended beyond Radu and over to the “most Christian” Greeks – and, therefore, gave them the end they deserved. The scheme was exposed in time and the plot immediately put down. The traitors were decapitated and thrown naked off the walls of the city, leaving behind desolated widows and providing an object lesson to anyone tempted to take up the intrigue from where the aspiring mutineers had left it.¹⁴

In the following verses, Matthew makes sure that the readers of his chronicle realise the significance of the situation. Despite his innate mildness and his merciful disposition, the prince showed absolutely no compassion in eradicating Bărcan's subversive network. Mihnea's vengeance was intended to convey a double message:

[N]ὰ μάθουσιν οἱ ἄελοιοποὶ νὰ μὴν ἐπιβουλεύου
 410 ποτὲ τοὺς ἀφεντάδαις τοὺς, μόνε νὰ τοὺς δουλεύου
 μὲ πίστιν, μὲ εὐλάβειαν, μὲ τὴν ἐμπιστοσύνη,
 ἂν θέλουσιν τὸ κεφάλι τοὺς εἰς αὐτοὺς ν' ἀπομείνη,

century after 1750 [...] Greek was the primary language of commerce in the Balkans, and Balkan merchants, regardless of ethnic origin, generally spoke Greek and often assumed Greek names. Often of Greek nationality, ‘Greeks’ were sometimes ‘Greeks’ only in the sense that they were not ‘Latins’. In Hungary, Croatia and the villages of Srem and Backa, the term ‘Greek’ did not contain a narrow ethnic significance, for Greeks, Macedo-Vlachs, Macedo-Slavs, Wallachians, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Orthodox Albanians were all ‘Greeks’, that is, of the ‘Greek’ faith. The religious connotation yielded even to the economic: a ‘Greek’ was above all a peddler or merchant, and in this sense even a Jew could be a ‘Greek’”. See also *ibid.*, pp. 62-63, where Stoianovich discusses the process of “Hellenisation” that all Balkan Orthodox ethnic groups, with the exception of the Serbs, underwent in the eighteenth century.

¹⁴ Cf. É. Legrand, *op. cit.*, p. 245 (esp. lines 407-408).

Ῥωμαίους τοὺς χριστιανούς νὰ μὴ καταφρονοῦσιν
μόνον νὰ τοὺς εὐβλάβουνται καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἀγαποῦσιν,
415 ὅτ' εἶναι γένος ἅγιον, γένος εὐλογημένον,
γένος ὀρθοδοξότατον, ἀπ' ὅλους τιμημένον·
αὐτ' εἶναι ὅπ' ἐγέμισαν τὸν κόσμον μὲ σοφίαν,
μὲ γράμματα, μὲ ἄρματα καὶ μὲ θεολογίαν,
τὴν πίστιν τῶν χριστιανῶν αὐτοὶ τὴν ἐδεχθῆκαν,
420 κα' εἰς ὅλους τὴν ἐμοίρασσαν, χριστιανούς ἐποῦσαν·
αὐτοὶ ἐσᾶς ἐβάπτισαν μὲ τὴν ὀρθοδοξίαν,
τώρα νὰ τοὺς σκοτώσετε δὲν εἶναι ἁμαρτία;¹⁵

The quoted passage attests to a cleverly conceived and intentionally transparent rhetorical manipulation of the narrative material: both the period starting with line 413, and the one that precedes it, elaborating on the political lesson that the unavoidable failure of the attempted revolt should invoke, are made syntactically dependent on the same clause, “so that everybody *shall learn not to...*”¹⁶ The verb recapitulates emphatically the preventive character of the princely cruelty and the political necessity that underlies it. But in addition to that, Matthew seems to be indicating that those who disregard and misbehave towards the “Christian Greeks” are unmistakably identified, in terms of the moral quality and the potential consequences of their behaviour, with the exterminated traitors, whose actions provoked the severe, paradigmatic punishment he has just described in detail. Greeks must be welcomed, accommodated, respected and even “loved” by the natives of Wallachia because they represent a blessed – indeed, a holy – people. For Matthew, the contribution of the Greek γένος to the universal and the Wallachian civilisation consists mainly, and most importantly, in the conscious and beneficial spread of both secular and sacred wisdom, on the one hand, and the Christian faith, of which Greeks were the first ardent exponents, on the other. Consequently, it cannot be but a disgrace, a certified “sin” [ἁμαρτία], for someone to engage in plans of mass elimination against these most generous apostles of Orthodoxy.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246 (lines 409-422): “Everybody should learn never to mean harm / against his ruler, but only to serve him / with loyalty, respect and trust, / if he wants his head to stay on his shoulders; / people should also realise that they must not nourish bad thoughts against Christian Greeks / but respect them and love them, / since they are a holy, blessed people, / a people most Christian in its Orthodoxy, and widely honoured; / for it is Greeks who have lavishly bestowed wisdom upon the world, / and letters and the art of war and theology; / it was they who first embraced the Christian faith, / and disseminated it, making Christians out of everyone; / they have converted you to Orthodoxy: / wouldn't it be a sin for you to slay them now?”

¹⁶ Cf. lines 410-412 and 409, respectively; emphasis is mine.

Greeks, however, are not beyond reproach either. They share with the Wallachians an equal responsibility for the dangerous situation that had just been defused thanks to the perceptiveness of the voivode and God's special care. The author strongly indicates that the attitude of the Greeks towards the natives calls for some serious changes. Here, Matthew's strategic defense of his cause and vision is developed on a rather different ground. What before took the form of an abstract, theoretical argument on the Wallachian people's benefit from the cultural and spiritual superiority of the Greek settlers, aiming at an *a priori* justification of the latter's aggressive presence in the country, becomes now a historically informed and socially sensitive critique based, apparently, on personal experience and observation. Avarice [πλεονεξία] is the most striking and appalling feature detected in the Greek attitude toward the native inhabitants of Wallachia, and it is the central concept around which Matthew deploys his critique against his wilful compatriots:

[Ἄ]λλὰ καὶ σεῖς προσέχεσθε, ὧ ἄρχοντες Ῥωμαῖοι,
 ὅσοι ἔς τὴν κούρτην βρίσκεσθε καὶ ὅσοι ἀγοραῖοι·
 425 ἰδέτε καὶ προσέχετε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀδικίαν,
 τοὺς Βλάχους μὴ πειράζετε μὲ τὴν πλεονεξίαν·
 μὴδὲ νὰ ἦσ' ἀχόρταγοι ἔς τοὺς ἐπτωχοὺς ἀπάνω,
 ὅτ' εἶν' θεὸς ἔς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ βλέπει ἀποπάνω·
 [...]
 θαρρῶ καὶ δυναστεύετε τοὺς ἐπτωχοὺς τοὺς Βλάχους,
 καὶ ἡ πλεονεξία σας τοὺς κάμνει Ῥωμαιομάχους,
 435 καὶ δὲν μποροῦν νὰ σᾶς ἰδοῦν μὴδὲ ζωγραφισμένους·
 ὡσὰν σκύλους τοὺς ἔχετε πολλὰ ὠνειδισμένους,
 ἄν δὲν εἴχασιν ἄδικον δὲν ἤθελαν φωνάζη,
 ἀμμὴ διατὶ κλαίγουνται ἔχουσιν ὁμοιάζη·
 καὶ παύσετε καὶ λείψετε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀδικίαν,
 440 μὴν σᾶς κολάσῃ ὁ θεὸς κόλασιν αἰωνίαν.
 Αὐτ' οἱ πτωχοὶ μᾶς θρέφουσι καὶ μᾶς ἀποκυττάζουσι,
 θέλοντες καὶ μὴ θέλοντες «ζουπούνελε» μᾶς κρίζουσι,
 καὶ πρέπει νὰ τοὺς ἔχωμεν καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἀγαποῦμε,
 ὅτι μᾶς εἶναι ἀδελφοί, πρέπει νὰ τοὺς τιμοῦμε.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 246 (lines 423-444): "But you too, Greek lords! You should also be careful, / both the courtiers among you, and those who deal in business; / be on guard and don't succumb to injustice: / you should not allow your greed to burden the people of Wallachia, / nor should you be excessively demanding upon the poor, / for there is a God in heaven and He is watching from above; / [...] / It seems to me that you behave like tyrants to the poor Wallachians, / and your greed has turned them into Greek-haters, / to the extent that they abhor even the mere sight of you; / you look down on them as if they were dogs, / and, after

It is interesting, I think, that in the first 15 lines of the quoted passage Matthew employs the second person plural to address the “Greek lords”, and then, towards the end of the section, he switches to first person plural. The interplay between alienation and a sense of belonging, between self-distancing and identification, or disengaged observation and corrective introspection, is, naturally, not without meaning, and it is quite indicative of the emotional intensity and the subtle narrative gestures of Matthew’s text. With noteworthy directness, the chronicler admits that Greeks have grown to be exceedingly greedy, oppressive and arrogant, even scornful, vis-à-vis the “poor Wallachians”, to the point that they treat them “like dogs”, which has justifiably forced them to turn into “Greek-haters” [ῥωμαιομάχοι].¹⁸ This crass behaviour has almost reached, to Matthew’s mind, the point of hubris and it is likely to provoke divine wrath and attract the proper punishment from above, unless it is significantly bridled or even stopped. After all, the author explains, the Wallachian natives are the very source of the well-being of the Greek archons living in their land. Willingly or not, they regard them as “masters” [ζουπού-νελε], at least by calling them so, and have made possible for them to acquire and maintain unlimited access to material prosperity and social ascendance. They are “brothers”, Matthew concludes, worthy of respect and affection.

all, if they weren’t mistreated they wouldn’t be complaining. / But it does seem that they have good reasons to whine. / Stop, then, and refrain from injustice, / or God will inflict an eternal punishment upon you. / These poor devils provide for us, and they take good care of us, / and, willy-nilly, they even call us “masters”, / so we must feel for them and love them; / and we must honour them, for they are our brothers.”

¹⁸ At this point, Matthew is drawing a clear distinction, which makes the slightly problematic passage in lines 395-397 less ambiguous. Here, he refers to Greeks who serve at the princely court (“ὅσοι ἔς τὴν κοῦρτην βρῖσκεσθε”), that is, people who operate within the state apparatus of the principality; and Greeks who reside in the country engaging in trade and similar financial activities (“καὶ ὅσοι ἀγοραῖοι”), mainly artisans and professional or occasional merchants. This twofold distinction, schematic as it may seem, is, indeed, of a fundamental importance if the basic socio-political patterns of the Greek functional presence in Wallachia is to be properly understood. One should keep in mind, though, that both aspects of the Greek diffusion sketched out in Matthew’s description extend over a wide range of roles, professions and vocations, especially during the second half of the seventeenth century, when the Greek presence in the country had been firmly established and its socio-cultural, institutional and financial role had reached an almost definitive level of structural consolidation. In this sense, to return to Matthew’s working distinction, Greek individuals serving at the court, for instance, could have been doing so as court officials (secretaries, advisors, treasurers, diplomats), but could also be princely tutors, clerics, doctors, court historians or philosophers, and, more often than not, all these at the same time.

It would not be unreasonable to claim that Matthew's dialectic involves (explicitly or implicitly) everything that mattered most in pre-modern Wallachia: financial power, political control, religion. It is within this particular context that the quoted passages epitomise the factual aspects of the Greek diffusion in the principality in the early seventeenth century, as well as the social and political tension that the latter often generated; the structural changes it brought to Wallachian society, politics and trade; and the radical reactions it frequently gave rise to. A historical event of minor political importance, Bărcan's unsuccessful plot against Radu Mihnea, gives Matthew the opportunity to inject in his historiographic project his own pressing agenda, though not without a certain pose of authorial embarrassment: characteristically, the section that follows after the last quoted passage opens up with a brief but poignant statement where the chronicler appears to be retrospectively acknowledging a sort of narrative malfunction, which, if not promptly taken care of, could compromise the internal equilibrium of his narrative:

445 Ἐξω λοιπὸν ἐβγήκαμεν ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορίαν,
 ἅς ἔλθωμεν ἔς τὸν λόγον μας, ὅποῦ μᾶς κάμνει χρεῖαν,
 νὰ εἰποῦμεν διὰ τὸν Ἰάδουλα βοεβόδα [...]¹⁹

Indeed, the description and assessment of Mihnea's background, personal history and reign is picked up from where it was left several verses ago. Naturally, Matthew submits here to a highly conventional and widely used narrative manoeuvre. It should not be overlooked, however, that by bringing up the fact that he has digressed and by declaring his intention to recast the narration into its normal and legitimate sequence, he redirects his audience's attention precisely towards the "guilt-ridden" space of the confessed discontinuity. His digressive discourse is granted a special, extraordinary status, by being discreetly but strategically spotlighted and detached from the rest of the text.

In a certain sense, the crude and uncanonical disruption of the narrative thread is authorised and validated by the threatening political anomaly that it seeks to account for; it also points suggestively to the latter's negative irregularity and potential for social refraction and turmoil by evoking (or replicating) it on a purely textual level. This carefully planned diegetic distortion provides the author with the suitable space in the context of which he can expose and address a problematic aspect of the relations between Greeks and Wallachians, active within the same geographic territory and, more

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247 (lines 445-447): "But we have strayed away from the due course of our story, / let us resume our narration, as we must, / so that we can explain about Prince Radu..."

importantly, within the same range of interests. Matthew's programmatic use of the present tense in his exhortations to both Greeks and Wallachians indicates clearly that the problem under review had transcended the temporal dimensions of the event that brought it to the surface in the first place, and was still as urgent an issue when the chronicle was being written, around 1620, as it had been at least ten years earlier, in the beginning of Mihnea's reign. It is precisely the imminent danger of massive conflict and collapse that legitimises Matthew's painstaking and painfully sincere attention to the psychological details and the pragmatic causes of the problem. The precarious balance and idiosyncratic fragility of the Greek-Romanian cohabitation in Wallachia render his climactic call for mutual respect and a more effective mode of coexistence not merely pertinent, but actually imperative.

It hardly needs to be mentioned, of course, that the presence and activity of Greeks in the Danubian principalities – especially in the wealthier Wallachia – was not a phenomenon restricted to the seventeenth century. On the contrary, it should be clearly understood that the consolidation of the strong Greek element, which by the end of that period had come to dominate the cultural, religious and political life in the area, had been the result of a long process of mobility and migration among the Greek-speaking populations of the Ottoman Empire dating at least as far back as the period immediately following the fall of Constantinople.²⁰ The extensive contacts between the newly founded principalities and the Byzantine Empire already since the early fourteenth

²⁰ Marie Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou has recently offered a substantial overview of the Greek presence in the two principalities throughout the early modern period and up until the beginning of the nineteenth century in an article titled “La tradition post-byzantine et la présence de l'Hellénisme dans les Principautés danubiennes”, published in the essential volume edited by Paschalis Kitromilides and Anna Tabaki, *Greek-Romanian Relations: Interculturalism and National Identity / Relations Gréco-Roumaines. Interculturalité et identité nationale*, Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research / National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2004, pp. 39-57. The author pays close attention to the multiple channels (cultural, institutional, linguistic) through which fundamental aspects of post-Byzantine Greek Orthodox civilisation were received and assimilated in the Romanian states, and she is right when she stresses in the opening section of her text that “Le rôle des Grecs durant les longs siècles d'asservissement, un rôle –dirais-je– ‘interbalkanique’, ne se limita pas, évidemment, aux Principautés danubiennes; mais c'est en Moldavie et en Valachie que la présence de l'Hellénisme généra une étonnante et fructueuse synthèse au profit des deux peuples.” (p. 39; cf. also the historically sensitive concluding observations on pp. 56-57 regarding “la réciprocité, la continuité et la conséquence” that characterised Greek-Romanian relations during the long period of intimate, if not always easy, contact between the two peoples.)

century, and the considerable influence that late Byzantine models had exercised on the cultural evolution, religious orientation and political organisation of the nascent Romanian states had undoubtedly facilitated that “physical” process and had allowed it to acquire far-reaching dimensions and a much more complex ideological character than it would have otherwise been reasonable to expect.

Already since the time of Nicolae Iorga, modern historians have discussed the decisive opening to Byzantium, launched under the auspices of the first Romanian rulers, in terms of a gradual distancing from the overwhelming influence of Slavic medieval culture, and as a crucial development that resulted in a significant reconfiguration of the institutional and religious settings in the principalities. Cl. Tsourkas, for instance, following N. Cartoian, has noted that, “les fondateurs mêmes des deux Principautés Roumaines, de la Valachie et de la Moldavie, par un instinct supérieur de culture et, nous pouvons ajouter, de race aussi, ont cherché à entrer en rapports directs avec Constantinople par deux voies, celle de la politique et celle de la religion.”²¹ It should be observed

²¹ Cléobule Tsourkas, *Les débuts de l'enseignement philosophique et de la libre pensée dans le Balkans. La vie et l'œuvre de Théophile Corydalée (1570-1646)*, Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1967, p. 117. Indeed, other historians have also emphasised this double venue of exposure of the early Romanian states to the influence of Byzantine forms and structures, starting, naturally, with N. Iorga; cf., for example, his *Roumains et Grecs au cours des siècles. À l'occasion des mariages princiers de MDCCCXXI*, Bucharest: Cultura Neamului Românesc, 1921, esp. pp. 16-22, for a brief survey of direct and indirect ecclesiastical contacts, and pp. 23-26, for a condensed presentation of the most significant manifestations of the extensive Byzantine influence in the principalities (even through Serbian or Bulgarian channels) on a political and institutional level. With regard to the period from the sixth century to roughly 1300 – before, that is, the foundation of the principalities – Răzvan Theodorescu has indicated the perpetual presence of the “*secutio byzantina*” and its instrumental role in the formation and evolution of collective mentalities in the area, and has sensibly expounded the complex historical circumstances under which the Carpatho-Danubian region came under the influence of a series of peripheral centres of Byzantine civilisation (what he calls “*la Byzance provinciale*”), rightly stressing in conclusion that this long process, especially as it took place in the thirteenth century, opened the way for a much more direct and substantial contact with Byzantium *per se* (“*la Byzance aulique, de Constantinople et de la seconde ville de l'Empire que fut Salonique*”) in the fourteenth century, the period which we will focus on in the following section; cf. his “*Romans, Roumains, migrants et la civilisation byzantine au Bas-Danube (VIe-XIIe siècles)*” and “*Roumains et Byzance provinciale dans la civilisation du Bas-Danube au XIIIe siècle*”, both republished in the volume *Roumains et balkaniques dans la civilisation sud-est européenne*, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1999, pp. 49-86 and 197-211, respectively. Theodorescu's informed discussion of these crucial, if particularly elusive, historical phenomena should be

that the individual terms in Tsourkas' formulation ("instinct", "supérieur," "race") are highly controversial and indicative of a rather biased historiographic stance, but as a general statement it is not irrelevant to the historical phenomenon that concerns us here. For even though the possibility of direct political influence was unavoidably suppressed for several decades after the conquest of Constantinople, the religious connection was immediately taken up and soon became the most important channel of communication and exchange between post-Byzantine and Romanian cultures.

II. *The Byzantine Background*

Not very long after the formation of Wallachia in the early fourteenth century, and in the context of the "rapports directs", which Tsourkas comments upon, the Ecumenical patriarch was officially granted full responsibility for appointing the archbishop of the principality. The recognition of the Wallachian Church by the Patriarchate in Constantinople and the subsequent foundation of the country's archdiocese effected a radical strengthening of the religious and institutional bonds connecting the (hitherto Catholic-controlled and oriented) ruling class of Wallachia with the Byzantine world. It also resulted in the establishment of an exclusive tradition of choosing and assigning the Wallachian archbishop from among the high officials of the Byzantine Orthodox Church, or those who met with its approval. This tradition was initiated in 1359, when the Bishop of Vyřina, Hyakinthos Kritopoulos, was elected and appointed Archbishop of Wallachia in response to Voivode Nicolae Alexandru Basarab's formal request to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.²² It was

read in the context of his larger theoretical scheme for the understanding of the zones, patterns and networks of cultural and ideological circulation in the medieval and early modern Balkans, which he elaborates on in the first article included in the same volume (pp. 13-48) titled "Au sujet des 'corridors culturelles' de l'Europe sud-orientale".

²² Cf. Athanasios Karathanasis, *Oi Έλληνες λόγιοι στη Βλαχία (1670-1714). Συμβολή στη μελέτη της ελληνικής πνευματικής κίνησης στις Παραδουνάβιες ηγεμονίες κατά την προφαναριώτικη περίοδο* [Greek erudites in Wallachia (1670-1714): contribution to the study of Greek intellectual activity in the Danubian principalities in the pre-Phanariot period], Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1982, p. 23, and Cl. Tsourkas, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118. It should be mentioned in addition that even before his ascension to the metropolitan throne, Kritopoulos had spent time in Wallachia, where he had sought refuge after a Tatar invasion that had devastated his eparchy in Dobrudja. I owe the information to Dimitri Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains. Recherches sur leur relations du milieu du XIVe siècle à 1654*, Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1986, p. 42, where Kritopoulos' strategic appointment (and the official recognition of the newly founded

kept alive for a span of 100 years and was interrupted only by the fatal events of 1453.²³

The official decree of Hyakinthos' election by the Constantinopolitan Synod is a neglected but extremely interesting document, in which crucial aspects of the Byzantine Church's diplomatic agenda at the time are laid out in fairly developed and elaborate terms, indicating clearly the latter's interest in pursuing the establishment and consolidation of its religious and political influence in the nascent principality.²⁴ In both the main body of the Synod's decree and in the

Wallachian Church by the Ecumenical Patriarchate) is described as an event of capital importance, after which "la Valachie était donc à l'ordre du jour pour les Grecs byzantins". For the events that took place soon after Hyakinthos Kritopoulos' ascension, resulting in the foundation of a second see – barely eleven years after the creation of the first one – and the overlapping appointment of yet another Byzantine Greek prelate, the *dikaiophylax* of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Daniel/Anthimos Kritopoulos, as archbishop of part of the country, see mainly Petre Ș. Năsturel, "Autour de la partition de la Métropole de Hongrovalachie (1370)", *Buletinul Bibliotecii Române*, ser. nouă, 8 (1977/1978), pp. 293-326; cf., however, Dimitri Nastase, "Le Mont Athos et la politique du patriarcat de Constantinople, de 1355 à 1375", *Σύμμεικτα* 3 (1979), esp. pp. 124-130, where serious reservations are expressed regarding P. Năsturel's reconstruction and interpretation of the dates and events pertaining to the peculiar situation created by this "dédoulement de l'autorité archiépiscopale dans la Valachie", as Iorga has put it (1921, p. 18). A synoptic overview of the history of the Wallachian archdiocese(s) and its influential Byzantine dignitaries during the first decades after its foundation is offered in Georgios Cioran, *Σχέσεις των ρουμανικών χωρών μετά του Αθω και δη των μονών Κουτλουμουσίου, Λαύρας, Δοχειαρίου και Αγίου Παντελεήμονος ή των Ρώσων* [Relations between the Romanian states and Mount Athos and especially the monasteries of Koutloumousiou, Laura, Docheiariou and St Panteleimon or of the Russians], Athens: Verlag der "Byzantinisch-Neugriechischen Jahrbuecher", 1938, pp. 21-27; it should be noted, however, that Cioran's discussion is slightly incapacitated by the fact that the author did not have access to important primary sources, related archival material, and secondary bibliography, a substantial knowledge of which enabled Năsturel and Nastase to draw much more detailed and accurate conclusions some 40 years later.

²³ For a historically informed discussion of the religious and political circumstances that led to the foundation of the Wallachian Orthodox archdiocese in 1359, see the essay titled "Sur le double nom du prince de Valachie Nicolas-Alexandre" in Daniel Barbu, *Byzance, Rome et les Roumains. Essais sur la production politique de la foi au Moyen Âge*, Bucharest: Éditions Babel, 1998, pp. 103-122, where this crucial development in the history of Wallachia is analysed against the background of Alexandru Basarab's enigmatic conversion to Orthodoxy and his re-baptism as Nicolae.

²⁴ Dated May 1359, and published in Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller (eds), *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, Vol. I: *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani, MCCCXV-MCCCCII, e codicibus manu scriptis Bibliothecae Palatinae Vindobonensis*, Vienna: Carolus Gerold, 1860, pp. 383-388 (no. 171).

attached letter to the Wallachian voivode, the patriarchal vocabulary is systematically organised around the concepts of ὑποταγή [submission], εὐπειθεια [obedience], στοργή [affectionate care] and εὐλάβεια [piety]. Indeed, these concepts, which are invariably treated as relational prerequisites, saturate the elevated rhetoric of the texts, as they recur almost obsessively and in a wide range of linguistic and syntactical variants.²⁵ Much attention is paid to the fact that it was Nicolae Alexandru himself who had persistently requested the transfer of Hyakinthos from his original see in Dobrudja to Wallachia, and his ordination as archbishop of the country.²⁶ It is also stressed that by doing so he has willingly submitted his ἀρχή [authority], his family and his entire domain to the religious and spiritual control of the Great Church.²⁷ Consequently, the newly appointed archbishop is regarded as having assumed a serious and demanding responsibility, but is also expected to be invested with an incontestable authority regarding Wallachian affairs, and granted all the power and influence that his dignity typically entails:

[“Ο]θεν ὀφείλουσιν οἱ τε ἐν αὐτῇ [τῇ μητροπόλει Οὐγγροβλαχίας] κληρικοί καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἱερωμένοι, μοναχοὶ καὶ λαϊκοί, ὑπέκειν καὶ ὑποτάττεσθαι τούτῳ [τῷ μητροπολίτῃ], ὅσα καὶ γνησίως αὐτῶν ποιμένοι καὶ πατρὶ καὶ διδασκάλῳ, καὶ δέχεσθαι προθύμως καὶ ἀποπληροῦν, ὅσα μέλλει λέγειν καὶ παραινεῖν καὶ ἐκδιδάσκειν αὐτούς, ἀφορῶντα εἰς ψυχικὴν λυσιτέλειαν, τηρουμένης ἀπαραιοποιήτου καὶ τῷ ἐξῆς ἀεὶ χρόνῳ τῆς ἐνομότου ἀσφαλείας καὶ ὑποσχέσεως ἐγγράφου εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ τοιοῦτου εὐγενεστάτου μεγάλου βοϊβόδα εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀεὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τῆς Οὐγγροβλαχίας ὑπ’ αὐτὴν καὶ δέχεσθαι ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἀρχιερέα γνήσιον, ὥστε γὰρ συντηρεῖσθαι εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς τοῦτο ἀκαινοτόμητον, καὶ βαρύτατον καὶ συνοδικὸν (ἀφορισμὸν) ἠπείλητο κατὰ παντὸς τοῦ βουλευθησομένου ἀκυρῶσαι αὐτό, ἐπειδὴ τούτου ἕνεκεν καὶ ἡ παροῦσα συνοδικὴ πράξις γεγρονῶτα τῷ εἰρημένῳ μητροπολίτῃ πάσης Οὐγγροβλαχίας καὶ ὑπερτίμῳ εἰς ἀσφάλειαν ἐπιδέδοται [...]²⁸

²⁵ Cf., for example, *ibid.*, p. 383 (lines 3-5); p. 384 (lines 2-3); p. 386 (lines 8-10).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 383-384 (line 5 and on); p. 386 (lines 6-23).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 383 (lines 7-14); pp. 384-385 (line 34 and on); p. 386 (lines 12-20).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 385 (lines 18-32): “Therefore, the clerics who serve at the Wallachian archdiocese, as also the rest of the clergy, monks and laymen must give way to the archbishop’s authority and be obedient, as to a true guide and father and teacher. They must willingly subscribe to whatever he will say, advise or instruct them: it will always be meant for the profit of their own soul. The written promise and guarantee of the most noble great voivode to the holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ that the Wallachian Church will always come under it and accept the

This is not the first time – and it is not the last one either – in the limited space of the examined document that the concepts of rightfulness and legitimacy are employed:²⁹ the patriarchal vocabulary frequently alludes to the fact that a “genuine” [γνήσιος] religious and spiritual leader, that is, an authentic and trustworthy fatherly figure, is being offered to the juvenile principality under the auspices and from within the very “source” of religious authority, the “cradle” of the true Christian faith.³⁰ And it is certainly not the only instance where the Byzantine Synod points to the absolute importance of a specific condition that must have played a crucial role in the final outcome of the negotiations between Constantinople and Curtea de Argeș, the medieval capital of Wallachia: the “most noble great voivode,” and in his name all those who will succeed him, was requested to bind himself by written oath never to dispute or recant the agreed submission of the newly founded Church to the spiritual and administrative suzerainty of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This condition is effectively summarised with two phrases strongly indicating a one-way relation of agency and direct dependence: “εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀεὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τῆς Οὐγγροβλαχίας ὑπ’ αὐτῆν” [that the Wallachian Church will always come under it [= the Great Church]], and “καὶ δεχέσθαι ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἀρχιερέα γνήσιον” [and that it will always accept the legitimate archbishop that the Synod will appoint]. The concluding mention of ἀφορισμός – synodical condemnation – as a means of reprisal for the illegal cancellation of the settlement is poignantly added at the end of this section in order to cement the validity of the covenant upon the trustworthy basis of metaphysical terror, firmly securing it against potential offenders.³¹

legitimate archbishop that the Synod will appoint should never be revoked under any circumstances; indeed, a most grave synodical condemnation is at stake for whomsoever will seek to cancel it. It is on the basis of this promise that the present synodical decree is released and delivered in trust to the above-mentioned and most honoured archbishop of all Wallachia.” In the second part of the decree, there are two similar passages, even more explicit and intense, where the voivode is personally addressed and strictly reminded of his responsibility to see that the terms of the agreement are smoothly put into effect and solemnly observed at all times; cf. *ibid.*, p. 386 (lines 18-32), and pp. 387-388 (line 14 and on).

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 383 (lines 12-14); p. 384 (lines 8-9); p. 385 (lines 12-15); p. 386 (line 26); p. 387 (line 10).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 386 (lines 10-12).

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, again on p. 387 (lines 27-29): “[...] ἐπεὶ ὥστε εἶναι ἀπαραιοίητον καὶ ἀμετάθετον τὴν εἰρημένην κατάστασιν, καὶ συνοδικὸς φρικώδης ἀφορισμὸς ἠπειλήται κατὰ τοῦ κωλύσοντος καὶ ἀθετήσοντος ταύτην.”

More than anything else, though, the high-pitched discourse of the patriarchal decree stressfully reflects the difficult situation in which the Byzantine Church had found itself at precisely that point in its history. At the time when Nicolae Alexandru was seeking to establish contact with Constantinople, mainly as a means of political opposition to the Catholic king of Hungary,³² Kallistos I had been patriarch, for the second time, since 1354, the year when John VI Kantakouzenos (*reg.* 1347-1354) abdicated in favour of his young co-emperor, John V Palaiologos (*reg.* 1354-1391). Kallistos was a branded supporter of Palaiologos, the legitimate contender to the throne, and had repeatedly proven his loyalty to him.³³ But even so, the Ecumenical patriarch, “a fervent hesychast and temperamentally unsympathetic to Latin theology”,³⁴ must have been savagely disillusioned when actually faced with the fact that the new emperor had proven to be more than willing to bargain his own and his people’s Orthodox faith with the Papists. Indeed, it soon became obvious that John V was ready to compromise the Empire’s official religion in

³² Cf., for example, D. Barbu, *op. cit.*, p. 107: “Par conséquent, la fondation de métropole roumaine représente non seulement une rupture des liens confessionnels avec l’Hongrie –et par là avec le monde latin– mais aussi une insurrection féodale dirigée contre Louis de Hongrie, exactement à l’époque où, d’une part le roi menait une croisade contre le ‘schismatique’ Etienne Uroš (automne 1358-1359) et, d’autre part, la Grande Église assumait dans les Balkans la coordination de la résistance politique à l’avancement confessionnel occidental.” See also the interesting observations of Stelian Brezeanu in his “A Byzantine Model for Political and State Structure in Southeastern Europe Between the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Centuries”, published in Răzvan Theodorescu and Leland Conley Barrows (eds), *Politics and Culture in Southeastern Europe*, Bucharest 2001, esp. pp. 86-88.

³³ Characteristically, when in 1353 Kantakouzenos publicly renounced the rights of John V to the throne and demanded of the patriarch to perform the ceremony of his son Matthew’s coronation as co-emperor and successor, Kallistos preferred to resign from his office (which was subsequently occupied by the usurper’s supporter and friend Philotheos Kokkinos, Bishop of Herakleia) and escaped to Galata and from there to the island of Tenedos, where John Palaiologos was residing and being kept away from the imperial capital. Kallistos was, however, officially rewarded when the latter finally came to power the following year, by being immediately reinstalled on the patriarchal throne.

³⁴ Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 260. Kallistos was appointed patriarch for the first time in June 1350, after the death of Isidoros I (*reg.* 1347-1350). He was an Athonite monk, a well-known hesychast and a personal friend of Gregory Palamas. Soon after his election, he presided at the council held at Constantinople in 1351, in which the Palamite theology was validated and recognized as fully Orthodox, and the anti-Palamite doctrines were condemned, allowing for the persecution of their supporters, including Nikiphoros Gregoras; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

exchange for political advantages and military support from the Catholic West, clearly demonstrating a defeatist attitude and an anguished determination to proceed to radical concessions that were totally unprecedented in the long and uneasy history of the Byzantine Empire.

Stefan Dušan's unexpected death in December 1355 came as a great relief to the Byzantines, whose supremacy not only in the Balkans but almost within the walls of Constantinople too was being threatened and severely undermined for several years by the dynamic imperialism and barely controllable political aspirations of the Serbian ruler. Things, however, were not made any easier for the Byzantine sovereign. Upon his coronation as sole emperor in December 1354, "John V inherited a situation that called for the combined qualities of a Justinian and a Belisarius", as a modern historian has put it.³⁵ Nicol has accurately observed that John was not equal to this exceptionally demanding situation, which is confirmed by the fact that by the end of his reign it had become almost hopeless.³⁶ It must be admitted, though, that standing up to the political and military complications of the period was not a simple task. The main difficulty that the young autocrat had to cope with was the advance of the Ottoman Turks, which was to trouble with an ever-increasing intensity all the remaining Byzantine emperors too.

John V's predecessor had attempted to slow down the Ottoman spread as much as possible, mainly by means of appeasing and seeking the alliance of the Osmanli caliphs with lavish gifts, territorial concessions, political marriages, etc. This passive policy, however, could not have accomplished much against the uncontrollable Asian force, which seems to have been backed up and facilitated by a series of decisive local and international developments. In the course of the little less than 40 years of Orhan's reign (1324-1362), the Ottoman dominion had spread way beyond the Sakarya Valley in Bithynia, where his father Osman I had settled at the end of the thirteenth century. It had already become clear that the Turks could not be kept within the confines of their Bithynian emirate, which was vitally invested with a new capital in 1326, when the important city of Bursa was conquered.

Indeed, Turkish pretensions over Byzantine territory in Europe became inescapably evident with the 1352 campaigns to Thrace led by Orhan's son and heir apparent Suleiman. Less than two years later, the Byzantine domination in the area was seriously weakened mainly due to two crucial developments: the capture of Gallipoli, a strategic port on the European shore of the Hellespont;

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 256.

and the rapid settlement of massive Turkish populations in Thracian towns and villages along the Dardanelles, which was preceded by a catastrophic earthquake in early March 1354. And this was only the beginning of a process of expansion both in the direction of Anatolia and in that of Rumelia. Didymoteichon and Adrianople were soon added to the Turkish possessions (in 1359/61 and 1369, respectively), and it was soon proved beyond any doubt that the Turks had become a major military force in the area: in the 1371 battle on the River Marica the large army of the despot of Serres, John Uglješa, and his brother Vukašin, who had joined forces in a concerted attempt to check the Ottoman penetration into Serbian Macedonia, was annihilated by the troops of Murad, who had in the meanwhile succeeded Orhan due to his elder brother's sudden death in 1357.

Faced with the political and military complexity of that trying situation, John V realised that it was impossible to deal effectively with the grave and imminent Ottoman threat without having first secured significant external assistance.³⁷ The Byzantine emperor turned to the Latin West for help and support, hoping for a long time that the Ottoman spread in European territory would inspire a sense of common danger to the Western world, making it more responsive to the urgency of the circumstances. He believed that his combined efforts would get the pope to authorise a crusade against the infidels, which must have seemed the only possible means for the salvation of the Empire at that point. This is not the place to give a detailed account of John V's policy of cultivating political friendships and pursuing alliances with Catholic Europe over the first 20 years of his long reign.³⁸ What is particularly interesting is that

³⁷ For a general historical overview of the period, see Halil İnalcık's brief chapter in Melvin A. Cook (ed.), *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 21-24; see also C. Imber, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10; and D. Nicol, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 241-242. For the Battle of Marica, see, more specifically, John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1987, pp. 379-382.

³⁸ John V's projects for the union of the Churches, and the polarisation they caused among political and religious circles in the Byzantine capital; his repeated appeals to the Curia at Avignon; the unfulfilled hopes that he had placed with the Catholic king of Hungary; and his official voyage to Rome, where he met with Pope Urban V, have been exhaustively discussed by Oscar Halecki in his *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*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1972, pp. 2-418 (photomechanical reproduction of the first 1930 edition), which still remains a valuable source of information on the subject and the period under review here; for a more condensed presentation, see D. Nicol, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-274.

this policy evolved almost entirely around the possibility of a union of the Churches. Naturally, this was not a new element in Byzantium's political negotiations with the West, but with John V it had become something quite different from a diplomatic ace in the Empire's sleeve. This particular emperor was resolved that if he was to get anywhere with his political plans, he would have to acknowledge and unreservedly accept the primacy of the Holy Roman Church and its supreme pontiff over their Orthodox counterparts.³⁹

The establishment of the Wallachian Church and the patriarchal decree of Kritopoulos' appointment can be adequately apprehended only within the historical context of these unfavourable military, political and diplomatic developments in the second half of the fourteenth century.⁴⁰ John V's prolonged resolution that the best way to secure the territorial integrity of the Empire was at the expense of its official religion could not have made the Orthodox patriarch happy, nor could it have left him at peace. As I see it, the foundation of the Wallachian archdiocese in 1359 was a symptom of this unbalanced, as much as perplexing, situation, or, rather, a part of a programmatic reaction against it,⁴¹ and the same thing can be claimed with respect to the establishment

³⁹ Cf., in this respect, *ibid.*, p. 258: "[John V] found no difficulty in accepting the fact that any approach to the Pope for help must be backed by an offer to submit the Byzantine Church to the authority of the See of Rome. In this respect as in so many others his opinions and his policy ran counter to those of his father-in-law John Cantacuzene who had consistently if courageously refused to deal with the Papacy on any but equal terms, or to discuss the union of the Churches except in the arena of an œcumenical council. John V wore his Orthodoxy more lightly. [...] He was a young man and he was led to believe that great things would come from a great gesture."

⁴⁰ Naturally, the 1359 decree is not an isolated specimen but one of several surviving documents in which the Great Church's policy in that period had been clearly articulated. It should be read, for instance, in conjunction with the patriarchal message that Kallistos had addressed to the Bulgarian clergy a few years earlier, in December 1355, published in Miklosich and Müller, *op. cit.*, pp. 436-442 (no. 186). Two things have already been made pretty clear here: first, the patriarch's non-negotiable position that the Bulgarian Church and its Patriarchate should always remain under the supervision and jurisdiction of Constantinople, "the new Rome"; and second, his irreconcilable hostility to the Catholic Church and its doctrines; see esp. pp. 437-439.

⁴¹ "Jamais le prosélytisme grec n'a été aussi actif qu'à la veille de la catastrophe de 1453. Au moment même où l'empire se rapetissait chaque jour davantage, ses voisins du Nord, assez peu empressés à défendre sa cause par les armes, subissaient en revanche le charme de sa culture et l'attrait de sa spiritualité. La plus belle conquête qu'ait fait l'Église byzantine au XIVe siècle est bien celle des Principautés valaque et moldave," wrote characteristically Vitalien Laurent in the introductory paragraph of his "Contributions à l'histoire des

of the archdiocese in the neighbouring principality of Moldavia a few decades later.⁴² Both Kallistos and his successor, Philotheos Kokkinos, engaged in fierce diplomatic activity seeking to consolidate the influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate throughout Eastern Europe, even as far as Russia, as a means of establishing an Orthodox front of resistance against both the openly pro-Catholic tendencies of the Byzantine imperial government and the organised Catholic propaganda in the area.⁴³

relations de l'Église byzantine avec l'Église roumaine au début du XV^e siècle", *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique* 26/2 (1945), p. 3 [=165]. Laurent has seen the concentrated interest of the late Byzantine Church in the Danubian countries, and its highly invested efforts to establish its influence in the area, as conscious reactions of a "Byzance agonisante". Similarly, for Eugen Stanescu the foundation of the Byzantine-controlled archdioceses in both Wallachia and Moldavia falls right in the heart of a crucial period (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) during which "l'ascension des États féodaux roumains se joint au déclin et à agonie de Byzance". Not accidentally, that was precisely the point, according to Stanescu, when the Byzantine presence in the area was not any more of a "politico-military" nature, as it used to be from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, but, rather, it had assumed a "politico-diplomatic" character and scope; cf. his detailed article titled "Byzance et les Pays Roumains aux IX^e-XV^e siècles", in *XIV^e Congrès International des Études Byzantines. Rapports IV*, Bucharest: Éditions de l'Académie de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 1974, pp. 7-47.

⁴² For a careful reconstruction and analysis of the equally interesting but more problematic case of the foundation of the Moldavian archdiocese in the beginning of the fifteenth century, see Șerban Papacostea, "Byzance et la création de la 'Métropole de Moldavie'", in Emilian Poperscu, Octavian Iliescu and Tudor Teoteoi (eds), *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, Vol. II, Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1991, pp. 133-150.

⁴³ For Kallistos' activity during his second patriarchate, which coincided with the first years of John V's reign, see mainly O. Halecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-52. Philotheos Kokkinos – who had barely escaped being lynched by the mob when John V assumed power – succeeded Kallistos immediately after the latter's sudden death. His agenda during his second service at the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1364-1376) epitomises the Great Church's policy in the second half of the fourteenth century and is closely related to a series of important developments in the principalities, which we have set out to examine here. In fact, Philotheos did not merely continue his predecessor's programme, but travelled much farther down the same path in an attempt to prevent the ardently pursued Union of the Churches and deter as much as possible the spread of Catholic influence among the highest reaches of the Byzantine imperial government, while, at the same time, he turned his attention to the Orthodox East in a much more concrete and programmatic way. Cf., in this respect, *ibid.*, p. 234: "Parcourant les actes du patriarcat constantinopolitain, on s'aperçoit aisément que jamais aucun patriarche n'a déployé une activité aussi intense et aussi vaste que celle dont fit preuve Philothée, de 1369 à 1371. Cette activité ne se bornait point du tout à la vie normale ni à l'organisation intérieure

With regard to the disquieted attitude of the Byzantine Church's leadership, it is characteristic that Kallistos insolently refused to respond to the formal letter that Innocent VI sent him in 1355 on the issue of the union of the Churches. On the other hand, while John V was in frequent communication with Avignon – seriously negotiating with the pope and even committing himself to the raising of his son and successor in a strictly Catholic spirit – the Ecumenical patriarch proceeded to sanction the engagement of the seven-year-old future emperor to the Bulgarian king's infant daughter. In addition, Kallistos was eagerly promoting the political alternative of military coalitions with other Orthodox rulers in the Balkans, and there can be no doubt that such an option represented for him not only a more viable solution but also a less onerous way to deal with the situation at hand, at least in comparison to the potential of a successful outcome of John V's devoted flirting with the schismatic West. Not accidentally, death found him in 1363 at Serres, where he had travelled to meet with Stefan Dušan's widow on a diplomatic mission designed to procure military reinforcements from the Serbians.⁴⁴

Clearly, this was a period when, under the weight of overwhelmingly unpropitious developments and in a climate of extreme peril emanating from the West as much as from the East, the Church was not simply making a statement by declaring its opposition to the official policy of the Empire; more than that, it was actively and systematically pursuing its own religious and political agenda, strategically conceived as a way to undermine or impede the emperor's plans, which were thought of as representing a most serious threat against the Orthodox *plirota*. Nevertheless, it must also be kept in mind that this determined, if unofficial, conflict between the political and religious authorities of the Empire was not merely a result of the geopolitical or ecclesiastical expediencies of the moment. On the contrary, it should be placed within a gradual process of redefinition of traditional conceptions of power and authority and their legitimate agents, which had been constantly shifting the established – but always precarious – balance between Church and State in

de l'Eglise de Constantinople. Au contraire: décidé de ne point aller à Rome et de rompre toutes négociations avec le pape, puisque celui-ci refusait de convoquer un nouveau concile général, le patriarche se proposait en même temps de réagir contre les tendances catholiques de l'empereur et des partisans de l'Union. Vivement inquiété, d'autre part, par la propagande latine organisée sous la direction d' Urbain V, Philothée fit, de son côté, un effort considérable pour affermir et pour étendre ses propres influences dans tout l'Orient.”

⁴⁴ For Kallistos' fatal sojourn on Serres and the pressing political necessities that dictated it, see *ibid.*, p. 78. Significantly, in D. Nicol, *op. cit.*, p. 262, it is mentioned that Kallistos' death was rumoured to have been a result of deliberate poisoning.

Byzantium ever since the “triumphant” resolution of the iconoclastic crisis in the ninth century.⁴⁵ It was, indeed, a long and tense struggle from which the Constantinopolitan Church emerged victorious when, after the irrevocable disintegration of the Byzantine *imperium*, the Ottomans assigned the patriarch with the distinguished task of being not only spiritually but also politically responsible for the entire Orthodox *millet*, that is, all the tax-bound Christian peoples that had or would come under Ottoman rule.

But besides the Patriarchate of Constantinople, there was another collective institution, sufficiently aggressive and increasingly influential, that around the same period entered dynamically the arena of religious politics in the Balkans, proceeding to play an important role in the establishment of an intricate network of relations between the Byzantine Orthodox world and the Danubian principalities, namely, Athonite monasticism. Not accidentally, one of the earliest and most characteristic instances in the early history of Byzantine-Wallachian contacts is closely related to the personal history and career of a charismatic individual who emerged exactly from within that context. Chariton of Koutloumousiou was a determined and indefatigable monk, originating probably from the small island of Imvros in the northern Aegean Sea, who had

⁴⁵ Gilbert Dagron’s magisterial discussion of the priestly or sacerdotal nature of the imperial function in Byzantium in his *Empereur et prêtre. Étude sur le “césaropapisme” byzantin*, Paris: Gallimard, 1996, is, to my knowledge, the most recent and satisfactory analysis of the long and uneasy history of the notoriously complex relationship between the State and the Church, the temporal system and the spiritual sphere in the Byzantine Empire; see mainly the two first chapters of the third part titled “La royauté des patriarches (VIIIe-XIe siècles)” and “Au jugement des canonistes et des liturgistes (XIIe-XVe siècles)”, pp. 229-255 and 256-289, respectively. Dagron’s discussion is based on a careful examination of a series of Byzantine prelates and canonists – Theodore of Studios, Photios, Michael Cheroularios, Demetrios Chomatianos, Theodore Balsamon – and of the diverse but equally indicative ways each of them reacted to the theoretical and practical implications of the problematic and controversial concept of the emperor being invested with special “priestly *charismata*” outside the strictly liturgical domain. Indeed, Dagron has shown that Iconoclasm represented a significant rupture which put an end to the “grande épopée de l’empereur-prêtre”, since it was after that point in the mid-ninth century that emerged consecutive tendencies and attempts seeking to establish the Patriarchate as a sort of “contre-pouvoir” against imperial sovereignty, and to promote the idea of “royal priesthood” as a viable alternative to that of “priestly kingship”. For a more condensed but substantial account of the period from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, generally following Dagron’s scheme but giving more emphasis on issues of judicial authority and legislative jurisdiction, see D. Barbu, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-17, with additional observations focusing on the last Byzantine centuries, on pp. 79-83.

spent most of his life on the road in constant search of benefactors for his monastic establishment, whom he usually found in the person of Byzantine, Serbian, Bulgarian, Wallachian and other Orthodox Balkan rulers. Although there is not much that we can infer about his pre-monastic background or the early stages of his presence and activity on Mount Athos, it is certain that Chariton had evolved into a prominent member of the Athonite community, at least during the last 20 or 25 years of his life: we know that he was elected abbot of the Koutloumousiou monastery at some point in the late 1350s (and surely before 1362), and ordained *protos* among the abbots of the Athonite monasteries in 1376. To be sure, the latter was an extremely prestigious dignity, but by that time Chariton had already reached the apex of his ecclesiastical career: in 1372 he had been appointed Archbishop of Wallachia, succeeding Hyakinthos Kritopoulos, by demand of the country's ruler, Vladislav I (reg. 1364-1374), and by the decision of the Ecumenical patriarch Theophilos Kokkinos.⁴⁶ He held that post until his death, probably in 1381 or a little later. In the meanwhile, he had become the main protagonist in a series of events that were brilliantly designed to secure for his monastery a good standing and a prosperous future, and by doing so he had also participated decisively, and on a much larger scale this time, in the making of the religious and political life in the larger area of the late medieval Balkans.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Cl. Tsourkas has erroneously dated Chariton's election to 1369; cf. *op. cit.*, p. 118. In P. Năsturel, "Autour de la partition de la Métropole de Hongrovalachie (1370)", pp. 297-298, the author correctly indicates that Chariton's appointment to the metropolitan throne is reflected in contemporary documents only "depuis août 1372", but on p. 314 mistakenly dates it to 1370, when Anthimos Kritopoulos, and not Chariton, became archbishop, sharing the country with the 1359 elected Hyakinthos. For the precise dates, see mainly the editor's introductory essay on the history of the Koutloumousiou and Alypiou monasteries in Paul Lemerle (ed.), *Actes de Kutlumus*, Vol. I: *Texte*, Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1945, pp. 10-11, and Petre Ş. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*, p. 49. Chariton's appointment and activity as archbishop are also discussed, though very briefly, in Haralambie Mihăescu, "Trois documents athonites du XIVe siècle comportant des références à la Valachie", *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 15/3 (1977), p. 462.

⁴⁷ For further information about Chariton's "inlassable activité" mainly as a powerful and energetic Athonite abbot and, to a lesser extent, as *μητροπολίτης μέρους Ούγγροβλαχίας* [Metropolitan of parts of Hungary-Wallachia], as he is designated in one of the Koutloumousiou acts (no. 37, line 1), see P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-13; see also P. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*, pp. 39-51; and, especially, D. Nastase, "Le Mont Athos et la politique du patriarcat de Constantinople, de 1355 à 1375", pp. 131-166, where interesting additional information is given regarding, among other things, Chariton's crucial role in the reconciliation of the Byzantine and the Serbian Churches in 1375, and the

It is of particular interest for us here that the main source of our knowledge for Chariton's activity is a series of three official documents that were produced by the Athonite abbot exclusively in the context of his long-term dealings with the voivode of Wallachia, Vladislav I.⁴⁸ Their content and tone make clear that what we are left with is but a minuscule fragment of what had actually been a sustained and far-reaching interaction between the two men and the worlds they represented. In effect, these are the few surviving traces of a complex, even stormy, relationship, on both an official and a personal level, which extended over several years of intimate contact and mutual influence.⁴⁹ Significantly, all three texts date before Chariton's ascension to the metropolitan throne of Wallachia in 1372, and that should remind us that his appointment was not a spontaneous or unmeditated decision on behalf of the local government, but had, rather, been the result of the Athonite abbot's exposure, familiarisation and accumulated experience with the Wallachian administrative élite. As it had happened with Hyakinthos Kritopoulos some 13 years before, this factor played an important role in Chariton's election as the head of the country's Church, and, upon validating his appointment, the Constantinopolitan Synod was, once again, eager to make an emphatic reference to the new spiritual leader's popularity among the Wallachians themselves. The related patriarchal decree takes special care to have it clearly stated that the elected archbishop had already been very well known and loved in Wallachia not only by its ruler and the nobility, but also by the people.⁵⁰

considerable influence he exerted on a contemporary religious figure who was also to play an important role in the early ecclesiastical history of Wallachia, Nicodemus of Tismana. Cf., finally, N. Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 18, where the historical significance of the origin of the first archbishops of Wallachia, as well as of their Athonite background and frequent sojourns in the Byzantine capital, is effectively, if briefly, stressed.

⁴⁸ All three of them are to this day preserved in the archives of Koutloumousiou and were diplomatically edited by Paul Lemerle in 1945; cf. P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-105 (no. 26); pp. 110-116 (no. 29); and pp. 116-121 (no. 30).

⁴⁹ In his third and last testament, Chariton asserts that he had met and negotiated with Vladislav (and his wife Anne) seven times in total; cf. *ibid.*, p. 136 (line 25).

⁵⁰ The document is preserved only in a version written in Old Church Slavonic, published by Grigore Nandriș in his *Documente românești în limba slavă din mănăstirile Muntelui Athos (1372-1658)* [Romanian documents from the monasteries of Mount Athos written in Old Church Slavonic (1372-1658)], Bucharest 1937, pp. 17-20 (no. 1). In a particularly interesting postscript written by Chariton and appended right after the conclusion and signature of the patriarchal decree of his appointment, it becomes clear how urgent and important a task it was for Byzantine ecclesiastics, such as the enterprising abbot

At any rate, even a cursory content analysis of Chariton's writings can clearly show that the unique historical importance of these documents lies in the substantial insights that a focused study could provide to modern researchers regarding the relations among the Balkan states, the Mount Athos monasteries and the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, as they had developed in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire. Indeed, their significance can hardly be overestimated, especially since they can be utilised as a set of primary materials that can advance our understanding of the inner workings of religious and political institutions in that obscure period by offering first-hand evidence about important developments which seem to have affected the religious landscape both in the Danubian principalities and in the Athonite world. Moreover, the texts highlight important aspects of late Byzantine monasticism and a series of critical institutional and doctrinal developments, which formed part of a vital process of redefinition and reconfiguration that the latter had been undergoing at the time.⁵¹

The earliest and most important of the texts under consideration, dated September 1369, is defined by its author as a “κτητορικὸν ἐνόρκως διατυπωθὲν γράμμα”⁵² – a sworn founding act – and was written by Chariton in his capacity as abbot of Koutloumoussiou but on behalf of Vladislav I, who had been granted the prestigious title of the monastery's founder. Despite its irregularity (no signature, no authentication mark, etc.), Lemerle has excluded the possibility that it is a fake or a Greek translation “faite sur un original valaque”. Primarily on the basis of internal evidence, he speculates, quite convincingly to my mind, that it is probably a duplicate of the (now lost) formal act, which had been composed in Greek. The original document must

of Koutloumoussiou, to secure the relations that were being established between the young principality and various Orthodox religious institutions by cementing them on as solid a ground as possible: “And again I say, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that whoever is by the grace of God elected metropolitan of the Wallachian country, should treat the Koutloumoussiou monastery as if he were its founder, and support it with great interest, following our example; in its turn, the monastery should recognise him as a founder and inscribe his name in the diptychs among the other founders. Let him who will neglect our written order be condemned on the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, however, who will carry out what I prescribe here, let him receive divine assistance in both the present and eternal life. Amen.” (pp. 19-20; Romanian translation on p. 22; English translation mine.)

⁵¹ See P. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*, esp. pp. 39-51, and H. Mihăescu, *op. cit.*; cf. also G. Cioran, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-101.

⁵² See P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, p. 105 (line 65).

have been faithfully reproduced before it was sent to Wallachia in order to be reviewed and signed by its alleged author, and the informal copy was kept in the monastery (where it is still preserved) lest something happened to the original while its final sanction by the voivode was still pending.⁵³

The story behind this text is worth summarising here as it reveals with sufficient precision the terms and conditions in which Athonite monasticism and Wallachian religious politics were first subjected to each other's sway: during his extensive travels, Chariton and his entourage had managed to obtain for Koutloumousiou the generous support and patronage of several Orthodox rulers in the context of a sustained effort to transform the monastery from a poor and almost abandoned convent, completely exposed to natural disasters and pirate raids, into a well-protected and flourishing monastic community.⁵⁴ The voivode of Wallachia, Nicolae Alexandru Basarab (*reg.* 1352-1364), was one of those who had contributed to this cause by means of financing the construction of a protective tower.⁵⁵ After Alexandru's death – probably not

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Cf. Chariton's own words in his second testament: “[’Ε]ξ ὀλίγων καὶ μερικῶν ἀδε(λφ)ῶν εἰς πολλοὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ἐπηύξησα· ἐκ πενήτων καὶ προσαϊτῶν, νῦν ἀνευδεεῖς· ἐξ ὀλιγοκτῆτων, νῦν πολυκτῆμονας· ἐξ ὀλιγοσκεύων, νῦν πολυσκευεῖς καὶ ἀγαθοσκευεῖς· ἐξ ἀπεριτελιγστῶν καὶ εὐαλώτων, νῦν τετελιγσμένους καὶ ἀναλώτους· καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν, οὐ καθυφῆκα πᾶν ὅτιοῦν ἀφορόν πρὸς σύστασιν καὶ βελτίωσιν τῆς μονῆς, οὐ μὴ ἐπελαβόμεν χειρὶ πάσῃ καὶ ψυχῇ. Οὐ δὲ χάριν, ὀλίγα τῶ μοναστηρίῳ προσέμεινα· βίος μοι σχεδὸν ἅπας αἴθριος, χειμῶνι καὶ νηφετοῖς καὶ ὕμβροις, θέρει τὲ καὶ καύματι μαχόμενος καὶ φόβοις αἰχμαλωσίας ἔθνῶν, Ῥωμαίοις ἐντυγχάνων καὶ Σέρβοις καὶ Βλάχοις, ἐξ ὧν μοι περιεγένοντο οὐκ ὀλίγα χρεῖματά τε καὶ κτήματα”. *Ibid.*, p. 118 (lines 27-33); cf., similarly, p. 113 (lines 12-15).

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 103 (lines 3-4) and, in more specific terms, pp. 113 (lines 18-19) and 118 (lines 37-38). It should be kept in mind that Nicolae Alexandru was the son and successor of Basarab I (*reg.* 1324-1352), the legendary founder of the Wallachian princely dynasty. In this respect, the events under consideration here take us back to the very beginning of the political and ecclesiastical history of the principality, which is by no means a negligible detail. For the precise nature and extent of Nicolae Alexandru's patronage, see mainly P. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*, pp. 41-42. Lemerle has suggested that it was Chariton who had established contact with Nicolae Alexandru and had persuaded him to extend his generosity to Koutloumousiou; cf. *Actes de Kutlumus*, p. 9. Chronologically speaking, this is by no means impossible: Vladislav's father had been voivode until his death in 1364, while Chariton had become abbot of Koutloumousiou at some point between 1356 and 1362, and he must have been travelling extensively during that period. Nevertheless, the latter's own writings do not seem to provide any evidence that could confirm Lemerle's hypothesis. Indeed, even when he specifically refers to Nicolae Alexandru, Chariton never speaks of a personal contact or meeting with him, as he emphatically does when it comes to Vladislav. Not unreasonably,

very long after he had started exhibiting an active interest in the monastery – his son Vladislav, who succeeded him to the Wallachian throne, was prompted by Chariton to continue his father’s pious work by providing the necessary funds for the completion of the monastery’s fortification.⁵⁶ The new voivode invested large amounts of money on that project, and, in exchange, he was bestowed the title and privileges of a κτήτωρ, traditionally reserved not only for the actual founders but also for the great benefactors of the Athonite monasteries.⁵⁷ In addition to that, however, Wallachian monks soon started to flow into Koutloumousiou, where they were, as far as we can tell, freely admitted in the context of the engaging relationship that had been established between the ruler of Wallachia and the specific monastery. It is not quite clear whether this development was part of the initial agreement between Chariton and Vladislav, or an unavoidable consequence of the Wallachian prince’s openhanded and much-needed sponsorship. What the events that followed do make clear, however, is that Vladislav was adamant in respect to that particular aspect of his affairs with the monastery, and that he was not in the least willing to make any concessions as far as the unhindered admission and residence of Wallachian monks on Mount Athos were concerned. In fact, the observance of this specific condition proved to be an issue of vital importance for the voivode, and, as Lemerle has already pointed out, his insistence is indicative of an incipient orientation process in Wallachia that entailed and eventually resulted in the organisation of the country’s Church, and its religious life in general, on the basis of Byzantine ecclesiastical models and Athonite monasticism.⁵⁸

Upon their arrival at the monastery, however, the Wallachian monks – “ὀρφανοὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀήθεις πάσης μοναχικῆς ἐγκρατείας καὶ προσοχῆς”⁵⁹ – were unpleasantly surprised to find out that Koutloumousiou was strictly observing the “coenobitic” system of monasticism, despite the fact that most of the other

serious doubts have been expressed about the role that Chariton could have played in soliciting Nicolae Alexandru’s interest in the monastery; cf. D. Nastase, “Autour de la partition de la Métropole de Hongrovalachie (1370)”, pp. 131-133; see also D. Barbu, *op. cit.*, p. 120. At any rate, the issue calls for careful reconsideration, although a final verdict does not seem at hand – at least not until new evidence has been cogently brought forth.

⁵⁶ Cf. P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, p. 103 (lines 1-12).

⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 103 (lines 12-15). It should also be mentioned here that besides Vladislav, Chariton himself was granted the title of founder “ὡς κοπιᾶσας καὶ ἀναστήσας καὶ νῦν καὶ πρότερον ἐν τε κτήμασι, ἀμπελῶσι, μετοχίσι, ἐν τῶν τοῦ ἀγίου ὄρους καὶ ἐκτός”.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁹ “taking to the hills and not partaking of the ethic of monastic continence and prudence”, *ibid.*, p. 118 (lines 53-54).

monasteries on Athos had already abandoned it in favour of a mode that was at a later point called “idiorrhhythmic”, a less rigorous monastic regime, which allowed considerable freedom to monks, including the right to possess private property. As they were unable to cope with the severe demands of coenobitic life, the newcomers were forced to leave Koutloumousiou and return to their country, a fact that provoked an intense and worried reaction on behalf of the voivode-founder.⁶⁰ Thus, he adopted a policy of constant pressure on Chariton in order to have the regime of the monastery changed in accordance to the prevailing style on Mount Athos at that point, indicating that, unless this issue were settled, his contribution to the urgent financial needs of the community should not be counted on.⁶¹ It was after long and uneasy negotiations, in which Hyakinthos Kritopoulos, Daniel/Anthimos Kritopoulos and other important officials in Wallachia were also involved, that the Athonite abbot agreed to proceed to the necessary changes, but only on the condition that the voivode would, in his turn, agree to pay the debts of the monastery, finance the building of a church, a dining hall and a number of cells, and arrange for its provision with revenues (land, animals, etc.) that were judged necessary for the well-being of the monks.⁶² Naturally, the potential of a much more flexible and accommodating regime allowed the previously intimidated or frustrated monks to return to the monastery and flourish under the new circumstances that Chariton’s decision had given rise to; indeed, it seems to have signalled an increased Wallachian presence in Koutloumousiou, so much so that sentiments of insecurity and hostility developed among the rest of the monks, who felt offended or threatened by the behaviour, claims and general demeanour of their Danubian brethren and could not help thinking that they would sooner or later be overrun by them and suffer to see the monastery passing into “foreign” hands.⁶³

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 103 (lines 19-23).

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 103-104 (lines 23-32). See also Lemerle’s discussion in *ibid.*, p. 10, and in the introductions to the respective documents; see also P. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*, pp. 44-50, and H. Mihăescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 458-462, with a useful, though imperfectly developed, section on the socio-doctrinal dimensions of these events on pp. 460-461.

⁶² Cf. P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, p. 104 (lines 32-35). From Chariton’s testaments we learn that the negotiations with the voivode and his agents about the change of the monastery’s regime took place in Wallachia in the course of two of the abbot’s visits to the country; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 114 (lines 25-40) and 119 (lines 50-85). Similarly, it is in these latter documents, and not in the founding act, that the voivode’s financial obligations are more clearly stated; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 115 (lines 57-62) and 120 (lines 115-122).

⁶³ The passage in which these developments are related in the founding act is worth

This situation of generalised aggression and unrest rendered necessary the composition of an incontestable monastic rule that would set things right and help ground the tension, namely, the founding act under consideration here. Writing on behalf of Vladislav, Chariton set out to offer an authoritative *typikon*, the main purpose of which was to regulate the relations between Byzantine and Wallachian monks, as well as to specify several other issues concerning the orderly function of the monastery under the weight of the new and rather delicate circumstances. The points that are given special emphasis in the text allow for a better understanding of the nature of the problem and the reasons behind the discomposure and anxiety that the settlement of Wallachian monks had generated among the old members of the community. Among other things, it is written that Koutloumousiou is to remain under the absolute control of the Byzantine monks and that no one should ever dare to doubt their supremacy by assuming or stating that it was only for the sake of the Wallachian monks that the voivode extended his generosity to the monastery.⁶⁴ Not accidentally, one of Chariton's main concerns proves to have been the issue of his succession. Thus, he stipulated the recognition of the right to elect the monastery's respective abbot as an exclusive prerogative of the community's Byzantine leaders – of Chariton himself and, after his death, of the abbot that he would choose, and so on – while the role of the voivode-founder was limited to validating whichever decision would be reached by the rightful authorities.⁶⁵ Under pain of malediction and expulsion from the monastery, the Wallachians were admonished to honour and respect the Byzantines,⁶⁶ while the latter were expected, in their turn, to refrain from disturbing and agitating their foreign brothers in Christ.⁶⁷ In fact, Chariton's attitude vis-à-vis the problem that had

reproducing here, keeping in mind, of course, that it was supposed to be written not by Chariton (who had been the real author) but by Vladislav: “Ἐπεὶ οὖν Θ(εο)ῦ βοηθείᾳ ἤρξα-
ντο ἐκ τῶν ἡμετέρων Οὐγγροβλάχων ἀπέρχεσθαι ἐν τῇ τοιαύτῃ μονῇ καὶ δὴ ἀπῆλθον
πλεῖστοι, δειλιᾶσαι συνέβη τοὺς κοπιαστὰς καὶ αὐτουργοὺς τῶν ἀμπελώνων καὶ μετοχίων
καὶ ἐτέρων κτημάτων τῆς τοιαύτης μονῆς Ῥωμαίους, καὶ γογγύσαι κατὰ τοῦ ὀσιωτάτου
μοι π(α)τ(ρ)ὸς καὶ καθηγουμένου αὐτῶν, λέγοντας ὅτι τοσοῦτους χρόνους μετὰ σου
κοπιᾶσαντας πλεῖστα, καὶ μήτε ἄρτον καλὸν φαγόντας, μήτε οἶνον καλὸν πίνοντας μήτε
ἐνδυθέντας βράσον καλόν, νῦν ὅτε ἐμελλες ἡμᾶς ἀναπαύσειν, παραδίδως ἡμᾶς τοῖς Οὐγγρο-
βλάχοις, ἵνα ἔχωσιν ὑποδεεστέρους αὐτῶν, καὶ μετὰ τὴν σὴν ἀποβίωσιν ἐξώσωσιν ἡμᾶς ἐκ
τοῦ πολυμόχθου καὶ πολυχρονίου κόπου ἡμῶν, τί ἡμῖν καλὸν ἐποίησας; Ταῦτ' ἐβόων μετὰ
δακρῶν”. *Ibid.*, p. 104 (lines 35-40).

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 104 (lines 55-59).

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 104 (lines 48-53).

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 104 (lines 44-45).

⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 104-105 (lines 61-63).

been threatening the microcosmic stability of the Athonite community prefigures in an almost uncanny way Matthew of Myra's highly invested vision for a balanced coexistence between the two ethnic groups in the shared space of the Wallachian mainland: "Οφείλουσι τοιγαροῦν ἀμφοτέρα τὰ μέρη ἔχειν εἰρήνην, ὁμόνοιάν τε καὶ ἀγάπην ὡς ὁ κ(ύριος) ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς διακελεύεται καὶ τὸ τῆς φύσεως κοινὸν ἀπαιτεῖ, μνημονεύειν τε καθ' ἑκάστην τῆς ἀθηντείας μου."⁶⁸

In Chariton's discourse, imbued as it is with concepts and values drawn from Christian ethics, peace, love and concord are acknowledged and insisted upon not only as indispensable prerequisites for an unproblematic coexistence, but also as a moral obligation of all the monks in Koutloumousiou regardless of their ethnic origin. In the context of that acknowledgment, however, the text does not fail to establish a clearly defined hierarchy and to make absolutely clear which among the two groups should lead and which should follow. The fact that this "founding" act was destined to bear Vladislav's signature and was actually supposed to be the formal expression of his final verdict regarding the raised controversy – a brilliant move on Chariton's part – endows the document with a very special quality. The voivode was requested not merely to subscribe to the terms imposed by Chariton, but even embrace them "ἀσμένως πάνυ καὶ μετὰ πολλῆς ὡς εἰπεῖν τῆς περιχαρείας",⁶⁹ as if they were the written record of his own thoughts and judgment on the subject. Both as the monastery's founder and as the Wallachian sovereign, he was regarded as the only authority qualified to provide the necessary legal basis for the effective rapprochement of the two contesting parts, but the only way for him to do that was by means of a voluntary acceptance and official confirmation of hierarchical patterns that would inevitably generate a specific dynamic not only between the Byzantine and the Wallachian monks but also between the community as a whole and the voivode himself. Such a formal testimony, reproducing as it were Vladislav's founding provisions regarding his and his subjects' place in the Athonite monastery, would inevitably establish a precedent that could be indisputably referred to in the future every time there would be a need for Koutloumousiou's "legitimate" dwellers to suppress inappropriate claims or restore a disrupted relational balance between themselves and the monastery's "resident aliens".

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105 (lines 63-64): "Both groups must, therefore, coexist in peace, harmony and love, as the Lord exhorts his own disciples in the gospels and as it is called for by the fact that they share a common nature, and they must also commemorate my royal highness on a daily basis."

⁶⁹ "with great pleasure and full of joy", *ibid.*, p. 104 (line 42).

Unfortunately, there is no evidence that could betray Vladislav's initial reaction to all these conditions, and one cannot be really certain about the precise meaning of the fact that no formal (i.e. signed) copy of the founding act has survived. It could mean that the voivode refused to succumb to Chariton's terms and that the proposed settlement was never validated. But it could also mean that the formal document, which the Wallachian ruler was expected to invest with a signature and send back to Koutloumousiou, had, indeed, reached its final destination but was subsequently destroyed or lost at an unspecified moment in the monastery's long history. The fact is, however, that more than a year after the composition of the document under discussion, Chariton felt obliged to address the same issues again – writing as himself this time – which is a clear indication that no satisfactory or permanent resolution of the difficult situation in the monastery had been achieved up to that point. Within a few months (August–November 1370), the Athonite abbot had produced two additional reports, and the texts themselves make evident that in doing so he was anxiously seeking to further clarify the nature of the controversy, give a clearer account of the events that preceded it, and reaffirm his previously stated positions. Both documents are quite extensive and much more detailed compared to the previous year's founding act, and they are both designated as the author's testaments.⁷⁰ For fear that he might die before Vladislav honoured his part of the agreement, Chariton carefully goes over the situation, gives a summary of the terms and conditions that he had expounded in the founding act, and concludes by exhorting his monks never to proceed with the change of the monastery's regime unless these terms were fully met. Needless to say, the two consecutive testaments were meant to contain the “final words” of the monastery's revered abbot, who had also become one of its founders,⁷¹ and as such they were certainly carrying an extraordinary importance for the community and its future.

It does seem reasonable to suggest, however, that it was not much later before a final solution had been reached, at least on an official level. Chariton's election as Archbishop of Wallachia in 1372 can only be understood as a clear indication that his relations with Vladislav had been fully restored, and that the latter had in the meanwhile accepted the abbot's terms as they had been laid out in the founding act of 1369.⁷² It is also characteristic that in his final testament, written

⁷⁰ The first document is defined as an “ἐνδιάθετος διάταξις” (*ibid.*, p. 113, line 6) and “ἐνδιάθετος ὑποθήκη” (*ibid.*, p. 114, line 52), and the second one is defined, even more clearly, as a “διαθήκη” (*ibid.*, p. 121, lines 159 and 162).

⁷¹ Cf. above, note 57.

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 10-11; see also P. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*, pp. 49-50.

in July 1378, Chariton makes no reference whatsoever to any of the events that had aggravated the situation in Koutloumousiou in the late 1360s, and, instead, he seems preoccupied with problems of a different nature, regarding mainly the frequent captures and abductions of his monks by pirates.⁷³ In fact, had this been the only document to have survived, there would have been no way for us to figure out what had taken place just a few years earlier. By this point, Vladislav had been dead for four years, but while he was alive he had made sure that the Athonite monastery which he had been generously supporting opened its doors to Wallachian monks, and that Wallachia itself was given a new archbishop in the person of Chariton, the Byzantine abbot of that monastery. In his turn, the latter strove to ground the incipient (but rapidly expanding) relations between Mount Athos and the Danubian principality on a basis that could leave no one with any doubts or false expectations about the logistics and exact nature of the bond that was being forged between the negotiating parts in the context of all this intense activity.

The decree of Hyakinthos Kritopoulos' appointment in 1359 and Chariton's writings offer, I believe, a rare insight into the consolidating process of those terms that had to a large extent determined the quality and extent of Wallachian-Byzantine religious contacts in the last century before the fall of the Constantinople, as well as the specific channels of communication and their institutional framework: a series of influential Byzantine metropolitans and a redoubled archdiocese closely controlled by the Ecumenical Patriarchate; Mount Athos and its major turn to a fresh and abundant source of pious attention and material support; and the Wallachian rulers themselves, who for their own political reasons welcomed and greatly facilitated the principality's exposure to the religious politics of the Great Church. Significantly, this was a time when the concept of monarchical power in both Wallachia and Moldavia was being reworked in its most basic aspects, as it was undergoing a process of redefinition that would soon result in its inextricable link to Orthodoxy. This crucial shift had immense consequences for the future development of the principalities and their relations with the Byzantine and post-Byzantine Orthodox world.

Understandably, any attempt to approach the problem of early modern Greek-Romanian relations by genealogically tracing their remote origins back to the very first steps of the newly formed principalities in the fourteenth century would run the risk of being suspected as rather simplistic or historically

⁷³ For the text of Chariton's third and final testament, see P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-138 (no. 36).

redundant. It hardly needs to be noted that, in the almost 150 years that separate the first Byzantine archbishops from the beginning of the period that concerns us here, a series of radical military developments had altered profoundly the geopolitical, socio-economic, religious, institutional and anthropological layout of the territories that had once been part of the former Byzantine Empire; and, naturally, the overall situation in the Balkans, including areas as remote as that of the Danubian states, was deeply affected too. Nevertheless, this type of archaeological descent towards a medieval “rock-bottom” through the thick layers and discontinuities of everything that had taken place in the crucial decades before and after the fall of Constantinople has, to my mind, its *raison d'être*. The patterns that had been urgently but firmly established as a result of the conscious absorption into the dominant paradigm of late Byzantine cultural and religious forms and practices did not disappear after the “physical” collapse of the Empire and the subsequent eradication (or transformation) of its political institutions. On the contrary, it cannot be doubted that it had been in the context of the highly responsive policies adopted by the first Wallachian monarchs toward Byzantium – and vice versa – that a fertile dynamic between the two cultures was generated; a dynamic that survived with the indigenous ruling class even when the historical terms and conditions in which it was first materialised had practically vanished. Indeed, it was reactivated within the discernibly different, but equally favourable, environment that the Ottoman predominance in the larger area of the Balkans had engendered, and gradually became one of the salient features of pre-modern Romanian culture and ideology. In this sense, the early history of the Danubian principalities is bound to be of special interest not only to medievalists but also to researchers focusing on the first two post-Byzantine centuries, to say the least. For those interested in the early modern history of the Balkans, the considerable advantages to be gained from a systematic study of manifestations of inter-ethnic contact in the late medieval period stem mainly from the fact that this is an excellent way to maintain a proper historical perspective in examining and accounting for the infinitely greater intensity of subsequent developments in the region. For the most part, a substantial understanding of these developments can only be achieved on the basis of an interpretation that would take into account the latent influence of inherited traditions or systems of thought, as well as the complex but often more obvious role of broader contemporary phenomena.

Indeed, such an approach could allow, I think, for a better grasp not only of the fact that the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire did not cause an irreparable disruption of the relations that had been consolidated in the

previous century or so, but also that within a short period of time Greek-speaking Ottoman subjects, as well as those most agile religious institutions that had with considerable success made the jump from the Byzantine into the post-Byzantine world, were actively able to redirect at least part of their attention and energy to the principalities, where they were readily received, absorbed or integrated. Thus, by the mid-sixteenth century, an expansive network of religious contacts, commercial activities and other types of intercommunal exchange had already been established on pretty solid grounds, although one must allow for a few more decades before they progressed towards a sufficient level of structural crystallisation based on fixed patterns and lasting forms. But this shall be discussed in the second part of this paper (to be published in *The Historical Review* IV). To that effect, I will start by concentrating on a characteristic episode that marked the early stages of the relations between Wallachia and the post-Byzantine Greek Orthodox world in an attempt to examine the most important ways in which this resumed process of symbiosis and socio-cultural fusion was materialised within the newly emerged historical circumstances; and to unearth, insofar as it is possible, its ideological underpinnings – inherited, reconfigured or originally conceived – which were in the first place employed to bridge the practical incompatibilities and experiential gaps caused by the Byzantine annihilation, and went on to play an indispensable consolidating role throughout the period in question. My point of reference will be the Ecumenical Patriarch Niphon II, who is known to have settled in Wallachia at the beginning of the sixteenth century after an official invitation extended to him by the Voivode Radu cel Mare – Radu the Great – (reg. 1495-1508).⁷⁴ The Constantinopolitan prelate was offered the metropolitan throne of the country in order to initiate and supervise a much-needed process of reorganisation of the Wallachian Church, which in the last 50 years of the previous century had fallen, by and large, into a state of limbo.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See briefly Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του νέου Ελληνισμού*, Vol. IV: *Τουρκοκρατία, 1669-1812. Η οικονομική άνοδος και ο φωτισμός του Γένους* [History of modern Hellenism, Vol. IV: Ottoman domination, 1669-1812: financial strengthening and the enlightenment of the Genos], Thessaloniki 1973, p. 247.

⁷⁵ After the fall of Constantinople and the disintegration of the Byzantine Empire, and until Niphon's decisive reforms, it was the respective abbot of the monastery of Cozia by the River Olt who would serve as the archbishop of the country. For basic information about the character and role of the Church in the Danubian principalities during the Middle Ages, and its organisation before and after Niphon, see K. Treptow, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-93. For a more detailed account of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Romanian ecclesiastical and monastic life, art and literature, see the first volume of Mircea Păcurariu's *Istoria Bisericii*

Approximately 150 years after Hyakinthos and Chariton, Niphon's short but crucial term, as well as a series of related events, stand as a telling instance of the profound influence that the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Athonite monasteries continued to exert on the religious and political life of the principality in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's emergence as the dominant political and military power in the area.

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