



IDENTIFICATIONS OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN OTTOMAN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE (c.1450-c.1750)

Edited by
MARIJA VASILJEVIĆ

FORMIDOX

INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES
SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS



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Cover illustration

Hexaameron of John Exarch and Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes,

Holy Trinity Monastery of Pljevlja, Ms 79, 1649, Building of the Tower of Babel, fol. 130b

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Table of Contents

Foreword	7
MARIJA VASILJEVIĆ Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe	13
OGNJEN KREŠIĆ Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe: Political, Social, and Legal Contexts	29
ALEKSANDRA IVANOVIĆ Heavenly Patrons and Earthly Communities: Identification and Topoi in Hymnography	45
MARIJA VASILJEVIĆ Commemorating and Identifying in the Ottoman Central Balkans	77
IRENA PLAHOVIĆ Rhetorical Identification: The Case of Encomiastic Literature	127
MILENA DAVIDOVIĆ Self-Understandings and Identifications of Orthodox Christians in Early Modern Serbian Marginal Notes 1450–1750	167
OGNJEN KREŠIĆ Orthodox Christian Monks and the Modes of Identification of Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire	229

NIKOLAOS LIVANOS	
Ethnic Identifications in the Textual Representation of the Past on Mount Athos from the 15 th to the 18 th Centuries	265
ZORAN JOVANOVIĆ	
Greeks and the Others: Post-Byzantine Greek Narratives about Greeks, Other Christians and Ottomans	285
KONRAD PETROVSZKY	
Narrating the Past, Locating the Self: Matthaïos of Myra and Synadinos of Serres, Two Clerics from 17 th -Century Ottoman Europe	351
MARIAN COMAN	
Wallachians and Moldo-Wallachians: The Self-Fashioning Rhetoric of the Claimants to the Throne of Wallachia (Late 16 th and Early 17 th Centuries)	375
MAJA NIKOLIĆ	
Identifications on Post-Byzantine Crete: The Case of the Micrography of Georgios Klontzas	409
VALENTINA ŽIVKOVIĆ	
Creation of a Narrative and an Iconographical Model of Conversion: Blessed Osanna of Kotor	431
OVIDIU OLAR	
Contested Identifications: Eastern Christianity Between Rome and Constantinople (First Half of the 17 th Century)	451
Afterword	489

Foreword

This volume stems from the research carried out in the project *(Trans-)Formation of Identities: Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans (c.1450–c.1750)*, acronym FORMIDOX, funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia in the call PROMIS 2023 (Grant no. 10932). The project introduced the analysis of collective and social identities (understood as the relational aspect of individual identities) into the study of the said period, as these topics have often been treated as self-explanatory, receiving little to no critical reflection. Eastern Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans were chosen as representative case studies to explore the complexities of identity-building.

The chronology is symbolic. Namely, in 1453 Constantinople, one of the symbols of Orthodox Christianity, fell to the Ottoman Empire. This event resonated far beyond its immediate significance – the Byzantine Empire at that time occupied just a fraction of the Balkans. The Ottoman conquest spanned from the last quarter of the 14th century to the early 16th century. For that reason, each study would start at a point relevant to that region.

The chronological endpoint – the middle of the 18th century – is marked by demographic and economic changes, as well as administrative reforms in the Empire's Balkan provinces. These developments significantly impacted the contexts of identity formation and align with Reinhart Koselleck's concept of *Sattelzeit*, denoting a period of considerable discontinuities and transformations in social and cultural life.¹ This era brought about new ways of perceiving and interpreting the world, laying the groundwork for the 19th century transformations.

The starting hypothesis of the project was that the identities of Ottoman Orthodox Christians, defined as a way people understand themselves and organise their

¹ On the term *Sattelzeit* (saddle period) see: R. Koselleck, "Einleitung", in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* [vol.] 1, Hrsg. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta Verlag, 1972), XIII–XXVII.

social worlds, were remodelled to fit their lives in a Muslim-dominated Empire and in closer contact with representatives of Islam. Namely, the legal system in the Ottoman Empire systematically enacted discriminatory measures against non-Muslims, while at the same time there was little concern for assimilation of any kind.² This affected how Orthodox Christians perceived themselves and how they were perceived by others. There was, however, no uniformity to this influence across regions.

The next important hypothesis was that, although there was an idea of a singular Orthodox Christian identity, its meaning varied across the Balkans. At the same time, under the ‘umbrella’ of Orthodox identity, other identities were nurtured. These identities included ties to a territory, ancestry, profession, place of residence, shared history and others. They coexisted, sometimes in harmony, and at other times in conflict. Notwithstanding their connection, the content of identities was different.

Over the course of the project’s implementation, the terminology and theoretical framework were refined, and some initial ideas were further developed. Here it is important to stress that ‘identification’ and ‘self-understanding’ were favoured instead of collective and social identities, while additional terms were introduced to reflect particular aspects of these processes.³ With this, the constraints of essentialist language were overcome: the terms themselves conveyed the processual quality of these phenomena. Processual quality denotes stability, change, adjustments, and transformations. These processes rested on categories (language, religion, place of residence, ancestry or any shared category deemed important in one context) and relational networks (family, neighbourhood, situational connections).

It was mentioned that the subject of identifications has often lacked thorough examination. Researchers tend to overlook or overstress the categories in their sources, rarely questioning how these categories were used (their meaning need not be equal to the contemporary one) and whether we can even evaluate their relevance. It is crucial to ask questions such as: Who used the category? Was it created at that moment, or did it already carry inherent meaning? How frequently was it used? Was it imposed by an outsider or developed in the process of self-identification? Can we assess the impact of the category and its “discursive career”,⁴ including both synchronic and diachronic changes?

By closely re-examining this, we can highlight the similarities in how Orthodox Christians throughout Ottoman Southeastern Europe perceived, interpreted, and

² On historical context of identifications in the Ottoman Empire see O. Krešić, “Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe: Political, Social and Legal Contexts”.

³ For more on this see M. Vasiljević, “Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe”.

⁴ R. Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups”, in: R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 13.

presented their worlds during this period. With this, we aim to avoid the pitfalls of ‘methodological nationalism’,⁵ which often imposes contemporary national perspectives onto the past. The commonality in identifications can be attributed to two macro-contexts: religion and life in the Ottoman Empire. Since the Ottomans entered the Balkans in the second half of the 14th century, Orthodox Christianity has served as a foundation for creating a wider sense of belonging. Faced with an adversary of another religion, people’s own faith became the crucial framework for interpreting their contemporary experiences. After the Ottoman conquests, contact with individuals, officials, and the new legal framework further influenced how Orthodox Christians viewed themselves. It led to the emergence of new salient categories and to the reshaping of existing ones. Many practices, consequently, became acts of identification.

Despite the shared macro-contexts, identifications and self-understandings were not uniform throughout the Ottoman Empire. Depending on its location and period, even the same practice could manifest differently, varying in meaning and results. This can be understood as the practice’s micro-context. Highlighting the differences in identifications and self-understandings due to the various micro-contexts is another goal of this volume. The synchronic differences do not necessarily align with the contemporary state organisation; rather, they arise from diverse social and economic conditions. Taking a closer look at which territories were encompassed by these processes will also reverse the work of methodological nationalism. Differences also involve diachronic change: for example, a certain category that may have been significant around 1500 could lose its relevance or change its meaning by 1600.⁶

As mentioned, identifications and self-understandings are tied to the practices in which categories and connections were articulated, propagated, institutionalised, imposed, appropriated and so forth. They are always contextual – determined by macro- and micro-contexts – and in turn, influence at least the latter. This could be called circular causality, which illustrates how identifications ‘worked’ over time, making it an important focus of this volume. The model: macro-context → micro-context → practice → micro-context (→ macro-context) explains how the contexts for next identification are created and accounts for both stability and change.

This model, the examination of who introduced the identification (someone from the purported group or outside of it) and the focus on different practices and

⁵ On ‘historiographical/methodological nationalism’ see E. Storm, “A New Dawn in Nationalism Studies? Some Fresh Incentives to Overcome Historiographical Nationalism. Consequences and Implications”, *European History Quarterly* 48/1 (2018), 113–129; G. Vasilev, “Methodological Nationalism and the Politics of History-Writing: How Imaginary Scholarship Perpetuates the Nation”, *Nations and Nationalism* 25/2 (2019), 18–27.

⁶ For example, names were renewable resources. On this see Vasiljević, “Identifications and Self-Understandings”.

their micro-contexts accounts for why researchers sometimes obtain disparate or even contradictory results. That is also the reason why identifications can be described as entwined; depending on the context, they can be complementary, contradictory, refer to the same categories with similar or different meanings, or refer to mutually exclusive categories.

To this should be added that the methodology and researchers themselves influence research results. The fact that the researchers, with their own worldviews and values are powerful identifiers should not be omitted; instead, it serves as a reminder of the importance of self-reflection. This practice helps mitigate some of the biases that can arise: methodological nationalism and various prejudices, including religious biases.

In this volume, researchers with diverse skills worked towards described objectives. Only by collaborating can we aim to paint a somewhat relevant picture of the myriad ways people viewed themselves and others during this period. Because of these differences, a shared theoretical foundation will help navigate the multitude of approaches. The following chapter will provide the reader with the necessary background to engage with the papers effectively.

To conclude these introductory words, I would like to say it was a great pleasure to collaborate with my colleagues on this project: Ognjen Krešić, Irena Plaović, Milena Davidović, Aleksandra Ivanović, and Zoran Jovanović. Our diverse expertise and research interests contributed to lively discussions during our monthly meetings, which will be missed. I thank them for their hard work and important contributions to this volume. I am also grateful to the contributors who were not part of the project but nevertheless engaged with this challenging subject alongside us: Ovidiu Olar, Marian Coman, Valentina Živković, Maja Nikolić, Konrad Petrovsky, and Nikolaos Livanos. I extend my gratitude also to everyone who participated in the implementation of the project – whether as participants at the conference or as members of the editorial board. A debt of gratitude is owed to our reviewers: Mirjana Živojinović, Andrei Timotin, and Hasan Çolak, who undertook the demanding task of reading the entire volume and provided important insights and suggestions.

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Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe

The concern with identities in the social sciences and humanities predates the introduction of the term itself. Its roots lead to the work of George Herbert Mead, Norbert Elias, and Maurice Halbwachs in the interwar period. Mead distinguished between internal individuality and the aspects of self that are shaped by the internalised attitudes of others, referring to these as the ‘I’ and the ‘me’; Elias focused on the external factors influencing identity that go beyond an individual’s personality; while Halbwachs emphasised that individual memory is dependent on the social frameworks, where a sense of belonging presupposes consensus on what will be remembered and how.¹ While these reflections do not encompass all early thoughts on identity,² they illustrate that researchers from different fields have long been invested in understanding how people perceive and understand themselves.

Identities became a significant subject of research in the social sciences and humanities with the introduction of the term itself in the 1950s.³ The variety of

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¹ G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, ed. C. W. Morris, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972 [1934]), 135–226; N. Elias, *The Society of Individuals*, ed. M. Schroter, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991 [1939]), 12–16; M. Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, éd. G. Namer, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994 [1925]); Similar could be said for posthumously published M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, éd. G. Namer, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997 [1950]).

² On earlier deliberations and the emergence of the term outside of social sciences and humanities, see, P. Gleason, “Identifying Identity: A Semantic History”, *The Journal of American History* 69 (1983), 910–921; R. Jenkins, *Social Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 31.

³ For an overview of the trajectories in the study of identity and their connection to contemporary social and political processes see: M. Wetherell, “The Field of Identity Studies”, in: *The Sage Handbook of Identities*, eds. M. Wetherell, C. T. Mohanty, (London: Sage, 2007), 3–26.

studies in fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and history can be overwhelming. Different meta-theoretical perspectives, theoretical frameworks, and disciplinary traditions have led to various methodologies, resulting in sometimes conflicting understandings, definitions, and findings. At first glance, the emphasis on individual, relational, or group identities seems to be a prominent distinction among these disciplines. The first one is linked to the work of Erik Erikson, who played a pivotal role in popularising the concept.⁴ The second and the third, which are of interest here, focus on how individuals perceive themselves as part of their social worlds and how they understand those worlds.

Key researchers also came from various traditions, such as Erving Goffman who is often associated with symbolic interactionism; Thomas Berger in the field of social constructionism; research stemming from the role theory; and others.⁵ Social psychology bridged the gap between individual and social with social identity theory by Henry Tajfel and John Turner, and later on by self-categorisation theory by John Turner and others.⁶ The key transformation took place with the introduction of the analysis of discourses and the focus on the language as a tool for constructing identities. By bringing attention to ‘regimes of truth’ and ‘discursive formations’, Michel Foucault redefined the focus of identity research.⁷ While before researchers focused on recognising or understanding ‘who is who’ in the worlds they were studying, their focus now became examining how the experience was constructed in the discourse.⁸

⁴ E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1950); E. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968).

⁵ E. Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963); P. Berger, T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); see also, Gleason, “Identifying Identity”, 917–918.

⁶ H. Tajfel, J. C. Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Inter-group Conflict”, in: *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds. W. G. Austin, S. Worchel, (Monterey, CA: Brooks-Col, 1979), 33–47; H. Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981); H. Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982); *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*, eds. J. C. Turner et al., (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1987).

⁷ M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses – une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); M. Foucault, *L’archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969). Even though this approach has its limits, especially insofar as it strips the subjects of their power (identities are created in the discourse), his insights are of utmost importance for our research.

⁸ Discursive approaches include the ones that will be presented in the following lines but also micro-analysis of everyday activities (it was contrasted as capital-D and small-d discourse in: M. Bamberg, A. De Fina, D. Schrifin, “Discourse and Identity Construction”, in: *Handbook of Identity. Theory and Research*, eds. S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, V. L. Vignoles, (New York: Springer 2011), 177–199).

Jean-François Lyotard's 'discourse genres/types' are also quite a useful concept as they refer to differing thought systems that could contradict one another.⁹ Connections to Mikhail Bakhtin's 'speech genres' – everyday speech patterned by particular themes, constructions, and style – and 'heteroglossia' – a product of these speech genres¹⁰ – are evident, which is why his work was integrated in the research on discourse. Thanks to anthropologists, the focus on difference in addition to similarity entered identity studies. Here, the interactionist approach proved to be of utmost importance.¹¹

As the number of conceptualisations of identity has grown, so too has its use in everyday conversations and politics. This surge in interest has prompted questions about the term itself, resulting in new attempts to redefine it.¹² Another consequence of this development was a growing need to combine different approaches in identity studies. The goal was not only to foster an integrated theory of identities – as in the work of Richard Jenkins and Rogers Brubaker – but also to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue that is often lacking.¹³

These lines do not exhaust this trajectory of identity studies – many notable approaches (e.g., the ones stemming from 'performative turn' or nationalism studies¹⁴) were left out. The mentioned approaches, in fact, are the ones that proved useful for the period and territory encompassed by this volume. For starters, this volume introduces diverse terminology. At the forefront stand 'identification' and 'self-understanding', which refer to what was commonly known as collective and relational identities.¹⁵ They bear the message of processual quality of our subject insofar as they were derived from verbs. They are followed by cognate terms 'commonality',

⁹ J. F. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

¹⁰ M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel", in: M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: Austin University Press, 1981), 259–422.

¹¹ *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. F. Barth, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

¹² Wetherell, "The Field of Identity Studies", 23.

¹³ For example, several handbooks aim to connect diverse theories and approaches rather than concentrating solely on individual or social identity. Notables include: *The Sage Handbook of Identities; Handbook of Identity. Theory and Research*.

¹⁴ This area of research will be referenced at the end of this chapter.

¹⁵ This use of the identification should not be confused with the psychoanalytical term used to explain childhood processes, but in line with the role theory and reference-group theory. This distinction was made by Gleason, "Identifying Identity", 915–917. The identification was used as a substitute for identity in: S. Hall, "Introduction: Who needs 'Identity'?", in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. S. Hall, P. D. Gay, (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 1–17. However, the inspiration for the use in this volume came from R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'", *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 14–21, although they are used in a slightly different way.

‘groupness’ and ‘community’ when focusing on collective aspects, and ‘self-positioning’, ‘self-fashioning’ and ‘self-presentation’ when stressing a person’s view of themselves in relation to others and how they present themselves to them.



Additional meta-positions should be stressed before turning our attention to the approach of this volume in more detail. The first is concerned with the artificial division between individual, relational, and collective aspects of these processes. While this distinction is quite useful in some studies, in our case it is beneficial to focus on the fact that their contexts, processes, and contents are simultaneous, occupy the same space and are implied in each other.¹⁶ In fact, they are a part of the same spectrum. Due to the period we investigate and the nature of the existing sources, our focus is on the relational and collective aspects. Second, they are analysed from a phenomenological perspective.¹⁷ Understood in this way, they can have complex relationships with one another; they can overlap, conflict, align, or be entirely unrelated.

The debate between essentialism and constructivism only seems redundant. Even though most contemporary research rejects the notion that identities consist of fixed and unchangeable elements, this issue is complicated by the frequent combination of essentialist arguments and a constructivist approach.¹⁸ In other words, although many researchers emphasise that studying identities involves examining dynamic and complex processes, the practical implementation of these insights often falls short. Moreover, the language we use influences how we interpret any phenomenon. The use of the static language can be seen as a way in which (unintentional) essentialism subtly affects the research on identities.

These obstacles can be overcome partly with the use of terms deriving from verbs, such as self-understanding and identification. Namely, each source – the

¹⁶ V. L. Vignoles, S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, “Introduction: Toward an Integrative View of Identity”, in: *Handbook of Identity. Theory and Research*, 1–27, 8–10. Richard Jenkins defined this as individual, interaction and institutional order: R. Jenkins, *Foundations of Sociology: Towards a Better Understanding of the Human World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 68–76.

¹⁷ This allows us to explore the discursive construction of identifications and self-understandings in our sources and analyse them as distinct phenomena. This should be stressed, as every identification and self-understanding is embodied by individuals, i.e., involves cognitive processes that can take place only in an individual. We might discuss this in terms of different aspects of individual processes, but doing so risks falling into ‘methodological individualism’.

¹⁸ Brubaker, Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 6.

stage of identifications and self-understandings – is context-dependent and serves different purposes in differing situations. As contexts change, so too does the content of identifications, hence the focus on their processual nature. This view does not exclude the stability across time and space. While it is acknowledged that some elements may be consistent, these observations are not universal truths. Only after thorough evidence from sources has demonstrated such stability can we make these claims.

Connected to this debate is the reification of groups, which has permeated the study of identities since its inception. Reification refers to the tendency to view society as composed of stable and homogeneous cultural, ethnic, or other groups.¹⁹ This issue manifests in various ways and has persisted despite significant developments in the social sciences and humanities. Its persistence can be understood as a reflection of identification politics. Every identification and self-understanding seeks a sense of stability and permanence, which is reflected as ‘psychological essentialism’ or ‘participants’ primordialism’.²⁰ This implies that it is in the nature of these processes to create the impression that the emphasised category or relationship, along with the affective resonance of that cognitive process, is something that has always existed and will continue to do so in the future. As a result, the belief emerges that the group is stable and materialised.

One way to address this reification is to redefine the groups. This means that we should understand groups not as a given, but as something created on occasions when a particular category or relationship would emerge as a basis for creating groupness.²¹ Here we can talk of a predisposition to perceive categories and social location as salient in certain contexts.²² This fit of a category or connection could be comparative – one that focuses on differences in the context, or normative – one that focuses on the meaning associated with those categories.²³ For example, religion could be counted as an identification category of a comparative fit in judicial cases or tax surveys in the Ottoman Empire, where it serves to stress the difference between

¹⁹ R. Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups”, in: R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 7–27, 8.

²⁰ D. Medin, “Concepts and Conceptual Structure”, *The American Psychologists* 44 (1989), 1476–1477; A. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 158.

²¹ Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups”, 12.

²² This refers to the research on salience of social categories, which rests on the particular category’s accessibility (perceptual readiness which includes past perceived fit to social stimuli) and the fit to the social stimuli: P. J. Oakes, “The Salience of Social Categories”, in: *Rediscovering the Social Group*, 117–141.

²³ *Ibid.*; R. Spears, “Group Identities: The Social Identity Perspective”, in: *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, 209.

Christian and Muslim subjects. At the same time, in liturgy it could count as a way to assign meaning to the lives of the faithful (normative fit) and thus generate a connection. On other occasions, such as in some cases of adjudications of inheritances, this category might not be relevant at all.

By focusing on these events, we can understand the situations of great cohesiveness and solidarity, “without implicitly treating high levels of groupness as constant, enduring, or definitionally present”.²⁴ This suggests that strong solidarity will not occur in every situation. By examining particular occasions and their contexts, we can better understand both the emergence and absence of intense feelings of connectedness. Witnessing a martyrdom and the martyr’s subsequent commemoration likely fosters an emotionally charged sense of belonging, while the compiling of a tax survey would probably generate a less emotionally laden commonality. For that reason, the diversification of the terminology, i.e., the use of the identification, commonality, community, as well as self-understanding, self-positioning, self-fashioning, allows us to stress the fact that senses of belonging and their functions are variable.

Identification refers to the perceived existence of groupness on a specific occasion. It doesn’t necessarily include only those physically present at the event. For instance, during a liturgy, individuals come together and foster a sense of community with those around them. They often belong to the same village, town, or nearby area. When the saint’s relics are present in a church, pilgrims, usually from nearby regions, may attend. This creates a connection among all those who regard a particular saint as their protector. If liturgical text references a specific territory or other category, it can evoke a feeling of belonging among the attendees. Ultimately, everyone present identifies as Orthodox Christians. Using commonality, groupness and community serve to assess the degree of the influence of this identification, i.e., to stress not the content of identification but its success.

This leads to the important question of the agents that do the identifying. These agents can be among other things individuals, organisations, discourses, and official accounts. They may be created by members of a purported community or outside of it. Researchers sometimes refer to these processes by introducing different terms, such as identification and self-identification, categorisation and symbolising.²⁵ Regardless of the terminology, identification is always constituted in the internal-external dialectic. This can mean that wherever the impulse for identification is – i.e., from a purported group, the people outside of it need to recognise it,

²⁴ Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups”, 12.

²⁵ Brubaker, Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 15; Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 102–117.

while external identification is meaningful only if people accept certain categories as significant.²⁶

Self-understanding refers to “situated subjectivity”,²⁷ which includes individuals recording their own interpretations of who they are. It relates to how a person perceives themselves and how they interpret various categories that contribute to their sense(s) of belonging. The emphasis is on personal perspective rather than external views and interpretations. We find it when a person for example calls themselves Christian, Moldavian, names their occupation or place of living, but also when they describe what it means to associate themselves with these categories. Terms such as self-positioning, self-fashioning and self-presentation draw the attention to the function ascribed to this understanding, i.e., their position in a purported community, their aims and ambitions and so forth.

Identifications and self-understandings rest on the categories and relational webs. The category can be religion, language, region, part of the town, ancestry, occupation, any practice or anything deemed important in a certain context. A category in one context can act as the foundation for creating a connectedness. For instance, when Ottoman officials labelled someone as an infidel, belonging to Christianity (or other religion) can emerge as the most identificatory. However, when participants of an event belong to the same religion, it can be one, but not the most important aspect of the identification.

Groupness is not equal to categories.²⁸ Categories are used to create a sense of belonging, but simply naming a category does not mean that the community exists. By separating them, we can examine in more detail their relationship. We can explore what people are doing with categories. Especially when categories are imposed, we should ask among other things how they were articulated, propagated, and institutionalised. We can also ask if they were internalised, evaded, or transformed.²⁹ The place of language in identifications is a good example of the need to distinguish between categories and groupness. The best illustration is the practice of ‘code-switching’, which designates shifting between languages or varieties of language, usually in order to gain some advantage,³⁰ thus signalling the lack of its

²⁶ In theory, people need not be aware of the category ascribed to them just as the shared category need not be recognised by others. However, in the second case, when a number of people share a category that is not recognised by others, they would have limited presence in the world. On this see Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 106.

²⁷ Brubaker, Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 17.

²⁸ Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups”, 12–13.

²⁹ Therefore, we need to analyse discursive ‘careers’ of categories and relational webs, *ibid.*, 13.

³⁰ On the changing relations between languages and communities (not defined in terms of homogeneity, with clear boundaries and with consensus) roughly in the period we are dealing with see P. Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge:

participation in identifications. In summary, we must examine how language is used, promoted, or even neglected, before we can understand its connection to identifications and self-understanding.

The frequent use of certain categories generally creates a strong groupness. These events can be so widespread and encompassing that they appear static and groups reified. It is, actually, the impact of the process itself. In cases that leave the impression of stable identifications, the diachronic change must be examined. On the contrary, unique or nearly incidental events highlighting a particular determinant rarely lead to the creation of (permanent) connections.

Identification and self-understanding are always shaped in the dialectic of similarity–difference. Namely, to stress similarity with a number of people is to stress the difference from others. Here, the concept of boundaries emerges.³¹ They are flexible, situational, and negotiable, and they exist between those who, through interaction, come to identify themselves and be recognised as members of different collectivities.

The consideration of the power in the period we are dealing with is another crucial aspect of this study. The state is one of the most powerful identifiers even in this period, as it has the biggest resources to impose various classifications, social counting, etc.³² In this context, stereotyping, understood as heightened categorisation, is particularly important. It reflects the construction of relevant stereotypes that lead to depersonalisation in specific situations.³³ Their ease of activation and influence on subsequent perception and judgment make them particularly important for this study. This can rest on the salience of social categories, but can also refer to something unrelated to the context. The former is the case in making a tax survey, where one of the relevant social categories is occupation. Even when people declare the occupation themselves, the making of a choice is imposed. If the survey was created in a neighbourhood of a town where most inhabitants were of the same

Cambridge University Press, 2004). The research has shown that only after the late 18th century did the language become nationalised.

³¹ Richard Jenkins introduced important insights on the work of Fredrick Barth in, Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 118–131. However, even though this approach birthed insights that should not be ignored, the concept of the boundary, even when seen as a process, is one of the most problematic concepts in terms of reification of the group, so it will not be used extensively here.

³² Brubaker, Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 16.

³³ The literature on stereotyping, crucial to cognitive processes, is vast and lies beyond the scope of this volume. On the process in different contexts with relevant literature see, *The SAGE Handbook of Social Cognition*, eds. S. T. Fiske, C. Neil Macrae, (London: SAGE Publications, 2012).

occupation, then this category can contribute to commonality. If stressed in other occasions, such as shared life customs, we can speak of a community.

This draws attention to the reaction to stereotyping, which can be negative or considered threatening to the designated group. This can be found in the stereotyping of members of all faiths outside of Islam in the Ottoman documents. The responses can vary, including focusing on a different category for comparison, altering the meaning assigned to a certain category, or just avoiding acknowledgement of the hierarchically higher identifier.³⁴ Orthodox Christians reversed their stereotyping in a way that not belonging to Islam became a positive category, thus resisting negative stereotypes. They also assigned their own negative stereotypes to Muslims. Both processes strengthened feelings of belonging and were an important aspect of various other identifications and self-understanding.

The aforementioned practices show that identifications and self-understandings take place in 'keyings' – in which actions are transformed from primary understandings to something “not literal”.³⁵ These are a set of “conventions by which a given activity [...] is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else”.³⁶ Social rituals, or ceremonials, are examples of these keyings – here something other than the scripted activity is taking place.³⁷ It is easier to see the work of keying in the liturgy, especially in the commemoration of local saints, who become symbols of community.³⁸ Keying can also be observed in creating tax surveys, where the act of recording individuals and their tax obligations encompasses identifying subjects and organising social, political, and cultural worlds. Sometimes we deal with the sources that elaborate on this keying. Other times we deal with documentation that uses limited language and terms, but this does not mean that

³⁴ This does not exhaust possible reactions but are the most relevant one for our research; see Tajfel, Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Inter-group Conflict”, 19–20.

³⁵ Erving Goffman did not deal with major institutions, discourses, questions of power and prestige, as he states himself: “I make no claim whatsoever to be talking about the core matters of sociology – social organisation and social structure [...] I personally hold society to be first in every way and any individual's current involvement to be the second; this report deals only with matters that are second”, E. Goffman, *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organisation of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 14. However, since these interactions (led by a set of rules, even if only to limit possible interpretations) reflect power structures, they are a way into understanding their influence.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 43–44.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

³⁸ Orthodox Churches act as important identifiers mostly by creating symbols of the community they aim to represent. Jenkins creatively assimilated the work of Anthony Cohen – A. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985) – in an attempt to clarify the process of self-identification, Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 132–147.

the transformation is absent. Keyings are not always easy to access, but they should be kept in mind, as they represent the means by which identifications occur.



The presented approach lacks the reference to perhaps the most important identifications today – ethnic and national identifications. Their contemporary prevalence and the ‘methodological nationalism’ calls for its separate mention. Another reason is the fact that when researchers analyse these phenomena, ‘categories of social and political practice’ and ‘categories of social and political analysis’ merge.³⁹ The category of practice refers to the term used in everyday life and politics; the category of analysis applies to the research on the practices of ethnic and national identifications. By uncritically adopting these categories of practice in their research, authors may inadvertently reinforce their work. Even when regarded critically, their conflation can further perpetuate the ‘participants’ primordialism’ – their conception and presentation of ethnic/national communities as something existing outside the events of identifications, transversing time and often space.

Another reason for avoiding the mention of these types of identifications is that focusing on these types of connectedness means focusing on the ‘winner’ among collective identifications today while overlooking others that could have been equally or even more significant during the period in question.⁴⁰ The aim of this volume was precisely to stress other forms of identifications in the early modern period, showcasing the complexity of identifications.

While both ethnic and national identifications can be viewed as parts of one domain,⁴¹ their research bifurcated in the past century. Even though both terms, in one form or another, appeared much earlier in history, the meaning they assume today started taking shape recently. The terms patriotism and its national version (nationalism) appeared in the 18th century to signal a new social and political movement, in a period defined by Reinhart Koselleck as *Sattelzeit*, i.e., after the period we are investigating.⁴² The understandings of the emergence of nations and nationalism

³⁹ Brubaker, Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 4–5. This, of course, is not the first time this was noticed, but perhaps the most eloquent way of formulating it. Patrick Geary also voiced this concern in *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1–14.

⁴⁰ On this comment, see J. Breuilly, “Dating the Nation: How Old is an Old Nation?”, in: *When is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism*, eds. A. Ichijo, G. Uzelac, (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 15–39, 17–18.

⁴¹ R. Brubaker, “Ethnicity as Cognition”, in: Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 64–87, 81–83.

⁴² On the emergence of the first -ism as *Bewegungsbegriff* – *patriotismus*, crucial for understanding nationalism see R. Koselleck, “Patriotismus: Gründe und Grenzen eines neuzeitli-

could be divided into primordialism, modernism, ethno-symbolism, and contemporary approaches.⁴³ Each of these approaches offers different definitions of nations and nationalism, and are to a degree an answer to the critique of the previous dominant paradigm. The researchers who argue that nations and nationalism existed in the pre-modern period use the term that emerged in specific social, cultural, and political contexts and apply it to quite diverse periods and places, which proves to be problematic. To overcome this obstacle, ethnic identification sometimes emerges as a bridge between pre-modern senses of belonging and contemporary nations. Ethnicity is a construct of the middle of the 20th century.⁴⁴ Ethnic identification was usually analysed from the perspective of primordialism, instrumentalism, interactionism, but also through social-psychological, ethno-symbolic, and contemporary approaches.⁴⁵

While differing greatly, the critique of reification applies to most of them: they assume the existence of a national or ethnic group, with the only question being how and to what extent was its identity realised or constructed. This does not mean that these approaches should be rejected. Rather, they need to be modified insofar as to include the perspective that groups are not a given, but are created over a series of events. They could be extremely stable, but they always rested on renewal and reinforcement. This is a contribution of contemporary approaches.⁴⁶

Therefore, both ethnic and national identification function in the same manner as identifications in general – they rest on categories and relational webs, i.e., rely on cognition, include affective and behavioural aspects, are dependent on the events of identification, imply the consideration of power, dialectic of similarity–difference and internal–external, stereotypisation, etc.⁴⁷ They are perspectives on the world, ways

chen Begriffs”, in: R. Kosseleck, *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 218–239. Usually, authors stress 1774 and 1798 as the first years that mention the word nationalism, U. Özkirimli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism. A Critical Engagement* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005), 14.

⁴³ These approaches will not be presented here; there are several handbooks that have done so. See in particular: *When is the Nation?*; U. Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism. A Critical Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2017).

⁴⁴ For ethnicity see J. Hutchinson, A. D. Smith, “Introduction”, in: *Ethnicity*, eds. J. Hutchinson, A. D. Smith, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4–5.

⁴⁵ On the approaches see *ibid.*, 7–10 as well as other papers in the same volume, while Rogers Brubaker can be included in contemporary approaches.

⁴⁶ Contemporary approaches in nationalism studies also call attention to the extent to which our analytical concepts are shaped by the discourse of nationalism, Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 182–183.

⁴⁷ Rogers Brubaker particularly stressed this for ethnicity: Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups”, and Brubaker, “Ethnicity as Cognition”.

of organising and making sense of the world with varying impact, varying salience once activated, and varying compatibility with other identifications.⁴⁸

When dealing with the early modern period, one must search for evidence that specific identification was the (most) important way of organising the social world. In other words, brief examples cannot serve as the “scissor-and-paste argument”,⁴⁹ taken out of context and lacking corroboration from other sources. Even if one or several authors define something that could be considered ethnic identification, we often lack the evidence that it was accepted outside of the author’s circle. Also, names, as renewable resources, could be forgotten, remembered, and used to convince people of continuity, often to conceal discontinuity.⁵⁰ Finally, one must always question to whom the sources refer and what was their reach.

Whatever interpretation one adopts regarding the use of the terms of ethnic and national identifications, the reach and possibilities for strengthening these types of communities today are incomparable to the early modern period. For example, the modern state could actually be called the ‘nationalising state’,⁵¹ which is constantly reminding its citizens of their belonging to a certain community. However, if the reach of a state and its political institutions even today is not comprehensive, we cannot assume that any institution could propose, impose, or propagate any commonality, connectedness, groupness, or identification in such a way as to include the majority of people across wide territories.

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⁴⁸ Brubaker, “Ethnicity as Cognition”, 78–81.

⁴⁹ Breuilly, “Dating the Nation: How Old is an Old Nation?”, 15.

⁵⁰ Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 118–119.

⁵¹ On the term ‘nationalising state’ see: R. Brubaker, “Nationalizing states in the old ‘New Europe’ – and the new”, in: R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79–106 and other papers in the same volume.

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Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe: Political, Social, and Legal Contexts

Starting from the mid-14th century, Ottoman rule gradually expanded over the territories of the medieval Balkan states. In the early 15th century, following the defeat inflicted by the forces of the Mongol ruler Timur, these areas gained great political and economic importance for the Ottomans. Despite this setback, successful military campaigns soon resumed, and by the last quarter of the century, almost the entire Southeastern Europe had come under the control of the Ottoman sultans. The choice of Edirne as the seat of power highlighted the significance of the Balkan provinces, a status further reinforced when Mehmed II conquered Constantinople in 1453 and established the city as the new capital. The Ottoman conquest marked a profound transformation in the social, economic, and cultural frameworks of the lives of the region's inhabitants. However, the influence was mutual, as the gradual incorporation of this area played a significant role in shaping the nascent Ottoman state.

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire expanded even further, and under the rule of Sultans Selim I (1512–1520) and Süleyman I (1520–1566), a political and administrative system was developed, often referred to as 'classical'. During this time, large parts of the Kingdom of Hungary were absorbed into the Empire, extending the Ottoman presence deep into modern-day Central Europe. Concurrently, the Empire expanded beyond its Anatolian provinces, conquering vast regions of the Middle East and North Africa. The latter decades of the century and the early 17th century were marked by various crises that prompted reforms and adaptations to the rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. The 17th century was characterised by successive political and economic challenges, necessitating constant adjustments of administrative practices. Despite these issues, this period saw the Empire reach its greatest geographical extent. However, the war against the Habsburg Empire and

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its allies, which began in 1683 and concluded in 1699, marked the first significant loss of territory for the Ottomans. Following several wars in the first half of the 18th century, the Empire's northern borders were stabilised along the Sava and Danube rivers, leaving most of the Balkan Peninsula under Ottoman rule until the 19th century. During this time, the imperial bureaucracy endeavoured, often unsuccessfully, to address political instability and to mitigate economic and military setbacks relative to European powers, which gained strength in the same period.¹

The scope of this volume thus covers the period from the firm establishment of Ottoman rule over Southeastern Europe and its full integration into the Ottoman administrative system, to the time when external geopolitical, economic, and cultural trends increasingly influenced the Empire's non-Muslim subjects. Over these three centuries, from the 1450s to the 1750s, the legal, administrative, economic, and cultural policies of the Ottoman Empire shaped the lives of the region's population. This overview will focus on aspects of the Ottoman polity that had an impact on the identifications of their Orthodox Christian subjects, both in terms of self-understanding and their relationship with the authorities.

The legal system of the Ottoman state was rooted in Islamic law, or Sharia, and was complemented by various traditions of earlier Turkic polities, other states' practices the Ottomans incorporated, and practical laws arising from administrative needs. From the state's perspective, two types of divisions among its subjects held significant legal and administrative importance, as they determined an individual's position in relation to both central and local authorities, as well as within society. The first division was between the sultans' subjects classified as members of the *askerî* and those categorised as *reaya*. The second division was between Muslims and non-Muslims.²

¹ For overviews of the political, social and economic history of the Ottoman Empire, with detailed literature, see: H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973); *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* [vol.] I: 1300–1600, ed. H. İnalcık; [vol.] II: 1600–1922, eds. H. İnalcık, D. Quataert, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); C. Finkel, *Osman's Dream. The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

² This does not mean that the authorities never employed other methods of grouping and identifying their subjects in official documents. When deemed necessary for administrative purposes or to improve the efficiency of individual identification, additional markers were used, such as ethnicity, language, place of origin, marital status, family ties, and profession. In a military context, for example, references to a soldier's ethnic or territorial origin can sometimes be found in salary registers, *Османски извори за ислямизационните процеси на Балканите (XVI–XIX в.). Серия извори [кн.] 2*, ред. М. Калицин, А. Велков, Евг. Радун-

The term *askerî* originally referred to soldiers; however, it came to include all individuals, along with their families, who received a salary from the state and were consequently exempt from paying taxes. Primarily, members of the military – such as cavalymen granted the income from a fief in return for military service (*sipahis*), janissaries, and auxiliary troops – belonged to the *askerî*. Additionally, individuals providing specific services to the state, such as protectors of mountain passes, bridge guardians, and falconers, were also included in this class. Beyond the military, the *askerî* encompassed members of the central and local bureaucracy, including state officials, clerks, and tax collectors. Finally, members of the learned professions were at times also regarded as part of the *askerî* class. It should be emphasised that such idealised classifications of individuals and professions were not systematised in the modern sense of the term and remained open to varying interpretations, both by contemporaries and by later researchers. We present them here solely as an illustration of the complexity of social stratification in the Ottoman Empire.³

In contrast, the term *reaya*, meaning ‘the flock’, referred to all other subjects of the Ottoman sultans who paid taxes to the state. This group included both urban residents engaged in trade and crafts, as well as peasants working in agriculture. Theoretically, these two classes were not strictly closed. For example, a soldier who ceased fulfilling his military duties could become *reaya*, while a peasant who performed an exceptional service might be promoted to the *askerî*. However, such transitions were uncommon, at least during the classical period. By the 18th century, the boundaries between these classes began to blur. At the same time, the term *reaya* increasingly came to be used specifically to describe the non-Muslim tax-paying population.⁴

This brings us to the second fundamental division among the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire: that based on religion. As previously mentioned, the primary

шев, (София: Издателство на БАН, 1990), 7–8. In Sharia courts, when a non-Muslim was a litigant or otherwise mentioned in documents, the *kadi* often supplemented the obligatory designation – *zimmi* – with additional identifiers such as patronym, territorial origin, or occupation: F. Müge Göçek, “The Legal Recourse of Minorities in History: Eighteenth-Century Appeals to the Islamic Court of Galata”, in: *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. M. Greene, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing Inc, 2005), 56–63; О. Крешић, *Манастир Хиландар и источни Балкан: културне и економске везе* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2021), 86–113.

³ Ş. Mardin, “Historical determinants of stratification: Social class and class consciousness in Turkey”, *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi dergisi* 22 (1967), 120–133; B. Lewis, “Askarî”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam* [vol.] 1, (Leiden: Brill, 1986,) 712; H. Sahillioğlu, “Askarî”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [c.] 3, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1991), 488–489.

⁴ M. Öz, “Reâyâ”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [c.] 34, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2007), 490–493; A. Fotić, “Tracing the Origin of a New Meaning of the Term Re‘âyâ in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Balkans”, *Balkanica* XLVIII (2017), 55–66.

legal system of the Ottoman Empire was Sharia, and adherence to the Muslim faith was one of the defining characteristics of the dynasty and the ruling elite. These circumstances determined the legal, political, and social status of the non-Muslim subjects. In administrative documents, non-Muslims were collectively referred to as Arabic *dhimmī* or Ottoman Turkish *zimmi*. The term derives from *dhimma* / *zimma*, referring to a protective compact between the Islamic State and its non-Muslim populations. This institution, rooted in Islamic tradition, predated the Ottoman period.

By accepting the authority of Islamic rulers and paying a special poll tax (*cizye*), followers of monotheistic religions were granted certain rights, including personal freedom, ownership of private property, freedom of religion, and legal protection. However, tolerance and legal protection did not equate to equality with Muslims. On the contrary, numerous restrictions, rules of conduct, dress codes, and additional taxes were imposed on the *zimmi*s, emphasising their subordinate status in comparison to Muslims.⁵ Thus, it is important to stress that the terms ‘toleration’ and ‘tolerance’ should be used with caution, bearing in mind that modern concepts should not be imposed on the early modern realities of life in the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Relations with non-Muslims were shaped both by diverse traditions inherited by the Ottomans and by the practical realities of governing a complex state in which non-Muslims constituted not only a large share of the population but also a significant social and economic factor.⁷ Eleni Gara succinctly summarised the fundamental inconsistencies and diverse nature of interreligious relations that emerged from such a societal structure: “toleration of the religious other alongside encouragement of conversion to Islam and legally enforceable Muslim supremacy; discriminatory practices and discourse but no policy of persecution; social regimes that ensured asymmetrical access to wealth, power and prestige, but also allowed a modicum of upward mobility to non-Muslims.”⁸

In the early centuries of Ottoman rule, a degree of social mobility among non-Muslims was evident in the presence of numerous Christian *sipahis* within

⁵ C. E. Bosworth, “The Concept of *Dhimma* in Early Islam”, in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. B. Braude, B. Lewis, (New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 37–51; А. Фотић, “Између закона и његове примене”, у: *Приватни животи у српским земљама у освић модерној доба*, ур. А. Фотић, (Београд: Clio, 2005), 27–71; M. Fayda, “*Zimmi*”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [c.] 44, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2013), 438–440.

⁶ E. Gara, “Conceptualizing Interreligious Relations in the Ottoman Empire: The Early Modern Centuries”, *Acta Poloniae Historica* 116 (2017), 81–84.

⁷ H. Çolak, “The Nature and Limits of Toleration in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire”, *Historisch Tijdschrift Groniek* 217 (2018), 378–381.

⁸ Gara, “Conceptualizing Interreligious Relations in the Ottoman Empire: The Early Modern Centuries”, 59–61.

the *askerî* class. However, by the 17th century, this practice had become increasingly rare. Nevertheless, Christians continued to serve in certain auxiliary military roles. The most prominent route for Christians to join the *askerî* class involved conversion to Islam. This was exemplified by the practice of the collection of young men predominantly from the Christian population (*devşirme*). These individuals were converted to Islam and subsequently trained to serve either as janissaries or as bureaucratic officials. Referred to as the slaves of the sultan (*kapıkulu*), they came to play a decisive role in both state administration and military affairs. However, this practice contradicted Sharia law, which prohibited forced conversions and the enslavement of *zimmis*, and was regarded as a severe burden by the Christian population.⁹

The characteristics of the Ottoman state allowed for a considerable degree of autonomy in the communal life of the non-Muslim *reaya* (*zimmis*), both in officially prescribed terms and in practice. Communities in towns and villages were able to organise the lives of their members. This provision for autonomous action facilitated the internal development of non-Muslim communities – although naturally influenced by economic, political, and social trends – allowing them to maintain a certain level of independence from the state. However, the administrative and tax systems necessitated the establishment of well-developed and ongoing interactions between the state and the population. Since Sharia law did not recognise the existence of corporate bodies or legal entities, the institution of collective surety became one of the most prominent mechanisms by which the state could formally acknowledge representatives of the local town and village communities and ensure the effective functioning of tax collection and administration.¹⁰

⁹ H. Inaldžik, “Od Stefana Dušana do Osmanskog carstva. Hrišćani spahije u Rumeliji u XV vijeku i njihovo porijeklo”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 3–4 (1952–1953), 23–54; V. L. Ménage, “Dewshirme”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam* [vol.] 2, (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 210–213; İ. M. Kunt, “Transformation of *Zimmî* into *Askerî*”, in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. B. Braude, B. Lewis, (New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 55–67; A. Özcan, “Kapikulu”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [c.] 24, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 347–349.

¹⁰ С. Иванова, “Данѣто облагане на населението в българските градове и формирането на неговите институции (XVII–XVIII в.)”, *Известия на държавните архиви* 63 (1993), 67–98; E. Gara, “In Search of Communities in Seventeenth Century Ottoman Sources: The Case of the Kara Ferye District”, *Turcica* 30 (1998), 135–161; S. Ivanova, “Varos: The Elites of the Reaya in the Towns of Rumeli, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries”, in: *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete V*, ed. A. Anastasopoulos, (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005), 201–246; S. Petmezas, “Christian Communities in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Greece: Their Fiscal Functions”, *Princeton Papers* 12 (2005), 71–127; H. Oruç, “1468/1469 Tahririne göre Bosna sancağı timârları”, *Prilozi*

In the Ottoman Empire, all subjects, regardless of their religion, had the right to appeal directly to the sultan. Both *askeris* and *reayas* made use of this right. Similarly, *zimmis* sent their requests and complaints to the central authorities, often utilising local judicial officials, legal experts, and clerks.¹¹ Nevertheless, the population's most frequent interactions with the authorities were through the judges (*kadis*). In the Ottoman Empire, these state officials did not solely serve a judicial function – they acted as representatives of the central authorities, public notaries, tax officials, and supervisors of the implementation of sultan's orders. Within the Islamic legal framework, the state automatically initiated court proceedings only for so-called crimes against God, which primarily encompassed religious violations. Most other infractions were considered private disputes between two parties, making dispute resolution through mutual agreement quite common.¹² Consequently, except in cases involving a Muslim, *zimmis* were permitted to resolve disputes among themselves, either through internal agreements or by taking their cases to church courts, or, in the case of Jews, rabbinical courts. Even so, *zimmis* did not always utilise this option, and they often chose to appeal to *kadis*, even when it was not mandatory. There were several reasons for this preference. Firstly, as a state institution, *kadi* courts could, at least in theory, ensure that their decisions – unlike agreements reached within a community – were enforced by the central authorities. Additionally, the practice of recording and issuing written rulings from *kadi* courts facilitated the presentation of evidence in case a future dispute arose over the same matter. Furthermore, *zimmis*

za orijentalnu filologiju 67 (2018), 263–297; O. Krešić, M. Pavlović, “Институција колективног јемства (*kefalet*) у османској правној теорији и пракси током транзиционог доба”, *Зборник Мајнице српске за друштвене науке* LXXI, 174 (2020), 167–183.

¹¹ Detailed literature in: M. Pavlović, O. Krešić, “The Institution of Appeal in the Legal System of the Ottoman Empire during the Transitional Period”, *SYNAXA* 6–7 (2020), 19–32.

¹² U. Heyd, “*Qānūn* and *Sharī'a* in Old Ottoman Criminal Justice”, *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* III/1 (1967), 10–11; R. Jennings, “Kadi, Court, and Legal Procedure in 17th C. Ottoman Kayseri”, *Studia Islamica* 48 (1978), 138–142; R. Jennings, “Limitations of the Judicial Powers of the Kadi in 17th C. Ottoman Kayseri”, *Studia Islamica* 50 (1979), 152; J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford; New York, 1982), 19–20, 24–25, 50–54, 76; B. Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 31; H. Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam. Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 72, 76; C. Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud. The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 6–7, 55; E. Ginio, “The Administration of Criminal Justice in Ottoman Selanik (Salonica) during the Eighteenth Century”, *Turcica* 30 (1998), 191–200; R. Gradeva, “The Activities of a Kadi Court in Eighteenth-Century Rumeli: The Case of Hacıoğlu Pazarcık”, *Oriente Moderno: The Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, n. s. XVIII/1 (1999), 177–190; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 216–225.

occasionally had grounds to believe that applying Sharia law would result in a more favourable outcome for their case and opted to use that opportunity.¹³

As expected, these approaches were disapproved of by the Orthodox Christian clergy, which, as previously mentioned, had the right to preside over religious courts. The jurisdictional rights of the prelates were not limited to canonical issues and were also both recognised and prescribed by the state. During the period under study, the Balkan Orthodox Christians were under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, the Archbishopric of Ohrid, and the Patriarchate of Peć.¹⁴ Since these entities could not be formally recognised as institutions under the Islamic legal system, the status of these prelates, as well as the bishoprics subordinate to

¹³ R. Jennings, “Zimmis (Non-Muslims) in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records. The Sharia Court of Ottoman Kayseri”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 21/3 (1978), 250–255; R. Gradeva, “Orthodox Christians in the Kadi Courts: The Practice of the Sofia Sheriat Court, Seventeenth Century”, *Islamic Law and Society* 4/1 (1997), 40–41, 57–62; N. Al-Qattan, “Dhimmis in the Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy and Religious Discrimination”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999), 432–436; E. Kermeli, “The Right to Choice. Ottoman, ecclesiastical and communal justice in Ottoman Greece”, in: *The Ottoman World*, ed. C. Woodhead, (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 347–351.

¹⁴ More on the position of the Ecumenical patriarchate in the Ottoman administrative and fiscal systems see: J. Kabrda, *Le système fiscal de l'Eglise orthodoxe dans l'Empire ottoman (d'après les documents turcs)* (Brno: Universita J. E. Purkyne, 1969); S. Petmezas, “L'Organisation ecclésiastique sous les Ottomans”, in: *Conseils et mémoires de Synadinos, prêtre de Serres en Macédoine (XVII^e siècle)*, éd. P. Odorico, (Paris: Editions de l'Association “Pierre Belon”, 1996), 429–485; H. Çolak, E. Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church as an Ottoman Institution: A Study of Early Modern Patriarchal Berats* (İstanbul: Isis, 2019); H. İnalçık, “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottoman”, in: H. İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire. Sultan, Society and Economy* (Istanbul: Kronik, 2021), 223–258. More on the Serbian Patriarchs see: P. Тричковић, “Српска црква средином XVII века”, *Глас САНУ. Одељење историјских наука* CCCXX/2 (1980), 61–153; Н. С. Шулетић, “Српска црква после 1459. године: О интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем”, у: *Паг Српске деспотовине 1459. године: зборник радова са научној скупља, одржаног 12–14. новембра 2009. године*, ур. М. Спремић, (Београд: САНУ, 2011), 331–349; Н. С. Шулетић, “Именовања пећких патријараха (1691–1766)”, *Зборник Мајнице српске за историју* 104/2 (2021), 51–71. In this paper, we have chosen to use the term ‘Patriarchate of Peć’, as it is widely used in literature and easily understood by the public. However, we must highlight that, during the Ottoman period, the heads of this Church institution were most commonly titled ‘Archbishops of Peć and Patriarchs of all the Serbs’, sometimes with additional territorial and ethnic epithets such as ‘of Bulgarians’ and ‘of the Northern Regions’. In that sense, the first term would denote only the monastery where the patriarchs resided. Nevertheless, the Ottoman administrative term *İpek Patrikliği* (Patriarchate of Peć) came to be widely adopted in both vernacular and scholarly discourse.

them, depended on charters of appointment (*berâts*) granted to individual church dignitaries, whether patriarchs, metropolitans, or bishops. As a result, they became closely intertwined with the functioning of the Ottoman administrative system, particularly its taxation structure. In addition to enjoying autonomy in religious matters, church dignitaries were granted state permission to adjudicate disputes among Christians related to family and inheritance law. However, official state courts retained the dominant position, even in cases where non-Muslims were not legally required to seek recourse to them. Although recourse to Ottoman authorities in matters formally recognised as falling under ecclesiastical jurisdiction was discouraged by religious leaders, owing to the practical and symbolic harm it could inflict on the legitimacy of the Church, Orthodox Christians nevertheless continued to seek justice in the *kadi* courts. Consequently, the main means of encouraging the faithful to bring disputes before church courts was through the spiritual authority of the prelates.¹⁵

In the Ottoman administrative system, members of the church hierarchy had the right to collect dues from their congregations with the backing of the state apparatus and, in exchange, they delivered advance payments to the imperial treasury. Thus, their position was similar to that of a tax farmer; however, the relationship between the prelates and the state bureaucracy extended far beyond financial matters.¹⁶ Because of their obligations and privileges, church hierarchs occupied a somewhat complex position within society in relation to their coreligionists. The highest-ranking church dignitaries – the patriarchs – fulfilled their financial obligations to the state in two ways. Whenever a new patriarch was confirmed or there was a change on the sultanic throne, it was necessary to obtain a renewal of the *berât*. On this occasion, a one-time payment known as *pîškeş* was made to the state treasury. For instance, the patriarchs of Peć paid *pîškeş* amounting to 100,000 akçes. In addition to this financial obligation, each year a patriarch was required to deliver a predetermined lump sum to the imperial treasury. Until the late 17th century, the patriarchs of Peć annually paid 100,000 akçes, although this amount was later reduced due to territorial losses. During the 17th century, these obligations were restructured and allocated to finance provisions for various military corps. In the 18th century, the introduction of lifelong leases for tax farms (the *malikâne* system) brought further changes. The patriarchal dues required upon receiving the *berât* were paid only once,

¹⁵ Petmezas, “L’Organisation ecclésiastique sous les Ottomans”, 503–505, 546–548; A. Фотић, *Свети Гора и Хиландар у Османском царству, XV–XVII век* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2000), 92.

¹⁶ Шулегић, “Српска црква после 1459. године: О интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем”, 338; T. Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan. Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 145–156.

as patriarchs gained lifelong rights. Due to the substantial payments they made, patriarchs and other church hierarchs were exempt from extraordinary taxes and possibly the poll tax (*cizye*).¹⁷

Metropolitans and bishops were appointed at the suggestion of the patriarch, but this rule was sometimes disregarded due to conflicts within the church hierarchy. Since each prelate individually received a *berât*, the Porte was afforded the opportunity to exert its authority over the decisions of the patriarch and the synod. This system also disrupted relations among the prelates, necessitating the renegotiation of the influence wielded by bishops and archbishops over patriarchal policies. This illustrates how the Ottoman state could influence the internal politics of the Orthodox churches. By classifying different eparchies into separate tax units, the state indirectly shaped their development and altered the territorial jurisdiction of certain bishops. Furthermore, the terminology used by the Ottoman bureaucracy was not fully compatible with that used by the Church hierarchies, which complicates the research. The term ‘patriarchate’ was applied to highest autonomous church organisations and, at the same time, tax units. Thus, in the case of the Balkans, there are three prelates, those residing in Constantinople, Ohrid and Peć, that oversaw a unit designated in Ottoman sources as a *patriklik* (patriarchate). Eparchs under their jurisdiction were named *piskoposlar* (plural of *piskopos*, bishops) or *metropolitler* (plural of *metropolit*, metropolitans). Nevertheless, the research of the tax registers of the Patriarchate of Peć in the 17th century has shown that the first term signified, at least in this case, an archbishop rather than a bishop, while all other prelates were designated as metropolitans disregarding their canonical titles.¹⁸ Finally, the tax farming system created opportunities for abuse and competition among candidates for ecclesiastical positions. While the *berâts*, even in their refined form, required that the incumbent

¹⁷ Тричковић, “Српска црква средином XVII века”, 66–67; Petmézas, “L’Organisation ecclésiastique sous les Ottomans”, 507–511; Н. Шулетић, “Пореске обавезе ‘Пећке патријаршије’ у време патријарха Калиника I (1691–1710)”, *Зборник Мајице српске за историју* 88 (2013), 11–18; P. Kotzageorgis, “About the Fiscal Status of the Greek Orthodox Church in the 17th Century”, *Turcica* 40 (2008), 68–72; P. Kotzageorgis, “Socio-Economic Aspects of a Tax: The Metropolitans’ and Bishops’ *Pişkeş* (Second Half of the Seventeenth Century)”, in: *New Trends in Ottoman Studies. Papers presented at the 20th CIEPO Symposium Rethymno, 27 June–1 July 2012*, eds. M. Sariyannis et al., (Rethymno: University of Crete; Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies, 2014), 207–222; Çolak, Bayraktar Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, 51–52.

¹⁸ Тричковић, “Српска црква средином XVII века”, 78–82; Шулетић, “Српска црква после 1459. године: О интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем”, 338–348; Çolak, Bayraktar Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, 30–60; E. Bayraktar Tellan, “The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the ‘Reform of the Synod’ in the 18th Century Ottoman Context”, *Chronos* 39 (2019), 7–22.

patriarch not only pay all his dues but also be deemed “able and worthy” to perform his religious duties and have the “support of the bishops and the flock”, numerous cases of corruption and unfair competition were nonetheless recorded.¹⁹

The complex position of Christian prelates within the administrative and fiscal system led early researchers of Ottoman history to overestimate their secular influence and their role as official intermediaries between their flock and the state bureaucracy. This resulted in the creation and widespread adoption of the concept of the ‘*millet* system’ in the historiography.²⁰ However, both terms in this phrase are problematic in distinct ways. A challenge to these long-accepted notions was introduced by B. Braude in the 1980s. He emphasised that the term *millet* originally referred to a “religiously defined people” and was most commonly used to denote the Muslim community. According to Braude, when *millet* was used to refer to non-Muslims before the 19th century, it appeared only in specific contexts – typically in reference to those living outside the Ottoman Empire. It was only in the 19th century that the term acquired the meaning of strictly defined religious groups that enjoyed particular rights and obligations. Braude hypothesised that the use of the term to describe ethnic and religious groups first emerged in the discourse of European contemporaries and was later adopted within the Ottoman Empire itself during the mid-19th-century reforms.²¹

However, subsequent researchers have shown that the term, in its meaning of religion or a group of people sharing the same religion, was used for non-Muslim subjects of Ottoman sultans at least as early as the 17th century. It appears that it was initially adopted by the central administration and only much later entered the discourse of documents issued by local authorities. The terms *tâ’ife* and *cemâ’at* were much more widely used to denote religious groups in the documents composed in provinces. Both words could refer to any group of people connected through a shared trait, whether it be language, religion, social rank, or occupation.²²

¹⁹ Petmezas, “L’Organisation ecclésiastique sous les Ottomans”, 512–513; Шулетих, “Српска црква после 1459. године: О интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем”, 345–347; Çolak, Bayraktar Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, 35–47.

²⁰ For a detailed overview of the historiography on the ‘*millet* system’ see: Gara, “Conceptualizing Interreligious Relations in the Ottoman Empire: The Early Modern Centuries”, 66–72.

²¹ B. Braude, “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System”, in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. B. Braude, B. Lewis, (New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 69–74.

²² M. Ursinus, “Zur Diskussion um ‘*millet*’ im Osmanischen Reich”, *Südost-Forschungen* 48 (1989), 200–205; V. Kursar, “Non-Muslim Communal Divisions and Identities in the Early Modern Ottoman Balkans and the *Millet* System Theory”, in: *Power and Influence in South-Eastern Europe 16th–19th Century*, eds. M. Baramova et al., (Zürich; Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2013), 102–107.

As we have seen, the word *millet*, as is often the case in the Ottoman language, had complex meanings. It was not used systematically and could be used interchangeably with some similar terms. The other part of the phrase, the word ‘system’, is equally complex, though it presents a different set of research challenges. It must be emphasised that the idea of a well-defined system of *millets* led by religious figures dating back to the earliest centuries of the Ottoman state was not solely a product of historiography. It stemmed from foundational myths developed by the key religious institutions of Ottoman non-Muslims. Among Orthodox Christian Church elites, in particular, a narrative regarding the relationship between Sultan Mehmed II and Gennadios Scholarios, the first Ecumenical Patriarch after the conquest of Constantinople, gained prominence. Facts were intertwined with the interests of prelates living a century or more after these events, creating a myth that emphasised the patriarch’s supposed special status and extensive rights and privileges. Similarly, comparable narratives emerged concerning the establishment of the Chief Rabbinate and the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople, both with supposed empire-wide jurisdictions.²³

It becomes clear that the phrase ‘*millet* system’, which at first glance appears well-defined and all-encompassing, can be misleading. A more nuanced approach is needed when researching the functioning of religious institutions and non-Muslim communal life. As B. Braude argues, the use of a certain term can distort the understanding of reality and the use of more heuristic terms, such as “communal” or “corporate,” would be more appropriate. He emphasises that the Ottoman state did not have an unchanging institutionalised policy towards non-Muslims and that one can identify only a “set of arrangements [...] subjected to considerable variations over time and place”.²⁴ Furthermore, existing research on non-Muslim communities in villages and towns, as well as their social and cultural practices, has shown that they not only frequented Sharia courts but also lived in multi-religious neighbourhoods, participated in guilds alongside Muslims, and engaged in joint merchant ventures with them. While the clergy exerted considerable influence over their coreligionists, their control was far from absolute and often faced challenges. The presence of religious syncretism, various forms of noncanonical religious practices, and

²³ Braude, “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System”, 74–83; K. B. Bardakjian, “The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople”, in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. B. Braude, B. Lewis, (New York; London, 1982), 89–100; M. A. Epstein, “The Leadership of the Ottoman Jews in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries”, in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. B. Braude, B. Lewis, (New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 101–115.

²⁴ Braude, “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System”, 74.

instances of Islamisation further contested the authority of Church officials.²⁵ Finally, the Ottoman sultans did not relinquish parts of their sovereignty to the prelates, who lacked the right to govern their coreligionists in the secular sense of the term. On the contrary, the state maintained direct control over its subjects, with notable changes becoming apparent only in the second half of the 18th century. While local communal organisation and a degree of judicial autonomy existed, these were not unique features of the status of non-Muslims but general characteristics applicable to all subjects.²⁶

This brief overview demonstrates that the Ottoman bureaucracy developed complex and varied relationships with the non-Muslim subjects of the sultans. These relationships were profoundly shaped by the legal and political system rooted in Islamic law and traditions. At the same time, they showcased a notable degree of practicality and adaptability to changing circumstances. While membership in the two main societal classes and religious affiliation formed the basis of an individual's legal status, the Ottoman authorities also acknowledged the existence of numerous other ways of (self)identification of their subjects. However, the specific legal and administrative framework did not assign formal significance to such individual and group markers, and attitudes towards different population groups and their representatives were subject to continual adjustments. Frequent interactions with representatives of the state administration were pivotal in further shaping social life. Furthermore, the Church hierarchies held an important role within the administrative and fiscal system, maintaining pre-Ottoman traditions while adapting their institutional organisation to accommodate evolving conditions. This enabled the Church to continue to play an important role in the lives of Orthodox Christians – not only in religious practices but also in legal and fiscal matters. Nevertheless, its position was sometimes contested. While the existence of intertwined networks of interest existed between people of different religions, local communities in villages and towns established their own limited ways of self-governance, fostering the emergence of a local elite. Under these circumstances and shaped by the interplay of all the aforementioned factors, the Balkan Orthodox Christians developed diverse types of personal and group identification.

²⁵ Kursar, “Non-Muslim Communal Divisions and Identities in the Early Modern Ottoman Balkans and the Millet System Theory”, 102.

²⁶ Gara, “Conceptualizing Interreligious Relations in the Ottoman Empire: The Early Modern Centuries”, 70–71.

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Heavenly Patrons and Earthly Communities: Identification and Topoi in Hymnography

In the shared rhythms of sacred songs, medieval hymnography shaped not only the spiritual lives of individual believers, but also the collective identifications¹ of Orthodox Christians. In both Byzantine and Slavic traditions, hymns positioned the faithful within a sacred narrative: the cycle of the liturgical year.² As the calendar unfolded through fixed and moveable feasts, from Nativity to Pascha, hymns were dedicated to specific occasions – biblical and church events, or the celebrations of particular saints. Together with other genres of liturgical literature³ – hagiographies,

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¹ For a theoretical discussion of the shift from ‘identity’ to ‘identification’, see R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 14–17. Brubaker and Cooper argue that identification, as a processual and active term derived from a verb, “lacks the reifying connotations of ‘identity’”. This approach proves useful in interpreting liturgical texts, where participants are invited to identify with saints and the community through ritual action. Terrence Cuneo similarly employs the term ‘identification’ in his philosophy of liturgy, describing it as the imaginative activity through which participants enter the perspectives, experiences, and moral realities of the figures presented in the liturgical script. See T. Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 94–105. For the application of these concepts in the analysis of Orthodox Christian identifications in the Ottoman Balkans, see M. Vasiljević, “Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe” in this volume.

² On the function of liturgical texts in shaping the believer’s lived experience around the founding events of the Church, see D. Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 80–105; Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 109–125.

³ The term ‘liturgical literature’ refers to one of the two main categories of Byzantine texts shaped by secondary orality, the other being ‘rhetorical literature’. This distinction, which highlights differences in purpose, performative context, and audience, is proposed by Charis Messis and Stratis Papaioannou. See Ch. Messis, S. Papaioannou, “Orality and Textuality

encomia, sermons and prayers – hymnography cultivated a unified Christian imagination through ritual and performance. As the central form of hymnography, the service (or office, ἀκολουθία, послѣдование) structured communal worship through a carefully arranged combination of poetic and musical elements – an interwoven fabric of primary liturgical genres: the troparion, kontakion, stichera, and kanon.⁴ Rooted in the daily cycle of prayer, the service was designated to be chanted across the canonical hours (e.g., Vespers and Matins), drawing the faithful into the rhythm of sacred time and within the narrative of the Scripture. This participation in both a liturgical, literary, and musical event could be analysed as a basis for creating groupness, identification and self-understanding.⁵

Although all of the aforementioned literary genres dedicated to the veneration of saints are composed with oral performance in mind, hymnography occupies a distinctive place among them. In broad terms, hagiography can be defined as a narrative genre primarily concerned with recounting the life and deeds of a saint in a largely diachronic manner. The encomium, by contrast, belongs to the rhetorical tradition, functioning as a form of public praise for the saint. Hymnography, meanwhile, constitutes a distinct poetic genre, a lyrical address to the saint, set to a specific melody, and thus inseparable from music. The service to a saint is, in its typical dialogical structure, a multi-directional apostrophe: it begins by summoning the faithful to gather in shared witness to their redemption; it proceeds with a collective invocation of the saint, beseeching their protection and intercession on behalf of the praying community; and ultimately, it culminates – as well as finds its deepest intention – in a communal prayer addressed to God, mediated through the saint.⁶

(With an Appendix on the Byzantine Conceptions)”, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, ed. S. Papaioannou, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 251.

⁴ On the classification and history of these forms, see: S. Papaioannou, “Sacred song”, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, 434–452.

⁵ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have argued for moving beyond the term ‘identity’ in favour of more analytically precise concepts such as ‘identification’, ‘self-understanding’, ‘commonality’, ‘connectedness’, and ‘groupness’. They define ‘self-understanding’ as “situated subjectivity”, that is, “one’s sense of who one is, of one’s social location, and of how (given the context) one is prepared to act”, while ‘groupness’ refers to “the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group”. See Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 17–21.

⁶ On the ‘apostrophic’ nature of hymnography and its lyrical, dialogical structure, see my earlier analysis: A. Ивановић, “Химнографија као лирска апострофа: Служба Светом кнезу Лазару”, в: *Четивото за миряни в южнославянския репертоар XIV–XVIII в. Сборник от Международната научна конференция София, 16–18 ноември 2023*, ред. Н. Гагова, М. Йовчева, А. Стойкова, (София: Изд. център “Боян Пенев”, 2025), 124–136. See also: D. Olkinuora, “Performance Theory and the Study of Byzantine Hymnography: Andrew of Crete’s Canon on Lazarus”, *Ortodoksia* 59 (2019), 7–31.

While hymns often echo the narrative content found in the saint's vita, they do so in a semantically condensed and highly stylised form, drawing extensively on commonplaces and formulaic language. The most deeply embedded in church ritual, hymnography is unsurprisingly the most conservative of the liturgical genres, adhering closely to formal structures developed over centuries. The core poetic forms crystallised in the early and middle Byzantine periods were preserved with remarkable stability. Later liturgical traditions that followed the Byzantine rite, including those in the Slavic world, adopted this established system of primary genres, the organisation of liturgical books, as well as the recurring topoi that constituted the hymnographic imagination. In this way, hymnography served as a medium of continuity and transmission for devotional practice and poetic expression across Orthodox Christian cultures.

It is within this deeply codified and tradition-bound framework that we must consider the hymnographic production in the Ottoman Balkans between 1450 and 1750. Rather than merely replicating earlier models, this period saw the continued composition of hymnographic services that, while grounded in inherited forms, also reflected the specific political, cultural and ecclesiastical circumstances of Orthodox Christians under Ottoman rule.⁷ In this context, hymnographic texts not only responded to the needs of worship but also participated in shaping saintly cults, collective identification, and liturgical memory in a post-Byzantine, multi-confessional environment. One particularly noteworthy example of later hymnographic activity is the liturgical veneration of the Branković lineage, which developed after the fall of the Serbian Despotate to the Ottomans in 1459. Originally a noble family rising to prominence in the 14th century, the Branković dynasty assumed rulership in the second quarter of the 15th century, governing the Despotate of Serbia during its final decades (1427–1459).⁸ Four members of the dynasty – Despot Stefan (d. 1476), his wife Angelina (d. c. 1520), and their sons, Despot Jovan (d. 1502), and Metropolitan Maksim (formerly Đorđe Branković, d. 1516)⁹ – came to be commemorated as saints,

⁷ For overviews of Serbian and Bulgarian hymnographic production in the post-Byzantine period, see Д. Богдановић, *Историја српске књижевности* [књ.] 1. *Сѣара српска књижевности* (Београд: Досије, Научна књига, 1991), 200–231; С. Кожухаров, *Проблеми на старобългарската поезия* [том] 1 (София: Изд. център “Боян Пенев”, 2004), 259–281; М. Йовчева, “Химнографски творби за новите мъченици”, в: *История на българската средновековна литература*, съст. А. Милтенова, (София: Изток–Запад, 2008), 708–712.

⁸ For historical background on the Branković family and their rise to power in the late medieval Serbian state, see М. Спремић, *Десѡиѡи Ђурађ Бранковић и његово доба* (Београд: СКЗ, 1999).

⁹ On the position of Stefan Branković's family within the Habsburg Monarchy, see D. Dinić-Knežević, “Sremski Branković”, *Istraživanja* 4 (1975), 5–47.

each receiving individual services in their honour. In addition to these, a Common Service for the Holy Despots of the Branković family was also composed.¹⁰ These hymnographic texts are not only expressions of local sanctity but also bear clear traces of a political-theological aspiration towards continuity with the pre-Ottoman Serbian state and ecclesiastical heritage, particularly through allusions to the Nemanjić legacy.¹¹ Saints Simeon (Stefan Nemanja), the 12th-century founder and first ruler of the Nemanjić dynasty, and his son Sava (Rastko Nemanjić), appointed as the first archbishop of the autocephalous Serbian Church in 1219,¹² serve as central symbolic reference points, anchoring the Branković cults within a sustained paradigm of holy lineage and Church tradition. This case represents one model through which Orthodox Christians articulated their response to the rupture of political and social order brought about by the Ottoman conquest, employing the medium of hymnography to shape a communal self-presentation.

The longest of these texts – the Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković – will be the central focus of the present article. This composition offers a particularly rich interplay of social relations, categories and locations,¹³ including notable heteroimages¹⁴ of Muslims and Catholics. As in all hymnographic works, religion remains

¹⁰ On the development of the cult and hymnography dedicated to the Branković family, see Л. Павловић, *Култови лица код Срба и Македонаца: историјско-еџнографска расправа* (Београд: Службени гласник, 2022), 139–156; Ђ. Трифуновић, “Белешке о делима у Србљаку”, у: *О Србљаку. Сџудџе*, прир. Ђ. Трифуновић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1970), 324–341;

¹¹ For more on the connection between the Branković dynasty and the Nemanjić legacy, see М. Тимотијевић, “Сремски деспоти Бранковићи и оснивање манастира Крушедола”, *Зборник Маџице срџске за ликовне умејносџи* 27–28 (1991–1992), 127–149; М. Васиљевић, *Култови свейџих на ценџтралном Балкану у време османских освајања* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2021), 121–150.

¹² For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular authority in the Serbian lands during the 11th–13th centuries, see И. Коматина, *Црква и држава у срџским земљама од XI до XIII века* (Београд: Историјски институт Београд, 2016).

¹³ These terms are drawn from Brubaker and Cooper’s proposed analytical approach to group formation and identification. ‘Categories’ refer to classificatory labels through which people are grouped (e.g., ethnic, religious, territorial labels); ‘relations’ emphasise the dynamic social ties and interactions among people; while ‘locations’ point to the spatial, institutional, and symbolic positions occupied by individuals or groups. See Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, 19–21.

¹⁴ The term ‘heteroimages’ refers to representations or perceptions of the ‘other,’ often constructed in contrast to ‘self-images’ (‘autoimages’), and plays a central role in intercultural studies. It highlights how communities define themselves through both similarity and difference. For foundational discussions of the concept, see J. Leerssen, “Imagology: History and Method”, in: *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary*

the principal axis of identification, yet here it intersects with additional markers of difference: ethnicity (Serbian, Turkish, Hungarian), ancestry (through reference to the Nemanjić lineage), and territory (e.g., the notion of Syrmia and ‘Serbian land’). The exact time of the Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković’s initial composition remains uncertain, though it is generally attributed to an anonymous monk from the Krušedol Monastery in the second half of the 16th century, likely in relation to the Branković family’s emerging cultic tradition. This hypothesis is supported by the palaeographic research of Đorđe Trifunović.¹⁵ In her unpublished 2008 master’s thesis, Milanka Ubiparip was the first to provide a palaeographic overview of the Service’s manuscript tradition, identifying two compendiums from the second and fourth decades of the 18th century.¹⁶ She further compared these manuscripts to two printed editions of the *Srbljak* – the 1761 Rimnik edition and the 1861 edition prepared by Metropolitan Mihajlo – concluding that multiple redactions and adaptations of the Service likely occurred throughout the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries. The first version may have been composed shortly after Despot Jovan’s death in 1502, in response to the emerging local veneration and reports that he had “revealed himself as a saint” three years later.¹⁷ Several historical circumstances could have prompted subsequent revisions: the translation of Jovan’s relics to Krušedol;¹⁸ the Ottoman incursions into the region of Srem after 1521; possible miraculous healings at his tomb; and the growing ecclesiastical significance of Krušedol, which by around 1708 was considered as a potential seat of the Metropolitanate for all Serbs north of the Sava and Danube rivers.¹⁹

The earliest surviving manuscript containing the Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković dates from this later period: manuscript no. 233 from the collection of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, written on paper bearing a

Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey, eds. M. Beller, J. Leerssen, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 17–32.

¹⁵ Трифуновић, “Белешке о делима у Србљаку”, 333–336.

¹⁶ М. Убипарип, *Заједничка служба светим деспојима Бранковићима – текстолошка и стилстичка студија* [магистарски рад] (Београд: Филолошки факултет, 2008), 52–107.

¹⁷ В. Јагић, “Још нешто о животу св. Ђурђа Кратовца”, *Гласник Српској ученој друштва* 40 (1874), 123, as cited in Трифуновић, “Белешке о делима у Србљаку”, 333. All translations from Serbian and Old Church Slavonic in this paper are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁸ The earliest mention of plans to construct the Krušedol Monastery appears in 1509, and although the exact date of the translation of Jovan’s relics remains unknown, it likely occurred in the context of the monastery’s evolving role as a dynastic and spiritual centre. See: Васиљевић, *Кулинови светих*, 133–134.

¹⁹ Убипарип, *Заједничка служба*, 106–107. See also: Павловић, *Кулинови лица код Срба и Македонаца*, 143–144.

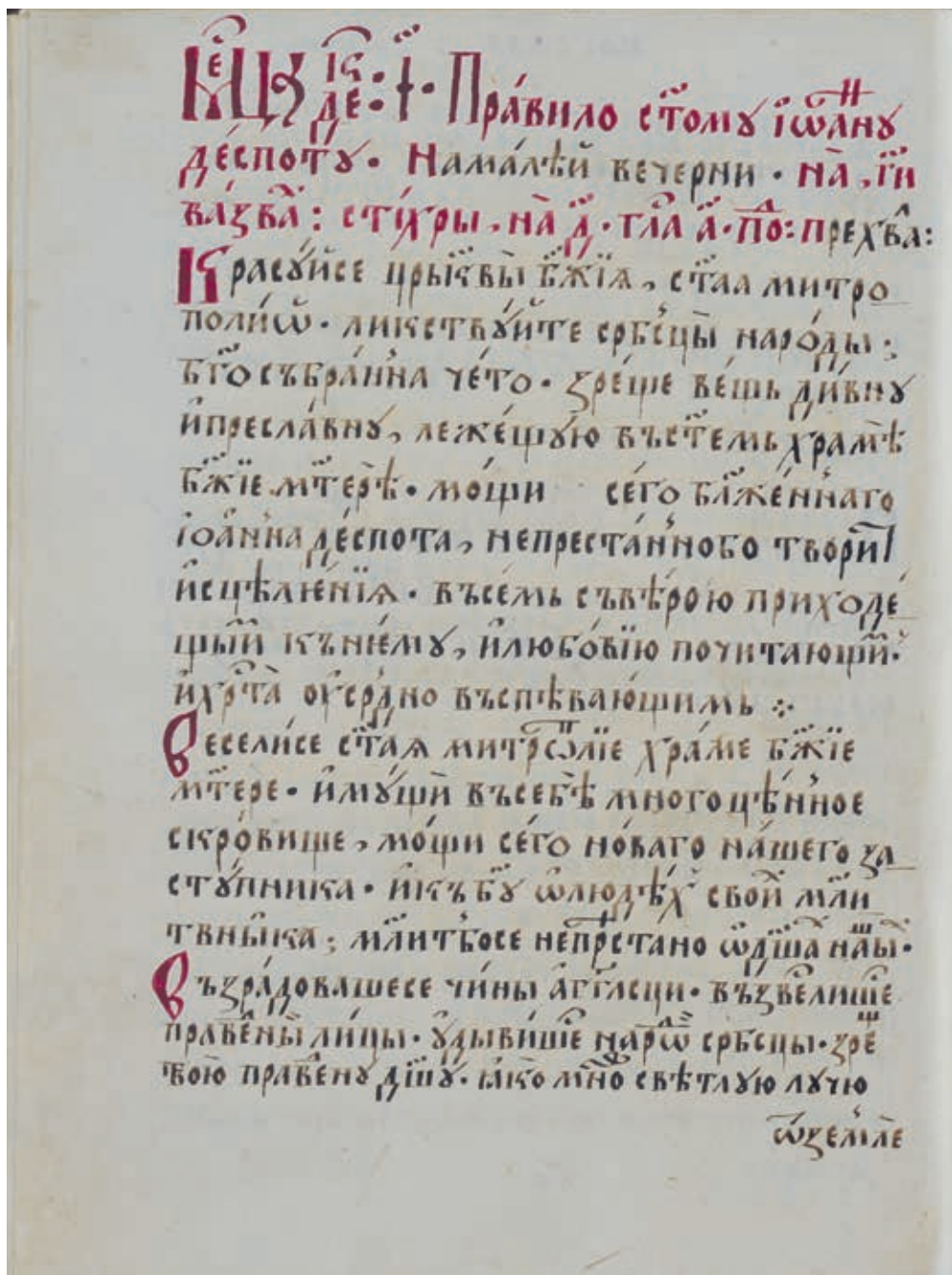


Fig. 1. *Service for Saint Despots*, Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Ms. 233, beginning of the Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković, fol. 36v

watermark dated to 1720. In her thesis, Ubiparip identified a joint acrostic in the two canons of the Service, which includes the name of one of the redactors – Nikanor Melentijević, Serbian bishop of Pécs and former igoumenos and archimandrite of Krušedol Monastery.²⁰ Since Ubiparip's findings remained unpublished, Sergey Temchin independently presented the same acrostic evidence in a 2014 article, based on printed editions of the *Srbljak* rather than manuscript sources.²¹ Drawing on this discovery, Temchin argued that Nikanor was the actual author of the Service, composed between 1711 and 1713, during the period when Leontije was igoumenos of Krušedol.²² In doing so, he effectively revived an earlier hypothesis proposed by Radoslav Grujić and Đorđe Sp. Radojičić, who had dated the text to the time when Krušedol served as the seat of the Metropolitanate, between 1708 and 1714.²³ Ubiparip, however, cautiously proposed that Nikanor was not the original author but rather the editor of an earlier version of the text. Unfortunately, no manuscripts predating this recension have survived with hymns that could allow us to trace textual revisions or differentiate the work of successive authors. As such, we can interpret the extant version with confidence only within the cultural and historical context of the early 18th century. Hypotheses regarding earlier stages of the text's development must be formulated carefully and in dialogue with other contemporaneous sources preserved in manuscript form. While the Service clearly draws on commonplaces and stylistic conventions inherited from earlier hymns, it reconfigures and recharges them with new layers of meaning shaped by the altered sociopolitical realities. In doing so, the text exemplifies hymnography's capacity not only to preserve and transmit shared cultural and religious values but also to engage meaningfully with contemporary circumstances and lived experience.

1. Catholicity vs. Particularity in Hymnography

From the earliest translations and original hymnographic compositions of the 9th century onward, Slavic hymnography adopted and transformed biblical, patristic, and even ancient Greek *topoi* inherited from Byzantine texts.²⁴ Within medieval

²⁰ Убипарип, *Заједничка служба*, 45–51.

²¹ С. Ю. Темчин, “Печско-мохачски епископ Никанор (Мелентиевич) как автор службы сербскому деспоту Иоанну Бранковичу”, *Rocznik Teologiczny* 1 (2014), 63–72.

²² *Ibid.*, 71.

²³ Ђ. Sp. Radojičić, *Antologija stare srpske književnosti (XI–XVIII veka)* (Beograd: Nolit, 1960), 366; Р. М. Грујић, *Духовни животи Срба у Војводини* [књ.] 1: *до велике сеобе од 1690. го.* (Нови Сад: Историјско друштво, 1939), 378.

²⁴ On the growing prominence of *topos* analysis in contemporary Byzantine and Slavic studies, see my earlier discussion in: А. Ивановић, “Топика и мимеза у Служби Светом кнезу

Slavic literature, these *topoi* served multiple, interrelated purposes. They offered ‘exegesis’ – interpreting Scripture and the writings of Church Fathers – and articulated Christian ethical ideals embodied in the life of a saint.²⁵ This ethical dimension functions as a form of ‘mimesis’: the saint’s life imitates the life of Christ, while hymnographic texts, in turn, call the faithful to imitate the saint, establishing a paradigm for Christian conduct.²⁶ This mimetic process unfolds through ‘anamnesis’: the liturgical remembrance of the history of salvation and of the events that shaped the collective life, now refracted through the figure of the saint.²⁷ Ultimately, the aim of the hymnographic constellation is ‘metamorphosis’: the spiritual transformation of the faithful through participation in the liturgy,²⁸ where theological reflection, collective memory,²⁹ and moral exhortation converge within the poetic language of worship. In this framework, *topoi* function as building blocks for the construction of sanctity, contributing to the development of specific hagiotypes: recurring theological and literary archetypes of holiness. The four dominant hagiotypes recognised in Christian tradition include martyrs, apostles, hierarchs (i.e., bishops and teachers of

Лазару”, *Годишњак Капиде* за српску књижевност са јужнословенским књижевносћима 17 (2021), 25–40. See also Th. Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos: Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2005); Д. Кристианс, *Топосы в песнопениях византийской служебной минеи и проблемы их переноса на славянскую почву* (Москва: Индрик, 2018).

²⁵ Кристианс, *Топосы в песнопениях*, 10–15.

²⁶ C. M. Gschwandtner, “Mimesis or Metamorphosis? Eastern Orthodox Liturgical Practice and Its Philosophical Background”, *Religions* 8/5 (2017), 1–22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ The concept of ‘collective memory’ was first introduced by Maurice Halbwachs to describe the shared pool of knowledge and representations held by a group that shapes its identification and sense of continuity. Building on this, Jan Assmann developed the notion of ‘cultural memory’: a specialised form of collective memory preserved through institutionalized cultural practices such as rituals, canonical texts, and liturgical performance. As Astrid Erll emphasises, collective memory refers to the complex interplay of biological, psychological, social, and medial processes through which past, present, and future influence one another within cultural frameworks. Rather than being opposed to history or individual memory, it provides the overarching matrix within which diverse cultural forms, such as autobiographies, monuments, literature, and rituals, are meaningfully connected. See J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 2002); A. Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017). On the contested nature of this concept, see also M. Sládeček, J. Vasiljević, “Predgovor”, u: *Kolektivno sećanje i politike pamćenja*, prir. M. Sládeček i dr., (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike; Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, 2015), 7–29.

the Church), and ascetics (monks and hermits).³⁰ In such compositions, historical detail is often subordinated to the demands of typology, with the saint's individual biography shaped in accordance with universalised patterns of sanctity designed to instruct, inspire and, ultimately, transform.

There is a persistent dialectic in hymnography between the universal and the particular – between enduring theological content and the shifting contexts in which it is expressed. Every new canonised saint, along with his corresponding office, is subsumed into a singular Orthodox spiritual community, rendering his ethnic, local, or otherwise distinctive attributes secondary. This phenomenon mirrors a broader characteristic of Church history: a presumed steadfast, yet historically responsive identification³¹ that continually finds its place within shifting political orders and ideological currents, often through modes of accommodation or 'symphonic' relations with the state. The foundations of this identification lie in the earliest phases of the Church, particularly in the theological reflections of the proto-Pauline epistles, which envisioned Christians as 'brothers and sisters', members of a 'fictional family'.³² In this kinship model, the differences among individuals – from diverse cultural, ethnic, or even religious backgrounds – become subordinate to the bond of shared belief and communal solidarity. The authenticity of this new identification was established by "transcending the given social structures of everyday life",³³ suspending hierarchical conventions and dominant inequalities in favour of unity and emotional attachment. However, this ethos of early Christianity underwent a transformation in the later, post-Pauline epistles, as the emergence of structured ministries gradually aligned the Church with the administrative and social paradigms of the imperial order.³⁴

The collective sense of universality – 'catholicity' in its deepest theological and aesthetic dimensions – is a foundational principle of Byzantine (and consequently, medieval Slavic) thought and artistic expression. In hymnographic production, this ideal of all-encompassing wholeness shapes both the form and function of the genre:

"One of the essential characteristics of Byzantine spiritual poetry is its decisive feature of literary tradition and heritage. In tradition, the hymnographer seeks both content and form, ensuring that he avoids any 'innovation' and authorial values, distancing himself

³⁰ Кристианс, *Тойосы в ѿсноиенях*, 21.

³¹ The notion of a historically responsive yet ostensibly steadfast ecclesial identification is explored in theological scholarship. See P. Јовић, *Динамика црквеної иденитиїетїа: црквена орїанизација као ениїма у заїонеїки* (Београд: Biblos Books, 2023), 7–33. Although Jović uses the term 'identity', the emphasis on its dynamic character allows it to be interpreted here in terms of processes of identification.

³² *Ibid.*, 15.

³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

from anything that would deviate from general, universal, and ecclesiological values. This is the reason for a certain static nature in the history of Byzantine and Old Serbian poetry.”³⁵

As we know, authorial values cannot be avoided in any literary production, even in the realm of liturgy, where tradition is paramount. This dialectic is not a tension to be resolved, but a structuring force that allows hymnography to speak simultaneously to the shared memory of the Church and to the lived experiences of the faithful. This embeddedness of local values within a common literary structure is precisely what allows many literary historians to speak of a single, unified Old Church Slavonic literature.³⁶ Grounded in a shared language (a foundation for group-ness) and a common system of genres, this tradition resists contemporary national compartmentalisation. As a result, the writing of separate literary histories – Old Serbian, Old Bulgarian, Old Russian, and others – has sometimes been questioned as methodologically limiting.³⁷ Instead, scholars emphasise the interconnectedness and mutual intelligibility of these medieval literary cultures, shaped more by religious and linguistic unity than by ethnic boundaries.

On the other hand, if we consider original Serbian hymnography as a distinct corpus, it is evident that it was composed principally to honour saints of Serbian origin – figures venerated not only for their exemplary sanctity, but also for their role as protectors of the fatherland and its people. This perspective finds its early articulation in the first original service in Serbian-Slavonic, the Service for Saint Simeon by Saint Sava, composed at the very beginning of the 13th century, in which Stefan Nemanja is extolled as both “the beacon” and “the lover of the fatherland”.³⁸ Such a recurring motif is intricately connected with the biblical topos of the good shepherd, wherein the saint is portrayed simultaneously as the protector, leader, and teacher of his flock – thereby functioning as a political as well as spiritual guide.

It is noteworthy that explicit ethnic markers – such as references to the “Serbian land”, “church”, or “throne” – appear less frequently in these liturgical hymns than the term “fatherland” (отѣство), which is employed in a wide range of variations.³⁹

³⁵ Богдановић, *Историја српске књижевности*, 63.

³⁶ А. Наумов, *Идея – образ – текст. Исследования по церковнославянской литературе* (Москва: Индрик, 2020), 11–27; Р. Пиккио, *Slavia Orthodoxa: Литература и язык* (Москва: Знак, 2003), 3–122.

³⁷ See, for example, A. Kahn et al., *A History of Russian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 13–14.

³⁸ Свети Сава, *Сабрани списи* (Београд: Просвета; СКЗ, 1986), 123, 132.

³⁹ Д. Дојчиновић, “Национални идентитет у старој српској црквеној поезији”, у: *Филолоџија и универзитет: темељски зборник радова*, ур. Б. Димитријевић, (Ниш: Филозофски факултет, 2012), 879–894.

This term exhibits significant semantic and stylistic polyfunctionality as early as the 13th-century liturgical texts.⁴⁰ On one level, it designates a specific territory – the land of one’s forefathers – thus evoking a sense of inherited belonging and a deeply-rooted familial bond. In this context, it also acquires a programmatic and ideological dimension,⁴¹ pointing to the idea of political governance under a particular ruler. Its abstract suffix -ство allows for a polyvalent use⁴²: it can denote both a tangible geopolitical entity and a broader symbolic schema, charged with theological and emotional significance.

A more distinctly articulated sense of ethnic identification appears at the beginning of the 15th century in the Service for Saint King Stefan Dečanski, where terms such as “Serbian tribes” (сръбскаа плѣмена)⁴³, “lineage” (сръбска кволѣна), and “kin” (сръбѣциѣи рѣдѣе) are introduced.⁴⁴ Particularly striking is that this service was composed by Gregory Tsamblak, a cleric of foreign origin who had migrated to the Serbian Despotate following the Ottoman conquest of the Second Bulgarian Empire and the fall of Tarnovo in 1393.⁴⁵ It may have been precisely Tsamblak’s position as a foreigner that enabled him to articulate such specific ethno-political markers – an external perspective providing a sharper definition to the contours of collectivity. Nonetheless, such ethno-identificatory language remains relatively uncommon in most hymnographic texts of the period. For instance, in the Service for Saint Prince Lazar, the adjective ‘Serbian’ appears only in the title, referring to the medieval Serbi-

⁴⁰ See З. Витић, “Патриотска лексика у српској средњовековној хагиографији: Нацрт за појмовник”, у: С. Марјановић-Душанић и др., *Полиџички оквири колективних идентитетских: Сведочанства српској средњовековља* (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2024), 115–181. In her analysis of patriotic expressions in Serbian medieval hagiography, Vitić identifies four main lexical groups, highlighting *отъѣство* (often appearing as *отъѣствнѣ*) as the most widespread term denoting homeland, inheritance, and fatherland. She notes its frequent occurrence from the earliest texts, along with related forms such as the adjective *отъѣскъ* and the compound *отъѣствѣлюбъѣ*, underscoring the term’s rich semantic range and its embeddedness in hagiographic discourse. See also: Г. Јовановић, М. Спасојевић, “О лексеми отачаство у преводима житија Светог Саве од Доментијана и Теодосија на савремени српски језик”, у: *Средњи век у српској науци, историји, књижевности и уметности XI*, ур. Г. Јовановић, (Београд; Деспотовац: Институт за српски језик САНУ; Народна библиотека “Ресавска школа”, 2021), 95–109.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ For a definition of the term ‘tribe’ in the medieval Serbian context, see С. Ђирковић, “Племе”, у: *Лексикон српској средњеј века*, ур. С. Ђирковић, Р. Михаљчић, (Београд: Knowledge, 1999), 521–523.

⁴⁴ I quote from the edition of the Service for Saint King Stefan Dečanski published in: Кожухаров, *Проблеми на старобългарската поезия*, 206–227.

⁴⁵ For a comprehensive overview of the life and works of Gregory Tsamblak during his stay in Serbia, see Г. Цамблак, *Књижевни рад у Србији* (Београд: Просвета; СКЗ, 1989).

an polity (бѣвшѧго самодѣръжца всеѣ сръбскіѣ земліѣ).⁴⁶ In this light, the apparent paradox of the 15th century – marked by the sporadic appearance of explicit ethnic qualifications, yet also by a significant literary innovation in the form of the *Srbljak*, a unified compendium of services in honour of Serbian saints⁴⁷ – can be understood as two complementary phenomena. The compilation of a ‘Serbian menaion’ may reflect a growing awareness of a shared ecclesiastical heritage and a desire to consolidate it under Ottoman rule, while the language of the hymns themselves often remains within the universalising framework of Orthodox liturgical literature.

2. Naming the People in Worship

A markedly different rhetorical strategy emerges in the Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković, characterised by the emphatic and repeated use of the adjective ‘Serbian’ in reference to the land, the Church, and the people: “Rejoice, O Church of God, holy Metropolis; exult, O God-assembled troop of the Serbian people” – Красѣи се цркви б(о)жїѧ, с(вѣ)таѧ мѣтрополїѧ. лїкствѣїте сръбцы народы; б(о)госъбранїѧ чето (286)⁴⁸; “Come forth, gloriously, O assemblies of the Serbian people” – Прїид[ѣ]те славно сръбскаго народа саворы (293); “Your land, Sirmium, and the God-assembled gathering” – Земля ваша сръмїѧ лїкѣ б(о)госабранїѧ (296), and so forth. Jovan is repeatedly referred to as “the joy of the Serbian land” – веселїѣ землїи сръбскѧ (288), землїи сръбскѧ радѡванїѣ (290), as well as its “luminary” – сръбскѧ землїи свѣтыло велїѣ (295), “nourishment” – ѡкрмленїѣ (296), “intercessor” – застѣпник (309), and “praise” – похвала (316). The conspicuous use of ethnonyms and toponyms in the Service signals a shift in the rhetorical strategies for articulating communal identification. The simultaneous invocation of “Serbian people”, “land”, and “Metropolis” appears, as far as the available *Srbljak* editions suggest,⁴⁹ only in the Service for Saint Despot

⁴⁶ The following reference is taken from an edition of the Service for Saint Prince Lazar, which I prepared for the article: А. Ивановић, “Служба светом кнезу Лазару према препису из Старог Сланкамена”, *Годишњак Кайшедре за српску књижевност и јужнословенским књижевностима* 13 (2018), 170.

⁴⁷ Т. Суботин-Голубовић, “Литургијски рукописи”, у: *Свѣй српске рукописне књиѣ (XII–XVII век)*, ур. Д. Оташевић, З. Ракић, И. Шпадијер, (Београд: САНУ, 2016), 105.

⁴⁸ For the Serbian-Slavonic text, I refer to the edition of the manuscript no. 233 from the collection of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as presented in Milanka Ubiparip’s master’s thesis: Убипарип, *Заједничка служба*, 286–317. Specific page numbers are provided in parentheses next to the relevant quotations.

⁴⁹ For example, *Србљак. Службе, канони, акаѣисїѧ* [књ.] I; [књ.] II; [књ.] III, прир. Ђ. Трифуновић, прев. Д. Богдановић (Београд: СКЗ, 1970).

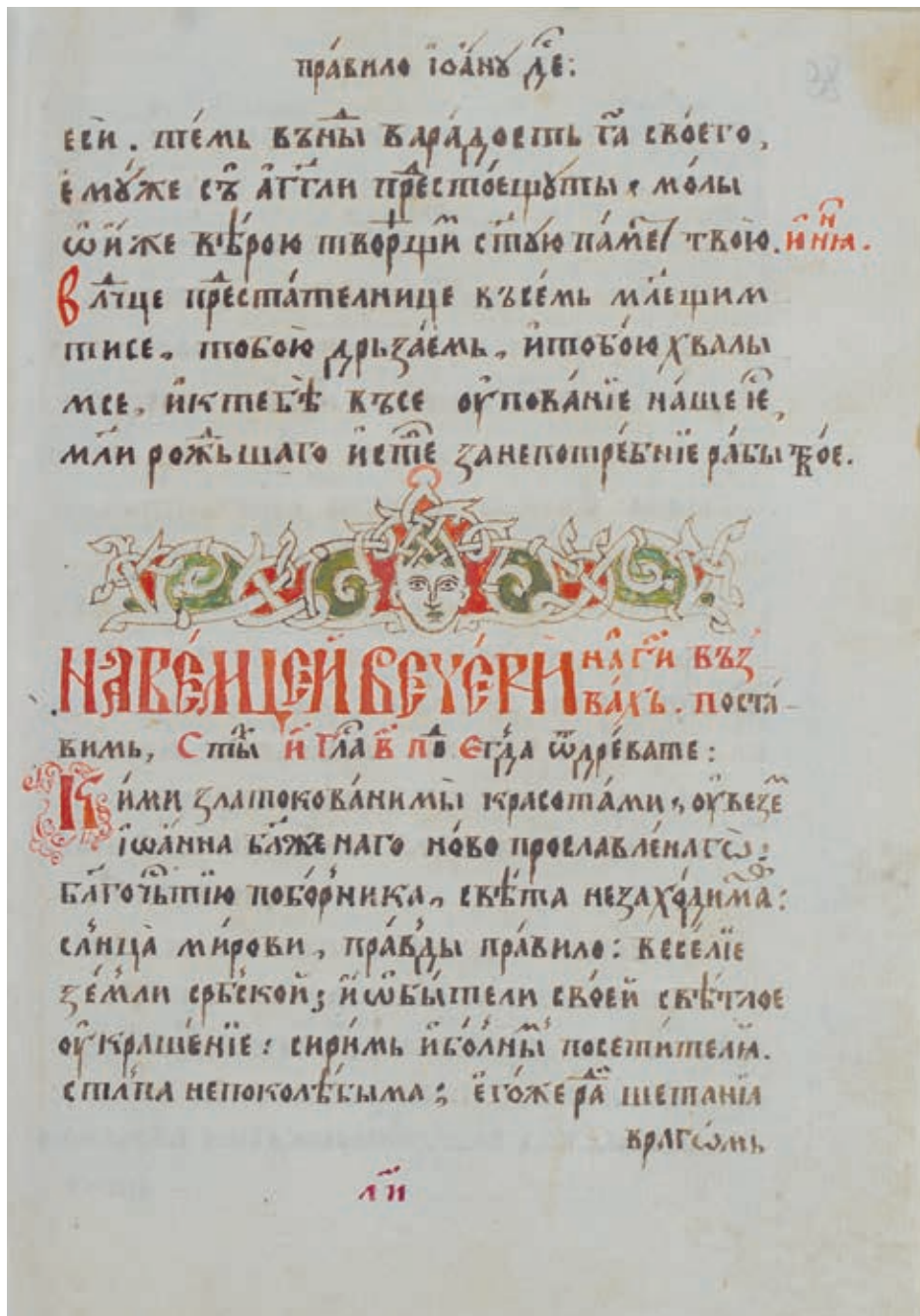


Fig. 2. Service for Saint Despots, Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Ms. 233, beginning of the Great Vespers of the Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković, fol. 38r

Jovan and in the Common Service for the Holy Despots of the Branković family.⁵⁰ Such clustering of ethnic, territorial, and ecclesiastical identifiers aligns closely with the new, Habsburg model of organising Orthodox communities, where ecclesiastical jurisdiction and ethnic-territorial identification were often explicitly linked.⁵¹ The relocation of the Serbian Orthodox spiritual and cultic centres to north of the Sava and Danube, the foundation and symbolic authority of Krušedol Monastery, and the eventual designation of Krušedol as the seat of the Metropolitanate, all contributed to a new setting in which religious and cultural identifications were articulated.

‘Syrmia’, as invoked in the Service, assumes the role of a key geographic and symbolic identifier following the arrival of the Branković despots in the region in 1486. The Hungarian King, Matthias Corvinus, granted the despot titles to the brothers Đorđe and Jovan as part of a broader political strategy to secure the southern frontier against Ottoman expansion.⁵² This gesture also catalysed a revival of dynastic ambitions among the Serbian elite, grounded in the Nemanjić tradition and their model of rulership sanctified by divine authority.⁵³ In 1497 or 1498, Đorđe relinquished secular authority and took monastic vows under the name Maksim, leaving the administration of the family’s domains to his younger brother Jovan, who held this responsibility alone until his sudden death without heirs in 1502. Although the aspirations for the renewed political sovereignty of the Serbian state ultimately remained unrealised, the Branković family continued to hold symbolic capital as dynastic and spiritual figures, particularly after the extinction of the family line. Their cults provided a locus of spiritual continuity and collective memory for the Serbian population of the Srem region, whether under Ottoman or Habsburg dominion. These political and institutional realignments significantly influenced the conditions under which texts associated with saintly cults were composed, revised, and transmitted. In this context, the Service for Saint Despot Jovan reflects both the reconfiguration of Serbian communal life, and the rhetorical strategies developed to affirm it.

The liturgical text itself opens with a clear evocation of the central sacred locus of Jovan Branković’s cult: the main church of the Krušedol Monastery, dedicated to the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where the despot’s relics were

⁵⁰ The phrase “Serbian people” (србѣцы народы) also occurs in the Stichera for Saint Prince Lazar, composed by the Serbian monk Kiprijan Račanin in Szentendre towards the end of the 17th century: *Србљак. Службе, канони, акаџисѣи* [књ.] III, 397.

⁵¹ В. Симић, *За љубав оџаџбине: љаџриоџе и љаџриоџизми у срѣској кулџури XVIII века у Хабзбурикој монархији* (Нови Сад: Галерија Матице српске, 2012), 88–105.

⁵² On the historical context, see С. Ђирковић, “Последњи Бранковићи”, у: *Истџорија срѣској народа* [књ.] 2. *Доба борби за очување и обнову државе (1371–1537)*, ур. Ј. Калић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1982), 445–464.

⁵³ Васиљевић, *Кулџови свейџих*, 121–130.

translated and enshrined. The initial stichera in the first tone, chanted at “Lord, I Call” during Little Vespers, proclaim: “Rejoice, O holy Metropolis, Temple of the Mother of God.” – *весели се с(вє)таа митр[о]полїе храмє в(о)жїє. м(а)терѣ.* (286) This opening invocation establishes, from the outset, the significance of the physical space in which the saint’s cult is grounded. The church is simultaneously identified as the “holy Metropolis” – a term resonant with ecclesiastical authority – and as the Temple of the Theotokos, thus integrating the local shrine into the broader sacred topography of Orthodox Christianity.

This dual identification reflects the layered meanings inscribed into Krušedol’s religious and dynastic function. The monastery had been established by members of the Branković family not only as a spiritual foundation but also as their dynastic mausoleum. The translation of Jovan’s relics to Krušedol – together with those of his father Stefan, and subsequently, following their deaths, of his brother Maksim (1516) and mother Angelina (between 1516 and 1520) – gradually established the site as a sacred locus of intercession. In this way, Krušedol assumed the role of a spiritual stronghold for the Serbian people in the Kingdom of Hungary and emerged as an important regional centre of pilgrimage and devotional life.⁵⁴

The idea of establishing the seat of the Metropolitanate in the Church of the Annunciation – part of the male monastic complex at Krušedol, which also includes a female monastery dedicated to the Meeting of the Lord – emerged after Maksim was appointed Metropolitan of Belgrade in 1512.⁵⁵ His intent was to relocate the centre of ecclesiastical authority farther from the volatile Ottoman border and to resist the jurisdictional claims of the Archbishop of Ohrid over the territories of southern Hungary.⁵⁶ “With the burial of Bishop Maksim in the narthex of the church of Krušedol Monastery, beside the mausoleum of the Holy Despots Branković, the site simultaneously became the mausoleum of the Bishops of Belgrade and Srem.”⁵⁷ This trajectory culminated in the early 18th century, when the autonomous church structure of the Serbs within the Habsburg Monarchy was formally established. In 1708, Krušedol was chosen as the seat of the newly formed Metropolitanate of Karlovci, thereby reaffirming its symbolic status as the spiritual heart of the Serbian Orthodox community.⁵⁸ It was in this very context that Bishop Nikanor undertook the redaction of the Service for Saint Despot Jovan – a moment when the term ‘Metropolis’ acquired new institutional resonance.

⁵⁴ Симић, *За љубав оѿаѿбине*, 99–103.

⁵⁵ Васиљевић, *Кулинови свейих*, 133.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵⁷ Симић, *За љубав оѿаѿбине*, 90.

⁵⁸ Р. Веселиновић, “Срби у Великом рату 1683–1699”, у: *Историја српскої народа* [књ.] 3/1. *Срби под турском влашћу*, ур. Р. Самарџић, (Београд: СКЗ 1993), 563.

3. Illuminating the Community: Pastoral and Light Metaphors

Although the Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković introduces a new conception of the ‘Serbian land’ – at times equated with Syrmia, and at other times invoked alongside it (“Exult, O Syrmia, and rejoice, O Serbian land” – *Ликѡи сирѡдїе и страну срѣска весели се*, 307) – the notion of fatherland remains a prominent thematic thread, inherited from the ideological legacy of the Nemanjić dynasty. In continuity with the model of rulers such as Saint Simeon, Jovan is portrayed as one of the “lovers of the fatherland” and the one who “gathered the scattered people of his fatherland” – *люды ѡт[ъ]ѣства своего распѣждѣнїе сабралъ еси* (297). This phrasing directly echoes the language used in liturgical texts dedicated to Saint Simeon,⁵⁹ evoking the idea of an inherited, sacred territory. However, it now appears in a transformed context: the fatherland is no longer a sovereign realm but an imagined space of unity for a scattered people – Serbian settlers and refugees dispersed across southern Hungary.

Remarkably, from the very opening of the Service – not only in its address to the Metropolis and the Serbian people – we encounter an inclusive invocation that calls upon a wide range of social, spiritual, and professional categories to partake in the veneration of Jovan’s relics and sanctity. The hymn summons “the assembly of monks”, “the young and the old”, “the rich and the poor”, – *Приди богосъбранїи скоупе красни лице иночъскы. приид[ѣ]те и всѣи срѣсцы народи, старѣ же и юни богати и ниши* (287), “tzars and bishops” – *ц(а)рїе и с(к)е(т)ытели* (289), “hesychasts and common people” – *бѣз[ъ]малѣицы. и простїи люди* (290) “princes showing their love for others” – *кнезѣ дръголюбѣа показѣте* (294), “mothers with their offspring” – *м(а)т(е)рѣ са чѣды* (293), and “a multitude of Orthodox soldiers” – *множества православныхъ вон* (296). These diverse groups, defined by vocation, age, gender, social status, spiritual calling, or political and military authority, are all brought together under a common designation: “servants of God” – *рабы вл[а]д[ы]жѣхъ васпоиѣте* (294) and the “assemblies of the Orthodox” – *православны съборы* (299). At this moment in the Service, even ethnic distinctions dissolve into a broader ecclesial groupness. The emphasis falls not on lineage of territorial belonging, but on a shared reverence for sanctity, a communal recognition of the relics as a source of healing, grace, and intercession. In this way, the text articulates a form of identification that transcends conventional boundaries – demonstrating how hymnography constructs unity not only through doctrinal language, but through the performative act of gathering, remembering, and blessing.

Within this reconfigured vision, Jovan is described as “the unfailing overseer of his flock” – *стадѣ своемѣхъ назырателя неѡтемѣмаго* (289), a phrase that draws on the topos of the good shepherd – an image traditionally associated with episcopal sanctity. In Christian liturgical tradition, the bishop is seen as the heir of the apostles,

⁵⁹ Стефан Првовенчани, *Сабрани сѣиси* (Београд: Просвета; СКЗ 1988), 64.

entrusted with both spiritual governance and the safeguarding of the faithful. As such, hymns dedicated to holy bishops often stress their apostolic succession and alignment with figures such as Peter and Paul.⁶⁰ In Serbian hymnography, this pastoral ideal is not limited to ecclesiastical figures but extends to rulers as well. Figures such as Archbishop Sava (1175–1235) and his immediate successor Arsenije (Archbishop 1234–1263)⁶¹ as well as later hierarchs like Nikodim (Archbishop 1316–1324) and Jefrem (Patriarch 1375–1380, 1389–1390),⁶² are portrayed in hymnography as exemplary shepherds entrusted with guiding their spiritual flocks. This pastoral ideal is likewise extended to rulers such as King Milutin (r. 1282–1321), King Stefan Dečanski (r. 1322–1331), Prince Lazar (killed at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389), and Despot Stefan Branković (d. 1476),⁶³ whose leadership combined temporal governance with religious devotion and care for their people.

At the heart of this topos lies the broader theological tradition of *imitatio Christi*, as mediated through the *imitatio apostoli Pauli* – the idea that the apostles, in imitating Christ, continue his mission of proclaiming the Gospel and bringing divine enlightenment to the world.⁶⁴ This apostolic role is often framed as one of preaching among pagans and unbelievers, fulfilling Christ’s commission to be “a light to the Gentiles, that may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13: 47). In hymnographic tradition, the apostles are frequently depicted as successors to Christ, the “Light of the world”, and are themselves called “second lights” who illuminate the darkness of ignorance.⁶⁵ Building on this tradition, Serbian hymnography – especially in compositions honouring pastoral figures – regularly adopts light metaphors to express spiritual authority and sanctity. These elements also appear with striking frequency in the Service for Saint Despot Jovan, even though he does not belong to the hagiotype of the holy hierarch. He is praised as a “many-lighted ray” – *многосвѣтлаа лъча* (286), one who “illuminates the universe with light” – *свѣтломъ вселензю озаряюще* (287), and who “sends forth gifts of healing like sparks” – *разъльчна дарованїа исцѣленїю*

⁶⁰ Кристианс, *Топосы в песнопениях*, 49–50.

⁶¹ On the liturgical veneration of Archbishop Sava and his successor Arsenije, see Србљак. *Службе, канони, акаѿисѿии* [књ.] I; [књ.] II.

⁶² For the liturgical poetry dedicated to Archbishop Nikodim and Patriarch Jefrem, composed by Marko Pečki, see Т. Јовановић, *Марко Пећки: сабрана дела* (Београд: Чигоја штампа, 2024), 121–145; 157–183. For historical information on these hierarchs, see С. Вуковић, *Српски јерарси: од деветиої до двадесетїої века* (Београд; Подгорица; Крагујевац: Евро; Унирекс; Каленић, 1996), 221–222; 362–364.

⁶³ The services dedicated to King Milutin, King Stefan Dečanski, Prince Lazar, and Despot Stefan Branković can be found in the second volume of the 1970 *Srbljak* edition: Србљак. *Службе, канони, акаѿисѿии* [књ.] II, 77–122; 143–200; 305–350; 409–464.

⁶⁴ Кристианс, *Топосы в песнопениях*, 35.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 39–40.

яко искры испoуцаеть (287). His sanctity is likened to an “unwaning light”, a “sun to the whole world” – свѣта незаходимаго: слнца мироу (288), and a “torch to the Serbian land” – свѣтильника срѣцен земли (309). His “brightly-glowing” (свѣтосиателіе, 306) relics are said to “shine brighter than gold and precious stone” – сіають бо пате злата и камене чистѣна (315) “enlightening both soul and bodies” – просвѣщаеть душе и тѣлеса (289) while his commemoration is celebrated as a “luminous feast” – свѣтло данас(ь) трѣж(ь)ство (289). He is a “light-radiant ray, coming from the West” – лѣча свѣтозарнаа, от[ь] зап[а]да пришада[ь] (297), and grants “light-bearing power to the emperors” – (свѣ)тоносна ц(а)реми дръжава (294). These luminous tautologies stand in contrast to the “darkness of spiritual downfall” that, as the Service suggests, hovers over the scattered and vulnerable people in the present moment, emphasising the saint’s role as a radiant guide through collective uncertainty. While the Service reflects anxieties shaped by the Ottoman conquest and its aftermath, the sense of collective threat did not diminish in later periods. By the 18th century, particularly in the borderlands of the Habsburg Monarchy, this uncertainty was often fuelled not by military invasions but by brutal raids carried out by hajduks and bandits. These attacks – targeting both rural villages and urban centres – continued to contribute to the persistent atmosphere of fear and reinforced the need for spiritual protection and communal cohesion invoked in liturgical texts.⁶⁶

This persistent need for spiritual reassurance found powerful expression in the symbolic language of hymnography. Among its most enduring and evocative elements, light metaphors reflect the stylistic patterns present in Byzantine hymnography, where similar expressions appear in services for saints such as Onesimus, Archippus, and the Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles. There, too, the apostle is described as a “ray of light,” (ἀκτίς) “illuminating the universe,” (τὴν οἰκουμένην λαμπρύνουσα) “banishing the deep darkness of ignorance,” (ἀφανίζουσα τὴν τῆς πλάνης σκοτόμαιναν) “torch,” (λαμπάς), and “luminary” (φωστήρ).⁶⁷ Within this wider liturgical tradition, the Service for Despot Jovan aligns his figure with both apostolic light and noble sanctity, reinforcing his dual identification as a spiritual shepherd and dynastic intercessor. The appropriation of episcopal imagery speaks to a broader poetic convention in Serbian hymnography, one that extends the language of apostolic legacy to rulers who were venerated for their devotion, leadership, and martyr-like endurance.

One particularly evocative image within the Service, which also bears directly on questions of collective identification, is the description of the saint as a “ray

⁶⁶ For additional context, consult: М. Тимотијевић, *Рађање модерне ђивајиносѣи: ђивајиносѣи живої Срба у Хабзбуршкој монархији од краја 17. до ђочейка 19. века* (Београд: Clío, 2006).

⁶⁷ Кристианс, *Тоїосы в ђесноїеніях*, 39–40.

coming from the West”. This metaphor, while rooted in the larger repertoire of light imagery associated with holy bishops, also reflects a deeper symbolic geography at work. A similar motif appears in the Service for Saint Prince Lazar, where the saint is addressed with the words: “A newly risen star, you appeared in the West, shining with the bright rays of your relics to all the faithful, but especially to your fatherland.”⁶⁸ In both cases, the image of light emanating from the West underscores a sense of spiritual exceptionality within a specific territorial context. The West, here, is not simply a geographical marker but a meaningful spiritual location – one that defines the identification of the fatherland in relation to the traditional centres of Orthodox sanctity located further east: Mount Athos, the Holy Land, and Constantinople. This East–West contrast had already been well established in Old Serbian literature by the 13th century, where it often served to assert the distinctiveness of the Serbian ecclesiastical and political space.⁶⁹ From this perspective, the sanctity of Jovan (and Lazar before him), does not merely conform to a pan-Orthodox ideal, but emerges from a specific region and returns light to it. Thus, the image of the “ray from the West” becomes both a metaphor of holiness and a statement of belonging – an expression of how local sacredness participates in, but also distinctively contributes to, the universal Orthodox community.

4. Holy Warriors and the Shaping of the Adversary

This is not the only explicit link between the Service for Prince Lazar and Despot Jovan – both texts are deeply embedded in a shared network of military metaphors and references to martyrdom. As rulers and holy warriors, Lazar and Jovan are framed through a similar set of topoi that reflect spiritual mobilisation. In the service dedicated to Jovan, his role is repeatedly emphasised as “the safeguarding of soldiers” – *воинѡм[ъ] саблюденїе* (288), “the all-honorable praise of soldiers” – *воемъ похваля всесъстнаа* (294), and the agent of “the defeat of Barbarians” – *варварѡмъ побѣжденїе* (288). He is invoked as the “invincible helper of all Christians” – *въсемъ христїанѡм[ъ] помощникъ непобѣдими* (294), an image that constructs him as both a literal and a spiritual warrior, charged with the protection and preservation of his people. Such imagery takes inspiration from early Christian models of the *miles Christi* (the

⁶⁸ Ивановић, “Служба светом кнезу Лазару”, 178.

⁶⁹ A number of articles and studies have addressed hierotopy in Old Serbian literature, as well as the symbolic axis of East and West. A useful overview of this body of scholarship can be found in the study: Т. Бабић, “О светим местима Светог Саве: Хијеротопија Истока и Запада у Доментијановом и Теодосијевом Житију Св. Саве”, *Philologia Mediana* 14 (2022), 173–184.

soldier of Christ), and on their prominent manifestation in Serbian hymnography in the figure of Saint Prince Lazar. In both cases, the saint appears as a divinely authorised leader who ensures the survival of the community through spiritual warfare and righteous resistance. The epithet “invincible helper” not only underlies the saint’s active role in confronting earthly enemies but also affirms divine intervention in the defence of the Orthodox people. This metaphorical arsenal supports a vision of communal resistance under threat, offering a liturgical expression of collective identification centred on faith, loyalty and sacrifice.

One striking invocation conveys this synthesis of martyrdom and leadership: “laying down your soul while yet alive, guard your fatherland” – ЖЫВЬ Д(ОУ)ШѦ СВОЮ ПОЛОЖИЛЪ ЕСИ: СИЦЕ, И ПО СМРТЬИ НЕОТСТЪПИНО ОУТ(Ь)Ч(Ь)СТВО СВОЕ СЪХРАНИИ (294). It presents Jovan as a figure who sacrifices himself, not through violent death or persecution, but through a conscious and willing surrender of his life in service to his people. This notion of benevolent self-giving is built on the tradition of *imitatio passionis Christi*, where sanctity is expressed through the voluntary acceptance of suffering or death for the sake of others, mirroring Christ’s own passion.⁷⁰ Though Jovan did not die as a martyr in the strict sense, the liturgical language utilises this tradition to characterise his leadership as a sacrificial and redemptive act, thus reinforcing his role as both a spiritual protector and a holy warrior. This theological framing is reinforced in the choice of Old Testament readings during the Great Vespers, which, at least in the manuscript tradition (though not in the printed *Srbljak* versions),⁷¹ are identical in both services: Isaiah 43:9–12 (“Thus says the Lord”), Wisdom of Solomon 3:1–9 (“The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God”), and Wisdom of Solomon 5:15–23, 6:1–3 (“The righteous live forever”). These are readings regularly appointed for martyrs,⁷² weaving Jovan’s cult more tightly into a sacrificial and eschatological narrative. His military skills, proven in several campaigns against the Ottomans, are thus elevated to the level of sanctified endurance – a holy war waged not only with arms, but with the soul.

The martial metaphors in the Service are intensified by vivid references to “foes both seen and unseen” – ОУТ[Ь] ВРАГЬ ВИДИМНХЪ И НЕВИДИМНХЪ (316) and to Jovan as “most valiant and armed against adversaries” – ВЕЛЇМИТЕ РАВРА ОУЗЖЕНОСНА НА ПРОТИВНІЕ В(О)ГЬ ПОКАЗА (301). The conflation of the faithful flock with a military body is shaped in direct contrast to the image of the Other, variously labelled as “Barbarians” and “Hagarenes”. The term ‘Barbarian’, adopted in Slavic translations of early Christian and Byzantine texts, typically served as a marker for non-Christians,

⁷⁰ Кристианс, *Топосы в песнопениях*, 21–27.

⁷¹ Убипарип, *Заједничка служба*, 78.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 59.

often encompassing pagans.⁷³ In Serbian sources, it came to designate “enemies, non-Christian peoples and tribes, and other races”,⁷⁴ encapsulating not only religious but also ethnic and political adversaries, reflecting contemporary threats to the community. In opposition to these foreign figures, Jovan’s people are described as the ‘New Israel’ – a long-standing topos of collective identification in Serbian liturgical texts,⁷⁵ traceable to the earliest services of the 13th century. This biblical metaphor elevates the Serbian people to the status of a chosen people of God, whose historical struggles are inscribed in a narrative of spiritual purpose and divine allegiance.

The use of ‘Hagarenes’ further enriches this symbolic landscape. Originating from the biblical account of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16 and 21),⁷⁶ the term came to signify descendants of Ishmael, commonly associated with Arabs and Muslims in Byzantine and Slavic traditions.⁷⁷ In the Service for Saint Prince Lazar, the Hagarenes are clearly equated with the Turks, the Ottoman conquerors who embodied the existential threat to the Serbian state and faith. A similar usage occurs in the Service for

⁷³ On the origin of the term ‘barbarian’ as a marker of alterity, see E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). For its adaptation and application in Byzantine and Slavic historiographical contexts, see M. Nikolić, B. Pavlović, “Bulgarians, Serbs, and the Rus in the Central Balkans in Byzantine Historical Narratives (Late 10th – Mid-13th Century): The View from Constantinople”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 60/2 (2023), 739–767.

⁷⁴ С. Ђирковић, “Варвари”, у: *Лексикон*, 67–68.

⁷⁵ On the notion of the Serbian people as the New Israel and its connection to the legacy of the Nemanjić dynasty, see С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића: дипломатичка студија* (Београд: СКЗ; Свети архијерејски синод Српске православне цркве; Clio, 1997); А. З. Савић, “Novus Israel: Нацрт за историју идеје о богоизабрању код Срба (XIII–XVI век)”, у: *Концепции национализма и империализма у српском политичком дискурсу: Средњи век, нови век, савремено доба* [књ.] 1, ур. С. Марјановић-Душанић, А. З. Савић, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2025), 51–80.

⁷⁶ E. Noort, “Created in the Image of the Son: Ishmael and Hagar”, in: *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, ed. M. Goodman et al., (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 33–44.

⁷⁷ The terminology in Greek, Syriac, and Coptic sources is not fixed: designations such as ‘Arabs’, ‘Ishmaelites’, ‘Hagarenes’, and ‘Saracens’ may refer to specific tribes, the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula more generally, or – especially in later contexts – to Muslims. In this study, ‘Arab’ is understood primarily as an ethnic or geographical category, whereas ‘Muslim’ denotes religious affiliation. See T. Wolińska, “Arabs, (H)agarenes, Ishmaelites, Saracens – a Few Remarks about Naming”, in: *Byzantium and the Arabs: The Encounter of Civilizations (from Sixth to Mid-Eighth Century)*, eds. T. Wolińska, P. Filipczak, (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015), 22–37; W. J. Aerts, “Hagar in The So-Called Daniel-Diegesis and In Other Byzantine Writings”, in: *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites*, 465–477.

Saint King Milutin,⁷⁸ even though during Milutin's reign the term may have initially referred more generally to Muslim enemies of the Christian world. Given that Patriarch Danilo III – who also authored an encomium to Prince Lazar – is credited with composing Milutin's Service, this may reflect an intentional anachronism, aligning past saints with contemporary struggles against the Ottoman Empire. Such terminology reflects how liturgical texts were often influenced by the pressing political and military realities of their time.⁷⁹ Terms like Barbarians and Hagarenes not only designate foreign enemies but also transpose ethnic and religious conflicts into a spiritual register. The transformation of the Ottoman threat into a broader symbol of spiritual antagonism is particularly evident in both Prince Lazar's and Despot Jovan's Services. In this way, the external ethnic identification of the invaders is abstracted into the realm of moral and eschatological opposition, reinforcing a binary worldview of a sacred and besieged community versus a hostile Other – a rhetorical mechanism central to the formation of collective self-presentation in medieval Serbian hymnography.⁸⁰

An especially remarkable moment in the Service for Saint Despot Jovan appears later in the kanon during Matins, where we find a reference to “the onslaught of the Hagarenes sons now”. This sudden temporal shift interrupts the otherwise narrative rhythm of the kanon, which traditionally recounts the saint's life in a structured, almost epic fashion. Instead, we encounter a lyrical apostrophe – a direct and urgent invocation of the saint – that brings the participants in the liturgy back into the immediacy of the present. This present, the sacred liturgical ‘now’, becomes the locus of spiritual transformation for the faithful. Through such temporal strategies,

⁷⁸ Т. Јовановић, “Служба светом краљу Милутину Данила Бањског”, *Косовско-медиохијски зборник* 6 (2015), 111.

⁷⁹ See Васиљевић, *Култови светих*, 168–218. Vasiljević emphasises that from the late 14th century onwards, the revitalisation of older cults became a deliberate activity of ecclesiastical circles, acquiring new ideological and political dimensions. These reactivations of saintly veneration, whether through hagiography, liturgical services, or other related genres, were often shaped by shifting social and political circumstances, underscoring how commemoration responded to contemporary communal needs.

⁸⁰ See А. З. Савић, “‘Незнабошци дођоше у достојање твоје’ (Пс 78, 1): Идентитет и другост у српском политичком дискурсу епохе османских освајања”, у: *Политички оквири колективних идентитета*, 77–115. The article argues that, especially after the Battle of Kosovo, hagiographic and liturgical texts interpreted historical suffering through the theological framework of ‘chosenness’ and covenant, casting the Ottoman enemy, often labelled as Hagarenes or Ishmaelites, not as autonomous actors but as negations of the sacredness of the faithful community. This rhetorical mechanism reinforced a binary worldview of divine election and moral contrast, positioning the invader as a corrective force within a providential historical cycle.

even those considered adversaries. This paradoxical gesture – of inclusivity within a text otherwise shaped by strong boundaries of collective identification – reveals the hymnographer’s awareness of, and response to, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious reality in which this hymnography was both composed and performed. The miracle does not erase the distinction between the Christian ‘we’ and the non-Christian ‘Other’, but it demonstrates that the saint’s power transcends those limits, thereby affirming the supremacy of the Christian faith while implicitly acknowledging the permeability of communal boundaries in lived experience.

5. Orthodoxy Beyond Borders: Identification in the Face of Estrangement

The image of the Other in the Service for Saint Despot Jovan is multifaceted. Beyond the Ottomans, the text evokes more subtle forms of estrangement through references to “foreign cities and lands” where Jovan and his family wandered “from place to place, like ancient Israel” – *тѣждѣ гради и страни проходеще от[ъ] мѣста на мѣсто ѿкоже нногда въ пѣстини древни израи́л’* (305). These lines allude to their exile following the fall of the Serbian Despotate, with historical references to their sojourns in the Friuli region of northern Italy and later in Styria, a Habsburg territory. One verse declares: “The anointed of Roman authority could not hold you back from your journey” – *Помазанникъ римскѣ дръжавѣ, аще и васхоте нъ не вазможе васъ оудръжати от[ъ] полѣченаго вамъ пѣтъшаствїа* (302), most likely pointing to the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich III, under whose protection the family lived in a Styrian castle.⁸² Another passage recounts: “The Hungarian, although possessed by disbelief, after seeing you, blessed boys, entrusted you with Syrmia to keep” – *Оугринъ оны аще и невѣрїемъ одржнмъ; нъ егда виде васъ отроцы прѣвл(а)женнїи; подаеть вамъ сирїїю въ одржанїе* (301), a direct reference to King Matthias Corvinus and their reception at the Hungarian court. In this diasporic context, Jovan is characterised as “a guileless lamb in a foreign land” – *ѿко агнѣ незлобиво въ чужден земли* (302), a figure of innocence and spiritual integrity amid lands culturally and religiously alien to Orthodoxy. Unlike the Hagarenes, who represent military enemies, the Habsburg and Hungarian Others are configured not through violent conflict but through more subtle forms of religious and intellectual contestation. The kanon proclaims: “Amidst foreign teachers, you did not err in the Orthodox teachings of the Fathers” – *Ище и по сред[ъ] иноезычнни оучителии вадѣвараше се б(о)г(о)вѣл(а)женне, нъ православїа от[ъ] чьска нико ли же погрѣши* (304), highlighting Jovan’s steadfastness in the face of Catholic influences. Here, spiritual perseverance becomes a mode of sanctity: the preservation

⁸² Васильевѣ, *Куліїови свейших*, 123.

of ancestral Orthodoxy in foreign lands is cast as a triumph of inner strength and fidelity.

This “strangerhood” – *тѣждѣ странствїа* (303) is not simply a condition of political exile, but rather elevated into a form of ascetic struggle – a spiritual pilgrimage aligned with the monastic ideal of voluntary alienation from the world (*fuga mundi*)⁸³ in pursuit of divine truth and heavenly citizenship. The text deepens this portrayal through traditional ascetic topoi, likening Jovan to a “sweet-smelling bouquet” – *кытра бл(а)говонїаа* (310), and a “fragrant lily”⁸⁴ – images of purity and spiritual refinement frequently found in the Byzantine menaion and monastic literature.⁸⁵ The lily, a potent symbol of chastity and divine grace, also evokes the biblical lilies of the field from the Sermon on the Mount, reinforcing themes of faith and divine providence. As an archetypal ascetic, described as an “unshakable pillar” – *стѣпа непоколебїма* (289),⁸⁶ Jovan subordinates both “marital union” – *сѣпреженїе брака* (303) and the “majesty of his rank” – *сана величїаство* (304) to his love of God, accepting the role of despot not out of ambition, but out of obedience to a higher calling. In this way, his sanctity weaves together all four primary hagiotypes – apostolic zeal, episcopal wisdom, martyr-like endurance, and ascetic devotion – activating the full spectrum of liturgical memory embedded in the Orthodox calendar. His external displacement and internal steadfastness together affirm his status as both a spiritual protector and a symbol of unwavering faith, embodying a sense of belonging that transcends political boundaries and affirms Orthodox continuity in the face of estrangement.

6. Conclusion: The Unspoken ‘We’ of Liturgy

Throughout the entire Service, collective identifications are articulated through the consistent use of the first-person plural. Although not explicitly stated, the implicit pronoun ‘we’ serves not merely a grammatical function but also creates a strong sense of communal voice: the chanters, the participants in liturgy, and the “venerable assemblies” are all joined in a shared speech act directed towards the saint. This use of direct address, unfolding as if ‘in real time’, collapses temporal distance and fosters a sense of active, communal presence. Importantly, this liturgical ‘we’ is not

⁸³ Кристианс, *Топосы в песнопениях*, 16–17.

⁸⁴ Непознати Крушедолац, “Служба”, 86.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 66–67.

⁸⁶ Т. Р. Руди, “«Яко столп непоколебим» (об одном агиографическом топосе)”, в: *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы* [том] 55, ред. Л. В. Соколова, (Санкт Петербург: Дмитрий Буланин, 2004), 211–227.

limited to those physically present. The Service explicitly invokes all who “live in righteousness” – людѣ, иже въ правости живѹщихъ] (299), symbolically extending the act of worship to a trans-spatial community of believers. While the Serbian people are foregrounded – others are even called upon to “marvel at the grace newly given unto us” – да дивѣтъ се ѣзыци новоданѣни намъ бл[а]г[о]д[ѣ]ти (294) – Saint Despot Jovan is nevertheless presented as a universal intercessor for the Orthodox faithful. He is described as the “helper of Orthodox soldiers in battles” – коншомъ] православнимъ] въ брани крепкы помощникъ (309), the “prayerful intercessor” (молитѣникъ) for all in need – those seeking peace, health, salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and the strengthening of faith, including “the spiritual and the secular, the old and the young, men and women” – д(о)уховнымъ] и мирьскимъ], старимъ; и юнимъ]: мѡжемоу], и женамоу] (295).

The emphasis on his universal role is particularly significant in times of crisis. References to “sieges” and “assaults of aggressors and thieves” likely allude to Ottoman incursions after 1521, but they could also reflect the terror brought by hajduk and bandit attacks in the borderlands of the Habsburg Monarchy in the early 18th century.⁸⁷ In such contexts, Jovan is invoked as the “liberator of the enslaved” – плененымъ] свободитель (288), and the “protector of strangers and the shelterless” – страннимъ] и безкровнимъ] покровителю (290). Finally, the Service’s call for “the peace for Thine churches” – испроси миръ цр(ь)квѣмъ твоимъ] (307) or “unanimity”⁸⁸ suggests an awareness of intra-Orthodox tensions. This phrase may reflect the jurisdictional conflicts between the Serbian clergy and the Archbishopric of Ohrid in the third decade of the 16th century.⁸⁹ Yet it also echoes earlier Serbian hymnographic texts, highlighting a long-standing concern for unity within the Church as a spiritual and communal ideal.⁹⁰

The Service for Saint Despot Jovan Branković, though deeply rooted in the traditions of medieval hymnography, reveals a remarkably adaptive and nuanced vision

⁸⁷ Тимотијевић, *Рађање модерне приватности*, 145–150.

⁸⁸ The word “unanimity” is absent from the manuscript 233 but can be found in the Rimnik version of the Service. See Непознати Крушедолац, “Служба”, 131.

⁸⁹ Н. Шулетић, “Српска црква после 1459. године: о интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем”, у: *Пад Српске деспотовине 1459. године: зборник радова са научној скупштини, одржане 12–14. новембра 2009. године*, ур. М. Спремић, (Београд: САНУ, 2011), 345–347.

⁹⁰ Several Serbian services – beginning with the earliest Service for Saint Simeon, and including those dedicated to Saint Peter of Koriša, Archbishop Nikodim, and Patriarch Jefrem – contain similar verses, underscoring a recurring concern for ecclesial unity. One author has noted the repetition of these verses and traced their source to the Byzantine Service for Saint Theodosius: И. Шпадијер, *Свети Пеѡар Коришки у старој српској књижевности* (Београд: Чигоја штампа, 2014), 100–101.

of collective identifications. Through a rich tapestry of metaphors – light, shepherding, warfare, martyrdom, and exile – the text constructs a model of sanctity that is both anchored in local experience and open to wider Orthodox worlds. The saint emerges as a spiritual protector of the fatherland, a warrior of faith, and an intercessor for all Orthodox Christians, transcending the immediate historical circumstances of his life and responding to the shifting realities of the Ottoman rule, frontier instability, and religious coexistence. By mobilising shared topoi and embedding them in the liturgical present, the Service reinforces a collective self-presentation defined not only by opposition to external Others – be they Muslim or Catholic sovereigns – but also by steadfastness in faith, unity of the Church, and a continued sense of divine presence and protection.

The categories of identification it mobilises – ethnicity, territory, religious affiliation, ancestry, occupation – are a blend of inherited and evolving frameworks. While some of these (like Orthodoxy, descent, or soldierly duty) are steeped in tradition and function as part of well-established topoi, others (such as regional or ethnic markers) are relatively newer, responding to changing political and cultural contexts. When these categories are frequently invoked, especially in hymnographic discourse, they contribute to a powerful sense of groupness that appears stable and self-evident, even though these very categories are in fact dynamic and historically contingent. Their meanings shift diachronically and operate across different scales – from the micro-contexts⁹¹ of Srem and the Metropolitanate in Krušedol, to the macro-contexts of the Balkans, Slavic Orthodox culture, and Byzantine literature. The relational network at the heart of the Service, centred on the Branković family, is mirrored in the symbolic ‘eucharistic family’ of the faithful gathered in worship – chanters, choirs, and liturgical communities – who are the discursive carriers of these topoi. Thus, even as the hymn presents a saint who appears timeless and unchanging, the text itself reflects a complex and evolving engagement with connectedness, belonging and memory, offering not only theological guidance but also a liturgical way to articulate identifications across centuries.

⁹¹ M. Vasiljević, “Foreword” in this volume.

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Commemorating and Identifying in the Ottoman Central Balkans

This paper examines the identifications of Orthodox Christians in the Central Balkans as articulated in two commemorative practices: the veneration of saints and history writing. Drawing attention to the term Central Balkans allows us to step away from equating the names and categories of identifications (such as the territory) from the sources and their present meanings.¹ Namely, since the middle of the 15th century, categories, and with it, communities, became objects of (re-)imagination, thereby rendering processes of identifications increasingly complex. In this context, the Central Balkans refers to the part of the Ottoman Patriarchate of Peć that once was a medieval Serbian state, as well as the region of Srem.

The commemoration is embedded in Christianity, making it a religion of memory.² Within the liturgical act of commemoration, the Christian identification was enacted.³ In the liturgy the saints were also commemorated, illustrating the

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¹ This is, in a way, a step towards distinguishing the category of practice and category of analysis, R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'", *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 45.

² O. G. Oexle, "Memoria als Kultur", in: *Memoria als Kultur*, Hrsg. O. G. Oexle, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht Gm, 1995), 9–78, 33; O. G. Oexle, "Memoria und Memorialüberlieferung im früheren Mittelalter", *Frühmittelalterlichen Studien* 10 (1976), 80.

³ Liturgy combines an act of thanksgiving (eucharist) and an act of commemoration (anamnesis) of God's acts in the life and death of Jesus Christ: R. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West. The Origin of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), 331–346. Even though it does not portray a complete picture of the ways in which the Eastern Orthodox Christians self-perception was created in the Byzantine Empire, which further determined how Slavs shaped their view of themselves, see the important study D. Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects. Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). Christian identification was not uniform over space or time, but its common traits

realisation of universal Christian ideals in a particular time and place.⁴ The veneration of saints reinforced Christian identification and introduced identifications rooted in the temporal, geographical, and political circumstances in which they lived or were venerated.⁵ The history writing is intrinsically connected to the identification of the institution or (purported) community whose past it noted.⁶ It created groupness within the broader Christian community and, even though it created chronological remembering, it could conflate with liturgical commemoration.⁷

The focus of this paper is primarily on hagiographic and historical texts written in the Central Balkans, both of which were greatly influenced by the other. The primary role of the former was to narrate the saint's life, i.e., their road to holiness, thus contributing to the 'history of holiness'.⁸ The latter, influenced by hagiographies,

and omnipresence profoundly shaped the way people perceived themselves. By means of continuous repetition, this eclipsed all other identifications until the Enlightenment, when other forms of identifications received similar attention and means of their promotion and imposition.

⁴ Д. Богдановић, *Историја сјаје српске књижевности* (Београд: СКЗ, 1980), 71.

⁵ On the veneration of saints, defined as polyphonic remembering, in their social and political contexts see М. Васиљевић, *Култови светих на централном Балкану у време османских освајања* (Београд: Балканолшки институт САНУ, 2021), especially 17–28.

⁶ On this see D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, "Introduction", in: *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 1–13, especially 1–2. The six edited volumes of *History and Identity*, that connects identifications and medieval and early modern historiography (from *Historiography and Identity* [vol.] I. *Ancient and Early Christian Narratives of Community*, eds. W. Pohl, V. Wieser, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019) to *Historiography and Identity* [vol.] VI: *Competing Narratives of the Past in Central and Eastern Europe, c. 1200–c. 1600*, ed. P. Rychterová, assist. D. Kalhous, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021)), show the extent to which history writing and identifying were intertwined.

⁷ The historiography was also contextualised within the broader processes of remembering. On the ways, for example, the nobility identified itself, among which the historiography is an important aspect, see D. W. Poeck, "Rat und Memoria", in: *Memoria in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, Hrsg. O. G. Oexle, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 312–317; O. G. Oexle, "Memoria als Kultur", 37–41. On chronological and liturgical remembering see J. Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 131–132.

⁸ The difference between the 'history of holiness' and the 'history of the world' was introduced by Д. Богдановић, *Ликови светињелца*, (Београд: Главни савез удруженог православног свештенства, 1972), 7. Namely, every hagiography was considered a continuation of the Holy Scripture, Богдановић, *Историја*, 72; D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness. The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 15–32. Due to its importance in reflecting universal ideals, Christianity could be called a hagiocentric religion, P. J. Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of

narrate the past of medieval and early modern ruling figures.⁹ Even though both genres constructed a type of history (holy or secular), their relations were deeper. The historicisation of hagiographies culminated in the 17th century, whereby a saint's life was depicted in a historical manner and could include excerpts of the historical works written in this period.¹⁰ This is partly due to the fact that the saints were usually figures of political significance, which meant that the events in a saint's life were often historical events. Historical texts focused on the rulers, many of whom were saints.¹¹ These works were often influenced by hagiographies, either implicitly or by directly borrowing from them.¹²

These texts were a reflection of their social worlds and actors in it.¹³ This 'social logic' explains why texts written in different periods and places brought about different aspects of identifications – drawing attention to the salience of categories.¹⁴ The impact of these texts rests on the fact that they were orally transmitted by a literate member, making them 'embodied texts', in the process of creating 'textual

Medieval Relics", in: P. J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 217.

⁹ By ruling figures, I mean rulers, and persons that exerted certain prerogatives and used ideological tools characteristic for Serbian medieval rulers.

¹⁰ Even though hagiographic and historiographic discourses are distinguishable, historical narrative was also susceptible to *topoi in vitae*. On the relationship between hagiography and historiography (and within that biography) in the examples where they were most closely intertwined: the Extensive Life of Despot Stefan Lazarević and the Extensive Life of Emperor Uroš written by Patriarch Pajsej, see Васиљевић, *Култови светих*, 102–114 and M. Vasiljević, "Between Hagiography and Historiography: Commemorating the Saints and Remembering the Past in the Seventeenth Century in the Patriarchate of Peć", in: *Writing History in Ottoman Europe (Fifteenth – Eighteenth Centuries)*, eds. O. Olar, K. Petrovsky, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2026) 296–325. Some researchers may argue that the pinnacle of the historicisation was the Extensive Life of Despot Stefan Lazarević, written (before) 1433. However, this hagiography is a specific example of the shifts between hagiographic and biographic discourse in the narrative of the saint, while the hagiography of Emperor Uroš, written in 1641, narrated Serbian history while also depicting the saint.

¹¹ On the place of the saints in historiographic works see Васиљевић, *Култови светих*, 323–360.

¹² That this was not a unique practice see M. Hinterberger, "Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres. Some Critical Observations", in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* [vol.] 2. *Genres and Contexts*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, (London: Routledge, 2014), 41–42.

¹³ On this approach see G. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages", *Speculum* 65/1 (1990), 59–76.

¹⁴ On the salience of social categories see. P. J. Oakes, "The Salience of Social Categories", in: *Rediscovering the Social Group*, eds. J. C. Turner et al. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 117–141.

community'.¹⁵ Their performativity and repetition (in the liturgy or some informal gathering) allowed them to be constitutive to identifications – proving them to be event and context based.¹⁶ Identifications need not be deliberate, they could emerge incidentally. Their impact depended on how frequently the texts were performed and on their contents.¹⁷ The content was shaped by the circumstances of its writing, the author, and intended audiences.

There are a myriad of possible approaches to analysing identifications in hagiographic and historiographic texts. These can include each of the aforementioned aspects – their copies, content, structure, topoi, place in a ritual, performativity, and so forth. Since the aim of the paper is to compare the identifications in these interconnected texts with different functions, structures, and contents, the most fruitful approach is to analyse categories such as place of residence, religion, and designations of communities. Not all categories held equal significance; they evoked varying senses of belonging depending on their emphasis or the lack thereof. Meanings shifted, some categories lost salience and disappeared while others appeared. The designations of peoples are particularly important for deliberation on identifications, although authors rarely clarify their meanings, which often prompts researchers to project modern interpretations onto them.¹⁸ The same uncertainty applies to adjectives suggesting shared traits.

The parallels between hagiographic and historiographic texts – in the categories used and in their connection to the context – allow comparison to determine whether identifications depended primarily on the function of the text or on its content. The emphasis on or the omission of certain categories can show whether

¹⁵ On the 'embodied texts' see E. Fischer-Lichte, *Performativität. Eine kulturwissenschaftliche Einführung* (Transcript Verlag: Bielefeld, 2021), 161–162. On the model of 'textual communities' see B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 88–240 and other texts of the author.

¹⁶ E. Fischer-Lichte, *Performativität*, 51, 63; on connections between events and identifications R. Brubaker, "Ethnicity without Groups", in: R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 12.

¹⁷ That impact on the audience should not be assumed, but rather examined, was pointed out in the case of historiography, by W. Pohl, "Historiography and Identity: Methodological Perspectives", in: *Historiography and Identity* [vol.] I. *Ancient and Early Christian Narratives of Community*, eds. W. Pohl, V. Wieser, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 16–17.

¹⁸ On names as renewable sources see P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 118–119; W. Pohl, "Introduction: Historiography and Identity in a Comparative Perspective", in: *Historiography and Identity* [vol.] IV. *Writing History Across Medieval Eurasia*, eds. W. Pohl, D. Mahoney, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 5–6. This can be understood as the equation of the category of practice and category of analysis.

they were the grounds for identifications outside of these two practices. To answer these questions, we must start with each genre.

1. Venerating and Identifying: The Lives of Saints

The lives of saints (*vitae*) and related narrative texts, collectively termed ‘hagiographic texts’, focus on the saint’s path to holiness, presented in mosaic-like episodes.¹⁹ Two main types of hagiographic texts exist: synaxarial (brief liturgical readings) and extensive hagiographies (detailed episodes depicting deeds and inclusion among the saints).²⁰ Unlike offices and encomia – highly stylised and structured forms written to celebrate and praise a saint, hagiographic texts vary greatly in their content and form.²¹ Their diversity reflects the ‘social logic’ of saint cults, which also caused minor textual changes in the copying and the writing of the new versions, often coexisting with older ones.²²

The authors presented the portraits of saints that became symbols – a shared category – of the venerating communities.²³ These were usually local communities,

¹⁹ On this and the plurality of texts that belonged to the ‘hagiographic circle’ see Hinterberger, “Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres” and other papers in the same volume. This has also been reflected on the Serbian medieval and early modern veneration of saints, Васиљевић, *Култови светих*, 33–39. I use the term ‘hagiographic text’ to denote a ‘proto-genre’, i.e., classification of texts according to their function and not their form; on this approach see G. Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: A Socio-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts* (Los Angeles: Slavica Publishing, 1989), 11–31. It could include hagiographies and different types of ‘orations’. On these genres, where ‘medieval literature’ includes the early modern period, see Ђ. Трифуновић, *Азбучник српских средњовековних књижевних јојмова* (Београд: Нолит, 1990), 47–77, 323–326.

²⁰ On this see Васиљевић, *Култови светих*, 34–37.

²¹ This has long been noticed, as hagiography was called a fluid, flexible, and ever-changing format, open to transformations: S. Efthymiadis, “New Developments in Hagiography: The Rediscovery of Byzantine Hagiography”, in: *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies* [vol.] I. *Plenary Papers*, ed. E. Jeffreys, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 167. For examples on how offices and encomia participated in identifications see the papers in this volume: A. Ivanović, “Heavenly Patrons and Earthly Communities: Identification and Topoi in Hymnography” and I. Plaović, “Rhetorical Identification: The Case of Encomiastic Literature”.

²² I refer to this capacity for synchronic and diachronic differences in commemorating a saint as the polyphony of the memories of saints, Васиљевић, *Култови светих*.

²³ On the symbolic construction of the community see A. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985). The work of Anthony Cohen was assimilated in Richard Jenkins’ clarification of the process of self-identification, R. Jenkins, *Social Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 132–147. A model for the participation of the cults of saints,

but the presence of the relics could attract pilgrims, fostering broader connectedness.²⁴ The authors also organised their own and the audiences' social worlds, by employing categories that evoked various commonalities, connectedness, or communities. Both levels influenced future generations through repeated readings. However, the influence of hagiographies should not be overestimated: they were typically read once a year, on the saint's feast day, in the shrine holding their relics and in neighbouring ones.²⁵

To highlight the contextual nature of hagiographic texts, I will divide them territorially. The first group concerns the texts dedicated to three saints whose relics were placed in Srem: two of them members of the Branković dynasty and the third Saint Stefan Štiljanović. Namely, members of the nuclear family were included among the saints and venerated in Krušedol Monastery: former Despot of the Serbian Despotate Stefan Branković (1458–1459); his sons, Despots in the Kingdom of Hungary Đorđe (1486–1497/1499, d. 1516) and Jovan (1494–1502); and their mother Despotess Angelina (d. c. 1520).²⁶ Of the four, the synaxarial hagiographies of Stefan, Đorđe/Archbishop Maksim, and Angelina are known, but the last two could be dated right before or at the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Srem.²⁷ These texts were followed by two orations for a local noble from the first half of the 16th century, Stefan Štiljanović, who was venerated in Šišatovac Monastery. One was presumably written between the last decades of the 16th and the first decades of the 17th century,

and therefore, hagiographies, in identifications, is presented in: M. Vasiljević, "Venerating and Identifying in Ottoman Srem: Saint Stefan Štiljanović", *Scrinium* 2026 (in print).

²⁴ The statement that "a community is just a boundary-expressing symbol" strongly applies here, Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community*, 15. To this should be added that the most imprecise, ambiguous, and heterogenous meaning of symbols is what makes them the most effective, *ibid.*, 21.

²⁵ When the cults were particularly popular, the translation of a saint's relics could also be commemorated. Only rarely were the cults generally accepted, such as the cults of the founders of the Nemanjić dynasty, Saints Simeon and Sava. On this, see Васиљевић, *Култови светих*.

²⁶ On the history of the Brankovićs see М. Спремић, *Десџоји Ђурађ Бранковић и његово доба* (Београд: Службени гласник, 1999); М. Спремић, "Српски деспоти у Срему", у: *Срем кроз векове. Слојеви култура Фрушке горе и Срема*, ур. М. Матицки, (Београд; Беоцин: Вукова задужбина, Институт за књижевност и уметност, 2007), 45–73. For a short overview in English see S. M. Ćirković, *The Serbs* (Malden; MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 77–145.

²⁷ This, however, cannot be determined with certainty, as the Synaxarial Vita of Maksim is preserved in a 17th century copy (А. Вукомановић, "Живот архиепископа Максима", *Гласник Друштва српске словесности* 11 (1859), 125), while the Synaxarial Vita of Angelina is known from a copy from 1626 (Ђ. Трифуновић, "Белешке о делима у Србљаку", у: *О Србљаку. Стилдије*, ур. Ђ. Трифуновић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1970), 332).

the other possibly written by the Patriarch of Peć, Pajsej (1614–1647).²⁸ The second group concerns the ruling figures of the Nemanjić dynasty (1166–1371): the hagiographies of Queen Jelena (d. 1314) whose relics were in Gradac Monastery; King Stefan the First-Crowned (Grand Župan 1196–1217, King 1217–cca. 1223), whose relics were in Sopoćani Monastery; and Emperor Stefan Uroš V (1355–1371), venerated in Nerodimlje Monastery. Jelena's hagiography was presumably written around 1600 by Metropolitan of Raška Visarion, while the latter two were written by Patriarch Pajsej in 1628/1629 or soon thereafter and 1641.²⁹

The analysis will allow the comparison of identifications between synaxarial and extensive hagiographies; hagiographies and orations; differences and similarities across the time and the territories in which they were written; the evaluation of the participation of historical content and the role of the author in the shaping of the identifications.

1.1. New Protectors in (Ottoman) Srem

The synaxarial vitae of Đorđe and Angelina Branković were written in Srem, whose population structure in the 15th and 16th centuries changed due to migrations from the former Serbian Despotate.³⁰ In order to use the immigrants in the wars with the Ottoman Empire, Hungarian kings granted the title of despot to the descendants of Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456).³¹ After one branch of the Branković family

²⁸ On the dating of the older text see M. Васиљевић, О. Крешић, “Култ светог и манастирска економија: Прослављање Стефана Штиљановића у Шишатовцу под османском влашћу”, *Историјски часопис* 72 (2023), 354–355. On the problem of authorship and the copies of the second see Т. Јовановић, “Кратко повесно слово о светом Стефану Штиљановићу”, у: *Манастир Шишајовац. Зборник радова*, ур. Д. Давидов, (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 1989), 73–76.

²⁹ Т. Јовановић, *Књижевно дело ђакопјарха Пајсеја* (Београд: Свети архијерејски Синод Српске православне цркве, 2001), 94–95. See on both rulers see contributions in: *Историја српског народа* [књ.] 1. *Од најстаријих времена до Маричке бијке (1371)*, ур. С. Ђирковић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1981), 263–340, 566–663, as well as a short overview in: Ђirković, *The Serbs*, 34–46, 77–80. For the year of King Stefan's death see Ђ. Бубало, “Још једном о години смрти краља Стефана Првовенчаног”, у: *Стефан Првовенчани и његово доба*, ур. И. Коматина, (Београд: Историјски институт Београд, 2020), 99–118.

³⁰ On the migrations between the end of the 14th century and the first half of the 16th see А. Крстић, *Благовјерна јосифова и славне јосифе. Студије о брачној јолицији, друштвеном, јојожају и јоседима српске елије у Утарској (XV–XVI век)* (Београд: Историјски институт Београд, 2025), 13–20, with older literature.

³¹ On the title of despots in the new social and political circumstances from the perspective of the continuities in identifications see А. Крстић, “Између службе ‘светлој коруни’ и чувања српских традиција”, у: *Концепти ђакопјархијизма и национализма у српском*

perished, in 1486 Đorđe received the title of despot, and moved with his brother Jovan and mother Despotess Angelina to Kupinik, on the Sava River, bringing the relics of their father Stefan.³² After Jovan's death in 1502, Đorđe, now a monk called Maksim and Angelina went to Wallachia, only to return to Srem in 1508.³³ They founded Krušedol Monastery on the Fruška Gora Mountain and, after Maksim became the Metropolitan of Belgrade, moved its seat to the monastery (around 1513). Maksim probably did so due to the wars with the Ottomans, the growing need to organise a life of the Orthodox flock in Srem, and to oppose the pretensions of the Ohrid Archbishopric to the south of the Hungarian kingdom.³⁴ The placement of Stefan's and Jovan's relics contributed to the monastery's reputation as a holy place. The relics of Maksim and Angelina soon joined them, probably sharing the same reliquary.³⁵ According to Maksim's hagiography, his body was translated seven years after his death (i.e., in 1523) while the translation of Angelina's body cannot be dated with certainty.³⁶ Nevertheless, the hagiographies were written on the eve of the Battle of Mohács (1526) or soon after, i.e., around the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Srem.

The Synaxarial Vita of Maksim leaves the impression of a historiographic work. Much longer than the hagiography of his father, it recounts the life of both Despot Stefan Branković and Despot Đorđe Branković/Archbishop Maksim, as well as mentioning other family members.³⁷ In order to portray the longevity of the ruling

їолийичком дискурсу: средњи век, нови век, савремено доба [књ.] 1, ур. С. Марјановић-Душанић, А. З. Савић, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2025), 208–211.

³² On Stefan's cult see, Васиљевић, *Кулинови светици*, 125–130.

³³ On this and the following see *ibid.*, 130–134.

³⁴ Many of Maksim's actions could be interpreted in this context, М. Тимотијевић, *Манастир Крушедол* [књ.] 1 (Београд: Драганић, 2008), 20–22. On the Serbian Church at the beginning of the Ottoman rule see Н. С. Шулетић, "Српска црква после 1459. године: О интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем", у: *Пад Српске десјојовине 1459. године: зборник радова са научној скупа, одржаног 12–14. новембра 2009. године*, ур. М. Спремић, (Београд: САНУ, 2011), 331–349.

³⁵ Тимотијевић, *Манастир Крушедол* [књ.] 2, 68–69.

³⁶ Вукомановић, "Живот архиепископа Максима", 129; The hagiography of Angelina only states that the relics were translated after a few years, М. Стефановић, "Житије мајке Ангелине", *Археолошки прилози* 8 (1986), 137.

³⁷ Stefan's life represents a 'vita within a vita'. If at first Maksim's relics were placed in the reliquary with his father's, that could explain this choice. Another reason could be the importance of Stefan's cult. However, since the author mentions other family members, it could be that he intended to write a family chronicle, in addition to the narrative about a saint: Васиљевић, *Кулинови светици*, 135–136. Even though it mentions other family members, the author omits Đorđe's predecessor, the first despot in the Hungarian kingdom, Vuk Branković.

dynasty, the genealogical note starts with Saint Simeon/Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja (1166–1196, d.1199), the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty and recounts the line: Despot Đurađ – Despot Stefan – Maksim. This reflected the centuries’ long view of Serbian rulers as members of the same dynasty, explicitly promoted by genealogies.³⁸ The section on Despot Stefan depicts him differently to his hagiography: rather than focusing on the tragedies of his life (blinding, exile, death in foreign lands),³⁹ the author focuses on his positive qualities – his bravery, which prompted the sultan to meet him and which persisted as he fought the Ottomans as a blind despot, as well as his agency. He went to the “emperor” (цесарь) in the West, who admired his wisdom and gave him a castle, where he married a “daughter of the Arvanitian prince Aranit the Brave Kyr Agelia” (дъщерь княза арванитскаго аранита храбраго кюръ аггелію / Gjergj Araniti), and where Maksim was born.⁴⁰ The author wanted to present Stefan as a warrior and a resourceful leader, while almost omitting his sainthood.⁴¹ This can be explained by the Ottomans’ presence and by the need to present the origin of these traits in his offspring.

The absence of didactic content, references to the Holy Scripture and comparisons to holy figures brings the hagiography closer to history writing even in the part on Maksim. However, the narrative depicts Maksim’s important qualities and deeds, thus fulfilling hagiography’s primary function to identify a saint. For example, throughout his life, Maksim was able to ignite admiration from his superiors, receive privileges, and honourable positions. His sainthood is also illustrated by his refusal to marry the Hungarian king’s cousin and by becoming a monk.⁴² Ascending the archbishop’s throne in Wallachia after an intervention in a political dispute could also be interpreted from this perspective. His solemn death in Krušedol particularly distinguishes the text from the biography, followed by the description of the elevation of the relics and mentions of miracles.⁴³

³⁸ See section 2.1. Dynastic Holy Tree.

³⁹ In his vita, obedience, wisdom, suffering, and dignity are the traits that earned him his sainthood, depicted in a story of his blinding at the Ottoman court; his dethronement by “those led by the devil”; his wanderings; and life in Italy, И. Руварац, “Повесна слова о кнезу Лазару, деспоту Стефану Бранковићу и кнезу Стефану Штиљановићу”, *Летопис Маџице српске* 117 (1874), 117.

⁴⁰ Вукомановић, “Живот архиепископа Максима”, 125–126. At the same time, the reasons for his exile were not even mentioned.

⁴¹ It was mentioned only later when Maksim and Angelina travelled to Wallachia with Stefan’s and Jovan’s relics, *ibid.*, 128.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 127–129. Even though in historiography this marriage was questioned, recent research shows that the marriage did take place, see Крстић, *Блајоверна јосјода и славне јосјође*, 74–107.

⁴³ Вукомановић, “Живот архиепископа Максима”, 129.

Maksim's life could not be understood without depicting the complex political landscape of that period, including commonalities and communities. Maksim is named as the "former Despot of Serbs" in the title.⁴⁴ This title is implicitly equated to those of Despots Đurađ and Stefan, thus blurring the difference in the position between them. The Serbian Despotate is not named but symbolised with the mention of the throne and the "despot's rank" (деспотства сѣнь) that Stefan had received.⁴⁵ Confusion is further created with the statement that Srem is called Maksim's and Jovan's "fatherland" (отѣчьство).⁴⁶

The term ‘fatherland’ should not be understood in its contemporary sense, but as personal inheritance.⁴⁷ It was connected to the term ‘Serbian land’ in medieval cultic texts, usually meaning the state.⁴⁸ If the previous use of the term is taken into consideration, the mentions of fatherland could serve the (un-)intentional creation of continuity of political identification with the Serbian Despotate. Or, it could just refer to the former Serbian despot’s land and property in Srem.⁴⁹ In addition to the naming of the Serbs in Maksim’s title, when describing the reaction to Maksim renouncing the title, the author states that he left the sorrow to the “Serbian kin” (ρῳὰς σερβικοῖας).⁵⁰

The other named community are the Ottomans. They are, in accordance with a centuries-long tradition, named predominantly as Hagarenes, once Ishmaelites, while sultan Murad II is mentioned by name “amir Amourat”, by title “amir” and “emperor”, and Beyazid II “Hagarene amir”.⁵¹ Interestingly, those from the sultan’s circle refer to their state as their “land and fatherland”, thus confirming the connection between

44 The full title is: Пáмeть ѿже къ свeтeчнѣмъ oтцa нáшeгo архіeпискoпa Мláзнa нoвaгo бѣвшагo дeспoтa сѣблaкѣмъ, *ibid.*, 125.

45 *Ibid.*, 126.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

47 On the dangers of equating categories of practice and categories of analysis with regards to the term ‘fatherland’ see M. Васиљевић, “Династија као носилац идентификације: стари српски родослови”, у: *Концептии пајтриојизма и национализма у српском јо-политичком дискурсу*, 83–87.

⁴⁸ М. Ивановић, “Границе Српске земље од краја XII до средине XV века према наративним изворима”, у: *Концепции патриотизма и национализма у српском јолитичком дискурсу*, 101–124.

⁴⁹ For this interpretation see Крстић, “Између службе ‘светлој коруни’ и чувања српских традиција”, 212–213.

⁵⁰ Вукомановић, “Живот архиепископа Максима”, 127.

⁵¹ For example: *агарене, йсмаїлїтель, амїрѣ амхрата, цѣрх, амїре агарѣнскомх, ibid.*, 125–128. On the terminological repertoire and their meaning assigned to the Ottomans since the end of the 14th century in the cultic texts see A. З. Савић, “Незнабошци дођоше у достојање твоје” (Пс 78, 1): Идентитет и другост у српском политичком дискурсу епохе османских освајања”, у: Смиља Марјановић–Душанић и др., *Политички оквири колективних*

the terms even in this text.⁵² The attention paid to the Ottomans, even though they were important figures only in the life of Despot Stefan, can be explained by their presence and importance in the everyday life of the flock in Srem.⁵³

Other than that, the political landscape was depicted by referring to the rulers. The Hungarian kings (Matthias Corvinus and Vladislaus II) are mentioned just by their title. Similarly, the “emperor” (Frederick III), his court, and the succeeding despot of the other faith (Ivaniš Berislavić) – all are unnamed actors in Maksim’s story. Despot Ivaniš is named as a “man of another tribe/alien” (иноплеменикъ) three times, thus highlighting the border between ‘us’ (those addressed by the author) and ‘them’. The reason for this could be found in their faith. This seems more plausible when we bear in mind that the Orthodox actors are named: Angelina’s father and the Wallachian rulers: “Wallachian stratelate Radul” (Radu IV the Great) and “Voivode Bogdan” (Bogdan III the One-Eyed), among whom Maksim mediated a peace, as well as “Voivode John” (Neagoe Basarab), who helped the building of Krušedol.⁵⁴ With this, the author reflected the growing connections between Serbian and Wallachian nobles.⁵⁵ Finally, mentions of monks and nuns as social actors are important: the former as a monastic brotherhood in Krušedol, and the latter as those whom the Hungarian king’s cousin joined.

In contrast to this text, the Synaxarial Vita of Despotess Angelina makes frequent references to the Holy Scripture and other saints. Angelina’s wisdom, rationality, and obedience earned her inclusion among the saints. Her adherence to the words of the Apostle Paul is lauded and Maksim is compared to Prophet Samuel. Despot Stefan Branković is named the New Martyr and compared to Stephen the Protomartyr, while the translation of Stefan’s relics to Kupinik to that of Stephen’s translation to Constantinople. In Srem they ‘ruled’ in accordance with the ideal: they were hospitable to foreigners and the poor, released prisoners, etc. Đorđe’s abdication, becoming a monk, ascension to the throne of the Wallachian archbishops and his endowments

иденїїїїейїа: Сведочансїїва срїскої средњовековља, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2024), 77–114, with relevant literature.

⁵² Вукомановић, “Живот архиепископа Максима”, 126.

⁵³ This is further supported by the fact that the Ottomans were mentioned only once as “barbarians” in the synaxarial hagiography of Despot Stefan, Руварац, “Повесна слова”, 117.

⁵⁴ Вукомановић, “Живот архиепископа Максима”, 128–129.

⁵⁵ The connections between Serbian and Wallachian nobles were manifold, and included often marital connections between the noble families, Крстић, *Блаїоверна їосїюга и славне їосїюђе*, 167–178. This was reflected in a Memorial book of Krušedol Monastery: *Поменик манастира Крушегола*, ур. М. Томић, М. Војкулеску, (Београд: САНУ; Народна библиотека Србије, 1996).

– New Hopovo and Krušedol Monasteries – are also described.⁵⁶ Angelina spent her late days as a nun in the church she built near her son's. Her death, burial, and translation to Krušedol, where she is with “her sons in a coffin” (и положена бысѣтъ) въ ковчегѣ съ сыновын сконци), and the miracles end this text⁵⁷. Therefore, Angelina's Synaxarial Vita presented to the local Christians an “ideal and a norm of behaviour for that period”:⁵⁸ a noble woman, learned, meek, a nun, and a saint, and placed those mentioned within the Christian *oikumene* by virtue of comparison.

Historical data on Angelina is scarce: “she was the daughter of Arvanitian Prince, Aranit the Brave” (бѣше дъщи бл(а)гоуспѣваго кнеза, арванитскаго, арванита храбраго); the origin of her husband Stefan is lauded, his blinding by “Amir Sultan Amurat” is noted, as well as her family's move to “Italy” (Италію).⁵⁹ Their arrival to the “Emperor's court” (въ дворѣ кесаревѣ), to the “Hungarian king” (къ кралю оугарскому), and the throne of the Wallachian Archbishopric are also briefly mentioned.⁶⁰ Due to the lack of focus on history, the majority of the commonalities are connected to Srem – it is described as “their fatherland, Syrmian land” (от(ъ)уство их(ъ) сирмїю землю), later Maksim erected churches in “his own land” (въ своен кѣлоу земли), while Jovan was “elevated to the throne of Despotate of his land” (възводим(ъ) бивает на прѣстоул(ъ) деспотства земли своен).⁶¹ Thus, the polysemantic term ‘land’ was used in accordance with the cultic text of previous centuries – any region of particular importance and a degree of autonomy could be termed as such, making its meaning deducible only from context.⁶² Srem's landmarks are also mentioned: the seat at Kupinik, the Sava River, Krušedol and New Hopovo Monasteries, as well as Angelina's endowment. The author mentions also nuns that lived in her endowment. Since the author mentions the throne and he later states that the “Serbian rule” ended with Jovan's death (кон(ъ)ць прїеть сръвскою бл(а)д(н)уство), it could be

⁵⁶ As stated by the writer, he built churches looking up to Stefan Nemanja, Руварац, “Повесна слова”, 136. On New Hopovo in the context of its foundation legend, see O. Krešić, M. Vasiljević, “Saint(s) as Founder(s): Nurturing the Foundation Narrative of Orthodox Christian Monasteries in Ottoman Srem”, in: *Sanctuary Foundation Legends in Early Modern History (1450–1750)*, ed. M. Papasidero (in print).

⁵⁷ Стефановић, “Житије мајке Ангелине”, 137.

⁵⁸ On this function of hagiographies see Богдановић, *Ликови светишћела*, 6.

⁵⁹ Стефановић, “Житије мајке Ангелине”, 134–135.

⁶⁰ On this see *ibid.*, 136.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² It often meant the state, as in the cases when it was prefaced with the adjective ‘Serbian’, but also, minor political entities as already named in the study of the term ‘Serbian land’, Маџва: М. Ивановић, “Границе Српске земље”, 109. The given example “Land called Маџва”, see in: Архиепископ Данило и други, *Животи краљева и архиепископа српских*, ур. Ђ. Даничић, (Загреб: Штампарија Светозара Галица, 1866), 28.

that he considered them rulers, blurring the political change between Despot Stefan Branković and his sons.

Another text that also focused on the saint and on the local identification is dedicated to Stefan Štiljanović. It is assumed that he was a noble who fought in the war for the Hungarian throne and was included among the saints after the final establishment of the Ottoman administration in Srem in 1541.⁶³ The centre of his veneration was Šišatovac Monastery on Fruška Gora, possibly founded by the refugees from the former Serbian Despotate in 1520.⁶⁴ The first text with the function of an extensive hagiography – Historical Oration – was written at least several decades after the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Srem, when the local population adjusted to social and political changes.⁶⁵ That the text reflects these new life circumstances is visible in all of its layers.

Stefan's life is depicted with a few historical facts: born in Paštrovići; entered the service of the unnamed Serbian despots and received property in Srem; fought the "Hagarenes", after which he "went" to the Hungarian king, who granted him a fief where he died.⁶⁶ He is not assigned a formal title, but referred to as a nobleman once, while his "government" (власть дръже) is mentioned as well.⁶⁷ Mentions of his bravery and education could be considered *topoi*, while he reflects the ideal ruler of the previous era – he is righteous, hospitable to foreigners, a patron of the monks and the poor, etc.⁶⁸ It is said that wherever he lived, prosperity followed. His most important deed was feeding the hungry in Srem in the time of the great famine – the author, unsure of the date, attributes the famine to the "Hagarene danger". By not charging for the wheat, he surpassed Joseph of the Old Testament.⁶⁹ The narrative also identifies Šišatovac Monastery with the detailed story of the translation of Stefan's relics. The burial of Stefan's wife Jelena (Nun Jelisaveta) in the narthex of

⁶³ On his historical character and the beginnings of his veneration since 1545 see М. Васиљевић, "Нови заштитник хришћана у Османском царству: Свети Стефан Штиљановић", *Зборник Маџице српске за историју*, 109 (2024) 19–21 (with older literature).

⁶⁴ Васиљевић, Крешић, "Култ светог и манастирска економија", 345–346.

⁶⁵ See in this volume O. Krešić, "Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe: Political, Social, and Legal Contexts".

⁶⁶ Т. Јовановић, "Похвално и Повесно слово деспоту Стефану Штиљановићу", *Књижевна историја* 10/38 (1978), 358–372.

⁶⁷ It probably did not have the meaning of sovereign government, but a jurisdiction in his dominion, *ibid.*, p. 363, 369.

⁶⁸ On the models that could have informed this depiction of Saint Stefan see Васиљевић, "Нови заштитник хришћана", 23.

⁶⁹ This reflects the theme of the New Testament surpassing the Old. With this, the oration repeats the structure of the Holy Scripture while, at the same time, poses as its continuation, like any other hagiographic text.

Šišatovac, also presented with the saint's qualities, signalled the potential for another cult in the shrine, following the Krušedol model.⁷⁰

In addition to the didactic function of the text – where a noble who fought the Ottomans and protected the poor was portrayed – here we find a rare direct call for imitation. The author points out that he “listened to the laity speaking foolish words” (слышетъ н(ы)ниа мнрѣне нже г(лаго)лють безоумнїе г(лаго)лы) who say it is no longer possible to do good deeds unless one is a monk, because of worries about family, home, and taxes.⁷¹ He then implores them to follow Stefan's example. He also identifies the doubters, thus probably depicting contemporary attitudes towards the saint.⁷² According to the author, because of the doubters, the saint's hand was taken to Constantinople for the confirmation of his sanctity, after which it was returned to Šišatovac.

Throughout the text, the author also focuses on the identification of the vast scale – world-building. In the lengthy prologue he divides the world into that of (Orthodox) Christians and others, by contrasting spiritual and material wealth – also referred to as “living” and “dead” wealth.⁷³ The Word of God represents the former, guiding Christians in “How to live piously. How to resist cunning thoughts. How to find righteousness and act in all things according to it. How to turn away from sin. How to please God.” (како бл(а)говѣрѣно жителѣствовати. како лоукавнѣи мислѣмъ противити се. како правдоу изъобрѣсти и по нѣи вѣса творити. како грѣха ѡсквѣнати се. како б(ог)оу оугаждати).⁷⁴ The author also identifies Christians with numerous biblical quotes and the types of saints that appeared throughout history – the role-models for the faithful.

The dichotomy is implicitly reinforced in depicting Stefan's opponents: the Ottomans. Throughout the text, they are described as God's punishment, “accursed and godless Hagarenes” (трѣклетїе и безбожнїе агарани); the theft of stock and the damage to property were likely causes of famine; due to their violence, Stefan relocated to the Kingdom of Hungary.⁷⁵ Explicitly, this dichotomy is presented in the account of the discovery of Stefan's relics after the Ottoman conquest of Hungary. “Hagarene

⁷⁰ This was commented on in Васиљевић, Крешић, “Култ светог и манастирска економија”, 356; Васиљевић, “Нови заштитник хришћана”, 25–26.

⁷¹ Јовановић, “Похвално и Повесно слово”, 365.

⁷² While doubt in miracles is a common hagiographic topos, it is typically limited to remark that the saint performs miracles for those who approach them with faith. The doubt is mentioned in a developed form only in the Story of the Transfer of the Relics of Saint Luke, written in the sixth decade of the 15th century, thus probably reflecting contemporary attitudes, Васиљевић, *Култови светих*, 254–255.

⁷³ Јовановић, “Похвално и Повесно слово”, 358–360. On the dialectic of similarity and difference in identification, i.e., by creating a groupness one must also exclude others from it, see Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 118–131.

⁷⁴ Јовановић, “Похвално и Повесно слово”, 358.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 363, 364, 367.

army [...] lovers of silver and not of God or holiness” (воннѣства агаранѣска...нѣсоутъ с(вє)толюбнѣи ни б(о)голюбнѣи, нѣ сребролюбнѣи) are said to have mistaken God’s sign of the relics for material treasure.⁷⁶ However, by stating that even they admired the relics emitting a “sweet fragrance”, although they did not understand what they saw, the author affirmed the supremacy of Christianity.

In order to highlight the complex relations between the members of the two faiths, the author mentions the Ottoman commander (“amir”) who was born a Christian but was captured and converted to Islam. He is said to be Stefan’s cousin who “honourably received” the relics (с(вє)т(а)го ч(л)стѣно приѣмлять).⁷⁷ In this way, the author acknowledged the crossing of boundaries between the two communities and concluded the world-building.

When the “amir” asked about the relic’s identity, Stefan is described as being from “Ras, how Hungarians call the Serbs” (родомъ расъ. тако бо оугри нарицають срѣбляе).⁷⁸ This testimony to the identification by those outside of the community is a rare example in the cultic text, as these are usually a reflection of the community’s self-identification and the identification of others. However, it is not central to the narrative, as Serbs and Hungarians are mentioned only once. The adjective Serbian is used in connection to the despots. Finally, territory was a commonality: “Serbian land” is mentioned in the context of wars and as conquered land, denoting vaguely the Serbian Despotate.⁷⁹ We can see that the author considered Srem a part of the Serbian land when he calls it “part of the land sweet as honey, in our custom called Srem” (чєсть земли медосладостнїє...н(ы) нашіи нѣмъ оубиѣемъ зовомѣе сремь).⁸⁰ Also, after noting down that Serbian land was conquered, he states that Stefan left Srem. Notably, Šišatovac is in the “land Srem”, thus further complicating the presentation of the political landscape.⁸¹ In addition, Danube, Fruška Gora and Šišatovac Monastery mapped its territory.

Territorial commonalities are also presented in Stefan’s origin from Paštrovići in Zahumlje, an area under the rule of the “Venetian dodge”; Stefan’s move to the “Hungarian king” where he was granted “cities and villages”; when the Ottomans conquered the “Hungarian land”; in the Constantinople episode; and when Stefan’s wife Jelena went to the “German land”.⁸² Therefore, identifications that are not connected to the saint and local community relate mostly to territories and rarely to persons.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 368–369.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 363, 367.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 361–362.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 368, 371.

This completely changed with the Short Historical Oration for Stefan Štiljanović, which may have been composed to be read as a synaxarial vita during the office.⁸³ A note at its beginning attributes it to Patriarch Pajsej – he had presumably written the text during his visit to Šišatovac in 1631 – but this attribution remains unconfirmed, and the oldest copies cannot be precisely dated.⁸⁴ The historicised style, typical of Pajsej's other writing, suggests that the author was either Pajsej himself or someone familiar with his work. Notwithstanding the author, the new text probably reflects the new function of the relics as a means of confirming the position of the monastery within the Patriarchate of Peć, bolstering the new contextualisation of Stefan's life, and coincides with other work on the cults of saints.⁸⁵

'Despot' Stefan Štiljanović is portrayed as an exemplary ruler with brief references to his holy and just life and fight against the Ottomans. The episode of feeding the hungry is omitted, while the translation of the relics is mentioned in just one sentence. Conversely, Jelena's return to Fruška Gora, her monastic life, and burial occupy nearly a third of the text. Even the place of her burial is described in detail, supporting the thesis for a planned cult.

The Short Historical Oration placed Stefan within a specific historical context, affecting the identifications. While leaving out world-building, biblical quotations, and the Constantinople episode, the author focused on the actors in Stefan's story: Serbian despots were replaced by Despot Jovan Branković, the Hungarian king

⁸³ See also a comment on the interesting note from a copy of the Short Historical Oration from 1767, where it is said that it is an "excerpt" from the hagiography, Васиљевић, "Нови заштитник хришћана", 30. This could imply that it was made based on the extensive text.

⁸⁴ See published text in С. Петковић, "Збирка рукописа манастира Кувеждина, Дивше, Шишатовца и Гргетег", *Сјоменик Српске академије наука* 101. *Одељење друшћивних наука* 3 (1951), 58–59. The language of the publication is Serbian Church Slavonic with elements of Russian Church Slavonic, while the manuscript is destroyed. That the language of the publication cannot be the sole criteria for dating shows one example where the comparison with the manuscript was possible: it showed that Petković made some interventions in abbreviations (see Васиљевић, Крешић, "Култ светог и манастирска економија", footnote 12). See also on the Short Historical Oration, Васиљевић, "Нови заштитник хришћана", 29–31.

⁸⁵ On the ways the new vita could be used to reinvent/revive the cult for institutional purposes see one 16th century example: S. Boesch Gajano, "Reliques et pouvoirs", in: *Les reliques. Objects, cultes symboles. Actes du colloque international de l'Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale (Boulogne-sur-Mer) 4–6 septembre 1997*, éd. E. Bozóky, A. M. Helvétius, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 255–269. In the case of Stefan Štiljanović, this was connected to the copies of the liturgical texts, visit of the Patriarch Pajsej and Metropolitan of Belgrade Avesalom to Šišatovac Monastery, the making of the new reliquary, all of which took place at the beginning of the fourth decade of the 17th century, Васиљевић, Крешић, "Култ светог и манастирска економија", 356–357.

‘became’ Vladislaus II, and the “Hagarenes who plundered the Hungarian land” were designated as soldiers of Sultan Suleiman.⁸⁶ Most significantly, Stefan was named Prince of Zahumlje and heir of Despot Jovan, appointed by Jovan’s widow. The change in his position can be understood in the context of the cults of the despots in Krušed-ol Monastery whereby Stefan became their heir and, therefore, equal.⁸⁷

Next, the “Serbian people” are mentioned twice: as those whom Stefan ruled (над народомъ сербскимъ) and as those who moved with him to the Hungarian kingdom (с народомъ сербскимъ многимъ). Since the term used for people (narod) we find in the Extensive Life of Emperor Uroš, while later we find it also only in the offices for the Brankovičs from the 18th century,⁸⁸ this could be the argument that Pajsej did author it. The Ottomans are, again, the primary antagonists – Stefan fought “godless Hagarenes”, they are also referred to as “Turks” and Suleiman as “Turkish emperor”.⁸⁹ The dichotomous worldview is reinforced but also nuanced with the story of the “amir”. Relatedly, the territorial identifications are present: mention of the “Hungarian land”, Kupinik as the seat of the Serbian despots, Morović in Srem and Šikleuš (Siklós) in the Hungarian Kingdom as Stefan’s seats and, finally, Prague in the “Czech land”, where Jelena went after Stefan’s death. To conclude, the short text focused on historical narration and was therefore permeated with various historical identifications.

1.2. Venerating Serbian Medieval Ruling Figures

Between the last decade of the 16th century and 1641, cultic texts were written for Queen Jelena, wife of King Stefan Uroš I (1242/3–1276), Stefan the First-Crowned and Emperor Uroš. This was probably connected to the stabilisation of the Patriarchate of Peć, after the installation of Patriarch Makarije (before) 1557. The patriarchs presented themselves as the heirs of the medieval Serbian heads of the church, which was reflected even in their titles.⁹⁰ This, the need to strengthen the institution by identifying it, to renew the churches and monasteries under its jurisdiction, and the relative proximity of the seat of the Patriarchate to the shrines holding the relics, led to the support of the nascent cults. Since these were the ruling figures far removed

⁸⁶ Јовановић, “Кратко повесно слово”, 77.

⁸⁷ Васиљевић, “Нови заштитник хришћана”, 31.

⁸⁸ See Србљак. *Службе, канони, акаџисџи* [књ.] 2–3, прир. Ђ. Трифуновић, прев. Д. Богдановић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1970).

⁸⁹ Јовановић, “Кратко повесно слово”, 77.

⁹⁰ On the titles of archbishops and some notes on the idea of continuity with medieval Church see paper in this volume M. Davidović, “Self-understandings and Identifications of Orthodox Christians in Early Modern Serbian Marginal Notes 1450–1750”.

from the period under investigation, i.e., the authors needed to rely on other (oral or written) sources, these commemorations are the prominent example of the remediation of remembering.⁹¹

Queen Jelena was included among the saints shortly after her death, but her veneration was in the initial stages.⁹² Her Extensive Hagiography was written by Archbishop Danilo II, probably shortly after the translation of her relics in 1317. Known copies were made between the 16th and the 18th century, testifying to her veneration in this period and the topicality of this vita. Liturgical texts – hymns or entire office and synaxarial vita – from that period are unknown. After the renewal of Gradac Monastery in 1589, which was, in part, led by Metropolitan of Raška Visarion, troparia and kontakions were noted, and the synaxarial vita written, presumably around 1600. Their author could have been Metropolitan Visarion. The only known copy of the hagiography was made in 1663/1664.⁹³

The Synaxarial Vita of Queen Jelena notes the most important information about the saint, based on the Extensive Vita. She is presented as a pious queen, her charity reaching Jerusalem and Sinai, the one who built Gradac Monastery and where miracles are taking place “to this day”.⁹⁴ Similarly to Despotess Angelina, Jelena is identified as the “spouse of Serbian King Uroš” (жена оурошѣ краљу сръбскому), mother to Kings Dragutin (1276–1282) and Milutin (1282–1321) and as ruler of “many lands” (земле многыѣ).⁹⁵ Notably, the title states that she is a “lady of the Serbian people” (г(о)спождѣ сръбскаго языка).⁹⁶

The term used to denote people (jezik) is polysemantic, meaning both language and people. The latter is usually interpreted by researchers as ethnic or

⁹¹ A. Erll, *Prämediation – Remediation. Repräsentationen des indischen Aufstands in imperialen und post-kolonialen Meidenkulturen (von 1857 bis zu Gegenwart)* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2007); see also edited volume on this subject *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, eds. A. Erll, A. Rigney, (Berlin; Boston; Göttingen: De Gruyter, 2012).

⁹² B. Todić is of the opinion that Jelena was not venerated as a saint and defines her sainthood in terms of the presence or the absence of her cult (existence of the office and synaxarial vita), Б. Тодић, “Култ градачке ктиторке краљице и монахиње Јелене”, *Саопштења* 50 (2018), 33–50. However, if the sainthood is defined in a more flexible manner, where we discern the initial stages of the veneration and the formation of the cult, then we can claim that she was venerated as a saint since the 14th century. On this view see, Васиљевић, *Култови свейих*, 170–178.

⁹³ On this see in detail Тодић, “Култ градачке ктиторке”, 37–43.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42. The last statement refers to estates she ruled, which included Zeta and surrounding areas.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

national communities, and sometimes even translated as nations. However, the only certainty is that the language acted as the main category of identification. Additionally, since the term was usually used when various communities were designated, we can presume that it denoted groupness when symbolic borders became important.⁹⁷ It is interesting that in this vita, belonging to one community does not exclude the other: Jelena was of Frankish origin (ωτ(ι) ροδα φρῡγῖνσκαго).⁹⁸

Various forms of belonging are reflected in the hagiographies of King Stefan the First-Crowned/Monk Simon and Emperor Stefan Uroš V. Patriarch Pajsej's extensive work on the cults signals potential secondary functions of these texts. This may be connected to the experiences of Pajsej's predecessor Jovan and other church hierarchs during the Long War (1593–1606), when they started participating actively in political events.⁹⁹ One of the means of building political consciousness is also drawing attention to a shared past as an identification category that could also be an inspiration for the future. Pajsej did exactly that – he commemorated the past (the creation of the Serbian Kingdom and the entire Serbian history) and reflected and explained the present.¹⁰⁰

Stefan the First-Crowned, the first king of the Nemanjić dynasty, was already venerated as a saint probably without any cultic text.¹⁰¹ The Synaxarial Vita by Patriarch Pajsej is preserved in the 18th-century copy written in Russian Church Slavonic, which includes the interpolation on the translation of Simon's relics at the beginning

⁹⁷ On this see also section 2. Remembering and Identifying: History Writing. See also M. Vasiljević, "Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe", in this volume.

⁹⁸ Тодић, "Култ градачке ктиторке", 42. On Queen Jelena's origin see Н. Порчић, "Марија, сестра српске краљице Јелене", *Исјоторијски часопис* 70 (2021), 31–68.

⁹⁹ On the Long War see C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire 1300–1650. The Structure of Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 66–71. See also C. Finkel, *Osman's Dream. The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923* (London: John Murray, 2006), 173–195 and G. Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest. The Ottoman Empire and its Wars in Europe*, (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 251–258. During the war, the Banat uprising and the following uprising in Herzegovina were led by Church hierarchs, after which Patriarch Jovan was summoned to Constantinople in 1612, where he was executed. On the role of the Patriarch in these rebellions see J. Томић, *Пећки њаџријарх Јован и њокрећ хришћана на Балканском њолуосџраву 1592–1614* (Земун: Здружена штампарија Живковића и Стојчића, 1903), 59–142.

¹⁰⁰ On this see M. Vasiljević, "Between Hagiography and Historiography".

¹⁰¹ On the cult of Stefan, the First-Crowned before the 17th century see Д. Поповић, "Када је краљ Стефан Првовенчани уврштен у светитеље? Прилог проучавању владарске 'канонизације' у средњовековној Србији", у: Д. Поповић, *Ризница сјасења. Кулџ реликвија и срџских свейџх у средњовековној Србији*, (Београд; Нови Сад: Балканолошки институт САНУ; Матица Српска, 2018), 273–287.

of the 18th century.¹⁰² There are other indications that this version is not the original – it could be a combination of synaxarial and extensive hagiography merged into a single text.¹⁰³

The unusual composition led to the twofold identification of the saint. In the first part – the potential original synaxarial vita – Stefan’s descendance from Simeon and his wife Ana is stressed. The attention was given to Stefan’s youngest brother Rastko, i.e., the future first Archbishop of the Serbian Autocephalous Church, Saint Sava (1218/19–1233, d. 1236). The beginning of Stefan’s rule¹⁰⁴ and his coronation performed by Sava are mentioned. After highlighting the erection of Žiča Monastery – the seat of the Serbian Archbishopric and the coronation church – Pajsej paints Stefan as an ideal ruler: protector of the poor, invincible warrior who expelled foreigners from his country, etc. The text then goes back in time to narrate the events of Stefan’s life, including his coronation and revival and death, all of which were Sava’s deeds. This can be attributed to the fact that the hagiography of Saint Sava was the main source for this text.¹⁰⁵

The rest of the text narrates the ‘history of the relics’, i.e., their numerous translations – thus reflecting the contemporary life conditions and the history of the area.¹⁰⁶ The translations also identify numerous holy places that kept the saint’s relics. The first translation of Stefan’s relics was from Studenica to Sopoćani Monastery, by “Stefan’s nephew, Dragoslav, called the raspy king”.¹⁰⁷ The next was after the Battle

¹⁰² Tomislav Jovanović pointed this out some time ago: Т. Јовановић, “Патријарх Пајсије”, у: Патријарх Пајсије, *Сабрани списи*, ур. Т. Јовановић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1993), 23–24; Т. Јовановић, *Књижевно дело патријарха Пајсеја* (Београд: Свети архијерејски Синод Српске православне цркве, 2001), 90, 100–102.

¹⁰³ On this see Vasiljević, “Between Hagiography and Historiography”, 307–309.

¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, he dated it wrongly, to 6690 – 1181/2 instead of 1196, Јовановић, *Књижевно дело*, 233.

¹⁰⁵ On this and the method of reworking of hagiography, see *ibid.*, 112–115, 234.

¹⁰⁶ This is not surprising, as the translation as a genre is the most connected to historical realities of all cultic texts. On this genre see M. Heinzelmänn, *Translationsberichte und Andere Quellen des Reliquienkultes. Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* 33 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979).

¹⁰⁷ Јовановић, *Књижевно дело*, 236–237. The origin of this information is unknown, however it wrongly names the person who translated his relics, as it was Stefan’s son, King Radoslav (1223 or soon after–1234) who participated in it, Поповић, *Када је краљ Свѣфан*, 278–282. Naming Dragoslav as the “raspy king” may refer to Stefan Uroš I, as he is mentioned in historiographic works – genealogies and stemmas – but it seems that Pajsej did not rely on this data as it names the king differently. On the possibilities of how Uroš acquired this nickname see И. Коматина, *Црква и држава у српским земљама од XI до XIII века* (Београд: Историјски институт Београд, 2016), 307.

of Kosovo (1389), when the relics were hidden by Sopoćani monks.¹⁰⁸ The author then turns to the rediscovery of the relics in 1628/29 by stressing that neither the hegumen of Sopoćani nor the Metropolitan of Ras, Josif, both of whom were “scared of the authorities” (оубоавса от ц(а)рствѹющихъ / оубоавса от владѹющихъ), excavated the saint upon his appearance.¹⁰⁹ It took the Patriarch himself to conduct the excavation and to renew the veneration of the first Nemanjić king.

The interpolation points to another translation in 1686/7, during the War of the Holy League (1683–1699),¹¹⁰ when the relics were transferred to a cave church near the Ibar River, only to be moved back to Studenica in 1700/1. Even though the text attributes this translation to the Patriarch of Peć Mojsije (1712–1725), it was dated to the years of Patriarch Kalinik (1691–1710). After this interpolation, we find a digression on the burning of the relics of Saint Sava in Belgrade, after the unsuccessful military campaign of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed III during the Long War.¹¹¹ The hill on which the relics were burned, Vračar, became a new holy place and a site of Sava’s posthumous martyrdom. After this, Pajsej wrote about the devastation caused by the war, thus identifying his flock as sufferers under Ottoman rule.

Probably due to the nature of the sources for this vita, Pajsej narrates important historical events in a manner aligned with hagiography – as saint’s deeds. Other events, such as the Battle of Kosovo and the Long War are mentioned in passing. Pajsej names the “Serbian Kingdom”, Stefan as the “Serbian king”, then he refers to the “Serbian land” and the “Serbian Archbishopric”.¹¹² The meaning of the term “Serbian land” depends on the context: it means the state but also a territory in the Ottoman Empire. The sacral topography of the Serbian Land is represented with the most important monasteries: Studenica, Sopoćani, Peć, and Žiča, as well as the cave

¹⁰⁸ If this is to be accepted, then this could be counted in the various translations of relics at the time of the Ottoman conquests. On this subject see M. Vasiljević, “Translations of Saints’ Relics in the Late Medieval Central Balkans”, *Balkanica* 51 (2020), 23–43. Pajsej uses the opportunity to mention Prince Lazar, who was martyred in the Battle of Kosovo, and his son Despot Stefan Lazarević.

¹⁰⁹ Јовановић, *Књижевно дело*, 237.

¹¹⁰ On the War of the Holy League see Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 283–328; Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*, 490–504.

¹¹¹ Even though the events are wrongly dated to 1586, they refer to the beginning of the Long War and the defeat of the Ottoman forces. According to the text, the relics were burned because of the Muslim veneration of Saint Sava, which is not the first time Serbian hagiographic narratives noted that Muslims venerated Christian saints. This is also true for Georgije Kratovac/George of Kratovo (Васильевић, *Култови светих*, 150–168) and in the case of Stefan Štiljanović, but it could be interpreted as topos.

¹¹² Јовановић, *Књижевно дело*, 233–237.

church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel. To the monasteries, Kosovo and Vračar should be added as symbols of the tribulations and Morava and Ibar Rivers as toponyms. In the description of Stefan's burial, "a great assembly of Serbs" took place (И соборъ сербскоуѣ множествѣ бывшѣ).¹¹³ The Serbian community is also promoted with stressing its saints: Simeon, Archbishops Sava I, Arsenije I, and Sava II (son of Stefan the First-Crowned), and Stefan himself.

Throughout the text, Pajsej also identifies monks as an important groupness. He has done so by continuously calling Stefan "Monk Simon", but also by naming the monks of Sopoćani. This is unsurprising – a network of monasteries and their inhabitants served as a territorial structure and symbolic delineation from the Muslims.

The Ottomans, on the other hand, figure in the story of the relics. They are "Turks" and "Hagarenes", "authorities", while Sultan Mehmed III is also mentioned as "Emperor Mehmed" (ц(а)рь мѣхмедъ), i.e., the author's and the audience's ruler.¹¹⁴ Related to that is the twofold mention of Constantinople – as a place where Sava went to receive the title of archbishop (въ константинь градъ) and later as Mehmed's residence, where he retreated (въ цариградъ).¹¹⁵ The difference in naming reflects the changing meaning assigned to the place depending on the context as a Christian city of the holy emperor and as a seat of the contemporary Muslim ruler. Finally, mentions of Bosnia and Mount Athos and other places function as territorial identification. The relative absence of the portrayals of other political and social actors, excluding the Ottomans, is somewhat surprising, which could be explained with the lack of focus on history that is not directly connected to the saint(s).

Hagiographies of Emperor Uroš show a shift in Pajsej's approach to identifications. In the Synaxarial Vita, Uroš is identified with his most important epithet "young" (i.e., hagiography of ОУРОША Ц(А)РЯ МЛАДАГО); his origin from Saint Simeon and his father Emperor Stefan Uroš IV Dušan (King 1331–1346, Emperor 1346–1355); his coronation during Dušan's life so as to stress his legitimacy; his martyrial death by his regent Vukašin followed by Vukašin's own death by the Ottomans; finally, his endowments. In the short text the author identifies the nobles as important actors, stresses the "empire", while "imperial wreath/coronet" (и ц(а)рскоу дѣданюу облагають его· и вѣнъ ц(а)рьскы *стѣпъ саютъ емоу) and "throne" (и вѣрѣчаютъ прѣстоль дръжави своєє) also symbolise the Serbian Empire.¹¹⁶ Also, mention of the churches near Skopje – Uroš's endowments – identified this area as a part of the

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 237–239.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 235, 238.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 281.

empire. Finally, one short mention of “Turks” served only to depict the destiny of Uroš’s murderer.

The relation of the Extensive Life of Emperor Uroš to historiography was analysed: it can be called a hagiography in terms of its function, but it was written as a historical record.¹¹⁷ This does not pertain only to the genealogy of the Serbian rulers, included twice in the text, nor to the citing of sources, but also to the narrative itself. The reader could easily forget that this was a cultic text; it leaves the impression of the history of the Serbian people with a focus on the end of the Nemanjić dynasty.

That Uroš was not the only protagonist is evident in the title: the text is dedicated both to Uroš and his father Emperor Dušan.¹¹⁸ For that reason, Dušan’s conquests and death were described.¹¹⁹ After the description of his death, Pajsej starts the life of Emperor Uroš. As in the Synaxarial Vita, he is described as “young-minded, still young in age” (младодушнаго еще юнь възрастоу[х]).¹²⁰ Only a small portion of the text addresses his life and death. His virtues are mentioned in passing, and he is not involved in dialogues, nor does he act independently.¹²¹ The events leading to his death and the death itself received considerable attention: the handing over of the regency to Vukašin; his seizure of power; dividing the state between himself, his brothers Uglješa and Gojko (an unhistorical brother); the murder of Emperor Uroš during a hunt; the burial in Nerodimlje Monastery and the concealment of his murder. This is followed by the lament of Uroš’s mother Empress Jelena, the search for the relics and the finding of his burial place. The text goes on to show how Vukašin’s breaking of the oath and his pride led to his death and the defeat of Serbian forces at the hands of the Ottomans in the Battle of Marica (1371), which ultimately led to the contemporary living conditions.¹²²

What the text lacks in the identification of the saint, it makes up for by depicting commonalities and communities. Namely, the first and most important is the Serbian community, identified primarily with history as a shared category. That it

¹¹⁷ Vasiljević, “Between Hagiography and Historiography”, 313–315.

¹¹⁸ Јовановић, *Књижевно дело*, 287.

¹¹⁹ Here we find an interesting note about the fragmentation of his relics (*ibid.*, 294), another sign of the lack of data we have on the circulation of the relic. This, as well as the “adornment” of Dušan’s relics signal their veneration.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ The only exception is the address to Patriarch Pajsej when he asked for his “memory” to be renewed, which should be understood as a hagiographic topos, *ibid.*, 288.

¹²² This interpretation has been refuted long ago – even the deaths of Vukašin and Uroš did not go in this chronological order. It was crucial for the development of modern Serbian historiography in the 19th century, B. Mitrović, *Nastanak moderne istorijske discipline u Srbiji i Bugarskoj. Pretpostavke, teze, polemike (1878–1918)* (Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 2017), 214–242.

had a role in identification is said by Pajsej himself: he states that he wanted to know “where the Serbs came from” (отк[оу]доу прозебоше сръблы); in order to find that out he searched in the “genealogies”, “Serbian annals” (лѣтописѣ сръбьскомоу), and the “chrysobull of Peć” (хрѣсовула пек[скомоу]), and listened to his predecessors.¹²³ Therefore, in the prologue the author himself states that the text was an identification narrative. He copies and slightly reworks the genealogy of Serbian rulers, according to which they originated from the family of Constantine the Great. Here, the formerly implicit function of the genealogy – to symbolise the Serbian history – became explicit.¹²⁴ That the text was not merely copied shows the fact that Pajsej left out the bishoprics of the Serbian Archbishopric, as he himself was the head of the much larger Patriarchate of Peć, thus revealing the work of relational remembering and co-construction of the meaning of the past.¹²⁵ With the later references to the passing of time and circumstances of the revelation of Uroš’s relics, the text narrates history up until Pajsej’s time.

Pajsej furthers the depiction of community in various ways, in addition to naming the “Serbs” and naming Uroš as the glory of “Serbian kin” (всемоу сръб[скому] роду).¹²⁶ Notably, the term “kin” turns out to have a double meaning: as a ruling family and as a designation of community when it is preceded with the adjective Serbian.¹²⁷ Pajsej frequently mentions “Serbian land” and, related to that, “Serbian regions” (сръб[скому] пр[ѣ]дѣлоу) and “fatherland”. Serbian land for the most part signifies the state, but not exclusively: in the genealogical section it also denotes an undefined area in the empire of Constantine the Great (just like “the land of Zeta, that is Zachlumiya”), while it also denotes part of Dušan’s empire, like in the hagiographic texts of the previous era.¹²⁸ Interestingly, Pajsej mentions the “not small assembly that gathered” (сѣбороу сѣбрак[шѣ] се не малоу) in Prizren, on the grave of Emperor Dušan: it consisted of “Archbishop Danilo”, metropolitans and bishops, hegumens, monks, and the faithful. He also calls it the “all Serbian assembly” (всѣ сѣнмѣ сръб[скы]) and “assembly with archbishop and the entire people” (сѣборѣ съ арх[ієп(и)ск(о)помѣ,

¹²³ Јовановић, *Књижевна дело*, 289.

¹²⁴ On the genealogies of Serbian rulers and their implicit function see section 2.1. Dynastic Holy Tree.

¹²⁵ The importance of taking into consideration relationality as an aspect of the process of remembering, including a definition of three perspectives on memory and relationality, was shown on the study of Homeric epics, A. Erll, “Homer: A Relational Mnemohistory”, *Memory studies* 11 (2018), 274–286.

¹²⁶ Јовановић, *Књижевна дело*, 307.

¹²⁷ The former meaning, together with kinship, is the only one present in the Synaxarial Vita of Emperor Uroš and the dominant one in the Extensive Hagiography. It is adjacent to the term “forebearer”, also extensively used throughout the text, see *ibid.*, passim.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

и съ всем[ъ] нар[о]дѡмъ).¹²⁹ This should not be understood in terms of the entire population that identified as Serbs, but rather the Church and perhaps, nobility. Of course, Pajsej focuses on the parts of the Church – hierarchs and monastic organisation, while all others are called “faithful”. With this, he unintentionally reflected social organisation of the Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire.

As in the Synaxarial Vita of Monk Simon, the naming of endowments of dynastic members depicts the sacral topography of Serbian land. These include numerous monasteries in the Ras and other areas, including Dečani and Žiča Monasteries. In addition, other toponyms, such as Ras, Ibar, Morava and Lim Rivers, and towns like Novo Brdo, Skopje, Prizren, Belgrade, and Smederevo, also delineate Serbian land.

Pajsej differentiates between Serbian and lands belonging to other people, such as “the land of Gotts”, “Greek land/regions” (where Serres, Selymbria, and Constantinople belong), “maritime cities” (with Dubrovnik and Mljet), and “Bosnia”. He also discerns between territory and the state, i.e., the Serbian Empire. According to him, the Serbian Empire included all of the aforementioned territories, as well as Tarnovo.¹³⁰ Tarnovo was, namely, a third part of the Empire given to Gojko.

Pajsej also distinguishes between the territory and the community, as seen in the story of the Tower of Babylon, where the “foundation of the Serbs was laid, when people were divided and the Serbs were named” (тѣмѣль сръбляем[ъ] · еше по раздѣленіи ѣзыкѣ, именован[и] соуть сръбляи).¹³¹ Here we can see the intertwining of the term denoting language and group, and the importance of the constitutive act of naming. The text also names other communities, such as “Hungarians” and “Bulgarians”. Due to the narrative on the Serbian past and the focus on the events of Uroš’s death and Vukašin’s defeat at Marica, the Ottomans are crucial. They are most often designated as “Hagarenes”, then “Turks” and finally, their sultans are named: Beyazid I, Mehmed I, Murat II, as well as the pretenders during the Ottoman interregnum.¹³² Just as the Extensive Life of Emperor Uroš is the pinnacle of the historicisation of hagiographies, it is also the most elaborate text that constructs Serbian and other communities.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 295. He is either wrongly named or dated, as the heads of the Serbian Church named Danilo are either Archbishop Danilo in the second quarter of the 14th century or Patriarch Danilo at the end of the 14th century.

¹³⁰ This is particularly interesting in the context of the Illyrian idea of that period, for which the memory of the medieval Serbian Empire and Bosnian Kingdom carried particular importance, see Z. Blažević, *Ilirizam prije ilirizma*, (Zagreb: Golden marketing i Narodne novine, 2008), 71–72, 157–192. This envisioning of the Serbian Empire could be interpreted as a reflection of this idea combined with the extensive territory of the Patriarchate of Peć and perhaps Pajsej’s ambition to include other territories in his jurisdiction.

¹³¹ Јовановић, *Књижевно дело*, 302.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 293–307.



The presented hagiographic texts show that they were always focused on identifications, be it of a saint as a symbol of a (local) venerating community or of wider commonalities and communities. The more the author focused on commonalities and communities, the less likely it was that the saint's portrait was developed. This was sometimes connected to the making up of a saint or the lack of knowledge about him – both explanations are plausible for the texts dedicated to Stefan Štiljanović. At the same time, the text dedicated to Stefan the First-Crowned shows that the reasons the protagonists were in the background could be diverse, i.e., the text need not be focused on commonalities and communities.

Identifications were not dependent on the type of text nor its length. While longer texts usually included elaborations on identifications, as in the case of the Historical Oration for Stefan Štiljanović and the Extensive Vita of Emperor Uroš, this by no means meant they were absent from synaxarial hagiographies. Interestingly, one of the shortest texts – the Short Historical Oration for Stefan Štiljanović – is rich in categories, which is also true of the shortest Synaxarial Vita of Queen Jelena.

The influx of historical contents determined the presence and the type of categories, commonalities and communities. In the cases of cults in Srem, these refer to the ones contemporary to the saint and/or the author: the Hungarian kingdom, the Habsburg Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Wallachian principality, while in the cases of the cults of Serbian ruling figures these were historical: the Byzantine Empire, the Serbian Kingdom/Empire, Bosnia, and the contemporary Ottoman Empire.

Notwithstanding, even the texts that do not abound with historical content (although it is not excluded) participate in identifications. In those cases, as in the Synaxarial Vita of Angelina and the Historical Oration for Stefan Štiljanović, the authors focused on identifying local community as part of the Christian world. The Historical Oration for Stefan Štiljanović is particularly important as it teaches the audience in an elaborate way 'what it means to be Christian'. Therefore, the historicisation of the hagiographies influenced the identifications; however, they were not dependent on it. They were always connected to the time and place in which they were written, although this connection need not be straightforward or apparent.

Other than the time and the place in which the hagiographic texts were written, the person of the author played a decisive part in the shaping of the texts. More precisely, the position and perspective of the author could define identifications but did not determine them. As the case with Patriarch Pajsej showed, we can find different approaches to identifications from the same author – one that reflects his position and the other that could be attributed also to a regional clergyman. The Extensive Vita of Emperor Uroš holds a unique place as it leaves the impression that

it was written with the deliberate intention to participate in the building of the Serbian community. By the very nature of his position as the Patriarch of a Church with vast territories and a rich history, his view was likely to transcend the focus on the locality of the nascent cult. In other words, his position determined his perspective and agency, as well as categories he chose to reflect and (re-)shape. However, the text was written for a local cult and to this should be added the fact that it is known only in two copies.¹³³

Finally, the main stability is found in the naming and stereotypisation of the main opponent – the Ottomans. It is often vague and not elaborated on, which leaves the impression that these were references everyone was familiar with and easily activated. The Ottomans were given various degrees of importance depending on the person of a saint, the author, and the time and place in which the texts were written. As for the attention to the Serbian community, we find less coherence. One text does not mention the Serbian community (the Synaxarial Vita of Despotess Angelina), while others do so in passing (the Historical Oration for Stefan Štiljanović, the Synaxarial Vita of Maksim, the Synaxarial Vita of Queen Jelena and the Synaxarial Vita of Stefan the First-Crowned). In contrast to these texts, the Extensive Vita of Emperor Uroš includes a wealth of both naming and promoting categories of identification. The categories also prove to be unstable: when mentioned, ‘Serbian land’ changes meaning from text to text, and also within the text itself. Its territorial scope is also undefined in hagiographic texts. The status of Srem also changes as well as its relation to Serbian land. Therefore, although there is a stability in terms of the identifications that will appear in hagiographic texts, they were not stable in their scope and meaning.

2. Remembering and Identifying: History Writing

By constructing a past of a certain area, institution, or purported groupness, the narrative of the past served as a category of identification. The authors also employed other categories to shape identifications. These categories were dependent on the content of the historical work. Works that narrated the past in the Central Balkans after the 1450s and were influenced by hagiographic texts can be divided into genealogies, stemmas, and lists of the heads of the Church. They are related genres: the first two listed the Serbian rulers, while emphasising their belonging to one dynasty, while the lists of the heads of the Church emerged as a response to stemmas. As condensed texts, they do not present an elaborate contemplation on the past nor on the categories they used, but they do use them with intention and sometimes a change in meaning.

¹³³ The second copy was made around the middle of the 18th century, *ibid.*, 104–105.

2.1. Dynastic Holy Tree

Genealogies and stemmas both belong to the genealogical genre, but their differing contents and emphases justify their separation.¹³⁴ Both represented the medieval rulers and early-modern ruling figures as members of one dynasty, in contemporary historiography named as the Nemanjić, Lazarević, and the Branković dynasties.¹³⁵ The course of history is depicted through a succession, which created an impression of continuity designed to overcome the reality of discontinuities.¹³⁶ Both genres appeared around the end of the Nemanjić dynasty (1371) and stopped being written at the beginning of the 16th century – when the male members of the ruling family perished.¹³⁷ As ‘open texts’, they stopped being written only because their subject ceased to exist.¹³⁸

Their redactions emerged in similar periods. After documenting the history of the Nemanjić dynasty, genealogies and stemmas were extended in the time of Despot Stefan Lazarević (Prince 1389–1402, Despot 1402–1427), then during Despot Đurađ Branković, and were finally supplemented at the beginning of the 16th century.¹³⁹ Constant changes and turbulences in the wars with the Ottomans and

¹³⁴ On the development of the genre of genealogies and the appearance of stemmas as a genre between genealogy and chronicle with genealogical structure see L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* 15 (Tournhout: Brepols, 1975); and in the Serbian case М. Васиљевић, “Настанак српских родослова и летописа као последица политичких и друштвених промена”, *Иницијал* 3 (2015), 95–117.

¹³⁵ Contemporary historiography divides the rulers into three dynasties, but the authors of that time insisted on them being one by means of female kinship, which served to bridge apparent discontinuities. On one example of how the past might have been shaped in order to strengthen the claim of Despot Stefan Lazarević to the inheritance of the Nemanjićs, see М. Васиљевић, “Генеалогije између историје и идеологије: пример порекла кнегиње Милице”, *Историјски часопис* 65 (2016), 77–99.

¹³⁶ This was usual for medieval genealogical texts, G. Spiegel, “Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative”, *History and Theory* 22/1 (1983), 51–53.

¹³⁷ This, in fact, coincides with the Ottoman conquest of the Central Balkans, Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 16–134; *The Ottoman Conquest of the Central Balkans: Interpretations and Research Debates*, ed. O. J. Schmitt, (Wien: ÖAW, 2016).

¹³⁸ On genealogies as ‘open texts’ see Genicot, *Les Généalogies*, 27–28. Other historiographic genres, such as chronicles, annals, memorial books, etc. also could be understood as open texts. In a way, all medieval literature was also always open to additions and changes, which is also visible in the example of cultic texts. On this see Васиљевић, *Култови свейих*.

¹³⁹ They are published in Љ. Стојановић, *Сѣтари срѣски родослови и летописи* (Сремски Карловци: Српска Краљевска Академија, 1927), 2–110. Since these texts consist of stylistically uniform sections that narrate at least one generation of rulers, they are interpreted as separate redactions. The time of the redaction is determined based on the last person each section mentions or the period in which this section could have had an

general insecurity led to the continual search for continuities that was found in the ruling dynasty. Their compatibility is exemplified by the fact that part of genealogy was included in a stemma and possibly, vice versa. Interestingly, this took place in the period under study.

Genealogies and stemmas were copied until the 17th and 18th centuries. In fact, all known copies were made between 1430 and 1750.¹⁴⁰ The continuous copying and reworking of the texts testifies to the fact that the history of the Serbian ruling dynasty was considered important and continued to participate in identifications even in the centuries after their extinction.

In addition to having a related subject, writing and copying period, genealogies and stemmas share connections to hagiographies. Namely, since a number of rulers were saints, their hagiographies indirectly or directly influenced the texts. The indirect influence can be understood in terms of hagiographies creating a certain body of knowledge about the rulers which was incorporated in the texts.¹⁴¹ The direct influence of hagiographies is found in the redactions written after the 1450s, where hagiographies were mentioned or reworked to fit the style of text. Both are more visible in the genealogies, but we find them in one stemma too. For example, the

ideological or other function (as in the case of the genealogy of Constantine the Great, probably added at the time of Despot Stefan Lazarević). The difference is in the fact that genealogies also include the Bosnian Ban Tvrtko Kotromanić (Ban 1353–1377, King 1377–1391) and the later revision, Ruvarac Genealogy, adds the Russian Emperor Ivan IV the Terrible who descended on his mother's side from the noble Jakšić family – a family to which the wife of Despot Jovan Branković belonged as well. On the redactions of genealogies see Васиљевић, “Династија као носилац идентификације”, 89–90.

¹⁴⁰ The oldest copy is the genealogy included in the Extensive Life of Despot Stefan Lazarević by Constantine the Philosopher, of which a copy from 1433 is preserved (this could be a copy or potential autograph, A. A. Турилов, “Этническое и культурное самосознание сербов в конце XIV–XV века”, в: *Этническое самосознание славян в XV столетии*, ред. Г. Г. Литаврин и др. (Москва: Наука, 1995), 157–177). However, this is an abridged version of the genealogies written before this period, hence it is not the focus of this study, Ђ. С. Радојичић, “Из старе српске књижевности”, *Зборник радова* 10. *Институти за проучавање књижевности* 1 (1951), 57–61. On the dating of other copies of genealogies and stemmas see Стојановић, *Сџари српски родослови и летописи*, VIII–XI, XXXIV–XXXV. The revival of copying of historiographic works from the 17th century was linked to the writings of Patriarch Pajsej and work on manuscript copying, С. Матић, “Белешке из историје родослова и летописа”, *Зборник Матице српске за књижевности и језик* 21 (1973), 6–7.

¹⁴¹ One good example of the indirect influence is the portrayal of Stefan the First-Crowned as a secondary figure in dynastic history, under the influence of the hagiographies dedicated to Saint Sava: М. Васиљевић, “Краљ у сенци архиепископа: стварање државе у српској средњовековној историографији”, у: *Стефан Првовенчани и његово доба*, 343–362.

hagiographies written by authors from medieval Bulgaria: that of Despot Stefan Lazarević by Constantine the Philosopher and of Stefan Uroš III of Dečani (1321–1331) by Gregory Tsamblak (future Metropolitan of Kiev) were mentioned in the last redaction of genealogies, while Patriarch Pajsej mentions the vita of Stefan the First-Crowned in the genealogy from the Extensive life of Emperor Uroš.¹⁴² Redactions written before the 1450s will be analysed as integral narratives, after which the focus will be on those written in the period under study.¹⁴³

In genealogies, Saints Simeon and Sava are the most important figures – they identified the entire dynasty as holy. Other rulers are mentioned as such only if they belonged to a branch that continued the dynasty, otherwise they were named just as dynastic members.¹⁴⁴ The attention dedicated to Simeon and Sava is the outcome of the influence of their joint cult of ‘holy dyad’ and ‘holy root’ of the dynasty, i.e., their hagiographies, and the epistemology of origin that is characteristic of the genre.¹⁴⁵ Besides these two, not a single ruler was named holy, although we find quiet reflections of the cults of Kings Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321) and Stefan of Dečani.¹⁴⁶ It is interesting that Prince Lazar is not even mentioned, as the kinship between the Nemanjićs and Stefan Lazarević was secured by Stefan’s mother, Princess Milica, who is depicted as a descendant of Stefan Nemanja.¹⁴⁷ The redaction that connected the Nemanjićs with Constantine the Great makes him the only figure of similar importance as the dynastic founders, although he was not named a saint, but an ancestor of the Nemanjićs via the marriage of the Roman Emperor Licinius and Constantine’s sister (or daughter).¹⁴⁸ It placed the dynastic and Serbian identification in the antiquity by naming either Constantine as being of “Rascian lordship and the kinship of August Caesar” (ѿ корене и племене

¹⁴² Стојановић, *Сѣари срѣски родослови и летописи*, 32, 34, 41–42. On the authors of the first two hagiographies see Васиљевић, *Кулѣнови светѣих*, 120–116, 202–218. Mention of the hagiography by Gregory Tsamblak was noticed in П. Ангелов, “Житието на Стефан Дечански от Григорий Цамблук в србските родослови и летописи”, в: *Тѣрновска книжовна школа 3. Григорий Цамблук: живот и творчество*, прир. П. Русев, (София: БАН, 1984), 350.

¹⁴³ The opposite approach, which analysed each redaction and their changing categories can be seen on the case of genealogies in: Васиљевић, “Династија као носилац идентификације”. In this analysis, I will also rely on the Zagreb and Vrhobreznica Genealogies, which seem the closest to the older versions.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴⁵ On their place in genealogies see Васиљевић, *Кулѣнови светѣих*, 331–334.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹⁴⁷ On this, see Васиљевић, “Генеалогіје између историје и идеологије”.

¹⁴⁸ Васиљевић, *Кулѣнови светѣих*, 335–337.

рашњског господства и сродства Јвгоуста кесара) or Licinius as “some nobleman, Serb” (бољарина нѣкогѣо сръбнина).¹⁴⁹

It is unsurprising that in the sections on Simeon and Sava other categories were employed. The title of Stefan Nemanja is crucial as it maps the Serbian territory: “Serbian and maritime lands...”¹⁵⁰ Connected to the Serbian land and its regions, such as Ras, are the endowments of the rulers, that depict the sacral topography as in hagiographies. A number of Saint Simeon’s foundations are mentioned: the Holy Apostles, Hilandar, Studenica and others, as well as those of his brothers. Significantly, not all the monasteries of Simeon’s successors were named, only those considered the most important, probably due to the veneration of its founders – Banjska and Dečani, founded by Milutin and Stefan of Dečani.¹⁵¹ Another form of mapping is provided in the section on Saint Sava, where the seats of the bishoprics of the Serbian Archbishopric, ordained by Sava himself, were named. They correspond to the last quarter of the 14th century, thus reflecting the period in which they were written.¹⁵²

Orthodoxy and fatherland, designating personal inheritance, were also most frequently used in the sections on Simeon and Sava.¹⁵³ In the case of Saint Simeon fatherland refers to the Ras region, while for Sava it is the entire Serbian state. Mentions of foreign rulers, such as the “Greek emperor/king” and the “Hungarian king”, usually because their daughters were married to Serbian rulers, also participate in identifications.¹⁵⁴ The only mentioned community are the “Greeks”, whom we find in the title of the Emperor Stefan Uroš IV Dušan. In his and the title of Despot Stefan Lazarević we find the mention of “Serbs.”¹⁵⁵

This slightly changed in two redactions written after the 1450s, when the Ottomans became the most important community. The first genealogy that includes the Brankovićs of Srem – named the Sofia Genealogy – was probably written between 1486 and 1497 and copied at the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century.¹⁵⁶ The differences between this and previous genealogies include additional information on the sons of Stefan the First-Crowned and expanded sections on Kings

¹⁴⁹ Стојановић, *Сѣтари срѣски родослови и леѣоѣиси*, 4, 7.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 22–23,

¹⁵¹ For example, Žiža Monastery is not mentioned as an endowment of Stefan the First-Crowned, only as “the great Archbishopric Žiža”, *ibid.*, 26–27.

¹⁵² Compare *ibid.* and Коматина, *Црква и држава*, 282–291.

¹⁵³ Васиљевић, “Династија као носилац идентификације”, 91–96.

¹⁵⁴ Стојановић, *Сѣтари срѣски родослови и леѣоѣиси*, 28–29, 36–37.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 34–35, 38–39.

¹⁵⁶ Ђ. С. Радојичић, “Из старе српске подунавске књижевности 1. Родослов сремских Бранковића с краја XV века”, *Годишњак Филозофској факултета у Новом Саду* 3 (1958), 159.

Dragutin and Milutin, probably under the influence of their hagiographies in the same manuscript.¹⁵⁷

The author of the Sofia Genealogy inaccurately states that in the time of Despot Lazar Branković (1456–1458) Serbian rule had ended, probably because he was the last member of the Branković dynasty to rule the Serbian Despotate.¹⁵⁸ He dedicates significant attention to the sainthood of Stefan Branković, reflecting his veneration. Upon naming the children of Despot Đurađ, the author names him as “Stefan, the new martyr” (Стефана новаго мученика), like the author of the Synaxarial Vita of Angelina.¹⁵⁹ The text also ends with the mention of Stefan’s relics thus confirming that, at that time, his cult represented an important symbol.

The author insists that God “returned” Stefan to his “fatherland”, i.e., his relics (БЛ҃ГОВОЛИ Б҃А ВЪЗВРАТИТИ Е҃ГО КА СВОЕ҃МУ ѿЧЕСТВУ) to the “land of Srem”.¹⁶⁰ Even more significant is that, by God’s providence, Đorđe and Jovan were the recipients of the part of their fatherland, although they were not “autocratic” but under the “hand of the Hungarian king” (аще њ не самодръжѣнѣ, њ по рѣкою крѣпа з҃грьскаго).¹⁶¹ Thus, the concept of fatherland again receives an important place, denoting, as before, a family inheritance. Here, as in the beginning of the text with Simeon and Sava, fatherland need not signify an independent entity.

Because of these events, the determinants of otherness come to the fore. The daughters of Despot Đurađ were given in marriage to “those who confess other faiths” (иновѣрци): Mara to the “Turkish Emperor Murat” (Murad II) and Kantakuzina to “Olrich, the Latin duke” (Ulrich of Celje); Stefan Branković went to the “Arbanas’ land”, and married the daughter of “Aranit, duke and chief of that land”.¹⁶² Stefan also went to the “foreign land”, “Latin land” (another undefined area) while his descendants went to the “land of the Hungarian King Matthias”.¹⁶³ Thus, in periods of change, especially as grave as when the “Serbian rule finally fell into ruin and desolation” when the “Turks inherited” the lands (сръбское начелоство кончиное разрошениѣ њ запощениѣ приѣмлетъ. њ тѣркомъ наслѣдїе по рѣкѣ зстрої се),¹⁶⁴ the need to organise social and political worlds grew stronger, which was mediated by the narrative on the last members of the Branković dynasty.

¹⁵⁷ On the content of the manuscript and sections on Dragutin and Milutin see *ibid.*, 159–160, 162, 164,

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 163, 167.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 167, 169.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

Another version written after the 15th century, Karlovci Genealogy, notes the dynastic history up until the beginning of the 16th century, i.e., the events that followed the death of Despot Jovan. The author of this genealogy significantly reworked older versions. This is visible even in the title: it is called “A Short History of Serbian Rulers” (Исторїа въ крат’ цѣ о сръбскыиныхъ царехъ).¹⁶⁵ Also, the attribute Serbian is introduced at the beginning, where Licinius is mentioned, and the “Serbs” connected to Serres.¹⁶⁶ The reworked section on Constantine the Great does not seriously affect the identifications. Notably, the genealogic note on the origin of Despot Stefan Lazarević was moved from the end of the Nemanjićs to the section on Stefan Nemanja.

The parts on the rulers were extended insofar that they received their own chapters, mirroring stemmas. For example, while before mentioned in passing, Kings Stefan the First-Crowned and his son Vladislav (1234–1242/3) now received their own chapters (although somewhat misplaced in the text), and starting from King Milutin the sections are much longer. The part on Milutin was enriched with the names of his endowments, data which correspond to a great extent with the Cetinje Stemma, also probably written at the beginning of the 16th century.¹⁶⁷ In the part on Stefan of Dečani, his hagiography and office by Gregory Tsamblak were named and used as the source. The parts on Emperors Dušan and Uroš were also extended, mostly by focusing on their foundations and Uroš’s death. Here the “Turks” are mentioned for the first time, while they were the most important agent in the section on Despot Stefan Lazarević. The author himself had mentioned the Extensive Life of Despot Stefan Lazarević by Constantine the Philosopher in this section, implicitly suggesting that it was used as a source as well.

The story of Stefan Lazarević is marked by relations with the Ottomans, juxtaposing identifications. Therefore, the emphasis on concepts such as Serbian land is noticeable and the “Serbian tribe” is explicitly mentioned for the first time. However, it refers to the dynasty – it is stated that the “Serbian tribe” met its end with “the last Uroš” (племѣне сръбскаго кон’ць прїеть до послѣдняго Уроша), thus denoting just the Nemanjić dynasty.¹⁶⁸ The “Turks” and the “Turkish emperor” are mentioned, and when the sultans are named, the attribute ‘Turkish’ is absent.¹⁶⁹ Other than that, mention of the Wallachian Voivode Mircea stands out.

¹⁶⁵ The term which is used could literally be translated as ‘emperor’ but by this period it meant ‘ruler’, Стојановић, *Сѣпару срѣски рогослови и лейоѳисци*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Whether they both relied on information from independent sources, or one borrowed from the other cannot be concluded at this moment. Cf. *ibid.*, 30–32, 75–79.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 41–42.

In the lines about the Brankovićs, the sultans are exclusively called “emperor” (царь), while the adjective Hungarian is retained. “Olrich, ban of Celje” and “the daughter of the Aranitian tribe, Angelina” (дъщерь Аранитовѣх племени, Ан’гелина), the wife of Despot Stefan Branković, are also mentioned.¹⁷⁰ Serbian land is not emphasised, nor do we find the adjective Serbian. If the author equated Serbian land to the Serbian Despotate, this omission is not surprising. For the same reason, the story about the ruling family could have paid more attention to the side branches. Notably, Mara received an entire section due to her connection to Mount Athos and Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror.¹⁷¹ Interestingly, while Murad II is mentioned only as “emperor”, Mehmed II is named “Muhamed”.

Srem is not connected with the Serbian land or fatherland, but was emphasised on two occasions: when explaining that Đorđe and Jovan govern Srem, which was given to them by the Hungarian king, and later when Jovan is called the “despot of Srem”. Kupinik and the Church of the Evangelist Luke are mentioned, thus mapping important loci of Srem. The story ends with an account of Maksim becoming a monk and his and Angelina’s departure to Wallachia (в Флоридію) with the relics of Despots Stefan and Jovan. The focus on the relics stresses their role in symbolising and belonging to the holy dynasty, but also their potential use in the new contexts. These lines closely identified the world the author and the audience lived in or could remember.

The subsequent copies of genealogies revised the content, often shortening it, but they mostly ended with Despots Stefan Lazarević and Đurađ Branković. These revisions show that genealogies retained their role in identifications, often stressing contemporary interpretations. These changes can be linked to the time of creation and the authorial intention. For example, the genealogy in the Extensive Life of Emperor Uroš by Patriarch Pajsej ends with Despot Đurađ and does not contain a list of the bishoprics of the Serbian Archbishopric. Pajsej also expanded the section on Stefan the First-Crowned, whose cult he supported, and mentions the hagiography he had written.

The Pejatović Genealogy, a version from the 17th century, presents Constantine the Great as the grandson of Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great. It also connects Stefan Nemanja to the Croatian King Zvonimir, thus connecting the identity of the Serbian dynasty to the Croatian line.¹⁷² This can be seen as the outcome of

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷¹ On Mara Branković see M. Popović, *Mara Branković: Eine Frau Zwischen Dem Christlichen Und Dem Islamischen Kulturkreise im 15. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: Verlag Franz Philipp Rutzen, 2010) [translated: M. С. Поповић, *Мара Бранковић. Жена између хришћанској и исламској културној круја у 15. веку* (Нови Сад: Академска књига, 2014)].

¹⁷² Стојановић, *Сѣари срѣски рогослови и лейоисци*, 47.

the gradual expansion of the idea of unifying the Balkans, visible also in the ways Patriarch Pajsej envisaged the former Serbian Empire.¹⁷³ Thus, identification of the dynasty was transformed to fit these tendencies. This genealogy was also expanded with the story of King Stefan of Dečani, focusing mostly on his ascension to the throne. Identifications in other copies were rarely affected as in this version. More often than not, the same categories emerged in each text, if the length allowed it.

Stemmas represent a smaller group of texts, with important differences to genealogies. In fact, stemmas are a series of ‘miniature portraits’ of the Serbian rulers.¹⁷⁴ Here, the author named all rulers as such, while Saint Sava is mentioned but did not receive a separate section.

The organisation of the text and its length influenced identifications. Firstly, all monarchs acted as symbols of identification, which is further supported by a greater number of them being named as saints: among them are Simeon and Sava, Kings Milutin and Stefan of Dečani and Prince Lazar.¹⁷⁵ In addition, other, somewhat vague mentions of sainthood are present. With a greater number of rulers, many of whom were saints, the dynasty appeared to have greater longevity and, therefore, prestige, thus giving this category heightened significance.

Categories such as fatherland as personal inheritance, Orthodoxy, Serbian land, and, characteristic for stemmas, kingdom, are used in almost every miniature. In other words, they are repeated many times throughout the text. By repeating them, these categories would, on the occasion of a public reading, leave a strong impression on the audience and create a stronger belonging. Naming numerous foundations acts as an additional mapping tool. These include Žiža, Mileševa, a great number of monasteries and churches founded by King Milutin, etc. Furthermore, King Milutin’s foundations outside of the Serbian kingdom mapped the Orthodox world: Jerusalem, Sinai, Egypt, the Greek land (one copy mentions Slavic land), “islands” (островы поморские и заморские), Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and Mount Athos.¹⁷⁶ It is interesting that the author states that Milutin’s grace reached “all people” (по всѣхъ языцѣхъ).¹⁷⁷ The term ‘languages’ can also build meaning: while describing a Battle at Velbazhd (1330) it is used to denote a crowd comprised of many communities

¹⁷³ On Patriarch Pajsej and his vision of the Balkans see the section 1.2. Venerating Serbian Medieval Rulers, esp. footnote 130.

¹⁷⁴ On this sections miniatures see Ђ. Трифуновић, “Минијаторски стил старе српске књижевности”, *Књижевност* 32 (1961), 511–522.

¹⁷⁵ On the reflection of the veneration of saints in stemmas see Васиљевић, *Култови светих*, 341–355.

¹⁷⁶ Стојановић, *Сѣпару срѣски родослови и лейоѡисци*, 74–78. I will rely on Koporinje and Peć Stemmas, which seem the closest to the oldest version of these texts.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

gathered to fight the Serbian king. Finally, it is stated that King (future Emperor) Dušan conquered “neighbouring people” (око́ръстныѣ ѣзыкы).¹⁷⁸

This text also offers an interesting take on discussions surrounding the meaning of the term ‘land’ and ‘fatherland’, as both are used extensively.¹⁷⁹ As mentioned, in other sources it usually, but not exclusively, signified the state. This is the case with stemmas as well. For example, we find it in stemmas with the mention of “all Zeta and Zachlumian land” ruled by Prince Vukan, son of Stefan Nemanja.¹⁸⁰ However, contrary to other sources, the Empire of Stefan Dušan did not consist of “Serbian” and “Greek land”, but the author, after noting that Dušan conquered the Greek land, states that he “celebrated his fatherland and honoured and spread and expanded the Serbian land and conquered neighbouring peoples” (свое ѿчѣство прославивъ, и почитъ землю срѣбскѣю, и ѿ вьсоудѣу распрастранивъ и разширивъ, и око́ръстныѣ ѣзыкы покнижъ).¹⁸¹ Therefore, the Serbian land denoted the entire state even in the time of Emperor Dušan.

Finally, data on royal marriages is absent; foreign rulers are mentioned when they influenced the course of history. Therefore, only the “Hungarian king” and the “Greek emperor” are mentioned while we also find names for communities: Hungarians, as well as Tatars and Besarabs, led by a “Scythian ruler, called Emperor Mihailo” (начѣлникъ скиѣ’скын, глаголюмы Мѣхалъ царь) as participants in the Battle at Velbazhd.¹⁸²

Two redactions on Prince Lazar (Peć and Studenica Stemmas) are dedicated to creating the continuity with the Nemanjićs and commemorating the new saint, thus featuring many of the mentioned categories.¹⁸³ It borrows from sections on both Stefan Nemanja and Milutin, the latter especially, with mentions of his grace reaching “Egypt, Sinai, and Jerusalem” or “Mount Athos and Jerusalem”.¹⁸⁴ The most important are the mentions of “Hagarenes”, “Ishmael’s sons” along with the people they led at the Battle of Kosovo: “Greeks”, “Bulgarians”, “Arvanitians” or “Arbanians”, “Tatars”, etc.¹⁸⁵ Lazar’s importance is testified by the fact that the miniature of his son, Prince Stefan, describes the translation of his relics to Ravanica Monastery.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁷⁹ The term ‘land’ is not used only for ‘Serbian land’, but also for ‘Greek’ and ‘Bulgarian land’, *ibid.*, 62–84.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Ивановић, “Границе Срѣбске земље”, 112–115 and Стојановић, *Сѣтари срѣски рогослови и лейѣойиси*, 82.

¹⁸² Стојановић, *Сѣтари срѣски рогослови и лейѣойиси*, 70–72, 78, 84, 90.

¹⁸³ Васиљевић, *Кулѣйови свейѣих*, 348–353.

¹⁸⁴ Стојановић, *Сѣтари срѣски рогослови и лейѣойиси*, 88–89.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 90–91.

The Cetinje Stemma is the only one written after the 1450s. It presents the ruling figures up until the death of Maksim Branković and was copied at the end of the 16th century.¹⁸⁶ It is written as a continuation of the Studenica Stemma, supplemented by a longer miniature of Despot Stefan Lazarević and later the Brankovićs. Just as with genealogies, the slight changes reveal the shift in identifications. It starts with the title that states that this is the “history” of the Serbian rulers, who “lived in the Serbian land, their fatherland” (Повѣсть изложена о сръбскихъ господѣхъ, иже поживше въ земли сръб’стѣи ѿчества своего...).¹⁸⁷ Since the mention of the fatherland together with the Serbian land is not present in other titles, it shows that it was important to the author – possibly due to the contemporary political landscape or because he himself lived outside of these areas.

The Cetinje Stemma, is replete with categories such as fatherland, “their land” (i.e., по своен земли), Orthodoxy, the attribute Serbian, Serbs, etc. In other words, the main categories, already highlighted in previous redactions, are now even more pronounced. The author added a note on the relics of Saint Sava and their placement in Mileševa Monastery, an endowment of King Vladislav. He also notes the additional endowments of King Milutin (that we also find in the genealogy) and states that Milutin donated estates in the “Serbian and Bulgarian land” to Hilandar Monastery and renewed many churches in “his and foreign lands” (по своихъ и тѣждихъ земляхъ).¹⁸⁸ The miniature of King Stefan of Dečani is also expanded. Interestingly, the line Stefan Nemanja – Milica from genealogies is included. The author also used the Extensive Life of Despot Stefan. Unsurprisingly, in these parts we find mentions of “Hagarenes” and “Turks” and also a line Osman-Orhan-Murad I.¹⁸⁹ It also states that “Amir Yildirim Beyazid” (Beyazid I) conquered Serbian land after the Battle of Kosovo.¹⁹⁰ Even though the miniature on Despot Stefan names the Ottoman sultans, it does not insist on naming the Ottomans as a community. In contrast, “fatherland” is mentioned three times in this section, which stressed that sultans were considered intruders.

The miniatures on the Brankovićs are the shortest in the text. Starting from Despot Đurađ, they name the ruler, remarkably excluding Despot Lazar Branković and the first despot in the Hungarian kingdom, Vuk, but including Vuk’s father Grgur.¹⁹¹ The miniature on Maksim states that he was a metropolitan of “all the land of Srem” but also wrongly that he ruled “all the land of Srem” after Despot

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, XXXV.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 77–79.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

Jovan's death (по прѣставленіи же брата его Іоанна съдържатель бываеъ въсон срем'ском земли).¹⁹² Next to prolonging the Serbian dynasty, they add little to identifications: "Ishmaelites" and Murad II are mentioned, while "the land of Srem" three times in the short sections on Maksim and Jovan.¹⁹³ They also stress that the relics of Jovan and Maksim are in Krušedol, "founded by them".¹⁹⁴

2.2. Naming the Heads of the Church

Since naming was a constitutive part of remembering, with an expression in succession lists,¹⁹⁵ the need to remember the heads of the Church unsurprisingly led to listing them. As in genealogies and stemmas, Church heads, especially saints, acted as symbols of the Church institution. The oldest list of the heads of the Serbian Church is titled "On Patriarchs of the Serbian land" (О патріарсѣхъ землѣ сръбскыѣ) and corresponds chronologically to the Studenica Stemma.

It starts with a long section on Saint Sava, where we find the terms "Serbian land", "fatherland" and toponyms of his many pilgrimages, which maps the Orthodox world: Jerusalem, Damascus, Sinai, Egypt, Babylon, Constantinople and Mount Athos.¹⁹⁶ After that, archbishops and patriarchs are named, while several entries mention their foundations or the shrine holding their relics. Notably, the author assigns the title of prelate to Saint Sava (себѣ же съ многомъ поноужденіемъ архіересомъ поставляеъ) and some of his successors, while others are titled archbishop. He also does not note the change in the status of the Church heads.¹⁹⁷

However, the change in status is noted in the texts that name the patriarchs until the 17th or 18th century. For example, one copy states that it is about the "former Serbian archbishops who were in Peć" (сказаніе о архієпискоупехъ сръбскыхъ иже въ Пеки бывшихъ),¹⁹⁸ and where, after (sometimes mistakenly) listing archbishops, the

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, Maksim's section is not complete, so we cannot be certain what his section actually contained.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ O. G. Oexle, "Die Gegenwart der Toten", in: *Death in the Middle Ages*, eds. H. Braet, W. Verbeke, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983), 31–35, 40–44; O. G. Oexle, "Memoria in der Gesellschaft und in der Kultur des Mittelalters", in: *Modernes Mittelalter: Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*, Hrsg. J. Heinze, (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1994), 308–309.

¹⁹⁶ Стојановић, *Сѣари срѣски рогослови и лейописи*, 104–105.

¹⁹⁷ This was commented on in Ђ. С. Радојичић, "Политичке тежње у српској средњовековној историографији", у: Ђ. С. Радојичић, *Творци и дела сѣаре срѣске књижевности*, (Титоград: Графички завод, 1963), 150–161, p. 156. Only Peć Monastery is named as "patriarchal church".

¹⁹⁸ Стојановић, *Сѣари срѣски рогослови и лейописи*, 105–106.

miniatures on the first two medieval Patriarchs (Joanikije and Sava IV) were added only to resume the list. Most importantly, the distance between the last known patriarch from the 15th century and Makarije, the first patriarch of the Patriarchate of Peć, is ignored. They are named just as any other predecessor and successor. The list ends with Patriarch Arsenije III (1674–1706), who led the migration from the Ottoman to the Habsburg Empire in 1690, thus testifying to the importance of this event.¹⁹⁹ In other words, the list ends with the patriarch who was seen as the last one to reside in Peć, even if that was not really the case. This could, perhaps, signal that it was written north of the Sava and Danube rivers, where the Metropolitanate of Karlovci acted as the main Church institution, established exactly by Arsenije III. By naming patriarchs in an uninterrupted line, the Patriarchate of Peć is identified as originating in the 13th century, thus overshadowing discontinuities and changes that actually occurred in the 15th and 16th century.

Another two lists of similar content bring more information about the heads of the Church. They start with references to the histories of the world that note the baptisms of the “Bulgarians and then Serbs”,²⁰⁰ who conquered “many lands and peoples and areas”, after which the story of Sava I follows. He is “Saint Sava Serbian”, “Serbian archbishop”, and he anointed many metropolitans and bishops “from Serbs/in Serbian land”.²⁰¹ After repeating the section on archbishops, a short note marks the ordination of the “Serbian patriarchs” in the age of the “Serbian Emperor Stefan” only to continue with naming. One copy concludes with Arsenije III, while also noting the time in which the “Hagarenes” conquered “Serbian and Bulgarian land”, Patriarch Gavril who was smothered by the “Turks” due to slander (in 1659), and ends with a mention of Kara Mustafa Pasha, Grand Vizier who commanded the Siege of Vienna in 1683.²⁰² The other copy continues until Patriarch Mojsije I in the first quarter of the 18th century and names metropolitans and bishops under his jurisdiction, thus probably revealing the author to be his contemporary.

Notwithstanding the end of the list of the heads of the Serbian Church, the lists identified the institution from medieval times until the 18th century. The Serbian Church is identified as Serbian with its founder, but also with the title and introduction which assigns to them the epithet ‘Serbian’. They noted the change from archbishops to patriarchs in the middle of the 14th century but ignored discontinuities

¹⁹⁹ P. Веселиновић, “Велика сеоба Срба 1690.”, у: *Историја српског народа* [књ.] 3/1. Срби под турском влашћу, ур. Р. Самарџић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1993), 330–342; in short Ćirković, *The Serbs*, 143–147.

²⁰⁰ Стојановић, *Службени српски родослови и летиописи*, 106–107.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 108–109. On the Siege of Vienna see Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*, 490–494.

between the last known medieval patriarch and the first patriarch in the Ottoman period, Makarije. With that, they reflected the ideology of the Patriarchs of Peć.



The presented historical texts – a commemoration and identification media – show the complexity of identifications. The connection between the dynasty and the Church and the state birthed the connection between their history and the history of their subjects, which is the foundation of the narrative's importance in identifications. There is a degree of stability in the categories used: each ruler or head of the Church (particularly saint), a line of secular or clerical rulers, Serbian land and its holy places along with other uses of the adjective Serbian, and Orthodoxy. Genealogies and stemmas add to these categories the fatherland, and the consciousness of the Other, and stemmas add the kingdom. Among the presentation of the Other, like in hagiographic texts, 'Turks' were the most important community.

Some texts highlighted these categories, while others excluded them. This is particularly true for the depiction of the last Brankovićs, where the connection between Srem and the Serbian land is omitted. Orthodoxy was expressed in genealogies after 1450s with the focus on the cult of Stefan Branković or on the help Mara Branković provided to the Church, while in stemmas it is absent. The changing political map of the Balkans in the middle of the 15th century thus gravely influenced identifications. However, since these texts were copied and read as a whole, their parts noted in previous decades remained relevant. Moreover, some interpretations, such as connecting the term Serbian land to Srem via the ruling family, were implicitly supported.

Since the saints were commemorated as members of the ruling dynasty or the heads of the Church, i.e., their mentions were not tied to the shrine holding their relics or the area(s) to which the cult had spread, the locality of the cults of saints was surpassed. The influence of hagiographies on historical works is less than the influence of the historical (genealogical) worldview that shaped hagiographies. Hagiographies were used to give the most important information about the saint, but they did not significantly change the content of the text – to narrate the past of a particular family or institution.



This paper aimed to compare identifications in hagiographic and historiographic texts, i.e., to examine the degree to which identifications were dependent on the function of the text and/or on its content. It seems that, due to the flexibility of each genre, the content is the main determinant of the identifications. This means that

each author fitted identifications to his worldviews, social position, and intention for the text.

Hagiographic texts, by the nature of the veneration of saints, supported local and regional identifications. By celebrating the saints and their shrine, they became symbols of the venerating community. In addition, since they realised universal and timeless Christian ideals, they supported the flock's identification as Christians. In cases where historicisation is prominent, hagiographies included historical identifications, such as the naming of the communities, commonalities and other categories. In these cases, we find deliberate identifications and the ones made in passing. A myriad of ways in which historical identifications could have taken place in the act of veneration, led to the conclusion that they were not required in the text. In practice, it means that even when they were present, they were not always at the forefront or given particular meaning. The exception is the *Extensive Vita* of Emperor Uroš, which is the most elaborate presentation of identifications in a hagiographic text of this period.

Historical works show a greater degree of stability in identifications of the Serbian community. The fact that each narrative of the past served as an identification category is the most important. Other categories include the ones relevant for a particular time and place, but they also stress Orthodoxy. Even when the texts were influenced by hagiographies, it was in the service of the narrative of the past. This could be due to the brevity of the text and to the somewhat rigid structure.

The Ottomans – predominantly called Hagarenes in the hagiographic texts or mostly Turks in the historical works – are never absent. This, and the interpretations of the contemporary living conditions, confirm that the Ottoman rule was pivotal for identifications in the Central Balkans of this period. This identification is marked by stereotypisation, a reduction to their function in the text as the main opponent. Other than that, Serbian land, fatherland, and Serbs are shared among both types of texts, although not consistently. None of the aforementioned terms, however, have singular meaning: Serbian land could be the state but also a part of a larger state, its territories are also 'moving'; fatherland is personal inheritance, whether it is comprised of several cities, a region, or the entire state; while the term Serbs denotes a community, but whether the community had its own self-conscience is not clear. To the changing meaning of the terms should be added their difference from their contemporary counterparts, i.e., the danger of anachronism if such terms are to be interpreted with the meaning they have today (such as land, fatherland, people). This, and the focus on locality, social actors, regions, and Orthodox identification shows why focusing on the term Central Balkans is fruitful in showcasing the complexity of identifications of this period.

These texts had a relatively small reach. Hagiographies were read once a year in the shrine holding the relics and, in cases of greater popularity, surrounding

ones; it is still uncertain when historiographic works were used. Even though these texts should not be overestimated, the fact that they were written and copied means that they were used and warns against underestimating them. Their circulation is confirmed by mentions of hagiographies in historical works and vice versa, which shows that they were read at least by their authors and their content conveyed to those who read/listened to them. They created a sense of groupness at the reading events; however, how much time passed before it was repeated remains uncertain in the case of historical works.

The most important conclusion is that identifications in these commemoration practices were always dependent on the time and place in which the text was written as well as the authorial intention and his social location. This is not to say that, for example, Serbian identification did not exist in this period. As every author of an examined text did mention either some category and/or a Serbian community in one way or another, we can confidently say that a degree of groupness was created with each text. However, since the elaborations and meanings of various terms depended on a particular text or the context within the text, we can say that the degree of groupness evoked/created by them varied greatly. I have not termed this identification ethnic nor national. The former (ethnicity) represents a scientific construct created to explain diverse feelings of belongings and it is usually used to denote the groupness that preceded contemporary nations.²⁰³ It also often bears implicit primordial understanding (with or without ‘constructivist decoration’). Another reason is a ‘scissors-and-paste’ type of argument, such as the one that would result in focusing on the Extensive Vita of Emperor Uroš and ignoring the fact that it was written for a local cult in a specific moment.²⁰⁴ Thus, taking into account only this hagiography, even though Patriarch Pajsej penned another one with much less focus on identifications, or to focus on the last redaction of stemmas, and to ignore texts like the Historical Oration of Stefan Štiljanović would be to focus only on one aspect of the picture. The latter (nation), lacks the idea of popular sovereignty, the most important characteristic of nations, thus making its use simply wrong. Therefore, I find it safer to abstain from these terms.

To conclude, identifications in hagiographic and historiographic texts of this period included the evocation of ‘us’: be it the (Orthodox) Christian, Serbian, and/or local community, monastic institutions, church hierarchy, faithful, but also doubters,

²⁰³ On different approaches to ethnicity see *Ethnicity*, eds. J. Hutchinson, A. D. Smith, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and an approach that is compatible with the approach assumed in this volume: R. Brubaker, “Ethnicity as Cognition”, in: Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 64–87.

²⁰⁴ On this type of argument see J. Breuilly, “Dating the Nation: How Old is an Old Nation?”, in: *When is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism*, eds. A. Ichijo, G. Uzelac (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 15.

bad Christians, and those with whom they shared history; and of ‘them’: usually Ottomans, but also Hungarians, Wallachians, and others. These commonalities and communities intertwined, overlapped and were conflicted with each other. In other words, the identificational landscape of this period is more layered and complex than is often presumed. It served as a repository of interpretations that were propagated, institutionalised, imposed, interpreted and transformed by the ‘nationalising states.’²⁰⁵

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²⁰⁵ R. Brubaker, “Nationalizing states in the old ‘New Europe’ – and the new”, in: R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79–106.

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Rhetorical Identification: The Case of Encomiastic Literature

1. Rhetorical Heritage and the Effect-Oriented Encomiastic Literature

Contemporary literary criticism so heavily privileges the social context of literature that failing to acknowledge the extent to which literary forms are shaped by social conventions has come to be regarded as a cardinal sin.

Yet, medieval and early modern literature bring another fact to light – literary works are not simply defined by social conventions – they establish them.

The ways in which they do so are rhetorical in nature. In this section, I will attempt to outline some major traits of Slavic medieval encomiastic literature, with the principal aim to show how medieval rhetoric, as a vehicle for the transmission of values,¹ has an impact on public opinion and partakes in the very process of identification.

The primary goal of all oratory, both ancient and modern, is what is commonly referred to as the ‘effect’. This effect-oriented approach in literature clearly reveals its rhetorical origins: whenever we encounter a literary text with a strong sense of public impact, one that seeks to promote a particular agenda, it can be considered rhetorical. In literature, the effect is not a byproduct – it is the purpose. And this rhetorical influence, so often invisible, shapes the very foundation of every literary tradition. Historically speaking, all literature has emerged from the traditions of

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¹ G. A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton: University Press, 1983), 23–24.

epideictic or demonstrative rhetoric² – one of the three branches of ancient oratory, the others being judicial and deliberative.³

Nevertheless, certain genres of medieval literature have a particularly strong connection to Byzantine and ancient rhetorical traditions and can be classified as rhetorical genres in a strict sense. The most significant and widespread of these is undoubtedly the encomium. Other examples include various types of *oration* (slovo) – particularly *instructional* (poučno) and *historical* (povesno) – as well as homiletics, which is far more developed in Byzantine culture and plays a crucial role in translated literature among the Slavs.⁴

The classifications and variations of epideictic oratory are numerous; here, I will mention only a few, to illustrate the complexity of the epideictic tradition in early Christian and later Byzantine culture. According to the typology proposed by Nicolaus the Sophist in the 2nd century, encomiastic speeches may include speeches delivered upon departure (ἐπιβατήριοι), speeches of welcome (προσφωνητικοί), wedding orations (ἐπιθάλαμοι), and funeral orations (ἐπιτάφιοι). He further identifies the *σμινθιακὸς λόγος* and the *παναθηναϊκὸς λόγος*, orations intended for particular festivals. Menander of Laodicea, in his treatise *On Epideictic Oratory*, distinguishes no fewer than thirty subcategories of encomium. In his 2015 monograph, Laurent Pernot classifies epideictic speeches into those associated with travel – including, in addition to the aforementioned arrival and welcome speeches, the oration of invitation (κλητικός) and the farewell speech (συντακτικός) – and those delivered in various familial contexts. Within this latter group, alongside nuptial and funerary speeches, he also includes the *γαμήλιος* (an alternative form of wedding oration) and the *γενεθλιακὸς λόγος* (birthday speech).⁵ In parallel with these types, one also observes the development and proliferation of imperial orations (βασιλικοὶ λόγοι).⁶

² L. Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric. Questioning the Stakes of Ancient Praise* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

³ See: *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition. Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, ed. T. Enos, (New York: Routledge 1996); И. А. Кенеди, *Историја античке реторике* (Лозница: Карпос, 2019); J. A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

⁴ See: Г. Подскалски, *Теологија и философија у Византији* (Београд: Институт за теолошка истраживања ПБФ, 2010); Г. Подскалски, *Средњовековна теолошка књижевност у Бујарској и Србији (865–1459)* (Београд: Институт за теолошка истраживања ПБФ, 2010); Ј. Фундулис, *Омилијика: црквено проповедничко* (Краљево: Епархија жичка, 2010).

⁵ Pernot, *Epideictic*, 16.

⁶ “The imperial oration remained an essential and obligatory genre throughout the entire Byzantine period. The need for it never diminished, for the ideology of the great empire – headed by a single ruler, the emperor – continued, by every possible means, to affirm and

In the Serbian medieval literary tradition, these variations of epideictic rhetoric frequently appear as sub-genres or are integrated into larger textual forms, such as hagiography, hymnography,⁷ and, above all, encomiastic literature. In what follows I will provide a concise overview of the key characteristics of the encomium as a genre⁸ within Serbian medieval literature, with particular emphasis on its functions.

To begin with, encomia form a complex genre. None of the old Serbian encomia is solely an encomium, in the sense in which it is presented as an exercise in rhetorical manuals; each is composed of various epideictic forms, among which the most common are *ψόγος* (blame) and *ἐπιτάφιος λόγος* (funeral oration). Similarly, the encomium as a genre differs very little from historical speeches or hagiographies; in many of its parts, such as the narrative sections – it is essentially identical to them, just as hagiographies mirror it in their encomiastic elements.⁹ The difference lies, when viewed from within, in scale: within an encomium, the narrative will always be subordinated to the act of praise,¹⁰ both in scope and in meaning.

reinforce his supreme authority” (“Царски говор је остао важан и обавезан током целог византијског периода, а потреба за њим није јењавала јер је идеологија велике империје на чијем је челу стајао само један човек – цар, и даље на сваки начин тежила да потврди његов врховни ауторитет”), И. Тот, “Поређења у панегирику Прокопија из Газе посвећеном Анастасију I”, *Зборник радова Визанџиолошког института* 33 (1994), 34. See also: I. Toth, “Rhetorical *Theatron* in Late Byzantium: The Example of Palaiologan Imperial Orations”, in: *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, Hrsg. M. Grünbart, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 427–447; D. Angelov, “Byzantine Imperial Panegyric as Advice Literature,” in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. E. Jeffreys, (London: Routledge, 2003), chap. 4; and A. Kaldellis, “The Discontinuous History of Imperial Panegyric in Byzantium and Its Reinvention by Michael Psellos”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 59 (2019), 693–713.

⁷ For more on the relationship between hymnography and rhetoric, see: E. Jeffreys, “Byzantine Poetry and Rhetoric”, in: *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry*, eds. W. Hörandner, A. Rhoby, N. Zagklas, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 92–112.

⁸ For a more comprehensive treatment of the genre, see: И. Плаовић, “О чему говоримо када говоримо о говорима у средњем веку?”, у: *Визанџијско-словенска чџенија VI*, ур. Д. Бојовић, К. Митић, (Ниш: Центар за византијско-словенске студије Универзитета у Нишу, 2023), 241–253.

⁹ For a discussion of the similarities and differences between hagiography and encomiastic literature, see: *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. M. Whitby, (Leiden: Brill, 1998); *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, eds. T. Hägg, P. Rousseau, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and C. Rapp, “The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism: Purpose and Genre between Tradition and Innovation,” in: *Unclassical Traditions* [vol.] 1, eds. C. Kelly, R. Flower, M. S. Williams, (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 2010), 119–131.

¹⁰ Д. Петканова-Тотева, “Нови черти на похвалното слово през XIV–XV в.”, у: *Търновска книжовна школа* [књ.] 1, прир. П. Русев, (София: Великотърновски университет „Св. Св. Кирил и Методий“ – Университетско издателство, 1974), 89–112.

If there were a 'user's manual' for an old encomium, it would be based on one central point – participation. The participation of those before whom the speech is delivered in the celebration of the hero (in old Slavic literature almost exclusively a saint), is the culmination and main idea of the encomiastic speech. Throughout its entirety, regardless of sequence, length, theme, or the period from which it originates, the encomium aims for the moment when the listeners will be invited to engage in the 'joint act of praising'. 'Praise' in the sense in which the writers themselves use the term – not as a genre designation, but as a name for acclamation or praise in a narrower sense,¹¹ and also as a noun denoting the very act of praising – represents the essence of the encomiastic speech.

The next important aspect of this genre is generalisation, which is one of the key cognitive processes of any encomium. A large number of expressions, metaphors, ekphrasis, and topoi are based on generalisation. The literary technique that warrants particular attention in this context is abstraction. As S. S. Averintsev aptly observes, rhetoric functions as an instrument of abstraction¹²: an apparatus that delineates a situation stripped of incidental or contingent elements. In encomiastic literature, the primary vehicle of abstraction is the *topos*, or rhetorical commonplace. This is why topical analysis assumes a central role in medieval literary studies: the *topos* encapsulates the foundational values of a (rhetorical) community. Topicality, for its part, is unquestionably the main characteristic of medieval literature, and certainly of encomiastic speeches.¹³ In the context of the encomium, it may be worth emphasising once again: topoi are not a stylistic, but a conceptual matter.¹⁴

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of acclamation and praise in the narrower sense, as situated within the five-part structure of encomiastic discourse, see: К. Станчев, Г. Попов, *Климент Охридски: Живот и творчество* (София: Университетско издателство "Климент Охридски", 1988).

¹² С. С. Аверинцев, "Реторика као метод уопштавања стварности", у: С. С. Аверинцев, *Реторика и извори европске књижевне традиције*, (Сремски Карловци; Нови Сад: Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, 2019), 172–208. For further discussion of abstraction as a literary device in Slavic medieval literature, see: Д. С. Лихачов, *Поетика сјае руске књижевности* (Београд: СКЗ, 1972), 132–146.

¹³ What is less frequently noted, however, is that topicality is a feature of every literature, not just old literature. Moreover, topicality is a characteristic of language and thought. It is also a characteristic of science. We can distance ourselves terminologically as much as we want, referring to it as patterns, archetypes, clichés, prejudices, memes, etc. But no one has resisted the commonplace: M. Leff, "Up from Theory: Or I Fought the *Topoi* and the *Topoi* Won", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 36/2 (2006), 203–211.

¹⁴ E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, transl. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 79–105; Aristotle, *Topics*, ed. and transl. E. S. Forster, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955); R. Graff, "Topics/Topoi," in: *Rhetorik und*

A second key manifestation of abstraction in encomiastic discourse is its predilection for comparison – a rhetorical hallmark of the genre. The distinction between the encomiastic mode of praise and the hymnographic mode of celebration can often be discerned through their dominant figures of speech: encomia typically rely on comparison and parallelism (notably syncrisis), while liturgical poetry tends to privilege metaphor. The poetics of syncrisis, or structured comparison, contributes to rhetorical abstraction in a manner similar to that of cataloguing. Both rhetorical devices foreground the shared traits among multiple figures – in this case, saints – thereby privileging the general and universal over the particular. Such emphasis is crucial in the rhetorical construction of collective self-understanding.

Finally, encomiastic speeches are characterised by another phenomenon – projection. This allows, for example, the abstract ekphrasis and narratives, since the system of projection implies that everything relates to everything. This, of course, is closely linked to topoi and generalisation; moreover, they enable projection. Thanks to abstraction and topicality, the encomium can project qualities and values onto any subject, any audience, at any time.

Each of the aforementioned features of the encomium may be regarded as a rhetorical strategy or device, and is subject to interpretation through rigorous rhetorical analysis. This seems an appropriate moment to clarify what it means to conduct a rhetorical analysis and to define what is meant by rhetorical interpretation.

It is important to first address a widespread misconception: rhetoric is frequently perceived as the antithesis of ‘the real’, as though it exists merely in the absence of authentic action. This view is demonstrably flawed. Rhetorical thinking is not only an action with concrete consequences, but it is also an essential component of any meaningful action. Only through the conversational nature of our thinking, as Hans Georg Gadamer puts it,¹⁵ can our ideas be formed, put into motion, and later come to fruition as tangible social actions.

Moreover, when literary scholars encounter the term rhetorical interpretation, they typically associate it with topics, rhetorical figures, compositional techniques, and other elements inherited from the classical rhetorical tradition. Rhetorical reading can be understood as an approach that takes into account the traditional elements of rhetorical composition, which have been central to the theory of rhetoric since its inception. These are most commonly the elements that constitute the

Stilistik: Ein internationales Handbuch historischer und systematischer Forschung, Hrsg. U. Fix, A. Gardt, J. Knape, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 1023–1036.

¹⁵ *Gadamer and Ricoeur: Critical Horizons for Contemporary Hermeneutics*, eds. F. J. Mootz III, G. H. Taylor, (New York: Continuum, 2011), 83–84; H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960).

fivefold division of oratorical duties – *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, *actio* (or *pronuntiatio*)¹⁶ – which, in the interpretation of written texts, are transposed into the structural components of literary technique. The traditional terms inherited from rhetorical theory correspond to contemporary literary-theoretical concepts, such as composition/structure, style/expression and theme/motif. If we conceptualise rhetorical reading in this way, it follows that practically every literary interpretation could be considered a form of rhetorical reading, as the majority of 20th-century literary theories focus on one of these aspects, and can therefore be categorised according to their respective emphases. Even when considering the most recent trends in literary theory – such as the shift in focus from the literary text itself, where its authority is no longer absolute, and the recognition that anything can be deemed a ‘text’ – this perspective remains within the confines of rhetorical reading.

As we can see, traditional components do not exhaust the possibilities of rhetorical interpretation.¹⁷ Over the course of the 20th century, a wide array of theories in both literature and rhetoric has emerged which – despite their diversity – may be viewed as part of a coherent intellectual lineage, insofar as literary theory, in one form or another, finds its roots in rhetoric.¹⁸ This connection is well established in the scholarly literature, and I will not attempt to demonstrate what has already been thoroughly documented: namely, that all discourse is, to a significant degree, rhetorical. Instead,

¹⁶ For a more detailed examination of oratorical duties, see the classic work by Cicero: Cicero, *La retorica a Gaio Erennio*, a cura di F. Cancelli, (Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 2010).

¹⁷ For an in-depth analysis of how rhetoric informs hermeneutic approaches, consult: A. E. Berthoff, “Rhetoric as Hermeneutic”, *College Composition and Communication* 42/3 (1991), 279–287; D. Brent, *Reading as Rhetorical Invention* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992); M. Leff, “Hermeneutical Rhetoric”, in: *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, eds. W. Jost, M. Hyde, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 196–214; S. Mailloux, “Rhetorical Hermeneutics”, *Critical Inquiry* 11/4 (1985), 620–641.

¹⁸ “It is, in fact, probably the oldest form of ‘literary criticism’ in the world, known as rhetoric. Rhetoric, which was the received form of critical analysis all the way from ancient society to the 18th century, examined the way discourses are constructed in order to achieve certain effects [...] its horizon was nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole, and its particular interest lay in grasping such practices as forms of power and performance [...] It saw speaking and writing not merely as textual objects, to be aesthetically contemplated or endlessly deconstructed, but as forms of activity inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers, orators and audiences [...] Like all the best radical positions, then, mine is a thoroughly traditionalist one. I wish to recall literary criticism from certain fashionable, new-fangled ways of thinking it has been seduced by – ‘literature’ as a specially privileged object, the ‘aesthetic’ as separable from social determinants, and so on – and return it to the ancient paths which it has abandoned.” From: T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 179.

I will focus on a selection of theoretical conceptions that are explicitly shaped by rhetorical thinking – approaches that presuppose rhetoric's foundational assumptions.

The central premise here is that all interpretation is inherently rhetorical, as it can only be conveyed through language, and more specifically, by communicating the meaning of one text within another. Or, in the context of an oral culture, to explain what someone has said, one must say something else. The conclusion, then, is that hermeneutics and rhetoric are, in essence, one and the same. Since interpretation must be mediated by language in order to be communicated, rhetoric becomes its constitutive element, simultaneously reflecting it in a mirror: we interpret another's text – the rhetoric of the other – and mediate this interpretation through the rhetoric of our own text, to which the future reader must respond with their own hermeneutics. This seemingly simple exchange of inquiry and expression, interpretation and production, forms the foundation of the entire concept of a humanistic education. One could even ask whether interpretation and production truly alternate, or if they are, in fact, interchangeable concepts.

According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the most relevant thinker in the field of philosophical hermeneutics, interpretation is always a rhetorical achievement.¹⁹ Hermeneutics, in this sense, is the art of bringing meaning back into speech, which, in essence, makes it rhetoric. This system is perhaps most evident in literary studies. Since literature is defined by the will to further transmission, it has, through its complete dedication to the written modality of existence, arrived at a position where it must once again be transformed into speech. In order for the meaning of written words to be understood, they must be re-expressed.

In a narrower sense, among the various methods of literary analysis that explicitly identify themselves as rhetorical, two principal approaches stand out: the neo-Aristotelian tradition – whose foremost representatives include Chaïm Perelman²⁰ and Kenneth Burke²¹ – and the tradition rooted in biblical criticism and hermeneutics.²² A third strand, rhetorical hermeneutics, also intersects with the field of communication studies, insofar as it extends its interpretive scope beyond literature in the strictest sense of the term. This broader applicability has been particularly

¹⁹ Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 1960.

²⁰ C. Perelman, L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

²¹ K. Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

²² F. D. Watson, J. A. Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); R. Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

significant for my own interpretation of medieval written heritage, which frequently transcends the boundaries of what the modern subject understands as literature. The topic is, of course, vast and could be elaborated upon at length; however, I shall limit myself here to highlighting two key concepts of modern rhetorical hermeneutics that have proven especially relevant to interpreting encomiastic material within our specific context: effect and identification.

The theory of rhetorical effect, as presented by James Jasinski,²³ encompasses three main dimensions: lexical, cognitive, and constitutive, with the third dimension being the most relevant to our topic, as its product is the social world.

Among the most consequential effects of rhetorical practice is, without doubt, the process of identification – an idea that, within the theoretical discourse of the 20th century, has come to occupy a distinguished place within the pantheon of rhetorical concepts.

2. Rhetoric as a Formative Practice of Identification and Self-Understanding

Among the most significant forms of constitution as a dimension of rhetorical effect identified by Jasinski is the constitution of subjectivity; this process, as he notes – drawing on Stephen Greenblatt – is carried out “by various strategies of othering”.²⁴ Moreover, the rhetorical construction of alterity constitutes a crucial point of entry for understanding rhetorical strategies such as the essentialisation of the self and the Other, the ambivalence of judgments about the Other, and so on.

The ways in which rhetorical texts shape collective self-understanding are so numerous and encompass such a wide range of procedures that one might argue the entire endeavour of rhetorical production is, in essence, a process of identification. It is therefore unsurprising that one of the most prominent rhetoricians of the 20th century, Kenneth Burke, introduced identification as a central concept in rhetorical theory.

Rhetorical identification, which Burke prominently introduced in his *Rhetoric of Motives* (1945),²⁵ was intended to take the place of persuasion – to conceptually replace it. Burke sought to incorporate the unconscious into the process of transmitting and accepting ideas and values that ultimately lead to judgment, thereby distancing rhetorical theory from the intentionality that the concept of persuasion

²³ J. Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

²⁴ Jasinski, *Sourcebook*, 192.

²⁵ K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

traditionally implies. Identification may thus be understood both as a rhetorical device (a precondition for persuasion) and as the very aim of rhetoric itself.

What is at stake here is a process that unfolds within a rhetorical situation in which the speaker seeks to establish a connection with the audience by appealing to shared experiences and common interests. This process is essential for persuasion, yet it also transcends it. This becomes particularly evident in epideictic rhetoric, of which the encomium is a representative form, insofar as persuasion in this rhetorical mode operates over the long term. Epideictic discourse, in fact, exerts a delayed effect, as it establishes and reaffirms values that will shape decisions made in the future. What is praised in an encomium today becomes a value of the community tomorrow. This idea was developed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in their seminal work *The New Rhetoric*, in which they also introduced a concept closely related to Burke's identification – namely, the notion of communion.²⁶

The sense of communion is achieved through reminders of a shared past, common experiences, universally recognised allusions and references, a collective heritage or knowledge, as well as through various figures and modes of speech that invite participation, such as direct addresses or rhetorical questions.

Similar to identification, communion assumes a constitutive function (belonging to the constitutive dimension of rhetorical effect), insofar as it establishes common values as a fundamental precondition for the formation of a rhetorical community through discourse.²⁷

As Jens E. Kjeldsen has argued,²⁸ rhetorical communication often entails the subsumption of self-understanding into a shared, communal identification; individuals must, in a sense, divest themselves of personal distinctiveness in order to participate in the group ethos. In literary terms, this dynamic entails the dominance of thesis over narrative: abstract propositions about virtue and identification override the contingent details of personal biography. This tendency is especially pronounced in Christian rhetoric, which, as Averil Cameron has noted, is inherently figural, demonstrative, performative, and declarative.²⁹ In such a framework, abstraction is not merely a stylistic preference but a constitutive feature of the genre's rhetorical and ideological function.

²⁶ Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 163–167.

²⁷ For an insightful analysis of the relationship between Burke's and Perelman's concepts, see: R. Graff, W. Winn, "Kenneth Burke's Identification and Chaïm Perelman's Communion: A Case of Convergent Evolution?", in: *The Promise of Reason: Studies in The New Rhetoric*, ed. J. T. Gage, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 103–133.

²⁸ J. Келсен, *Ші́їа је реї́орика?* (Лозница: Карпос, 2019).

²⁹ A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

Among the literary devices that play a pivotal role in shaping the rhetorical situation, none is more central than the act of address. In rhetorical texts – particularly in genres such as the encomium – address is not a mere formal element, but a foundational structure. In the context of medieval religious discourse, the addressee is characteristically duplicated: the encomiast simultaneously directs their words to both the immediate audience and the saint, enacting what may be termed a ‘gemination of address’. This rhetorical doubling rests on the belief that language possesses the power to transcend the boundary between the visible, temporal world and the metaphysical, eternal realm. Within this framework, the rhetorical figure of apostrophe becomes essential: a key instrument through which the text performs its intercessory and communal function, enabling a dialogic bridge between the human and the divine.

While explaining the terms, (rhetorical) identification and communion, Chaïm Perelman wrote extensively about the use of apostrophe and the rhetorical function of shifting pronouns, demonstrating how such language choices reconstitute the dynamics of speaker–audience interaction. Kenneth Burke, on the other hand, draws attention to specific syntactic symmetries that serve a similar purpose, reinforcing alignment between speaker and audience through patterned expression.³⁰ The essential concept in encomiastic texts is, of course, that of participation, and all the aforementioned figures and techniques aim at inviting the audience to engage in the act of laudation and celebration. In doing so, the audience enters into a form of mental and affective cooperation that is deeply formative in the shaping of self-understanding and in the process of identification.

These ideas (both of identification and of communion) largely converge with Foucault’s notion of the “discursive mediation of identity”³¹, as well as with Althusser’s concept of interpellation and Rancière’s subjectification.³² Thus, these concepts approach the endless problem of the relationship between ideology and rhetoric, a matter that would demand a complete study to unravel.³³

³⁰ Graff, Winn, *Identification and Communion*, 2011.

³¹ Foucault employs the term identity; however, in the context in which I use it here, it can be understood in the same sense as identification—the concept we have adopted and consistently apply, both because of its explicitly processual character and because of its strong connection to rhetorical theory.

³² M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, transl. A. M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); L. Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)”, in: L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, transl. B. Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–186; J. Rancière, *Staging the People: The Proletarian and His Double*, transl. D. Fernbach, (London: Verso, 2011).

³³ See R. Wess, “Ideology as Rhetoric”, in: R. Wess, *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric, Subjectivity, Postmodernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1–38.

We shall now turn our attention to several examples of rhetorical practice originating from the early centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Our focus will first rest on the works of two encomiasts active during the mid- and late 15th century, who share a particular position as outsiders within the framework of Serbian literary culture. Both authors were of Greek origin, and both composed encomia in the Serbian Church Slavonic language. The better known of the two, Dimitrije Kantakuzin (Kantakouzenos), was raised in Novo Brdo, while little is known about the origins of Andonije Rafail. Given that he signed his name with the designation *epaktites* – a term denoting a newcomer or foreigner – it is generally assumed that he did not spend his formative years within the territories of medieval Serbia. And yet, it was Andonije Rafail who composed an encomium dedicated to a new, local saint – Prince Lazar – while Kantakuzin turned to a much older subject matter that transcended both the geographical and historical context of his own time. In the analysis that follows, we will attempt to identify some of the principal features of their respective poetics and, more specifically, of their rhetoricality. These elements may shed light on the ways in which the rhetorical tradition of this period represented and reshaped the identification of the rhetorical community in which – and for which – it was produced.

Following this, we shall turn to a solitary example of encomiastic literature from the late period of medieval Serbian poetics – the *Encomium for Stefan Štiljanović*, dating from the 16th century. Its stylistic, thematic, and compositional features may offer valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of the genre and its function within the broader social context.

3. Two Foreigners in Serbian 15th Century Rhetoric: Andonije Rafail and Dimitrije Kantakuzin³⁴

The *Encomium to Saint Prince Lazar* by Andonije Rafail (Andonius Raphael) from 1419/20³⁵ represents the pinnacle of the *pletenije sloves*³⁶ style in Serbian literature.

³⁴ The third foreigner in Serbian 15th century rhetoric, and undoubtedly the most famous, is Gregory Tsamblak, author of over fifty encomia and numerous other texts, making him the most influential Slavic encomiast after Clement of Ohrid. His work, however, although stylistically and rhetorically masterful, was written at the turn of the 14th to 15th centuries – thus predating the period under analysis by a significant margin. For rhetorical analysis of his work see: И. Плаовић, “Реторички портрет Григорија Цамблака”, *Studia Litteraria Serdicensia* 3/5 (2023), 108–119.

³⁵ Edition: Ђ. Трифуновић, “Слово о светом кнезу Лазару Андонија Рафаила”, *Зборник историје књижевности* [књ.] 10 (Београд: САНУ, 1976), 147–149.

³⁶ М. Мулић, *Српски извори “илејенија словес”* (Сарајево: Академија умјетности Босне и Херцеговине, 1975).

Although it predates the period after 1450, which is the focus of this research project, it marks the final point of the encomiastic literary tradition dedicated to Prince Lazar³⁷ – a figure whose cult was undoubtedly of central importance to the process of identification in the aftermath of the Battle of Kosovo. It is within these encomiastic texts that the battle and its consequences begin to take on their earliest narrative and rhetorical shape, thus setting out on the path to becoming the most influential national myth in the centuries to come.

It is also worth noting that the manuscript tradition of this particular encomium spans from the 16th to the 18th century, attesting to the enduring interest in this text during the period that concerns us.³⁸

Andonije Rafail, who, as stated above, also signed himself as *Επακτίτης* (foreigner, newcomer), was most likely of Greek origin.³⁹ His work emerged three decades after the Battle of Kosovo, at a time when several texts of nearly identical content had already been composed. For this reason, his writing bears witness to at least two aspects crucial to questions of identification: first, how a writer of foreign origin – whose linguistic expression contains a significant number of Greek words and calques – introduces his own cultural repertoire⁴⁰ into the Serbian-Slavic

³⁷ See: Ђ. Трифуновић, *Српски средњовековни сјиси о кнезу Лазару и Косовском боју* (Крушевац: Багдала, 1968); М. Васиљевић, *Култови свейих на централном Балкану у време османских освајања* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2021), 39–79, 290–303; И. Плаовић, “Слатка и ствар и име: реторичка природа Слова о свейом кнезу Лазару непознатог Раваничанина”, *Зборник Мајице српске за књижевности и језик* 65/1 (2017), 53–69.

³⁸ The encomium can be found in the following manuscripts: *The Paterikon and Triodion* (РНБ ГИЛФ 58), *Služabnik (Srbijak)* – ХИЛ 509, *Danilo's Anthology* (ПБ 51) *Služabnik (Srbijak)* – ХИЛ 505, *Anthology* (JAZU 107. II D 139, Kukuljević 277). For a detailed analysis of the manuscript tradition, see: И. Плаовић, *Реторичко наслеђе српској средњовековља: слова и ѿхвале* [докторска дисертација] (Београд: Филолошки факултет, 2023), 94–95 (<https://phaidrabg.bg.ac.rs/view/o:31333,23.5.2025>). See also: В. Мошин, “К датировке рукописей из собрания А. Ф. Гильфердинга Государственной Публичной библиотеки”, *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы* 15 (1958), 409–417; И. Шпадиер, “Антологический состав хиландарской рукописи № 505”, в: *Imperium Bulgariae. Studia in honorem annorum LX Georgii N. Nikolov / Българско царство. Сборник в чест на 60-годишнината на доц. д-р Георги Н. Николов*, ред. А. Николов (София: Университетско издателство “Св. Климент Охридски”, 2018), 815–827; В. Мошин, *Тирилски рукописи Јуѿславенске академије* [књ.] I–II (Загреб: ЈАЗУ, 1955), 156.

³⁹ Ђ. Трифуновић, “Андоније Рафаил Епактит”, у: *Сјиси о Косову*, прир. М. Грковић, (Београд: СКЗ; Просвета, 1993), 77–80.

⁴⁰ Doug Brent explains that readers' interpretations are influenced by their "repertoire of experience", which encompasses prior knowledge, experiences, and values that shape how they engage with and evaluate new texts. This can also refer to writers. See: D. Brent,

literary tradition; and second, how, within a relatively short period, a need arose to engage with the same cult, within the same literary genre, but through a renewed stylistic approach. After presenting several examples, I will seek to examine what the emergence of Andonije's work signifies in terms of rhetorical practices of identification. In view of our thematic focus and the considerable complexity and scope of the work, the analysis will be confined to select aspects of the text. In the encomium composed by Andonije Rafail, it becomes apparent – even upon an initial reading – that the density of style obstructs access to the underlying narrative. This is apparent, for instance, in a single sentence situated near the beginning of the text:

“Newly radiant like Hector, in the final race of progress, circling beneath the life-giving sphere of the heavens, with exceptional reverence among the Orthodox, is he called refuge. From his very depths, as a star newly risen in the last of our generations – when the current of human life turns towards its setting – is he revealed, onto the stage of this life, to us, presenting the brave martyr upon the sea, whose names in the upper book, written in the starry ink of piety, beyond worldly fame, are painted by the hand of the artist. Sealed with the seven-sealed number are they, whereupon the throne sits the Lamb, accustomed to judging with the sevenfold eye of the Holy Spirit, as His beloved disciple saw in the revelation on Patmos. And within it, every nature for the salvation of humankind is painted by the Spirit.”⁴¹

Andonije's 'loose' composition contains elements in which the homiletic, narrative, and metapoetic discourse constantly intertwine, while the encomiastic tone, in the strictest sense, appears only in the ekphrasis and apostrophes to Prince Lazar, with no true acclamations whatsoever. This is a characteristic of Andonije's work that sets it apart from the vast majority of other encomia, and from a great number of hagiographies. Acclamation, or praise in the narrower sense, with an anaphoric sequence, often incorporating salutary praise (chairetic anaphora, hajretizam), is nearly an obligatory part of both encomia and hagiography. Moreover, it represents the stylistically most condensed and exalted part of both; yet, the work written in the most condensed and exalted style of old Serbian literature contains none of this! Why? I believe the answer lies precisely in the fact that the entire work of Andonije Rafail is conceived and executed in such a heightened expression that there is no

Reading as Rhetorical Invention: Knowledge, Persuasion, and the Teaching of Research-Based Writing (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992), 56–59.

⁴¹ The translations are, unless otherwise indicated, mine. For this edition see: Трифунувић, Слово, 1976. For a contemporary Serbian translation see: *Хресѣомаиѣја средњовековне књижевности* [том] II, прир. Т. Јовановић, (Београд: Филолошки факултет, 2012), 143–159

room for an acclamation which would otherwise serve as the stylistic and emotional climax of the encomium; simply put, everything here is a climax, and the entire text is written as one continuous euphoric peak.

When one attempts to organise the material presented in this encomium within the reader's cognitive space, or even to grasp any semblance of order, and when one tries to penetrate the system of Andonije's 'word weaving', the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the aforementioned modes (narrative, metapoetic, homiletic, descriptive, prayerful, etc.) rapidly alternate, each time in a different sequence. For instance: metapoetic-descriptive-narrative; homiletic-narrative-metapoetic; narrative-prayerful-homiletic, and so on. Divided into sections, the encomium proceeds as follows:

1. Introductory Contemplation
2. Abstract Ekphrasis
3. Metapoetic Passage
4. Ekphrasis
5. Narrative Passage (on the reign and birth of Stefan)
6. Short Speech by Lazar
7. Homiletic Passage
8. Narrative Passage (on the construction of Ravanica)
9. Metapoetic Passage
10. Narrative Passage (on the arrival of the Turks)
11. Short Prayer by Lazar
12. Homiletic Passage
13. Narrative Passage (on the Battle of Kosovo)
14. Ekphrasis of Lazar
15. Metapoetic Passage
16. Narrative Passage (on the translation of the relics)
17. Lament of the Sons
18. Milica's Lament
19. Apostrophe to Lazar
20. Homiletic Passage
21. Prayer
22. Inscription
23. Appeal to the Listeners/Readers

This type of composition could, as some might argue, result in a muddled and confounding text. Yet, I would also point out that it functions as a sort of 'rollercoaster', with Andonije Rafail expertly steering the reader's emotional and cognitive journey through rapid transitions between various discourses, all the while remaining faithful to the core characteristics of his *pletenije sloves* – numerous compounds, striking imagery, an accumulation of epithets, and long, syntactically nearly

unmanageable sentences. In rhetorical terms, the effect he seeks to achieve does not rely on the text's level of comprehensibility, but rather on its very incomprehensibility.

One example of this deliberate obscurity is found in Andonije's inversions. The following examples are cited according to the edition by Đ. Trifunović, along with attempts at translation into English that aim to preserve the original inversions as much as possible:

And praise-born, for the new Lazarus, merrily may the nations rejoice.

“И похваалораслабны ѿ новоу лазароу весело да ликуютъ ꙗзыци.”

Today, O holiday-lovers, spiritually hath opened to us from above the Lord the eye of the godly word.

“Д(ь)н(ь)сь празнолюбци д(оу)ховное ѿтврѣзе намъ нже съвыше вл [а] д [ы] ка б(о)ж(ь) ст(ь)вномоу словоу око.”

And as a treasury of virtue, sweet-gazing an eye of discernment, and of reason a reed.

“И ꙗкоже нѣкое добродѣтелѣ скровнище сладкозрителнымъ расоужденіа окоу и разоуму трѣстїю.”

Just it is, that Davidic too, as testimony to the law, to summon – the word.

“Праведно же и д(а)в(и)дское ѿно, въ с [ъ] вѣд [ѣ] телства оуставъ привести сл(о)во.”

There exist many more such examples. The *pletenje sloves* consistently employed by Andonije Rafail corresponds to the Asianism of classical rhetoric, as opposed to Atticism.⁴²

One of the most rhetorically charged moments in the encomium is the passage depicting Princess Milica mourning Prince Lazar during the translation of his relics, following his death.

What remains constant in this rhetorical situation – the lament of the Princess – is the act of falling upon the Prince's body and a particular kind of *ἔκστασις* (“transport of the mind”, “stupefaction”, or “derangement”), followed by a return to conscious awareness and the utterance of speech, that is, of song, or lament (“she spoke”, “weeping, she cried aloud”, “lamenting she said”, “her song burst forth”)⁴³. This should not be interpreted as a direct echo of the historical translation of Prince Lazar's relics, but rather as a topos. For, when this rhetorical situation – Milica's lament (which the above-cited phrases already sufficiently define in terms of genre, as a simultaneity of speech, song, and weeping) – is compared with a much older one, namely that which precedes Andromache's lament in Book 22 of the *Iliad*,⁴⁴ it becomes immediately clear that it reproduces in detail the established schema of the

⁴² Enos, *Encyclopedia*, 41.

⁴³ All examples are taken from: *Хрестоматија средњовековне књижевности* II, 143–159. The translations are mine.

⁴⁴ Homer, *Iliad* [vol.] II. Books 13–24, transl. A. T. Murray, (Harvard University Press, 1925).

woman's lament over a fallen warrior – a motif that survived as an intact commonplace from Homer to the Serbian Middle Ages.⁴⁵

That the *Iliad* could have exerted direct influence on the encomiast is suggested by a striking comparison in Andonije's encomium: Lazar is described as "newly-radiant as Aktur (Hector)".⁴⁶ This is, moreover, the only such comparison in the entire Serbian-Slavonic encomiastic corpus, and it reveals how a writer of Greek origin incorporates his own repertoire of literary and rhetorical references into a local thematic context. Another example of this kind is the comparison of Prince Lazar with Saint Nestor of Thessalonica, while Sultan Murad is likened to Lyaaios.⁴⁷

Let us return briefly to the lament of Princess Milica. When a ruler's wife mourns her husband, this grieving over the rupture of life paradoxically acquires the significance of affirming a continuity. In lamenting him, she glorifies him; from the position of power as his regent, *pro tempore* co-successor, along with their son Stefan, she ensures the permanence of his exalted status – once a ruler, now a saint. This is stated almost explicitly in her speech as rendered by Andonije Rafail: "Who, by the breadth of her weeping, prepares a fitting table for future celebration?"⁴⁸ Her lament, firmly situated within the tradition of female laments, is meant – by the very "breadth of her weeping" – to secure the future glory of the newly-martyred Prince. In this way, the hero undergoes an ontological transformation; he becomes a metaphysical entity, and the object of a cultic construction intended to strengthen the position of those who succeed him – while the position of the Princess, as both co-successor and mediator of succession, is affirmed.

Particular attention must be given to the fact that Milica's lament, as crafted by Andonije and of such breadth that it may be regarded as an autonomous composition in its own right, encompasses all the key formal features traditionally associated with the encomium: rhetorical questions, anaphoric sequences, genitive and dative metaphors, and comparisons.

What distinguishes this rhetorical situation – where the tone of lament intertwines with the classical tone of encomium – is, among other things, its capacity to assemble, in the fullest possible sense, those who mourn the fallen hero. From such a situation emerges a hyperbolic sense of collective unity in deprivation. In this way,

⁴⁵ Although the period on which our project focuses is commonly referred to as the early modern era, in the context of literary production and the specific characteristics of its poetics, we cannot speak of significant differences in comparison to the preceding period of the 13th and 14th centuries. Rather, the literature produced in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries is also regarded as medieval.

⁴⁶ *Хресѣомаѣија средњовековне књижевности* II, 143–159.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

the collective acquires an additional rhetorical identification: the assembled are not merely Christians, or members of a particular people, or opponents of the 'Ishmaelites'; they are also those who grieve the same hero.

Given its thematic focus and date of composition, which precedes the primary period covered by our research project, this is also the only encomiastic work in which one can directly observe the attitude towards the Ottoman 'Other' – a crucial element in the rhetorical identification. This construction, in the case of Andonije Rafail, is grounded in the dichotomy between good and evil, a defining feature of the medieval worldview. It unfolds through three central rhetorical mechanisms: the mobilisation of Hellenic cultural memory – spanning classical and early Byzantine sources; scriptural allusions; and the zoomorphisation of the Other.



A writer from Novo Brdo in the second half of the 15th century⁴⁹ – who, among the well-known encomiasts of Serbian medieval literature⁵⁰ (except for the anonymous author of the encomium dedicated to Stefan Štiljanović), appears last – turns to themes much older than those of the Serbian medieval period, namely to the saints of the 3rd century, Saint Demetrius of Thessalonica and Saint Nicholas of Myra. Both praises, regardless of their unequal length (the praise to Saint Nicholas occupies only one page), represent the most typical examples of this genre in terms of composition. In fact, if one had to choose works that are entirely paradigmatic for the classical five-part structure of an encomium, these two compositions by Kantakuzin would undoubtedly be it.⁵¹

⁴⁹ About Dimitrije Kantakuzin, see: Ђ. Трифуновић, *Димитрије Канџакузин* (Београд: Нолит, 1963); Димитър Кантакюзин, *Събрани съчинения*, съст. Б. Ст. Ангелов и др., (София: Българска Академия на науките, 1989); *Сјиси Димитрија Канџакузина и Владислава Грамаџика*, прир. Ј. Грковић Мејџор, (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1993).

⁵⁰ Although the period under discussion is generally designated in historiography as belonging to the early modern era, the literary periodisation operates according to a different principle. All literature composed in the Serbian Slavonic language is considered medieval until the late 17th and early 18th centuries, when new language, as well as new aesthetic and poetic orientations, begin to appear.

⁵¹ The encomia can be found in the following manuscripts: Compilation for Demetrius of Thessalonica (RNB VYAZ Q 279), Compilation of homilies and lives (NIK 49), Averkije's October Panegyric (HIL 440). For more information, see: Плаовић, *Рейџоричко наслеђе*, 117–119; Ж. Л. Левшина, *Рукописи сербског правописања Руској националној библиотеки, каталог* (Санкт-Петербург: Руској национална библиотека, 2021), 36; Д. Богдановић, *Инвентар ћириличких рукописа у Југославији (XI–XVIII века)* (Београд: САНУ, 1982), 35. К. Иванова, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica* (София: Академично издателство "проф. Марин Дринов", 2008), 96, 141.

144

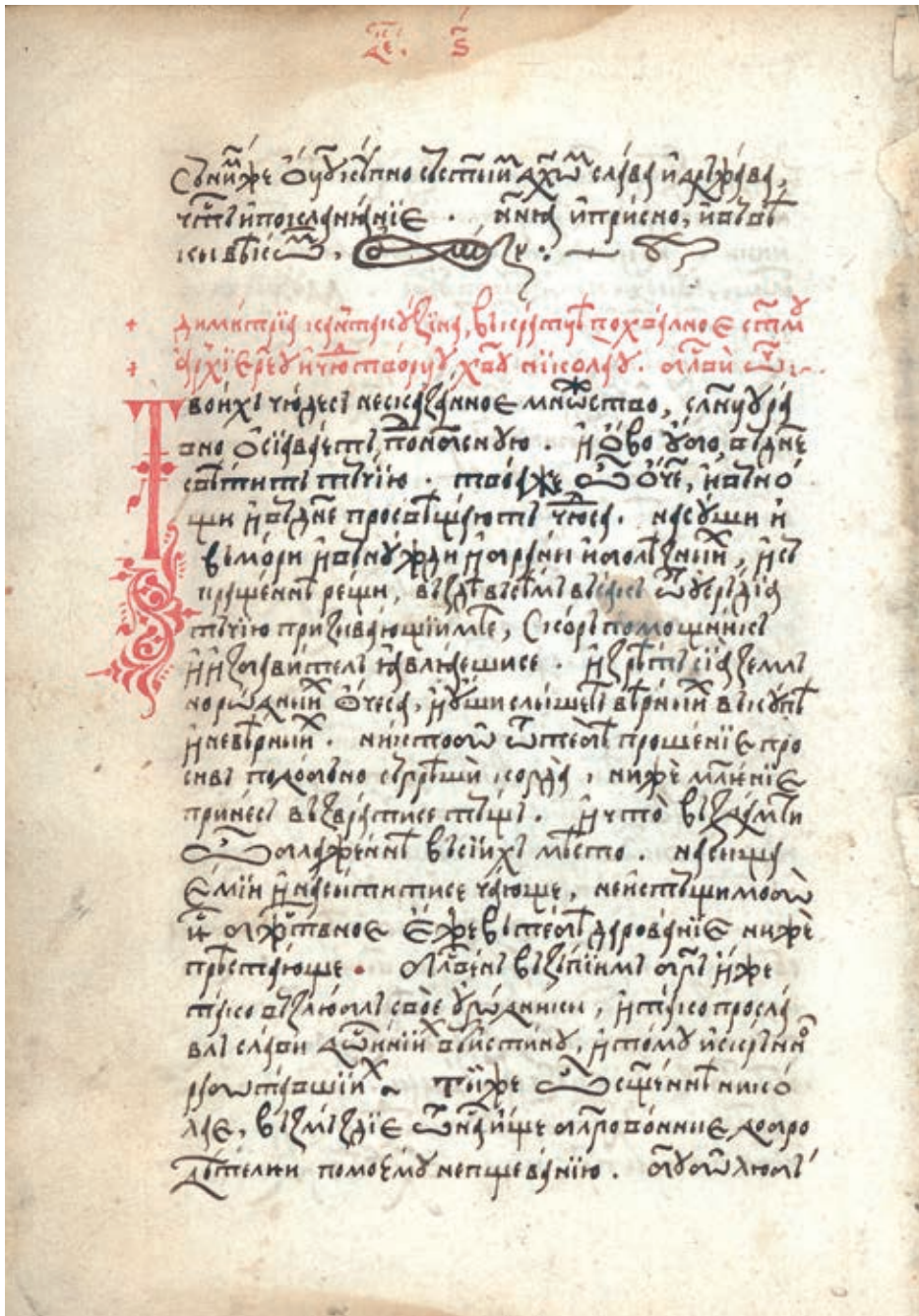


Fig. 2. Collection of Homilies and Vitae, Nikoljac 49, Serbian, 16th century, Encomium to Saint Nicholas, fol. 47v

The praise to Saint Demetrius of Thessalonica,⁵² moreover, is a work with an exceptionally clear rhetorical situation, and for this reason, it is valuable to us: it was written for the summer feast of Saint Demetrius and delivered in the Basilica of Saint Demetrius in Thessalonica, as noted by Đ. Trifunović,⁵³ and as the author's voice explicitly states: "Let us come to the divine church of the martyr"; "We who are gathered today in the divine and holy temple of the martyr"; "We have come here now to honor the martyr's summer feast [...] let us fervently approach the streams of peace that flow from the rich source of the martyr's body and abundantly draw the inexhaustible gifts".⁵⁴ The praise begins with an address to the gathered, from which we can draw one of two conclusions – either the audience consists of monks, or it is a classic rhetorical *captatio benevolentiae*, by which the orator earns the goodwill of the listeners – through praise:

"You who have been enriched by the acquisition of incorruption, who have escaped the decay of the perishable and been delivered from the bonds of death – it is through the providence of the Lord and the Most High, He who, in His love for mankind, condescended to dwell among us.

You who desire to become dwellers of Paradise and heirs of the heavenly Kingdom – for the sake of keeping the holy evangelical commandments, and above all for the sake of the ineffable and boundless mercy shown through the goodness of our God and Father:

You who bear upon yourselves the name of Christ as a most precious garment, who strive for the heights and pursue heavenly wisdom according to your strength, and as much as is within your power – walk in righteousness..."⁵⁵

⁵² According to Đorđe Trifunović, the origin of this praise can be placed in the ninth decade of the 15th century. See Ђ. Трифуновић, "Кантакузинова похвала писана за солунску базилику светог Димитрија", *Исходник* 5 (1993), 39–55.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ For the original text, see editions: Б. Ст. Ангелов, "Две неизвестни творби на Димитър Кантакузин", *Известия на Института за българска литература* (1959), 265–273; Г. Данчев, "Неизвестен препис на Похвално слово на Димитър Солунски от Димитър Кантакузин", *Известия на Института за българска литература* (1972), 67–78; А. Е. Tachiaos, "Nouvelles considérations sur l'œuvre littéraire de Démétrius Cantacuzène", *Cyrrilomethodianum* 1 (1971), 152–159.

⁵⁵ ѡлицѣ нѣтаѣнїа добрѣишииѣ обогатиѣ се стежанїемъ тѣлѣнїа избѣгшиѣ и смѣртныхъ свобождыѣ се оузь радѣ смѣотренїа владѣнїа и краннїего нже о нас ѣлколюбнаго съхощенїа ѡлицѣ радѣ жителѣ быти желающе и цѣтвїа нѣснаго наслѣднїици радѣ творенїа бѣгыхъ египтскихъ заповѣдѣи патѣ же радѣ мѣлти несповѣднїици и безмѣрнѣи поучинѣи щедротѣи хѣи бѣа нашего ѡлицѣи хѣи именованїе на себѣ яко многоцѣннѣишю носещи одеждоу и высокихъ соущи рабѣи нѣи горнѣи моудрѣи по силѣи и по елико моци бѣгнѣи рече се . For the original text, see editions: Ангелов, "Две неизвестни творби"; Данчев, "Неизвестен препис на Похвално слово"; Tachiaos, "Nouvelles considérations".

By introducing the listeners to the praise, Dimitrije Kantakuzin achieves a dual purpose with this address: not only does he flatter the readers, but he also calls them to a special responsibility, while simultaneously insisting on what they all have in common, namely the key aspects of Christ's legacy. Prepared in this way, they, as a community of the exceptional, can proceed to celebrate the saint as 'one of them'.

The invocation of Christ – otherwise, of course, a commonplace in medieval ecclesiastical literature – is here particularly emphasised, such that immediately following the introduction comes the first anaphoric sequence, "Glory to Thee", which is not addressed to Demetrius of Thessalonica but to Christ the King.⁵⁶ This choice – the decision to dedicate the first anaphora so early in the text to God rather than to the saint – is relatively rare among medieval Serbian encomiasts. From this rhetorical move, one might discern a heightened need to establish, from the very outset, a strong rhetorical identification grounded in Christian faith. On the level of poetics, this is achieved through a strategy of generalisation – or, to put it colloquially, a rhetorical raising of the stakes: the focus is not solely on the saint who is being praised, but always, and above all, on Christ.

In the prayerful address to God that follows the anaphora, the content of the supplication is revealed, along with yet another dimension of its placement immediately after the introduction – this is, in effect, a prayer for creation, a descendant of the ancient invocation of the Muses. After this, we are presented with an 'abstract narrative' concerning Demetrius. The nature of this narrative warrants closer attention. We shall present here a passage from this 'narrative' and compare it to Andonije's ekphrasis in order to understand what kind of discourse emerges from this intersection of contemplation and narration.

Kantakuzin: "As a tree planted, according to the prophet, by streams of water, it grows gloriously in the magnitude of good deeds, reaching to the heavenly heights. And firmly, its root is planted in the foundation, that is, in faith, branching out widely and enriched with the foliage of teaching. Then, those scorched by disbelief are brought into the shade of this teaching, and by the cooling words of piety, they are quickly lifted from despondency to the true heights of heartfelt devotion. It draws the eyes of the beholder to meditation, flourishing in the extraordinary purity of the body, and the perfect innocence therein."⁵⁷

Andonije: "from our lineage, he bears the crown of deeds, by the extension of manliness, earnestly turning thought and not for long, having deftly circumscribed

⁵⁶ *Хресѣомаѣиѣја средњовековне књижевности* II, 202.

⁵⁷ For the original text, see editions: Ангелов, "Две неизвестни творби"; Данчев, "Неизвестен препис на Похвално слово"; Tachiaos, "Nouvelles considérations".

the circle of deeds, in the last era of progress, traversing the life-giving sphere, calling the shelter among the Orthodox the ‘newly arisen star in our last lineage.’”⁵⁸

While Dimitrije, without saying anything concrete, nevertheless employs the narrative present tense (which, of course, serves to enhance vividness and immediacy) as a signal of narration, Andonije merely offers a tautological description of the saint. In neither case do we learn anything substantial about the holy figure: both passages could easily be inserted into any other encomium or hagiographic text without betraying any indication that they pertain to a specific individual. They consist of a series of commonplaces such as “crown of ascetic striving”, “good tree”, “refuge”, “star”, “teacher of the faith”, and so forth.

It is characteristic that both authors – arguably the most abstract and lyrical among Serbian encomiasts – go on to concretise their subject shortly after these abstract passages. Thus, Andonije Rafail offers a second ekphrasis of the saint, this time with more particularised details, while Dimitrije Kantakuzin proceeds to recount a concrete narrative about the martyrdom of Saint Demetrios of Thessalonica during the reign of Emperor Maximian.

Between these two narrative moments – the pure abstraction and the historical account – another direct address to the audience is inserted. This address contains one of the two ubiquitous topoi of Serbian epideictic tradition, which we shall, for clarity’s sake, describe here as the ‘it is not unknown to you’ topos and the ‘all for all’ topos. These two rhetorical figures are of particular significance for understanding the mechanism of Burkean identification as it appears in this case. The first refers to the typical statements made by encomiasts, where they invoke prior knowledge, perceptions, or the understanding of the audience, often with the intention of elevating the narrative about the saint to the level of the universally known – and thus the universally accepted – facts. Referencing shared experience is one of the primary methods of establishing identification between the speaker and the listeners. The second topos, present later in the encomium, concerns the dative (e.g., “father to the poor”, “companion to travellers”) or genitive (e.g., “advocate for the hopeless”) metaphors,⁵⁹ which attempt to ‘cover’ all the ways in which the saint was a figure for all types of people in need. These metaphors are abundant, and in the case of Kantakuzin, this is succinctly expressed as follows:

“To all, you are everything, and you are perpetually present by the grace bestowed upon you by God.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ All examples are taken from: *Хрестіомаїија средњовековне књижевности* II, 143–159. The translations are mine.

⁵⁹ This is, of course, only visible in the original Old Church Slavonic text.

⁶⁰ For the original text, see editions: Ангелов, “Две неизвестни творби”; Данчев, “Неизвестен препис на Похвално слово”; Tachiaos, “Nouvelles considérations”.

The two instances of metaphors I previously cited emerge from another encomium by Kantakuzin, dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Myra. Here, they mark the culmination and conclusion of the work, subtly transforming the anaphoric sequence into a resounding acclamation:

“You, educator of childhood, you, teacher of youth, guide of maturity, honor of old age [...] guide to the blind, corrector to the lame, healer to the sick, succour to the powerless, leader to the mariners, savior to the drowned [...] companion to the travellers, liberator to the captives,”⁶¹

and so forth. This exceptionally concise encomium by Kantakuzin astoundingly condenses all the traditional elements of the encomiastic genre. Outlined by sections it looks like this:

1. Invocation
2. Ekphrasis
3. Rhetorical questions
4. Acclamation (anaphoric sequence)

It opens with an invocation to the saint, employing a strikingly effective and somewhat unconventional topos of surpassing. Whereas most authors of encomiastic works resort to comparisons drawn from the Old Testament when invoking surpassing, Kantakuzin’s miracle-working Nicholas surpasses the sun itself: “while it shines only by day, your miracles, O Father, shine both day and night.”⁶² This swiftly transitions into an ekphrasis of the saint, followed by a brief rhetorical sequence of questions, culminating in a concise acclamation, framed by an anaphoric sequence of ‘rejoice’, which Kantakuzin artfully condenses as follows: “Rejoice, rejoice, and once more, rejoice, I call you, Father! And I proclaim again and again: rejoice!”

Of the anaphoric sequences, only the anaphoras remain, which, as they no longer serve as sentence openers but instead complete the sentences, no longer retain their original anaphoric function in the strictest sense. Nevertheless, this may offer an insight into the medieval conception of the poetics of praise: specifically, when a writer seeks to condense the text, they are far more inclined to eliminate all superfluous material, rather than stripping away the formal markers of acclamation.

This fact further illuminates the choice made by both Dimitrije Kantakuzin and Andonije Rafail to present radically abstracted narratives and ekphrases in their encomia. In laudatory discourse, the primary concern is not what happened,

⁶¹ For the original text, see editions: Ангелов, “Две неизвестни творби”; Данчев, “Неизвестен препис на Похвално слово”; Tachiaos, “Nouvelles considérations”.

⁶² Ангелов, “Две неизвестни творби”.

in a historical sense, but what it means in a metaphysical or spiritual register. It is not historical concretisation, but metaphysical signification that constitutes the essence of the encomiastic gesture. Thus, it is of greater importance to say to the saint “Rejoice”, than to explain why, or on whose behalf. The formula itself already contains all that is necessary for sacred communication to take place. Following the initial *chairetismos*, the familiar dative metaphors resume the acclamatory movement, culminating in prayer, thereby completing the text in both compositional and spiritual terms.

Let us now return to the remaining compositional levels in Kantakuzin’s *Encomium to Saint Demetrios of Thessalonica*. The text bears distinctly oral characteristics, containing no fewer than four direct addresses to the audience – an impressively high number given its modest length. In this light, the word ‘proportion’ could well serve as a key to understanding Kantakuzin’s poetics. These addresses are carefully positioned: the first occurs at the very beginning, the second follows the abstract narrative, the third comes after the concrete episode, and the fourth appears at the close of the ekphrasis. In the first instance, as previously observed, the direct address serves to establish a laudatory tone, to gain the goodwill of the audience, and to foster a sense of communal participation in the act of celebration. In what follows, I shall examine all four addresses collectively, in order to discern their rhetorical and structural function within the encomiastic composition.

You, who bear upon yourselves the name of Christ as a garment most precious... who set your minds on heavenly things... and who, to the best of your strength, strive to surpass others in virtue! You, lovers of feasts, lovers of martyrs, lovers of God—let us today cast aside the tumult of earthly cares, and come forth into the divine church of the martyr	I believe, O radiant celebrants and beloved assembly, that to you—who are in any way acquainted with writing—it is not unknown what evils those pagans wrought across the oikoumene in those days...	A small portion of the saint’s life, O lovers of sacred words, have I briefly set before you. It is fitting now to turn to praise.	Let us draw near, O assembly of martyr-lovers and radiant celebrants, we who are gathered today in the divine and sacred temple of the martyr.

What immediately stands out is that the orator does not miss a single opportunity, in any of his addresses, to name his listeners as: “lovers of the feast, lovers of martyrs, lovers of God”, “radiant celebrants, beloved assembly”, “loving listeners”, “martyr-loving and radiant feast-celebrating assembly”.⁶³ These, we can see, are all variations on a single theme – the love of the audience for the martyr, their love for the feast, and the speaker’s love for the audience. In this case, love emerges as the central motif of communion, the primary mechanism that animates and sustains it.

This is only one example of the meticulous care with which Dimitrije Kantakuzin composes his encomium. When outlined by sections, the structure of the praise unfolds as follows:

1. Address to the audience
2. Anaphoric sequence of praise to God: “Glory to You”
3. Prayer for creation
4. Abstract narrative
5. Address to the audience
6. Concrete narrative
7. Address to the audience
8. Ekphrasis
9. Contemplation and address to God
10. Address to the audience
11. Acclamation with an anaphoric sequence of “Rejoice”
12. Concluding prayer and moral teaching

As we can see, the most frequently repeated discursive mode here is the direct address to the audience, which eloquently underscores the fact that, in encomiastic literature, the true centre of gravity is the listener rather than the object of praise. Through these continual returns to apostrophe – which always also functions as an invitation to participate – the rhetor forges a strong and enduring bond with the audience.

Kantakuzin devotes considerable space to the acclamation or praise in the strict sense, where the most interesting elements from the perspective of *inventio* are the metaphors: “fragrant flower of chastity”, “fruitful olive tree in the house of God”, “vine planted by God”, “beautiful rose adorned with scarlet blood”. And here, as in all other aspects, Kantakuzin carefully ensures variation and cohesion; all the metaphors he employs are, without exception, drawn from nature – flowers and fruits.

Of course, the metaphors Kantakuzin uses are not of his own invention but belong to the stock repertoire of the rhetorical and liturgical tradition. The use of the traditional repertoire is precisely one of the main sources of rhetorical identification

⁶³ Хресѣоматиѣја средњовековне књижевности II, 202.

and communion. For instance, Saint Demetrios is called a fruitful vine by Clement of Ohrid as well.⁶⁴ It is worth emphasising here that stock metaphors and fixed epithets should not be equated with *topoi*. A *topos* presupposes a complex structure, a recurring ‘situation’ that may reappear in various forms, but not necessarily in identical expressions. A commonplace is, therefore, a conceptual rather than a stylistic pattern.

This is one of the hallmarks of the distinctive style that Kantakuzin cultivates in his *encomia* – a style which differs both from the predominantly narrative style of the *encomiast* who immediately precedes Andonije, Danilo of Banjska, and from the expansive and monumental style of the greatest Serbian *encomiast*, Teodosije of Hilandar, as well as from the dense and intricate weaving found in Andonije Rafail. It may best be described as elevated and abstract, yet at the same time clear and restrained. The traditional fourfold classification of rhetorical styles offers a category that may suit Kantakuzin well: the so-called graceful style (*genus tenue*). Everything in it is careful, measured, harmonious, deliberate, concise – everything in its rightful place. It is no wonder, then, that Kantakuzin also produced one of the greatest achievements of late medieval Serbian lyricism.⁶⁵

4. Encomiastic Identification in the Praise of Stefan Štiljanović

The *Encomium to Stefan Štiljanović* belongs to a group of several texts dedicated to this otherwise not widely known figure from the late 15th and the first half of the 16th century.⁶⁶ It was published, based on a manuscript copy (PB 56), and translated by Tomislav Jovanović.⁶⁷ The manuscript tradition of the *encomium* is rather modest, as it has been preserved in only two witnesses.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Д. Н. Петканова, “Нови черти на похвалното слово през XIV–XV в., Търновски писмена: алманах на Търновската книжовна школа 2 (2009), 100–130.

⁶⁵ See: *Хресѣомаѣиѣ средњовековне књижевности* II, 190.

⁶⁶ М. Васиљевић, О. Крешић, “Култ светог и манастирска економија: Прослављање Стефана Штиљановића у Шишатовцу под османском влашћу”, *Историјски часопис* 72 (2023), 343–374; Н. Половина, “Свети Стефан Штиљановић као Јосиф Прекрасни: Прилог изучавању једне библијске паралеле”, *Зборник Маѣице срѣске за књижевност и језик* 61 (2013), 347–362.

⁶⁷ Т. Јовановић, “Похвално и Повесно слово о деспоту Стефану Штиљановићу”, *Књижевна историја* 10/38 (1978), 344–356; translated in: Т. Јовановић, “Непознати писац: Похвално слово светом Стефану Штиљановићу”, *Источник* 2/7–8 (1993), 79–84.

⁶⁸ *Menologium* (PB 56) and *Srbljak* (HIL 287). For more information, see: Плаовић, *Рейоричко наслеђе*, 119–120; Д. Богдановић, *Киѣлої ћирилских рукописи манастира Хиландара. Сѣаре шѣамѣане књиѣ манастира Хиландара* (Београд: САНУ, Народна библиотека Србије, 1978), 126–127; *Каталог славянских рукописей афонских обителей*, ред. А. А. Турилов, Л. В. Мошкова, А. Е. Н. Тахиаос (Београд: Чигоја штампа, 2016), 406.

The structure of this encomium – the most recent among medieval Serbian texts of its genre – opens with the conventional topos of affected modesty and is further distinguished by an introductory allegory that establishes a symbolic link between the wreath of praise and the royal crown. This motif is, as expected, framed within the context of the name “new Stefan”, he whose very name signifies a wreath (*venceimenit*).

“A great praise and adornment to an emperor is the crown and diadem, and without these, it is unseemly for him to reign. Yet if a crown and diadem befit an earthly emperor, how much more does it befit the righteous and wreath-named Stefan to be honoured in memory with a diadem of praise. Even those who seek to craft an imperial crown and diadem are gripped by great labour and awe, and undertake toil and suffering, fearing lest in any way their crown prove unworthy of the emperor. Though they gather with skill materials fit for a royal diadem – silver, gold, purple cloth, precious stones, and gleaming pearls – we, in turn, gather even nobler adornments to praise the memory of the saint. Instead of purple, we assemble the praise of his righteous virtues; instead of silver, the tried and true words of the Spirit; instead of gleaming gold, the golden-radiant words of the Apostles; instead of glittering pearls, the most precious pearl – the understanding of divinely inspired words; and in place of costly stones, a single priceless stone, the cornerstone – who is Christ.”⁶⁹

A somewhat extended quotation was necessary here in order to observe just how many features characteristic of the poetics of praise are present within a relatively limited passage of this work. Alongside the topos of self-deprecation, we also encounter the standard topos of surpassing. What is unconventional, however, lies in the second part of the comparison, which refers to the author of the encomium himself: “we, in turn, gather even nobler adornments.” As the allegory develops, it weaves in two rhetorical figures drawn from the same classical repertoire.

One of these is the enumeration of material in order to later contrast it with the spiritual realm, and the other is the full explication of the allegory, in the manner of the *Physiologus* and other instructive writings; the need to ‘unravel’ the image. This also hints at the author’s tendency towards didacticism, as a homiletic passage follows immediately after the resolution and conclusion of the allegorical introduction – something that, of course, is not unique to this work. Between it and the subsequent sermon section, only a narrative will intervene. The beginning of the narrative is marked by a poetically significant statement, in which the unknown author reveals how he distinguishes between historical writing and encomiastic writing. This means that genre awareness, primarily on a functional level, remained present even in the late stages of medieval poetics and seems to have been

⁶⁹ Јовановић, “Похвално и Повесно слово о деспоту”, 344–345.

even more explicitly emphasised in the epideictic rhetoric of the 16th century. The unknown author of the *Encomium for Stefan Štiljanović* frequently reflects on the laudatory nature of his work, using the following terms: “to adorn remembrance with a crown of praise, to beautify memory with laudation”; “to extol the memory of the holy one, we gather, instead of purple raiment, let praise be offered”; “I shall proclaim his praiseworthy words”; (ПАМЕТЬ ОУКРАСИТИ ПОХВАЛНОЮ ДІАДНИМОЮ ПОХВАЛОЮ ОУКРАСИТИ ПА(А)МЕТЬ С(ВЕ)ТАГО, ПА(А)МЕТЬ С(ВЕ)ТАГО ПОХВАЛИТИ СЪБИРАЕМЬ, ВЪМѢСТО ПОРФИРИ ПОХВАЛЕНІЕ ПОХВАЛНІЕ БѢСѢДИ ЕГО ВЪЗГ(ЛАГО)ЛЮ).

In the majority of cases, as we observe, the encomiast employs expressions of praise alongside the words “remembrance” or “memory”. The subtle difference, which can be discerned through careful reading, compared to the works of earlier periods, consists of a blending of various parts of the composition that are no longer so distinctly separated. Thus, for example, the narrative will almost ‘slide’ into a homily, only to return to its narrative course, and, constantly interrupted by preaching, transform into an ekphrasis. We will attempt to illustrate this discursive blending through selected excerpts:

“This holy and righteous Stefan was born beyond the borders of Zahumlje, near the Southern Sea, a splendid vessel of southern warmth [...] Even in his youthful maturation, increasing his knowledge towards God, he showed himself to be deeply devout. And the Lord, who has made mankind in one heart, who sits on the high cherubic throne and looks into the abyss and depths of every human heart [...] made him also great among the apostles, Paul [...] although Paul was initially a persecutor of Christians [...] Christ captured him [...] And I believe that Stefan, too, advanced towards the higher calling from his youth. As he grew, it seems that he also received an education in letters [...] As John Chrysostom said: “Those upon whom the Holy Spirit rested, as on the cherubim.” And this one speaks in the book [...] which is called Bisernik or Margarit.”⁷⁰

What follows, as the reader may already anticipate, is a homiletic commentary on Chrysostom, interwoven with numerous biblical reminiscences, which subsequently return once more to Saint Stephen. The aim is to underscore his previously mentioned “literary education” and to situate him within a continuum of historical realisations of evangelical ideals. It hardly requires emphasising that the entire narrative of Stephen is, to a great extent, abstracted and ahistorical; this process of deconcretising what is already, to some degree, abstract was also observable in the works of Andonije Rafail and Dimitrije Kantakuzin. Thus, this later encomium confirms that the trajectory of epideictic poetics in the Serbian medieval tradition moved increasingly towards abstraction and ever more indistinct transitions between different encomiastic discourses. Given the proximity of this text’s composition to

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 346–347.

the Baroque epoch in European literature, it is unsurprising that a growing 'Asianism' becomes apparent in the later encomia. The ekphrasis of the saint is primarily structured around a rhetorical syncrisis with Joseph, while the motif of Stephen feeding the people during a famine in Srem – also the central motif of his *Poučno slovo* – along with the related epithet "giver of grain", forms the narrative thread of the entire amplified description. Thus, the saint is identified, above all, through the figure of the provider.

The ekphrasis is once again followed by a commentary in the style of a sermon, and before the reader can take note, the narrative has already shifted to Stephen's burial and the desecration of his grave. The account of the 'Saracens' who were tempted by the hope of finding silver instead of relics serves as a pretext for the anonymous author to insert a brief *psogos* in the form of a direct invective against the impious – marking the only section in which identification through contrast with the Other is explicitly articulated, as was also the case in the work of Andonije. A *psogos*, the counterpart of the encomium, typically serves to assign moral blame with the intent of instructing the audience on right and wrong, often targeting specific members of the community. In this case, however, the *psogos* is directed at the Ottoman soldiers, notably not for their affiliation, but for their greed: "Reckless guard, you have invested your efforts in vain, and you did not find what you were looking for because you are not God-loving, but love vain and transitory things and keep them in your hearts."⁷¹ An invective focused in this manner is rather unusual, and to date we have found no close parallel to it in the encomiastic material of this period. As we have seen, criticisms directed at the Ottomans typically appear in texts composed shortly after the Battle of Kosovo and dedicated to Prince Lazar, where their religious affiliation is foregrounded through the use of biblical designations such as Agarenes and Ishmaelites, and where the primary mode of othering takes the form of zoomorphisation. Here, however, the Ottoman soldiers seem to function as an almost neutral object of invective, which is topical in nature and grounded in the critique of the vice of greed, as well as of a preoccupation with material values, without reference to their religious otherness. The return to the narrative is marked by the account of the saint's posthumous miracles, accompanied by an apostrophe to the audience inviting communal celebration, followed by an acclamation and a final prayer. This address to the listeners is employed for yet another homiletic passage – this time not in the service of interpreting biblical or patristic texts, but with a didactic purpose.

One of the most striking elements in this regard is the recurrence of a motif central to the renowned denunciation of vice by the much earlier encomiast

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 352.

Teodosije of Hilandar, particularly in his encomium to Saints Simeon and Sava. The anonymous author of the encomium to Stefan echoes it in the following way: “today, in memory of Saint Stephen, let us rejoice and celebrate spiritually – not in drunkenness and immoderate excess, but in prayer [...] It is said, therefore, let not your hearts be weighed down with food, drink, or worldly cares.”⁷² This *psogos* appears to function as a rhetorical commonplace of the encomiastic genre.

The acclamation structured around the anaphoric sequence “Stephen”, composed by an anonymous encomiast, is relatively short, minimalistic, and thoroughly topical. It lacks the effort to produce a rich array of diverse images or the consistent natural metaphors seen in Kantakuzin. Instead, it stands as a rhetorical relic, a conventional formula that fulfils its structural role within the encomium without extending beyond it. The metaphors are recognisable and formulaic: “source of grace”, “pillar of piety”, “refuge of virtues”, and so on. Inventiveness is not a defining feature of this acclamation. However, as previously noted, creativity emerges in the compositional quality of the text, which relies on discursive blending and abrupt transitions – from narrative to sermon, from sermon to ekphrasis, and back again, in various configurations.

The final address and call to celebration explicitly reveal the original rhetorical situation, which unfolds before the saint’s relics – a fact more overtly stated here than elsewhere: “Therefore, in his memory, let us all come forth in faith and prayer before his holy shrine, which holds the relics endowed with healing.” The dominant characteristic of this encomium remains its homiletic nature – its orientation towards instruction and its clear intent to frame the saint’s praise as an exemplum, serving both exegetical and pedagogical purposes.

5. Invisible Transformations

Encomium, as a rhetorical genre, is characterised by abstraction and a metaphysical approach to identification; it offers limited concretisation, yet it is rich in subaudition and implication. Because of this, as well as due to the processual and relational nature of self-understanding (a characteristic that it shares with rhetorical thinking), it is difficult to grasp, for example, the self-conception of the encomium’s author or their relation to the community they address, in any manifest transformation. There is also the issue of the specificity of literary material, given that encomia belong not only to the rhetorical but also to the literary tradition; the writer, in this context, can be understood as an ambivalent identifier – someone whose position enables an institutional role, but also offers the possibility of subversion. We should remain attentive to this functional duplexity, as well as to the one inherent in the medieval

⁷² See *Христїомаїцїа средњовековне књижевносїи* II, 39.

and early modern writer's curious position – situated between topical imagination and the concrete realities that furnish material for literary creation.

What can be observed in the encomia of the 15th and 16th centuries is an increasing level of abstraction and generalisation, which paradoxically both expands and narrows the context: it expands it insofar as ethnic and local communities merge into a single religious community, which overshadows them, while it narrows it in that the repertoire of references and motifs, which should provoke identification and serve in the construction of both self-understanding and identification, is reduced to a limited number of Christian topoi, most often of martyrological provenance.

This maximal topicality and maximal abstraction – present both in narrative and in description – is not limited to the saint as the object of veneration, nor to the abstract, Christ-loving community of participants in the praise; it also pertains to the portrayal of the Ottoman Other, who consistently appears as a symbol rather than a concrete reality. Moreover, both the zoomorphisation and the specific biblical naming, which reduces Ottomans to a collective defined by biblical tradition, contribute to typical strategies of othering, producing a hypertrophied sense of communal unity among listeners and readers.

Moreover, by adhering to established topoi and elevating the identification to a strictly religious level, the encomiast steps outside of historical time – which is perceived as unfavourable – into a realm of timelessness, where change ceases to exist.

This is precisely why any potential transformations of self-understanding and identification remain largely invisible. Specific categories recede before metaphysical abstractions, just as narrative yields to rhetorical acclamation. This does not imply that reconfigurations never occur, or that identifications are static or in a state of hibernation. However, a society oriented towards the preservation of values – one that does not view change as inherently positive, and which, in poetic terms, privileges topicality and the perpetuation of tradition over novelty and originality – cannot permit explicit or concrete transformations of its self-understanding.

Another compelling aspect of identification, stemming from the specificities of the encomiastic genre, lies in the reconfiguration of the community: it is no longer merely a religious collective, but also a gathering of the present audience – a particular kind of public engaged in a participatory model of value production. This process unfolds through moral appeal, that is, through epideictic discourse, which praises or blames, thereby naming and reinforcing the fundamental social categories of honour and shame.

Participation, as a key moment in the encomium wherein communion is activated, represents an ancient mode of community formation and, consequently, of societal structuring – one that invariably relies on its own relational and situational nature.

In his *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory*, within the chapter entitled 'Rhetorical Thinking', Gerard Hauser defines rhetoric, among other things, precisely from the standpoint of its situational and relational nature: rhetoric is a "constitutive social practice" within which both narrative and dialectic emerge as "models of communal thinking".⁷³ Following a similar line of thought, Jeff Mason and Peter Washington emphasise the foundational role of speech as inquiry, which inherently presupposes publicity, mutuality, and reciprocity.⁷⁴ Within the context of a renewed humanistic education – towards which their work is primarily oriented – they regard the cultivation of the arts of speech and dialogue as an opportunity for what they term "conversational inquiry": an exploration of ideas within a (purported) community. What enables speech to be interpreted through the lens of community building is its inevitable effect, its necessary "reciprocal understanding": "sooner or later, what has been heard and understood will be actively expressed in later speech or in the behaviour of the listener."

Mikhail Bakhtin, in his study *The Problem of Speech Genres*, points to an intriguing phenomenon that he terms the "responsive understanding with delayed action".⁷⁵ It is precisely the notion of delayed action that is captured in that "sooner or later", in which the interpreted message will inevitably find its expression: "Genres of complex cultural communication are, in most cases, designed precisely for such responsive understanding of delayed action."⁷⁶ Such an effect is anticipated by virtually all rhetorical – and certainly all literary – genres, a point that has also been emphasised in the way scholars such as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca conceptualise epideictic discourse.

If we place this issue in a cognitive context to better understand how encomiastic literature operates on an identification level, we will see that thought is never solitary; the basic state of the human mind is irreparably intersubjective.⁷⁷ From this intersubjectivity arises a specific position: thinking and writing occur simultaneously in and for the rhetorical community. The supposed community of contemporaries is composed of society itself, a construct shaped precisely through rhetorical thinking. Inextricably connected to this professed community is the community of ancestors and predecessors; another name for it is tradition. Medieval writing implies creation

⁷³ G. A. Hauser, *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2002).

⁷⁴ J. Mason, P. Washington, *The Future of Thinking: Rhetoric and Liberal Arts Teaching* (London: Routledge, 1992), 16.

⁷⁵ М. М. Бахтин, *Естетика језичкој саваралаштва* (Сремски Карловци; Нови Сад: Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, 2013), 160.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ T. Oakley, *Rhetorical Minds: Meditations on the Cognitive Science of Persuasion* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2020), 8.

within tradition, which is not the same as creating 'based on tradition'. The particular relationship with preceding heritage, as suggested earlier, points to the dialogic and conversational nature of rhetorical thinking. Ultimately, the situationally and contextually conditioned reasoning, which all theorists of rhetorical thinking emphasise, is clearly visible in the multiple and complex events of hagiography. Behind medieval literary creation stands both the literary mind (Mark Turner) and the rhetorical mind (Todd Oakley), which does not calculate or prove, but persuades, relying on probability and grounded in parable, metaphor, and narrative.

This type of identification practice takes place within a discursive space that we could compare to Habermas's model of the public sphere (Öffentlichkeit).⁷⁸

Drawing on examples from encomiastic literature, we can begin to address some of the implicit rules governing the medieval and early modern public sphere. For 'public' speech in these times to be accepted, it must affirm and uphold core values, preserve and renew the canon, legitimise established institutions, and speak in a specific language. In the case of southern Slavic culture, due to the well-documented phenomenon of diglossia, this language is further distanced from everyday speech. Its usage is confined to liturgical functions, and its style, characterised by its elevated tone, strives to match the exalted nature of the subject it addresses. Central to this 'stylistic territory' is rhetoric, which serves as the foundational canon of literary education. While formalised literary education was not systematically structured in medieval and early modern Balkan societies, it was nevertheless implied.⁷⁹

The authors' continuous awareness that they are situated within a community during the production and delivery of encomiastic praises is clearly evident in the obligatory element of every encomium: the call to participate in the celebration.

A sense of belonging to a community, without which the cultic function of the old Serbian encomium would be inconceivable, is acquired through the cultivation of a shared sensibility, which is made possible precisely because rhetorical literature operates within the world. Although it is framed by the conventions of the society in which it is produced, it is, paradoxically, the very tool that establishes these conventions.

It does so by appealing to shared emotions and expectations of the collective for which, and in which, it is created. Since rhetoric, as is well-known, is grounded

⁷⁸ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, transl. T. Burger, F. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

⁷⁹ See И. Плаовић, "Српска средњовековна слова и похвале и њихово реторичко наслеђе", *Годишњак Каптегре за српску књижевност са јужнословенским књижевностима* 12 (2017), 233–244; И. Шпадијер, "Поетички ставови српских средњовековних писаца", у: *Развој ђоеџике српске књижевности: ђеорија књижевности код Срба*, ур. З. Бојовић (Београд: САНУ, 2020), 23–32.

in argumentation based on the probable, the old Serbian encomium derives its persuasive power from what is probable. And what is probable is what is constantly repeated, and therefore, what is predictable is persuasive; hence, every medieval narrative functions as an exemplum. This exemplarity of storytelling allows medieval encomiastic writings to include numerous repetitions on all levels – not only repetitions of *topoi* and figures, but also repetitions of entire sentences, abstract narratives, and maximally generalised ekphrasis. Therefore, it is not unusual for a medieval audience to find that figures such as the First Martyr Stefan, Saint Demetrius of Thessalonica, Saint George the Great Martyr, Prince Lazar, Saint Nicholas, and so on, are much the same in many respects; on the contrary, this is precisely what makes them convincing.

It is no surprise, then, that younger encomiasts, such as Kantakuzin, return to older themes and repeat the praise narratives already recounted many times by early Christian Fathers: precisely in moments of crisis in the Serbian statehood and great suffering, there is a need to revive the memory of a sequence to which, for instance, Prince Lazar belongs.

By affirming to their listeners and readers these exemplary narratives of the saints' deeds, irrespective of their historical context, rhetoricians craft truths and convey meanings. In doing so, they – I can assert without hesitation – play an active role in shaping the cultural identification of their audience and, by extension, the future generations and epochs that will inherit it.

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Self-Understandings and Identifications of Orthodox Christians in Early Modern Serbian Marginal Notes 1450–1750

Manuscripts hold an extraordinary place as both functional and artistic creations, embodying the skill and dedication of everyone involved in their production and use. Despite the rise of printed books and the inevitable wear of time, the manuscripts endure as vivid testaments to the scribes, illuminators, binders, commissioners, and the many others who have touched them. Their preservation speaks to the intertwined stories of craft, faith, and intellectual endeavour.

Produced in the carefully structured settings of small workshops or large scriptoriums, the manuscripts were designed with precision. The layout balanced text with white space to optimise readability and aesthetic harmony. Text blocks were thoughtfully organised, employing graphic and coloured elements to signal shifts between paragraphs and ideas. Beyond the core text, marginal spaces became sites for additional notes, lending the manuscripts layers of personalisation and historical depth.¹

Manuscript examination often reveals notes directly tied to the text, marking transitions between collaborators within a single manuscript. Additionally, side margins commonly contained liturgical instructions, glosses, and reading guidelines, typically added by scribes after completing the text, though editors or readers could enhance them later. These margins served as spaces for visual cues, like fish symbols

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¹ И. Шпадијер, “Живот са књигом”, у: *Приватни животи у српском средњем веку*, ур. С. Марјановић-Душанић, Д. Поповић, (Београд: Слио, 2004), 447–470; К. Иванова, *В началото бе книгата. Разказ за старобългарската книга и нейната съдба* (София: Ариадна, 2002), 27–44, 52–68; Ch. de Hamel, *Making Medieval Manuscripts* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2018).

drawing attention to specific sections, as well as for interpreting text, with scribes offering synonyms to assist future readers.²

Beyond marginalia tied to the main text, the blank sections of manuscript pages frequently featured notes about the book as an artifact. Typically penned by scribes, these annotations detailed the circumstances of the book's creation. They provide valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and personal contexts of the manuscript's production, enhancing its importance and deepening our understanding of the era in which it was crafted.

Another significant category includes the notes of orderers, donors, readers, buyers, and owners. These records serve as vital chronicles, capturing the journey of the book from its commissioning to its eventual readership. They preserve the history of the book, offering insights into its use and cultural significance throughout its existence.

Notes in manuscripts and old books often contained important details, personal reflections, anecdotes, and situational narratives, within which scribes or other individuals constructed self-understandings or identified others. These records conveyed personal ideas, as well as, more broadly, ideas shared among specific professions, religious communities, or local environments.³

Within the South Slavic scholarly community, particularly among Bulgarian researchers, the classification of manuscript notes reflects varying approaches. The general classification in Bulgarian scholarship encompasses two categories of marginal notes: colophons, which pertain to the history of a manuscript's creation, and other marginal annotations, which trace the manuscript's subsequent history and use over time.⁴

In Serbian scholarship, no strict typology has been established. Đorđe Trifunović defines a note (*zapis*) as an annotation inserted into a book by scribes, readers, or owners, using the term *zapis* broadly for all types of notes, without drawing a clear distinction between colophons and other forms of marginalia.⁵

² Ђ. Трифуновић, *Азбучник српских средњовековних књижевних појмова* (Београд: Нолит, 1990), 88–89.

³ K. Petrowszky, "Marginal Notes in South Slavic Written Culture. Between Practising Memory and Accounting for the Self", *Cahiers du Monde russe* 58/3 (2017), 483–502.

⁴ Иванова, *В началото бе книгата*, 80; Б. Райков, "Приписките в системата на старата българска книжнина", *Palaeobulgarica/ Старобългаристика* 2 (1992), 38–41; Е. Узунова, *Бележките на българските книжовници от XV–XVII век и тяхното значение за българската историческа лексикология* [докторска дисертация] (София: Софийски университет "Св. Климент Охридски", 1997); T. N. Nikolova-Houston, *Margins and Marginality: Marginalia and Colophons in South Slavic Manuscripts during the Ottoman Period 1393–1878* [PhD thesis] (The University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 7–8.

⁵ Трифуновић, *Азбучник*, 78.

The research corpus primarily includes two subcategories of Early Modern Serbian notes – colophons, which provide information about the history of a book's production, and notes related to the trade of books, which represent brief records of purchase transactions. These two groups of notes, among the abundance of preserved manuscript records, exhibit the most complex structures and content.⁶ They contain a wide range of categories – such as the name and title of the scribe, commissioner, seller or buyer of a book; the place and date of the book's production; as well as the reasons for its purchase and the circumstances of the transaction – through which the authors expressed their own self-identification or identified others with whom they had direct or indirect interaction.

The study primarily examines the dynamic relationship towards specific categories during the long and dynamic period of Ottoman rule (cc. 1450–1750). Given the chronological and territorial scope covered by the research, the focus is on microcontexts within which changes arose in the processes of self-understanding and identification of Orthodox Christians. In this regard, particular attention is given to the models of preserving the stability, as well as the circumstances that led to the transformation. Starting from the premise that identifications inherently involve a continuous dialectic between stability and fluidity, tension and internal contradiction, this study seeks to examine how individuals – particularly scribes, commissioners, ecclesiastical authorities, and book buyers – perceived themselves, how they identified with specific groups, and how they reinforced their sense of belonging within those communities.⁷

The second direction focuses on the identification of the Other, in this case the Ottomans, either as a group or as individuals, in the notes found in books. Given that the records in liturgical books were made by Orthodox Christians, certain limitations must be taken into account. Since the power to shape these records rested in the hands of Orthodox Christians, they primarily reflect processes of self-understanding and the identification of others – that is, the articulation of a critical stance towards Muslims, understood either collectively or as individuals. A second limitation concerns the nature of these inscriptions. As a genre originating from the Byzantine system, these records tend towards schematic and poetic systematisation. Consequently, the processes of identification and self-understanding recorded therein cease to function merely as reactions of Orthodox Christians to specific situations and instead become formulaic expressions transmitted across generations of scribes.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 79–84; Б. Николова, “Приписката в българската ръкописна книга от X–XIV в. (Проблеми на извороведското им изследване)”, *Помощни исторически дисциплини* 5 (1991), 98–112; T. N. Nikolova-Houston, *Margins and Marginality*, 24.

⁷ For more on the theoretical and methodological framework, see: M. Vasiljević, “Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe” in this volume.

1. Self-Perception of Orthodox Christian Scribes, Patrons, and Book Owners, and the Identification of Muslims in Ottoman-Era Serbian Colophons

1.1. Self-Understanding of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman-Era Colophons: Name and Title

Across different periods and contexts, manuscript copying remained one of the practices derived from the freedoms granted to Orthodox Christians in the Balkans under Ottoman rule.⁸ Given the extensive temporal span of this period, marked by significant historical and social transformations, the composition of literate individuals engaged in book copying evolved and varied across different regions of the Ottoman Empire. The name and title of a scribe constitute the fundamental layer of their self-identification. The origin of the name, whether secular or monastic, as recorded in colophons, provides a valuable insight into the structure of scribal activity and the broader development of literacy.

During the mid and late 15th century, Ottoman attacks targeted cities and major monasteries in the central Balkans, significantly reducing or temporarily halting book production in those areas.⁹ Consequently, in the central Balkans – especially in the heart of the former Serbian-Greek Empire and Bulgarian Empire – book copying and reproduction were primarily carried out by village priests or deacons.¹⁰

⁸ See O. Krešić, “Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe: Political, Social, and Legal Contexts” (in the present volume); Н. Шулетић, “Српска црква после 1459. године. О интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем”, у: *Паг Српске десетогодине 1459. године: зборник радова са научної скупштини, одржане 12–14. новембра 2009. године*, ур. М. Спремић, (Београд: САНУ, 2011), 331–349.

⁹ It is understood that the decline in manuscript production was not uniform across all monastic communities. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the cultural activity of certain monasteries – most notably Dečani – experienced a marked decline during the period of Ottoman conquest in the middle of the 15th century. At the same time, a notable revival in manuscript production occurred from the late 15th century into the early decades of the 16th century, coinciding with the period during which Dečani enjoyed a privileged status under Ottoman rule. Cf. Д. Богдановић и др., *Опис ћирилских рукописних књига манастира Високи Дечани* [књ.] 1 (Београд: Народна библиотека Србије, 2011), 689–690.

¹⁰ The term ‘deacon’, traditionally associated with the first degree of priesthood in the Christian Church, underwent a notable transformation during the Middle Ages. Over time, it began to take on an additional meaning, coming to represent a scribe. The title ‘deacon’ was often used interchangeably with ‘grammarian’ to refer to scribes in general, though the latter could also signify a scribe with exceptional skill and literary expertise. Đorđe Trifunović observed that both deacons and grammarians were eligible for entry into the priesthood, emphasising the fluid relationship between scribal work and ecclesiastical roles in medieval

The abundance of colophons produced in these regions suggests that deacons relied on writing as a source of income. Their workshops primarily produced codices for daily worship, reflecting both a lower level of formal education and the essential role of meeting contemporary needs in parish churches to sustain Orthodoxy.¹¹ This socio-historical context in the central parts of the former Serbian medieval territories fostered, in the latter half of the 15th century, the emergence of a distinct class of professional scribes who travelled to various locations to produce books.

Scribal centres within monastic communities in the central Serbian regions were restored – or, in some cases, newly established – only after the restoration of the Serbian Church's autocephaly,¹² as evidenced by the emergence of numerous manuscripts and early printed books produced through the dedicated work of monks in these spiritual and cultural centres. An exception in terms of book production at the close of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century was represented by the monastic communities on Mount Athos, where the largest number of scribes continued their work even under Ottoman occupation.¹³ This trend was also observed in monasteries that enjoyed privileges under Ottoman rule, such as Dečani, as well as in monastic centres established within Hungarian territories.

The Ottoman period undeniably posed significant challenges to Christian communities, frequently creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.¹⁴ Such condi-

society. See Трифуновић, *Азбучник*, 36, 39; С. Станојевић, “Студије о српској дипломатици. Дијак, Граматик, Нотар, Канцелар, Номик, Логотет”, *Глас СКА СVI. Друић разред* 61 (1923), 50–96; Т. Суботин-Голубовић, “Граматик”, у: *Лексикон српској средњеј века*, ур. С. Ђирковић, Р. Михаљчић, (Београд: Knowledge, 1999), 127–128; Д. Радославова, “Състав на българските книжовници преписвачи от XVII век според запазените приписки”, у: *Факти и мистификации в старите текстове*, ур. Б. Христова, Е. Узунова, (София: Националната библиотека “Св. Кирил и Методий”, 2011), 110.

¹¹ Т. Суботин-Голубовић, *Српско рукописно наслеђе од 1557. године до средине XVII века* (Београд: САНУ, 1999), 25.

¹² Н. Шулеић, “Улога цркве у утемељивању српског националног идентитета (XVI–XVIII век)”, у: *Концепции национализма и патриотизма у српском политичком дискурсу: Средњи век, нови век, савремено доба* [књ.] 1, ур. С. Марјановић-Душанић, А. З. Савић, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2025), 239.

¹³ Д. Богдановић, *Каталоги ћириличких рукописа манастира Хиландара* (Београд: САНУ; Народна библиотека Србије, 1982), 23.

¹⁴ Р. Радић, “XIV Страх од Турака”, у: *Страх у позној Византији 1180–1453*, (Београд: Стубови културе, 2000), 201–240; Ј. Мргић, “Живети у средњем веку – нека разматрања о стрепњама и страховима од глади, болести и смрти”, у: *Пошаси на људу средњовековних српских земаља (ејидемије – нејиде – љаг)*, ур. С. Мишић, К. Митровић, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2021), 62–67; М. Шуица, “Османлијски јахачи апокалипсе”, у: *Пошаси на људу средњовековних српских земаља (ејидемије – нејиде – љаг)*, ур. С. Мишић, К. Митровић, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2021), 43–56.

tions shaped not only the day-to-day lives of Serbian Orthodox Christians but also their cultural and literary practices.

During the Long War (1593–1606), waged between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, the Serbs of the Banat region launched the Banat Uprising of 1594 against Ottoman rule in the area surrounding Vršac.¹⁵ The Banat (Temišvar) Uprising, spearheaded by Bishop Teodor Nestorović of Vršac, reverberated across other regions under the jurisdiction of the Peć Patriarchate, prompting Christian communities in Herzegovina to likewise rise in revolt against Ottoman authority. It appears that the then-incumbent Patriarch of Peć, Jovan Kantul (1592–1614), was also actively engaged in these liberation efforts.¹⁶

Amid these intense conflicts between Christian and Muslim populations, both secular and monastic scribes in the affected regions frequently resorted to the use of cryptographic writing in order to conceal their names, places of origin, and the monasteries in which they resided. Moreover, such writing was often employed to obscure entire sentences expressing negative attitudes towards the Ottomans, under whose rule they lived:

“This was written by the sinful and least among the monks, *Georgije*. Glory to God, the Perfector, for everything and in all things, amen. This book was completed in the year 7108 [1599/1600], in difficult and burdensome times for all people. At that time, there was war with the Ishmaelite people.”¹⁷
(*Menaion*, the Archive of SASA, № 38 (339))

“It was written in the year 7110 [1601/1602] *in Mokra Gora*. [...] Oh, what a marvel! At that time, there was a great war, destruction, and devastation of holy and divine

¹⁵ С. Ђирковић, “Устанак банатских Срба”, *Рад Музеја Војводине* 37/38 (1995/1996), 239–245; Н. Шулетић, “Устанак у Банату 1594”, у: *Енциклопедија српског народа*, ур. Р. Љушић, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2008), 1185.

¹⁶ М. Ковић, “Устаничко наслеђе српске цркве (1594–1941). Прилог истраживању односа између цркве и државе”, у: *Осам векова аутокефалије Српске православне цркве* [књ.] 1, ур. В. Пузовић, В. Таталовић, (Београд: Православни богословски факултет, 2020), 273–287.

¹⁷ “Сїе писа грѣшнїи и мѧнїи вѣ иноцѣхъ *Геѡргїе*. слава свѣршителю богоу ѿ всехъ и за все, аминь. свѣрши се сїа книга ѿт[ъ] бытїа вѣ лѣто .ѣ.р.н., вѣ лѣта тежкаа и оуснїлаа на все чловѣкы. тогда быс(тъ) рать с нз[ъ]малтескнм[ъ] езном[ъ]”, *Сїари српски записи и найписи* [књ.] I, ур. Љ. Стојановић, (Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1902–1926) [further *ССЗН*], 902. The words within the asterisks (*) are written in a secret script. Љ. Стојановић, *Каѣалої рукописа и сїарих шїѧмїанихъ кнїѧ. Збирка Српске краљевске академије* (Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1902), 23, по. 38 (339); Д. Богдановић, *Инвенїар ћирилскихъ рукописа у Јуїославији (XI–XVIII века)* (Београд: САНУ, 1982), 55, по. 629.

churches, and the desecration of sacred books by the unbelieving peoples *and the accursed Hagarens*.”¹⁸

(*Nomocanon*, the Archive of CASA III a 38)

The differing interpretations of cryptograms by Dragutin Kostić and Dimitrije Bogdanović enrich our understanding of this practice. Kostić’s view, which frames cryptograms as an intellectual exercise, contrasts with Bogdanović’s perspective, which ties their prevalence to the difficult realities of daily life under Ottoman rule. This divergence highlights the multifaceted purposes behind cryptograms, whether as a creative outlet or a response to existential pressures.¹⁹ Delving into these perspectives reveals the broader cultural and historical significance of cryptograms, not merely as acts of concealment but as reflections of the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual resilience of their creators during challenging times.

1.2. Relocation of the Serbian Orthodox Population: Migrations in the Mid-15th and Late 17th Century

Scribes’ colophons often included details about their place of work, indicating the origin of the books they produced. While such records were occasionally found before Ottoman rule, they became more frequent – almost standard – during the Ottoman era. This change was largely influenced by the Ottoman conquests throughout the 15th century and into the first half of the 16th century, which triggered continuous migrations of the Christian population.²⁰ As they were displaced from the south, Christians sought refuge in northern territories, and following the fall of Smederevo,

¹⁸ “Писа леть .ѣ.р.ї. *хзлпцзлцв* (=у мокр^г горн) (...) ѿле чѣдо! Тогда великѣм[ь] ратомъ и попереніемъ и раз[ь]дрѣшеніемъ светынмъ и божѣственымъ црѣквмъ, и разгнѣбаніемъ светынмъ кнѣгамъ ѿт[ь] иновѣрных[ь] езыхъ *ѡфкцлпнѣ, ѡзѡцнѣ ѡпв.ї* (=и проклѣти агарен[ь]ски чѣдъ)”, *ССЗН* I, 916. The words within the asterisks (*) are written in a secret script. See also: I, 970, 1796; IV, 6493.

¹⁹ Д. Костић, “Тајно писање у јужнословенским ћириловским споменицима”, *Глас СКА* 92 (1913), 1; Д. Богдановић, *Историја српске књижевности* [књ.] 1: *Сѣара српска књижевности* (Београд: Научна књига, 1991), 202.

²⁰ Д. Ј. Поповић, *Велика сеоба Срба 1690. Срби сељаци и њлемећи* (Београд: СКЗ, 1954); С. Ђирковић, “Српски живаљ на новим огњиштима”, у: *Историја српског народа* [књ.] 2: *Доба борби за очување и обнову државе (1371–1537)*, ур. Ј. Калић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1982), 431–444; С. Ђирковић, “Сеобе српског народа у Краљевину Угарску у XIV и XV веку”, у: *Сеобе српског народа од XIV до XX века. Зборник радова њосвећен ѡрисѣајѡдишњици Велике сеобе Срба*, ур. Д. Ранковић, (Београд: Завод за уѣбенике и наставна средства, 1990), 37–46; А. Крстић, “Време турске власти у Срему”, у: *Срем кроз векове. Слојеви кулѣура Фрушке ѡре и Срема*, ур. М. Матицки, (Београд: Вукова задужбина, 2007), 76–78.

many settled in Hungarian regions beyond the Sava and Danube rivers. The border zone – marked by the ongoing struggles between the Ottomans and Hungarians for control of the central Balkans until the Battle of Mohács (1526) – was home to a Serbian Christian population, along with the last despots of the Branković dynasty, who ruled over towns in Srem, including Kupinik, Slankamen, Berkasovo, and later Sremska Mitrovica.²¹

Having settled in the Kingdom of Hungary, scribes viewed that territory as foreign, despite working in cities under the administration of Serbian Despots Đorđe (1486–1496) and Jovan (1496–1502). This distinction prompted them to emphasise their origins, particularly their place of birth. In the early 16th century, Priest Georgije first copied the *Four Gospels* and then donated the book to the Church of Saint Nicholas in Slankamen in memory of his parents.

His detailed colophon offers valuable insights, particularly regarding his background. In addition to naming his parents and noting that his father was a priest – a vocation he himself inherited – Georgije recorded that he originated from the Serbian lands, specifically from Viteževo in the Braničevo district.²² The tension within his self-understanding is particularly emphasised through the contrast established between the territory of his origin – evoking regions that, prior to the Ottoman incursion, were under the rule of a Serbian Orthodox sovereign – and the territory governed by the Hungarian king, where his parents were buried.

The distinction between home and foreign lands, reflected in the colophons, not only highlights the displacement of Orthodox Christians from their birthplace to their new residence but also underscores the specific Christian context in which they lived – namely, under Roman Catholic Church authority. In such an environment, Orthodox Serbs who migrated north of the Sava and Danube rivers during the great migrations in the 17th century felt the need to affirm their origins in their self-identification, while also ensuring the preservation of their affiliation with the Orthodox Christian Church.

The large-scale migration of Serbian Christians occurred in 1690 during the Great Vienna War (1683–1699), when Orthodox communities, led by the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III Crnojević (1674–1706), settled in southern Hungary (present-day Vojvodina) and the Austrian Military Frontier.²³ Among those who relocated

²¹ М. Спремић, “Српски деспоти у Срему”, у: *Срем кроз векове*, 55–67, 71.

²² *ССЗН* I, 388.

²³ Н. Радојчић, “Велика сеоба Срба 1690 године”, *Гласник Историјског друштва* 1–2 (1941), 1–10; Д. Јеремић, *Велика сеоба Срба под Арсенијем III Чернојевићем 1690*. (Граховљани: Српска православна црквена општина, 1990); *Пајријарх српски Арсеније III Чернојевић и велика сеоба Срба 1690. године. Зборник радова о ирисијо-дишњици велике сеобе Срба*, ур. епископ шумадијски Сава Вуковић, (Београд: Свети

were monks from Rača Monastery, renowned in the 17th century as a distinguished cultural and literary centre. Some journeyed as far north as Saint Andrea, preserving the legacy of their former spiritual and cultural hub. Many of these monks later established themselves in Beočin Monastery at the foot of Fruška Gora, frequently associating their names with Rača Monastery as a tribute to its significance:

“This service and the life of our holy and venerable Father Peter were transcribed at the order of the Bishop and Metropolitan of Arilje, Kyr Ruvim, by the hand of the most sinful and unworthy scribe, Hieromonk Christophor *Račanin*, in the year 7176 [1668], on July 31, in *Banja*, by the providence of God.”²⁴

“This most pure Apostle is the work of the sinful and least among the monks, Hierodeacon Simeon, a monk of Rača, in the year 7184 [1676], on February 1.”²⁵

While large-scale migrations of the Serbian Orthodox population in the Balkans occurred during significant wartime events, scribes’ colophons also documented the movement of Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman state on a more localised scale. These smaller migrations primarily involved travelling scribes who moved within their bishopric’s boundaries, and occasionally beyond, to copy books.

In this regard, particular attention is drawn to the movements of the Scribe Simon. Based on information about the location and circumstances of his work, it is possible to reconstruct the itinerary of this educated individual. Over the course of several years, this scribe travelled by invitation to various villages in the municipality of Srbica, in Kosovo and Metohija, for the purpose of copying books:

“I wrote this holy and divine book, called the Gospels, near the temple of the holy wonder-worker Nicholas, in the village of Ovčarevo, near the river Klina, in the home of the Elder Maxim and his son, the Priest Raič – may God forgive them. I agreed on the price and copied four chapters [...]. This holy and divine Book of the Gospels was written in the year 7070 [1561/1562], in harsh and difficult times, during the reign of

архијерејски синод Српске православне цркве, 1997); В. Гавриловић, “Велика сеоба Срба као миграциони талас у време Великог Бечког рата”, *Испрживања* 24 (2013), 167–177.

²⁴ “Сѣа слажба и жнтїе свѣтаго и прѣподобнаго отьца нашего петра прѣписна се повелѣнїемъ владики и господина божїею мнлостїю мнтрополита архнальскаго квр[ь] рвнмла, рвкою же мнвоггрѣшнаго и ненсквснаго писца христофора нермонаха *рачанина*, въ лѣто .ж.р.б.ж. съмютренїа владичнаго .ж. ж.ж.н., мѣсеца юлїа .лѣ. 8 *банин*”, *ССЗН* I, 1636. The words within asterisks (*) are written in a secret script.

²⁵ “Сѣн апостол[ь] прѣч(ис)ты грѣшны и мѣншїи въ иноцѣх[ь] їеродїаконѣ сїмѣон[ь], крѣмонах[ь] рачанин[ь], лѣто .ж.р.п.ж. мѣсеца фер[вара] .ж.”, *ibid.* I, 1710.

Sultan Selim, the executioner of Christians. I wrote this book with the help of God and all the saints – I, the most sinful and least among men, the Disciple Simon.”²⁶

In 1566/1567 Simon was in the village of Prekaze, where he copied the *Four Gospels* for a certain sum of money:

“This book was completed with the help of God in the year 7075 [1566/1567] in the Church of the Dormition (of the Mother of God) in the village of Prekaze. [...] I, the most sinful and least among all men, Deacon Simon, wrote this book [...] I wrote it during the reign of Emperor Selim, the executioner, fornicator, and wine-drinker.”²⁷

The mention of Sultan Selim II (1566–1574), accompanied by several intriguing details about his lifestyle and habits, supports the view that travelling scribes – among whom was certainly the Deacon Simon – gained firsthand insight into the lives of Orthodox Christians during their journeys. From them, they could hear various stories, the most fascinating of which often concerned Muslims. Shaped by the influence of different events, the extensive notes at the end of manuscripts thus resembled travel writings.

1.3. Residences and Titles of Serbian Ecclesiastical Authorities: Self-Understandings Within the Jurisdiction of the Ohrid and Peć Archbishoprics During the Ottoman Period

In addition to monks, itinerant scribes were also engaged in the production of books within monastic settings. Their colophons not only recorded the monastery where the manuscript was created but also frequently included the names of the abbot or other monastic figures who had commissioned the work, as well as the church dignitary overseeing the territory in which the book was completed. The self-understandings and identifications of these dignitaries were carefully constructed, often incorporating titular formulas alongside their names. Although such identifications were recorded by the scribes in their colophons, they were typically shaped under the direct influence of the dignitaries themselves. Consequently, they serve as a

²⁶ “Писах[ъ] сїю светѣю божїю книгѣ нмѣ р[е]къ[ъ] їев[ар]гелїе кодъ храма светаго христова и їудотворїца николи на селѣ оѡктареѡвѣ, близъ рѣке клинѣ, въ домы старѣца маѣїїла и сина маѣ попа ран҃га, богъ да нх[ъ] прости. ѡценнх[ъ] и съписах[ъ] .ѡ. главѣ (...) съписа се сїа светаа и божьствнаа книга еѡ[ар]гелїе въ лѣт(о) .ѡ. и .ѡ. лѣт(о). въ та люта и прискрѣбна врѣмена оу днь свѣтанѣ селѣма, на хрїстїанѣ кръвник[ъ]”, *ibid.* IV, 6316.

²⁷ “Съврѣши се сїа книга божїею помощїю въ .ѡ. тїсѣшно и .ѡ.ѣ. лѣт(о) въ храм[ъ] оуспѣнїе на селѣ прѣказах[ъ]. (...) писах[ъ] сїю книгѣ многорѣшнн и маи[ъ]ши паче всех[ъ] чловѣкъ дїакъ сїмѡн (...) писах[ъ] ѡ днь цара селѣма, кръвникъ, блядникъ, винопїа”, *ibid.* IV, 6337.

valuable source for examining complex ecclesiastical relationships and patterns of self-identification within a specific historical and social context.

The Serbian church organisation is believed to have ended around 1463, marked by the last recorded mention of Patriarch Arsenije II (1453–ca.1463), and followed the Ottoman conquest of Smederevo (1459), the capital of the Serbian Despotate.²⁸ While no official document of the Ottoman abolition of the Patriarchate of Peć exists, it is clear that the Serbian patriarchal throne in Peć fell under Ottoman control during Mehmed II's siege in late spring of 1455, alongside the conquests of surrounding cities.²⁹ By the agreement between Despot Đurađ (1427–1456) and Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1481) later that year or early the next, the regions south of Kruševac and Western Morava were formally recognised as Ottoman territory.³⁰ In addition, the principal spiritual centres of the Serbian Church – Peć Monastery and Žiča Monastery – were territorially incorporated within the Ottoman sultan's domain.³¹

When none of the former centres of the independent church were within the Despotate's borders, Arsenije II, the last patriarch before its final collapse, was likely consecrated in the Metropolitanate of Smederevo, no earlier than the spring of 1456.³²

²⁸ Љ. Стојановић, “Српска црква у међувремену од патријарха Арсенија II до Макарија (око 1459–63. до 1567. г.)”, *Глас СКА CVI, Друиу разред* 61 (1923), 120; М. Југовић, “Титуле и потписи архиепископа и патријараха српских”, *Бојословље* 3 (1934), 259; В. Ђурђев, *Uloga crkve u starijoj istoriji srpskog naroda* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1964), 88. Б. Нилевић, *Српска православна црква у БиХ до обнове Пећке патријаршије* (Сарајево: Веселин Маслеша, 1990), 98; Р. Грујић, “Пећска патријаршија”, у: *Народна енциклопедија СХС* [том] III: *Н–Р*, ур. С. Станојевић, [треће факсимилно издање] (Сремски Карловци: Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, 2010), 374. Simultaneously, scholars have raised doubts, relying on a particular collection of sources, primarily memorial books, which challenge the notion that Arsenije II was the final Serbian patriarch before the church throne remained unoccupied for nearly a century, see Г. Суботић, “Пећки патријарх и охридски архиепископ Никодим”, *Зборник радова Византолошкој институцији* XXI (1982), 221–223, п. 33–37, with older bibliography.

²⁹ Суботић, “Пећки патријарх”, 218.

³⁰ Ђурђев, *Uloga crkve*, 88; Нилевић, *Српска православна црква*, 99, 100; Суботић, “Пећки патријарх”, 218, п. 22.

³¹ Ђурђев, *Uloga crkve*, 87; Нилевић, *Српска православна црква*, 99, 100; Суботић, “Пећки патријарх”, 218.

³² Gojko Subotić paid close attention to the circumstances surrounding Patriarch Arsenije II's elevation and firmly believed that Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456) sought advice from Genadije Sholarije (Gennadius Scholarius) on this occasion. An intellectual and critic of union with the Catholic Church, Genadije Sholarije was appointed by Mehmed II as Patriarch of the Church of Constantinople the year after the city's conquest. This appointment by Sultan Mehmed ensured the Church's continuity and guaranteed that the

The absence of references to the Serbian Church's supreme authority in sources before 1557 suggests that, after Patriarch Arsenije II's death, the essential church structure required to convene a council for electing a new leader had dissolved.³³

Although the history of the Serbian Church from the second half of the 15th to the mid-16th century remains largely obscure, the preserved sources indicate that the spiritual and cultural activities of the Orthodox clergy and monastic communities continued to function within individual episcopacies (metropolitan sees). The question of which authority governed the dioceses of the former Patriarchate of Peć has long been the subject of scholarly debate.³⁴ A definitive answer remains elusive, not only due to the scarcity of preserved sources from that period but also because conditions varied across different regions of the former Patriarchate. However, it is widely accepted that the bishoprics in the southern Serbian lands – among the first to come under Ottoman rule – were initially placed under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Ohrid, and that his authority expanded as more territories fell under Ottoman administration.³⁵

Ottoman authorities would allow the introduction of new regional hierarchs. See Суботић, “Пећки патријарх”, 218–222, with references.

Milanka Ubiparip and Vladan Trijić emphasised that the significance of the Christian sanctuary and the seat of the Smederevo Metropolitanate was further enhanced by the presence of the relics of Saint Luke, secured through the patronage of the Branković dynasty. Recalling the fact that the ruling Branković family possessed an important relic from the Žiča Monastery – the right hand of Saint John the Baptist – the authors cautiously proposed the assumption that other treasures might also have been located in the cathedral church in Smederevo. These could have been transferred from the seat of the Archbishopric in Žiča to Smederevo “both for their protection and to affirm the legitimacy of the new ecclesiastical centre, an idea likely considered by Despot Đurađ when planning the construction of the cathedral church in his capital”. See М. Убипарип, В. Тријић, “Зборници параклиса у српскословенској традицији”, *Археографски њилози* 37 (2015), 76–77, 79–80.

33 Стојановић, “Српска црква”, 122.

34 Р. Веселиновић, “Стање Српске цркве од пада српских држава под турску управу до обновљења под патријархом Макаријем”, *Болословје* 3/4 (1937), 266–293; В. Ђурђев, “Однос између Охридске архиепископије и Српске цркве од пада Смедерева (1459) до обнављања Пећке патријаршије (1557)”, *Радови АНУБиН* 38 (1970), 185–209; Ђ. Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве* [књ.] 1: *Од њокршћавања Срба до краја XVIII века* (Београд: ЈРЈ, 2002), 277–300; Р. Грујић, “Охридска архиепископија”, у: *Народна енциклопедија СХС* [том] III: *Н–Р*, 251; Р. Грујић, “Пећска патријаршија”, у: *Народна енциклопедија СХС* [том] III: *Н–Р*, 374.

35 Ђурђев, *Улога цркве*, 104; Нилевић, *Српска православна црква*, 99; М. А. Пурковић, *Српски ѡпатријарси средњега века* (Дизелдорф: Српска православна епархија западноевропска, 1976), 158–160.

Historical sources from the late 15th century to the mid-16th century do not confirm that the archbishop of Ohrid had a decisive role in appointing church dignitaries within the former Peć Patriarchate – or at least not in all episcopal seats. Supporting this view, Despot Đorđe Branković (1486–1496), who had been granted governance over several towns in Srem by the Hungarian monarch, sought the assistance of the Metropolitan Kalivat of Sofia to be elevated to the rank of hieromonk after taking monastic vows at the beginning of the 16th century.³⁶ It appears that the metropolitans of Belgrade and Zeta also retained their independence from the archbishop of Ohrid.³⁷

The earliest signs of the church preserving its autonomy in certain regions emerged in the early 16th century, particularly within the Mileševa Metropolitanate with the Mileševa Monastery playing a central role in this development. In the late 1500s, the itinerant scribe, Deacon Vladislav, arrived in Mileševa, where he copied *The Life of Saint Sava* by Monk Teodosije. Upon completing the work, he left a colophon that included a detailed description of the manuscript, mentioning Abbot Gavriilo and its patron, Archdeacon Vasilije. Additionally, he recorded a distinct title for the dignitary overseeing the Mileševa Diocese:

“And at that time the throne of Saint Sava was held by the most-consecrated Archbishop Jovan, and the Abbot of the house of Christ the Saviour and Saint Sava, the former hieromonk Gavriilo. It is written by order of the steward of the Mileševa Archdeacon Vasilije. [...] The many-sinful Deacon Vladislav [...] And then I travelled to Sarajevo.”³⁸
(*The Life of Saint Sava*, Sarajevo, the Old Church № 18)

Kyr Jovan was recognised as the holder of Saint Sava’s throne, signifying his role as the successor to Saint Sava in leading the Serbian Church. This identification is reinforced by the first part of his title – ‘most-consecrated Archbishop’ – a titular formula established during Sava’s occupation of the throne in the 13th century. Notably, the attribute ‘most-consecrated’ draws particular attention, as it was historically reserved for the head of the Serbian Church – initially as an archbishop

³⁶ Стојановић, “Српска црква”, 123.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 123–124.

Đoko Slijepčević proposed the thesis that in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro, the archbishop of Ohrid’s ecclesiastical authority may have been merely nominal. See Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве*, 297.

³⁸ “(...) И въ ти дни прѣдъжещѣ прѣстоль свѣтаго савѣи прѣосвѣщенномоу архієпископу кыр іованна, игоуману же соушоу тогда въ домоу спасовѣ и свѣтаго савѣи бнвшоу крѣмонахоу кыр гаврилоу. писа повѣленіемъ[ъ] иконома милешевскаго архіидіакона василіа. (...) многогрѣшни діакъ владислав (...) и тада пѣтова (къ) сараево”, *ССЗН* I, 399; V. Mošin, S. M. Traljić, “Ćirilski spomenici u Bosni i Hercegovini”, *Naše starine* VI (1959), 77, № 24.

and later after 1346 as a patriarch.³⁹ Following the collapse of the Serbian–Greek Empire (1371),⁴⁰ distinctions among Serbian church dignitaries’ titles became less defined, and by the late 14th century, terms such as ‘most-consecrated’ and ‘all-consecrated’ were often used interchangeably for patriarchs, archbishops, metropolitans, and bishops.⁴¹ However, Deacon Vladislav appears to have intentionally preserved the Nemanjić tradition, identifying Kyr Jovan in his colophon as the heir to Saint Sava’s throne and the ‘most-consecrated’ archbishop. The connection to Saint Sava’s tradition is further reinforced by the fact that *The Life of Saint Sava* was copied in the temple dedicated to the Holy Saviour, which also serves as the home of Saint Sava’s relics and a focal point of his cult since the Middle Ages.

A year later, another record in the *Octoechos* by Monk Marko from Trebinje mentions Kyr Jovan alongside another ecclesiastical dignitary, Kyr Visarion:

“Up to here Marko Trebinjac wrote. Me, the holy Monk Marko, humble among the monks, wrote by order of my master and teacher, Archiereus Kyr Visarion, under the all-consecrated Archbishop Kyr Jovan in the place founded by them, in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Trebinje...”⁴²
(*Octoechos*, the Savina Monastery № 5)

The two church figures are cited as founders of the church dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the central temple of Tvrdoš Monastery. Their joint patronage suggests that by the early 16th century, Tvrdoš was already regarded as the seat of the Mileševa Metropolitanate, later known as the Metropolitanate of Herzegovina.

Of particular interest to scholars, however, are the titular formulas recorded alongside the names of these two ecclesiastical dignitaries. While Kyr Jovan is designated as ‘archbishop’, Kyr Visarion is identified as ‘archiereus’ – an honorary title for a higher clerical rank, encompassing bishops and metropolitans.⁴³ Scholarly inter-

³⁹ Југовић, “Титуле и потписи”, 255–257.

⁴⁰ Р. Михаљчић, *Крај Српској царсѣва* (Београд: СКЗ, 1975); Р. Михаљчић, “Маричка битка”, у: *Историја српској народа* [књ.] 1: *Од најстаријих времена до Маричке биѣке (1371)*, ур. С. Ђирковић, (Београд: СКЗ, 1981), 593–602; П. Коматина, “Промене на српском престолу 1370–1371. године. Покушај реинтерпретације”, *Историјски часопис* LXVI (2017), 149–171.

⁴¹ Југовић, “Титуле и потписи”, 257.

⁴² “до заѣ писа марко трѣбницаѣ. (...) писа смерни въ иноцѣх[ъ] свещенни мних[ъ] марко, повелѣниѣм[ъ] господина ми и зчителѣ архіерѣа квр[ъ] висаріона при всеосвещеннѣм[ъ] архіепископѣ квр[ъ] іованнѣ въ мѣстѣ ѿт[ъ] них[ъ] създаннѣи црькви испѣниѣ прѣсветіе богородице въ трѣбницѣ...”, *ССЗНІ*, 404; Д. Богдановић, “Инвентар рукописа манастира Савине”, у: Д. Медаковић, *Манастир Савина*, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 1978), 91.

⁴³ М. Јанковић, “Архијереј”, у: *Лексикон*, 21–22.

pretations of their hierarchical relationship vary. Some maintain that both held the same rank, with the titles ‘archbishop’ and ‘archiereus’ signifying metropolitan dignity, whereas others argue that Visarion occupied a subordinate position relative to Jovan.⁴⁴

However, the distinction between the titles of ‘archbishop’ and ‘metropolitan’ merits further analysis. After the Serbian Kingdom attained imperial status in 1346, the Serbian Church was likewise raised to the rank of a patriarchate, which introduced a metropolitan structure and advanced several former bishoprics to the status of metropolitanates.⁴⁵ Up until the Ottoman era, the title of metropolitan was typically assigned to the chief or senior bishop overseeing a larger ecclesiastical region (metropolitanate), with authority over one or more subordinate bishoprics.⁴⁶ However, this distinction faded under Ottoman rule, as the title of metropolitan gradually became synonymous with that of archbishop.⁴⁷

In the colophon of the Monk Marko, Kyr Jovan is referred to as the “all-consecrated archbishop”. However, the identification of him as the successor of Saint Sava on the throne of the Serbian Church is absent, creating some ambiguity, given that Tvrdoš Monastery in Trebinje was under the jurisdiction of the Mileševa Metropolitanate. This suggests that Jovan’s title as the successor of Saint Sava was specifically tied to Mileševa Monastery – the residence of Archbishop Jovan. In addition to the place where the manuscript was produced, the content of the manuscript itself played a significant role in shaping Jovan’s (self-)presentation. Copied at Mileševa Monastery, with the intention of being read there, *The Life of Saint Sava*, the First Serbian Archbishop, who secured autocephaly for the Serbian Church and whose archbishop was consecrated by local bishops,⁴⁸ undoubtedly influenced the (self-)identification of Archbishop Kyr Jovan in the colophon.

The emphasis on the continuity of the Serbian Church, initiated during the tenure of Archbishop Jovan within the Mileševa Metropolitanate, appears to have persisted in the following decades under the spiritual leadership of Metropolitan Marko. In 1524, at Tvrdoš Monastery, Deacon Jovan Maleševac copied the *Menaion*, leaving a noteworthy inscription. Church dignitary Marko is designated in his titlature

⁴⁴ Нилевић, *Српска православна црква*, 127–128; И. Снегаров, *История на охридската архиепископия–патриаршия: отъ падането и подъ турците до нейното унищожение* (София: Македонски научен институт, 1932), 255, п. 1.

⁴⁵ М. Јанковић, “Митрополија”, у: *Лексикон*, 412.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ An example of the interchangeable use of the titles archbishop and metropolitan can be found in the titular formula used by Monk Makarije in the preface and afterword of the printed *Octoechos* in 1494. In the preface, he refers to Vavila as ‘the Metropolitan of Zeta’, while in the afterword, he describes him as ‘the Archbishop of Zeta and Vavila Metropolitan’, demonstrating the fluidity of ecclesiastical titles during that period. See *CCЗН* I, 381, 382.

⁴⁸ М. Јанковић, “Архиепископ”, у: *Лексикон*, 17.

as the successor of Saint Sava on the ecclesiastical throne, and ‘the all-consecrated Metropolitan’ (fig. 1, 2):

“And at that time, the all-consecrated Metropolitan Kyr Marko managed the holy churches and held the throne of Saint Sava of Serbia. To the Abbot at that time in the home of the Holy Saviour and the Most Holy Mother of God, Kyr Marko hieromonk. And by his order I wrote, the humble and many-sinful servant of God, Deacon Jovan Maleševac.”⁴⁹ (*Menaion*, RNL Gilf. № 88)

This colophon is particularly significant, as the manuscript’s patron, Hieromonk Marko, is identified as the abbot not only of Mileševa Monastery but also of Tvrdoš in Trebinje. The inscriptions of Deacon Vladislav and Deacon Jovan Maleševac should be examined in the context of the increasing pressure exerted by the archbishop of Ohrid on the dioceses of the former Peć Patriarchate during the early 16th century. In this light, the actions of Metropolitan Pavle of Smederevo – who openly opposed the archbishop of Ohrid and seemingly ordained Serbian dignitaries against Ohrid’s authority – should be understood as part of a broader struggle for ecclesiastical autonomy.⁵⁰

The independence of the Serbian Church from the Archbishopric of Ohrid, particularly regarding the appointment of bishops and metropolitans, was achieved during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566) and the tenure of Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha (1544–1553, 1555–1561).⁵¹ Though individuals of

⁴⁹ “(...) И въ тѣхъ дѣлѣхъ нѣмъ бѣаху дающе с(вѣ)тыни цр(к)кви и прѣдърѣжещѣ прѣстолѣ с(вѣ)т(а)го савы сръб(с)каго. въ сѣм(свѣ)щенному митрополитѣ кыр(с) марку. Нѣмъ же соущѣ тогда въ домѣ сп(а)совѣ и прѣс(вѣ)тѣ б(о)городице. кыр марку ермонах[о]у. и повѣленіемъ егоуемъ :- Писаху азъ сдереніи и многогрѣшніи рабъ б(о)жїи дїакъ юаннь малешевъ :-”, *ССЗН* I, 451; RNL Gilf 88, f. 1b. Ж. Левшина, *Рукописи сербского правописания Российской национальной библиотеки* (Санкт Петербург: Российская национальная библиотека, 2021), 69–70, no. 86.

⁵⁰ For further details on Smederevo Metropolitan Pavle’s movement, his supporters, and the trials held at the two Councils in Ohrid, refer to: “Документи о буну Смедеревског епископа Павла против потчињавања Пећке патријаршије архиепископији Охридској”, ур. П. Костић, *Сѣоменик СКА* 56 (48) (1922), 32–39; Стојановић, “Српска црква”, 113–131; Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве*, 290, 292, 295, 298–301.

⁵¹ In historiography, the independence of the Serbian Church from the Archbishopric of Ohrid has traditionally been attributed to Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha Sokolović (Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве*, 301–319, with older bibliography). However, further research into the jurisdiction of Ottoman institutions, particularly the Chancellery of the Revenues and Tax-farms of Bishops (*Kalem-i mukataa-i piskopos*), calls this assumption into question. As Vojin S. Dabić observes, since the recording of payments on behalf of church districts and the issuance of berats fell under this Chancellery, subordinate to the Grand Vizier, the mid-17th-century defter statement that “the aforementioned Patriarchate

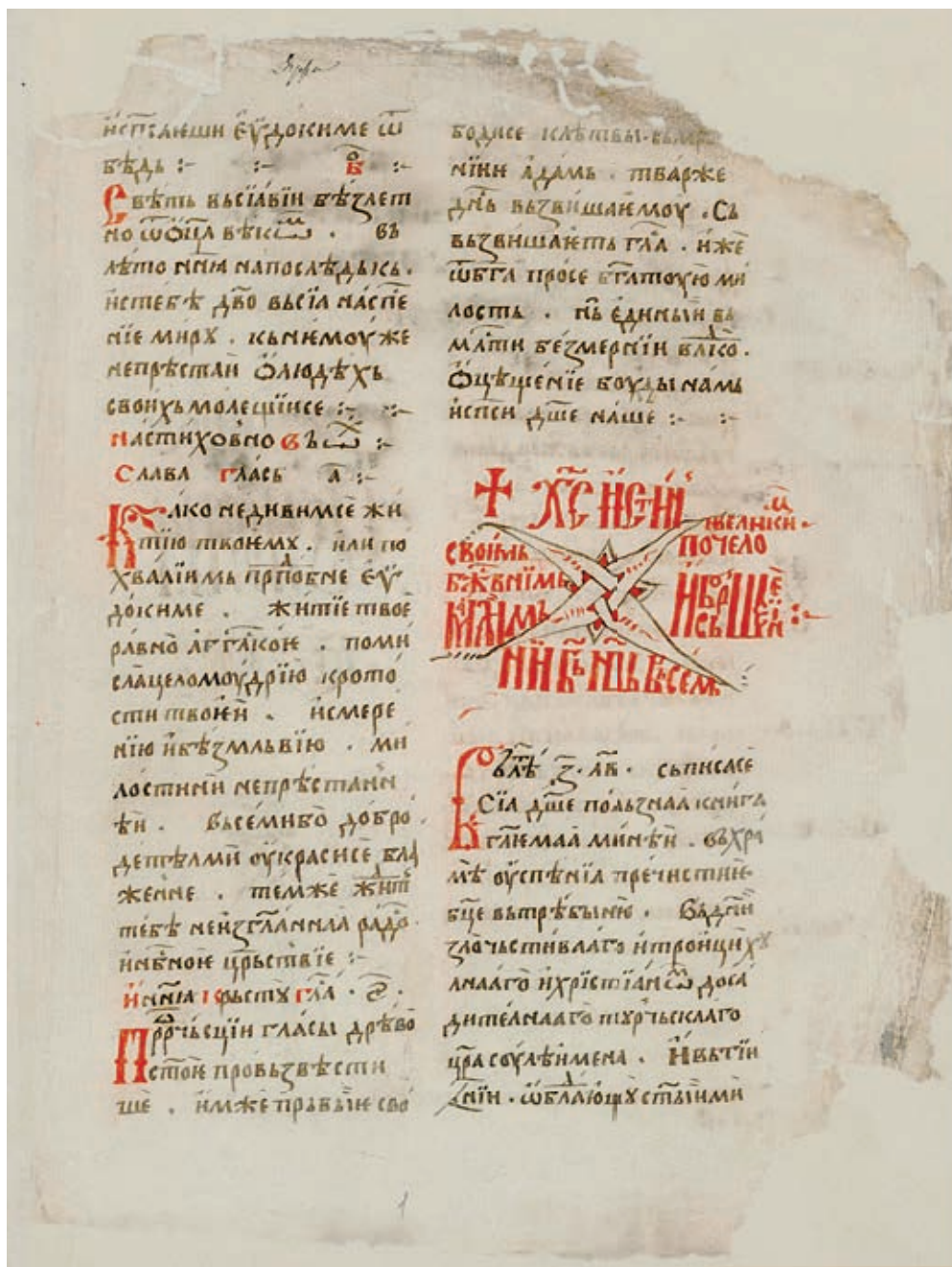


Fig. 1. Menaion, RNL Gilf. 88, 1524, colophon of Deacon Jovan Maleševac, fol. 1a
 Source: https://expositions.nlr.ru/ex_manus/Serbian_Manuscripts/

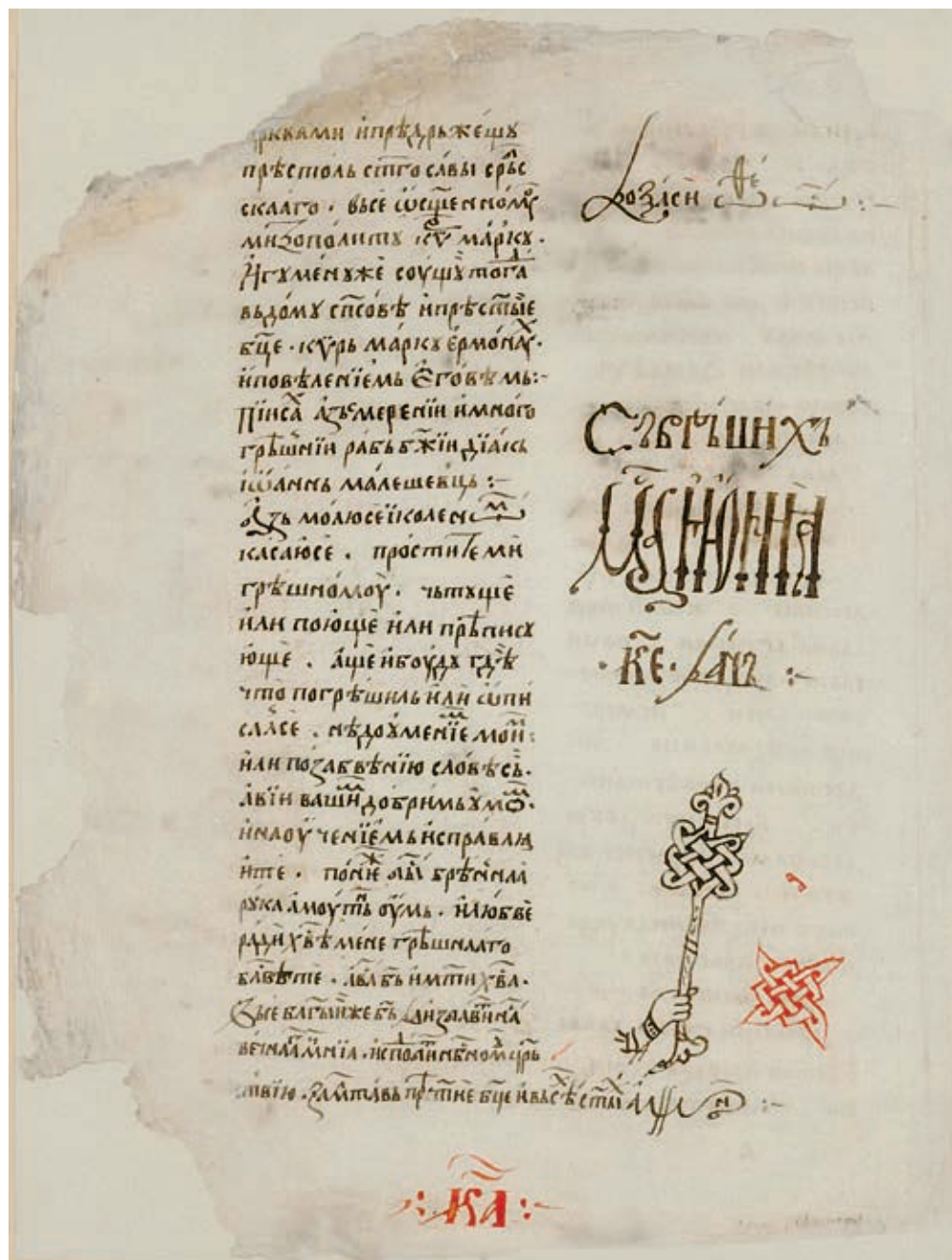


Fig. 2. *Menaion*, RNL Gilf. 88, 1524, colophon of Deacon Jovan Maleševac, fol. 1b
Source: https://expositions.nlr.ru/ex_manus/Serbian_Manuscripts

Serbian origin held influential Ottoman positions, the re-establishment of church organisation in Peć was primarily a negotiated compromise between the Serbian clergy and the Ottoman authorities. Sultan Suleiman's political and economic interests played a key role, making the restoration a strategic move within Ottoman governance.⁵²

Regarding the titles of Serbian church leaders from the mid-16th century, Ottoman and Serbian sources differ significantly. While in Ottoman tax registers the head of the Serbian Church is referred to simply as the 'Patriarch of Peć', Serbian sources from the mid-16th century, particularly colophons and other marginal notes, present titles of church leaders that are considerably more elaborate and reflect several significant elements. Above all, these titles were formulated to faithfully convey continuity with the traditions of the medieval Serbian state and Church.⁵³ Nebojša Šuletić observed that "this emphasis on continuity was so pronounced that the title of bishop was defined according to the political map of the 13th and 14th centuries and adapted to the contemporary political situation".⁵⁴

Although no direct signature of Patriarch Makarije (ca.1557–1571), the first archbishop of the restored Serbian Church, has been preserved, existing book colophons and inscriptions on church buildings were created under his direct influence.⁵⁵ The earliest attested instance of the title formula dates to 1557:

"This holy and divine book called the Psalter was initiated by the order of the Abbot Kyr Danilo and completed in the year 7067 (sic!) since the creation of the world, and 1557 since the birth of Christ, [...] on the 4th day of November, at the Mileševa Monastery, under the abbot of that monastic community, Kyr Danilo. At that time, the throne of Saint Sava, the first Serbian archbishop and teacher, was restored and held by the most-consecrated

was established ... by His Excellency the Grand Vizier" can be considered reliable. Given that the Grand Vizier at the time was Rüstem Pasha (1544–1553, 1555–1561), V. S. Dabić concludes that this evidence "inevitably challenges the longstanding tradition attributing the restoration of the Serbian Patriarchate to Mehmed Pasha Sokolović". B. C. Дабић, "Макарије Соколовић", у: *Српски биографски речник* [књ.] 5: *Кв–Мао*, ур. Ч. Попов, (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2011), 757–758; Шулетић, "Улога цркве", 239.

⁵² Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве*, 301–302, 304; Дабић, "Макарије Соколовић", 757.

⁵³ Н. Шулетић. "Југоисточна граница Српске патријаршије у доба османске владавине", у: *Јужни српски крајеви у XIX и XX веку: друштвено-економски и политички аспекти*, ур. Д. Антић, И. Бецић, (Врање: Народни музеј, 2018), 47.

⁵⁴ Шулетић, "Улога цркве", 239.

⁵⁵ In the inscription on the narthex of the patriarchal church in Peć, founded by Makarije in 1561, Makarije is identified as 'the most-consecrated archbishop and first patriarch of the second restoration of the honorable and holy throne of all Serbian lands, the western maritime lands, and the northern regions', *CC3H* III, 5609; *ibid.* IV, 6310.

Archbishop of all Serbian lands, both maritime and northern and other regions, Kyr Makarije, in the empire of the Ishmaelite emperor, the great Emir Sultan Suleiman Bey.”⁵⁶

The colophon encompasses several key elements.⁵⁷ Patriarch Makarije is acknowledged for restoring and maintaining the throne of Saint Sava, the first archbishop and spiritual Serbian teacher. He is also referred to as ‘the most-consecrated archbishop of the Serbian and maritime lands, the northern regions, and other territories’. Additionally, his political-territorial jurisdiction is affirmed through his recognition of the empire of Sultan Suleiman.⁵⁸

Makarije’s self-presentation as Saint Sava’s successor reflects a tradition already established among the Mileševa (Herzegovinian) metropolitans, who were consecrated at Mileševa Monastery. The central part of his titlature mirrors Sava’s title – ‘Archbishop of all Serbian and maritime lands’.⁵⁹ Through this identification, Makarije is recognised not only as a legitimate successor to Saint Sava but also as the guardian of the Serbian ecclesiastical throne, reinforcing the continuity of the autocephalous Serbian Church while subtly ‘erasing’ the period of its decline.

However, his titlature also introduces certain innovations in response to the historical circumstances surrounding the church’s restoration, particularly the expansion of his jurisdiction both northward and into other regions. The northern regions refer to territories beyond the Sava and Danube rivers, home to Serbian Orthodox communities, while the other regions indicate the southwestern areas of medieval Bulgaria. The surviving colophons referencing Patriarch Makarije indicate that his title evolved over time. In records from 1564 to 1568, his jurisdiction expanded to include not only Serbs but also Bulgarians:

“This divine book called the Trioden is written according to the wish with the blessing of the blessed and most-consecrated sir, father and teacher and Patriarch to all Serbs and

⁵⁶ “(...) почеше се сіе светые и божьствныя книги, глаголемы ѱалтирь, повѣленіемъ игоумена кврѣ данїла, и съврѣшише се оть бытіа въ лѣто .Ṣ. тисоуштоє и .Ṗ.Ṗ. (sic!), а оть рождѣства христова тисоушта и .Ṗ.Ṗ.Ṗ. (...) месеца ноемврїа .Ḃ. днь въ монастырѣ мнашешеве, при игоуменѣ тоежде обытели кврѣ данїла. тогда же обновашоу и прѣдрѣжештоу прѣстолю светаго савы прѣваго архїєпископа и оуѣнителя срьбскаго пресвещенномоу архїєпископу въсе срьбскыя земли и подморѣскыя и северѣныя страны и протїи мѣ кврѣ макарію, въ царствѣ же цара измаѣльскаго велнка амирѣ соуланѣ соуленцанѣ бега”, *ibid.* I, 589; *ibid.* IV, 6295.

⁵⁷ Vojin S. Dabić highlighted that, based on the colophon of Monk Makarije in the printed *Psalter*, it is not possible to determine with certainty when Makarije became the Archbishop of Peć and Serbian Patriarch, nor the exact timing of the restoration of the Serbian Patriarchate. He noted that while it is generally accepted, there is no definitive proof that it occurred just before the printing of the mentioned book. Дабих, “Макарије Соколовић”, 757.

⁵⁸ *ССЗН* I, 589.

⁵⁹ Југовић, “Титуле и потписи”, 254, 255.

Bulgarians and the western coast and the northern regions, Kyr Makarije of Peć, with the effort and price of gold of the humble and many-sinful among the monks, Savatije, Hierodeacon of the Great Church of Peć and I dedicated this book to the holy and sacred coenobium of the Dormition of the Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, the monastery located at the source of the Piva River. [...]. I wrote this [...] in the year 7076 [1568], on June 15 in Peć [...]”⁶⁰

(*Lenten Triodion*, the Cetinje Monastery № 37)

The inclusion of the Bulgarian ethnic element in the title of the first patriarch of the restored Serbian Church holds significant meaning. While Serbs and Bulgarians coexisted in the southwestern regions of the Patriarchate of Peć, this designation likely stemmed from ideological motives rather than demographic realities. The reference to Bulgarians, which remained in the patriarchal title until the Patriarchate's abolition in 1766, can be interpreted as a response to the archbishop of Ohrid, who had long contested Serbian ecclesiastical authority.

In connection with the efforts of the Archbishopric of Ohrid to bring the dioceses of the Peć Patriarchate under its jurisdiction, it is particularly noteworthy that, throughout the 16th century, the archbishops of Ohrid consistently incorporated ethnic identifiers into their titlature, most commonly referencing Bulgarians, Serbs, and occasionally Greeks:

“Prohor, by the grace of God Archbishop of Justiniana Prima, to all Bulgarians, Serbs, and others. [...] In the year 7056 [1548], on April 15.”⁶¹

“Prohor, by the grace of God Archbishop of Justiniana Prima, to the Bulgarians, Serbs, and Greeks. In the year 7057 [1549].”⁶²

The Serbian Church's adoption of a similar approach may have been a strategic effort to assert the archbishop of Peć's superiority over the archbishop of Ohrid

⁶⁰ “(...) зписа се сіа свѣтаа божьств[ь]на кнѣга глаголемѣ трїѡд[ь] повѣленїем[ь] и благословенїем[ь] блаженѣишаго и прѣосвещеннѣишаго господина общаго отца и зчїтелеа и патрїарха въсѣмь сръблемь и българом[ь] и западнаго поморїа и севернїимь странама[ь] квр[ь] макаріа пекскаго трѣдѡм[ь] и цѣною злата смѣреннаго и многогрѣшнаго въ иноцѣхъ] саватїа їродїакона великые цркви пекы и приложїхъ] сїю книгъ с(вє)тѣи и с(вє)щеннѣи обители зспенїю прѣс(вє)тен вл(а)д(ы)т(и)це нашен в(о)городїце и приснодѣви мариїн монастїр[ь] иже єсть пїва врѣло. (...) се бо писахъ (...) лѣт(а) 7076. м(ѣ)с(є)ца їун[ь] .її. д(ь)нь 8 пек[ь] (...)”, *ССЗН* IV, 6341; М. Мартиновић, *Рукописне књиѣ манастїра Рођеня Пресвєїте Боїородїце на Цетїињу* (Цетиње: Митрополија црногорско-приморска, 2023), 171–174.

⁶¹ “Прохор[ь] мнлостїю божїєю архїєпископ[ь] .ї. Ізстїнїанїе всѣм[ь] българом[ь] сръблем[ь] и прочїм[ь] (...) въ лѣт(о) 7056. апрелїа .її. дьнь”, *ССЗН* I, 547.

⁶² “Прохор[ь] мнлостїю божїю архїєпископ[ь] прьвїи Ізстїнїани българом[ь] и сръблем[ь] и грь(к)ом[ь]. въ лѣт(о) 7057.”, *ibid.* I, 552; *ibid.* IV, 6270.

within the Ottoman Balkans.⁶³ This interpretation is reinforced by two key events: the attempt to appoint a Serbian church dignitary as archbishop of Ohrid following the death of Archbishop Prohor, just before the formal restoration of the Serbian Church, and the charter dated April 2, 1647. In this document, Patriarch Pajsije – a Serbian church leader from the first half of the 17th century (1614–1647) – is titled ‘Archbishop of Peć and all Serbs, Bulgarians, some Greeks, and the northern regions’.⁶⁴ The official nature of this titular formula is evident, particularly considering his travels to Constantinople in 1641 and 1642, where he successfully prevented the Ohrid Church from subordinating the Peć Patriarchate.⁶⁵

The titular formula established with Patriarch Makarije was carried forward by his successors on the throne of the Serbian Church. Variations in the official title, observed in colophons and other book inscriptions, primarily involve abbreviated forms of ecclesiastical designations. The head of the Church is usually referred to as either ‘the Archbishop of Peć’, emphasising his seat and legitimacy as the canonically elected leader of the Serbian Church, or ‘the Patriarch of the Serbs (and Bulgarians)’, highlighting his role as the spiritual shepherd of the Orthodox Christian communities in the Balkans:

“[...] this holy and divine book, called the Menaion, was written by Hieromonk Georgije, during the time of the all-consecrated Metropolitan of Belgrade and Srem, Bishop Kir Makarije in Vrdnik, in the year 7097 [1588/1589], under the most-consecrated Archbishop of Peć, the father and teacher of the Serbs and Bulgarians and of many other lands, Bishop Kir Jerotej.”⁶⁶

⁶³ In 1550, Metropolitan Simeon of Raška was indeed appointed to the Ohrid throne, but his tenure lasted only six months, *ibid.* I, 610.

⁶⁴ Југовић, “Титуле и потписи”, 262–263.

⁶⁵ Ј. Радонић, *Римска курија и јужнословенске земље од XVI до XIX века* (Београд: САН, 1950), 165. In his dissertation, Nikola Kjirikj also highlighted disputes over jurisdictional authority between the archbishop of Ohrid and the archbishops and bishops of other neighbouring ecclesiastical territories. In this context, Kjirikj noted that the archbishop of the Ohrid Church customarily signed as the “Archbishop of Justiniana Prima and Ohrid”. During the late 17th and 18th centuries, this titular formula was occasionally extended to include “regions that were currently or formerly under their jurisdiction”. In this regard, it is particularly noteworthy that the title of the archbishop of Ohrid – and, by extension, of the Ohrid Archbishopric itself – was expanded to encompass “all of Bulgaria” as a direct response to the actions of “external” bishops, among whom the activity of the Bishop of Trnovo, Gregorios, was especially prominent. N. Kjirikj, *The Church of Ohrid in the Context of the 18th Century Ottoman Institutional Developments* [PhD thesis] (Istanbul: Istanbul Medeniyet University, Department of International Ottoman Studies, 2025), 7, 13, 92.

⁶⁶ “(...) съписа сју светою и божеств[ъ]ною книгъ, глаголемую месс[ъ]никъ, ѿр[ъ]монах[ъ] георгіе, при всесвещенноу м[ъ]нтрополитоу бѣлградскоу и срѣмскоу владыкы квр[ъ] макарию оу

Until the final decade of the 16th century, Makarije's successors maintained his approach in their relations with the Ottoman Empire. However, this course shifted during the reign of Patriarch Jovan Kantul, whose tenure was marked not only by a turn towards Western powers but also by direct involvement in Western efforts to liberate Balkan peoples from Ottoman rule.⁶⁷ This shift led to intensified Ottoman reprisals against the Orthodox population, culminating in the burning of Saint Sava's relics at Vračar⁶⁸, while also bringing persistent pressure from the Roman Curia to pursue church union. Although the Ottomans faced certain military defeats, the collapse of the powerful, predominantly Islamic empire remained distant. In response, Patriarch Pajsije focused on easing tensions between the Orthodox population and the Ottoman administration, maintaining ties with the Roman Curia while simultaneously strengthening relations with Russia.⁶⁹

Unlike the titles associated with previous heads of the Serbian Church, Patriarch Pajsije's title stands out for its simplicity, reflecting his monastic humility. In the notes he personally wrote, Pajsije consistently signed as 'Archbishop of Peć', omitting the patriarchal designation.⁷⁰ This absence can be interpreted as his deliberate self-presentation as the autocephalous leader and rightful heir to the Serbian church throne in Peć. The only two instances where he is referred to as "most-consecrated Patriarch"⁷¹ or "Serbian Patriarch"⁷² appear in records written by others.

Patriarch Pajsije often concealed his name and details within cryptographic writing. As he travelled, he left inscriptions in temple books, marking his presence while encrypting information – such as his construction of a bridge at Petrakovac in 1642, in honor of Stefan Dečanski, Serbian king (1321–1331):

ВРЪДНИКЪ, ВЪ ЛѢТ(Ѧ) .Љ.Ѓ.Љ. ВЪ ДНІИ ПРЪОСВѢЩЕННАГО АРХІЕПИСКОПА ПЕКСКАГО, ОУТ[Ъ]ЦА И ОУЧИТЕЛЯ СРЪБЛЯК[Ъ] И БЪЛГАРОМ[Ъ] ІІНІИМ[Ъ] МНОГІИМ[Ъ] СТРАНАМ[Ъ] ВЛАДЫКЕ КУР[Ъ] ІЕРОФЕА", *ССЗН* I, 806.

⁶⁷ Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве*, 322–330.

⁶⁸ *ССЗН* I, 876. The memory of the Ottoman burning of the relics of Saint Sava is preserved in sources written in various languages – including Serbo-Slavic, vernacular Serbian, Italian, Latin, and Turkish. For more on these sources, see: Т. Јовановић, "Извори о спаљивању моштију Светог Саве до средине XVII века", у: *Спаљивање моштију Светог Саве 1594–1994*, ур. епископ шумадијски Сава Вуковић и др., (Београд: Свети архијерејски синод Српске православне цркве, 1997), 11–20; Т. Јовановић, "Грађа за библиографију о спаљивању моштију Светог Саве", у: *Спаљивање моштију Светог Саве 1594–1994*, 369–372.

⁶⁹ Слијепчевић, *Историја српске православне цркве*, 331–332.

⁷⁰ *ССЗН* I, 202, 442, 1012, 1199, 1347, 1359, 1379, 1410, 1418; *ibid.* III, 4986; *ibid.* IV, 6655; Југовић, "Титуле и потписи", 262.

⁷¹ *ССЗН* I, 1276.

⁷² *Ibid.* III, 4988.

“At a certain time, I, the humble and many-sinful Archbishop of Peć, Pajsije, rebound this divine book in 7150 [1642], on August 30th, in Peć, with my own hand, *out of love for the holy martyr Stefan Uroš III, after I built the bridge at Petrakovac. And in those days, I appointed Avramije to the position of abbot in the Monastery of Dečani.”⁷³

These cryptograms reflected his erudition and humility but may also have served to protect the Dečani monks, the bridge, and himself.

The grand alliance of Christian forces in the war against Ottoman rule during the late 17th century had a profound impact on the Serbian Church, significantly destabilising the patriarchal throne in Peć. As the Habsburgs advanced in their military campaigns against the Ottomans, Patriarch Arsenije III Crnojević and all the bishops of the Patriarchate of Peć joined the fight in November 1689, pledging their support to the imperial troops and aiding the uprising. However, early in 1690, a shift in military fortunes forced the Serbs, led by Patriarch Arsenije III, to flee northward to escape the advancing Tatar horsemen.

The influx of Serbian refugees into Belgrade was viewed by Emperor Leopold I (1658–1705) as both a military asset and a political means to halt the Ottoman advance.⁷⁴ Following Leopold’s *Invitatorium*, the Belgrade Council met on June 28, 1690, where the patriarch and Serbian leaders secured key rights for Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy.⁷⁵ The first privilege, issued on August 21, 1690, extended the patriarch’s authority over all Orthodox Christians in the Monarchy, guaranteeing freedom of faith, election of a Serbian archbishop, and rights to consecrate bishops, appoint clergy, build churches and monasteries, and conduct visitations. Clergy were exempt from taxes, and church property was protected.⁷⁶ This formally recognised the Serbian religious and ethnic community as a “privileged religious category”, but their status challenged Hungary’s legal and social order, sparking

73 “По неконх[ь] врѣмень прѣвезах[ь] сію бож[ь]ств[ь]ную книгу(8), азъ смѣрныи и многогрѣшніи архієпископъ пекскыи павсен, въ лѣт(о) .ж. ѣ. ѣ. тоє, мѣсеца августа .ж. 8 пекки своею ркою *любови ради ндех[ь] въ светомъ мѣстѣникъ stefanъ оурошъ третіємъ егда оздах[ь] мост[ь] на петраков[ь]цѣ. И тѣхъ дана ставихъ їгум[ь]на аврамїа 8 дечанѣ”, *ibid.* IV, 6655; *ibid.* I, 1359. The asterisk (*) marks the beginning of Archbishop Pajsije’s secret writing.

74 Г. Васин, Н. Нинковић, *Историја Карловачке митрополије* (Нови Сад: Прометеј, 2002), 12.

75 М. Костић, “О постанку и значењу тзв. ‘Инвитаорије’ Леополда I балканским народима од 6. априла 1690”, *Историјски часопис* 2 (1949–1950), 144–158.

76 Васин, Нинковић, *Историја Карловачке митрополије*, 12, 13–14; И. Точанац-Радовић, “Етничка и верска заједница у привилегијама хабзбуршких владара (1690–1743). Срби – Расцијани – Илири”, у: Б. Бешлин и др., *Државно-правни оквири и осећање припадности. Српски колективни идентитети у новом веку* (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2024), 44–45, 46.

frequent conflicts between Serbs defending their privileges and Hungarian estates opposing them.⁷⁷

Although these guaranteed rights raised hopes for a more stable life for Orthodox Christians in the Habsburg Monarchy, the reality was often different, as the Orthodox population migrating from the Ottoman state to the Hungarian territories faced numerous challenges related to the transformation of their affiliation with the Orthodox spiritual tradition and the Serbian linguistic and cultural sphere. It became essential to develop strategies for preserving and nurturing established self-understandings within a new cultural, linguistic, and predominantly Catholic environment. The Archbishop Arsenije III relied on diplomatic skills and fought to preserve the Orthodox faith among his flock as well as the legitimacy of his archbishopric. His efforts were directed not only towards the new rulers and the Catholic Church in his new surroundings but also towards Kalinik I (1691–1710), the patriarch appointed by the Ottomans to the vacant throne at the Peć Monastery immediately following the migration.⁷⁸ Although Kalinik I's appointment was met with little enthusiasm, he nonetheless safeguarded the Serbian Church's survival within the Ottoman Empire, just as the autonomy of part of the Church was preserved in the Hungarian regions under Habsburg rule.⁷⁹

The struggle to preserve the Orthodox faith and ecclesiastical legitimacy is partly reflected in the titular formulas of Serbian church dignitaries from the late 17th to mid-18th century. Arsenije III inherited the title of his predecessors – 'Archbishop of Peć, Patriarch of Serbs, Bulgarians, and others' – with minor variations. Until the Great Migration in January 1690, his signatures appeared in manuscript and printed books in abbreviated forms, such as 'Archbishop of Peć, Patriarch of Peć, or Patriarch of Serbs'. He occasionally added the epithet *hajji*, referencing his

⁷⁷ Точанац-Радовић, "Етничка и верска заједница", 46; I. Točanac-Radović, "The Great Migration of Serbs and the Question of the Serbian Ethnic and Religious Community in the Habsburg Monarchy", in: *Migrations in the Slavic Cultural Space. From the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, eds. Z. A. Brzozowska, P. Kręzel, I. Lis-Wielgosz, (Łódź: Łódź University Press, 2022), 21, 22, 24.

⁷⁸ Kalinik's request to be appointed Patriarch of Peć was approved by the Ottoman authorities, who saw it as an opportunity to restore the disrupted sharia order following the Habsburg invasion. The Patriarch of Constantinople also played a key role in this process, sending two Greek bishops to Peć to ordain the new patriarch. Н. Шулетић, "Пореске обавезе 'Пећке патријаршије' у време патријарха Калиника I (1691–1710)", *Зборник Маџице српске за историју* 88 (2013), 9–11.

⁷⁹ И. Точанац, *Српски народно-црквени сабори* (Београд: Историјски институт, 2008), 34–35, 100–101; Васин, Нинковић, *Историја Карловачке митрополије*, 34–36, 39; Точанац-Радовић, "Етничка и верска заједница", 45–46.

pilgrimage to Jerusalem,⁸⁰ a practice later adopted by his successors on the Serbian patriarchal throne.⁸¹

In the titles recorded in manuscripts and printed books, as well as in official correspondence with the Viennese court and Austrian dignitaries, Patriarch Arsenije III actively defended his legitimacy as the head of the Serbian Church, along with the privileges granted to Orthodox Christians – particularly Serbs – under Habsburg rule. His titles varied between letters and inscriptions in books, as correspondence generally assumed a more formal tone. In contrast to colophons and marginal notes in books primarily intended for an Orthodox Christian audience, Arsenije's official correspondence addressed to higher social authorities reveals a notable practice of code-switching. Letters sent to the highest ranks of the Habsburg Monarchy were signed in Latin, the official language of the state, while German was employed when addressing influential Austrian figures.⁸² Patriarch Arsenije's use of code-switching should certainly be interpreted as one of the strategies aimed at securing equal status for the Orthodox community in relation to Catholics, while simultaneously indicating a certain degree of assimilation.

Emperor Leopold I's privilege granted Serbian Archbishop Arsenije III spiritual authority over all Orthodox peoples within the Habsburg Monarchy. This authority was sometimes interpreted broadly in records, leading to Arsenije III being titled 'Patriarch of Peć, all Serbs and Bulgarians, and the upper Danube region to the city of Rome and all western and other territories' shortly after receiving the privilege.⁸³ Although the titulature of Patriarch Arsenije III might suggest that the jurisdiction of the Serbian Church had significantly expanded beyond the regional boundaries governed by his predecessors on the patriarchal throne, it is evident that such a title was more an expression of ideological intent than a reflection of historical reality. This leads to the conclusion that colophons and marginal notes in books produced after the Great Migration at the end of the 17th century became permeable to more flexible forms of titulature, within which self-understandings and identifications of Serbian church leaders were shaped under strong ideological influence.

The titles of the exiled Serbian Patriarch, first recorded in letters and later in certain inscriptions, underscore his dedication to the preservation of the Orthodox flock, serving as a protective shield for the Orthodox population in Dalmatia, Lika,

⁸⁰ *CCЗН* I, 1903; *ibid.* II, 2099, 2128; *ibid.* IV, 7258; *ibid.* V, 7320.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* II, 2132; *ibid.* V, 7316, 7397.

⁸² Југовић, "Титуле и потписи", 266, 267. For the terminology concerning the Serbs in the diplomas issued by Emperor Leopold I to the Serbs during the Great Turkish War and in the immediate aftermath of the Great Migration, see: Точанац-Радовић, "Етничка и верска заједница", 46–79.

⁸³ *CCЗН* IV, 7122. Југовић, "Титуле и потписи", 266.

Slavonia, and Srem – regions under Ottoman rather than Habsburg rule.⁸⁴ Striving to preserve Orthodox allegiance among his flock, Arsenije frequently conducted canonical visitations to those regions, where he was often titled “Orthodox Archbishop and Patriarch of Serbs, Bulgarians, and all Orthodox faithful of the Eastern Church, organised according to Greek tradition”.⁸⁵

The territorial scope of Arsenije III's spiritual authority was significant not only to the Serbian leader but also to members of the Habsburg Monarchy, as reflected in their correspondence. They particularly emphasised his title, designating regions inhabited by Serbs north of the Sava and Danube, as well as Orthodox-populated areas in Dalmatia, Bosnia, and parts of Slavonia, under the term ‘Illyricum’ – or more precisely ‘Eastern Illyricum’ – a reference to the extent of the Roman province that became part of the Eastern Roman Empire in the 4th century.⁸⁶ This territorial identifier was clearly intended to affirm both the belonging to the Orthodox community and the legitimacy of the Patriarchate of Peć and its leader under the authority of the Eastern Roman Empire, as evidenced by Arsenije III's title, ‘Archbishop of the Eastern First Justinian Church’.⁸⁷ While this designation was commonly used in letters during his administration, it became more frequent in book records only in the signatures of his successors on the patriarchal throne in Peć. This shift was likely influenced by the charter of 18 March 1710, in which Patriarch Kalinik I, confirming the Karlovac Metropolitanate as an autonomous part of the Peć Patriarchate, signed “Patriarch of all Illyricum”.⁸⁸ This title became increasingly prevalent in book records during the reign of Arsenije IV (Archbishop of Peć, 1725–1737; Metropolitan of Karlovci, 1737–1748). Following the death of Metropolitan Vikentije, Empress Maria Theresa (1740–1780) appointed Arsenije IV as administrator of the Karlovac Metropolitanate, reaffirming his patriarchal status and officially establishing the title ‘Patriarch of All Illyricum’ as a recognised designation.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ С. Вуковић, С. Гавриловић, “Арсеније III Црнојевић”, у: *Српски биографски речник* [књ.] 1: А–Б, ур. М. Лесковац, А. Форишковић, Ч. Попов, (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2004), 271–272.

⁸⁵ *ССЗН* I, 1960; *ibid.* VI, 10198; Југовић, “Титуле и потписи”, 265.

⁸⁶ This term would later, from the mid-18th century onwards, denote a territory inhabited by Orthodox Christians of various ethnic backgrounds. Similarly, alongside the designation ‘Rascian’, the Serbian people were most frequently referred to as ‘Illyrians’ in official communications between the Serbs and the Habsburg monarch. From the second half of the 18th century, however, this term began to expand to include other Orthodox subjects of different ethnic origins within the Habsburg Monarchy. Cf. Точанац-Радовић, “Етничка и верска заједница”, 65–79.

⁸⁷ Југовић, “Титуле и потписи”, 264.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁸⁹ С. Вуковић, С. Гавриловић, “Арсеније IV Јовановић Шакабента”, у: *Српски биографски речник* [књ.] 1: А–Б, 273–274.

Alongside the brief administrations of Serbian and Greek rulers in the mid-18th century, Arsenije IV's tenure marked the final phase of the Serbian Church's existence before the Patriarchate of Peć was abolished in 1766 and placed under the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople due to mounting debts to the Ottoman state.⁹⁰

1.4. The Identification of Ottomans and Ottoman Rulers in Early Modern Serbian Marginal Notes

Medieval, and subsequently early modern, scribes commonly recorded the time of their work from the beginning of the world. In the process of dating manuscripts, they regularly referenced the rulers to whom they owed allegiance or the ecclesiastical authorities of the Serbian Church under whose jurisdiction they were copying texts. The most discernible changes in dating practices coincided with the incorporation of Orthodox Christian polities in the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire. As political and social conditions evolved under Ottoman rule, Orthodox scribes adapted by aligning the dating of their manuscripts with the reigning Ottoman sultans and, increasingly from the mid-16th century onwards, with Serbian archbishops or patriarchs. Over time, specific references to individual Ottoman rulers were replaced by more generalised terms such as 'the Turks', a shift that reflects both pragmatic modifications and the pervasive influence of Ottoman administrative structures.

The emergence of Ottoman references in medieval texts occurred at a notably early stage, underscoring the significant impact of historical developments during the 14th century, particularly in its latter half.⁹¹ During this period, Orthodox literate communities – both Slavic and Greek – quickly formulated a structured framework for conceptualising and defining the Ottoman presence. Within this framework, Orthodox scribes developed specific modes of identifying the Ottomans, revealing the complex entanglement of cultural, political, and religious narratives as a response to Ottoman expansion.

⁹⁰ Ђ. Слијепчевић, "Укидање Пећке патријаршије 1766", *Богословље* 3–4 (1938), 250–307; П. Пузовић, "Српска црква од Светога Саве до укидања Пећке патријаршије 1766. године", у: *2000 година хришћанства* ур. Д. Калезић, С. Ристановић, (Београд: Вукан'с, 2000), 128–149; Н. Радосављевић, "Пећка патријаршија, од обнове аутокефалности до укидања (1557–1766). Поводом 450 година од обнове Пећке патријаршије", *Брајисво* 11 (2007), 11–34.

⁹¹ One of the earliest recorded references to the Ottomans and the term 'Turks' appears in *The Life of the Holy King Milutin*, authored by Archbishop Danilo II, see Архиепископ Данило, *Живот и краљева и архиепископских српских* (Београд: СКЗ, 1935), 83.

In representations produced by Serbian authors and scribes, whose intellectual and spiritual lives were centred around monastic institutions or parish churches, Ottoman expansion was interpreted as the incursion of an alien force of another religion. The Ottomans, perceived as hostile towards non-Muslims and unwilling to integrate with the Orthodox populations they encountered upon their arrival in the Balkans, were symbolically identified as the descendants of Hagar – the Egyptian handmaiden who bore the illegitimate and rejected son of Abraham – Ishmael.⁹² This construction – including the synonymous designation ‘Ishmaelites’ – carried deeply negative connotations, further reinforced by epithets such as ‘godless’, ‘accursed’, ‘faithless’ and ‘merciless’:⁹³

“[...] I wrote this in the year 7111 [1602], on November 17, in Peć – and during those troubled years there was no peace anywhere for Christians, nor for me, because of the violence of the faithless Ishmaelites.”⁹⁴

In the detailed examination of the identifiers ‘Hagaren’ and ‘Ishmaelite’ – representations of the Ottomans that were, from an early stage, incorporated into the established poetic conventions of the Byzantine literary tradition, particularly within the genre of the colophon – Aleksandar Z. Savić also highlighted the potential for expanding the connotative range of these terms.⁹⁵ Referring once again to the semantic layer of the Old Testament story of Ishmael, he proposed that, through the motif of the son’s separation from his father – and, by extension, from the covenant – “a new idea emerged that, in a certain sense, transcended the purely religious sphere”. “The exiled son”, in his view, “came to embody the spatial and moral coordinates of the wilderness”, which were transmitted to his descendants. Finally, Aleksandar Z. Savić paved the way for understanding the use of the terms ‘Hagaren’ and ‘Ishmaelite’ not merely as markers of religious difference, but as terms that “can imply a foreign and inherently violent and warlike experience”.⁹⁶

⁹² Postanje (1.Moj) 16.1–16. *Sveto pismo. Novi srpski prevod.* prev. M. Živković, Ž. Đorđević, A. Birviš, (Beograd: Ikonos, 2024), 13–14, 24.

⁹³ В. Ђоровић, “Утјецај и одношај између старих грчких и српских записа и натписа”, *Глас СКА LXXXIV, Друшћу разред 50* (1910), 52–53.

⁹⁴ “(...) Писах[ъ] лѣт(о) .ж.р.ѣ.ї. мѣсеца ноемврїа .ж.ї. 8 пекв. и въ тѣх[ъ] нрѣжних[ъ] лѣтѣх[ъ] ниг[ъ]деже христїанинѣ мнрѣе бешѣ ни мѣ грешны от[ъ] насилїа иноезгыных[ъ] исцмилѣтенѣ”, *ССЗН IV*, 6498.

⁹⁵ А. З. Савић, “‘Незнабошци дођоше у достојање твоје’ (Пс. 78,1): Идентитет и другост у српском политичком дискурсу епохе османских освајања”, у: С. Марјановић-Душанић и др., *Политички оквири колективних идентитетских: Сведочанства српској средњовековља*, (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2024), 83–86 (with bibliography in no. 24, 26–28).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 85–86.

The negative portrayal of the Ottoman collective was deeply embedded in colophons and marginal notes composed during periods of armed conflict, wherein military confrontations between the Ottomans and Christian forces – both Orthodox and Catholic – were documented. The hope for liberation from Muslim domination contributed to a narrative, particularly during the heightened military engagements of the late 17th century, in which Orthodox Christians perceived themselves as part of a broader Christian community, united with their Catholic counterparts. This self-understanding as members of Christ’s universal flock implied a temporary and strategic effacement of the longstanding theological and ecclesiological divisions between the Eastern and Western Churches in pursuit of a shared Christian goal: the resistance, repulsion, and eventual defeat of ‘the godless children of Hagar’. However, despite hopes for a universal Christian community that would compel the Muslims to withdraw from the Balkans, Orthodox Christians who had fled found neither peace nor fulfillment within the Catholic Christian and cultural sphere, where, during their migrations, they sought to establish a new home:

“I, the sinful and least among the monks, Mihailo, hieromonk of Ravanica, wrote this in the land of Hungary, above the capital city of Buda, in a place called Szentendre, pressed and exiled by the godless and God-hating Hagarens. Deprived of our homes and monasteries and of every good, and here we found no good at all. We have endured these four years in hardship, awaiting good, yet we did not attain it; and henceforth we await God alone. Mourn, O Christian people! In 7203 [1694/1695]”⁹⁷

In such colophons, scribes frequently employed allegorical imagery to represent the Ottoman military force. Metaphorical language portrayed the Ottomans as “winged serpents flying over land and sea”,⁹⁸ or as “furious, bloodthirsty wolves preying upon Christ’s flock”.⁹⁹ The choice of such imagery was informed by medieval literary traditions and illustrates the intertextual dynamics between various genres, including colophonic notes, hagiography, and hymnography. This convergence of literary forms not only underscores their mutual permeability but also reflects the high level of education possessed by many scribes, which enabled them to craft elaborate and symbolically rich narratives.

⁹⁷ “Писахъ азъ грѣшникъ и мѧн[ъ]ши въ нѧоцѣхъ мѧхѧнѧь кѣр[ъ]монахъ раванникѧнникъ въ оугарскыхъ странахъ внише столѧнаго града бѣдѧла въ мѣстѣ зовомъ сѧнт андраш[ъ] въ велицѣмъ оутѣсненѧи и из[ъ]гнѧни ѡт[ъ] без[ъ]божнихъ и богомрьскыхъ агарѧь своихъ домоѡвъ и монастыренъ и всакаго добра лишени, а зде никакого добра не приобрѣли. И прѣбихомъ зде 4 лѣта по злѧ добра чекаюѡмъ и не дождахомъ[ъ], а ѡтѣ] селе единомѧ бога вѣдомо. Оуѡи родѧ хрѣстѧнскомѧ! въ лѣто 7203”, *ССЗН* I, 1996.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* I, 654, 1824.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* I, 1796; Mošin, Traljić, “Ćirilski spomenici”, 68–69.

In the Serbian colophons of scribes and marginal notes from the Ottoman period, references to nearly all Ottoman rulers have been preserved – from Murad I (1362–1389), during the initial incursions into the Balkan Peninsula in the 14th century, to Mahmud I (1730–1754), whose reign ended in the mid-18th century.

These annotations, originating from subjugated Orthodox Christians, generally portrayed Ottoman rulers in a negative light:

“[...] And at that time, in Constantinople, the fierce fighter against God and warrior against Christ’s flock, Sultan Ahmed, ruled [...]”¹⁰⁰

The systematic discrimination of non-Muslim populations under the Ottoman legal framework, the devastation of Orthodox religious sites by Ottoman forces, and, above all, the firsthand experience of Muslim hostility towards Christians – especially as endured by scribes, particularly itinerant ones – all contributed to the development of such negative portrayals in manuscript annotations. Characterised by epithets such as ‘godless’, ‘God-hating’, ‘merciless’, ‘malevolent’, ‘wrathful’, and ‘furious’, these identifications often acquired the status of negative stereotypes. Frequent, and with only a few exceptions, these portrayals reflect the existence of a well-defined system of signifiers in which the emphasis lay less on historical accuracy and more on constructing a stable system of identification. The fact that such portrayals of Ottoman rulers were copied and reproduced in manuscripts over centuries aligns with the scribal tradition of faithfully replicating established models.¹⁰¹

An illustrative example appears in the colophon of Hieromonk Mardarije, who adapted a Byzantine tradition of imperial portrayal – particularly that of Constantine V (741–775) – in a specific form. Mardarije inserted the name of Sultan Suleiman I into this framework, which led to the sultan being mistakenly associated with “the iconoclastic emperor who ruled over the eastern and other lands”.¹⁰²

Over the centuries, Christian scribes developed various models for identifying Ottoman rulers, which in time became distinctive markers of particular workshops or monastic scriptoria. In the early 16th century, the scriptorium of the Metropolitan-ate of Mileševa developed one such model for the identification of Ottoman rulers, which would subsequently function as a kind of identification standard transmitted through the notes of regional scribes. As examples of the adoption and transmission of these established identification models, we may cite the colophons of Monk Marko

¹⁰⁰ “(...) и царьствующя тогда въ константинь градѣ люты богоборац[ь] и стада христова ратники соултанъ ахмет[ь] (...)”, *ССЗН* I, 1021.

¹⁰¹ This is evidenced by the 17th century Hilandar miscellany, where an unknown Athonite scribe provided a template for composing inscriptions, Трифуновић, *Азбучник*, 83.

¹⁰² *ССЗН* IV, 6328.

of Trebinje and Jovan Maleševac¹⁰³ – two scribes who were associated with the Tvrdoš Monastery over a period of approximately fifteen years can be cited:

“[...] at the time of the reign of the wicked and blasphemous of the Holy Trinity, and persecutor of Christians, the Ishmaelite Emperor Bayazid [...]”¹⁰⁴
(Monk Marko from Trebinje, 1509)

“[...] at the time of the impious and blasphemous of the Holy Trinity and persecutor of Christians, the Turkish Emperor Suleiman [...]”¹⁰⁵
(Jovan Maleševac, 1524)

While the precise origins of these models for identifying and portraying Ottoman rulers remain difficult to ascertain, it is evident that specific patterns circulated within defined regions or among particular scribal communities. During the sixth and seventh decades of the 16th century, one such pattern was widely employed in scribal workshops operating across the territory from the Patriarchate of Peć to the Metropolitanate of Budimlja. This connection is particularly illustrated through the work of two scribes, Jovan from Nikolj Pazar and Simon, whose activities were centred around the broader area of the Patriarchate of Peć, including Polimlje and the city of Berane.¹⁰⁶

In the colophons authored by both scribes, the reign of Sultan Suleiman I is consistently depicted as a period marked by hardship and evil.¹⁰⁷ While Deacon Jovan's contribution is limited to a single manuscript, Deacon Simon's extensive oeuvre – comprising five large codices – offers more substantial evidence of the existence and transmission of an established identification model. Simon's scribal career spanned the reigns of both Suleiman I and his successor Selim II.¹⁰⁸ Although he employed the same descriptive framework for both rulers, Simon introduced notable innovations in his depiction of Selim II, characterising him as “a Christian executioner”, “a fornicator”, and “a wine-drinker”.¹⁰⁹ He further emphasised Selim's

¹⁰³ In Deacon Jovan's signature, the term Maleševac indicates his place of residence, likely the village of Mileševac, which emerged near the fortress bearing the same name, close to the Mileševa Monastery. By the 17th century, this village became known by its Turkish name, Hisardžik.

¹⁰⁴ “(...) въ тѣже вѣмѣна цар[ь]ствующѣхъ нечестивыхъ и тронц(и) хваломъ и христїаном[ь] досадител[ь]ныхъ царѣхъ исмаилѣйскихъ баязитъ (...)”, *ibid.* I, 404.

¹⁰⁵ “(...) въ д[ь]ни злочестивааго и тронци хвалааго и христїаном[ь] досадителнааго тврѣскааго цара соулѣмѣна (...)”, *ibid.* I, 451.

¹⁰⁶ А. Младеновић, Љ. Штавланин-Ђорђевић, “Дијак Симон – писар српских богослужбених књига у другој половини XVI века”, *Археолошки прилози* 4 (1982), 102, 119.

¹⁰⁷ *ССЗН* III, 5606; *ibid.* I, 613; *ibid.* IV, 6314.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* I, 613; *ibid.* IV, 6314, 6316, 6337, 6359.

¹⁰⁹ A clear indication that Simon's workshop followed a specific model for depicting sultans is the fact that researchers studying his manuscripts failed to recognise that two of Simon's

policies, such as the recruitment of Janissaries and the imposition of the grass levy, thereby offering a more detailed and nuanced assessment of his rule.¹¹⁰

It is indisputable that the colophons and marginalia produced by Orthodox scribes during the Ottoman period often emerged in an atmosphere of fear and reflected the direct experience of conflicts between the Ottomans and Orthodox Christians. Nevertheless, the patterns and identifications that scribes constructed under such circumstances were quickly accepted and incorporated into a broader poetic and generic framework of inscriptions. The schematic and typological features of the colophon and other notes played a crucial role in enabling certain patterns (i.e., identifications) to prevail in the immediate process of manuscript transcription. At the same time, this further reinforced the scribes' sense of belonging to a particular circle of scribes or scriptorium that was active during a specific period within a clearly defined geographical area.

State-territorial references to the Ottoman Empire reflect intentional and carefully considered choices, often influenced by specific contextual factors, whether political, theological, or cultural. Within this broader framework, depictions of the Ottoman Empire – through which the authors of these inscriptions situated their lives and work – range from strongly critical to occasionally favourable evaluations. These references are frequently presented in a comparative manner, highlighting contrasts between differing ideological and cultural viewpoints. The linguistic precision and depth of meaning within these inscriptions demonstrate the scribes' purposeful engagement with their audience and the ideological significance of their expressions. The ways in which the identification of the Ottoman state is interwoven into these texts provide valuable perspectives on the scribes' viewpoints and the historical context of the era.

Throughout the Ottoman period, the term 'empire' (*carstvo*) was used in colophons and marginalia as a synonym for state rather than a reflection of hierarchical status. While Ottoman political dominance was indirectly acknowledged, explicit references to their empire in Orthodox scribes' writings remained rare. The infrequent explicit mention of the concept of the state can be partly attributed to the inherited conventions of medieval Serbian marginal notes, in which references to the state or empire appeared only rarely.

Direct acknowledgement of Ottoman authority and subordination to the sultan emerged only within specific microcontexts, reflecting localised or situational perspectives. Such recognition was often accompanied by a negative depiction of

copies were produced during the reign of Sultan Selim. Instead, they incorrectly attributed the creation of these manuscripts to the reign of Sultan Suleiman, see Младеновић, Штаљанин-Ђорђевић, "Дијак Симон", 121.

¹¹⁰ ССЗН IV, 6337.

the Ottoman Empire, which was at times further intensified through a deliberate contrast between ‘the godless Ottoman ruler’ and ‘the pious Serbian sovereign’. Fully aware of his subordination to the Turkish sultan and his affiliation with the Ottoman realm, Paraecclesiarch Aksedije consciously crafted his self-representation within a comparative framework, elevating the late Serbian Despot Stefan (1389/1402–1427) above Murad II (1421–1444, 1446–1451) and aligning this narrative with the broader historical realities of the period:

“In the year 6942 [1433/1434], the seventh year after the death of the pious Despot Stefan, in the empire of the godless Emperor Murad Bey of Turks, this book was copied by the sinful Aksedius, Paraecclesiarch of the Great Skopje Metropolitanate.”¹¹¹
(*Apostles*, National Library of Belgrade, Old Collection № 1164)

This juxtaposition fulfils both religious and ideological objectives. By portraying the Ottoman ruler reigning at the time the colophon was created, it simultaneously shapes the remembrance of the morally and spiritually superior Serbian ruler, who embodies the significance of Serbia’s past. Through this deliberate comparison, the attributes and consequences of Ottoman rule are subtly conveyed, showcasing the scribe’s intricate method of capturing power dynamics and fostering a culture of remembrance during a period of foreign domination.

Of particular interest, however, are the colophons in which direct acknowledgement of belonging to the Ottoman Empire and allegiance to the sultan is devoid of any negative connotation. In this regard, the colophon of the Dečani Scribe Nikander is particularly revealing, as it uniquely articulates the relationship between Jeftimije, the Elder of the Belaja Hermitage, and Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512), while also reflecting Jeftimije’s own perception of the Ottoman state and political order to which he belonged. Setting aside for a moment the identification of “the impious Ishmaelites”, no explicit positive or negative characterisation was attributed to the empire of Bayezid II. This suggests that such identification was indicative of the acknowledgement of the subordinate status of Monk Nikander and Elder Jeftimije, two esteemed spiritual figures who resided in Dečani and its vicinity during the late 15th century and the early decades of the 16th century:¹¹²

“This holy and divine Four Gospels was written in the year 7002 [1493/1494] in the Belaja hermitage, in the home of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the days of the impious

¹¹¹ “(...) .Ж.І.І.Б. по кончинѣ благочѣстнаго деспота стевана .Ж. лѣто въ царство безбожнааго цара мзрать бѣга турскаго (...) прѣписа сїю книгѹ грѣшни акседне параксаркѣ великыѣ митрополыѣ скопскыѣ”, *ibid.* I, 261. The manuscript was burned during the German bombing of the National Library in Belgrade on April 6, 1941. See Богдановић, *Инвенѹар*, 192 (R 23).

¹¹² Д. Поповић, Б. Тодић, Д. Војводић, *Дечанска ѱусѹиња. Скиѹови и келије манастѹира Дечана* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2011), 15, 41–43, 118 (with no. 263).

Ishmaelites and in the empire of Emperor Bayezid. It was written by the hand of the many-sinful Nikander, and with the wish and blessing of the Elder Jeftimije. To our God be the glory forever and ever, amen.”¹¹³

(*Four Gospels*, the Dečani Monastery N^o 14)

Situated within the Ottoman Empire, the Dečani Monastery, along with its nearby hermitages, stood out among other monastic communities of the time for its uniquely privileged status. In the early 16th century, an Ottoman decree relieved monks from taxes on wood and grass, easing the financial strain on the abbot and the monastic brotherhood.¹¹⁴ Additional relief followed when the Ottoman ruler mandated that the monastery abbot raise falcons for the sultan's court.¹¹⁵ In return, both the abbot and the entire monastic community were granted exemptions from several taxes typically imposed on Orthodox monasteries.¹¹⁶

Nikander's colophon offers an exceptionally valuable insight into the inherited medieval models of self-understanding and spatial perception, as well as into the ideological and spiritual frameworks of the time. By situating the scribe's work within "the empire of Bayezid" while simultaneously referring to "the godless Ishmaelites", the text suggests a tension that is manifested not only between belonging to the Orthodox monastic order on one hand, and belonging to the Muslim state on the other, but also between the identification of the Ottoman sultan (who granted certain privileges to the monastery) and "the godless Muslims".

The understanding of the spatial dichotomy between the external political sphere and the inner sanctity of the hermitage dedicated to the Virgin (fig. 3), shaped in the process of self-understanding by the Dečani Monk Nikander and Elder Jeftimije, strengthens the scribe's spiritual mission and sense of purpose. Such descriptions carry deep symbolic meaning, presenting the act of writing as an essential part of the path to salvation and reflecting the medieval worldview. Furthermore, the introspective consideration of authorship further enriches the narrative by emphasising

113 “Ғы с(кѣ)ты и б(о)ж(ь)ствѣныи тетрѡеѹ(а)г(г)ѣ)лѣ сьписа се къ лѣт(ь) .ѣѢ. къ пѣстинѣ бѣлаѣ, къ домоу прѣс(кѣ)тыѣ б(о)городице. къ д(ь)нѣи нечѣствѣиых[ъ] исманатѣнь, къ ц(а)рство ц(а)ра бѣлѣзѣнта. роукою многѡгрѣшнаго никан(ь)дра писа се, повелѣнїемъ и б(ла)го(с)л(о)венїемъ старца еѹфїмїа. б(о)г(ь)хъ нашеѣхъ слава къ вѣкы аминь :-~ ~ ~”, Dečani № 14, f. 315a, CC3H IV, 6187.

¹¹⁴ М. Чанак-Медић, Б. Тодић, *Манасџир Дечани* (Нови Сад: Платонеум; Манастир Дечани, 2018), 117.

¹¹⁵ О. Зиројевић, *Цркве и манастири на подручју Пећке патријаршије до 1683. године* (Београд: Историјски институт; Народна књига, 1984), 90.

¹¹⁶ X. Калешин, М. Ерен, “Четрнаест турских фермана манастира Дечана”, *Гласник Музеја Косова* X (1970), 305–344; М. Шакота, *Дечанска ризница* (Београд: Просвета; Републички завод за заштиту споменика културе, 1984), 53; С. Мишић, “Соколари”, у: *Лексикон*, 682; Чанак-Медић, Тодић, *Манастир Дечани*, 117–118.

the mutual connection between self-understanding and the broader socio-political and theological context in which the scribe operated.¹¹⁷

Evidence from Nikander's other colophons, along with the fact that the *Four Gospels* (fig. 4) were commissioned by Elder Jeftimije, strongly suggests that although Nikander physically copied the manuscript and its accompanying colophons, Elder Jeftimije, the leader of the hermitage in Belaja, was likely the compiler of the colophon. This dynamic interplay between the scribe and the commissioner, which inherently involved questions of authority and power, was a common feature of medieval scribal practice, one that continued to be cultivated into the early modern period. The assertion that Elder Jeftimije served as the colophon compiler is well supported by his prominent role as an elder within the monastic community of the Dečani Monastery.¹¹⁸ His position not only provided him with the authority to oversee such projects but also placed him at the centre of intellectual and spiritual leadership, making his influence on the content both logical and significant.

In the sole extant example, the Ottoman Empire is negatively identified through the dynastic relationships within the ruling family. Beyond its commemorative function, this note with a negative identification of the Ottoman dynasty aims to convey a specific ideological message. An unidentified scribe of the *Menaion* employed this approach by portraying the empire of Sultan Suleiman through the lens of the conflict among his sons. Seeking to negatively characterise Suleiman's own reign, the scribe concluded his note with an emotionally charged narrative conveying the message that the greatest consequences of the conflict on the Ottoman dynastic throne were suffered primarily by the state's subjects – Orthodox Christians:

“This Menaion was penned in the year 7068 [1559/1560] [...] during the reign of misruled Ishmaelites of Suleiman the Emir.”¹¹⁹

And then his sons, Selim and Bayazid, quarrelled over the empire, and they fought a war. And Selim shed blood, while Bayazid fled to Qazvin. Oh, the sorrow and burden on the Christians at that time.”¹²⁰

(*Menaion*, the Holy Trinity Monastery of Pljevlja № 27)

A few exceptional colophons offer Christian interpretations of Ottoman rulers, and consequently their empire, in a more favourable light. These representations are shaped by the unique characteristics of the scribal environment or context and

¹¹⁷ А. Гуревич, *Катѣѣоріје средньовековне кулѣуре* (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 1994), 61–110.

¹¹⁸ Поповић, Тодић, Војводић, *Дечанска ѣусѣиња*, 189–190, 191.

¹¹⁹ “Сѣи мнен писа се въ лѣт(о) 7068. ѣ. (...) въ дрѣжавѣ злѣдрѣжныхъ[ъ] исламлѣть царя свленмана алмрѣ”, *ССЗН* I, 615.

¹²⁰ “И въ то врѣме сваднше се сыновн его ѡ царство, селнлѣ и паазиѣть, и бон быше. и оуби селнм[ъ], и прнѣже паазиѣть на възлѣбашъ. ѡ тоуга и н теготѣ на христѣанехъ въ то врѣме (...)”, *ibid.* I, 616.

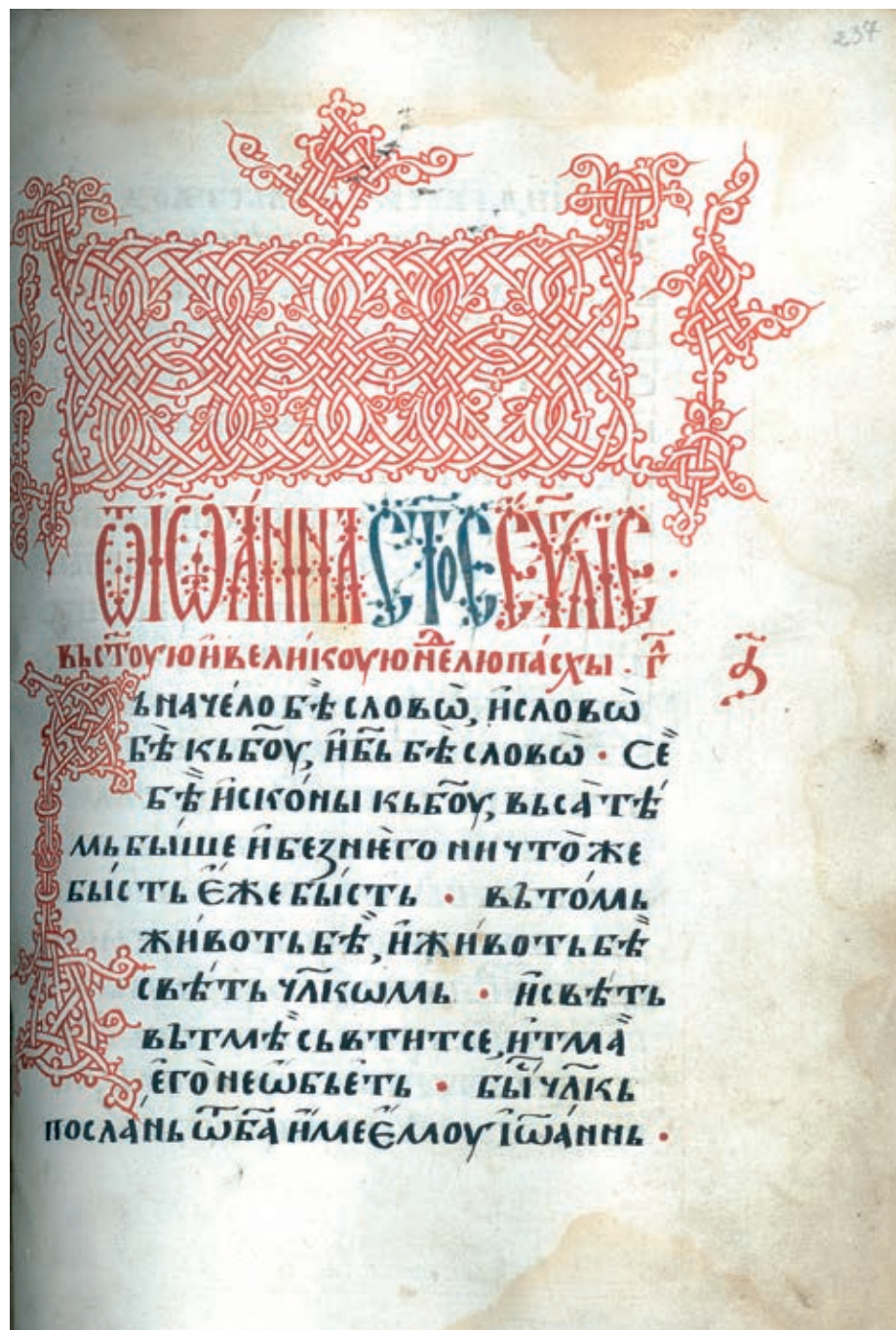


Fig. 3. *Four Gospels*, Dečani Monastery 14, 1494, fol. 237a

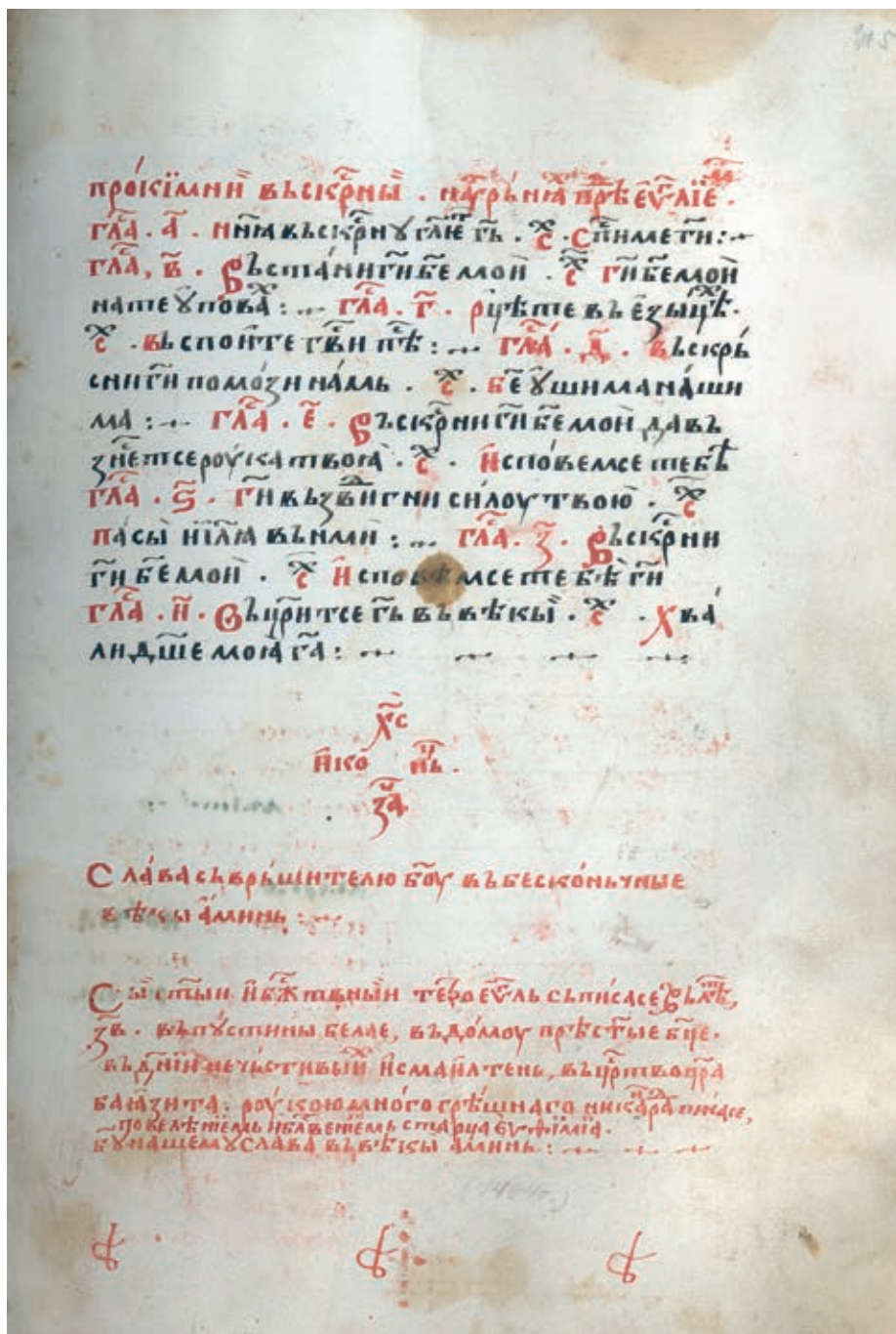


Fig. 4. *Four Gospels*, Dečani Monastery 14, 1494, colophon of Monk Nikandar, fol. 315a

are influenced by prevailing political and ideological factors. Notably, positive representations of Sultans Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1481) and Bayezid II are found only rarely, appearing in the colophons of Vladislav Grammarian, a scribe from the mining town of Novo Brdo, and Nikola Kosijer, a scribe from Zeta.

Scribe Vladislav, known as both Deacon and Grammarian, was a close associate of Dimitrije Kantakuzin (Demetrius Kantakouzenos), whose family had relocated to the prosperous mining town of Novo Brdo during the Ottoman incursions. After the fall of Novo Brdo in 1455, Vladislav settled in Mlado Nagoričino but completed most of his work at the Matejča Monastery.¹²¹ Among his notable works is the *Miscellany*, compiled for Dimitrije in 1468/1469, which concludes with an extensive colophon, commonly referred to as *Epistle to Dimitrije Kantakuzin*. In its final lines, Vladislav praises Ottoman ruler Mehmed II, using honorifics typically reserved for Christian monarchs:¹²²

“This book was written for Lord Demetrius Kantakouzenos by the hand of the last among the deacons, so called Deacon Vladislav, in the sacred monastery of the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the Black Mountain, during the reign of the great and autocratic emperor, the Muslim Emir Mehmed Bey, in the eighth year of his rule. From the beginning of the world, 6977 [1468/1469]...”¹²³
(*Miscellany*, CASA III a 47)

The glorification of the Ottoman ruler in the final part of the *Epistle* is a unique instance within Vladislav's body of work, raising questions about its purpose. Although it is not possible to offer a definitive and unequivocal explanation of Vladislav's identification of the Ottoman ruler, two lines of interpretation appear to be certain at this stage.

On the one hand, the basis for such identification may be found in the socio-historical context in which Vladislav Grammarian lived and carried out his literary work. Dimitrije Kantakuzin, at whose request Vladislav composed the *Epistle*,

¹²¹ Сїиси Димийїрија Каниїакузина и Владислава Грамайїика, ур. Ј. Грковић-Мејдор, (Београд: Просвета; СКЗ, 1993), 23; Б. Христова, *Опис на рѣкописите на Владислав Граматик* (Велико Търново: ПИК, 1996).

122 С. Марјановић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића. Дијломаиичка студија* (Београд: СКЗ, 1997), 60–69; Б. Ферјанчић, “Самодржац”, у: *Лексикон*, 642–643; Р. Михаљчић, *Владарске идеологије обласних владара. Прилог владарској идеологији у стваријој српској прошлости* (Београд: Српска школска књига; Knowledge, 2001), 71–72.

123 “(...) писа же се сіа кнѣга господиноу аминроу кантакоузиноу послѣднимы въ дѣцѣхъ нарицае-
мымы таха дѣакомы владиславомы въ вѣсѣстнѣмъ монастыри прѣсвѣтын богородице соущее иже въ
подкрѣпѣи трыныя горы. въ дѣни велнкаго и самодръжавнаго цара моусроманьскаго аминре мѣхъмѣдъ
бега. въ осмое же на десете лѣто царьствѣа его, от[ъ] създаѣа же мира сего въ лѣто 5.ѣ.ѡ.Ѣ. (...)”,
ССЗН I, 335.

was closely associated with Mara Branković – the daughter of Đurađ Branković and the widow of Sultan Murad II, who spent part of her life at the court of her stepson, Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II.¹²⁴ Moreover, “an incomplete note from the year 1480 suggests that Vladislav the Grammarian was most likely employed as a scribe in the service of Mara Branković”.¹²⁵ What is certain is that both Dimitrije Kantakuzin and Vladislav the Grammarian composed hagiographic texts celebrating the life of Saint John of Rila, whose relics were transferred from Trnovo to the Rila Monastery – a transfer in which Mara Branković played a decisive role.¹²⁶ In the shadow of the translation of the relics of Saint John of Rila, all of these circumstances suggest that Vladislav’s laudatory tone in identifying Sultan Mehmed II may have emerged precisely under the influence of the close ties that both Dimitrije Kantakuzin and Vladislav the Grammarian maintained with the Serbian princess Mara Branković.

Although the importance of the historical context cannot be denied, it is equally necessary to acknowledge that Vladislav’s identification of Mehmed the Conqueror was shaped within the framework of literary genre. The concluding section of the *Epistle* – part of a larger composition that is not entirely original and incorporates elements from the epistle of one of Vladislav’s contemporaries – is written in an elevated linguistic register.¹²⁷ This suggests that such references to the Ottoman ruler, on the one hand, depend on the content and genre of the manuscript in whose margins the identification appears, while on the other hand, they reflect Byzantine literary conventions, likely shaped under the influence not only of Vladislav himself but also of the commissioner, Dimitrije Kantakuzin.

Contrary to Vladislav Grammarian’s depiction of Mehmed II, in the notes of Priest Stefan from the village of Jezerce,¹²⁸ written in 1479, Sultan Mehmed II is

¹²⁴ After ascending to the throne of the Serbian Despotate in 1427, Đurađ Branković found himself under significant pressure from the expansionist Sultan Murad II. In an effort to appease the Sultan’s conquering ambitions and his demands for submission, Despot Đurađ gave his daughter, Mara Branković, in marriage to the Ottoman ruler, providing a substantial dowry. Even after the death of Sultan Murad II, Mara Branković remained at the court of her stepson, Mehmed II the Conqueror. She enjoyed considerable esteem within the Ottoman Empire, where she played an important role in diplomatic negotiations on behalf of the Ottoman state. See M. C. Поповић, *Мара Бранковић. Жена између хришћанској и исламској културној круја у 15. веку* (Нови Сад: Академска књига, 2014), 52–92.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21, 199.

¹²⁶ In 1469, she received permission from the Sultan to transfer the relics of Saint John of Rila from Veliko Trnovo to the Rila Monastery. See *ibid.*, 154.

¹²⁷ *Сѣиси*, 26; В. С. Киселков, *Владислав Граматик и неговата рилска повест* (София: Синодална печатница, 1947), 315, 319.

¹²⁸ For a long time, researchers were unable to determine the location of the village of Jezerce; however, it is most likely situated near the town of Uroševac, not far from Novo Brdo.

described as “an insatiable Judas” – a reference to Mehmed’s decision to apprehend his former ally and nobleman from Novo Brdo, Janja Kantakuzin, along with his descendants:¹²⁹

“This holy Four Gospels was written in the year 6984 [1475/1476] by the unworthy Priest Stefan in Jazirchah (!), during the reign of the wicked and insatiable Judas, that is, Emperor Mehmed Bey. He rose to the heights of power, only to descend into the depths of hell [...]”¹³⁰

(*Four Gospels*, the Holy Trinity Monastery of Pljevlja № 59)

The ideological-political framework, depicting the Ottoman ruler with all the attributes of sovereignty, is even more pronounced in the colophon of Nikola Kosijer, a scribe whose signatures indicate affiliation with a priestly family, itinerant scribes, and copyists of two functional literacies.¹³¹ Within just two years, he created the *Miscellany* (fig. 5) and the *Commented Psalter*, leaving behind entries marked by strikingly different tones and content:

“The book was written 6994 [1485/1486].

This holy book was written in the residence of the venerable and god-fearing lord of Zeta, Sir Ivan Crnojević, during the reign and rule of the powerful Ishmaelites emperor Sultan Bayezid. God gave him authority and power over Christians as a consequence of our sins and transgressions. It was written by the hand of the humble Disciple Nikola.

¹²⁹ ССЗН I, 348; *ibid.* IV, 6365; Мартиновић, *Рукописне књиге манастира*, 178–181. Scholars hold varying views on whether the executed Janja was the biological brother of Dimitrije Kantakuzin. Similarly, the surviving sources offer conflicting accounts regarding the number of descendants who were executed in Constantinople by order of Sultan Mehmed. Cf. Čuču, 13, with n. 12; T. Stavridis, *The Sultan of Vezirs. The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453–1474)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 90–92.

¹³⁰ “Бъ лѣто ҃.ѿ.п.ѿ. сьписа се сын бож[ъ]ств[ъ]ны тѣроув[а]г[е]л[ъ] рскою многогрѣшнаго попа сѣфана въ ѿзрицѣх(!), а въ дни злочѣстиваго и злоу[б]равнаго и неснѣтаго юѹде мѣхмѣдъ бѣга цара, вѣдвигшаго се до небесѣ, и пакы сьнидет[ъ] до ада. (...)”, ССЗН I, 341; В. Мошин, “Бирилки рукописи манастира Св. Тројице код Плевала”, *Историски записи* 1–2 (1958), 239, no. 59.

¹³¹ Nikola Kosijer’s scriptorial work vividly highlights how scribal workshops evolved during the Ottoman period. Serving at the courts of the Zeta lords Ivan Crnojević and his sons, Kosijer displayed “dual functional literacy”, excelling in both manuscript and charter writing. This dual proficiency, common in the Middle Ages, persisted into later centuries, seamlessly combining legal and liturgical traditions. Ђ. Бубало, “Никола Косијер (Поповић)”, у: *Српски биографски речник* [књ.] 7: *Мл–Пан*, ур. Б. Бешлин (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2018), 362.

At the request of the upright and sagacious Logothete Božidar Grk [...]. It was written in the month of July, on the second day, on a Saturday, in the year 6994 [1486] by the hand of the modest and unworthy servant of Christ, Nikola Kosijer.”¹³²

(*Miscellany*, Saint Petersburg, RNL Q.I.1224)

“This book was written by the sinful Deacon Nikola in the year 6996 [1487/1488], during the reign of the accursed Emperor Bayezid [...]”¹³³

(*Commented Psalter*, HMC, P-30, Lepavina № 46)

In the later copy of the *Commented Psalter*, Nikola succinctly recorded that he completed the book during the time of “the accursed Emperor Bayezid”, employing a characteristic poetic system common in early modern texts to articulate his views on the Ottoman ruler. Opposite this entry, however, is another note that diverges in tone – a fascinating contrast that illuminates the layered nature of his work and complexities of identification and expression within scribal traditions. These contrasting notes highlight not only his craftsmanship but also his ability to adapt his writing to varying social and emotional landscapes.

However, Nikola Kosijer’s afterword in the *Miscellany* reflects a masterful intertwining of religious, political, and diplomatic elements (fig. 6). By extolling both Ivan Crnojević (1465–1479, 1481–1490), the Zeta ruler, and Sultan Bayezid II, the text underscores the complex political realities of the period.¹³⁴ The acknowledgement of Bayezid’s authority as divinely sanctioned due to the sins of Christians reveals a theological justification for Ottoman dominance. This legitimisation, however, is fraught with tension, as it juxtaposes the praised political authority of Bayezid with references to his “Ishmaelite” lineage – revealing a subtle conflict between the identification and authority of the Ottoman ruler and the underlying ideological framework.

¹³² “(...) пїнса се сїа б(о)ж(ь)ств[ь]наа книга. вѣ домоу б(а)гочыстнаго и б(о)гохраницаго г(о)сподара, зецкаго г(о)с(под)ина ивана црноєвника (...) вѣ д(ь)ни и вѣ ц(а)рство сѣлокрѣпкаго и прѣвнскоаго изманаѣтскаго ц(а)ра соуѣтанѣ баязита елѣж[е] попоусты б(о)гъ слоуѣ и крѣпость над[ь] хрїстїани грѣх[ь] рад[ь] н(а)шїх(ь) и беззаконї :+
Я пїнса се роукою смиреннаго х(ри)с(т)оу раба нико[л]е дїака.
Я молюсь достопочтеннаго и велемоудраго логофета божидара грѣка (...).
Допїнса се м(е)с(е)ца юліа .бѣ. д(ь)нь оу соуботоу вѣ лѣт[ь] 511.51.
Пїнса се сїе роукою смерѣннаго и недостоїнаго х(ри)с(т)оу раба николе косїера (...).”

RNL Q.I.1224, f. 279a–279b; *CCЗН* I, 355. Левшина, *Рукоїиси сербскоїо*, 173–174, № 311;

Мартиновић, *Рукоїисне књиѣ манасїира*, 298–299.

¹³³ “Пїса сїю кнїгѣ многогрѣшнїн нїкола дїакъ в[ь] лѣто 511.51. [...] пїсахъ вѣ д(ь)ни трѣклетаго цара плазїта (...)”, *CCЗН* I, 356; *ibid.* IV, 6178; В. Мошин, *Ђирилски рукоїиси у Повїјесном музеју Хрвайске. Коїишарева збирка словенских рукоїиса и Цојсов ђирилски огломак у Љубљани* (Београд: Народна библиотека Србије; СКЗ, 1971), 39–40.

¹³⁴ Михальчић, *Владарске ѿишїуле*, 122–123.



Fig. 5. *Miscellany*, RNL Q.I.1224, 1485, fol. 32b–33a

Source: https://expositions.nlr.ru/ex_manus/Serbian_Manuscripts/

Nikola's deviation from traditional scribal conventions is particularly striking. The diplomatic tone of the colophon, influenced by Ivan Crnojević's directives and shaped under the guidance of the court Logothete¹³⁵ Božidar Greek, aligns with the courtly environment in which the manuscript was produced.¹³⁶ The inclusion of this type of discussion in a book meant for monastic use can be attributed to the unique setting of its creation, where the political sphere intersected with the spiritual. The polyglossic nature of Nikola Kosijer's colophons highlights their dual purpose – not only as records of religious devotion but also as vehicles for political and ideological expression.

¹³⁵ М. Благојевић, “Логотет”, у: *Лексикон*, 369–371.

¹³⁶ Cf. *Законски сјоменици српских држава средњега века* [књ.] 5, ур. С. Новаковић, (Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1912), 778–781.

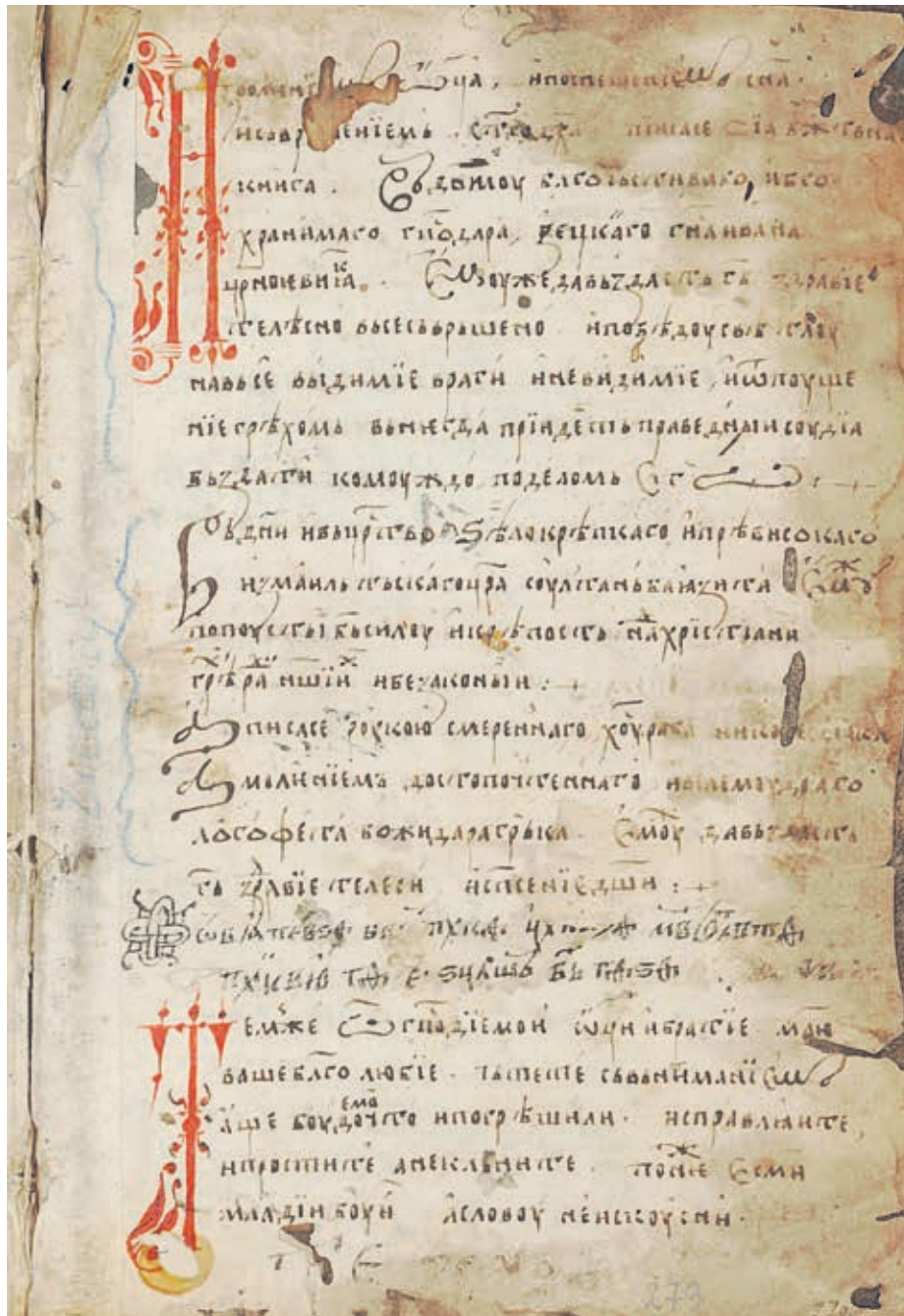


Fig. 6. *Miscellany*, RNL Q.I.1224, 1485, colophon of Deacon Nikola Kosijer, fol. 279a
Source: https://expositions.nlr.ru/ex_manus/Serbian_Manuscripts/

2. The Book Trade in the Ottoman Period in Service of the Self-Understanding and Identification of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans

Trade in the Ottoman Balkans played a central role in regulating interactions among diverse religious and social groups, highlighting the interconnectedness of the region. Among the traded items were books, relics, church vessels, icons, monasteries, and even people, such as high-ranking church officials and eunuchs,¹³⁷ particularly during moments of crisis.

Books, initially a luxury confined to the ecclesiastical, noble, and ruling classes in the Middle Ages, underwent a dramatic shift in accessibility and distribution from the 15th to the 18th centuries. During these centuries, the trade of books gained momentum, becoming a popular activity and serving a broader audience. Marginalia from this era reveal evidence of a book trade, offering a glimpse into the dynamics of cultural exchange in the Balkans under Ottoman rule. This evolution of the book trade not only reflects shifts in social and cultural practices but also underscores the capacity of Orthodox Christian communities in preserving and disseminating their traditions in the complex political landscape.

Marginal notes documenting book purchases follow a distinct and structured format. In addition to identifying the book as an item of exchange, these inscriptions record details about the buyer and seller, ensuring legitimacy and transparency in the transaction. They typically include the reason for the purchase and the price. During the height of Ottoman rule, book prices were primarily recorded in *aspri*, a general term for local silver coins.¹³⁸ By the late 17th and 18th centuries, alternative currency terms such as *groš*¹³⁹ and *dinar*¹⁴⁰ also appeared in colophons and marginalia. At the conclusion of these purchase records, the owner – or the buyer and contributor – often included instructions regarding the book's use, along with stipulated sanctions in case their wishes were ever disregarded.

¹³⁷ The two testimonies from the Bodani monastery highlight the immense sacrifices required to secure the freedom of their abbots, Vasilije and Kiril Moračanin, who had been imprisoned in the Bač fortress. The redemption costs – “500 groši” for Abbot Vasilije, and two years later – “three purses of groš, 1,800 forints”, for Abbot Kiril Moračanin, see *CC3H* I, 1088; *ibid.* III, 4981.

¹³⁸ For further insights into the term *aspra* and its connection between the designation of a specific Turkish coin and the broader category of domestic silver coins, see С. Ђирковић, “Аспра”, у: *Лексикон*, 25.

¹³⁹ *CC3H* III, 5729.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* I, 1796.

One of the earliest documented instances of the book trade dates back to 1475, when the Priest Dragoslav purchased a manuscript from DMITAR MAIKOV in Skopje. Although the price of the book was not recorded, the note meticulously lists the witnesses present during the transaction, emphasising the importance of authenticity and accountability in such exchanges.¹⁴¹ In this manner, the blank spaces in the margins and on unused folios within manuscripts were often reserved for identifying the new owner, thereby further embedding personal and transactional details into the physical artifact itself.

The book trade experienced substantial growth during the 16th and 17th centuries, evolving into a dynamic exchange that connected individuals of diverse – and often opposing – social, artisanal, and religious backgrounds on both sides of the transaction. In several waves – first in the mid-15th century during the Ottoman conquest of Orthodox territories in the Central Balkans, then at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century amid the suppression of uprisings by subjugated Orthodox populations in Banat and Herzegovina, and again during the rebellions at the close of the 17th century – the devastation inflicted by Ottoman assaults on Orthodox temples, churches, and monasteries was profound. These attacks left architectural heritage, frescoes, and sacred objects vulnerable to damage and destruction.

Records of Ottoman incursions into Christian territories in the Balkans reveal that many such valuable items – icons, church vessels, crosses, and books – were looted and resold to members of Christian communities. The redemption of manuscripts, such as the act performed by the Nun Jefimija, who during the war between the Ottomans and the Habsburg Empire purchased a copy of the *Four Gospels* for thirty dinars from “a Hagaren”, constituted a practice in which an individual’s (in this case, a female monastic’s) affiliation with Orthodoxy was reaffirmed and continually reconstructed:

“This took place in the year 7190 [1682], on the 5th of June. This holy Gospel was redeemed by the nun *Jefimija for 30 dinars from the God-hating Hagaren, after the holy monasteries were destroyed on account of our sins. At that time, many imperial dwellings were laid waste from their very foundations, according to the word of the Lord in the Holy Gospel: ‘There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’

Oh, then did our beautiful chantings and the splendors of the holy churches suddenly turn into hatred, because of our sins. We lament, beloved ones, the desolation of the holy and beautiful monasteries now forsaken; we lament, brethren, the burning of the holy churches, even as the Prophet Jeremija mourned the burning of the holy city of Jerusalem. Therefore, with them I cry out over the holy churches: ‘Break down your doors, O sanctuary of God’, and again he speaketh prophetically.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* I, 340.

Then did evil wolves commit many robberies upon the devout flock; then did fierce wolves shed much blood among the Christians. Therefore, with David I cry aloud: 'The nations have entered into Thine inheritance; they have defiled Thy holy temple. The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem.'¹⁴²
(*Four Gospels*, Sarajevo, the Old Church № 5)

Books were acquired for various purposes, one of which was personal reading and spiritual enrichment:

"Let it be known that I, Priest Stefan, purchased this book, called the Prayer Book, from Priest Jeremija for 5 groš in the year 7162 [1653/1654]."¹⁴³

Since well-developed monastic scriptoria – aside from those on Mount Athos – were uncommon, high-quality copies were typically obtained from professional scribes who travelled across different regions to produce manuscripts, often commissioned by clergy. In the early 18th century, the Grammarian Jovan, originally from the Rila Monastery area, purchased a book from Priest Mladen the Younger for "twenty para":

"I, Jovan the Grammarian, purchased this book from Priest Mladen Mali for 20 para, in the year 7210 [1701/1702] since the creation of the world, and the year 1602(!) since the birth of Christ."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² "Сне бистъ въ лѣто .ж.р.ѣ. н(ю)ѣа .ѣ. Сне светое еѡ[а]г[е]лїе ѡт[ъ]кѡпи монаха *ефимїа за .л. динар[ъ] ѡт[ъ] богом[ъ]ръскаго агарѣнина, егдаже се раз[ъ]сѣше свети монастири грѣхъ ради наших[ъ]; тогда сѣ разоришѣ многа царьска заданна ѡт[ъ] ѡснованна по рѣк[ъ]шомъ господъ въ светѣмъ еѡ[а]г[е]лїи: камѣнь на камѣни нѣ останет[ъ], нже нѣ разоритъ се. Оле нам[ъ] тогда красна пѣнна и красотахъ светих[ъ] цркъви вънѣзапъ въ мръзость прѣтворишѣ се грѣхъ ради наших[ъ]. Плачнм[ъ], вазлюбелннїи, ѡпастѣнїа светих[ъ] и краснїи монастирїи запастѣнїа; плачнм[ъ], братїе, сагорѣнїа светих[ъ] цркъви, такоже пророкъ еремїа божїа града єросалима, тѣм[ъ]же са ним[ъ] вавниим[ъ] на светнмъ црквамъ: раз[ъ]врьзѣте врата въша, божна свѣтилица, и протѣ глаголи пророчаскїе. Тогда благодатнѡмъ стадъ многа расхищѣнна бнше ѡт[ъ] зли вьковъ, тогда многа крѡвопролитна бнше христианом[ъ] ѡт[ъ] лютїи вьковъ. Тѣмъже са давидом[ъ] възспнем[ъ]: бѣ придошѣ езици въ света жилища твоѡа, ѡскѡврѣнише цркви светне твоѡе, положишѣ трѣпина раб[ъ] твои брашно птицам[ъ] небеснмъ, пролиаше крѡвъ их[ъ] яко вода ѡкрѣсть светих[ъ] сѣлени твоих[ъ]", *ibid.* I, 1796.

¹⁴³ "(...) да се зна како коупних[ъ] азъ поп[ъ] стефан[ъ] сїю книгъ, глаголемы молитв[ъ]никъ ѡт[ъ] попа еремїа за .ѣ. гроша, въ лѣто .ж.р.ж.б.", *ibid.* III, 5677.

¹⁴⁴ "Сїа книга кѡпих[ъ] азъ їованъ грамат[ъ]никъ ѡт[ъ] попа младена малаго за .к. пари, въ лѣто .ж.ѣ.ї., ѡт[ъ] създаїе мїра, а ѡт[ъ] рожд[ъ]ства христова .ж.ї.(!).б.", *ibid.* III, 5732. The discrepancy in the dating of the manuscript's creation can likely be attributed to the scribe's accidental error in calculating the date from the birth of Jesus Christ.

However, one of the most common motivations for acquiring books was their donation to churches or monasteries. In return, the names of the donors – along with those of both close and extended family members – were mentioned during the liturgy, either as prayers for the repose of the dead or for the health of the living.¹⁴⁵ Through the practice of purchasing and donating books to Orthodox places of worship in the Ottoman Balkans, the self-understanding of marginalised individuals, such as widows, was simultaneously affirmed and made more visible – at least within certain micro-communities – during the Ottoman period.

Christophor Pivljanin recorded that, in the house of Sekula Kara-Nikolić and in the presence of witnesses, on the feast of Saint Luke, October 18, 1660, the widow Bogdana purchased the *Octoechos* from Bishop Viktor for “eight arslan”. She subsequently donated the book to the church for the soul of her late husband, Grujica, as well as for her own:

“In the year 7169 [1660], this book, called the *Octoechos*, was purchased by the widow Bogdana for the soul of her husband Grujica and for her own soul, to be commemorated at every (liturgy) together with the ktetors. She purchased it from Bishop Viktor for the price of 8 arslan coins and offered it to the church of Vakšan, that it may be used for service as long as the settlement of Vakšan exists, and that (Bogdana and Grujica) may be remembered both in life and after death, and in the ages to come. And whoever dares to alienate this book, let him be cursed by the Lord God Almighty and by us sinners – let him be accursed – and at the judgement of God, may the Most Pure Mother of God be his merciless opponent. This I wrote for every safeguard, I, the sinful Christophor Pivljanin, in the month of October, on the 18th day, on the feast of Saint Luke, in the house of Sekula Kara-Nikolić. Present as witnesses were Priest Cvijo, Nikola Naunović, Živko the furrier, and Predrag and Trifun.”¹⁴⁶

The practice of redeeming and donating liturgical books played a crucial role in preserving the Orthodox faith under Ottoman rule. Books were frequently donated to monasteries and churches that faced significant economic hardships due to the heavy fiscal burdens imposed by the Ottoman administration. This practice

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* IV, 6502.

¹⁴⁶ “Бѣ лѣто .ѿ.р.ѿ.ѿ. сню книгѣ, глаголемѣи ѡхтон, кѡпи в[ъ]дова богдана за дѡшѡ свога господара грѡнице и за свою дѡшѡ да се поминѣ на васакѡмѡ съ правилии х[ри]стѡри. и кѡпи кѡт[ъ] владикѣ кнхторѡ ценою срѣб[ъ]ра за ѡсамѣ арсланниѡ, и приложи є цр[к]в[ъ]и вакшаньскѡи да сѡжѡи докле є вакшаньскѣ варѡши и нека се поминѣ и до сам[ъ]рти и по сам[ъ]рти и ва бѡдѡщи векѣ. и тѡо кѡт[ъ]ниинити, да єсть прокле(тѣ) ѡт[ъ] господа бога васедр[ъ]житѣла, и ѡт[ъ] нас[ъ] грѣшних[ъ] да єсть проклетѣ, и да ѡѡ бѡде на сѡдѡ божню прѣтинѡта богородица сѡпарница без[ъ] ѡиѡсти. Се бѡ писѡхѡ ва васѡко сѡхранѣниѣ и пис[ъ]хѡ аѡѣ грѣшникѡ христовѡрѡ пивлянинѡ, ѡѣсеца ѡктом[ъ]риѡи .тѣ. данѣ на свѣтаго лѡкѡ, 8 кѡѣи сѡѡѡле кара никѡлиѣ. тѡ бѡше свѣдоѡи попѣ цѣнѡи и никѡла наѡновѣѣ и живѡко тѡжѡиѡ и прѣдрагѡ и трѣвѡнѣ”, *ibid.* III, 5686.

was closely linked to, and often intertwined with, another widely observed practice among Orthodox monastics dating back to the first half of the 16th century. As part of collecting various forms of aid – referred to as ‘the collection of donations for the monastery’ (*skupljanje pisanije*) – monasteries would send their most esteemed monks to different regions, particularly to areas where they expected a warm reception. During these journeys, the monks recorded the names of benefactors in special registers to ensure they would be commemorated during liturgical services in monastic churches.¹⁴⁷

Archpriest Đurađ of Slankamen encountered this practice through monks from Mount Athos in the early 16th century, specifically in 1513. He commissioned a manuscript from the Scribe Andreja Rusin and later gifted it to the abbot and monks of Hilandar Monastery. In gratitude, the monks pledged to pray for the soul of Nun Martha.¹⁴⁸ A notable example of the blending of these two traditions among Orthodox Christians in the Balkans is the brotherhood’s effort to obtain a *Bible* from Vissarion, the spiritual father of Mount Athos:

“This book, called the Bible of the Monastery of Krupa, was purchased jointly by the brotherhood from the spiritual father Vasilije the Athonite, in the year 7081 [1572/1573].”¹⁴⁹

Whether it involved the commissioning, restoration, or purchase of a book, the price of a codex often varied. Although the cost was determined by various criteria, acquiring a single manuscript frequently required a substantial financial investment.¹⁵⁰ When an individual could not afford to purchase a book independently, the acquisition of a codex was often made possible through the contributions of several people providing smaller monetary donations. In this way, networks of cooperation developed, particularly in smaller towns and villages, where priests and laypeople joined forces to achieve a common goal. Such collaboration played a crucial role in maintaining the functionality of parish churches. In return, the names of all

¹⁴⁷ А. Фотић, *Света Гора и Хиландар у Османском царству (XV–XVII век)* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ; Манастир Хиландар; Свети архијерејски синод Српске православне цркве, 2000), 221–231.

¹⁴⁸ *ССЗН* I, 416.

¹⁴⁹ “Сја книга, зовом[ъ] библѣна, манастира крѣпе, кѣпише братѣи свѣпа... 8 дѣховника василѣна светогорца ... ва лето .ж. тисѣщ[ъ] .п.ѣ.”, *ibid.* III, 5620.

¹⁵⁰ According to some information preserved in historical sources, the price of a book could exceed 1,000 aspers. For more on this, see: И. Русева, “Приписки и бележки по нашите писмени паметници”, *Известия на Семинара по славянска филология при Университета в София* 4 (1921), 45–46.

benefactors were recorded in the purchased books, thereby granting these communities the role of guardians of faith and culture.

A particularly remarkable example is that of a village community that united to purchase a liturgical book for use in two parish churches, demonstrating their solidarity and dedication to preserving their religious heritage. The note left by Hieromonk and Scribe Gavril serves as an inspiring testament to the collective effort and resourcefulness of the villagers of Bogdanovdol, in the Sofia Metropolitanate, during the 16th century.¹⁵¹

“It was written this book, the holy and divine and soul-saving Menaion called. It was written in the village of Batanovci, near the river Struma, in the Assumption Monastery of Holy Theotokos Virgin Mary. And it was written by the Clergyman and Hieromonk Gavril. And the inhabitants of the village of Bogdanovdol redeemed it for 430 aspri and attached it to the temple of Saint Nicholas and to the temple of the Holy Martyr Paraskeva Petka, to serve for their souls and the souls of their parents. And the Serf Nešo, Priest Dmitar, Stojan Bonkin, Jove Peov, Stojan Stepanov, Petar Miloslavov, Stojan Vitkov, Nikola Milev, Jove Miloslavov were in charge. Ten people took the lead and the village bought it together. Everyone added what he had and (the book) was bought to be used in the churches. Whichever priest comes to serve, the book must not be removed from the village. It was written in 7072 [1563/1564] during the time of Emperor Sultan Suleiman and Bishop Diomidie of Sofia.”¹⁵²

Beyond documenting the book's origin, Gavril's inscription reveals its immediate transition into the shared property of two village churches. While the overall state of the liturgical book collection remains uncertain, the apparent scarcity of books such as the *Menaion* in these churches highlights the necessity of such a communal effort. The process of acquiring the book offers insight into the village's well-organised structure. Led by ten prominent figures – including the village

¹⁵¹ Р. Тричковић, “Српска црква средином XVII века”, *Глас САНУ* 320, *Одељење историјских наука* 2 (1980), 96.

¹⁵² “(...) писа се сја книга свети и божьств[ъ]ни и двшеспасни мнен глаголемн. писа се кнше села батеновци, близъ реце стрѹме, оу манастирь оуспеніе прѣсветіе владычце нашен богородице приснодѣвїи мартїи. и писа ю дѣховникъ ермонач[ъ] гавриль. и кѹпи ю село богдановъ доль за .бѹ. ѿ. аспри и приложнше ю оу храмъ светаго ѿт[ъ]ца нашега никола, и оу храмъ светѹю мѹченицѹ параскїевѹ петкѹ да сѹжн за нѣхна дѹша и за родителека нѣль. и настоѹаше кметове нешо, поп дмитрь, стоанъ бонкин, ѿкове пеговъ, стоанъ степановъ, петрь милославовъ, стоанъ витковъ, никола мнлець, ѿкове милославовъ. .ї. людїе настоаше, они настоаше, а село кѹпи съборно, вѣси придалоше кон є цю іакъ, и кѹпи се да работи ѹ црѣква. кон попь донде да поє, алн нзъ село да се не нзноси. (...) писа се въ лет(о) ж.б.б. при цар[ъ] свѣтанъ свѣїмена и при владннн софнскѹм[ъ] дїѹмїдїем[ъ] (...), *ССЗН* III, 5611.

headman (*kmet*)¹⁵³ and the priest – the community members contributed whatever they could, forming a united front to secure the purchase.

Through the practice of joint purchase, the book was identified as a communal endowment through which, in a rural setting such as Bogdanovdol in the 16th century, Orthodox Christians were encouraged not only towards commonality but also greater connectedness. Belonging to the Orthodox world – and, by extension, to the village community governed by the headman (*kmet*) – was thus further reinforced through the act of purchasing the book, which in turn was transformed into the property of two village churches.

The heads of the Serbian Church frequently appear as buyers and patrons of books. In the *Panegyricon*, a note by Dionisije records that in 1561, Makarije, ‘the most-consecrated Archbishop of Peć, of all Serbian and maritime lands’, purchased the book for three ducats:

“Kyr Makarije, the blessed and most-consecrated Archbishop of Peć and of all the Serbian and maritime lands, my father and lord though I am sinful, found this soul-beneficial book called the Panegyricon in the city of Constantinople and purchased it for 3 ducats. In the year 7069 [1561], on the 25th of March. Written by the so-called Dionisije.”¹⁵⁴

However, among all the dignitaries of the restored Serbian Church, Patriarch Pajsije identified as the greatest bibliophile. Numerous inscriptions in his own hand attest to his meticulous care for manuscripts throughout his jurisdiction. He not only renewed, restored, and enhanced books but also actively acquired them.¹⁵⁵

In 1619, Pajsije purchased a book from Marko Kratovac, who had sold it to settle a debt:

“Pajsije, Patriarch of Peć, in the year 7127 [1618/1619], purchased this book for 350 as payment of a debt from Makarije of Kratovo.”¹⁵⁶

At the end of the *Gospel*, preserved in the library of the Patriarchate of Peć, Pajsije left a note stating that in 7132 [1623/1624] he purchased it for “402 *aspri*”,

¹⁵³ On the different meanings of the term ‘serf’ and changes over the centuries, see P. Михальчић, “Кмет”, у: *Лексикон*, 298–299.

¹⁵⁴ “Кѹр[ъ] макаріе, блаженныи и прѣосвещеніи архієпископъ пекскыи и всѣх[ъ] сръбскыих[ъ] и поморскыих[ъ] земель, мнѣ же грѣшному от[ъ]цѣ и госпо(ди)нѣ еи оверѣтъ сію доушеполазнію кнѣгъ зовомуа панагиріи въ констант(ин)нградѣ, и кѣпѣ є за .҃҃. двѣ[ьтъ] лѣт(о) .҃҃.҃҃. мар[ъ]тъ) .҃҃. днь. Писа таха діѡнисіе”, *ССЗН* IV, 6312.

¹⁵⁵ Ђ. Слијепчевић, “Пајсије, архиепископ пећки и патријарх српски као јерарх и књижевни радник”, *Бојословље* 1–2 (1933), 124; 3 (1933), 260–262.

¹⁵⁶ “Панисне патриархъ пекски лѣт(о) .҃҃.҃҃. кѣпих[ъ] сію кнѣг(с) за .҃҃.҃҃. за дльгъ от[ъ] макаріа кратовѣскога”, *ССЗН* I, 1075; Русева, “Приписки и бележки”, 44.

had it rebound and gilded in 7138 [1629/1630], and ultimately donated it to the Great Church in Peć as a lasting memorial.¹⁵⁷ The subsequent fate of this book is particularly intriguing, as beneath Pajsije' inscription, marginal notes by Patriarchs Arsenije III Crnojević and Arsenije IV provide further details:

“Arsenije, by the grace of God, Patriarch of the Serbs, Bulgarians, and others. This holy Gospel Book was donated to the Great Church by the late Patriarch Pajsije, during the war between the German Emperor Leopold and the Turkish Sultan Mehmed, when the blessed Patriarch Arsenije Crnojević, due to hardship and Hagaren violence, fled from his throne to the Hungarian lands. At that time, the Hagarens and Tatars devastated all the property of the Great Serbian Church in Peć, and this Gospel Book was taken as well. Later, Priest Radosav from Voćnik found this book among the Hagarens and redeemed it in such a condition, without its bindings. After his death, his brother, Priest Radota, together with Radosav's son Pavle, brought this Gospel Book to the Great Church to serve there and gave a bull as a donation to the monastery. This took place in the year 7237 [1729], on May 18. Signed in my own hand, I, Arsenije IV.”¹⁵⁸

Following Arsenije III's signature, Arsenije IV left an extensive note confirming that the book had originally been donated to the church in Peć by Patriarch Pajsije. He then described how, during the war between the German Emperor Leopold and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV (1648–1687), Arsenije III was forced to flee to Hungary, while the church in Peć suffered devastation at the hands of “the Hagarens and Tatars”, leading to the *Gospel's* theft. The book was later purchased from a “Hagaren” by Priest Radosav from the town of Voćnik. After Radosav's death, his brother Radota and his son Pavle donated the book back to the church in Peć, as recorded on May 18th, 1729, by Arsenije IV. Thus, after being repurchased and passing through many hands over a century, the book was finally returned to its rightful place – where, according to Pajsije' own decree, it was never meant to be removed.

¹⁵⁷ CC3H IV, 6652.

¹⁵⁸ “Арсеніє божію мнл[остію] патріарх[ъ] ср[ъ]блєм[ъ] и болгаром[ъ] и прочим[ъ]. Сіє светое тетроеѹ[аг]г[еліє] приложено светен велицен црьквы светопочинкшии[ъ] патріар[ъ]хови[ъ] павсесом[ъ], и ва время рати междѹ немцѹи[ъ] бсаром[ъ] лесополом[ъ] и свѣтаном[ъ] тврѣским[ъ] мехмедом[ъ], егда блаженновсопши патріархъ арсеніє черноевнч[ъ] нвждѹ радѹ и насилѹ агаранского избегал[ъ] от[ъ] своего престола ва згарскѹ стрѹнѹ, тогда васе именіє велике цръкве срѣбскіє пекѹ разхнѣено било агарани и татарни. тогда и сіє еѹ[аг]геліє вазето. Потем[ъ] от[ъ] воѣника поп[ъ] радосав[ъ] шерео сію кннгѹ з (а)гаран(а) и от[ъ]квпѹ є сице без[ъ] шкова нже є било на немѹ. И по самѹрти єговон брат[ъ] єго поп[ъ] радота са синои[ъ] попа преставлѹшаго се радосава именом[ъ] павлом[ъ] принеше сіє еѹ[аг]геліє пакъ вѣлнцен црьквы да сѹвжн, и єдного вола писаше з мнѹстирь. Се же бнсть ва лето господнє .ѧ.Ѣ.к.Ѣ. мѧѧ .нѧ. .Ѣ.ѣ.ѧ.Ѣ. своію рѹкою под[ъ]писах[ъ] аз[ъ] арсеніє четвр[ъ]тн”, *ibid.* IV, 6653; *Сѹара срѣска ѹоезија, зайиси и найѹиси, ареніє*, ур. Т. Јовановић, (Нови Сад: Издавачки центар Матице српске, 2013), 250.



The examination of early modern Serbian colophons and other marginal notes in manuscripts, viewed from the perspective of the self-understanding of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans, has revealed, on the one hand, a certain continuity and stability of categories related to Orthodox Christian self-perception, while, on the other hand, within specific micro-contexts, it is possible to trace processes of change within certain categories. Since early modern Serbian colophons and marginal notes were the result of the efforts of scribes, often encouraged by members of higher ecclesiastical circles, the focus here is placed on the processes of self-understanding among members of this particular profession.

The first two categories – the scribe's name and title – as attested in these notes, indicate primarily that manuscript production was largely undertaken by lay scribes and, in connection with this, point to the emergence of a distinct category of itinerant scribes. Regarding the category of names, a notable shift is also observed in comparison with medieval Serbian records. While the encoding of names with cryptographic scripts prior to the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans served as a marker of the scribe's erudition, during the periods of minor and major conflicts between Christians and Muslims, such encoding assumed the function of personal protection.

Spatial movements were common during the Ottoman period, particularly in times of crisis. Rebellions against the Ottomans in the Banat and Herzegovina regions at the turn of the 17th century, as well as uprisings initiated in the area of the seat of the Peć Patriarchate at the end of the 17th century, in which Serbian church dignitaries played key roles, often resulted in inevitable population migrations.

The transition from an Islamic ruler's territory to regions governed by Western Christian authorities profoundly influenced Orthodox Christians, shaping their self-perceptions and interactions with others. Colophons and marginal notes served as spaces where dilemmas of self-understanding and identification were articulated. Forced by circumstances to live under the rule of a different sovereign belonging to another religious denomination, Orthodox Christians felt a strong need to preserve memories of their homeland and origins. This was expressed both at the micro-level of individual families and at the macro-level, as memories of the regions that had been under Serbian rulers before the loss of state independence.

For nearly a century, the Serbian Church, with its seat in Peć, remained unrecognised within the Ottoman administrative and fiscal system, facing the challenge of preserving its autocephaly in opposition to the canonical and jurisdictional claims of the archbishop of Ohrid. Notes in codices document various efforts to defend and safeguard autocephaly, attained as early as the 13th century through Saint Sava's efforts, along with the closely related category of ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

The dedication and perseverance of certain high-ranking church officials in defending and preserving the autocephaly of Serbian hierarchs during the first half of the 16th century played a crucial role in the institutional renewal of the Serbian Church in the mid-16th century. However, by the late 17th century, the stability of the Serbian Church once again faced serious challenges, as the patriarchal throne had been neglected and an autonomous Orthodox church unit with a Serbian hierarch at its head was established in predominantly Catholic regions.

In these circumstances, Serbian church leaders repeatedly took on the responsibility of protecting their flock – over which they had religious authority – from any form of disintegration, while also defending the autocephalous status of the Serbian Church. Evidence of this struggle and efforts to preserve these can be found in the margins of books, either through the signatures of Serbian church dignitaries or notes left by scribes and other individuals. The institutional framework of the Patriarchate of Peć was ultimately dismantled in 1766, which affected the organisation of the Serbian Church in Ottoman territories under the administration of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Within the Ottoman system, where they were predominantly classified as *reaya* – the tax-paying non-Muslim population – Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans were often burdened by fear of Ottoman violence or forced conversion to Islam, which contributed to the frequent negative portrayal of the Ottomans, particularly representatives of Ottoman authority, in colophons and other marginal notes. Identifications of the Muslim world as a collective, along with the identifications of individual Ottoman rulers, quickly became fixed constructs within a genre-poetic system that was passed down through generations of scribes with minimal change. The only notable exceptions, in which Ottoman rulers were portrayed positively, appeared in specific microcontexts influenced by political and ideological circumstances.

During the Ottoman era, old books became objects of trade, shaping interactions both among Christians and between Christians and Muslims. With the absence of ruling and aristocratic patrons, patronage underwent transformations, shifting to individuals from lower social strata with relatively better financial standing. In this context, notes in manuscripts and old printed books served not only as records of Christian practices but also as a form of confirmation and validation of completed transactions. The monetary exchange of books introduced new groups into the social sphere of Orthodox Christians, assigning them the role of defenders of the faith, while simultaneously strengthening a sense of community similar to that formed during liturgical services in Orthodox churches. Through the practice of book purchasing, often intertwined with other Orthodox Christian customs, members of marginalised groups, such as widows, were identified with greater social visibility.

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Orthodox Christian Monks and the Modes of Identification of Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire

When researching the self-understanding and modes of identification among non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, one group stands out as a particularly insightful case study – Orthodox Christian monks. Although they might appear to be isolated from the broader world, this was far from the reality. By entering a monastery, monks became part of complex institutions rooted in multilayered traditions, yet they maintained strong ties with their coreligionists and introduced new influences into their communities. Monasteries served as focal points not only of religious life but also of social and cultural activity among Orthodox Christians. Their impact extended well beyond the confines of any single monastic setting. At the same time, the demands of the monastic economy and the practical necessities of daily life required ongoing engagement with Ottoman administrative institutions. This dynamic interplay of diverse, and at times conflicting, influences shaped the nuanced ways in which monks articulated their self-understanding and affected the identification patterns of those they interacted with.

In this paper we will firstly consider how the Ottoman state policies and administrative practices could shape the modes of identification of monks. In the second part we will present one aspect of the monastic influence on the shaping of the self-understanding of the Orthodox Christians – the expression of the elite status. Before delving into these topics, it is important to highlight some general characteristics of Orthodox monasticism that are relevant to this study. Monks did not constitute a homogeneous group, neither within individual monastic brotherhoods nor across broader regional contexts. Monastic communities throughout the Balkans exhibited distinct features in the internal organisation of monastic life, shaped by canonical traditions and historical developments. Nevertheless, they

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shared sufficient common traits to be analysed collectively.¹ The core of this paper's research draws on sources related to monasteries under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Peć, as well as, in the case of Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, those that sustained continuous and multifaceted ties with Church dignitaries affiliated with the Patriarchate and with the Orthodox Christian population of the central Balkans and beyond.²

The most secluded and ascetic type of monks were hermits, or anchorites. Their way of life was regarded as the highest form of devotion to prayer and God, and only experienced monks were permitted to pursue this path. Although they maintained contact with other monks and coreligionists, these interactions were naturally restricted. As such, hermits fall outside the scope of this paper.³ Instead, the primary focus is on monks residing in monasteries, either as cenobites or idiorrhythmic. Cenobitic monks lived in strictly hierarchical communities where the authority of the hegumen (abbot) had to be respected. They were not allowed to leave the monastery without permission, were required to participate in communal dining and prayer, and were prohibited from owning private property. Idiorrhythmic monasticism, by contrast, permitted monks to live in separate or grouped cells outside the main monastic buildings and to acquire and retain personal possessions. Monks could choose the extent to which they participated in communal life. Although this form of monasticism was considered undesirable by the Church, it was nonetheless adopted by some of the most prominent monasteries during the Ottoman period. Monastic life, however, was more nuanced than this dichotomy suggests. Not only could individual monks move between different monasteries and organisational styles, but especially in the later part of the period under study, a single monastery might exhibit characteristics of both cenobitic and idiorrhythmic monasticism.⁴

¹ Д. Поповић, "Живот у монашкој заједници", у: *Приватни животи у српским земљама средњега века*, ур. С. Марјановић-Душанић, Д. Поповић, (Београд: Clio, 2004), 525–551.

² For more on the Patriarchate see the chapter: O. Krešić, "Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe: Political, Social, and Legal Contexts" in this volume.

³ Д. Поповић, "Монах-пустињак", у: *Приватни животи у српским земљама средњега века*, 552–585.

⁴ A.-M. Talbot, "Idiorhythmic monasticism", in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* [vol.] 2, ed. A. Kazhdan, (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 981–982; П. Христу, *Света Гора АѠонска. Историја, начин живота, блага* (Београд: Просвета, 1994), 206–207; А. Фотић, *Света Гора и Хиландар у Османском царству (XV–XVII век)* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2000), 106–107.

1. Monasteries and Ottoman Authorities – Modes of Identification in Official Documents and Correspondence

The establishment of Ottoman rule in the Balkans had far-reaching repercussions for all aspects of life in the monasteries scattered across the peninsula. It altered the administrative framework in which these institutions operated, reshaped the legal status of monks, and transformed systems of taxation and the functioning of the monastic economy. Many of the privileges previously enjoyed by monastic communities under the medieval Balkan states were lost, along with the economic security they had provided. To ensure the continued functioning of monastic life, monks adapted to the new circumstances and familiarised themselves with the intricacies of the Ottoman bureaucratic system. This system served as a framework that significantly influenced the modes of identification of monks as well.

In defining a person's legal status, several traits were considered essential: whether the individual was a tax-paying subject, Muslim or non-Muslim, slave or free, and their sex. Thus, from the perspective of the state, monks were tax-paying non-Muslim subjects of the sultans, in other words *zimmi reaya*.⁵ A key distinction between monks and lay Orthodox Christians was the state's practical recognition of the collective nature of monastic communities. This is particularly noteworthy given that Sharia law did not formally acknowledge the existence of legal entities and, therefore, could not officially recognise monasteries as institutions.⁶ Nevertheless, the Ottoman bureaucracy, aware of the monasteries' significance as taxpayers, devised mechanisms to de facto acknowledge monastic brotherhoods as collective units. As a result, monks paid taxes collectively, and the continued possession of monastic properties was effectively secured.⁷

Consequently, in various documents produced by both central and local authorities, monks were identified not only as individuals but also as members of monastic brotherhoods. Two types of sources illustrate how monks were perceived by bureaucrats in the Empire's capital: imperial registers and sultanic orders. In contrast, documents compiled in judicial courts, along with petitions, reflect practices at the provincial level, where state representatives interacted more frequently with the population. In analysing Ottoman documents, particular emphasis will be placed on modes of external identification. That is, the focus will be on how individuals

⁵ For more on the terms and their meaning see the chapter: O. Krešić, "Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe" in this volume.

⁶ J. Schacht, *An Introduction to the Islamic Law* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 125–126.

⁷ А. Фотић, "Конфискација и продаја манастира (цркава) у доба Селима II (проблем црквених вакуфа)", *Balkanica* XXVII (1996), 60.

who were neither members of monastic communities nor adherents of Orthodox Christianity identified monks and understood their social and legal status. To clarify these issues, each type of source under consideration will be explained, including the contexts in which they were typically compiled and the purposes they served.

The practice of compiling imperial registers related to the establishment of the *timar* system and the development of tax administration. Arable land belonged to the sultan and thus it had to be distributed in order to be used. *Timarlıs* and *zaims* – referred to as ‘masters of the land’ (*sahib-i arz*) in bureaucratic terminology – were granted the right to collect taxes from their estates in exchange for military service, although the land itself remained state property and was not privately owned. These estates were cultivated by the *reaya*, who received deeds from the landlords granting them the right to use specific plots of land. To document sources of income and the population subjected to taxation, the Ottoman state conducted a detailed census. The data were recorded in census registers, which typically began with a *kanun-name*, a legal code outlining the methods of tax distribution and the types of levies applicable in each region. There were several kinds of registers, but for the first centuries of the Ottoman rule the most important were the detailed registers (*mufassal defter*) that enumerated all inhabitants of a certain territorial unit, listing all of the taxes they were due to give to the state, and the summary registers (*icmal defter*) that listed the landlords and presented only the total amount of taxes collected from a certain territory. The practice of compiling the detailed registers was discontinued in the 17th century.⁸

Monasteries were recorded in Ottoman registers as separate entries, though their belonging to a particular settlement or territorial unit was also noted. In the early centuries of Ottoman rule, some monasteries retained their landed possessions in the form of a *timar*. According to the 1476 tax register, the Ravanica Monastery held a *timar* valued at over 6,000 *akçes*. Its monks were exempt from paying taxes but were obligated to equip three soldiers for military campaigns. In the 16th century, the monastery lost this privileged status, although it retained access to significant sources of income and certain privileges. Eventually, it became part of a *timar* and

⁸ B. Đurđev, “Požeška kanun-nama iz 1545. godine”, *Glasnik državnog muzeja u Sarajevu* I (1946), 129–138; Б. Ђурђевић, “Сремска канун-нама из 1588–9 године”, *Гласник земалскої музеја IV–V* (1949–1950), 269–283; Х. Шабановић, *Турски извори за историју Београда* [књ.] I. *Каџасџарски њојиси Београда и околине 1476–1566* (Београд: Историјски архив града Београда, 1964), XIII–XXV; Фотић, “Конфискација и продаја манастира (цркава) у доба Селима II”, 49–50; С. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 193–206; М. Öz, “Tahrir”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [c.] 39, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010), 425–429.

was required to pay annual dues to a *sipahi*.⁹ Another important monastery, Resava (Manasija), held a *timar* under the condition of providing two soldiers to serve as fortress guards.¹⁰ Although such practices gradually ceased, many prominent monasteries continued to enjoy special privileges due to their monks being granted the status of the sultan's falconers, for example, as was the case with the monasteries of Gračanica, Dečani, and the Patriarchate of Peć.¹¹ The fact that they were perceived as 'masters of the land', in some cases, or as subjects that enjoyed certain privileges, in others, enabled the monastic brotherhoods to maintain even in the Ottoman administrative context the self-understanding of having a special status in their local communities.

Ottoman imperial registers followed strict templates, and the information they provide – especially regarding modes of identification – is limited. In detailed registers, a monastery's entry typically included a list of taxes paid, information about monastic possessions, and occasionally a list of monks. In summary registers, mentions of individual monks are rare, as this type of document, as was previously explained, enumerates only 'masters of the land'.¹² For instance, the detailed register of the Province of Srem (*Sirem sancağı*) from 1546 contains an especially high number of monastery entries that all follow a consistent pattern, present in other registers as well. The collective nature of monastic communities is acknowledged through expressions such as "enjoyed/held by monks" (*râhibler/ruhbân(lar) / ruhbân tâ'îfesi taht-ı tasarrufında / ellerinde olan*) and "registered in the name of monks" (*ruhbânlar üzere kayıt olundu*).¹³ These registers were compiled with the

⁹ A *sipahi* was a cavalryman granted the right to collect specific taxes from an assigned landed estate in exchange for military service. B. Đurđev, *Uloga crkve u starijoj istoriji srpskog naroda* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1964), 108–109; O. Зиројевић, *Цркве и манастири на ђогручју Пећке ђајријаршије до 1683. године* (Београд: Народна књига, 1984), 172; eadem, "Попис манастира Смедеревског санџака из 1516", *Саопштења XXVI* (1994), 158–159.

¹⁰ Đurđev, *Uloga crkve u starijoj istoriji srpskog naroda*, 109.

¹¹ H. Kaleši, M. Eren, "Četrnaest turskih fermana manastira Dečani", *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova X* (1970), 311; Зиројевић, *Цркве и манастири на ђогручју Пећке ђајријаршије до 1683. године*, 87–88, 90, 165.

¹² *Oblast Brankovića. Opširni katastarski popis iz 1455. godine*, prir. H. Hadžibegić, A. Handžić, E. Kovačević, (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut, 1972); B. McGowan, *Sirem Sancağı Mufassal Tahrir Defteri* (Ankara: TTK, 1983), 105, 174, 178, 181, 196, 197, 229, 230, 238; Т. Катић, *Ојшћни ђојис Призренској санџака из 1571* (Београд: Историјски институт Београд, 2010), 62, 136, 181, 307, 343, 345, 399, 494, 537–538; Д. Амедоски, *Сумарни дефтер Крушевачкој санџака из 1516. године* (Београд: Историјски институт Београд, 2023), 359.

¹³ Even though the word *ruhbân* is the plural of the word *râhib* – a monk – the double plural form *ruhbânlar* is common, Фотић, *Светла Гора*, 40. The word *râhib* can denote a priest

help and participation of locals. Although names were sometimes altered during transcription into the Arabic script, they generally reflect the original designations. In some cases, scribes recorded alternative names for monasteries, a practice that suggests familiarity with and interest in local circumstances. It may also indicate how monks themselves referred to their monasteries. For example, such entries are: “Monastery of Saint Stefan Štiljanović, other name Šišatovac” (*manâstır-ı İsvetî İştefân İşkilâtovik nâm-ı diğēr Şîşâtovîk*) and “Monastery of Saint Sava, other name Kuveždin” (*manâstır-ı İsvetî Sâva nâm-ı diğēr Kûvejdîn*).¹⁴ Similarly, in the register for the sub-province of Smederevo it was noted that Ravanica Monastery was the resting place of two members of the ruling dynasties of the Serbian Medieval states.¹⁵

Such entries underscore the significance of historical figures and the cults of saints, which were especially cultivated in certain monasteries and played a vital role in their identification.¹⁶ That these designations were frequently used as self-identifications is clearly demonstrated in letters and documents written by the monks themselves. In a series of appeals addressed to Russian rulers, where various monasteries requested financial assistance or gifts of books and holy vessels, a consistent pattern of naming monasteries emerges, subject only to minor variations. For example, the monks of Hopovo Monastery, situated on the Fruška Gora Mountain, identified their monastery in a 1634 letter as follows: “...in the Serbian land, on the slopes of Fruška Gora, an imperial and sacred monastic brotherhood founded by the Serbian Despots, by the former Despot and Saint Archbishop Maksim, the monastery named Hopovo, with the Church of the Holy Archbishop of Christ and Wonderworker Nicholas of Myra, where the relics of Theodor Tiron are deposited.”¹⁷ The monks of Hilandar Monastery described their brotherhood in 1655 as: “...on Holy Mount Athos, the imperial and sacred brotherhood of Saint Simeon the Myrrh-streamer and Saint Sava the Wonderworker, the Serbian *lavra*, Hilandar Monastery, whose catholicon is the Church of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God.”¹⁸ The monks of Ra-

as well, although rarely in the documents studied here. The term used for nun is *râhibe*, *Redhouse Turkish/Ottoman-English Dictionary*, eds. U. Bahadır Alkım, et al. (İstanbul: SEV Matbaacılık ve Yayıncılık Eğitim Ticaret A.Ş., 1997), 946.

¹⁴ McGowan, *Sirem Sancağı*, 105, 196.

¹⁵ They were recorded as *Lazoğlu* and *Voyvodaoglu* - though the latter appears to be an error and should have been written as *Vilkoğlu*. These individuals were most likely Vuk Lazarević and Lazar Branković, Зиројевић, “Попис манастира”, 159.

¹⁶ М. Васиљевић, О. Крешић, “Култ светог и манастирска економија: Прослављање Стефана Штиљановића у Шишатовцу под османском влашћу”, *Историјски часопис* LXXII (2023), 351.

¹⁷ С. М. Димитријевић, “Грађа за српску историју из руских архива и библиотека”, *Сѹ-мѣник СКА* 53 (1922), 199.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

vanica, who visited the Russian Empire in 1693, described their monastery as: “The sacred brotherhood of Ravanica, the temple of the Ascension, where lie the relics of the holy Serbian Emperor Lazar.”¹⁹

Imperial orders (*fermâns*) were among the most important and frequently issued documents by the central Ottoman bureaucracy. These decrees, always issued in the name of the reigning sultan, were visually distinguished by a stylised calligraphic monogram (*tuğra*) that dominated the upper portion of each document and immediately stressed the ultimate authority of the information that it contained. Consequently, those types of documents were often preserved with special care in monastic archives and used as proof of rights whenever the need arose. Examples of translations of *fermâns* for the use of monks are attested.²⁰ The language used in *fermâns* reflects the official policies of the state and often aligns with the designations found in imperial registers. Most *fermâns* were addressed to provincial governors and judges, who were responsible for ensuring the implementation of the sultan’s decisions. The narrative portion of the document typically provides contextual background for a specific case, followed by the sultan’s directive itself.²¹ Although *fermâns* are far more discursive than the registers, they offer only limited insight into the modes of identification used for the sultan’s subjects, particularly those employed by individuals themselves.

When individual members of monastic brotherhoods are mentioned, their names are almost always followed by the word of Arabic origin *ruhbân*, or, less frequently, *keşiş* – a Persian word with the same meaning. If relevant to the matter at hand, the specific monastery to which the monk belonged is clearly indicated. When an order concerned the entire brotherhood, the standard phrase “the monks of [monastery name]” was used.²² This practice aligns with the broader approach of the Ottoman administration, which tended to use only the minimal number of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

²⁰ V. Boškov, “Ein kyrillischer Transkriptionstext des Osmanisch-Türkischen im Athoskloster Hilandar”, in: *Studi Preottomani e Ottomani. Atti del Convegno di Napoli (24–26 settembre 1974)*, a cura di A. Gallotta, (Napoli: Istituto universitario orientale, 1976), 69–74.

²¹ M. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı Belgelerinin Dili (Diplomatik)* (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Akademisi Kültür ve San’at Vakfı yayını, 1994), 99–123.

²² Архив манастира Хиландара, Турска [АМНТ], ферман 195; Музеј Српске Православне Цркве у Београду, Турска документа [MSPC TD]: 8372, 8400, 8410, 8423; В. Бошков, Д. Ковачевић, “Султанске повеле из манастира Хиландара. Регеста и коментар за период 1512–1601.”, *Хиландарски зборник* 8 (1991), 176–212; G. Salakides, *Sultansurkunden des Athos-Klosters Vatopedi aus der Zeit Bayezid II. und Selim I. Kritische Edition und Wissenschaftlicher Kommentar* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1995), 43–48, 65–79, 86–101; А. Фотић, “Најпознатији хиландарски ферман”, *Хиландарски зборник* 10 (1998), 302–305; А. Фотић, *Свејша Гора*, 284, 326, 371; А. Фотић, “Институција амана

markers necessary to identify an individual or group. Therefore, it was not considered necessary to reiterate that a monk was a *zimmi* or a member of the *reaya*; such status was already implied by the initial designation.

Nevertheless, when circumstances required it, bureaucrats occasionally employed multiple designations, as demonstrated by the following example. Between 1693 and 1696, during the War of the Holy League, the administration issued a series of orders more precisely referred to as *amânnâmes*. Literally meaning ‘documents that granted mercy’, these orders confirmed that a particular settlement or group of people in reconquered areas had submitted to the sultan’s rule and were granted protection in return. Consequently, when issued to monastic brotherhoods, it was necessary to emphasise that the monks had regained their status as *zimmis*.²³

Although monasteries maintained regular contact with the central authorities, the majority of interactions between monks and the Ottoman administration occurred at the local level, particularly in judicial courts. Judges, or *kadis*, were central figures in the Ottoman local administration. Their responsibilities extended well beyond the judicial sphere. In addition to adjudicating legal cases, they also served as notaries and were tasked with executing imperial orders and overseeing tax collection. Such a wide array of responsibilities explains why the monks frequented the courts, and in what contexts the documents issued by *kadis* were written. For the issue of identifications used in such documents, it is important to stress that the Ottoman legal system was grounded in Sharia law but also incorporated state-prescribed regulations (*kanun*).²⁴ Negotiated settlements were encouraged within the Ottoman legal practice. As a result, parties did not always approach the *kadis* to initiate litigation; more often, they only wished to formalise a previously reached agreement. The *kadis* issued documents known as *hüccets*, which contained all the relevant information about a case, including the adjudication, or, in many instances,

и примања подаништва у Османском царству: пример сремских манастира 1693–1696”, *Историјски часопис* LII (2005), 227–231.

²³ Фотић, “Институција амана”, 233.

²⁴ U. Heyd, “*Qānūn and Sharī‘a in Old Ottoman Criminal Justice*”, *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* III/1 (1967), 10–11; R. Jennings, “Kadi, Court, and Legal Procedure in 17th C. Ottoman Kayseri”, *Studia Islamica* 48 (1978), 138–142; R. Jennings, “Limitations of the Judicial Powers of the Kadi in 17th C. Ottoman Kayseri”, *Studia Islamica* 50 (1979), 152; Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 31; H. Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam. Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 72, 76; C. Imber, *Ebu’s-su’ud. The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh: Stanford University Press, 1997), 6–7, 55; C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650*, 216–225.

merely a record of the mutual agreement between the parties. The *kadis* also kept official protocol books called *sicils*.²⁵

As *zimmis*, the monks had the right to resolve many disputes that did not involve Muslims without being obligated to turn to the *kadi*. Moreover, hierarchies of the Orthodox Church consistently encouraged monasteries to avoid unnecessary litigation before the Sharia courts. While prelates were authorised to adjudicate cases involving canonical matters, as well as family and inheritance law, they regarded recourse to Ottoman authorities by their coreligionists as a last resort. This was due to both the practical and symbolic harm such actions could inflict on the Church's legitimacy.²⁶ Nevertheless, the benefits of appealing to a court backed by the state's administrative apparatus were considerable. Consequently, despite opposition from Orthodox Church authorities, monks, like laypeople, frequently turned to the *kadi* courts.²⁷

Extensive research into monastic archives has shown that monks were well acquainted with the workings of the Ottoman judicial system. In the monastic archives collections of documents issued by local authorities were often the most numerous. Monks most frequently appeared before the *kadi* court to resolve property-related matters, such as registering purchase and sale contracts, settling disputes over boundaries, or addressing violations of land-use rights. Additionally, monks were required to obtain permits from local authorities for any repairs or construction within their monasteries. Beyond its military-administrative division into provinces and sub-provinces, the Ottoman Empire was also organised into *kazas* – territorial units under the jurisdiction of a *kadi*. Every monastery belonged to a *kaza*, and monks typically conducted most of their legal affairs in the local court. However, some

²⁵ Detailed literature in: О. Крешић, *Манастѝр Хиландар и истајочни Балкан у XVIII веку. Културне и економске везе* (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2021), 16.

²⁶ S. Petmezas, "L'Organisation ecclésiastique sous les Ottomans", in: *Conseils et mémoires de Synadinos, prêtre de Serres en Macédoine (XVIII siècle)*, éd. P. Odorico, (Paris: Editions de l'Association "Pierre Belon", 1996), 503–505, 546–548; Фотић, Света Гора, 92.

²⁷ R. C. Jennings, "Zimmis (Non-Muslims) in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records. The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 21/3 (1978), 225–293; R. C. Jennings, "The Zimmis: Greek Orthodox Christian and Other Non-Muslims", in: R. C. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571–1640* (New York; London: New York University Press, 1993), 132–172; R. Gradeva, "Orthodox Christians in the Kadi Courts: The Practice of the Sofia Sheriat Court, Seventeenth Century", *Islamic Law and Society* 4/1 (1997), 37–69; N. Al-Qattan, "Dhimmi in the Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy and Religious Discrimination", *Int. Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999), 429–444; A. Anastasopoulos, "Non-Muslims and Ottoman Justice(s?)", in: *Law and Empire: Ideas, Practices, Actors*, eds. J. Duindam et al., (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 275–292.

monasteries owned properties located far from their main site, requiring monks to travel frequently on monastic business. As a result, they often had recourse to various courts across the Empire.²⁸ That means the modes of identification found in court-issued documents are not representative of specific localities but can be used to research general practices present throughout the Ottoman Balkans.

Hüccets were strictly structured documents that consistently followed a standardised format. They began with the identification of the parties involved, proceeded with the recording of statements from both litigants and witnesses, and concluded with the *kadi's* judgement. These documents also included the *kadi's* verification and a list of so-called witnesses to the judicial act. The forms of identification used for individuals appearing in court were a blend of official administrative terms, on the one hand, and self-reported phrases and designations and their translations into formal judicial language, on the other. It is important to keep in mind that, although statements were recorded by court scribes as if they were verbatim, they were nonetheless translated and adapted to conform to judicial parlance and to emphasise the legal aspects of each case.²⁹

When identifying non-Muslims, the most legally significant term – *zimmi* – was used following the personal and paternal names. Ethnic markers and other religious designations were rarely employed, and pejorative terms such as ‘infidel’ or ‘unbeliever’ (*kâfir*) were avoided. However, a series of technical terms served to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims and to stress the subordinated positions of the latter. Instead of ‘son of’ (*bin*) and ‘daughter of’ (*bint*), non-Muslims were identified using ‘child of’ (*veled-i*). While Muslims were described as living in a place (*sâkin*), non-Muslims were referred to as merely settled there (*mütemekkin*). When referencing a deceased person, the verb used for non-Muslims was ‘to perish’ (*hâlik olmak*). Consequently, as F. Müge Göçek stresses: “The systematic deployment of certain language was crucial in determining and reproducing the symbolic boundaries of identity within the Ottoman Empire.”³⁰

All these conventions were applied when monks appeared before the court. Scribes consistently noted that an individual was a monk, using appropriate terms such as *râhib* or *keşiş*. Nevertheless, in some instances, particularly when the scribe was unfamiliar with the specifics of monastic status, a more general term for

²⁸ For more see: Фотић, *Свети́а Гора*; Крешић, *Манастѝр Хиландар*, 43–46, 86–113.

²⁹ M. Coşgel, B. Ergene, *The Economics of Ottoman Justice. Settlement and Trial in the Sharia Courts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 132.

³⁰ F. Müge Göçek, “The Legal Recourse of Minorities in History: Eighteenth-Century Appeals to the Islamic Court of Galata”, in: *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. M. Greene, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing Inc., 2005), 56–57.

Christian priests (*pâpâ/pâpâs*), was used to refer to monks as well.³¹ This can make it difficult to determine whether the individual in question was truly a monk or a lay priest, especially when no additional context is provided. Such ambiguity often arises when monks are not the primary parties in a litigation or when they appear before the court in a private capacity. Far more commonly, however, monks mentioned in the documents were engaged in monastic business, and it was therefore considered important to clearly indicate the monastery to which they belonged. These practices were consistently applied across various regions of the Empire and throughout the period under study, as the following examples will demonstrate.

The monasteries were recognised as collectives in judicial records. In some cases, the scribe did not record the names of individual litigants, which was unusual, but simply noted that one party consisted of the monks of a particular monastery. Thus, when the monks of Šišatovac filed an appeal in 1589 claiming that one of their horses had been stolen, the scribe identified them as “the monks of the monastery named Šišatovac that belongs to the kaza of Irig” (*Kazâ-ı İrig tevâbi’nda Şişâtôvik nâm manâstır ruhbânları*).³² Half a century later, in 1641, the monks from the same monastery appeared before the kadi in Grgurevci to accuse a janissary of wrongdoing. This time they were recorded as “the monks of the monastery named Šišatovac in the *nahiye* of the town of Grgurevci” (*Kasaba-ı Gırgurôfçe nâhiyesinde Şişâtôfçe nâm manâstır râhibleri*).³³ Elsewhere in the Balkans, on Mount Athos, we find the same pattern. Monks from the Athonite monasteries of Hilandar and Dionysiou entered litigation over land. In a related document, the parties are described as “the allegations of the monks of the Hilandar Monastery, one of the Mount Athos monasteries, against the monks of the monastery named Dionysiou” (...*Cezire-i Aynarôz manâstırlarından Hilandâr manâstırınıñ ruhbânlarınıñ Diyônişât nâm manâstır ruhbânları ile... da’vâları...*).³⁴

Far more numerous are *hüccets* that record individual monks or groups of monks. In the *hüccet* issued in 1570 regarding the purchase of landed properties by the monks of Šišatovac Monastery, they are introduced as follows: “the monks named Mihailo, Mardarije and Andrija, among the monks of the monastery named Šišatovac, near the village of Remeta that belongs to the *kaza* of Varadin” (*Varâdin*

³¹ Фотић, *Свеѡа Гора*, 40–41.

³² MSPC TD, 8382. Šišatovac was one of over a dozen monasteries situated on the slopes of Fruška Gora Mountain in the sub-province of Srem (in present-day northern Serbia). These monasteries were important religious centres that gained their prominence during the Ottoman rule.

³³ MSPC TD, 8387. *Nahiye* is a small territorial unit in the Ottoman Empire.

³⁴ АМНТ, 2/230. Numerous examples from the end of the 15th until the end of the 17th century: Фотић, *Свеѡа Гора*, 247, 302, 308, 317, 331, 351, 391.

kazâsına tâbi‘ Remeta nâm karye kurbinde vâk’ı Şiřatovik nâm manastır ruhbân-larından Mihâilo ve Mârdâriye ve Ânteriye nâm ruhbânlar).³⁵ In 1654, the monks of the same monastery requested permission to repair the church, and the scribe identified them as follows: “the monks named Pahomije, Kirion, Savatije and Ikonisi-je, among the monks of the monastery named Šiřatovac that belonged to the town of Grgurevci” (*Kasaba-ı Gırgurofçe‘ye tâbi‘ Şiřatofçe nâm manâstır râhiblerinden Pâhômîye ve Kirîyôn ve Savâtiye ve Kûnîsiye nâm râhibler*).³⁶

Once again, we observe the same pattern in the documents issued to the monks of Hilandar Monastery. In 1740, when the inheritance of a deceased monk of Hilandar was adjudicated at the *kadi* court in Thessaloniki, the *hüccet* identified him as follows: “the late Antim, son of Mosko, son of Petko, a monk of the monastery named Hilandar, one of the Mount Athos monasteries that belongs to the protected city of Thessaloniki” (*Mahmiye-i Selânîk muzâfatından Aynarôz manâstır-larından Hilandâr manâstırı râhiblerinden iken bundan akdem hâlik olan ‘Antimô veled-i Moskô veled-i Petkô*).³⁷ Similarly, in the 1747 document an Athonite monk was recorded as: “the monk named Yosif, son of Konstantin, a priest settled on the island of Mount Athos that belongs to the protected city of Thessaloniki” (*Mahrûse-i Selânîk muzâfatından Aynarôz ceziresi mütemekinlerinden pâpâ Yâsaf veled-i Ko-statîn nâm râhib*).³⁸

Hundreds of judicial documents issued over the span of three centuries demonstrate a consistent method of identifying monks. Numerous other locally composed certificates follow the same practice. Unlike other non-Muslim subjects, monks were seldom designated as *zimmis*, since their status already implied it. Only in a few analysed cases were they explicitly referred to as Christians (*Nasrânî*). This practice appears to have been applied more widely from the mid-18th century, aligning with the shifts in discourse seen in the centrally issued document mentioned earlier. For example, the phrase “the Christian poor” (*fukâra en-nasâra*) appears in special instances where monastic property was acquired not through an actual or fictitious purchase but by endowment. Islamic law proscribes that religious endowments cannot be dedicated to the monasteries themselves but must benefit the monks and the poor residing within them.³⁹

More commonly, we encounter markers of monastic rank in the records. Monks might introduce themselves in courts as hegumen or prohegumen (former

³⁵ MSPC TD, 8377.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8396.

³⁷ AMHT, 3/225.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3/263.

³⁹ Крешић, Манасѣир Хиландар, 95–97.

abbot).⁴⁰ Scribes unfamiliar with these titles sometimes treated them as personal names, whereas those accustomed to dealing with the representatives of monasteries consistently rendered them as titles. In such cases, they even translated the terms into Ottoman administrative language as administrator of a religious foundation (*mütevelli*) or head (*re'is*).⁴¹ Hegumens frequently represented their monasteries, and they clearly considered it important to identify themselves as such. And, by the 18th century, the office of prohegumen had become increasingly prominent.⁴² Although scribes did not record parties' statements verbatim, elements of the monks' own self-identification nonetheless found their way into the official language of the documents.

At first glance, the documents that could most closely reveal how monks referred to themselves, and which identification markers mattered to them, are the petitions sent to the imperial court. Known as *arzuhal*s (*arz-ı hal*), these petitions were, however, usually drafted by a local scribe and, like all official records, adhered to a prescribed form and language. This means that the identifiers used were not chosen by the individuals themselves but were dictated by the Ottoman administration's criteria for a well-composed document.⁴³

As with other subjects of the empire, petitions used the terms *bende* and *kul* to describe monks. Both words can mean 'slave', but in this context they convey the meaning of 'servant' or 'subject'. Petitions typically opened with phrases such as 'The petition of the servants is as follows' or simply 'These servants', and concluded with a signature in the form 'Servant' (or 'Servants') followed by the personal name(s) of the supplicant(s). When monasteries were mentioned, their descriptions matched those in other types of documents.⁴⁴ In a 1693 *arzuhal* from the monks of Rakovac

⁴⁰ AMHT, 3/240, 3/338a; MSPC TD, 8371, 8374, 8375, 8376, 8389, 8435; Фотић, *Свеїѡа Гора*, 247, 302.

⁴¹ AMHT, 3/243, 3/285, 3/291, 3/382; MSPC TD, 8393; Фотић, *Свеїѡа Гора*, 41.

⁴² O. Krešić, "Adapting to Shifting Imperial Realities: Mount Athos (Chilandar Monastery) in the Political Context of the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire", *Хиландарски зборник* 14 (2017), 135–145.

⁴³ Grounded in the principle that every subject had the right to petition the ruler, *arzuhal*s often provide insight into a wide range of personal and communal concerns. Upon receipt, the issue at hand was summarised at the top of the document. When necessary, various chanceries were consulted to verify the relevant records. Ultimately, the grand vizier would order the issuance of a *fermân* in response, M. İpşirli, "Arzuhal", in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [c.] 3 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1991) 447–448. For more on the institution of appeal see: М. Павловић, О. Крешић, "Институција апелације у правном систему османског царства током транзиционог периода", *Зборник Мајице српске за друштвене науке* 154 (2016), 37–51.

⁴⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi [BOA], AE.SAMD.III 59/5914, AE.SAMD.III 140/13611, C.ADL. 62/3714; MSPC TD, 8385, 8413, 8424.

Monastery, who sought protection from marauding soldiers, they are introduced only as “the poor”, perhaps to underscore the dire conditions they faced during years of war. That petition was signed by “the monk [...] of Rakovac Monastery”.⁴⁵ By contrast, in another 1693 petition, in which the monks of Šišatovac requested that their taxes remain unchanged, they signed collectively as “The servants, monks of Šišatovac” (*Bendegân-i Şişâtôvik ruhbanları*).⁴⁶

Finally, attention should be drawn to identification markers not previously discussed, namely, ethnic ones. In general, Ottoman bureaucrats rarely used ethnic labels or references to language when identifying the sultan’s subjects. This does not imply a lack of awareness regarding the diverse character of the population, which included various Christian denominations, languages, local traditions, and ethnic affiliations. Rather, this practice reflected the fact that, in most cases, such factors did not influence an individual’s legal status. Nevertheless, there are instances in which ethnic and cultural markers were employed. To explore these, we will turn to documents concerning a group of monks not previously examined in this paper because they represent a distinct category apart from monastic brotherhoods: the patriarchs and bishops of the Orthodox Churches.⁴⁷

The charters of appointment (*berât*) of different Church hierarchs changed throughout the centuries of the Ottoman rule but some aspects remained more or less constant while the development of different types of identification can be traced. For example, the Ecumenical Patriarch was from the 16th century until the middle of the 18th century mostly referred to as ‘the Patriarch of the unbelievers in Istanbul and Rumeli’, only gradually to be changed to variations of the phrase ‘the Patriarch of Greeks/Orthodox Christians (*Rûmiyân*) in Istanbul and belonging territories’.⁴⁸ Similarly, the Archbishop of Peć was designated in Ottoman documents using the variation of a phrase ‘the Patriarch of the unbelievers of the region of Peć and belonging territories’.⁴⁹ Starting in the third decade of the 18th century, pejorative

⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the document is damaged, so the name of the supplicant cannot be read, MSPC TD, 8385.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8413.

⁴⁷ For more on this see chapter: O. Krešić, “Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe” in this volume.

⁴⁸ H. Çolak, E. Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church as an Ottoman Institution: A Study of Early Modern Patriarchal Berats* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2019), 71–73, 79–90, 94–98, 111–129.

⁴⁹ For example: “The Patriarchate of the unbelievers of the Region of Peć and the belonging territories under the charge of a monk named Kalinikos...” (*Patrîklik kefere-i vilâyet-i İpek ve tevâbi’-i-hâ der ‘ühde-i Kâlinikôs nâm râhib...*), Н. Шулетић, “Подаци о бератима архијереја Пећке и Охридске архиепископије у дефтеру прихода канцеларије црквених муката (BOA, KK 2542–33)”, *Српске сџугује* 1 (2010), 183.

terms such as ‘unbelievers’ (*kefere*, *kefere/kûfire ta’ifesi*) and ‘baseless rite’ (*âyîn-i âtûla*, *âyîn-i bâtûla*), used to describe Christians and their religious practices in the documents of the central administration, began to be replaced with more neutral expressions, such as *zimmis* or ‘the community of Christians’ (*Nasârâ tâ’ifesi*).⁵⁰ The formal titles of various Orthodox Christian prelates subordinated to patriarchs and archbishops followed the same pattern, stressing the territorial jurisdiction and the religious affiliation of their flock, while their personal names were followed by the marker ‘monk’.⁵¹

However, a series of documents concerning relations between Catholic Franciscan monks in Bosnia and the prelates under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Peć that spans the whole of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th, showcases the previously mentioned argument: the Ottoman administration was aware of the more precise distinctions among its subjects and, when necessary, employed various markers of identification. In this case it was important to differentiate between Catholic monks and believers and their Orthodox Christian counterparts. So, in a number of documents that included both centrally issued *fermâns* and *berâts*, and locally composed *hüccets*, the Franciscan monks and their coreligionists were referred to as Frankish or Latin monks (*Frenk/Latin ruhbânları*) and Frankish unbelievers (*Frenk keferesi*). Additionally, they were identified as Bosnian monks (*Bosna ruhbânları*), based on the territory they inhabited, or by ethnic designations such as Hungarian, Šokci, and Albanian unbelievers (*Macar ve Şokça ve Arnavud keferesi*).⁵² On the other hand, the Orthodox monks and prelates were designated in the same documents as “metropolitans and vladikas/bishops of Greek/Orthodox, Serbian, Wallachian unbelievers” (*Rûm ve Sırf ve Eflâk keferesiniñ midrepolid ve ivlâdikaları/piskôpôsları*) or “Greek/Orthodox, Serbian and Bulgarian bishops” (*Rûm ve Sırf ve Bulgâr pôskôpôsları* (sic!)).⁵³ Moreover, the different denominations of Christianity are identified by using the same markers. The Catholics stressed both in petitions and before the judge, as far as it was translated to the Ottoman administrative parlance, that their Frankish and Latin ‘faith and rite’ (*dîni ve âyîni*) is different to that of the Greek, Wallachian and Serbian ones.

⁵⁰ Çolak, Bayraktar–Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, 57.

⁵¹ *Турски документи за исџоријаџа на македонскиот народ* [том] I, ур. М. Соколски, (Скопје: Државна архива на СР Македонија, 1963), 113, 117, 136–138; *Турски документи за исџоријаџа на македонскиот народ* [том] II, ур. М. Соколски, (Скопје: Државна архива на СР Македонија, 1963), 1966), 78, 183–184; *Турски документи за исџоријаџа на македонскиот народ* [том] IV, ур. А. Стојановски, (Скопје: Државна архива на СР Македонија, 1963), 15, 77–78.

⁵² В. Бошков, “Турски документи о односу католичке и православне цркве у БиХ и Далмацији”, *Сџоменик САНУ CXXXI* (1992), 11, 29–30, 41–42.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 36–38, 43–49, *passim*.

We should emphasise that the Ottoman administration employed terms with multiple meanings, making it difficult at times to determine the intended sense. Context is always crucial, especially when the terms in question are translations – both between different languages and from colloquial discourse to administrative usage. For instance, in a *berât* issued in 1626, we encounter the phrase: “...*Sırf ve Eflâk milletinde olan râhibler...*”, which, in this context, can be translated as “monks of the Serbian and Wallachian people or rite”.⁵⁴ Another noteworthy expression, *hilâf-i cins*, was also used to underscore that Orthodox Christian prelates should not exercise jurisdiction over Catholics. The first word means ‘opposite’ or ‘contrary to’, while the second – *cins* – has several possible meanings, ranging from ‘type’, ‘variety’, and ‘sort’ to ‘sex’, ‘origin’, or ‘race’. For example, in a *hüccet* issued in Sarajevo, we find the sentence: “...*hilâf-i cinsimiz olan Rûm ve Sırf ve Eflâk keferesinin midrepôlid ve îvlâdikaları...*”, which can be translated as: “the metropolitans and bishops of the Greek, Serbian, and Wallachian unbelievers who are of a different kind from ours.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ottoman scribes made efforts to translate certain religious terms in ways that aligned with Ottoman legal practice. In some cases, the term *mezheb* was used to denote different Christian denominations. For example: “to the Jesuits and other monks belonging to the Latin rite” (*Yezûitî ve sâyir Lâtîn mezhebinde olan ruhânîlara*) or “to the Jesuits, monks, and priests belonging to the Papal rite” (*Papeşde mezhebinde olan pâpâşlar ve ruhânlar ve yezûîtlere*).⁵⁶

The Orthodox Christian monks of the Balkans operated within the administrative, economic, and legal frameworks dictated by Ottoman imperial policy. Their frequent encounters with various levels of bureaucracy inevitably shaped not only the monastic economy but also many aspects of daily life. In correspondence with the authorities, they presented themselves in terms recognisable to the representatives of the Ottoman authorities and easily integrated with their legal practices. Conversely, these practices likely influenced how Christian Orthodox monks articulated aspects of their self-understanding. Thus, by analysing identifiers used by external actors, such as those found in Ottoman documents, we can also glean information about the ways in which the monks identified themselves. Although a variety of identifiers entered the Ottoman administrative discourse, previous research has shown that the two primary markers were the occupational one, ‘the monk’, encompassing the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45; M. I. Kunt, “Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5/3 (1974), 236.

⁵⁶ Бошков, “Турски документи”, 43–44, 58. In the Islamic discourse this term was used to denote four different schools of jurisprudence, F. Koca, “Mezhep”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* [c.] 29, (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2004), 537–542.

religious identification, and affiliation to a monastery. In most cases, these were sufficient to define each monk's position within Ottoman society.

2. Patronage of Monasteries among the Orthodox Christian Elites in the Ottoman Balkans

While the study of Ottoman documents has primarily focused on modes of identification external to the group being identified, the second part of the chapter will examine how one aspect of self-understanding, being rooted in medieval traditions, evolved within the framework of the Ottoman administrative and social system. In particular, we will investigate the practices of monastic patronage and how they shaped the forms of identification employed by both monks and their patrons. Special attention will be given to how these practices were incorporated into expressions of elite status among Orthodox Christians in the Balkans.

In the medieval Balkan states, as in other parts of Europe, monastic patronage was a key marker of noble status. Members of all ruling dynasties in the Serbian lands were prominent founders and benefactors of monasteries.⁵⁷ The imposition of Ottoman rule from the late 14th century onwards transformed the political, social, and cultural landscape of the peninsula. However, these changes were gradual, and many medieval practices were not abolished but adapted. Monasteries thus endured as religious and cultural focal points. Before examining the individuals who donated to monasteries and considering how such acts contributed to their self-perception as members of the elite within their communities, it is necessary to first outline how Christian religious foundations and patronage functioned within the framework of the Ottoman legal and administrative systems. This framework provided the foundation and profoundly shaped the practices that constitute the central theme of the study.

In Islam, religious endowments are called *waqfs* (Ottoman Turkish: *vakıf*). Their establishment often had political and economic significance and was part of the state policy to establish authority over a certain territory. Thus, rulers themselves and people close to them founded endowments that could include mosques, public kitchens, public baths, madrasas, libraries, caravanserais, fountains, and other

⁵⁷ Д. Богдановић, “Преображај српске цркве”, у: *Историја српског народа* [књ.] 1. *Ог најстаријих времена до Маричке бишке (1371)*, ур. С. Ћирковић, (Београд: СКЗ 1981), 315–327; В. Ј. Ђурић, “Рашко и приморско градитељство”, у: *Историја српског народа* [књ.] 1, 389–407; М. Живојиновић, *Историја манастира Хиландара: од оснивања манастира 1198. до 1335.* (Београд: Просвета, 1998); Т. Стародубцев, “Задужбинарство и ктитори у Србији у доба Лазаревића”, *Саопштења* XLII (2010), 39–60.

public facilities. At the heart of every *waqf* was the desire to do a godly deed by bequeathing certain real estate or money and goods. The bequeathed property could no longer be sold or otherwise used except as specified in the document establishing the *waqf* (*waqfiyya* or Ottoman Turkish *vakıfnâme*). The classical definition of a *waqf* implied that revenues derived from it could be intended for specific individuals or for public benefit. The implementation of decisions stated in the *waqfiyya* was overseen by an endowment administrator (*mutawalli*, Ottoman Turkish: *mütevel-lî*), whose appointment method also had to be specified in the founding document. Later, a division was established between charitable *waqfs* intended for public use and family ones.⁵⁸

Although *waqfs* as institutions were different from the Christian concept of religious endowment, the two institutions were not mutually exclusive. Church canons prescribed that property donated to ecclesiastical persons could only be used for performing religious services, supporting clergy members, and helping the helpless. Although Islamic jurists advocated that *waqfs* could not be used for building new churches, most accepted that it was legal to designate them for the benefit of *zimmis*.⁵⁹ The attitude of the Ottoman administration towards this issue was not uniform and evolved through several phases. Upon encountering a well-developed network of Christian religious endowments in the Balkans, particularly the extensive landed estates of major monasteries, the Ottomans did not immediately or systematically adapt these institutions to Islamic legal norms. While a significant portion of monastic land was confiscated and converted into state property, many monasteries nonetheless managed to retain control over parts of their former holdings, as was already mentioned. The monasteries of Mount Athos succeeded in securing a special status early in the Ottoman rule, a status primarily reflected in their recognition by the authorities as a distinct community. In contrast, the position of other monasteries, whose monks had to negotiate their standing individually, was considerably more precarious. Both situations shaped how the state identified the monasteries in question. From the onset of Ottoman conquests until the mid-16th century,

⁵⁸ J. R. Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); R. Peters et al., "Wakf", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition* [vol.] XI: W–Z, eds. P. J. Bearman et al., (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 59–99.

⁵⁹ E. Kermeli, "Ebū's Su'ūd's Definitions of Church Vakfs: Theory and Practice in Ottoman Law", in: *Islamic Law. Theory and Practice*, eds. R. Gleave, E. Kermeli, (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2001), 141–142, 148; С. Иванова, "Християнска и мюсюлманска благотворителност по българските земи, XVI–XVIII в. (документи, участници и институции)", в: *Дарителство и взаимопомощ в българското общество (XVI – началото на XX в.)*, ред. П. Митев, (София: Издателство: ИФ-94, 2003), 11; Фотић, *Свејџа Гора*, 19–36.

administrators and jurists experimented with various approaches to integrate monasteries into the state system while preserving them as sources of revenue.⁶⁰

As previously mentioned, some monasteries held their lands as *timars*, which exempted them from taxation but required the provision of a specified number of soldiers. In this capacity, they were regarded as ‘masters of the land’, akin to any other *sipahi*. This arrangement applied, for example, to the monasteries of Ravanica, Resava, Meteora, and the Franciscan monastery in Fojnica. Additionally, monks from certain prominent monasteries were appointed royal falconers, a status that granted them exemption from specific taxes.⁶¹ It appears that certain traditional obligations of peasants on monastic lands towards monasteries persisted during the initial phase of Ottoman rule.⁶² Thus, some monasteries could continue enjoying a somewhat special status relative to their coreligionists, a fact that might have been reflected in how their monks perceived themselves and their social position.

When it comes to monastic patronage, the period in question saw the incorporation of certain members of the old nobility into Ottoman society, many of whom continued to support Christian monasteries. Some served as *sipahis*, and there are documented cases of monasteries being attached to the *timar* of Christian *sipahis*.⁶³ One of the most prominent patrons of monasteries, particularly those on Mount Athos, in the second half of the 15th century was Mara Branković (1416–1487), daughter of the Serbian Despot Đurađ Branković and lawful wife of Sultan Murad II. Owing to her royal lineage and close ties to the Ottoman court during the reign of Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1481), she was able to provide substantial support to the Athonite monastic communities. Sources concerning Mara’s patronage confirm that, during the 15th century, there were still no clearly defined legal mechanisms for integrating Christian endowments into the Islamic legal framework. Medieval practices remained evident in documents detailing her bequests of immovable property to the monasteries of Saint Paul and Vatopedi.

⁶⁰ Фотић, *Свеџа Гора и Хиландар*, 24–26, 32–35, 43–48.

⁶¹ Đurđev, *Uloga crkve*, 108–109; Зиројевић, “Попис манастира”, 158–159; Фотић, *Свеџа Гора*, 47–48.

⁶² In some documents, the Ottoman bureaucracy occasionally employed the term *waqf* to describe properties belonging to monasteries or to suggest that these institutions enjoyed property as a *waqf*, even though they did not formally possess that status. This usage represented one of the ways in which the peculiarities of monastic institutions were adapted to the conventions of Ottoman administrative discourse, Đurđev, *Uloga crkve*, 111; Фотић, *Свеџа Гора*, 43–44.

⁶³ H. Inaldžik, “Od Stefana Dušana do Osmanskog carstva”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* III–IV (1952–1953), 23–54; Đurđev, *Uloga crkve*, 109.

These bequests even included elements that directly contradicted Sharia law, such as the donation of arable land.⁶⁴

However, during the second half of the 16th century, non-Muslim *waqfs* became the subject of special interest of one of the most active and influential Ottoman legal experts, *Şeyhülislâm* Ebüssuûd.⁶⁵ Driven by economic considerations and a desire to standardise various forms of land tenure, he issued a series of legal opinions (*fatwas*) that enforced a strict application of Sharia regulations concerning endowments. Non-Muslim subjects of the sultan were affirmed in their right to establish religious endowments; however, stringent rules and procedures were introduced. It was decreed that all monastic properties lacking legally valid ownership documentation were to be confiscated, while monks were granted the right of pre-emption to repurchase them.⁶⁶

One of the principal challenges arose from the regulation stipulating that a religious endowment (*waqf*) could only be established using movable or immovable property privately owned by the donor, thereby excluding arable land. Furthermore, since *waqfs* were conceived as perpetual institutions, their establishment required the prior designation of an uninterrupted line of beneficiaries. This posed a particular difficulty in the case of monasteries, as Sharia law did not recognise the existence of legal entities, making it impossible to designate a monastery as the institutional recipient of an endowment. A solution was found by directing the endowment to the monks of the monastery, thereby classifying monastic *waqfs* as a form of family *waqf*. According to the *berâts* issued to church dignitaries, which also contained provisions related to inheritance law, a non-Muslim could bequeath up to one-third of his property without interference from other heirs, the state, or the clergy.⁶⁷ Thus, as previously explained, the authorities managed to recognise monasteries as collectives of monks, while formally adhering to the proscriptions of Sharia.

Simultaneously with the standardisation of monastic status within the legal framework, a shift in the social and cultural landscape was underway. Members of

⁶⁴ Фотић, *Свеїа Гора*, 184–187; Ph. P. Kotzageorgis, “Two Vakfiyyes of Mara Branković”, *Хиландарски зборник* 11 (2004), 308–312.

⁶⁵ The *şeyhülislâm* was the chief authority on jurisprudence, and Ebüssuûd (1545–1574) was among the most prolific and influential figures ever to hold that position in the Ottoman Empire. For more on his work see: C. Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ A. Fotić, “The Official Explanations for the Confiscation and Sale of Monasteries (Churches) and their Estates at the Time of Selim II”, *Turcica* XXVI (1994), 33–54; А. Фотић, “Конфискација и продаја манастира (црква) у доба Селима II”; J. Alexander, “The Lord Giveth and the Lord Taketh Away: Athos and the Confiscation Affair of 1568–1569”, *Mount Athos in the 14th–16th Centuries (Athonika Symmeikta 4)* (1997), 149–200.

⁶⁷ Фотић, *Свеїа Гора*, 232–235; Kermeli, “Ebū's Su'ūd's Definitions”, 141–149.

the old elites either left the Ottoman Empire, were assimilated, or lost their prominent status. Monasteries, especially those with rich medieval traditions, turned to foreign rulers, such as the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia or the Russian rulers, for financial support.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, a far more prominent role in the lives of monks was played by their coreligionists living in the Balkans. The development of social and economic life among non-Muslims in Ottoman towns and villages led to the emergence of new elites who were willing to support religious institutions.

When attempting to identify members of these new elites among Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans, two groups stand out: high-ranking members of the Church hierarchy and the well-to-do inhabitants of villages and towns.⁶⁹ The authority of patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops was rooted primarily in their religious roles, and secondarily in their positions within the administrative system of the Empire.⁷⁰ Consequently, their capacity to influence the lives of their flock and to support monasteries was greater than that of the second group. Nevertheless, the ties between local Christian notables and monasteries were more numerous and played a significant role in shaping the self-understanding of both parties.

The functioning of religious life in a monastery depended on the support of Church prelates. With the disappearance of Christian rulers and aristocrats, all monasteries came directly under the jurisdiction of patriarchs, local archbishops, or bishops. These prelates held the authority to ordain priests and confirm hegumens.⁷¹ Furthermore, when monasteries sent monks as representatives to travel and collect alms, they were required not only to obtain permission from the Ottoman authorities but also, as a customary practice, to seek approval and endorsement from local bishops.⁷² In addition to their administrative roles, prelates often chose

⁶⁸ Фотић, *Свеїа Гора*, 194–220; С. М. Димитријевић, “Грађа за српску историју”, 116–234.

⁶⁹ For an overview of different groups that can be considered as elites in the Ottoman society see: *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire, Halcyon Days in Crete V*, ed. A. Anastasopoulos, (Rethymno: Crete University Press 2005).

⁷⁰ See more in: O. Krešić, “Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe” in this volume.

⁷¹ Р. Грујић, “Монаштво и манастири код православних Срба”, у: *Азбучник Српске Православне Цркве*, прир. С. Милеуснић, (Београд: БИГЗ, 1993), 147–149; Фотић, *Свеїа Гора*, 93–96.

⁷² Фотић, *Свеїа Гора*, 221–231; A. Fotić, “Athonite Travelling Monks and the Ottoman Authorities (16th–18th Centuries)”, in: *Perspectives on Ottoman Studies. Papers from the 18th Symposium of the International Committee of Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Studies (CIEPO) at the University of Zagreb 2008*, eds. E. Čaušević, N. Moacanin, V. Kursar, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010), 157–165; И. Радев, *Таксидиотство и таксидоти по български земи през XVIII–XIX век* (София: АИ “Проф. Марин Дринов”, 2008), 8–22; Крешић, *Манасѝир Хиландар*, 77–79.

to become patrons and benefactors of monasteries. To be named a *ktetor* of an important monastery, connected with medieval state traditions, was both a mark of religious devotion and social standing. The prelates donated books and liturgical vessels and financed restoration and rebuilding projects. One notable example is the Archbishop of Peć and Patriarch Pajsije (1614–1647), an agile and dedicated prelate. He visited Mount Athos several times, granting the monks of Esphigmenou a letter of recommendation for collecting alms in territories under his jurisdiction and offering generous monetary gifts to the monasteries.⁷³ Such visits occasionally played a significant role in ideological programmes and served to reinforce the authority of the prelates. For instance, Patriarch Pajsije's visit to the Monastery of Šišatovac in Srem contributed to the development and dissemination of the local cults of saints.⁷⁴

During the 16th century, lay elites gradually began to play an increasingly important role as patrons of monasteries. This trend became more pronounced in the following century, reaching its zenith in the 18th century. A telling illustration of this process can be found in *The Life of the Holy Emperor Uroš*, a *vita* composed by the aforementioned Patriarch Pajsije in the 1640s. This narrative highlights the methods of restoring old monasteries and establishing religious foundations, which were in full concordance with information gleaned from Ottoman documents, and provides essential contextualisation. Namely, in the account of the discovery of the Emperor Uroš's relics, the author describes the actions that led to the restoration of the Church of Dormition of the Mother of God near Nerodimlje (known also as Saint Uroš Monastery), where the relics were deposited. The whole process is dated in the text in the last decades of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century. After the holy relics were found and the pilgrims started to visit the site, a local Church dignitary wrote a letter of supplication and gave it to those who travelled to collect alms for the monastery. In the town of Janjevo, "a pious Christian, Jova Živković, became the *ktetor*, and, showing ardour towards this temple of the Mother of God and the newly revealed saint, he promised to renovate the church as much as he could... Together with other *ktetors*, they restored the church, rebuilt what had been destroyed, roofed it with slabs, and decorated the interior. The doxology was sung and the brotherhood assembled. And the local *ktetors* helped and contributed donations: some [gave] arable fields, some meadows, some pastures and mills, while others [gave] according to their means. It was sufficient [to provide] food for the brotherhood. They adorned [the church] with icons, books, and vestments".⁷⁵ It is

⁷³ Фотић, *Свети Гора*, 238.

⁷⁴ Васиљевић, Крешић, "Култ светог и манастирска економија", 356–357.

⁷⁵ Т. Јовановић, *Књижевна дело патријарха Пајсије* (Београд: Свети архијерјески синод СПЦ, 2001), 305–306; cf. Патријарх Пајсије, *Сабрани списи*, прир. Т. Јовановић, (Београд: Просвета; СКЗ, 1993), 101–102.

evident that the monastery was reestablished through the support of both affluent individuals and the broader community, under the supervision of Church dignitaries. The tone of the text suggests that such a process played a crucial role in shaping the religious and social life of Orthodox Christians. In this context, the proliferation of the title *ktetor*, which will be discussed in greater detail later, is particularly evident.

When trying to determine who were monastic patrons, supplication letters, one of which is mentioned in the case of the rebuilding of Nerodimlje Monastery, can give us that information. Those letters had a standard form, and the lists of the addressees display only small variations. Their order showcases the hierarchies of the contemporary society.⁷⁶ For example, a letter in Greek composed by the elders of Hilandar Monastery enumerates the following persons: the high clergy of the Orthodox Church, the monks of other monasteries, priests, “the highly esteemed leaders and merchants; ship owners and sailors steered and protected by God; craftsmen of every art and skill and artisans of particular crafts, and all Christ loving and merciful Christians”.⁷⁷ A similar letter brought by a monk of Hilandar Monastery to Russia in 1693 starts with the following address: “...illustrious and noble *knezes*, merchants and renowned headmasters of all arts that live in glorious and saved by God Serbia, Hungary and Wallachia, all the Greeks settled there...”.⁷⁸ A charter from 1767, but that is based on older models, issued by the officials of the Athonite monastic community that guarantees that two of Hilandar’s monks travelling to collect alms were bearing a part of the Holy Cross, is addressed to “noble *knezes*, the notables of towns and all excellent merchants, and the honourable headmaster craftsmen and other masters of guilds”.⁷⁹

Extant research of the monastic communities has in many instances confirmed how well informed the monks were about the political and economic developments, which is to be expected as the two-way relations between the monasteries and believers were constant. Thus, the examples listed in the previous paragraph correctly reflect the social landscape of Ottoman villages and towns. With changes to the taxation system, starting in the 17th century, the importance of communal organisation,

⁷⁶ Р. Грујић, “Одношаји светогорских и других манастира са митрополитима карловачким”, *Споменик СКА* 51 (1913), 49, 54; Д. Медаковић, “Манастир Хиландар у XVIII веку”, *Хиландарски зборник* 3 (1974), 7–70, 30; Крешић, *Манасџир Хиландар*, 79.

⁷⁷ Р. Грујић, “Једно грчко хиландарско писмо из XVIII в. с миниатурама”, *Зборник за историју Јужне Србије и суседних области* I (1936), 393.

⁷⁸ This letter was registered in its Russian translation, which makes it impossible to determine which geographical terms were used in the original, and whether the term ‘Greeks’ was a translation or really used in the document. As was already mentioned, this term was widely used in the meaning of ‘Orthodox Christians’, Димитријевић, *Грађа за српску историју*, 130, Крешић, *Манасџир Хиландар*, 165–166.

⁷⁹ Медаковић, “Манастир Хиландар”, 17.

especially in urban areas, rose. The whole community was responsible for paying certain types of taxes, and thus there was a need to organise their distribution and collection. Non-Muslims collectively took care of paying various communal expenses as well, such as necessary repairs, the collection of fees for various services in the city and the maintenance of the *menzil* (i.e., local warehouse). In such cases, we find examples of the cooperation and the mutual redistribution of debts between the Muslim and non-Muslim population, as well as between the town and the non-Muslim population from nearby villages. Non-Muslims could also own common property at the town level, which was managed in a similar way as a *waqf*. There are records of urban neighbourhoods collectively buying and selling houses, while villages purchased and sold plots of land, pastures, and real estate. Examples of this practice were contrary to Islamic law, but it is possible that the *kadis* viewed such transactions as the common property of a group of individuals rather than a collective body.⁸⁰

These kinds of increasingly formalised collective bodies also took care of the local church and the salaries of parish priests. Consequently, there was an overlap between secular non-Muslim collective bodies and church parish councils.⁸¹ In the Ottoman documents the practice is reflected in using group markers when referring to relations of the inhabitants of rural and urban settlements, such as: 'village', 'Christians of the city' and 'Christian neighbourhood'.⁸² On the other hand, research on cities in the area of present-day Bulgaria has shown the widespread use of the term *varoš* (which was once used to refer to the outskirts of a fortress) to designate all non-Muslim residents of a settlement, demonstrating the formation of a new instance that surpassed the *mahalle* or a neighbourhood as the basic unit of collective (self)organisation, although it did not completely suppress it.⁸³

The complexity of the functions performed by collective bodies suggests the existence of organised leadership. However, there is not much information about the manner of its election. Most often, community leaders are listed in the documents

⁸⁰ S. Ivanova, "Varoš: The Elites of the Reaya in the Towns of Rumeli, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries", in: *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, 207–208, 217; E. Gara, "In Search of Communities in Seventeenth Century Ottoman Sources: The Case of the Kara Ferye District", *Turcica* 30 (1998), 151; O. Крешић, М. Павловић, "Институција колективног јемства (*kefalet*) у османској правној теорији и пракси током доба транзиције", *Зборник Мајнице српске за друштвене науке* 174 (2020), 176–181.

⁸¹ В. Скарић, "Српски православни народ и црква у Сарајеву у 17. и 18. вијеку", у: В. Скарић, *Изабрана гјела* [том] II (Сарајево, 1985), 24, 83–84, 106; Ivanova, "Varoš: The Elites of the Reaya in the Towns of Rumeli, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries", 218–226.

⁸² Gara, "In Search of Communities", 142–143.

⁸³ С. Иванова, "Данџото облагане на населението в българските градове и формирането на неговите институции (XVII–XVIII в.)", *Известия на държавните архиви* 63(1993), 90–96; *Eadem*, *Varoš*, 206–207, 209.

without any titles or qualifiers. Eleni Gara came across only a few mentions of specific titles. In the village of Chernovi in 1648, a “koca”, i.e., village elder, is mentioned, while in a case dated 1650, a *mahallebaşı*, the head of a *mahalle*, is mentioned.⁸⁴ The only titles regularly found in the documents refer to urban settlements and to Muslims – *ayans* and officials (*â'yân ve eşrâf*) – and, in the case of non-Muslims, the *kethüda* of Christians, i.e., representative or elder. Although these were not necessarily leaders of the communities in a strict sense, but their legal representatives, they, nevertheless, certainly were part of the local elite.⁸⁵ During the 18th century, community leaders gained greater authority and influence, and there is a further formalisation of their status through the titles such as *koca* and *çorbacı*. The local church councils, that were often presided over by prelates, were organised around parish churches. Members of those bodies often bore titles that signified an elite status of their bearers. Some were of Greek origin like *archon*, *epitropos*, *ktetor*; and others of Slavic origin, like *nastojatelj*, *kmet*, *sinovi Crkveni*. The meaning of all these words is close to that of an administrator or overseer. People bearing those titles often held additional ones like *kyr* (a shorter version of the Greek word *kyrios* meaning master or sir).⁸⁶ Especially interesting is the relatively high number of persons holding the title *hajji* (*hadzhi* in vernacular Slavic languages and *haci/aci* in Ottoman documents) among the Christian notables. This title was reserved for those who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and became widespread in 17th century. Because this travel required not only significant funds, but it also entailed risk, only well-to-do people could have afforded it.⁸⁷

Individuals who held formal positions in communal bodies or exercised informal influence (whose elite status can be inferred from their wealth or titles) appear in documents related to monastic patronage. The most common form of donation to monasteries was the giving of alms to travelling monks. These relatively modest contributions were made so that the names of donors and their families would be read during liturgies in the monasteries. As previously mentioned, travelling monks

⁸⁴ Gara, “In Search of Communities”, 143.

⁸⁵ Б. Ђурђевић, “О кнезовима под турском управом”, *Историјски часопис* 1 (1949), 135; Gara, “In Search of Communities”, 144–145; *Sidžil Blagajskog kadije 1728–1732. Regesta*, priredio H. Hasandedić, (Mostar: Islamski kulturni centar, 2009), 66.

⁸⁶ Скарић, “Српски православни народ”, 100–102; Gara, “In Search of Communities”, 139; Ivanova, “Varoş: The Elites of the Reaya in the Towns of Rumeli, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries”, 203–231; Крешић, *Манастир Хиландар*, 130–132, 137–38.

⁸⁷ V. Izmirlijeva, “Christian Hajjis – the Other Orthodox Pilgrims to Jerusalem”, *Slavic Review* 73/2 (2014), 322–346; J. Радонић, “Епистола манастира Продрома (Слепче) из XVI века”, *Споменик СКА* 49 (1910), 59–65; Г. Суботић, Б. Миљковић, Н. Дудић, *Напомена манастира Хиландара XIV–XVII век* [т.] I (Београд: САНУ; Византолошки институт САНУ; Манастир Хиландар, 2019), 79; Крешић, *Манастир Хиландар*, 143–145.

prepared their visits systematically and often brought with them holy relics and icons. They also maintained registers of the living and the dead whose names were to be commemorated, which have been called memorial books. These books typically begin with the names of medieval rulers and high-ranking church dignitaries, followed by priests and monks. Entries concerning laypersons are generally sparse, often recording only names and places. When additional identifying markers are present, they are usually ethnic. For example, in the memorial book of the monastery Saint Jovan Bigorski, in modern-day North Macedonia, only about two dozen names include such markers, such as “Greek”, “Wallachian”, or “Serb”.⁸⁸ In contrast, one of Hilandar’s register books, which was used to record various aspects of the monastic economy, contains around a dozen entries, mostly from the 1740s, listing men and women who made donations for commemoration. Many of the male names are preceded by titles such as “master” (*gospodar*) or “hadzhi”. It is likely that the monks chose to record only the more prominent patrons in this particular register.⁸⁹

A more prominent form of patronage was the establishment of monastic endowments, that is, the gifting of real estate or land. Unlike the previously described practice, this form of patronage often required recourse to the *kadi* court and, at times, the involvement of representatives from the Muslim community. As a result, a substantial number of documents attesting to these activities have been preserved. However, it is not always possible to determine whether a document concerning the transfer of property refers to a donation or a purchase. The rules governing the establishment of religious endowments were strict, as previously noted. Consequently, individuals sometimes opted for the simpler and more legally defensible route of purchase and sale. In fact, some documents drawn up as sales contracts may have represented donations in practice.⁹⁰ Moreover, it is often difficult to ascertain the

⁸⁸ П. Костић, “Поменик манастира Св. Тројице код Призрена”, *Сјоменик СКА* 49 (1910), 28–32; Н. Целакоски, “Најстарији Поменик на Бигорскиот манастир”, *Сјоменик, оглење историских наука* CXXXI/7 (1992), 221–240; Љ. Пузовић, “Хиландарска писанија 1709. године”, *Зборник Мајице српске за историју* 97 (2018), 53–68; Љ. Пузовић, “Прикупљање писаније према катастиху манастира Хиландара (бр. 521): Прилог историји српске цркве и народа крајем XVII и почетком XVIII века”, у: *Scala paradisi. Актемику Димитрију Бојдановићу у сјомен*, ур. А. Аркадијевич Турилов и др., (Београд: САНУ, 2018), 239–263; *Хиландарската кондика од XVIII век*, пр. Б. Райков, (София; Београд: Народна библиотека “Св. св. Кирил и Методиј”; Народна библиотека Србије, 1998); Крешић, *Манасџир Хиландар*, 86–124.

⁸⁹ *Хиландарската кондика од XVIII век*, л. 196–40а.

⁹⁰ А. Fotić, “Concealed Donation or a Sale: The Acquisition of Christian Monastic Property in the Ottoman Empire (XV–XVII C.)”, in: *XIV. Türk Tarih Kongresi. Ankara 9–13 Eylül 2002. Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler* [с.] II/1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2005), 721–727.

social standing of individuals whose property was transferred to monasteries. Nevertheless, by examining titles, recurring patterns of joint action, and the value and types of real estate involved, tentative conclusions can be drawn.⁹¹

Several cases can help illustrate the practice of donating property to monasteries and how the elite status of individuals can be discerned even when not explicitly stated. Particularly telling are instances involving multiple unrelated owners of a single plot of land or house. In 1637, nine individuals, identified only by name and patronymic, sold the usufruct rights of a pasture to a monk from the Dovolja Monastery (in present-day Montenegro).⁹² Although it remains uncertain whether this transfer of rights was a genuine sale or a concealed donation, the next example is more explicit. In 1742, a *sipahi* issued a receipt stating that Melentija, daughter of Miloš, and Mata, Luka, Jovan, Mirko, and Filip, sons of Vukojica, have gifted their rights to arable lands to the monks of Dovolja Monastery.⁹³ In another part of the Balkans, several cases of real estate acquisition in urban settlements further illuminate this practice. A house in Chirpan (present-day Bulgaria), which became the property of Hilandar Monastery in the second half of the 18th century, was collectively owned by eight individuals described as “*re’aya çorbâcîler*”. It was sold in 1762 to a buyer named Hadzhi Koya, son of Hadzhi Velo.⁹⁴ Another noteworthy case concerns the town of Eski Zagora (in present-day Bulgaria). In 1753, a curious purchase contract was registered before the local *kadi*. Monk Nektarios from Hilandar bought a one-storey house that belonged to six individuals. The fact that these persons were unrelated, had different occupations (including various craftsmen and one priest), and that the property was located next to the parish church strongly suggests that the house was a gift from the Zagora church council to Hilandar.⁹⁵ Occasionally, monasteries also received gifts of valuable items, agricultural products, and livestock.⁹⁶

One distinctive feature of documents issued by *kadi* courts is the inclusion, at the end, of a special category of witnesses – *şühud ul-hâl*. These instrumental witnesses, or witnesses to the judicial act, served to guarantee the validity of the legal proceedings and could be called upon in any future disputes. They might be individuals who happened to be at the *kadi* court on unrelated business, but more often they were notable members of the community or local officials. When cases involved Christians, the *şühud ul-hâl* often included Christian names. In many

⁹¹ Крешић, *Манасџир Хиландар*, 132–135.

⁹² Ф. Барјактаревић, “Турски документи манастира Св. Тројице код Плевља (са 6 факсимила)”, *Сјоменик СКА LXXIX* (1935), 40.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁴ АМНТ, 3/327.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3/273; 3/274; Крешић, *Манасџир Хиландар*, 89.

⁹⁶ МСПС ТД, 8382, Крешић, *Манасџир Хиландар*, 113–124.

instances, these individuals held titles signifying elite status, such as *knez*, *kocabaşı*, *çorbacı*, or *hacı*. This is frequently observed in documents recording the acquisition of property by monasteries. Although it is often impossible to determine with certainty why specific individuals were listed as witnesses, it seems plausible that local notables appeared before the court to signal the community's involvement or endorsement when it engaged in transactions with monastic institutions.⁹⁷

Another way for individuals to become patrons of a monastery was by financing building projects within the monastic complex. In the Middle Ages, the title of *ktetor* was reserved exclusively for founders and major benefactors of monasteries. However, in the early modern period, even modest contributions could earn a person this title. Holding it allowed individuals to affirm their status as elite members of society. Acts of patronage were often commemorated through inscriptions on monastery walls – an expression that served both religious and social functions. An example is Kyr Dimitrije Pepić, a prominent figure from Kratovo and contractor (*mültezim*) of a local mine, who was the *ktetor* of the church at the Monastery of Saint Nikola in Toplica, built in 1536/7.⁹⁸ One of Hilandar's *kellia*, the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, known as Flaska, in Karyes (Mount Athos), contains an inscription dated to approximately 1525 listing the church's donors. Referred to as "*ktetors*", the names include both men and women: Nikola, Irina, Dmiatar, Mara, Dmiatar, Nun Evgenija, Manojlo, Teodora, Nun Jelisaveta, Stanislava, Ivan, Monk Genadije, Hierodeacon Natanail, and Monk Pavle.⁹⁹ While joint donorships had a long tradition, the Athonite examples are particularly noteworthy. Unlike the more common group donations to small parish churches, these donors contributed to the construction of a religious building they would likely never see – especially the female donors, who were barred from entering Mount Athos.¹⁰⁰ One of the most striking examples of a representation of a *ktetor* is the reconstruction of the Church of Saint Jovan of Rila in 1755 at Hilandar Monastery. The financier, Hadzhi Valcho from the town of Bansko (in present-day Bulgaria), was a wealthy merchant. He was depicted in a patron portrait inside the church, following medieval traditions of visual commemoration.¹⁰¹

The motivations behind acts of monastic patronage were twofold. These practices had deep religious roots dating back to the medieval period, and for many

⁹⁷ О. Крешић, "Хришћани као сведоци чина (*şuhud ul-hal*) на кадијским судовима у османском царству", *Зборник Мајице српске за историју* 89 (2014), 30–32.

⁹⁸ Ј. Радонић, "Епистолар манастира Продрома (Слепче) из XVI века", *Сјоменик СКА* 49 (1910), 62; Суботић и др, *Најпјисани манастири Хиландара*, 39.

⁹⁹ Суботић и др, *Најпјисани манастири Хиландара*, 29.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 30–32.

¹⁰¹ Медаковић, "Хиландар", 41–42, С. Ненадовић, "Архитектура Хиландара. Цркве и параклиси", *Хиландарски зборник* 3 (1974), 164.

believers, the primary reason for bequeathing property to a monastery was the salvation of their souls. Nevertheless, such bequests also carried significant social value. Acquiring the title of a monastery's *epitropos* (overseer) or *ktetor* (patron, founder) could serve as a marker of one's social standing. Within the Ottoman Empire, opportunities for members of the Christian urban and rural elites to symbolically assert their status and influence were limited. The use of honorary titles was especially prominent when bestowed by monks from the most renowned monasteries. Representatives of communal institutions, members of church councils, and wealthy, influential notables often employed the practice of monastic patronage to affirm their position.

Monks, for their part, recognised this dynamic. When seeking support, they emphasised the importance of their patrons, sometimes reiterating invitations for them to visit the monastery. They cultivated diverse ties with Orthodox Christians across the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, enabling believers to imagine their religious community as transcending local boundaries. In doing so, they helped connect urban communities from different towns across physical, administrative, cultural, and linguistic divides. Moreover, monks played a prominent role in the dissemination of shared cultural practices. Acts such as almsgiving and the establishment of religious endowments not only reflected personal piety and generosity but also held broader social significance. Through these rich networks of interaction, monks contributed to shaping modes of identification among their coreligionists. In turn, their own self-understanding – both as individual servants of God and as members of particular monastic brotherhoods with distinct traditions – was articulated and transformed through these very relationships.



Orthodox Christian monasteries, though confronted with numerous new challenges, successfully adapted to the realities of the Ottoman administrative and legal systems. These realities, alongside the monastic economy and the daily lives of monks, shaped a framework within which various modes of identification could be transformed and new ones emerge. The state bureaucracy employed a language that was formalised but not standardised, allowing for the coexistence of diverse markers with similar meanings. They provided external identifications of monks and their monasteries as collectives, which were subject to mutual influence. Specifically, the ways in which monks presented themselves and defined their monastic communities left a mark on official discourse, while simultaneously being shaped by that very discourse. This research has confirmed that the term 'monk' was the most frequently used designation for the members of monastic brotherhoods in the Ottoman documents, encompassing several meanings that were crucial for determining an individual's legal status.

When identifying monasteries, Ottoman bureaucrats often followed local conventions and adopted the naming practices used by the monks themselves to describe their monastic brotherhoods.

However, relations with central and local Ottoman authorities did not exhaust the scope of monastic engagement beyond the monastic walls. For the functioning of monasteries, relations with the higher Orthodox clergy and lay coreligionists were of paramount importance. The social framework of Ottoman towns and villages shaped the development of communal life, within which a new Orthodox Christian elite began to take form. In the absence of broader avenues for social advancement within Ottoman society, local notables focused their efforts on their immediate communities. Care for parish churches and patronage of monasteries became prominent expressions of communal life. Through their ties with monasteries, these elites found new avenues for asserting their status. Consequently, they were identified by their acts of patronage, stressing their roles as patrons through the usage of appropriate titles and identification markers, while monks, in turn, developed their own self-understanding by playing an indispensable role in the religious and cultural life of Orthodox Christians.

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Ethnic Identifications in the Textual Representation of the Past on Mount Athos from the 15th to the 18th Centuries

1. Introduction

Mount Athos, known as the Holy Mountain, has long been regarded as a unique microcosm of Orthodox monastic life. Since at least the 10th century, this rugged peninsula in northern Greece has attracted monks from various regions, including Constantinople, the Caucasus, the Danubian principalities, the Balkans, and beyond.¹ Historical sources consistently highlight the fact that, while each monk was primarily defined by his spiritual commitment to the Orthodox faith, ethnic differences persisted in many practical dimensions of monastic life. Such differences were often reflected in the establishment of monasteries dedicated to a particular linguistic community, and in the production and circulation of legendary narratives that aimed to explain foundations, miraculous phenomena, and special devotions.

Although the notion of a predominant Orthodox Christian identity could, in principle, transcend local affiliations, it did not always erase the memories of homeland, language, and specific origins.² When men ventured to the Holy Mountain to

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¹ For English sources on Mount Athos, see, *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism: Papers from the Twenty-Eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1994*, eds. A. Bryer, M. Cunningham, (London: Routledge, 2016); *Medieval Mount Athos between Wealth and Poverty*, ed. Z. Chitwood, (Leiden: Brill, 2024); G. Speake, *A History of the Athonite Commonwealth: The Spiritual and Cultural Diaspora of Mount Athos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); G. Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); G. Speake, K. Ware, *Mount Athos: Microcosm of the Christian East* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012).

² Following Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, this paper distinguishes between identity as a category of practice, i.e., the self-understanding and collective belonging as expressed

pursue an ascetic life, they brought with them deeply ingrained cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Over time, these backgrounds gave rise to parallel institutional structures or at least parallel traditions within the same institution. The endurance of one's original language, along with a sense of ancestral belonging, shaped the collective memories of particular groups. This situation often culminated in the production of written texts, such as hagiographical narratives, foundation legends, and miracle stories that served a dual role.³ On one hand, they reinforced Athonite spirituality as a supra-ethnic phenomenon under the umbrella of Orthodoxy; on the other, they championed distinct ethnic narratives, especially when it came to sustaining institutional claims, attracting financial assistance, or legitimising monastic authority before external rulers.

In what follows, the discussion centres on the ways the Iberians (Georgians) and the Bulgarians, used or appeared in Athonite legends. These two groups, each possessing distinct historical ties to Mount Athos, developed narratives that illuminate how identification boundaries were shaped and reshaped over centuries. The first part of this study addresses the legends pertaining to Iviron Monastery (the 'Iberian' foundation) and the narrative of the Theotokos that directly connected the monastic peninsula to the Caucasus.⁴ The second part focuses on Zografou Monastery and the narrative concerning Saint George and the miracle of his self-painted icon.⁵ By examining these examples, we observe how the interplay of legends, politics, and cultural memory forged a composite yet dynamic understanding of Athonite identifications.

by historical actors themselves, and identification as a category of analysis, referring to the contingent, situational processes by which such affiliations are constructed, asserted, or attributed. See R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'", *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 14–21.

³ Ν. Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση και ιστορικότητα 1005–1705 αι. Η Ανάμνησις μερική περί τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους Ἄθω (BHG 1054μ)* (Αθήνα: Ινστιτούτο Ιστορικών Ερευνών-ΙΙΕ, 2025), 210–211.

⁴ For the text see *Ibid.*, 62–65; see also Σ. Λάμπρος, "Τα Πάτρια του Αγίου Ὁρους", *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* 9 (1912), 123–126.

⁵ Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, 67–68. On Zografou Monastery, see Δ. Παπαχρυσάνθου, *Ο Αθωνικός Μοναχισμός* (Αθήνα: Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης, 1992), 239–241; C. Pavlikianov, *The Early Years of the Bulgarian Athonite Monastery of Zographou (980–1279) and its Archive* (Sofia: Akademichno Izdatelstvo, 2011), 58–119; C. Pavlikianov, *The Mediaeval Greek and Bulgarian Documents of the Athonite Monastery of Zographou (980–1600): Critical Edition and Commentary of the Texts* (Sofia: Akademichno Izdatelstvo, 2014), 35–75.

2. Narrative Framework and Historical Context

Mount Athos' geographic isolation and sacred status date from late antiquity, but the peninsula emerged as a major centre of Orthodox monasticism in the 10th century, having been the dwelling place for hermits or smaller groups of monks for two centuries. In 963, Athanasius the Athonite established the Great Lavra, which quickly became the model for subsequent foundations on the peninsula.⁶ Emperors Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tsimiskes offered patronage, and later imperial benefactors fortified the monastic institutions that began to dot the peninsula. Within a few decades, the monastic communities had multiplied, gradually gaining a privileged legal and economic status within the Byzantine Empire. During this flourishing era, monks arrived from diverse regions of the empire, and from other parts of the Orthodox world such as the Balkans or the Caucasus. Many founding figures were Greek-speaking, while others spoke various Slavic or Caucasian languages. Over time, a pattern emerged whereby certain monasteries became identified with a particular ethnic or linguistic group, as, for example, Iviron (which literally means 'of the Georgians'), Hilandar (Serbian), Agiou Pavlou (Serbian), Zografou (Bulgarian), and St Panteleimon (Russian). Although language often served as a category of identification, external sociopolitical factors, such as imperial alliances, local power struggles, or access to sponsorship, also had an impact on the trajectory of these communities. The ideal of the 'Orthodox monk', whose religious commitment outweighs these differences, was – and remains – a central tenet. Yet, the historical record reveals frequent tensions and negotiations over property rights, liturgical languages, and even interpretive traditions of scripture. The presence of distinct ethnic groups did not simply vanish inside the monasteries: it found constant expression, as in separate chapels or separate segments of monastic complexes designated for those who could neither follow nor participate effectively in Greek-language services.⁷

In practical terms, daily liturgy played a paramount role in monastic life. Since worship forms the very core of monastic spirituality, any language barrier immediately generates a need for parallel services. This phenomenon is documented, for example, in the 13th century at Iviron Monastery, where Georgian and Greek monks

⁶ On the conditions of the founding of the Lavra of St Athanasius, see the introduction in *Actes de Lavra* [vol.] I: *Des origines à 1204*. *Archives de l'Athos* [vol.] V, éd. P. Lemerle et al., (Paris: CNRS, 1970).

⁷ At Iviron Monastery, for example, the Georgian monks held services in the main church and the Greeks in the chapel of the Portaitissa. In 1355/6, this was reversed, as after the Mongol occupation of the Caucasus, the number of Georgian monks had declined and the Greeks now outnumbered them; see *Actes d'Iviron* [vol.] IV. *Archives de l'Athos* [vol.] XIX, éd. J. Lefort et al., (Paris: CNRS, 1995), 4–5.

coexisted but allegedly used two different churches to conduct their daily offices, thus reinforcing communal demarcations.⁸ These language enclaves helped shape the self-understandings of monks, resulting in a multi-layered system: an overarching Orthodox identity paired with local or ethnic identities that often reasserted themselves in narrative form.

By the 16th century, Athos had generated numerous miracle stories and local legends reflecting each monastery's foundation, the miraculous arrival of famed icons, or divine intervention in times of political and religious crisis. A corpus of fourteen such narratives circulated widely, not only on the Holy Mountain but as far away as Novgorod in Russia.⁹ These texts are typically referred to as “legends” in a scholarly sense, insofar as they recount miraculous episodes – often unverified and frequently impossible to corroborate through conventional historical sources. Their authors wrote in a style that merged hagiographical motifs with the local memory of apparently supernatural events, thus blurring historical truth with theological or spiritual messages. It is well established that these legends originated in older oral traditions.¹⁰ By the time of their recorded versions in the 16th century, they had presumably been reshaped by monastic storytellers who adapted them according to current concerns, local pride, and external pressures, sometimes even placing them in a vague past, which is not easily identifiable, or what Jacques Le Goff would call, “temps sacré” (sacred time).¹¹ These legends were therefore shaped by a strategic insistence on continuity with a sacred past, a process of selective reinterpretation

⁸ *Actes d'Iviron* [vol.] III. *Archives de l'Athos* [vol.] XVIII, éd. J. Lefort et al., (Paris: CNRS, 1994), 46.

⁹ For an overview of the legends of Mount Athos, see Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, 18–25.

¹⁰ In memory studies, orality constitutes a foundational dimension of recollection that frequently precedes textualisation. Maurice Halbwachs, in *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte* (Paris, PUF, 1941), 15, observes: “Quelques-unes de ces localisations pourraient sans doute avoir été fixées dans une tradition orale plus ou moins vague...” (Some of these localisations could without doubt have been fixed in a more or less vague oral tradition ...). For a sustained analysis of the transition from oral performance to written legend, see M. C. Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition: Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 1–32. On the formation of origin legends in early medieval Western Europe, consult *Origin Legends in Early Medieval Western Europe*, eds. L. Brady, P. Wadden, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2022), 1–22. For the Athonite narrative tradition, see Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, where each tale is deconstructed to reveal its archaic layers and oral intermediaries.

¹¹ J. Le Goff, *À la recherche du temps sacré: Jacques de Voragine et la Légende dorée* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), 19–20. For an overview of Athonite legends seen through J. Le Goff's historical analysis, see N. Livanos, “Lire le sacré à Byzance à travers ses légendes”, in: *Un large Moyen Âge? L'œuvre de Jacques Le Goff et les études byzantines*, éd. B. Campos Rubillar, L. Ciolfi, M. Panoryia, (Paris: EHESS, 2018), 107–117.

that served contemporary needs while functioning independently of the Ottoman political landscape, as the ruling Muslim power was mostly indifferent to Christian claims of sacred identity.¹²

Legends formed a narrative currency that not only celebrated the sanctity of a particular place but also reinforced the monastery's claims to distinct origins or special devotions. When monastic communities needed to attract benefactors, whether Byzantine emperors, Slavic princes, or wealthy local notables, they often invoked their unique connection to the divine. By depicting their monastery as the site of a theologically significant miracle or a place singled out by the Theotokos, they gained an additional layer of legitimacy in the eyes of the faithful. For communities belonging to a minority linguistic group, legends also provided a powerful mechanism for retaining a sense of separate identity amid the dominant Greek-speaking monastic cosmos of Mount Athos. A legend that validated claims to a Georgian or Bulgarian heritage could serve as both a spiritual anchor and a pragmatic tool when appealing to sympathetic sponsors from their homelands. The result was a complex interplay between local memory, ethnic-cultural solidarity, and pragmatic fundraising tactics.

3. Two Case Studies: The Iviron and Zografou Legends

One of the most remarkable 16th-century narratives traces the origins of Athonite devotion to the Theotokos to a miraculous event associated with Iberia (Georgia).¹³ According to this legend, when the Apostles cast lots to determine which regions they would evangelise, the Theotokos also took part. Her lot fell on Iberia, but an angel intervened, delivering a divine message that she was to remain where she was, while Iberia would come to faith through her influence at a later time. During a journey to visit Lazarus in Cyprus, the Theotokos' ship was swept off course by a fierce storm, eventually landing on Mount Athos, at the site where the Georgian monastery of Iviron would later stand. There, she encountered the local pagan population, whom she personally baptised, consecrating the site as her own. The legend further recounts that a slave woman was later sent to Georgia in the name of the Theotokos, marking the beginning of Iberia's Christianisation.

On the surface, this narrative establishes a pivotal bond between the Theotokos and Athos, a spiritual bond that eventually evolved into the popular notion

¹² For other forms of self-representation by the Athonites, particularly within the Ottoman legal and archival system, see the paper by O. Krešić, "Orthodox Christian Monks and the Modes of Identification of Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire" in this volume.

¹³ Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, 62–65.

of Athos as ‘the garden of the Mother of God’.¹⁴ At the same time, Georgia is made an essential part of the story, linking its Christianisation directly to the Theotokos. This might seem puzzling, especially since no earlier canonical text refers to the Virgin Mary’s ‘lot’ being Georgia. Yet the idea that the Theotokos and Georgia share a special relationship can be traced back at least to the 10th century. In the writings of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, it is mentioned that the Iberians claim descent from the Theotokos herself, through the seed of King David.¹⁵ Additionally, in the *vita* of Saint Nino, who is traditionally credited with converting Georgia, Nino states that she was sent by the Theotokos, who deemed Iberia her special domain.¹⁶ In other words, by the 10th century, textual evidence already existed to connect Georgia to the Theotokos.

The legend, though spiritual in character, arises from concrete historical realities. Georgian monasticism on Athos became prominent in the 10th century, particularly through the figure of Athanasius the Athonite, who himself had familial links to Lazica, i.e., the western coastal region of present-day Georgia. The earliest references to a ‘Georgian presence’ on the Holy Mountain, aside from general notices, are found in Iviron’s Georgian manuscripts.¹⁷ One crucial reference is Iviron Codex Georg. 32, from 981, where the text specifically refers to Athos as “the dwelling place

¹⁴ Mount Athos treasures a large number of miraculous icons of the Theotokos. At the Great Lavra there are the icons of *Koukouzelissa* and *Oikonomissa*; at the monastery of Vatopedi, there are the icons of *Vimatarissa*, *Paramythia*, *Esphagmeni*, *Elaiovrytissa*, and *Antiphonitria*; at the monastery of Iviron, there is the icon of the Theotokos *Portaitissa*; at Hilandar, there are the icons of *Tricherousa*, *Papadiki*, and *Galaktotrophousa*; at Dionysiou, the icon of Theotokos *Akathistou*; at Koutloumousiou, the icon of *Fovera Protasia*; at the monastery of Pantokrator, the icons of *Gerontissa* and *Elaiovrytissa*; at Zographou, there is the icon of *Proangelomeni*; at the monastery of Docheiariou, the icon of *Gorgoepikoos*; at the monastery of Philotheou, the icons of *Glykophilousa* and *Gerontissa*; at Simonopetra, the icon of *Elaiovrytissa*; at the monastery of Saint Paul, there is the icon of *Myrovlytissa*; at the monastery of Xenophontos, the icon of *Odigitria*; at the monastery of Grigoriou, there is the icon of *Palaiologina*; at the monastery of Saint Panteleimon, the icon of *Ierosolimitissa*; and at Kastamonitou, there is the icon of *Antiphonitria*; finally, in the Protaton church, the icon of Theotokos *Axion Esti* (or *Kareotissa*).

¹⁵ Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De Administrando Imperio*, eds. G. Moravcsik, R. J. H. Jenkins, (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1967), 45, 204.

¹⁶ J. Gippert, “St Nino’s Legend: Vestiges of Its Various Sources”, in: *Perspective – XXI/VI: Indo-Iranica et Caucasica. Studies in Honour of M. Andronikashvili*, ed. M. Sakhokia, (Tbilisi: Giorgi Tsereteli Institute of Oriental Studies, 2004), 106–113.

¹⁷ *Catalogue of the Georgian Manuscripts, Holy Monastery of Iviron*, eds. J. Gippert et al., (Mount Athos: Iviron Monastery, 2022).

of the Holy Mother of God”.¹⁸ Before the foundation of Iviron Monastery, there was already a Georgian community near the Great Lavra, in the cell dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the Georgians probably did not solely introduce or ‘devise’ the Athonite dedication to the Theotokos. Other Athonite documents, such as *The Life of Saint Peter the Athonite* (written between 972 and 980), attribute the Theotokos’ claim over the peninsula to an earlier, more universal tradition.²⁰ The text places words in the mouth of Mary affirming that she had “asked” for Athos in the presence of her Son. Regardless of which tradition predates the other, the Georgian version harnessed this broader narrative to bolster a sense of Georgian legitimacy on the Mountain. When Iviron Monastery was established, it became a symbolic bastion of Georgian identification, even as it welcomed Greek monks and later came under Greek-speaking leadership.²¹ The Mongol conquest of the Caucasus in the early 13th century severely disrupted the steady flow of Georgian monks to Athos.²² By the 14th century, Greek monks had started to dominate Iviron. In 1355/6, the Protos, the head of the Athonite monastic community, Arsenios, in agreement with Kallistos, the Patriarch of Constantinople, transferred control of the main church from Georgian to Greek monks, changing the monastery’s main liturgical language to Greek, despite having small groups of Georgian monks enduring at Iviron for some centuries thereafter.

From the late 15th century onwards, the finances of Iviron, like those of all Athonite houses, became precarious under Ottoman rule. Monasteries turned to distant Christian rulers for sponsorship, such as the princes of Wallachia, Moldavia, Russia, and, in the case of Iviron, rulers of Georgian kingdoms as well. Efforts to sustain or revive ties with Georgia included trips by Athonite delegates to the Caucasus. In 1492, Iviron monks approached the Georgian ruler Quarquaré II and later his son Kaihosro, who generously supported the monastery, funding the repair of its central tower, portions of the main church, and adorning the icon of the Portaitissa

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹⁹ T. Grdzeldze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos: Two Eleventh-Century Lives of the Hegoumenoi of Iviron* (London: Variorum, 2009), 57.

²⁰ K. Lake, *The Early Days of Monasticism on Mount Athos* (Oxford: OUP, 1909), 26.

²¹ During the 10th and 11th centuries, Iviron Monastery became the major centre for the production of Georgian literary texts and translations. See, N. Aleksidze, “Georgian”, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, ed. S. Papaioannou, (Oxford: OUP, 2021), 625–629.

²² On the Mongol invasion of the Caucasus, see L. Pubblici, *Dal Caucaso al Mar d’Azov. L’impatto dell’ invasione mongola in Caucasia fra nomadismo e società sedentaria* (1204–1295) (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2007); L. Pubblici, *Mongol Caucasia* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

with gold.²³ It is noteworthy that most of the monks who travelled to solicit these donations were Greek, which underscores the strategic importance of the monastery's 'Georgian identification' even when the monastic community itself might have had only a small Georgian component.

The 16th-century textual form of the Theotokos legend could thus have functioned as a highly effective diplomatic tool. By accentuating Georgia's sacred link with the Mother of God – a link presumably centred on Mount Athos – the monastery's envoys could bolster their fundraising appeals. Whether or not the original impetus for the legend was an internal Georgian claim, the version that circulated in the 16th century was undoubtedly advantageous for the Greek administrators of Iviron who were in need of Georgian patronage.²⁴

Another 16th-century text of ethnic significance is the founding legend of Zografou Monastery.²⁵ In this story, three brothers from Ohrid travelled to Mount Athos during the reign of Emperor Leo VI (886–912). They sought to establish a monastery but disagreed on which saint it should be dedicated to, Saint Nicholas or Saint Clement of Ohrid. Leaving the decision unresolved, they placed a blank icon board in the church. By a divine miracle, the image of Saint George, which until then had been the main veneration icon of the monastery of Saint George in Lydda, in the Holy Land, appeared on the previously blank icon on Mount Athos. Convinced that Saint George himself had chosen this new dwelling place for himself, the founders proceeded to dedicate the monastery to him, calling it Zografou (literally, 'of the painter'), an allusion to the self-painted icon.²⁶

²³ Apart from the donations made by members of the ruling family of Samtskhe to the Iviron Monastery in the early 16th century, we know that during the same period, the ruler of Kakheti, Alexander, donated 12,000 gold florins to the monastery – an exceptionally large amount for the time – which significantly helped it to relieve the debt it had accumulated; see Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, 113–116. See also G. Millet, J. Pargoire, L. D. Petit, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de l' Athos* (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1904) [photo reprint, Thessaloniki, 2004] no. 220, 67.

²⁴ In the legend, the christianisation of Georgia is attributed to an unknown 'captive woman', which is found in early Latin and Greek historians, such as Rufinus, Socrates or Sozomen. Saint Nino, to whom the Georgians attribute their Christianisation from the middle Byzantine era, is not mentioned, thus raising suspicion that the legend was forged in its final form by Greeks; see Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, 89–91.

²⁵ On the foundation and first centuries of Zographou Monastery in English, see C. Pavlikianov, *The Early Years of the Bulgarian Athonite Monastery of Zographou*, 58–119; C. Pavlikianov, *The Mediaeval Greek and Bulgarian Documents of the Athonite Monastery of Zographou*, 35–75. The full edition of the Greek documents of Zographou and their historical commentary is expected soon by the team of the "Archives de l'Athos" series.

²⁶ For the text of the legend, see Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, 67–68.

While colourful and spiritual, the account includes a multitude of anachronisms. Most notably, Saint Clement of Ohrid was still alive during the final years of Leo VI's reign, so it would be impossible for him to have been chosen as a saint for veneration in a foundation that supposedly happened during that emperor's lifetime.²⁷ Moreover, the earliest historical evidence suggests that Zografou did not exist before the late 10th century, and that its founder was likely named George, and most probably an icon painter (Greek: *zographos*). The first certain record of the monastery comes from the *Typikon* of Mount Athos, issued by Emperor John Tzimiskes in 972, in which a certain "George the painter" is listed as the founder or head of the foundation.²⁸ By 980, Zografou is documented as a functioning, self-governing monastery.²⁹ It remains uncertain precisely when the monastery transitioned to Bulgarian hands. The first Slavic abbot on record is Simeon, mentioned in 1169. A more definitive Bulgarian control is documented in the second half of the 13th century, when official documents refer to Zografou as "the venerated monastery of the Bulgarians".³⁰ Given that the 16th-century text specifically attributed Zografou's foundation to monks from Ohrid and thus placed it within a Bulgarian or Slavic context, it seems that the story in its fully developed, ethnic-specific form took shape sometime after the 13th century, once Bulgarian monastic leadership had been established.

It is interesting that the 16th-century variant does not name the three founders, merely describing them as three brothers from Ohrid. It was only in the 17th century (1658/9) that a monastic writer, Stephen the Hagiorite, assigned them names: Moses, Aaron, and Basil. Later, around 1744, the so-called *Composite Charter*, a document proven to be forged, replaced Basil with someone named John Selima.³¹ These later additions emphasise how monastic tradition kept evolving to fill in narrative gaps and to create a more personalised account of heroic founders. Such reworkings, while lacking a strictly factual historical basis, reflect the monastery's ongoing quest to strengthen its Bulgarian identification and underscore the connection with Ohrid, itself a cornerstone of medieval Bulgarian spirituality. Like the Georgian stories about the Theotokos, the legend of the self-painted icon transforms Zografou into

²⁷ Leo died in 912, while Clement in 916, and his *Vita* was composed by the Archbishop of Ohrid, Theophylact, in the 11th century.

²⁸ *Actes du Protaton*, éd. D. Papachryssanthou, (Paris: CNRS, 1975), no. 7, l.167.

²⁹ Pavlikianov, *The Mediaeval Greek and Bulgarian Documents of the Athonite Monastery of Zographou*, no. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 10, l. 1-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 590-607. See also *Actes de l'Athos IV. Actes de Zographou*, éd. W. Regel, E. Kurtz, B. Korabiev, *Vizantiskiy Vremennik* 13/1 (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1969) [anastatic reprint of the St. Petersburg 1907 edition], 150-157 and 169-174; A. Соловьев, В. Мошин, *Грчке ѿвелье срѣских владара* (Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1936), 354-373. See also Παπαχρυσάνθου, *Ο Αθωνικός Μοναχισμός*, 239-240.

a distinct sacred space where the miraculous appears tangibly. By presenting Saint George as the direct agent who chose this particular monastery, the legend suggests that the institution carries a special grace.³² This grace, in turn, becomes a magnet for donations and spiritual endorsements from Orthodox rulers or other wealthy individuals seeking the Saint's favour.

In the early 14th century, the monastery faced severe challenges when the Catalan mercenaries raided the coasts of Macedonia. Precious objects, farmland resources, and livestock were lost, making financial recovery a daunting process. To further complicate matters, the monastery's ideological environment was influenced by conflicts with 'Latin' forces, especially under Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261–1282) and Patriarch John XI Bekkos, who advocated the short-lived union with the Roman Church. Zographou's monks cultivated a narrative that described them as righteous defenders of Orthodoxy against Latin oppression. This narrative included an episode in which the emperor and patriarch of 'Latin faith' supposedly orchestrated the brutal assault of Zographou, leading to the martyrdom of monks who refused union with Rome.³³ Though historically embellished or entirely fabricated, it became interwoven with the Zografou tradition and was often transmitted alongside the legend of the self-painted icon in manuscripts from the 16th century onward.

Similarly to Iviron and other Athonite communities, Zografou Monastery, after the Ottoman conquest in 1423, needed external support to survive. Beginning with a 1433 donation from the Wallachian ruler – some 3,000 akçes – and continuing through the 16th century, the monastery courted the princes of Wallachia, Moldavia, and, at times, Russia.³⁴ Each donor typically connected their patronage with per-

³² The icon has been dated by Efstathios Tsigaridas and Alexandra Trifonova to the late 13th century. However, this dating cannot be regarded as a secure *terminus post quem* for the composition of the narrative, since the existence of an earlier icon of Saint George at the monastery must be considered highly probable, given that the monastery was already dedicated to him prior to the 13th century; see E. N. Τσιγαρίδας, Α. Τριφονοβα, "Οι Θαυματουργικές Εικόνες της Μονής Ζωγράφου", *Μακεδονικά* 35 (2005–2006), 121.

³³ A. Rigo, "La Δύγγησις sui monaci Athoniti Martirizzati dai Latiniphroni (BHG 2333) e le tradizioni Athonite successive: alcune osservazioni", *Studi Veneziani* 15 (1988), 71–106. Cf. D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia, 550 BC – AD 562* (Oxford: OUP, 1994); И. Божилов, "Мъчение на зографските монаси – Легенди и факти", в: *Свети Ойорска Обишел Зограф* [том] II, ред. В. Гюзелев, (София: Софийски Университет "Св. Климент Охридски", 1996), 175–189; L. Stammer, "Creating Sacred Space by Commemorating Destruction: The Case of the Monastery of Zographou", *Scripta & e-Scripta* 7 (2009), 253–266.

³⁴ For an overview of the relations of Zografou Monastery with the Russians, see Н. Мердзимекис, "Связи афонского монастыря Зографу с царской Россией", в: *Материалы*

sonal piety, in the hope of securing divine protection. For instance, Alexander Aldea, a ruler of Wallachia, phrased his donation charter in a distinctly religious tone: he offered money so that Saint George might be his defender “now and forever”.³⁵ Such statements mirrored medieval precedents, when imperial or aristocratic patrons routinely sought heavenly intercession by supporting monasteries. Zografou’s ties to the Bulgarian homeland also gradually reemerged, especially as Bulgarian notables and, later, Russian benefactors recognised the monastery’s unwavering devotion to Saint George. In 1583, Tzar Ivan IV the Terrible of Russia became a benefactor, heralding a broader pattern of Russian involvement in Athonite affairs.³⁶ Throughout these developments, the legend of Zografou’s miraculous origin story stood as a vital part of the monastery’s identification, advertising its sanctity and drawing the attention of willing benefactors.

Although these narratives are not historiographical – at least not in the strict sense – they offer a window into the mindsets of monastic communities that simultaneously embraced a universal Orthodox identification together with an ethnic-specific collective memory. Legends articulate a collective memory that situates a group or community within a sacred and historical continuum. For Georgians at Iviron, proclaiming the Theotokos had chosen Iberia affirmed Georgia’s unique place in the global Christian landscape. For Bulgarians at Zografou, linking their monastery with Saint George and Ohrid gave them a sense of genealogical depth and spiritual legitimacy. Such foundational myths functioned as communal property, i.e., they were the intellectual and spiritual creations of entire brotherhoods rather than of one single writer. Monasteries ensured the widespread dissemination of these legends, either through oral transmission or by copying them into codices, which could be presented as gifts during fundraising journeys. The monks would relate the stories to visitors or potential patrons, reinforcing the connection between material benefaction of the sacred location and divine favour. By weaving the monastery into a cosmic narrative, a legend helped ground a geographically marginal place like Mount Athos in universal Christian history.

международной научно – богословской конференции «Россия – Афон: тысячелетие духовного единства», Москва 1–4 октября 2006, (Москва: Православный Свято-Тихоновский гуманитарный университет, 2008), 250–255 and N. Μερτζιμέκης, “Περὶ των σχέσεων της Αθωνικής Μονῆς Ζωγράφου μετὰ της Ρωσίας των Τσάρων, 16ος–19ος αἰ”, in: *Земля на блажені: In memoriam Professoris Iordani Andreevi*, ред. Иван Лазаров, (Велико Търново: ИВИС, 2010).

³⁵ P. Nasturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains: Recherches sur leurs relations du milieu du XIVe siècle à 1654* (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1986), 177.

³⁶ Μερτζιμέκης, “Περὶ των σχέσεων της Αθωνικής Μονῆς Ζωγράφου μετὰ της Ρωσίας των Τσάρων”, 542.

One dimension consistently highlighted by these legends is the role of language in shaping collective identification.³⁷ Although the miracle stories emphasise spiritual unity, everyday liturgical practices could create demarcations among monks of the same monasteries. The separation between Greek services and Georgian services, as documented in Iviron Monastery, highlights how language-based worship generated overlapping yet separate ritual worlds. This pattern would recur in other multilingual monastic centres across the Orthodox world, but it carried special weight on the Holy Mountain, which was often perceived externally as a single monastic ‘republic’. On Mount Athos, it was perfectly possible for monks who followed the same typikon of monastic life to remain separated by the language in which they chanted, studied scripture, and recorded administrative documents. Paradoxically, this separation did not necessarily undermine the broader sense of Athonite solidarity, especially when confronted with shared adversities such as pirate raids, tax burdens, or external religious threats. In times of crisis, differences could be set aside to defend the Holy

³⁷ The concept of collective memory as a process of reconstructing the past through history was first articulated by Maurice Halbwachs in: *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1925); *La Topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte: étude de mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941); *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959). In more recent scholarship, a significant contribution has been made by J. Assmann, “Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität”, in: *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, Hrsg. J. Assmann, T. Hölscher, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988); J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: C. H. Beck, 1992); J. Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis zehn Studien* (München: C. H. Beck, 2000). On the question of the temporal depth of collective memory, see W. Soyinka, “Memory, truth and healing”, in: *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and social Justice*, eds. I. Amadiume, A. An-Na’im, (London; New York: Zed Books, 2000), 21–37. For collective memory and its role in historiography, see *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. A. Erll, A. Nünning, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); R. Eyerman, “The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory”, *Acta Sociologica* 47/2 (2004), 159–169; D. Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); B. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003); P. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* [vol.] 1–3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. P. Nora, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000); G. M. Spiegel, “Memory and History: Liturgical Time and Historical Time”, *History and Theory* 41 (2002), 149–162; F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); B. Zelizer, “Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies”, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12/2 (1995), 214–239; E. Zerubavel, “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past”, *Qualitative Sociology* 19 (1996), 283–299. For a critique of the broader concept of collective memory, see N. Gedi, Y. Elam, “Collective memory – What is it?”, *History and Memory* 8/1 (1996), 30–44.

Mountain as a single entity. Yet once stability resumed, ethnic-linguistic identifications might resurface, shaping internal hierarchies and external alliances.

The legends that foregrounded ethnic identifications often served as conduits to mobilise financial or political support. In the aftermath of the Ottoman conquest, it was no longer plausible to rely heavily on Byzantine structures of patronage. Monasteries needed new routes of support, and these often derived from regional powers that cherished a sense of spiritual kinship. Zografou, for instance, leveraged its Bulgarian identification to approach donors who might have felt specifically drawn to a monastery that upheld Slavic liturgy and devotion to Saint George. Similarly, Iviron's historical link to Georgia, even if largely symbolic in the 16th century, allowed it to gather resources from the Caucasus. An intriguing development in this period is that the leadership at these ethnically designated monasteries could pass into the hands of Greek monks (as in Iviron), or remain under Bulgarian administration (as in Zografou), yet the monastery's ethnic identification persisted as a narrative symbol that could be invoked whenever expedient.³⁸ The tension between the day-to-day reality and the legend-based identification was sometimes stark. Still, the legends' rhetorical power meant that even Greek monks had an interest in preserving or promoting the 'Georgian story' of Iviron, for example, when reaching out to Georgian rulers.

4. Between Memory Narratives and Shifting Ethnic Identifications

The texts offer an invaluable prism through which to examine how religious communities negotiate local monastic identification amid multi-ethnic origins. By situating the Georgians or the Bulgarians in the realm of the miraculous, these texts transform local narratives into universal statements of devotion. They underscore how a sense of belonging – both spiritual and ethnic – can be continually adapted to changing political and economic conditions. The parallels between the Iviron and Zographou legends demonstrate a broader pattern shared by other Athonite monasteries as well, including Hilandar's narratives regarding Saint Sava of Serbia or Saint Panteleimon's evolving connections to the Russian realm.

From a historiographical viewpoint, these legends complicate any simplistic reading of Athonite history as purely Greek or purely universalist in orientation. Instead, they show that multiple layers of identification did coexist, occasionally reinforcing each other and occasionally pulling in different directions. The impetus to compose, copy, and disseminate these stories was shaped by real historical pressures:

³⁸ Over the centuries, monks from the monastery of Saint Panteleimon have been called 'Russians', even if a particular monk was not ethnically Russian, because of the particular ethnic character of the monastery.

the search for sponsors, the need to legitimise expansions or reconstructions, the desire to memorialise conflicts with perceived ‘outsiders’, and the continuing impetus to link the local environment with the timeless horizon of Orthodox belief.³⁹ Mount Athos has served, from the medieval period to the present, as a significant meeting point for various Orthodox cultures. The theoretical centrality of the Orthodox faith as the monk’s defining characteristic never entirely overshadowed the persistence of ethnic identifications, which remained vital markers of difference in linguistic practice, local customs, and communal memory. Legends such as those preserved in the 16th-century manuscripts were crucial in keeping these identifications alive, explaining the presence and significance of ethnic communities, and weaving their stories into a larger sacred tapestry.

For Georgians, the story of the Theotokos’ allotment to Iberia, intertwined with her miraculous detour to the Athonite peninsula, reinforced the notion that Georgia held a unique place in Marian devotion, thereby legitimising the establishment and growth of a Georgian monastery. For Bulgarians, the icon of Saint George that painted itself validated the identification and authenticity of Zografou, placing the monastery on an equal footing with other venerated Athonite foundations that claimed local miraculous events.⁴⁰

These narratives also highlight the reciprocal relationship between the imaginary and material realities. By offering an emotionally potent and theologically charged explanation for the monastery’s existence, legends enticed donations from devout rulers and laity who saw themselves as participants in divine history. The broader phenomenon of monastic legends, therefore, cannot be dismissed as mere fiction. Rather, it constitutes a deeply embedded cultural mechanism that allowed monastic communities to interpret their past, claim sanctity, seek resources, and articulate bonds of ethnic solidarity. These same episodes also show that labels acquire solidity only when the past is repeated and then adjusted to each new circumstance. As Maurice Halbwachs stressed, collective memory is never a mere stockpile but a

³⁹ Λιβανός, *Αφηγηματική παράδοση*, 210–211.

⁴⁰ In particular, at the monasteries of Vatopedi and Iviron, the veneration of the icons of *Vatopedini* and *Portaitissa* appears to have been established from the earliest years of their institutional existence. On the Portaitissa, see K. Chryssochoidis, “The Portaitissa Icon at Iveron Monastery and the Cult of the Virgin on Mount Athos”, in: *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 133–142. On the dating of the icon, see P. Vokotopoulos, “Note sur l’icone de la Vierge Portaitissa”, *Zograf* 25 (1996), 27–30; Π. Βοκοτόπουλος, “Η Εικόνα της Παναγίας Πορταϊτισσας της Ιεράς Μονής των Ιβήρων”, στο: *Άγιον Όρος. Φύση – Ιστορία – Τέχνη* [τόμος] 2 (Θεσσαλονίκη: Οργανισμός Πολιτιστικής Πρωτεύουσας της Ευρώπης «Θεσσαλονίκη 1997», Ιερά Κοινότητα Αγίου Όρους, 2001), 81–88.

social act.⁴¹ Here, every redaction of the Theotokos' Georgian 'lot' or of St George's self-painted image reanchors group boundaries in a living liturgical cycle. The material supports are crucial, as manuscripts, icons, or reliquaries give mnemonic narratives a durability that oral tradition alone could not provide, fulfilling Jan Assmann's claim that cultural memory depends on stable carriers yet remains open to periodic refitting.⁴²

Because these memories circulate within the wider framework of Ottoman state and Orthodox Christian patronage, they generate a self-reinforcing circle: a compelling legend attracts alms; those alms lead to wealth, which in turn amplifies the legend. The process matches Rogers Brubaker's insistence on treating identifications as events and Fredrik Barth's observation that ethnic boundaries persist only through recurrent interaction, not primordial substance.⁴³ With each repetition of the tradition, the label 'Georgian', 'Bulgarian', or 'Slavic' hardens just enough to organise liturgical roles and fiscal appeals, yet remains flexible enough to admit Greek monks or Moldavian donors, illustrating Reinhart Koselleck's notion that the past is continuously 'temporalised' to serve the present.⁴⁴ In refusing to naturalise these terms, the narratives also answer the call of recent nationalism studies for reflexivity: the monastery's own sources reveal how ethnic solidarities were crafted, not discovered.⁴⁵ What emerges, then, is a picture of identification as a negotiated repertoire carried by narrative and object. The monasteries guard their distinctive narratives precisely by keeping their memories usable, i.e., repetitive enough to be recognised, and flexible enough to recruit new audiences. Through this reiterative interplay of recollection and ritual, they forge durable bonds of group solidarity while remaining unmistakably part of a single Orthodox commonwealth.

Future research might explore additional lines of inquiry regarding how these legends intersected with local forms of memory and sacred space creation. They also illuminate how particular cultural elements, such as narratives, icons, and liturgical commemorations, shaped the intangible borders that distinguished one monastic brotherhood from another. By highlighting the interplay of identification, mainly

⁴¹ Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, 46–59.

⁴² Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 56–81.

⁴³ Brubaker, Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'"; *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. F. Barth, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 9–38.

⁴⁴ R. Koselleck, "Einleitung", in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* [vol.] 1, Hrsg. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck, (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972), V–XXIII.

⁴⁵ P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1–14; E. Storm, "A New Dawn in Nationalism Studies? Some Fresh Incentives for the Comparative Study of Nationalism", *European History Quarterly* 48 (2018), 113–129.

through language, and faith, these legends remain a vital testament to Mount Athos's ongoing role as a microcosm of the Orthodox ecumene, where universal devotion and particular claims have long coexisted in a complex yet creative environment.

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Greeks and the Others: Post-Byzantine Greek Narratives about Greeks, Other Christians and Ottomans

Historiography is a widely accepted topic in the study of identifications. The selectivity of the representation and (re)construction of the past, and the role of history in the formation of cultural memory, are inevitably connected with the (trans)formation of various identifications. As Walter Pohl highlighted, “What happened in history is contingent and constantly challenges our values and expectations”.¹ Therefore, the main aim of this study will be the analysis of post-Byzantine Greek historiography in the context of the (trans)formation of self-understanding and identification of the Greek-speaking Christians in the Ottoman Empire from the second half of the 15th century until the end of the 16th century.

To explore the topic, this paper is divided into four sections. The first section is dedicated to a theoretical examination of the role and significance of history and historiography in shaping the self-understanding and identification of both the Byzantine and, subsequently, post-Byzantine periods. The remaining three sections analyse historiographical narratives produced in Constantinople and the periphery of the Greek-speaking world. By examining texts composed immediately after the Fall of Constantinople alongside those written approximately a century later by both high- and lower-ranking members of social groups of Greek-speaking Christians, this study highlights both continuities and changes in their identification across time and space within the evolving social and cultural context of the Ottoman Empire.

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¹ W. Pohl, “Introduction: Historiography and Identity in a Comparative Perspective”, in: *Historiography and Identity IV: Writing History across Medieval Eurasia*, eds. W. Pohl, D. Mahoney, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 2–3.

1. 'Byzantines' after Byzantium: Theoretical and Chronological Framework

When discussing the participation of the post-Byzantine historiographers in the processes of identification, the first question that arises is: why label this period as post-Byzantine at all? This designation proves to be appropriate for several reasons. Historians of that era – whether writing about recent developments or distant past events – continued to focus on Byzantine history. They perceived the fall of Constantinople in 1453 not as a rupture, but as part of a historical continuum. In this sense, history itself became a means of identification, with the Byzantine past serving as a framework through which these authors understood and articulated their present.

Also, historiography as a literary genre has an idiosyncratic nature because it produces a picture of the past influenced by personal and/or ideological reasons, reflecting the inner world of the author.² At the same time, the authors wrote with the audiences in mind. Therefore, historians had a double task; on the one hand, they aimed to fulfil the expectations and requirements of the audience concerning the form and content of a piece. On the other hand, the historian was also an interpreter of the events he presented, as well as a *correcteur* of the past and, consequently, of memory – adapting it to new circumstances. Given that history is inevitably connected to memory, historiographical texts not only reflect the author's conscious (personal) memory but also shape and contribute to the collective consciousness of their audience.³ Hence, history writing has two layers. It simultaneously illustrates the values and the memory of the past of a society and shapes its opinion, serving various purposes, including propaganda.⁴ So, every history or chronicle had its own purpose, and it should be observed in its own context.

² For the analysis of debate about idiosyncrasy in Byzantine historiography, see R. J. Lilie, "Reality and Invention. Reflections on Byzantine Historiography", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68 (2014), 157–210. For *multidimensionality* of Byzantine texts see: J. Ljubarskij, "How should a Byzantine text be read", in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 117–126.

³ S. Papaioannou, "Byzantine *historia*", in: *Thinking, Recording, and Writing History in the Ancient World*, ed. K. A. Raafaub, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014), 297–313; A. C. Papalexandrou, "The Memory Culture of Byzantium", in: *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. L. James, (Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 108–122; L. Neville, "Why Did the Byzantines Write History", in: *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Belgrade, 22–27 August 2016. Plenary Papers*, ed. S. Marjanović-Dušanić, (Belgrade: The Serbian National Committee of AIEB, 2016), 272–276.

⁴ R. Scott, "Text and Context in Byzantine Historiography", in: *A Companion to Byzantium*, 251–262; G. M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text. The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), xviii and 3–28.

Through the elaboration of the historical context of a work and its reinterpretation of events, symbols or even words, become additional categories of identification, such as language, customs, beliefs, and values. The question remains to what extent the author reflects his audience and how far he shapes its perception. The answer to this question is dependent on every author himself. However, before the historiographical works are dealt with, some remarks about identifications in the Byzantine Empire are necessary.

The self-perception of Byzantines and the Hellenic element in their self-consciousness have received considerable attention in Byzantine studies in the second half of the 20th century. There were – and, to a large extent, there still are – two seemingly irreconcilable views. Nevertheless, the crucial difference comes down to one question: was – and if so, to what extent – Byzantium a part of the Greek people's medieval history, or, to put it another way, was Byzantium a Greek empire or not?⁵ Furthermore, at least three schools of thought about the Byzantine 'ethnic identity' seem to have emerged in modern Byzantine studies.⁶

The historiographic school, often characterised in the West as 'Romantic' because it emphasised the unbroken continuity between the Hellenes of classical antiquity and the Greeks of our days, sees Byzantium as a Greek medieval state.⁷ The second school highlights the multiethnic nature of the Byzantine Empire and the notion of *Romanitas* (Roman imperial tradition) as a unifying factor.⁸ Finally, Anthony Kaldellis proposed a third option, gradually introducing in his papers a theory about Byzantium as the pre-modern 'nation-state' of the Romans, but this theoretical orientation does not seem to have evolved into a fully-fledged school of thought, at

⁵ X. Μαλατράς, "Η Ελληνικότητα του Βυζαντίου στη μεταπολεμική ιστοριογραφία", *Ιστορικά Θέματα* 104 (2011), 25–37.

⁶ For the concepts of self-understanding and identification within the field of Byzantology, see, M. Mavroudi, "The Modern Study of Selfhood in Byzantium compared with Medieval Europe and the Islamic World: Parallel and Diverging Trends in the Construction of 'East' and 'West'", *Palaeoslavica* 30/1–2 (2022), 234–304 and Θ. Παπαδοπούλου, *Συλλογική ταυτότητα και αυτογνωσία στο Βυζάντιο. Συμβολή στον προσδιορισμό της αυτοαντίληψης των Βυζαντινών κατά τη λόγια γραμματεία τους (11ος–αρχές 13ου αι.)* (Αθήνα: Σύλλογος πρὸς διάδοσιν Ὁφελίμων Βιβλίων, 2015).

⁷ The role of Byzantium in shaping Modern Greek national identity is critically examined in the book: *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, ed. D. Ricks, P. Magdalino, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998). The most prominent representative of this school of thought was Apostolos Vacalopoulos (see: A. Vacalopoulos, *Origins of the Greek Nation: The Byzantine period 1204–1261* (New Brunswick; New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970).

⁸ I. Stouraitis, "Roman identity in Byzantium: a critical approach", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107/1 (2014), 175–220.

least not yet.⁹ It is important to note that most scholars based their contributions on pre-14th-century sources, disregarding the remarkably strong emphasis on the Hellenic element in the works of Byzantine authors who wrote in the second half of the 14th and the first half of the 15th century.¹⁰ This change in the identifications of late Byzantines is well attested in the writings of intellectuals, theologians and historians of the period.¹¹ Nevertheless, the historiography on identifications in Byzantium is further complicated by tendencies that seek to present a singular, unified picture, despite the fact that some categories change or remain present but change meaning depending on the historical, cultural, and social context.

Throughout the millennium-long history of the Byzantine Empire, three concepts of identification remained crucial in the period we are dealing with. The first is the concept of *Romanitas*, as the political (overarching) dimension of identification; the second is *Hellenitas*, as the cultural (and linguistic) dimension; and the third is Christianity, later Orthodoxia, as the religious category in their identification. These three elements were omnipresent throughout the entire history of Byzantium.¹²

Modern scholars direct their focus towards defining the ‘collective identity’ of the Byzantines. More specifically, the starting point of their research is the definition of the Byzantines, primarily as Romans (*Rhomaioi*) or Hellenes depending on the school of thought. This is followed by an analysis of the elements or criteria (categories in our research) that distinguish their collectivity from others.¹³ Most of these elements are socio-cultural factors, such as language, culture, religion, education, space (in the sense of identification with a geographical region), social class, and

⁹ A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); A. Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019); A. Kaldellis, *The New Roman Empire: A History of Byzantium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024).

¹⁰ D. Reinsch, “Η θεώρηση της πολιτικής φυσιογνωμίας των Ελλήνων στους ιστορικούς της Άλωσης”, *Études Balkaniques* 6 (1999), 69–86; G. Steiris, “History and Religion as Sources of Hellenic Identity in Late Byzantium and the Post-Byzantine Era”, *Genealogy* 4/1 (2020), 1–16; Z. Jovanović, “The Portrayal of Collective Identity in the Works of Gennadios Scholarios”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 60/1 (2023), 297–320.

¹¹ T. Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager: Power and Political Ideology in Byzantium before 1453* (Geneva: La Pomme d’or, 2011), 141–166.

¹² C. Rapp, “Hellenic Identity, ‘Romanitas’ and Christianity in Byzantium”, in: *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. K. Zacharia, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 127–147.

¹³ J. Koder, “Byzantium as Seen by Itself – Images and Mechanisms at Work”, in: *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies Sofia, 22–27 August 2011* [vol.] I. *Plenary Papers*, ed. I. Iliev, (Sofia: Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundation, 2011), 69–81.

even their understanding of time.¹⁴ Therefore, the modern understanding of identification in Byzantine studies essentially involves exploring the sense of belonging of Byzantines to a specific collectivity and emphasising the criteria of Otherness (gr. ἑτερότης / heterotēs) – namely, the shared beliefs, values, and ideals that distinguish one group from others.¹⁵ Nevertheless, as stated in the introduction to this Volume, groups are not given entities, but rather formed over time through processes of identification – processes that unfolded with varying degrees of success.¹⁶ From that point of view, the determination of the chronological and theoretical starting points is of significant importance.

Considering the Greek-speaking community of the Ottoman Empire, the most logical and ideal starting point is the Fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453. On that day, the Byzantines lost political control over one of the most important symbols of their pre-1453 identification. They had lost the shared fatherland (*patris*) of their “wretched race”, as they described Constantinople after its fall – a metaphor for their superiority and primacy, and simultaneously, the religious, political, and cultural symbol with which they identified themselves.¹⁷ Except for the shared *patris*, they had forever lost the institution of the ‘Greek’¹⁸ Orthodox Emperor/*Basileus* of *Rhomaioi* (βασιλεὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων) as a symbol of their imperial power and legacy,

¹⁴ Παπαδοπούλου, *Συλλογική ταυτότητα και αυτογνωσία στο Βυζάντιο*, 17–41; Jovanović, “The Portrayal of Collective Identity”, 297–320; J. Koder, “Time as a Dimension of Byzantine Identity”, *Studia Ceranea* 9 (2019), 523–542; S. Vryonis, “Greek Identity in the Middle Ages”, *Études Balkaniques* 6 (1999), 19–36; Z. Jovanović, “Χρονογραφία Γενναδίου Σχολαρίου: Η αντίληψη του χρόνου ως αντικατόπτριση της ταυτότητας των Βυζαντινών – μια περιπτωσιολογική μελέτη”, in: *Niš and Byzantium* 23, ed. M. Rakocija, (Niš: NKC, 2025), 577–592.

¹⁵ *Identity and the Other in Byzantium: Papers from the Fourth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium*, eds. K. Durak, I. Jevtić, (İstanbul: The Koç University, 2019); See also T. Papadopoulou, “The Terms Ῥωμαῖος, Ἕλλην, Γραικός in the Byzantine Texts of the first Half of the 13th century”, *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 24 (2014), 157–176; Παπαδοπούλου, *Συλλογική ταυτότητα και αυτογνωσία στο Βυζάντιο*, 11–12, 17–20; Н. Радошевић, “Ино-племенници у ‘царским говорима’ епохе Палеолога”, *Зборник радова Визанџолошког института* 22 (1983), 119–148.

¹⁶ See M. Vasiljević, “Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe” in this volume.

¹⁷ Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 141–165; Jovanović, “The Portrayal of Collective Identity”, 300–306.

¹⁸ Our use of the term ‘Greek’ is intentional, as it reflects the perspective of non-Greek or non-Rhomaic contemporaries, who commonly referred to Byzantines in this way. (cf. Л. Максимовић, “Значење речи Грк и Јелин у српским средњовековним изворима”, *Зборник радова Визанџолошког института* 38 (1999/2000), 215–227).

and the main pretext for the so-called *Romanitas*,¹⁹ i.e., the custom to call themselves *Rhomaioi*. Because of this, the chronological framework of this study will cover the period from the Fall of Constantinople, given that it is often described as the cause of an identity crisis due to various changes that were imposed by life in the Ottoman Empire, where the earlier ways of self-understanding of the Byzantines were incompatible with the new Ottoman reality.²⁰ On the other hand, the upper chronological boundary is the end of the 16th century and the period of the patriarchates of Jeremias II of Constantinople (Thranos),²¹ whose patriarchates are characterised as the beginning of ‘religious humanism’,²² assuming that the chronological framework of a century is demonstrative enough for illustrating the presumed process.²³

Concerning the theoretical framework, the primary focus will be on the text itself and its context. Also, it is important to note that, although the subject of our research is early modern Greek history, it is impossible to sever ties with Byzantium. As Linos Politis, writing about the beginnings of Modern Greek literature in the Byzantine period, suggested: “the old coexists with the new, because even the new was already emerging alongside the old.”²⁴ Therefore, post-Byzantine historiographical and chronographic texts must be observed within the context and theoretical framework of medieval (Byzantine) historiography.²⁵ Additionally, it is important to note that the term ‘Greeks’ in this paper will be used to refer to the members of the Greek-speaking community of the Ottoman Empire

For this reason, the first step in the search for identification will be to explore the Fall and the new circumstances that emerged immediately afterwards and

¹⁹ For discussions of this phenomenon following the first Fall of Constantinople, see: Stouraitis, “Roman Identity”, 215–219.

²⁰ I. Smarnakis, “Rethinking Roman Identity after the Fall (1453): Perception of ‘Romanitas’ by Doukas and Sphrantzes”, *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 25 (2015), 211–234.

²¹ On Patriarch Jeremias II Thranos (1536–1595) see: Ch. Hannick, K.-P. Tody, “Jérémie II Tranos”, in: *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition* [tome] II (XIIIe–XIXe s), éd. C. G. Conticello, V. Conticello, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 551–612.

²² L. Politis, *A History of Modern Greek Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 50.

²³ For a similar attempt, but with a wider chronological framework and different approach, see: D. Livanos, “The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism and Collective Identities in Greece (1453–1913)”, *The Historical Review* 3 (2006), 33–70.

²⁴ Politis, *A History*, 1–2.

²⁵ R. Scott, “Text and Context”, 251–262; R. J. Macrides, “The Historian in the History”, in: *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ. Studies in honour of Robert Browning*, eds. C. N. Constantinides et al., (Venice: Istituto Ellenico di Studi e Postbizantini di Venezia, 1996), 205–224; L. Neville, *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–30; J. Ljubarskij, “New Trends in the Study of Byzantine Historiography”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993), 131–138.

during the first generation, as reflected in the historiographical writing addressed to Greek-speakers of the Ottoman Empire and beyond.²⁶

2. The Fall of Constantinople as a “Watershed” in Identification

A natural starting point is the writings of Patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios (ca. 1400–1472), who served as the first head of the Greek-speaking Orthodox population of Constantinople and, by extension, of the Greek Orthodox community throughout the Ottoman Empire.²⁷ Scholarios’ case is quite representative, given that he was a well-known late Byzantine intellectual and First Secretary of the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos. On the other hand, he was appointed to the patriarchal seat by Mehmed II the Conqueror, with the support of the Greek archonts close to the Sultan.²⁸ Given

²⁶ It is commonly held that Modern Greek History begins with the Fall of Constantinople. This perspective could be considered absolutely valid when examined through the lens of later folk narratives surrounding Constantinople, the immortal emperor, and, ultimately, the concept of the *Megalē Idea* as the national program of Modern Greeks in the 19th century (About Constantinople in post-Byzantine Greek folklore, see K. Χρυσομαλλή-Henrich, “Η ρητορική του πένθους: Λόγοι θρήνοι, δημώδεις θρήνοι και δημοτικό τραγούδι για την Άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης”, στο: *Κωνσταντινούπολη. 550 χρόνια από την Άλωση: Η Άλωση [τόμος] II*, επιμ. E. Motos Guirao, M. Morfakidis Filactos, (Granada: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas Universidad de Granada, 2006), 319–332; S. Vryonis (Jr.), *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1971), 436–438. On the legend of the immortal emperor, see: D. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 95–108. Nevertheless, all the points mentioned here are the outcomes of a historical process (cf. M.-H. Blanchet, “Présentation des textes grecs et slaves”, in: *Constantinople 1453: Des Byzantins aux Ottomans. Textes et documents*, éd. V. Deroche, N. Vatin, (Toulouse: Les Belles Lettres, 2016, 63–64).

²⁷ On the life of Gennadios Scholarios, see M.-H. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400-vers 1472): Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’Empire byzantin* (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 2008); C. J. G. Turner, “The Career of George Gennadius Scholarius”, *Byzantion* 39 (1969), 420–455; M. Angold, “The Autobiographies of the Patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios”, in: *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, eds. T. Shawcross, I. Toth, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 68–89; F. Tinnefeld, “Georgios Gennadios Scholarios”, in: *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, 477–541; Θ. Ζήσης, *Γεννάδιος Β΄ Σχολάριος: Βίος, συγγράμματα, διδασκαλία* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πατριαρχικόν Ίδρυμα Πατερικών Μελετών, 1980).

²⁸ Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios*, 74–78.

that he was already fifty years old at the time of the Fall, his writings represent an older Byzantine model of identification in response to the new circumstances.²⁹

In his two homilies written in 1454, he portrays the Fall as a collective misfortune, not just for the Greeks in Constantinople, but for the entire “Hellenic race”, presenting the lost Byzantine capital as the fatherland and mother-city of all Hellenes, not just of the *Rhomaioi*.³⁰ For him, *Romanitas* is a concept of political identification connected to the institution of the Byzantine emperors, while Hellenes are all Orthodox Greek-speaking Christians who share a common ancestry with the Ancient Greek philosophers, as demonstrated through education.³¹ The Fall is redemption for the sins of Scholarios’ contemporaries,³² and the sign that the End of the World is near (καὶ ὁ τῆς συντελείας ἐπισταὶν καιρὸς, ὅς ἐστιν ἐγγύς).³³ This eschatological sentiment would be further developed in his only historiographical work – the *Chronographic Notes of 1472*.³⁴

In this chronicle, Scholarios introduces the theory of the transfer of imperial authority (*translatio imperii*), presenting the Byzantine Empire as the final and last one, defining it as the Empire of the *Rhomaioi*, i.e., the Christian Empire (Ἡ βασιλεία τῶν χριστιανῶν, ἥτις καὶ βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἦν), forewarning readers about the Second Coming of Christ. This statement underscores the political dimension of identification with the *Rhomaic* political legacy and explains that, for Scholarios, the

²⁹ З. Јовановић, “Последњи ѱроϋоведник исτῳине – Слика времена у Ламенῳу Генадија Схоларија”, in: *Всекидневие и кулῳурни ѱтрансфери на Балканиѳе (VI–XVI в.)*, (forthcoming).

³⁰ *Œuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios* [vol.] IV, éd. L. Petit, X A. Sideridès, M Jugie, (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1935), 211.23–25 and 213.31–33 (=Scholarios IV); З. Јовановић, “Τὸ κοινὸν καὶ τὸ ἡμέτερον – Три апологије Генадија Схоларија”, *Philological Forum* 22 (2025), 10–32.

³¹ Jovanović, “The Portrayal of Collective Identity”, 307–316; A. Angelou, “‘Who am I?’ Scholarios’ Answers and the Hellenic Identity”, in: *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ*, 1–19.

³² Scholarios IV, 353.20–354.12; C. J. G. Turner, “The Pages from Late Byzantine Philosophy of History”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 70 (1964), 365–372.

³³ Scholarios IV, 219.6–11; Jovanović, “Χρονογραφία Γενναδίου Σχολαρίου”, 577–592. See also, Ζ. Γιοβάνοβιτς, “Ο Ἄγιος Γεννάδιος Σχολάριος καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος”, στο: *Πρακτικὰ του Ὅγδοου Διεθνούς Επιστημονικοῦ Εργαστηρίου της Αγιορειτικῆς Εστίας*, (forthcoming).

³⁴ The new critical edition of the text: M. H. Congourdeau, “Byzance et la fin du monde: Courants de pensée apocalyptiques sous les Paléologues”, in: *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople: Actes de la Table ronde d’Istanbul, 13–14 avril 1996*, éd. B. Lellouch, S. Yerasimos, (Paris; Montréal: L’Harmattan, 1999), 55–97. For a broader context and sources of the *Chronographic Notes of 1472*, see Jovanović, “Χρονογραφία Γενναδίου Σχολαρίου”, 579–583.

Fall of Constantinople represented the loss of one layer of his self-understanding.³⁵ Furthermore, the eschatological atmosphere of the End in his writings after the Fall represents an ontological and, consequently, an identification confusion. The only satisfaction and miracle (θαυματουργία) for him after 1453 is the (re)establishment of the Church of Constantinople.³⁶ Namely, he emphasises the significance of the sultan's actions, i.e., his philanthropy that established the Church. We can, therefore, conclude that the restoration of the Church was undoubtedly the work of Mehmed II the Conqueror, to whom the imperial attribute of a philanthropist he ascribes.³⁷ Notwithstanding, he never used the title of *basileus* (emperor/βασιλεύς) for the sultan, thus denying political continuity between the Byzantine emperors and the Ottoman dynasty.

This was the response of a man who grew up in the Byzantine Empire, and this period marked the height of his career; it therefore represents a temporary *modus vivendi* for Byzantines,³⁸ and, consequently, a contingent mode of identification. The writings of the so-called Historians of the Fall – Doukas, Georgios Sphrantzes, Laonikos Chalkokondyles, and Kritoboulos of Imbros – are quite different.³⁹ Concerning their audience, they may be divided into three groups. The first group includes Kritoboulos and Chalkokondyles, given that their historical narratives are written in Constantinople, i.e., in a new Ottoman environment.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Doukas wrote his *History* on the island of Lesbos, where he was in the service of the Genoese family Gattilusio, so he will serve as a case study for the identification models that

³⁵ Congourdeau, “Byzance et la fin du monde”, 90. 292–295; Jovanović, “Χρονογραφία Γενναδίου Σχολαρίου”, 582–586.

³⁶ Scholarios IV, 227. 11–27.

³⁷ *Ibid.* IV, 265. 34–36; K. Moustakas, “Ottoman Greek Views of Ottoman Rule (15th–16th Centuries). The Perspective of the Patriarchate Associates”, in: *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. M. Sariyannis, (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2019), 311–317.

³⁸ On the modes of adaptation (*modi vivendi*) of the Greeks after the Fall, see C. G. Pitsakis, “De la fin des temps à la continuité impériale: constructions idéologiques post-byzantines au sein du Patriarcat de Constantinople”, in: *Le Patriarcat œcuménique de Constantinople aux XIV^e–XVI^e siècles: rupture et continuité. Actes du colloque international, Rome, 5–6–7 décembre 2005*, éd. P. Odorico, (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes / EHESS, 2007), 213–239.

³⁹ About the manner in which all Four Historians of the Fall describe the events of 1453, see M. Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune in the Oikoumene – Byzantine Historiography on the Fall of Constantinople in 1453”, *Balkanica* 47 (2016), 119–133. On the Historians of the Fall with bibliographical overlook, see A. Καρπόζηλος, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι, Τόμος Δ' (1305–1505 Αιώνας)* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Κανάκη, 2015), 270–400, 571–580.

⁴⁰ There is scholarly consensus that both works were written in Constantinople (cf. Reinsch, “Η Θεώρηση”, 79–81).

emerged in a different, pro-Latin environment. The narrative of the last historian of the Fall, Georgios Sphrantzes, is actually his *Memoirs*, i.e., his personal and private notes, so they provide an insight into the self-understanding of a high-ranking Byzantine nobleman following the collapse of the system in which he had participated.⁴¹

Laonikos Chalkokondyles and Kritoboulos of Imbros wrote their histories for the same audience: primarily the Greek community of Constantinople, and later all Hellenophones throughout the inhabited world (*oikoumene*).⁴² They both were probably members of the so-called learned circle of Gennadios Scholarios, and they had been corresponding with one another.⁴³ Furthermore, the place of writing these two *Histories*, Constantinople as the capital of the lost Empire and the new capital city of the Ottomans, and the fact that they were copied soon after, proves that they were considered important to their contemporaries and *congénères* in Constantinople.⁴⁴ These two narratives are in fact the instruments of identifications developed and controlled from the religious and intellectual top.

The secondary audience of these two *Histories* is also noteworthy, because it is showing the further trajectory of an idea. However, regarding this point, there appears to be some divergence among our two historians. Kritoboulos was writing his work for the future generations of the Greeks (ταῖς μεθ' ἡμᾶς γενεαῖς), as he states

⁴¹ Reinsch, “Η Θεώρηση”, 76–86; Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune”, 119–133.

⁴² Reinsch, “Η Θεώρηση”, 80–81. For a differing opinion on the intended audience of Chalkokondyles’ *History*, see A. Akışık-Karakullukçu, “A question of audience: Laonikos Chalkokondyles’ Hellenism”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 112/1 (2019), 1–30.

⁴³ Kritoboulos is described as a close friend (*amicissimus vir*) of Scholarios in a letter sent by Ciriaco of Ancona to Scholarios in 1444 (cf. D. R. Reinsch, “Kritobulos of Imbros – Learned Historian, Ottoman Raya and Byzantine Patriot”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 40 (2003), 299; *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae. CFHB 22*, ed. D. Roderich Reinsch, (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1983), 81*–83*). Regarding Chalkokondyles, there is no definitive evidence, only assumptions, that he was part of Scholarios’ intellectual circle (cf. Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune”, 125). These assumptions are grounded in his known associations with Greek intellectuals affiliated with Scholarios, including Kritoboulos, Demetrios Angelos, and Georgios Amiroutzes (cf. A. Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos. Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium, and the Emergence of the West* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014), 200).

⁴⁴ Chalkokondyles’ *History* appears to have been copied shortly after its composition (circa 1470), possibly by the aforementioned Demetrios Angelos, as proposed by Kaldellis (Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos*, 200), or alternatively by Georgios Amiroutzes, according to earlier scholarship (cf. Reinsch, “Η Θεώρηση”, 78–80). For the stemma of the manuscript tradition of Chalkokondyles’ “Apodeixeis istorion”, see H. Wurm, “Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der Apodeixeis istorion des Laonikos Chalkokondyles”, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 45 (1995), 232. In contrast, Kritoboulos’ *History* survives as an autograph manuscript preserved in the Topkapi Saray Library (Critobulus, 5*–6*).

at the very beginning of his *History*.⁴⁵ This intention of the author is particularly important for our topic, as, by writing a ‘programmatically history’, Kritoboulos actively shaped the memory of the past – modifying old ideas to suit new circumstances and legitimising new models of identification.⁴⁶ Furthermore, his work is dedicated to all speakers of the Greek language, and not only to them (ταῦτα δὲ οὐχ Ἑλληνισμόνον).⁴⁷ As Kritoboulos states: “But these things will thus become the common pride and wonder, not of Greeks alone, but of all western nations, indeed those beyond the Pillars [of Hercules] and those who inhabit the British Isles, and many more, when they are translated into the language of those peoples who are Philhellenes and are learned in such matters.”⁴⁸ This sentence can be observed as a testimony of one wider idea about the presentation of the new reality to the whole world and his, and his audience’s place in it.

On the other hand, Laonikos Chalkokondyles, as it can be assumed from the content of his work, was bearing in mind the Byzantine émigré intellectuals in the West and their Renaissance counterparts who knew Greek.⁴⁹ Hence, we may conclude that this work was a presentation or adaptation of enduring identification, as some authors state, for the Western humanist audience.⁵⁰

First, we will discuss Laonikos Chalkokondyles, who is characterised as an “Ottoman historian” by A. Kaldellis.⁵¹ As he states at the beginning of his work known as *Demonstrations of Histories* (*Ἀποδείξεις Ἱστοριῶν*), his aim is to present the fall of the Hellenes and their sovereignty (ἀρχή)⁵² and “the rise of the Turks”, creating

⁴⁵ Critobulus, 12.5.

⁴⁶ On comparable narrative strategies in Serbian medieval historiography, see: M. Васиљевић, “Настанак српских родослова и летописа као последица политичких и друштвених промена”, *Иницијал* 3 (2015), 95–117.

⁴⁷ Critobulus, 5.17.

⁴⁸ Cited according to the English translation: Kritoboulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, transl. Ch. T. Riggs, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 4. For Greek text: Critobulus, 5.

⁴⁹ Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos*, 197–206; Akışık-Karakullukçu, “A question of audience”, 1–30; Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune”, 126.

⁵⁰ Akışık-Karakullukçu, “A question of audience”, 28–29.

⁵¹ Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos*, 126–127.

⁵² Anthony Kaldellis translates this word as *realm* (*Laonikos Chalkokondyles: The Histories* [vol.] I, transl. A. Kaldellis, (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 2–3), but we think in this context sovereignty is more suitable, as a right to ecumenical power. A lot of Byzantines were writing about the Byzantine right to rule all the *oikoumene*, among them also Gennadios Scholarios: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνταῦθα πρῶτον ἡ χριστιανικὴ βασιλεία ἰδρυθεῖσα βεβαίως (highlighted by Z. Jovanović), μετὰ τοὺς πικροτάτους ἐκείνους κατὰ τῆς πίστεως διωγμοὺς ἐκ τῶν τῆς γῆς πάσης ἀρχόντων, ἅμα τῇ ἱερᾷ ἀρχῇ καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτῇ

a suitable memory of both races.⁵³ In this sentence Chalkokondyles illustrates the new reality of the Ottoman Empire, presenting that Byzantines, i.e. Hellenes as he characterised them, had lost their right to rule the Christian *oikoumene*. That is an important change in identification, because after the First Fall of Constantinople, Byzantines viewed themselves as a Chosen People of God in exile, like the Jews.⁵⁴ The political entity they once identified with is now irrevocably lost, as it can be concluded from Chalkokondyles' statement.

In the continuation of the work, the author presents the history of the Byzantines and the Ottomans in parallel, reflecting, in that way, the results of a historical process and current circumstances.⁵⁵ In this new context, the Ottomans became a key part of the identification of Byzantines – not as enemies, but as conquerors – due to their central role in the historical narrative. This is a 'new model' of an old literary response to the contemporary invasion or conquest, introduced by Herodotus, in which Chalkokondyles compares the shared codes of identification.⁵⁶

The Chalkokondyles' Herodotean response to the question "Who are Greeks?" is as follows: The post-Byzantine Greeks are actually Hellenes, and Hellenes are the offspring of Ancient Greeks,⁵⁷ who were conquered by the Romans. When the Romans (sc. Western Ancient Romans) had the ultimate power in the world (ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς οἰκουμένης μεγίστην ἀρχὴν) they founded the Greek city-metropolis (mother-city) Byzantion, that is to say Constantinople, in order to carry on the struggle with the Persians. From then, the Hellenes and Romans were mixing and although the Greek language and customs prevailed, they took the name of the Romans, changing their hereditary ones. Then he concludes, the Emperor of Byzantion was named the Emperor of the Romans, never again using the title Emperor of the Hellenes.⁵⁸ Later, he

ὁδηγῶ τὰ τῶν χριστιανῶν ὡς ἔκ τινος κέντρου διεῖπε φύλα ἀρίστῳ παραδείγματι θείας τε καὶ πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς. Scholarios IV, 218.1–5 (highlighted by Z. Jovanović).

⁵³ *Laonici Chalcocondylae Historiarum Demonstrationes* [vol.] I–II, ed. E. Darkó, (Budapest: Budapestini Sumptibus Academiae litterarum hungaricae, 1922), 1–2 (=Chalcocondyles I–II).

⁵⁴ G. Page, *Being Byzantine, Greek identity before the Ottomans, 1200–1420* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 88, 281.

⁵⁵ On the Byzantine–Ottoman relations and the place of Greek society within the Ottoman state prior to 1453, see: D. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 253–412; Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 288–350.

⁵⁶ C. A. Ríos Gordillo, "Herodotus and The Histories: Accounts of Intercivilizational Contact", *Comparative Civilizations Review* 85 (2021), 99–121. The Herodotean structure of Chalkokondyles' work is elaborated in: Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos*, 24–30.

⁵⁷ Chalcocondyles I, 2–3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* I, 4. See also: Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos*, 171–205.

elaborates on the religious divergence between the Eastern and Western *Rhomaioi*, referring to the former as Hellenes and the latter as Romans, thereby clarifying Orthodox faith as one of the key categories of identification.⁵⁹ For him, the main categories of identification are descent, language, customs, religion, the conception of Constantinople as the mother-city – and a sense of historical continuity, extending from the earliest historiographical Greek narratives to his day. This continuity is extensively exposed at the beginning of Chalkokondyles' work.⁶⁰

The core of this identification framework is created primarily by Chalkokondyles' master, Georgios Gemistos Plethon, and his famous definition of the Hellenic race for the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos: "We, the people you lead and rule, are Hellenes by race, as our language and traditional education bear witness."⁶¹ Additionally, the loss of Constantinople prompted Chalkokondyles to propose a new concept of identification, separated from the *Rhomaic* past.

There is an inclination to emphasise the Renaissance nature of Chalkokondyles' work by reducing his audience to the Byzantine émigrés in the West. However, it is worth noting that similar concepts concerning the key categories of identification appear in the writings of Gennadios Scholarios, composed both after the Fall and during his subsequent tenure as Patriarch, as previously discussed. Scholarios' concept is more shaped by a Christian (monastic) understanding of history, while Chalkokondyles' approach is more secular. Nevertheless, Chalkokondyles applies the idea of *translatio imperii*, less explicitly, yet still quite visibly.

As he argues, there was a chain of the transfer of power in Asia, in which each change is linked to a specific ruler. Assyrians are the first race who obtained the political domination over Asia, but the Medes took their place led by Arbakes. The next link in this chain of power are the Persians ruled by Cyrus, whose place was taken by Alexander the Great, the *basileus* of Macedonians. Later, when the Romans were at the peak of their power, their Great Emperor, i.e. Constantine the Great, founded Constantinople, and that is the beginning of the period of the Greek Empire and its domination over Asia.⁶²

In the given ideological framework, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople is also one part of that chain and the 'official' end of the Greek Empire defined by its capital Constantinople. This statement is illustrated through the word of Mehmed II himself to Janissaries before the final Siege of the Imperial city: "You, who have brought glory and fame to my predecessors and me everywhere (in the world), help

⁵⁹ Chalcocondyles I, 4–5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* I, 1–5.

⁶¹ *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, Γ', ἐπιμ. Σπυρίδων Λάμπρος, (Ἀθήναι: Ἐκδόσεις Βας. Ν. Γρηγοριάδης, 1926), 247–248.

⁶² Chalcocondyles I, 4.

me now to conquer my Empire.”⁶³ Nevertheless, the nature of this conquest defines Chalkokondyles’ attitude towards the Ottomans. For him, the Turks, as he named the Ottomans, are barbarians, and the Fall of Constantinople is seen as an act of enslavement. His portrayal of Mehmed II equates him with a “barbarian tyrant par excellence”.⁶⁴

As the above suggests, Chalkokondyles was unable to identify with the new reality and circumstances. Consequently, he envisioned a new (future) Greek state as a framework for identification. He could not perceive himself as a *Rhomaïos*, given that *Rhomaïoi* (Byzantines) were now slaves of the Sultan. Thus, the source of his identification was the historical legacy of the *Hellenitas*, whose most prominent representatives resided in the West. For that reason, Chalkokondyles predicts in his *History* the new political entity (βασίλεια) with clearly a Greek character, meaning by it a Greek *basileus* and his (Greek) successors that will rule over the whole Hellenes according to their own customs.⁶⁵

The middle way, which corresponded with contemporary conditions, was proposed by Kritoboulos of Imbros.⁶⁶ His historiographical work – addressed to the Constantinopolitans and dedicated to Sultan Mehmed II Fatih – represents another possible mode of identification among high-ranking Greeks associated with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Namely, in the *Dedication Letter* to the Sultan, that serves as an introduction to the *History*, Kritoboulos explains his reasons for writing. He has observed that Fatih’s achievements are worthy of becoming part of Hellenic (i.e., Greek) history, because the new sovereign of Constantinople has achieved such great deeds, greater than those of generals and emperors of the Persians, the other races and even of “Rhomaïoi that is Hellenes”.⁶⁷ Using the stylistic device *Ῥωμαίων τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων*, Kritoboulos defines *Rhomaïoi* as Hellenes, or more precisely, he illustrates who the *Rhomaïoi* were.⁶⁸ Later, he elaborates that the deeds of Mehmed II should

⁶³ “ὅμεις ἀπανταχῇ δόξαν παρὰ τοῖς προγόνοις καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐκλεῖ ἄνελόμενοι συγκατεργάζεσθε τὴν βασιλείαν ἐμοί”, Chalcocondyles II, 157. See also: Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune”, 124. For a different interpretation of this sentence see: *Chalkokondyles: The Histories* [vol.] I, 189.

⁶⁴ Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune”, 124–125; Akışık-Karakullukçu, “A question of audience”, 11–12.

⁶⁵ Chalcocondyles I, 2. Because of this ‘prediction’ Chalkokondyles was characterised as one of forerunners of Modern Greek nationalism and *Megalē idea*, see Reinsch, “Ἡ θεώρησις”, 74–81.

⁶⁶ Nikolić, “The Greatest Misfortune”, 119–133; Reinsch, “Kritobulos of Imbros”, 297–311.

⁶⁷ Critobulus, 3.12–20, 4.33–5.5

⁶⁸ Specifically, Kritoboulos juxtaposes the Persians (i.e., the Ottomans) and other races with the *Rhomaïoi* and the Hellenes; through this rhetorical formulation, he effectively equates the *Rhomaïoi* and the Hellenes (cf. πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων ἔργων αὐτουργὸν ὄντα σε ὁρῶν,

become better known as far as Hellenes and Hellenic history are concerned (ἔνεκά γε Ἑλλήνων καὶ τῆς Ἑλλήνων ἱστορίας), because his acts are similar to those of Alexander the Great or of the generals and *basileis* (emperors) of his rank.⁶⁹ Therefore, in writing his chronicle of the conquests of Mehmed II in Greek, he wanted them to become a part of Greek history and tradition. With that a shared history as a category of identification is changed.⁷⁰

Although he will use the term *Rhomaioi* in his work for the Greek subjects of the Byzantine (*Rhomaic*), and later the Ottoman Emperor, it is clear that he considered *Rhomaioi* as Hellenes in the context of their language, descent and historical continuity. The historical continuity is expressed in the *Dedication Letter*, as already shown, through the concept of the history of the Hellenes in which the new ruler should obtain his place. Furthermore, it can be concluded that, for him, language was also a symbol of continuity and a marker of distinction from others. As mentioned, by writing the history of Mehmed II in the Greek language, he intended to incorporate it into the narrative of Greek history.

Regarding the criterion of origin, descent from the Ancient Greeks is implicitly conveyed through the narrative. Namely, Kritoboulos uses the term Hellenes when he refers to Ancient Greek history, occasionally adding the epithet “ancient” (οἱ παλαιοὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων).⁷¹ Furthermore, Kritoboulos demonstrates an awareness of the heterogeneity of the ancient Greek world, noting the Athenians’ wars against both the barbarians (Persians) and the Hellenes – with the latter, he was referring to the rest of the Hellenic world.⁷² As he adds below, following the conquest of Athens, the Sultan travelled through Boeotia and Plataea, examining Hellenic sites and collecting information about them.⁷³ Hence, we recognise again that the author presented the historic continuity between Ancient and post-Byzantine Greeks and presumed common descent.

Kritoboulos exemplifies the connection between Ancient Greeks and his contemporaries through the mouth of Mehmed II who says at the ruins of Ancient Troy: “It was the Greeks (Hellenes) and Macedonians and Thessalians and Peloponnesians who ravaged this place in the past, and whose descendants have now through my efforts paid the just penalty, after a long period of years, for their injustice to us

ὃ μέγιστε αὐτοκράτωρ, καὶ πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων (τῶν πάλαι φημί) στρατηγῶν τε καὶ βασιλέων κρατοῦντα, οὐ μόνον Περσῶν τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων γενῶν, ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ Ῥωμαίων τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων, Critobulus, 3.13–20).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.12–32.

⁷⁰ Nikolić, “Greatest Misfortune”, 121; Critobulus, 3–5.

⁷¹ Critobulus, 12.24, 21.22, 77.3–7, 105.21–22, 128.20, 149.2, 184.14.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 128.20–21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 128.31–129.3.

Asiatics at that time and so often in subsequent times.”⁷⁴ Also, in one part of Sultan Mehmed II’s speech to his soldiers before the Siege of Constantinople, he states that his predecessors had defeated the Mysians (i.e., Bulgarians), the Illyrians (Albanians), the Triballians (Serbs), the Hellenes, and many other peoples. This suggests that, for Kritoboulos, the term ‘Hellenes’ referred to a broader collective, likely all Greeks, while ‘Rhomaioi’ was reserved for the Greek subjects of the Byzantine, and later Ottoman, rulers.⁷⁵

As is shown in Byzantine studies, Kritoboulos’ ‘programmatic’ history’s main purpose was the legalisation of the new circumstances. For him, the sultan was a natural successor to the Byzantine emperors in a long line of succession that saw great empires and rulers replace each other at the helm. The Ottoman sultan and the Ottomans were thus the last link in a string of changes that should be plain for everyone to see, beginning with the Assyrians and continuing with the Medes, Persians, and Hellenes and *Rhomaioi*. Although he mourns Constantinople as did all Byzantines, the Fall of the Eastern Roman Empire was nothing extraordinary, but in accordance with nature and *taxis*.⁷⁶

For that reason, the sultan was also the new holder of political identification. The *Rhomaioi* in Kritoboulos’ *History* are the Greek subjects of the Byzantine emperor, whose successor is Mehmed II – the new ruler of Constantinople and inheritor of imperial authority. Furthermore, it is important to note that Kritoboulos writes about the Greek origin of the Ottoman dynasty – they are offspring of Achaemenes and Perses, that were, according to him, also Hellenes – descendants of Danaus and Linceus.⁷⁷ Hence, Kritoboulos, aside from legitimising the new system, was presumably also envisaging a new concept of identification with the Ottoman ruling dynasty. It is also noteworthy that he does not deny the otherness of the Ottomans. It is quite notable when he compares the Fall of Troy with the Fall of Constantinople. As he narrates, the Hellenes behaved more philanthropically towards the conquered citizens of Troy, “respecting their common fates” (τὰς κοινὰς αἰδούμενοι τύχας), while present circumstances are comfortless.⁷⁸ So we may observe again his identification with Ancient Greeks and simultaneously the distinctiveness of Ottomans.

On the other hand, Doukas’ approach is slightly different, owing to the context of writing and the intended audience. Regarding the audience, Doukas’ narrative was clearly directed at the inhabitants of Lesbos and other islands under the control of the Gattilusio family, and more broadly, at the pro-union Byzantine nobles and

⁷⁴ Kritoboulos, *History of Mehmed*, 181–182; Critobulus, 170.13–17.

⁷⁵ Critobulus, 27.14–15.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.18–29.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.25–16.7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.6–10.

Hellenised Western archons who governed parts of the former Byzantine Empire.⁷⁹ His starting point is clearly pro-unionist and anti-Ottoman, as evidenced by his extremely negative portrayal of anti-unionist Byzantines, while reserving his harshest epithets for the Ottomans. He describes the anti-unionist inhabitants of Constantinople as: “rough people”; “hating the good”; “root of arrogance”; “branch of vanity”; “the flower of haughtiness”; and “the dregs of the Hellenic race”.⁸⁰ Therefore, it can be inferred that his religious inclinations prevented him from identifying with the Constantinopolitans. Of course, it must be taken into account that his patrons were not Byzantines but Genoese – that is, Roman Catholics.

Nevertheless, a sense of belonging to the same collectivity, defined by a shared language and customs, is clearly evident.⁸¹ Namely, after the Fall of Constantinople, he refers to the Conqueror as the “destroyer of our race” (ὀλετῆρος τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν), thereby underscoring the significance of Constantinople as a key criterion for his identification with a race he primarily designates as *Rhomaic*, most often using the socionym *Rhomaioi* to refer to his contemporaries.⁸² For this reason, it is widely accepted that *Romanitas* was the principal criterion of identification for Doukas.⁸³

Quite illustrative is his description of a certain Michael Pylles: “This Pylles descends from Ephesos; he was *Rhomaïos* by race (τῷ γένει) and Christian by faith (τὸ σέβας).”⁸⁴ Apparently, for Doukas, ‘*Romanitas*’ was more a term denoting ancestry and political tradition than merely a concept of political identification among the Byzantines. This interpretation is supported by Doukas’ account of the fate of his grandfather, Michael Doukas. As he narrates, his grandfather fled to the beylik of Aydin in Ephesus and adopted a foreign city (μετοικία) as his fatherland (πατρίς), showing respect to a man of another race and a barbarian (τὸν ἀλλογενῆ καὶ βάρβαρον). He later adds that his grandfather was aware that the Empire would fall because of the sins of the *Rhomaioi* ruling at that time and “our ancestors” (διὰ τὰς ἀνομίας τῶν τότε πολιτευομένων Ῥωμαίων καὶ ἡμετέρων ἀποπάππων).⁸⁵ Thus, a sense of continuity in terms of origin is illustrated through *Romanitas* in Doukas’ narrative.

⁷⁹ Reinsch, “Η θεώρηση”, 83; H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* [vol.] I (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1978), 490–494.

⁸⁰ Ducas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina* (1341–1462), ed. V. Grecu, (Bucharest: București Ed. Acad. Republicae Popularis Romanicae, 1958), 319 (= Ducas).

⁸¹ Reinsch, “Η θεώρηση”, 83–84.

⁸² Ducas, 33, 35, 39, 41, 47, 49 *et passim*.

⁸³ Smarnakis, “Rethinking Roman Identity”, 212–227.

⁸⁴ Ducas, 235.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

However, he also uses the term *Graikoi*, in addition to Hellenes, which was previously noted.⁸⁶ The term *Hellēn* is used, as in previous cases, in two ways: to refer to the Ancient Greeks and to Greeks who are not subjects of the Byzantine emperor.⁸⁷ Namely, in describing a conflict between John VI Kantakouzenos and Empress Anna of Savoy, Doukas narrates that “the Turks” plundered Byzantine territories and captured some *Rhomaioi*. He adds, poetically, that tears filled the eyes of the *Rhomaioi*, but neither *Hellēn* nor barbarian was there to show them compassion.⁸⁸ It seems likely that by *Hellēn*, the author is referring to other Greek-speaking Christians. In his descriptions of Ottoman cruelty, he characterises abused women as *Hellēnis* (Greek), though it remains unclear whether this identification is based on their ethnic origin or their language.⁸⁹ There is no clear indication of an explicitly illustrated continuity between the Ancient Greeks and the Byzantines in terms of origin or historical continuity.⁹⁰ However, some elements of continuity between Ancient Greeks and Byzantines may be traced.

This statement could be underpinned by Doukas’ metaphorical description of Mehmed II’s transport of the ships across the land. He mentions that the Ottoman Sultan surpassed Xerxes, for while Xerxes was defeated by the Athenians, Mehmed overthrew the Byzantines (*Rhomaioi*) and captured the true golden Athens – Constantinople – the ruling city of the world.⁹¹ Additionally, in the speech that Timur delivered to his soldiers before the Battle of Angora, he referred to the Hellenes (Ancient Greeks) as demigods and heroes.⁹² Along with that, Doukas describes the supporters of John Kantakouzenos as “Peloponidas and Aeacids’ descendants” and Kantakouzenos himself as “offspring of ancient heroes”.⁹³ Dietrich Reinsch suggests that Doukas regarded the educated elite of Byzantine society as the descendants of the Ancient Greeks.⁹⁴ In this context, it becomes clear why he refers to the anti-unionist

⁸⁶ Following the old habits of the Westerners, the term *Graikoi* is used at the Council of Florence to refer to Orthodox Hellenophone Christians, in contrast to the Latins. Thus, it can be regarded as a technical term for Orthodox Christians: *ibid.*, 267, 269, 317, 319; Smarnakis, “Rethinking Roman Identity”, 222. See also, Jovanović, “The Portrayal of Collective Identity”, 311.

⁸⁷ For the use of the term *Hellēn* to refer to the Ancient Greeks, see Ducas, 31, 95.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁹⁰ Smarnakis, “Rethinking Roman Identity”, 221; Reinsch, “Η θεώρηση”, 83.

⁹¹ Ducas, 339.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 43, 51. It should also be noted that Doukas’ grandfather was a supporter of John VI Kantakouzenos, see Καρπόζηλος, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί Δ*, 270.

⁹⁴ Reinsch, “Η θεώρηση”, 83.

Constantinopolitan faction as “the dregs of the Hellenic race”.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, in terms of language and culture, there are indications of continuity with the ancient Hellenes, as Doukas describes Markos Eugenikos as well-educated in Hellenic studies and in Christian teachings.⁹⁶

Doukas primarily identifies his collective within a Christian framework. He opens his narrative in accordance with Byzantine tradition, beginning with an excursus on biblical world history up to Constantine, the first Christian ruler. He then mentions Justinian, “during whose reign the Church in the name of Holy Wisdom was built”, followed by Constantine VI and Irene of Athens – likely due to their association with the Seventh Ecumenical Council. He later recounts the line of emperors from Alexios I Komnenos to the reign of the Palaiologoi.⁹⁷ Throughout his narrative, he gradually introduces a biblical interpretation of the Fall and juxtaposes the Byzantines (*Rhomaioi*) with the Jews (*Ioudaioi*).

He explains the beginning of Byzantine misfortunes with the blinding of the rightful Emperor John IV Laskaris and the accession of the Palaiologos dynasty. With this event, the Byzantines, according to Doukas, brought an anathema upon themselves: “As the Jews did at the time of the Lord’s Passion, they drew down upon themselves the curse. And they were utterly destroyed, as this narrative will disclose, condemned for the same passion as the Jews, who became zealots of their transgressions.”⁹⁸ It emerges from this comparison of the two peoples that Doukas also regarded the Byzantines as a Chosen People. This biblical motif permeates the entire narrative, most notably in Doukas’ depiction of the Fall.

He recounts the history of the event of 1453 in a completely biblical discourse. Even before the Fall, the author characterises Mehmed II Fatih as Nebuchadnezzar, and mentions that on Easter (Bright) Friday, “Nebuchadnezzar came to the gates of Jerusalem”.⁹⁹ He portrays the atmosphere in the City on the eve of the Fall through the prophetic words of Jeremiah and Amos.¹⁰⁰ He later concludes that the Byzantines had been judged as deceivers, and that “the heathen” counted their worship (λατρεία) as worthless. According to him, it was because of their sins that the New Zion – Hagia Sophia – was turned into the altar of the barbarians and the dwelling

⁹⁵ Ducas, 319.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 267. It is worth noting that he also uses the adjective *hellenic* (ἑλληνικός) with a lowercase letter to denote pagan or idolatrous meanings (cf. *Ibid.*, 323), while he employs the uppercase form when referring to ancient Greek education (cf. *Ibid.*, 267, 135).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29–33.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 327.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 357, 367.

place of Muhammed.¹⁰¹ All of this underscores that Doukas viewed the Byzantines as the Chosen People, the New Israel.

In addition, he ends the account of the Fall with a lamentation over Constantinople. Through this lament, he not only underscores the City's profound significance but also reveals the defining characteristics of *Rhomaic* identification as he understands them. He begins by mourning the City as the keeper of Holy Relics and the sacred remains of saints and martyrs. His lament then turns to the remains of Constantine the Great and his imperial heirs, before culminating in a sorrowful elegy for Hagia Sophia, the "earthly heaven".¹⁰² Through his lamentations, he conveys the sacred character of Constantinople, articulated within a distinctly religious framework, thus recognising religion as the primary category of identification. Later, he laments over lost books – firstly for holy Christian literature, and later for the education of the demigod heroes.¹⁰³ By demigod heroes, he meant the Ancient Greeks. So, speaking about education, it could be concluded that Doukas recognised a synthesis of classical Greek culture with Christianity.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, although *Romanitas* and Christianity were the main components of his understanding of Byzantine identification, Hellenism is also present.

With regard to the Ottomans, whom Doukas refers to as "the Turks", they are depicted as 'the Other' in opposition to the Byzantines. This portrayal is largely characterised by a barbaric image, particularly in religious matters, where Doukas employs pejorative language, describing Islam as "polluted" (μιαρά).¹⁰⁵ Significantly, Doukas identifies 'the Turks' as the race of the subjects of the Ottoman dynasty, thereby framing them as both a religious and political collectivity.¹⁰⁶ Hence, in Doukas' narrative, the Ottomans (*Turks*) and the Byzantines (*Rhomaioi*) are portrayed as two juxtaposed collectivities, primarily defined in terms of religion and descent.

Finally, Georgios Sphrantzes, by compiling personal (or autobiographical) notes in the form of a private diary during his life and later transforming them into a chronicle known as the *Chronicon Minus*, provides us with an insight into his inner world.¹⁰⁷ Due to the intimate nature of this chronicle – widely recognised in

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 375.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 385, 387.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 387.

¹⁰⁴ On the integration of classical Greek culture into Christianity from the 4th century onward, see: W. Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 68–85.

¹⁰⁵ Ducas, 283, 375; Smarnakis, "Rethinking Roman Identity", 222–225.

¹⁰⁶ Ducas, 169, 177; Smarnakis, "Rethinking Roman Identity", 221.

¹⁰⁷ Hunger, *Literatur*, 495–498; Καρπόζηλος, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί Δ'*, 571–575. The standard critical edition: *Giorgio Sfranze, Cronaca*, a cura di R. Maisano, (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1990). The version of Sphrantzes' Chronicle known as the *Chronicon*

Byzantine studies as his *Memoirs* – it is generally accepted that it “does not reflect ideological struggle or religious variance”. Instead, as the last *megas logothetes* of the Byzantine Empire and a trusted confidant of the last Byzantine emperor, the author focuses on his private life, his relationships with the imperial family, and his diplomatic missions.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, these chronographic notes – probably revised after Sphrantzes’ withdrawal to the Monastery of Saints Jason and Sosipater in Corfu in 1468 – represent a specific perspective shaped by his service in the imperial administration and his later tragic fate following the Fall.¹⁰⁹

Contrary to the previous works, Sphrantzes opts for a more factual account of the Fall of Constantinople.¹¹⁰ Ioannis Smarnakis proposes that it was his conscious choice and that the author omits the further explanation of the Fall and skips the traditional lamentation over the Queen of the Cities because of the trauma caused by the Ottoman conquest.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, given that the author recounts the death of his own five children plainly, we suggest that the extremely brief mention of the Fall – limited to a single sentence – may be explained by the nature of the text itself. Since this chronicon represents his personal notes, and given that chronicles as a genre are generally characterised by an unadorned structure, the simple reference to the date of the Fall is quite understandable.¹¹² His pain and suffering – stemming both from personal misfortunes and from the collapse of the world he had known before the Fall – are expressed in the opening sentence of the *Chronicle*, where he states that it would have been better had he never been born or had died in childhood.¹¹³

Minus represents the original form of the text. Nevertheless, it was later extended by the Metropolitan of Monemvasia, Makarios Melissourgos-Melissenos. This expanded version, known as *Pseudo-Sphrantzes* or the *Chronicon Maius*, was completed around 1580. This chronicle, or more accurately, a compilation of various texts and authors, will not be included in this paper. The critical edition is: *Pseudo-Phrantzes: Macarie Melissenos. Cronica 1258–1481*, ed. V. Grecu, (Bucharest: Editura Academici Republicii Socialiste România, 1966).

¹⁰⁸ Καρπόζηλος, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί Δ'*, 571.

¹⁰⁹ Giorgio Sfranze, 17*–18* and n. 43; Reinsch, “Η θεώρηση”, 84–85; Smarnakis, “Rethinking Roman Identity”, 229.

¹¹⁰ Giorgio Sfranze, 10*–11*, 19*. See also, Nikolić, “Greatest Misfortune”, 130–131.

¹¹¹ Smarnakis, “Rethinking Roman Identity”, 290–230.

¹¹² A. Kazhdan, “Chronicle”, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* [vol.] I, ed. A. Kazhdan, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 443–444. On the importance of genre in Byzantine writing, see M. Mullett, “The Madness of Genre”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 233–243.

¹¹³ Giorgio Sfranze, 4. On conscious messaging in Byzantine texts, see K. A. Grammatiki, “Rhetorische Kommunikation in den Kaiserreden des 12. Jahrhunderts: Der Kontakt zum Publikum”, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 47 (2007), 83–93; M. Mullett, “Rhetoric, theory and the imperative of performance: Byzantium and now”, in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter*

Instead of lamentation, Sphrantzes focuses on the figure and institution most important to him: Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos and his death.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, he identifies the Emperor himself through his predecessors of the Palaiologos dynasty, beginning with Michael VIII, defining Constantine XI as the eighth emperor of the house (γένος) of Palaiologos.¹¹⁵ Given that earlier in the text he narrates that the house of the Palaiologoi obtained its heir (διάδοχος), and “that this humble spark of the *Rhomaioi*” gained an heir and successor (τοῦ τῶν Ῥωμαίων μικροῦ τούτου σπινθῆρος εἶθε διάδοχος καὶ κληρονόμος) through the birth of Despotēs Thomas’ son, Andreas Palaiologos, it may be concluded that Sphrantzes was identifying both his collectivity and himself with the ruling dynasty.¹¹⁶

Exemplifying the Fall itself, he narrates: “And my blessed lord, the Emperor – what did he not do, both secretly and openly, to help his household and the Christians,¹¹⁷ more than he did for his own life?”¹¹⁸ It emerges from the quoted passage that, for Sphrantzes, Constantinople was the household – or, more literally, the poorhouse (ὀσπίτιον) – of the Emperor and, in a broader sense, of the Palaiologan dynasty.¹¹⁹ Thus, for him, the imperial environment in which he had grown up and

College, University of Oxford, March 2001, ed. E. Jeffreys, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 151–170.

¹¹⁴ Giorgio Sfranze, 134; Smarnakis, “Rethinking Roman Identity”, 229.

¹¹⁵ Giorgio Sfranze, 134. Namely, we would argue that the most suitable translation for the term γένος in this specific context is ‘house’ (kin group). See, P. Magdalino, “Honour among Romaioi: the framework of social values in the world of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 13 (1989), 183–218.

¹¹⁶ Giorgio Sfranze, 132.

¹¹⁷ The term ‘Christians’ is used broadly by Sphrantzes – not only to refer to Byzantines, but also to Catholics (οἱ τῆς Δύσεως Χριστιανοί) and other non-Byzantine Christian states (οἱ ἔξωθεν Χριστιανοί) – *ibid.*, 6, 82, 106, 136, 140, 142, 155. Thus, it may be inferred that he understood ‘Christians’ primarily in opposition to the Ottomans, as representatives of a different faith.

¹¹⁸ Ὁ δὲ μακαρίτης καὶ αὐθέντης μου ὁ βασιλεὺς, τί οὐκ ἔπραξε κρυφίως καὶ φανερώς πρὸς βοήθειαν τοῦ ὀσπίτιου αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἢ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ; Giorgio Sfranze, 140.

¹¹⁹ The lexeme ὀσπίτιον derives from the Latin word *hospitium* and is most commonly interpreted as ‘house’, or more specifically as ‘poorhouse’ or ‘small house’, see *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts (LBG)* [Faszikel] 5, Hrsg. E. Trapp, (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005) [<https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lbg/#context=lsj&eid=50945>] and *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). By using this term, the author was likely referring to Constantinople as the household – or, in modern terms, the dominion – of the Palaiologan dynasty. See also, T. Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 148–149; T. Kiousopoulou, “Les hommes d’affaires byzantins et leur rôle politique à la fin du Moyen Âge”, *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 7 (2011), 15–22.

spent the best part of his life was the main criterion of his political identification.¹²⁰ Regarding the socionyms he uses for the Byzantines, Sphrantzes refers to them as *Rhomaioi*, which is significant, as both occurrences – apart from the one already mentioned – take place after the Fall, denoting Greek-speaking Christians.¹²¹ In both cases, this reference applies to the Greeks in the Peloponnese. Although D. Reinsch suggests that Sphrantzes' concept of identification reflects the view of ordinary people,¹²² it can be argued that it is, rather, a reflection of his service in the Byzantine imperial administration and environment and his personal connections with the last Emperor of the *Rhomaioi*. Thus, it was an echo of an old mode of identification, deeply connected with the institution of the Emperor.¹²³

On the other hand, the influence of new political circumstances is quite notable at the very beginning of the chronicle, where Sphrantzes recounts the Ottoman rulers from Ertuğrul to Sultan Mehmed II, “who enslaved us and expelled us from Constantinople”.¹²⁴ He defines the Ottomans (Ἀτουμαλίδαι) as the blood descendants of Osman, in a manner comparable to the Palaiologoi as already discussed; even the number of rulers is identical – eight.¹²⁵ For the subjects of the Ottoman dynasty he uses the socionym “Turks”.¹²⁶ Beyond the political criterion used to identify the Ottomans in Sphrantzes' text – specifically, the association of the Turks with political and religious identification¹²⁷ – it can only be assumed that elements such as language and origin also played a role, though his writings provide no explicit evidence of this.

To conclude this section of this paper, we can say that new models of identification emerged, while traces of the old ones remained. Specifically, after the Fall of Constantinople, the Byzantines continued to see themselves as Hellenes, united by a common origin, language, customs, and religion. Thus, the cultural aspects of identification, it could be said, remained largely unchanged. However, their political aspect of identification shifted. For Gennadios Scholarios, there was no new concept

¹²⁰ On the imperial ideology at the Palaiologan court, see F. Leonte, *Imperial Visions of Late Byzantium: Manuel II Palaiologos and Rhetoric in Purple* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). See also Н. Радосевић, “У ишчекивању краја – Византијска реторика прве половине 15. века”, *Зборник радова Визанџолошког института* 43 (2006), 59–70.

¹²¹ Giorgio Sfranze, 154, 178.

¹²² Reinsch, “Η θεωρησις”, 86.

¹²³ Cf. N. Aschenbrenner, *Reframing Empire: Byzantium and the Transformation of European Identity, C. 1400–1520* [PhD thesis] (Cambridge: MA, 2019), 121–128.

¹²⁴ Giorgio Sfranze, 132.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20, 22, 24, 58, 64, 70, 90, 110, 134, 136, 140, 142, 152, 156, 160, 182.

¹²⁷ Cf. μετὰ τοῦ Μουσταφοπούλου Τοῦρκοι καὶ θαυμάσαντες καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῆς μόνης τῆς θεωρίας αὐτοῦ μετὰ θαύματος ἔλεγον, ὅτι τὸν τῆς πίστεως αὐτῶν ἀρχηγὸν Μαχοῦμετ ὁμοιάζει, *ibid.*, 22.

of political identification after the Fall of Constantinople, as he anticipated the End of the World. Laonikos Chalkokondyles, could not fully identify with the new reality, even though he acknowledged it. He instead looked towards the future, envisioning a new Hellenic state. Lastly, Kritoboulos proposed a third perspective, identifying himself as a Hellen under the Ottoman emperor. In doing so, he simultaneously accepted his role as both a *Rhomaïos* and a *reaya* (tax-paying subject), recognising his place in the Ottoman reality and the new world order.

On the other hand, the cultural and political context in which Doukas wrote his *History*, along with his pro-unionist religious background, had a strong influence on his self-perception and his identification of the Byzantines. Although Doukas presents all major frameworks of identification – Christianity, *Romanitas*, and Hellenism – he primarily identifies his collective through a Christian and *Rhomaic* lens. For Doukas, the term *Rhomaïos* appears to denote a Greek-speaking Christian, not merely a subject of the Byzantine emperor, as in the previously discussed case. Particularly significant is the importance Doukas places on Constantinople, which he portrays as the New Jerusalem of the Chosen People – a symbolic centre with which he identified. However, he seemingly could not fully identify with the Constantinopolitans themselves due to their anti-unionist stance. In contrast, Sphrantzes' *Memoirs* reflect a self-understanding shaped by his role and service: as the last Grand Logothete and a close confidant of the last Byzantine emperor, he identified his collective with the ruling Palaiologos dynasty and viewed the Byzantine state primarily as their dominion.

To understand how the post-Byzantine Greek-speaking community defined itself as a collective one century after the greatest catastrophe of its world, it is necessary to examine its self-perception from two perspectives: that of Constantinople and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and that of the lower clergy in the provinces, far from the centre.

3. The View from the Centre – Church and World Histories of the 16th Century

The history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, as the only surviving Byzantine institution after 1453, in the early Ottoman period is often characterised as a 'dark age' because of the lack of sources.¹²⁸ The number of historiographical works was significantly reduced, and most of them are texts derived from each other

¹²⁸ M. Philippides, W. K. Hanak, *The Siege and Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography and Military Studies* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 152.

with common provenance in an anonymous chronographic work known as *Ecthesis Chronica* (Ἐκθεσις Χρονική).¹²⁹

The so-called *Ecthesis Chronica* or *Annual Compilation* is the earliest testimony to the existence of an active school of history writing under the auspices of the Great Church in the 16th century.¹³⁰ This work, most likely written by a lower-ranking clergyman (he is assumed to have held the rank of *notarios*), has several versions and, depending on the manuscript, covers the period from 1391, although reference is made to events that go back to 1373, until 1517 or 1543. What makes this work unique is the information it brings on the siege and fall of Constantinople, which probably suggests it came from stories circulating among Constantinopolitan Greeks in the 16th century.¹³¹ When discussing the context in which this chronicle was compiled, although many aspects remain unclear, it is important to emphasise the time of its composition. Given that the *Ecthesis Chronica* was written almost a century after the fall of Constantinople, it can be seen as a positive outcome of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's adaptation to the Ottoman reality, as the Patriarchate had its own reasons for producing a historical account that presented its history within the framework of a new political and social order.¹³² Moreover, the simple language in which it was written suggests that it was not intended solely for a narrow 'intellectual' circle around the patriarchal seat, but rather for a broader audience.

Its importance is attested by the fact that Theodosios Zygomalas (1544–1607), a close collaborator of Patriarch Jeremiah II,¹³³ slightly revised it (διορθώσας τὸ κατὰ δύνάμιν) for the needs of the Tübingen Lutheran classicist Martinus Crusius

¹²⁹ *Emperors, Patriarchs and Sultan, 1373–1513: An Anonymous Greek Chronicle of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. M. Philippides, (Brooklyn: Hellenic College Press, 1990), 1–23 (= *Ecth. Ch.*); M. Philippides, "The Patriarchal Chronicles of the Sixteenth Century", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine studies* 25 (1984), 87–94; Philippides, Hanak, *The Siege and Fall of Constantinople*, 53–65; D. Sakel, "A non-existent Byzantine-style historian in a new encyclopaedia of Ottoman historians", *Revue des études byzantines* 68 (2010), 216–217.

¹³⁰ *Ecth. Ch.*, 16–23. D. Sakel, "A Probable Solution to the Problem of the Chronicle of the Turkish Sultans", in: *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott*, eds. J. Burke et al., (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 204.

¹³¹ *Ecth. Ch.*, 22.

¹³² For an analysis of this process of adaptation, see D. Apostolopoulos, "Du sultan au basileus? Dilemmes politiques du Conquérant", in: *Le Patriarcat œcuménique de Constantinople aux XIV^e–XVI^e siècles*, 241–251; Pitsakis, "De la fin des temps à la continuité impériale", 213–239.

¹³³ Theodosios Zygomalas was a well-educated Greek born in Nauplio. Later, he moved to Constantinople with his father, who served as a teacher at the Patriarchal School. Zygomalas held various offices (*offikia*) in the Patriarchate, serving as *notarios*, *protonotarios*, and eventually *dikaiophylax*. He also authored several works, among them *Historia Politica* (see A. Rhoby, "The 'Friendship' between Martin Crusius and Theodosios Zygomalas: A Study of their Correspondence", *Medioevo greco* 5 (2005), 251–252 and n. 7 and n. 8).

(1526–1607), who renamed it *Historia Politica Constantinopoleos*, and included this reworked version into the *Turcograecia* compendium.¹³⁴ At the end, T. Zygomalas included a brief review of the patriarchs and sultans from the death of Patriarch Pachomius I of Constantinople (1513) to Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople (1578).¹³⁵ By all accounts, *Ecthesis Chronica* or *Historia Politica Constantinopoleos* may be used for understanding the political legacy of the Greek religious elite and their place in the Ottoman world. An example of this is Lev Lukhovitskiy’s analysis, which, focusing on genre mode and literary topoi, describes the *Ecthesis Chronica* as an “imaginary world” of post-Byzantine Greeks.¹³⁶

As Lukhovitskiy has shown, three approaches to the Ottoman rule over the Greeks can be identified: the apocalyptic, the aretalogic (or hagiographic), and the pragmatic.¹³⁷ This is evidenced by the descriptions of Sultan Mehmed II, who is portrayed – both before the Fall and afterward, following the conquest of Christian cities – as a wild beast (θῆρ ἄγριος) and a slayer of Christians.¹³⁸ On the other hand, after the Fall, descriptions of the Sultans range from that of an ideal, worthy emperor to the portrayal of a pragmatic statesman characterised by selfishness and political shrewdness.¹³⁹ It could be suggested that these three approaches – or genre modes – are a testimony to an internal struggle of identification.

The scheme of the Chronicle until the Fall emphasises this model of correlation between two worlds – Greek and Ottoman – because it represents the history of the Ottoman and the Palaiologan dynasty side-by-side. This interconnection is introduced at the beginning, where the chronicler correlates the story of the rebellion of Andronikos IV Palaiologos, the son of Emperor John V Palaiologos, with that of Musa Çelebi,¹⁴⁰ son of Sultan Murad I (1362–1389), who rebelled against

¹³⁴ The edition of *Historia Politica Constantinopoleos* in *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae: Historia Politica et Patriarchica Constantinopoleos. Epirotica*. CSHB, ed. I. Bekker, (Bonnae: Impensis Ed. Weberi, 1849), 77. The original publication: M. Crusius, *Turcograecia: libri VIII* (Basel, 1584) (available online: <https://mateo.uni-mannheim.de/camenahist/crusius1/jpg/asoo4.html>).

¹³⁵ *Historia Politica*, 76–77.

¹³⁶ Л. В. Луховицкий, “Художественный мир поствизантийской хронистики (на материале «Хронологического изложения» первой половины XVI в.)”, *Античная древность и средние века* 48 (2020), 172–188.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ecth. Ch.*, 44, 54.

¹³⁹ Луховицкий, “Художественный мир”, 172–188.

¹⁴⁰ The chronicler mistakenly refers to Musa Celebi when it was Savci Bey (cf. Ducas, 71; I. Politi, “The civil disputes between John V and Andronicus IV through the correspondence of Demetrius Cydones”, *Θεολογία* 94/4 (2023), 178).

their fathers in 1373.¹⁴¹ Quite notable are two descriptions of the conquest of Thessaloniki in 1430. The first account tells us that Murad II (1421–1444, 1446–1451) had conquered the most important Byzantine city after Constantinople, knowing that the Byzantines had sold it to the Venetians.¹⁴² The other account narrates the inexplicable suffering of the local Christians who had refused to pay homage to him after the conquest.¹⁴³

Additionally, when it comes to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the Sultan is the enemy of the Christians. The Fall of Constantinople is the most tragic event, the fall of New Jerusalem, and the conversion of Hagia Sophia, the earthly paradise and New Zion, to the temple of Ismaelites is inexplicable and unbearable.¹⁴⁴ Also, when Mehmed II launches his campaign against Continental Greece and the Aegean islands, he is once again depicted as a rascal and a murderer of Christians. Later, however – following the appointment of Scholarios as Patriarch, elected by the Christians and enthroned by the Sultan himself – and after speaking with him, the Sultan changes his view of their *genos* (τὸ ἡμέτερον γένος). He becomes pleased to be the ruler (ἄρχηγός) of such a people – a race of scholars and teachers.¹⁴⁵ Later, the anonymous chronicler adds that Mehmed II was more formidable than any of the emperors (*basileis*) before him – likely referring to the Byzantine emperors, as he later explicitly names Mehmed a *basileus* – and portrays him as an admirer of scholars, not only of his own people, but also of “our own” (ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἐξ ἡμῶν).¹⁴⁶

By giving the Sultan the title of *basileus*, the author does not recognise him as a tyrant, but as a rightful sovereign, akin to the Byzantine emperors or the emperors of Trebizond.¹⁴⁷ He thus sees himself as a subject of the Ottoman rulers. Nevertheless, the main characteristic of the narration after 1453 is the parallel presentation of the histories of the Ottoman sultans and the Ecumenical patriarchs. In this way, the author continues the earlier narrative scheme, now portraying the Ottomans as the political authority and the patriarchs as both the religious and communal leaders of the Greeks.

Regarding identification, the author is quite inconsistent. He mostly names the inhabitants of Constantinople, and later subjects of the Ottoman Sultan, simply as Christians. In his words, Sultan Mehmed II, preparing to launch an offensive against

¹⁴¹ Ecth. Ch., 24.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 28

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 48–50.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 88–89

¹⁴⁷ M. McCormick, A. Kazhdan, “Basileus”, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* [vol.] I, 264.

Constantinople, made a decision which proved most bitter to the City and to the Christians.¹⁴⁸ He adds that the Conqueror appointed a patriarch so that Christians everywhere would hear about it and would return to the City.¹⁴⁹ So, religion was the primary category, a way of setting clear boundaries; nevertheless, when speaking about Byzantines and other Christians, as per the old Byzantine practice, he names them as *Rhomaioi*. Beginning his account of the Union, he writes: “Pope Eugenios was governing the throne of Rome and, being aware of the weakness of the Eastern Romans (*Rhomaioi*), hoped that he would easily bring about the union and that they would agree to the beliefs of the Latins.”¹⁵⁰ Later, after the Fall, in describing a competition between *Rhomaioi* chanters (Georgios and Gerasimos) and their Persian counterparts, the chronicler notes that the Emperor (Mehmed II) was astonished by the excellence of the *Rhomaioi*.¹⁵¹ Another statement explains the deeper complexity of identification.

When describing the appointment of Patriarch Nifon II of Thessaloniki in 1486, he says of the new patriarch: “He was a noble *Rhomaios* from the Peloponnesos on his mother’s side; his father was an Arvanian lord.”¹⁵² This suggests that, for this author at least, a *Rhomaios* was synonymous with a Greek-speaking Christian – similar to how Kritoboulos used the term – belonging to a group distinct from the Arvanites, who spoke a different language and were believed to have a different origin.¹⁵³ This collectivity could have certainly been the one that late-Byzantine writers defined as Hellenic. However, the anonymous monk never defined this group as Hellenic and only used this attribute when discussing education. Describing the erudition of Mehmed Bey, son of Georgios Amiroutzes, he says he was well-educated in Greek (Hellenic) and Arabic literature.¹⁵⁴ Apparently, the author of the *Ecthesis Chronica*

¹⁴⁸ Ecth. Ch., 42

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁵³ On the importance of language as an identification marker, see J. Koder, “Sprache als Identitätsmerkmal bei den Byzantinern-Auf-isti-endende sprachbezogene Adverbien in den griechischen Quellen”, *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse* 147/2 (2012), 5–38. See also H. Ahrweiler, “Byzantine Concepts of the Foreigner”, in: *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds. H. Ahrweiler, A. Laiou, (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998), 1–15. For the various aspects of the integration of non-Greeks into the *Rhomaic* civilisational world, see: *Barbarians, Rhomaioi and Those in Between. Integrating the Christians of the Central Balkans into the Byzantine Empire (late 10th – mid-13th century)* [vol.] I–II, ed. B. Krsmanović, (Belgrade: Institute for Byzantine Studies SASA, 2025).

¹⁵⁴ Ecth. Ch., 86.

was aware of the historical continuity with the Byzantine past and the cultural connection to Greek education. However, the primary element of distinctiveness in the new Islamic world was the Christian faith. Thus, he primarily defines his community simply as Christians.

As noted above, *Historia Politica Constantinopoleos* represents a literary revision of the *Ecthesis Chronica* by a high-ranking official of the Great Church, Theodosios Zygomalas, for a Lutheran ‘early Philhellenist’. Namely, Martin Crusius (Martin Kraus), professor of Latin and Greek at the University of Tübingen, took it upon himself to present Greek life in the Ottoman Empire from an ethnographic perspective.¹⁵⁵ He was observing, at least at the beginning of his task, that the present Greeks and Byzantines are the descendants of Ancient Greeks and he also saw the continuity between the ancient Christian Church and the contemporary Patriarchate of Constantinople.¹⁵⁶ Apparently, he wanted to provide an insight into the world of Byzantine Greeks (*praesertim Graecorum Byzantii rebus*) under Ottoman rule.¹⁵⁷ The content of *Turcograecia* clearly illustrates this.

Book 1, or *Historia Politica Constantinopoleos*, focused on the political history of Constantinople, while Book 2, known as *Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos*, presented ecclesiastical matters of the Ottoman Greek world since the Fall of Constantinople. In Books 3, 4, 7, and 8, Crusius included letters he had received, which served as his main source of information on the local social structure. Finally, Books 5 and 6 rounded out Crusius’ exploration of Ottoman Greek life by highlighting the educational value of vernacular Greek texts.¹⁵⁸ Due to the peculiar circumstances of its composition, the *Historia Politica Constantinopoleos* and *Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos* can be seen as the official histories of the Greek Christians in the

¹⁵⁵ About M. Crusius see R. Calis, *Discovery of Ottoman Greece. Knowledge, Encounter, and Belief in the Mediterranean World of Martin Crusius* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2025).

¹⁵⁶ *Inscriptionem eis feci TVRCOGRAECIAE: propter quod res graecorum, iam inde a Imperij Graeci amissione, sub Turcico dominatu factas, & fieri solitas, continent. Ἑλλάς ἐκτουρκοθεῖσθαι est: Graecia servituti Turcicae subiecta: insuperque multis in Religione erroribus & superstitionibus (quod initio nos latebat) obnoxia: ideoque, merito infelicitas eius deploranda*, Crusius, *Turcograecia*, 2 (For a broader context see A. Ben-Tov, *Lutheran Humanists and Greek Antiquity Melanchthonian Scholarship between Universal History and Pedagogy* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 113–118).

¹⁵⁷ UBT, Mh 466, vol. 1, fol. 1. His private *Diary* is available online: <https://opendigi.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/Mh466>. The critical edition of text: *Diarium Martini Crusii 1589–1599*, eds. W. Göz, E. Conrad, (Tübingen: Verlag Der H Laupp’schen Buchhandlung, 1931).

¹⁵⁸ Crusius, *Turcograecia*; R. Calis, “Reconstructing the Ottoman Greek World: Early Modern Ethnography in the Household of Martin Crusius”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 72 (2019), 177.

Ottoman Empire, or of the former subjects of the Byzantine state.¹⁵⁹ This is particularly significant, as Richard Calis notes, because for M. Crusius – who viewed Byzantine and Ottoman history as a continuous narrative – Byzantium was not merely a political and cultural entity of the past, but a living present.¹⁶⁰

The first focuses on political authority, namely, the Ottoman sultans, while the second documents the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchs after 1453. Together, they create a historical portrayal of their reality, while simultaneously conveying their ideology and worldview, with the aim of presenting them to the Western world. Since all the changes in the text of the *Ecthesis Chronica* – whether made consciously or unconsciously – reflect the environment in which the *Historia Politica* was produced, the issue merits closer examination.

Firstly, it is clear that Zygomalas had the Western audience in mind.¹⁶¹ He had a close relationship with Western scholars – Crusius in particular – with whom he exchanged letters for more than 25 years.¹⁶² Zygomalas' use of socionyms (in a broader sense) is even more complex, given his effort to stylistically refine the *Ecthesis Chronica*. Specifically, he does not follow the anonymous chronicler's selection and use of socionyms; instead, he introduces new ones. He uses from time to time the ancient name of Constantinople, Byzantium, and instead of using the term *politai*

¹⁵⁹ K. Moustakas, "The Logic of Historical Thematology in the *Historia Politica* Constantinopoleos and the *Historia Patriarchica* Constantinopoleos", in: *Festschrift in Honor of Ioannis P. Theocharidis* [vol.] II. *Studies on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey*, eds. E. Balta, G. Salakidis, T. Stavridis, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2014), 363–374.

¹⁶⁰ R. Calis, "Martin Crusius' Lost Byzantine Legacy", in: *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, eds. N. Aschenbrenner, J. Ransohoff, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2021), 107. At this point, the researcher should also consider the introduction of Byzantine studies in the West by Hieronymus Wolf (1516–1580). He was a Lutheran professor at the St. Anna Gymnasium in Augsburg. His publication of several Byzantine chronicles under the title *Corpus Universae Historiae Byzantinae* is recognised as a foundational moment in the establishment of Byzantine history as a distinct category of historical study. Martin Crusius was familiar with Wolf's edition of sources for Byzantine history. For general context, see A. Grafton, "Western Humanists and Byzantine Historians", in: *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, 71–104; Ben-Tov, *Lutheran Humanists*, 105–107, 178–179.

¹⁶¹ Theodosios Zygomalas maintained close ties with Lutheran circles, who sought to establish contact with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and ultimately aimed for a union with the Orthodox Church. One of the leading figures in this effort, Stephan Gerlach, selected Theodosios Zygomalas as a key intermediary with the patriarchal circles and directed him towards collaboration with the German scholar Martin Crusius. Zygomalas' narratives and letters to Martin Crusius are considered key sources for the ethnography of Ottoman Greeks, providing invaluable insights into the culture, religion, and daily life of the time. T. E. Σκλαβενίτης, "Λόγιοι και Χρονογράφοι", *Ναυπλιακά Ανάλεκτα* IX (2019), 180–187.

¹⁶² Rhoby, "The 'Friendship' between Martin Crusius and Theodosios Zygomalas", 249–267.

for the inhabitants of Constantinople (as the author of the *Ecthesis Chronica* does); he opts for the term Byzantines (Βυζαντινοί).¹⁶³

For example, when he describes the Ottoman conquest of Thessaloniki, he does not use the term ‘Christians’ (οἱ Χριστιανοί) as the original author does; instead, he uses the Latinised term for Greeks, ‘*Graikoi*’ (οἱ Γραικοί).¹⁶⁴ This indicates that, for him, ‘Christian’ could not be equated with ‘Greek’ in that specific context, since the Christians involved were also Venetians – the previous holders of the city. Meanwhile, the term ‘*Graikoi*’ is specifically attributed to the Greek Orthodox population of Thessaloniki.¹⁶⁵ That ‘Christians’ could have a broader meaning is clear from his statement that the Janissaries, during the reign of Bayezid II, plundered not only the houses of Jews and Christians in Constantinople, but also those of the “Turks” and their pashas.¹⁶⁶ As can be deduced, the primary distinguishing criterion in this case is religion.

By contrast, when the narrative turns to events involving exclusively the Greek Christians of Constantinople, Zygomalas refers to them simply as ‘Christians’ and even mentions Christian friends and scholars of Sultan Mehmed II, who were undoubtedly Greek.¹⁶⁷ At times, he uses both terms – ‘Christians’ and ‘Greeks’ – within the same rhetorical period, likely for stylistic reasons. For instance, he notes that the Sultan gave orders for a “council of Christians” to elect a new Patriarch in order to encourage the *Graikoi* to settle in Constantinople.¹⁶⁸ The “our race” beloved by the Fatih in the *Ecthesis Chronica* is, for Zygomalas, the race of the *Graikoi*.¹⁶⁹ Also, in this revised edition, the *Rhomaioi* chanters from the original text are now referred to as *Graikoi*.¹⁷⁰ That Zygomalas was aware of differences among other Christians can be inferred from his remark that the Sultan loved them (i.e., Greeks) more than other Christians (καὶ μᾶλλον τοὺς ἡμετέρους τῶν Χριστιανῶν).¹⁷¹

¹⁶³ Historia Politica, 5; Ecth. Ch., 26.

¹⁶⁴ Ecth. Ch., 30; Historia Politica, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Given that the audience of the *Political History of Constantinople* was Western, the term ‘*Graikos*’ may be understood in two ways: as referring to Orthodox Christians more generally, or specifically to Greek-speaking Christians. In this particular context, we argue that it most likely refers to Greek-speaking Christians.

¹⁶⁶ Historia Politica, 68.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 26. It is well known that the election of Gennadios II to the patriarchate was mediated by Greek archons from the circle of Mehmed II. This is attested by several contemporary sources (cf. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios*, 74–78).

¹⁶⁸ Historia Politica, 27.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

Another example of perceived differences can be seen in the case of Patriarch Raphael I, who descended from Serbia (ὀρώμενος ἐκ Σερβίας) and was greatly disliked – not only because he was considered a heavy drinker, but also because he spoke a different language (ἀλλόγλωσσος).¹⁷² As can be inferred from the above, Zygomalas was fully aware of the distinctiveness of the group he identified with, although the terms he uses vary depending on the context. This group, as in the case of the *Ecthesis Chronica*, was defined by common origin, language, and ultimately faith.

Of particular significance to this paper is the attribution of the title Emperor of the *Rhomaioi* (*basileus tōn Rhomaiōn*) to the Sultan – a designation presented as a natural consequence of the conquest of the imperial city of Constantinople. Zygomalas is remarkably explicit:

Ecthesis Chronica: “Who can describe the sovereign’s joy, as he had become the lord of such an extraordinary city?”¹⁷³

Historia Politica: “Who could possibly describe the joy of the sovereign – the Sultan reigning at that time? Namely, he realised that he had become the sovereign of this great, renowned, and extraordinary city, and the Emperor of the *Rhomaioi* (βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων), ruler of the East and not an insignificant portion of the West.”¹⁷⁴ (highlighted part is added by Zygomalas)

Having already discussed the use of the term *Rhomaioi* for the Greek-speaking Christians of the Ottoman Empire, we may conclude that, for Zygomalas, the figure of the Sultan held no small significance. He was regarded as the rightful sovereign – not only of Zygomalas and his people, but of a broader group of subjects, as suggested by the reference to both East and West. Konstantinos Moustakas understood this interpolation in the context of the Ottoman response to the Habsburg claims to the title of Roman Emperor.¹⁷⁵ Conversely to Moustakas, it should be noted that mentioning the Sultan as the *basileus Rhomaiōn* underpins two facts: the still living memory of Constantinople as a symbol of the Empire, as it has already been stressed; and the identification of the Greeks in relation to the Sultan as a new holder of political authority, and more importantly, of Byzantine imperial legacy.¹⁷⁶ At least, this is how it was meant to be understood by Westerners, because this historical narrative is not a

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 43–44.

¹⁷³ *Ecth. Ch.*, 52.

¹⁷⁴ *Historia Politica*, 23.

¹⁷⁵ Moustakas, “The Logic of Historical Thematology”, 363–374.

¹⁷⁶ Especially because Zygomalas, at the beginning of his work, mentions Manuel II as βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων (cf. *Historia Politica*, 3). The synonymy between terms *Rhomaioi* and *Graikos* could be underlined with the fact that in his letter to Martin Crusius, Zygomalas named Byzantium as the Empire of the Greeks (βασιλεία γραικῶν) – Crusius, *Turcograecia*, 95–96.

Greek history of the Ottomans – as the *Chronicle of the Turkish Sultans*¹⁷⁷ – but rather a Greek history of themselves under the Ottoman rule. Furthermore, descriptions of the Sultan as an enemy of the Christians are softened or omitted. Thus, it can be concluded that the Greek religious elite perceived a continuity between the Byzantine and Ottoman empires – both out of self-interest and because it reflected their lived reality. Elements of the old identification model were integrated into the new, connecting Christians through their status as subjects of the Ottoman emperor and by their historical legacy and privileges, which they sought to preserve and enhance.

The struggle for the legacy in question and the clear understanding of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as the only surviving Byzantine – and, it may be said, imperial – institution, is clearly illustrated in the *Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos*. This history of the Ecumenical Patriarchs, from Gennadios II Scholarios to the first patriarchate of Jeremias II Tranos, was written – or more precisely, revised and translated from Demotic into Koine Greek – by Manuel Malaxos, a 16th-century scholar, historian, manuscript copier, and canonist, before April 1578.¹⁷⁸ By all accounts, this work is actually an abridged version of the *History of the Patriarchs of Constantinople from Constantine to the Present Time*, a still-unpublished chronicle surviving in the manuscripts *Constantinopolitanus Met. Sancti Sepulcri* 462.¹⁷⁹ This broader Church History was once erroneously attributed to Damaskinos Stouditis, the well-known Greek intellectual of the 16th century and Metropolitan of Nauplio; however, modern scholarship has correctly identified Manuel Malaxos as its true author.¹⁸⁰ The second part of this chronicle, covering the period from Gennadios II to the accession of Sultan Murad III in 1574, survives in the codex *Londiniensis Harleianus* 5632.¹⁸¹ Both

¹⁷⁷ *Χρονικόν περί των Τούρκων σουλτάνων: κατά τον Βαρβερινόν ελληνικόν κώδικα*, επιμ. Γ. Θ. Ζώρας, (Αθήνα: Σπουδαστήριο Βυζαντινής και Νεοελληνικής φιλολογίας του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών, 1958).

¹⁷⁸ Manuel Malaxos (1501–1581) was born in Nauplio. He spent a significant part of his life in Italy, mostly in Rome, where he collaborated with the Vatican Library, primarily engaged in copying Greek manuscripts. In 1561, Malaxos became chancellor of the Metropolis of Thebes. Later in life, around 1574, he moved to Constantinople, where he remained until his death in 1581. At the request of Theodosios Zygomalas, Malaxos prepared the *Historia Patriarchica* for Martin Crusius – Χ. Παπαδόπουλος, “Περί της ελληνικής εκκλησιαστικής χρονογραφίας του ΙΣΤ’ αιώνος”, *Εκκλησιαστικός Φάρος* Θ’ (1912), 421–427; Σκλαβενίτης, “Λόγιοι και Χρονογράφοι”, 184 and n.14.

¹⁷⁹ Sakel, “A non-existent Byzantine-style historian”, 209–217; cf. Κ. Ν. Σάθας, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη, Τόμος Γ’* (Βενετία: Τύποις του Χρόνου, 1872), ια’–ιδ’.

¹⁸⁰ Sakel, “A non-existent Byzantine-style historian”, 209–217; Philippides, “The patriarchal chronicles”, 87–94.

¹⁸¹ F. H. Marshall, “The Chronicle of Manuel. Malaxos”, *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 5 (1926), 25–28.

are autographs of Malaxos himself, with the second manuscript likely serving as the basis for the *Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos*.¹⁸² This history represents a deliberate presentation of the patriarchal milieu to a Western audience and as an abridged version of an earlier Demotic Greek prototype, it offers important insights into the broader socio-cultural context of the post-Byzantine Greek community in Constantinople.

In terms of its structure, the *Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos* presents a strictly ecclesiastical history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, systematically divided into discrete units based on the patriarchal tenures. Noteworthy are the summaries that interrupt the narrative at the death of each sultan and the accession of his successor, counting them from Mehmed II, who “took the City” (ἐπῆρε τὴν πόλιν), and assigning to each the title of *basileus* (emperor).¹⁸³ These summaries, in fact, provide a list of the patriarchs who held office during the reign of each Sultan, thereby linking the ecclesiastical succession to the holders of political authority. This structural choice may reflect the position of the Patriarchate within the Ottoman framework.¹⁸⁴

The narrative begins with the (re)establishment of the Patriarchate through the election of Gennadios Scholarios, carried out by the direct order of Sultan Mehmed II (Fatih) himself.¹⁸⁵ As the text reports, the Sultan knew that the *Rhomaioi* had always had a patriarch and was familiar with the *Rhomaic* way of life and customs. The Sultan himself was interested in the procedure of the election of patriarchs and the role of the Byzantine emperor in it. As Malaxos narrates, everything was carried out as it had been in the time of the *basileis*, that is, under Byzantine Emperors: the Sultan himself bestowed upon Scholarios the pastoral staff and granted him all the privileges and benefices traditionally accorded to the patriarch under the emperors.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, after a theological discussion with Scholarios concerning the Orthodox faith, the Sultan issued an order prohibiting violence against Christians. As Malaxos writes: “Not only the Sultan, but all the Muslims loved the Christians, because of the lord’s command. The Sultan was joyful and content, for he had become *basileus* and lord over such a people.”¹⁸⁷

Apparently, this is a romanticised portrayal, intended to reflect the mid-16th-century tendencies of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to present itself as the rightful heir

¹⁸² Sakel, “A non-existent Byzantine-style historian”, 215.

¹⁸³ *Historia Patriarchica*, 126–127, 149, 151, 190.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. O. Krešić, “Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe: Political, Social, and Legal Contexts” in this volume.

¹⁸⁵ *Historia Patriarchica*, 80–81. About Scholarios’ election see Blanchet, *Georges Gennadios Scholarios*, 67–84.

¹⁸⁶ *Historia Patriarchica*, 81.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

to the privileges of the old Byzantine order – and not only those privileges, but the broader legacy of imperial and ecclesiastical authority as well. Namely, the chronicle concludes with a description of the restored Monastery of Pammakaristos during the first patriarchate of Jeremias II – a passage likely added deliberately by Malaxos in the *Historia Patriarchica*, as it is absent from the earlier version preserved in codex *Londiniensis Harleianus* 5632.¹⁸⁸ In that description, the seat of the Church of Constantinople and the patriarchal throne are depicted as an earthly heaven and a divine throne on earth – an image mirroring the heavenly throne of God. The Monastery of Pammakaristos is portrayed as an earthly paradise, a New Zion, the beauty and the mother of all churches, not established by human hands, but by God Himself. This rhetorical *ekphrasis* closely echoes earlier descriptions traditionally reserved for Hagia Sophia. Thus, it affirms the intentions of the patriarchal circles to present themselves to the Western audience as the rightful inheritors of the Byzantine legacy and reflects their self-understanding as the guardians of God’s Chosen People.¹⁸⁹

The socionyms used by Malaxos also align with this concept of chosenness. In his *History*, the Greeks are most often referred to as *Rhomaioi*, underscoring their continuity with the Byzantine (*Rhomaic*) legacy. Notably, when referring to the Byzantine period, Malaxos frequently uses the temporal phrase “in the time of the *Rhomaioi*” (εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τῶν Ῥωμαίων) or adds the term Empire (βασιλεία), as “in the time of the Empire of the *Rhomaioi*” (εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τῆς βασιλείας τῶν Ῥωμαίων).¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, the *Rhomaioi* also refer to his Greek contemporaries, or their predecessors after the Fall,¹⁹¹ and even the language they speak is occasionally referred to as *Rhomaic* (Ῥωμαϊκά).¹⁹² Furthermore, in contrast to certain Byzantine narratives that identify the Catholic Church as *Roman* (Ῥωμαϊκή),¹⁹³ Malaxos describes the Greek churches – and more broadly, the Ecumenical Patriarchate – as

¹⁸⁸ Marchal, “The Chronicle of Malaxos”, 27.

¹⁸⁹ This idea underpins the comparison between the patriarch seated on his throne and God seated upon His heavenly throne (*Historia Patriarchica*, 204). Furthermore, in recounting the events surrounding the self-declared Metropolitan of Monemvasia, Arsenios, Malaxos notes that Arsenios did not seek forgiveness from the “common Lord and Master” – the vivid icon of Christ on Earth – thereby reinforcing the theological and symbolic significance of the patriarchal office (*ibid.*, 145).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82, 102.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 104, 128, 148, 158, 159, 166, 174, 200.

¹⁹² As Malaxos notes regarding Patriarch Raphael, he did not speak the Rhomaic (Ῥωμαϊκά) – that is, the Greek – language, but only Serbian (Σερβικά), as he was originally from Serbia (*ibid.*, 114). This statement underscores once again the importance of language and origin in Malaxos’ narrative.

¹⁹³ Cf. Angelou, “Who am I?”, 10–11.

Rhomaic (Ῥωμαϊκή), thereby claiming for them the true continuity of the *Rhomaic* (Byzantine) legacy.¹⁹⁴

In summary, while Konstantinos Moustakas asserts that the *Historia Politica* and *Historia Patriarchica* “correctly expound the idea of the discontinuity between the Byzantine emperors and the Ottoman sultans”, the opposite could be argued. Traces of the older model of identification can still be observed, most notably in the concept of the chosenness of the Greek people. The key categories of identification remain largely unchanged: descent, language, and religion. Among these, religion gains particular prominence due to the specific circumstances of Ottoman society. Furthermore, the importance of the Sultan is clearly emphasised through his designation as emperor (basileus) – and, more significantly, as emperor of the *Rhomaioi*.

However, it is important to note that all these views had primarily stemmed from the connection the Ecumenical Patriarchate established with the new political order.¹⁹⁵ In this new order, the position of the Church was insecure and entirely dependent on the will of the Sultan.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, the Church of Constantinople regarded itself as the holder of primacy in the Orthodox world, as evidenced by a letter addressed to the Lutherans by Patriarch Jeremias II in May 1576. In this letter, he declares that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the “patria of all churches” (πατρίς τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν), that it has received the “new privileges of Orthodoxy” (νέα τὰ πρεσβεῖα τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας εἴληφε), and that it has been appointed as the “head of the Orthodox Churches” (εἰς κεφαλὴν τέτακται).¹⁹⁷ This statement reflects the historical primacy of the Byzantine state and Church within the Orthodox world and, apparently, the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s tendency to assert and preserve this primacy among all Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire, especially since, following the Ottoman

¹⁹⁴ *Historia Patriarchica*, 158–159.

¹⁹⁵ Sakel, “A Probable Solution”, 219–220.

¹⁹⁶ For the role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate during the period of *Turkokratia*, see S. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity. A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (London; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968); A. Ζαχαριάδου, *Δέκα τουρκικά έγγραφα για την Μεγάλη εκκλησία (1483–1567)* (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, 1996); D. G. Apostolopoulos, “Continuity and Change: The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 1: The Survival of a Byzantine Institution”, in: *A Companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, eds. Ch. Gastgeber et al., (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 103–117; M. Païzi-Apostolopoulou, “Continuity and Change: The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 2: Institutions and Administration: Continuity and Rupture”, in: *A Companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, 118–129; T. Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan: Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁹⁷ I. Καρμίρης, *Τα δογματικά και συμβολικά μνημεία της ορθόδοξου καθολικής Εκκλησίας Α΄* (Αθήνα: χ.ο., 1960³), 476.

conquest of the Balkans, nearly all autocephalous Churches were incorporated into a single imperial framework after almost a millennium.¹⁹⁸ Given this context, the idea of the Church of Constantinople as the ‘head of the Orthodox Churches’ is understandable, both ideologically and for practical reasons.

Additionally, the statements of Patriarch Jeremias II provide background for understanding the reasons behind the production of historiographical narratives within the Patriarchate. The work *Ecthesis Chronica* (*Historia Politica Constantinopoleos*) establishes a historical framework for a new, ‘official’, *modus vivendi* that emerged within the Patriarchate. Thereby, the Patriarchate viewed its reestablishment as a ‘shared good’, particularly in terms of its connections and relationships with the Ottoman conquerors.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, the *History of the Patriarchs of Constantinople* (*Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos*) had an unquestionable purpose, as it created a historical basis for the (insecure) privileges of the Ecumenical Throne, especially in view of its dependence on the Sultan.

Concerning its dependence on Ottoman political authority, in addition to the episode describing the imagined enthronement of Patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios by Mehmed II, another part of the *Historia Patriarchica* is particularly illustrative. As Malaxos narrates, during the second patriarchal tenure of Jeremias I (1537), there was an attempt at the complete destruction of all *Rhomaic* churches in the city, because *fetva* had been issued stating that in cities conquered by the sword, Christian churches must not exist. The Patriarch addressed this problem by presenting two Janissaries from Adrianople (Mustafa and Piris) as witnesses; they were 102 years old and testified to the divan that Emperor Constantine XI and his archontes had voluntarily handed over the keys of Constantinople to Mehmed II. Following this hearing, by order of the Sultan, a decree was issued stating that the question of the churches would never again be raised.²⁰⁰ Through this episode, it is possible to understand why the Patriarchate felt the need to secure its position, since this very incident demonstrates how precarious its status was.

Finally, it is of great significance to consider one of the most popular historiographical works of the post-Byzantine period: the largely anonymous Byzantine-style historical compilation known as the *Biblion Historikon* (Βιβλίον ιστορικὸν περιεχόν ἐν συνόψει διαφόρους καὶ ἐξόχους ιστορίας), once inaccurately ascribed

¹⁹⁸ Pitsakis, “De la fin des temps à la continuité impériale”, 228–229; P. Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Apostolopoulos, “Du sultan au basileus?”, 246.

²⁰⁰ *Historia Patriarchica*, 158–168.

to Dorotheus, the Metropolitan of Monemvasia,²⁰¹ although the name of Metropolitan Dorotheus is not known from the *Acts of the Great Church*, but Hierotheos.²⁰² Recently, Dean Sakel closed the discussion on the authorship by identifying the oldest manuscript and the basis of the chronicle in the Patriarchal Library in Jerusalem (Cod. *Hierosolymitanus, Sanctae Crucis* 28), attributing it to the already mentioned post-Byzantine intellectual Manuel Malaxos.²⁰³ Though it was copied, expanded and printed several times before 1800, the original version (that was characterised as the ‘unfinished’ one)²⁰⁴ was compiled by Malaxos, around August 1570.²⁰⁵ It is important to note that the *Chronicle of 1570* refers to a collection covering a range of manuscripts containing a chronicle that, in its complete form, spans from Creation to at least 1570.²⁰⁶ Most of these manuscripts either originate directly from the workshop of Manuel Malaxos or serve as continuations of his chronicles. Nevertheless, its importance in the shaping of the consciousness of post-Byzantine Greeks is unquestionable, given that, practically speaking, it was the most popular and the most read book of history among a substantial portion of Greeks. If not the only one, as Cyril Mango has stated.²⁰⁷

This chronicle, written in the vernacular language (hence the popularity and the later revisions), represents history in the manner of Byzantine world chronicles as a continuity from Genesis until the present moment.²⁰⁸ The first part is world

²⁰¹ E. M. Jeffreys, A. Kazhdan, “Dorotheos of Monemvasia”, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* [vol.] I, 654.

²⁰² Th. Preger, “Die Chronik vom Jahre 1570 (‘Dorotheos’ von Monembasia und Manuel Malaxos)”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 11 (1902), 4–15.

²⁰³ D. Sakel, “The Chronicle of 1570: the original version”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 106/1 (2013), 143–152. On manuscript tradition see: D. Sakel, “The Manuscripts of the Chronicle of 1570”, *Byzantion* 83 (2013), 363–374.

²⁰⁴ “ἄνευ τοῦ τέλους αὐτοῦ” as it describes Chrysostomos Papadopoulos (see Παπαδόπουλος, “Περὶ τῆς ἐλληνικῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς χρονογραφίας”, 412–413).

²⁰⁵ Sakel, “The Chronicle of 1570”, 144.

²⁰⁶ Sakel, “A probable solution to the Problem”, 206; Sakel, “The Manuscripts”, 363–374; Παπαδόπουλος, “Περὶ τῆς ἐλληνικῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς χρονογραφίας”, 410–420.

²⁰⁷ C. Mango, “Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium”, in: *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition: University of Birmingham, Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, 1979*, eds. M. Mullett, R. Scott, (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies University of Birmingham, 1981), 48–57.

²⁰⁸ This work references the 1814 edition of the Chronicle: *Βιβλίον ιστορικόν περιέχον εν συνόψει διαφόρους και εξόχους ιστορίας: Αρχόμενον από Κτίσεως Κόσμου, μέχρι της αλώσεως Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, και των ακολούθων Σουλτάνων / Συλλεχθέν μεν εκ διαφόρων ακριβών Ιστοριών, και εις την κοινήν γλώσσαν μεταφρασθέν παρά του πανιερωτάτου μητροπολίτου Μονεμβασίας Κυρίου Δωροθέου. Νυν δε μετατυπωθέν, και επιμελώς διορθωθέν, Παρά Νικολάω Γλυκεί τω εξ Ιωαννίνων, Εν Βενετία 1814.* (=Biblion Historikon), but we

history from the Creation until the reign of Cleopatra, when the Empire of Egypt was destroyed by Roman forces.²⁰⁹ Immediately after follows the description of the Trojan War, but this remembrance of Ancient Greek history does not reflect any perception about their Hellenic origin.²¹⁰ On the contrary, the description of the Trojan War is an introduction and is the basis for the story about Aeneas, the forefather of the Romans, and in accordance with a classical Byzantine chronicle.²¹¹ Namely, in classical Byzantine chronicles ancient history is presented in the framework of Roman and Christian history and tradition: the Creation, Abraham, Moses, the Hebraic history and later Persian and Hellenistic history (βασιλεία Ἑλλήνων) from Macedonian King Philip II until Ptolemy II Philadelphus.²¹²

After the Trojan War, Malaxos and later rewriters of the Chronicles provide the three catalogues or chronological tables. The first catalogue is of the Roman Emperors that is to say of Ancient Rome (Περὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλέων ἡγουν τῆς παλαιᾶς Ῥώμης), from Caesar to Constantine the Great, the most Christian Emperor (χριστιανικώτατος Βασιλεύς [sic.]).²¹³ The next catalogue is of the Emperors of Constantinople, the New Rome (Περὶ τῶν βασιλέων Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τῆς νέας Ῥώμης), from Constantine who founded Constantinople, to the contemporary Sultan, depending on the edition of the Chronicle.²¹⁴ Finally, the third catalogue is of the Patriarch of Constantinople from Stachys the Apostle, ordained by Saint Andrew as the first bishop of Byzantion, to the third patriarchal service of Jeremias II (1587–1595).²¹⁵

The thematic scheme of the Chronicle illustrates, on a macro level, the interests of the public. On a micro level, it reflects the ideology of the Ecumenical

also have taken into account the descriptions of manuscripts provided by Chrysostomos Papadopoulos (see Παπαδόπουλος, “Περὶ τῆς ἐλληνικῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς χρονογραφίας”, 412–413).

²⁰⁹ Essentially, the first part of the *Chronicle* concludes with Ptolemy II Philadelphus and the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint). The mention of Cleopatra serves to illustrate the shift in world power, or the *translatio imperii*. *Biblion Historikon*, 122–123.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123–132.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 139–140.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 9–123; E. M. Jeffreys, “Byzantine Chroniclers and Ancient History”, *Byzantion* 49 (1979), 199–238; D. Dželebdžić, “Ἡ δημοκρατική Ῥώμη στην πολιτική σκέψη του Μιχαήλ Ψελλοῦ”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 42 (2005), 23–34.

²¹³ *Biblion Historikon*, 133–134. Before the list of Roman emperors, a list of the seven kings of Ancient Rome is provided, along with a brief overview of the Roman Republic.

²¹⁴ In the edition we have access to, it goes up to Sultan Mehmed III (1595–1603). *Ibid.*, 134–135.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 136–138.

Patriarchal throne. The narrative framework of the main part of *Biblion Historikon* is as follows: the history of the Roman Empire and its Christian successor, the Empire of Constantinople; the history of the Ottoman Empire, with an extensive excursus on the situation in the Church during the three patriarchal services of Jeremias II; the history of the Morea under Frankish rule; an excursus on John VIII Palaiologos and the Synod of Ferrara-Florence; the history of Venice, focusing primarily on the catalogue of the *doges*; followed by a plethora of vernacular texts concerning predictions, astronomy, and other folklore topics; and, a list of the *offikia* (offices) of the Byzantine court.

As regards the schematic structure and presentation of historical material in the main part of the Chronicle – the history of an Empire – Malaxos and his continuators narrate the history of the Roman Empire from Romulus to the Sultans Mustafa III and Abdul Hamid I (in the final redaction), as a historical continuum. However, as we can conclude from the aforementioned catalogues, there is an important distinction. Namely, the author does not seek traces of his political legacy in Ancient Rome, but in Constantinople, the Christian city “built by Constantine in the name of Theotokos” (νὰ κτίσῃ Πόλιν τῇ Θεοτόκῳ), and in Christianity, because Byzantine Emperors are primarily the Emperors of Christians.²¹⁶ An illustrative example is the description of the Church of the Holy Apostles as a burial place for the “most Christian Emperors”.²¹⁷ Furthermore, for him, the *Rhomaioi* are the Greek holders of Constantinople, because the authors write that Venetians took the Empire of Constantinople (τὴν Βασιλείαν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως) and later add that “Emperors of Rhomaioi” (οἱ Ρωμαῖοι οἱ Βασιλεῖς) went to the East and there settled the Empire.²¹⁸ Hence, it was the Greeks’ vivid consciousness of historical continuity from Constantine and the later Byzantine emperors as Christian rulers, to the Sultans as the emperors of Constantinople, which they regarded as a New Jerusalem.

The mentioned view is supported by the chroniclers’ description of the Fall of Constantinople and the sacrilege of the Hagia Sophia and other churches which they expressed through the verse of Psalm 79: “O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled.” Thus, it is a clear comparison of the destruction of Jerusalem with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. Gods omen was the darkening of the Sun, that was not an eclipse, but a sign for the whole world that the Queen of the Cities had been handed over to the “Turks”.²¹⁹ Furthermore, the chroniclers’ self-understanding as members of the New Israel is elaborated through a verse from the Book of Daniel about three Holy Children: Hananiah, Azariah, and

²¹⁶ On the building of Constantinople see *ibid.*, 172–174.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 395.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 413.

Misael thrown into the blazing furnace: “We are handed ‘to an unjust king, the most wicked in all the world’.”²²⁰

Therefore, it could be argued that for the Greeks in the 16th century and beyond, the consciousness of their divine chosenness – an essential element of Byzantine imperial ideology – remained alive.²²¹ For Malaxos and his successors, the term *Rhomaïos* symbolised the Byzantine imperial legacy and served to distinguish them from other Christians in the new Ottoman world. Thus, the term *Rhomaïos* is not equivalent to ‘Roman’, as the authors clearly distinguish between the ancient Romans and the Byzantines, the latter being Christians and the rightful holders of Constantinople. Hence, in the 16th century, *Rhomaïos* was synonymous with Greek-speaking Christians, subjects of the Ottoman sultans, given that the language and alphabet spoken and used at that time were named *Rhomaic* (γλῶσσα Ῥωμαϊκή and γράμματα Ῥωμαϊκά).²²² Furthermore, the compilers were aware that it was one language, given that they did not correct mentions of the Greek (Hellenic) language in the section taken from the *Ecthesis Chronica*.²²³

As can be deduced from the *Ecthesis Chronica*, *Historia Politica*, *Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos*, and *Biblion Historikon*, these works reflect a shared worldview and ideology shaped by the enduring legacy of the Byzantine imperial tradition and the new realities of life under Ottoman rule. At the same time, within the intellectual environment of Malaxos, a completely new type of post-Byzantine historiography began to emerge: the Greek history of the Ottomans. Specifically, the *Chronicle of 1570* would evolve into what became known as the *Greek Chronicle of the Turkish Sultans*. Manuel Malaxos, who can rightly be regarded as the principal historian of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the 16th century, would go on to compose a historiographical narrative of Ottoman-Muslim history from an Ottoman-Christian perspective.²²⁴ Hence, the three historical works of Malaxos – the *History of the Patriarchs*, the *Chronicle of 1570*, and the *Chronicle of the Turkish Sultans* – simultaneously represent the three main components of the post-Byzantine self-understanding of the Greek ecclesiastical elite: the Byzantine legacy, the central role of the Church, and the reality of Ottoman political power.

The defining characteristic of all these histories is their focus on Constantinople. This emphasis can be understood in two ways. First, it reflects the symbolic importance of Constantinople in the collective consciousness of post-Byzantine Greeks

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 413; Dan. 3:32.

²²¹ Cf. S. Eshel, *The Concept of the Elect Nation in Byzantium* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 185–202.

²²² *Biblion Historikon*, 450–451.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 422.

²²⁴ Sakel, “A Probable Solution”, 204–220.

as the ‘mother-city’ (μητρόπολις). Second, it stems from the fact that both political and religious authority were centred there. In order to gain a broader perspective – one that moves beyond the imperial centre – we will now turn our attention to the historiographical works known as the ‘Short Chronicles’.

4. Writing Contemporary History – Short Chronicles

The Byzantine Short Chronicles represent a specific subgenre of historical writing.²²⁵ According to Peter Schreiner, these chronicles lack narrative elements and the contextual analysis typical of traditional historical works. Instead, they consist of concise, personal chronographic notes that document specific events within a relatively short or long timeframe, depending on the type to which they belong.²²⁶ Despite their varied origins and classifications, these records primarily note the selected events. However, this selectivity in documenting history offers insights into the authors’ self-understanding and organising of the social world.²²⁷ Additionally, all these chronicles are in a certain respect the media used for the conscious and unconscious transmission of ideas.²²⁸

It should be stressed that these Chronicles were compiled in different circumstances and environments. Unlike the works produced in the immediate environment of the Ecumenical Patriarchal throne, these short annals offer a valuable insight into the world of the lower clergy. They reflect not only the life in an imperial capital, but also in various regions across the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. Significantly, nearly all the short chronicles composed during the period of the ‘Tourkokratia’ were written almost exclusively by lower-ranking clerics and monks – and, more importantly, they record contemporary history.²²⁹ The short chronicles originated in prominent monastic centres such as Mount Athos and the island of Patmos, but also in urban hubs like Thessaloniki, Constantinople, and other important Orthodox cities

²²⁵ *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* [vol.] I–III. *CFHB* XII/1–3, Hrsg. P. Schreiner, (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975–1979) (= *Kleinchroniken* I–III).

²²⁶ *Ibid.* I, 21; Καρπόζηλος, *Βυζαντινοί Ιστορικοί Δ΄*, 557.

²²⁷ Although Apostolos Karpozilos states that these chorographic notes were written without any clear connection, and that their only common feature is the recording of years and dates (cf. Καρπόζηλος, *Βυζαντινοί Ιστορικοί Δ΄*, 556), their main purpose remains the same as in any historiographical work: to record history and pass it on to future generations (cf. S. Kilic, “Ottoman Perception in The Byzantine Short Chronicles”, *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 32 (2013), 111–136).

²²⁸ *Kleinchroniken* II, 38–40; P. Varona, “Chronology and History in Byzantium”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 58 (2018), 389–422.

²²⁹ *Kleinchroniken* II, 42–43.

throughout the former Byzantine *oikoumene*.²³⁰ This fact, once again, underscores the central role of the Church in shaping post-Byzantine historiography.²³¹ Hence, due to the diverse regions of provenance of these short chronicles, researchers are afforded the opportunity to examine the identification within the Greek-speaking community of the Ottoman Empire from a broader geographical and, consequently, contextual framework.

In terms of text and context, the three-dimensional nature of this subgenre will be explored. Firstly, a short chronicle, due to its idiosyncratic nature, offers insights into the self-understanding of its anonymous – or occasionally known – author, as it can be seen as a product of personal memory. An illustrative example is *Chronicle No. 106*, a local account preserved in a book once owned by Georgios, a deacon from Chios. This chronicle covers events on the islands of Rhodes, Kos, and Chios. Notably, it recounts that a star appeared three years after the Ottoman conquest of the Great City, Constantinople.²³² Thus, the historical consciousness of this author was shaped by the tragic event of the Fall.

Second, all short chronicles are created or compiled within specific social contexts. For example, Manuel Grekos from Thessaloniki writes in the short *Chronicle No. 107*, at the beginning of 16th century, that his son Theodoros was born in the morning while “the Turk” (i.e., the muezzin) was singing. In another note, he mentions that his daughter Euphrosyne was born on “Clean Monday”. From these entries, we can observe that “the Turks”, as he names Ottomans, and their way of life had become part of the Greek everyday experience.²³³

Third, analysing a short chronicle alongside the textual context of its creation may be useful in clarifying certain aspects of the authors’ or compilers’ self-understanding and the effect of identifications. At this point, it is crucial to emphasise the significance of manuscript context, as some messages may be embedded within the structure of the manuscript itself. This dimension involves investigating the variations of its elements and the underlying reasons for such variations. These differences form the basis for understanding the shared memory landscape of a collective, as well as its myriad expressions – particularly in terms of how a collective categorises itself in relation to others across various temporal and spatial contexts.²³⁴ At this stage, it is crucial to pose the following question: What was the primary role of the compilers of these short chronicles?

²³⁰ P. Πάντις, “Τα Βραχέα χρονικά ως πηγή της ιστορίας του 16^{ου} αιώνα. Γενικές παρατηρήσεις”, *Βυζαντινός Δόμος* 5-6 (1991-1992), 13-24.

²³¹ Kleinchroniken II, 43.

²³² *Ibid.* I, 666.

²³³ *Ibid.* I, 668-669; Kilic, “Ottoman Perception”, 123-133.

²³⁴ Kleinchroniken II, 55.

Their primary task was not writing about world histories but recording events important for themselves or the transmission of one specific idea, and, depending on the chronicle, we can trace the modulation of this idea. All of these authors, as we see them, were well aware of the role they had as representatives of an unofficial historiography and probably they had some consciousness about transmitting ideas, because compiling these chronicles represented their voluntary intention. Also, one compiler does not aim to use them for political or religious propaganda, instead they used them, as it has previously been said, for transferring information to the next generation. However, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive picture in this paper due to the overwhelming amount of material. Instead, in an attempt to illustrate the previously mentioned changes in the understanding of their own collectivity short chronicles will be analysed based on certain criteria. The primary criterion, given the selectivity of personal memory, will be thematic content, while the secondary criteria will include chronology and geography.

The post-Byzantine chronicles that focus on Byzantine history as an imperial narrative will be classified as ‘imperial chronicles’ (Reichschroniken and Kaiserchroniken in Peter Schreiner’s classification). Later chronicles that similarly convey the history of the Ottoman sultans will be classified as ‘*reaya* chronicles’ (or Chroniken türkischer Eroberungen in Schreiner’s edition), while those reflecting elements of local identification will fall under Schreiner’s classification of ‘local chronicles’ (Localchroniken).

To begin with the so-called imperial chronicles. These chronicles, which are very similar to *Fasti consulares*,²³⁵ represent a list of Byzantine emperors with the years of their reign and eventually some important events, more specifically natural or religious disasters. The most representative example is the *Short Chronicle No. 14*.²³⁶ Its structure follows the traditional Byzantine model of a world chronicle, that is to say – short chronographic notes from Adam to Constantine the Great, with whom the imperial authority transferred from Ancient Rome to Constantinople. These notes are followed by a chronographic catalogue of Byzantine emperors to the last emperor – Constantine XI Dragases with an inserted note on the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204 accompanied by a lament. The last chronographic note is about the Fall of Constantinople into the “hand of godless Hagarenes” (παρὰ τῶν

²³⁵ *Fasti Consulares* are lists of eponymous magistrates (consuls) in the Roman state, whose terms of service served as chronological markers. From those lists, the historiographical genre of annals (short chronicles in Byzantium) emerged. S. R. F. Price, A. Hugh McDonald, “Fasti”, in: *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds. S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999³), 588; Kazhdan, “Chronicle”, 444.

²³⁶ Kleinchroniken I, 128–155.

ἁθέων Ἀγαρηνῶν).²³⁷ The compiler who had refined the chronicle compares his collective, that we call Byzantines, to the Jews and their sufferings during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Through this chronicle an imperial idea can be observed and connected with the identification of the Greek-speaking community of the Ottoman Empire with the imperial past. It can be assumed that they saw themselves as the legitimate heirs to the imperial legacy and a Chosen People. This ideological concept is strictly connected with the idea of the *Romanitas* or the *Rhomaic* legacy of the Byzantine Empire, and in all of these chronicles the only and exclusive term used for their ancestors, today referred to as Byzantines, was “*Rhomaioi*” (οἱ Ρωμαῖοι). There is no mention of the glorious Hellenic past, which was widespread in the late Byzantine writings.²³⁸

Additionally, the manuscript context of *Chronicle No. 14*, along with some other unpublished short chronicles, can be utilised to explain their role in conveying the concept of imperial legacy. With a few exceptions, this imperial chronicle is often saved with the text of *Patria Constantinople* (Πάτρια Κωνσταντινουπόλεως - a historical narrative on the history and monuments of Constantinople) and the ceremonial book erroneously attributed to Georgios Kodinos.²³⁹ Furthermore, in the edition of the *Pseudo-Kodinos handbook* published in the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* series, *Chronicle No. 14* was attributed to Georgios Kodinos and is known as *Chronicon de annis ab orbe condito* (Περὶ τῶν ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου μέχρι τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου, καὶ περὶ τῶν βασιλευσάντων ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ βασιλίδι τῶν πόλεων μέχρι καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς παρὰ τῶν Ἀγαρηῶν ταύτης ἀλώσεως).²⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the *Pseudo-Kodinos handbook* was by itself one of the symbols of the Byzantine imperial legacy and a link between Roman and Byzantine tradition.²⁴¹ The majority of the manuscripts containing the aforementioned *Chronicle No. 14* constitute a unique manuscript concept, which Jean Verpeaux referred to as “*De rebus Constantinopolitanis*”.²⁴² Codices of this specified type contain the following

²³⁷ *Ibid.* I, 155.

²³⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* I, 148; Mango, “Discontinuity”, 48–57; Kilic, “Ottoman Perception”, 131–132.

²³⁹ *Pseudo-Kodinos, Traité des Offices*, éd. J. Verpeaux, (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1966), 92–107; *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies*, eds. R. Macrides, J. A. Munitiz, D. Angelov, (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 18–19; *Kleichroniken I*, 125–126.

²⁴⁰ *Georgii Codini Excerpta de antiquitatibus Constantinopolitanis*. *CSHB*, ed. I. Bekker, (Bonnae: Impensis Ed. Weberi, 1843), 147–165. English translation of the title: *About the years from the creation of the world to the reign of Constantine the Great, and about the rulers of that Queen of cities until its Fall to the Hagarenes*.

²⁴¹ N. Aschenbrenner, “Contesting Ceremony, Contesting Byzantium: Reading Pseudo-Kodinos in Early modern Europe”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 72 (2018), 197–214.

²⁴² *Pseudo-Kodinos*, ed. Verpeaux, 101. Cf. *Georgii Codini Excerpta*, 1–208.

works: Πάτρια Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, the catalogue of Ecumenical patriarchs from the time of Constantine the Great to the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos, chronicles on the Fall of Constantinople, the list of imperial tombs in that time already ruined Church of the Holy Apostles and other Constantinopolitan churches and monasteries and a compendium of world or biblical history.²⁴³

All these texts create one imperial environment, that is to say one short presentation of imperial legacy through the lists of emperors and patriarchs, historical works on the history and monuments of Constantinople, and the illustration of the imperial court. These manuscripts were widespread in the first half of the 16th century, but their template, upon which later manuscripts were transcribed, must have been written in the first half of the 15th century and enhanced immediately after the Fall of Constantinople, as it is testified by the manuscript *Mutinensis 122*. This famous manuscript of Zonaras' *History* from Modena, contains similar 'patriographical' works, a catalogue of *offikia* and catalogues of emperors and patriarchs.²⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Niels Gaul emphasises *Pseudo-Kodinos' handbook* as a *lieu de mémoire* for post-Byzantine Greeks. He argues that this work evolved into a cherished and sought-after memory, evoking the nostalgic essence of something irretrievably lost.²⁴⁵ On the other hand, the manuscript from Modena does not include *Pseudo-Kodinos' handbook* but rather a list of *offikia*.²⁴⁶ Therefore, the focus of research might be shifted from *Pseudo-Kodinos' work* to a network of symbols of imperial authority, specifically the Holy Imperial City of Constantinople, the Church of Saint Sophia, and the 'sacred memory' of deceased emperors and patriarchs. The manuscript from Modena is particularly relevant in this context because it contains the portraits of all the Roman and Byzantine emperors, serving as a visual representation of the underlying concept of imperial authority. All the aforementioned indicate

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 95–102.

²⁴⁴ Ο. Γκρατζίου, "Μαρτυρίες για τους χρήστες του Ζωναρά της Μόδενας", *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 19 (1997), 39–62.

²⁴⁵ N. Gaul, "The Partridge's Purple Stockings: Observations on the Historical, Literary and Manuscript Context of *Pseudo-Kodinos' Handbook on Court Ceremonial*", in: *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, Hrsg. G. Fatouros, M. Grünbart, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 101–102.

²⁴⁶ An illustrative example is the manuscript *Parisinus Graecus 1783* – probably written in the third quarter of the 16th century in Italy by Greek immigrants from Crete: Μ. Α. Курышева, "Рукопись Paris. gr. 1788 со списком императорских гробниц храма Святых Апостолов в Константинополе: новая датировка", *Graphosphaera: письмо и письменные практики* 1 (2021), 159–168. On the lists of *offikia* see A. Kazhdan, "Offices" in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* [vol.] I, 1513 and J. Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les οφφίκια de l'Église byzantine* (Paris: Institut français d'Études Byzantines, 1970).

that the short chronicles were more than mere notes in the margins of post-Byzantine manuscripts; in fact, they served as mediums for conveying a specific idea.

Aside from ideological motivations and the preservation of tradition, these tracts – particularly the lists of *offikia* and treatises such as *Pseudo-Kodinos* – likely served practical purposes as well. The Ecumenical Patriarchate sought to maintain the traditional system of the patriarchal court, with officials whose roles were enlarged in response to the new historical circumstances. The Patriarchate had gradually begun to incorporate certain *offikia* connected to the imperial court.²⁴⁷ For example, the office of the Grand Logothete (*megas logothetes*), whose last holder in the Byzantine Empire was the previously mentioned Georgios Sphrantzes.²⁴⁸ Taken together, these observations support the earlier claim that the Patriarchate regarded itself as the legitimate heir to the Byzantine imperial authority, embodying both the sacred authority (*sacerdotium*) and the custodianship of the imperial tradition (*imperium*).²⁴⁹

In discussing the variations introduced at the beginning of this section, those that were influenced by regional factors will be focused on first. The distinctions in understanding this identification with the imperial past are well-documented in short chronicles. For example, we can compare imperial *Chronicle No. 14*, likely compiled in a Constantinopolitan, and thus imperial, context, with imperial *Chronicle No. 22*, which was probably composed in the Peloponnese.

Imperial *Chronicle No. 14* emphasises the institution of the emperor and the ideological foundation of the Empire, culminating in the Fall of Constantinople as the end of the Christian *oikoumene*. For the anonymous compiler, identification with the imperial past is centred on the authority of the emperor, embodied by the imperial city of Constantinople. In contrast, *Chronicle No. 22* focuses on the history of the Palaiologos dynasty, which gradually liberated the Peloponnese during the last two centuries of Byzantine history.²⁵⁰ It marks the end of the Christian era with the fall of the Peloponnese, portraying it as a voluntary surrender to Sultan Mehmed II by Despot Demetrios Palaiologos. The chronicle concludes with the death of Despot Thomas and cites a prophecy linking the names of the first and last Byzantine

²⁴⁷ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, 172–176.

²⁴⁸ *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 85; Kioussopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 81–84.

²⁴⁹ I. Κυριακωννάκης, *Ιστορικός λόγος της Μεγάλης Εκκλησίας κατά την πρώτη νευτερικότητα* [διδασκτορική διατριβή] (Αθήνα: Σχολή Οικονομικών και Πολιτικών Επιστημών ΕΚΠΑ, 2011), 29–31; Pitsakis, “De la fin des temps à la continuité impériale”, 213–239.

²⁵⁰ Kleinchroniken I, 180–188; S. Runciman, *Μυστράς: Βυζαντινή Πρωτεύουσα της Πελοποννήσου* (Αθήνα: Καρδαμίτσα, 1986).

emperors and their mothers, thereby emphasising the significance of Constantinople and the enduring legacy of the Byzantine Empire.²⁵¹

These observations illustrate the topocentric nature of collective memory and its impact on identification. For the Peloponnesian compiler, imperial overlapping identification still revolved around imperial authority, but it was now represented through the Palaiologos dynasty, whose members were viewed as both liberators and the last defenders of that region. Therefore, we can conclude that one layer of identification of the post-Byzantine Greek community was rooted in the Byzantine imperial past, which is reflected in the institution of the emperor, the ruling dynasty, the imperial city of Constantinople, and the Hagia Sophia as a symbol of sacred authority.

Conversely, the new circumstances also influenced the collective consciousness of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire. This change is evident in the later short chronicles written from the first half of the 16th century onwards, which P. Schreiner classifies under the category of the *Chronicle of Turkish Conquests*.²⁵² In contrast to the earlier chronicles categorised as ‘imperial’, these later texts reveal how their authors perceived their contemporary reality and projected it onto the past. As they were primarily composed in rural Orthodox monasteries within the Ottoman Empire and reflect the self-perception of the Greek-speaking *reaya*, we propose classifying them as ‘*reaya* chronicles’.

Nevertheless, in these chronicles, both known and anonymous authors recount the histories of their masters – specifically, they focus exclusively on the history of the Ottoman conquests. This is evident from the inscriptions at the beginning of *Short Chronicle No. 63*: “The reigns of Ottoman rulers who ruled over Constantinople”,²⁵³ or *Chronicle No. 58*: “On the emperors (*basileis*) of the Turks and the years in which they conquered the cities mentioned below.”²⁵⁴ Occasionally, in the absence of clear criteria, anonymous chroniclers refer to the Ottoman sultans using the imperial title *basileus*.²⁵⁵ A noteworthy example of their evolving understanding of the circumstances and their community’s role in this context is found in *Chronicle No. 60*, which contains the following chronological notes: it begins with the foundation of Constantinople, followed by the construction of Hagia Sophia, the Prophet Muhammad, and then details the arrival of the Ottomans from Asia to Europe in 1307, along

²⁵¹ For a more detailed discussion of this legend, see M. Николић, *Јелена Драјаш Палеолојина – њоследња царица Ромеја* (Београд: Филип Вишњић, 2018), 201–222.

²⁵² Kleinchroniken I, 375–588.

²⁵³ *Ibid.* I, 471–482.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* I, 418–431.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* I, 365–366, 387, 406, 431.

with the subsequent history of their conquests.²⁵⁶ Thus, we can still observe the aforementioned elements of their identification – Constantinople and Hagia Sophia as earthly manifestations of political and sacred authority – but now the primary figures in these chronicles are the Ottoman sultans.

Within this context, *Chronicle No. 54* also merits attention, as it includes brief references to the last five Byzantine emperors – spread across three entries – before proceeding with a detailed narrative of the Ottoman conquests, thus fostering a sense of historical continuity.²⁵⁷ This historical continuity is primarily rooted in the fact that Ottoman rulers were the holders of the imperial city of Constantinople, as it is attested in some chronicles. *Chronicle No. 63* has the title: “The reigns of the Turks who ruled over Constantinople.”²⁵⁸ Furthermore, *Chronicle No. 64* bestows upon Osman the title of “first Emperor of the Turks”, designating his reign as “legitimate” (κυρίως) and “authoritative” (καθολικῶς). It adds that from him originates the “Empire of the Turks”, which continues to this day, as they rule over Constantinople.²⁵⁹ Thus, it can be concluded that the anonymous chroniclers regarded the Ottoman rulers as legitimate authorities and as successors to the Byzantine imperial tradition.

For example, *Chronicle No. 58* depicts Sultan Selim I (1512–1520) as a brave, wise, and just ruler, particularly for his decision to allow the restoration of old churches and the construction of new ones.²⁶⁰ In this chronicle, the primary antagonists are not the Ottomans, but rather the Jewish people, who are depicted as deceiving Sultan Suleiman I (1520–1566) and inciting him to take punitive action against the Christians of Constantinople, i.e., the Greeks.²⁶¹ Noteworthy is the fact that this chronicle is not merely a history of the Ottomans (i.e., the Turks, as the chroniclers referred to them), but it is also imbued with Greek folk stories – including one about the miraculous chanting of the Paschal troparion during Easter of 1522 or 1523 in Hagia Sophia. This reflects that the ‘nostalgic’ memory of a glorious past was still alive among the Greek-speaking community of the Ottoman Empire. The chronicle even ends with a note proclaiming that with the reign of Sultan Selim II – the fifth emperor (*basileus*) after the Fall – all the power of the “impious Hagarenes” would collapse, and their sovereignty would disappear from the face of the Earth.²⁶²

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* I, 450–457. A similar narrative structure is found in *Chronicle No. 61* (cf. *ibid.*, 458–460).

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* I, 388–393.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* I, 471.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* I, 493.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* I, 425.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* I, 425–426.

²⁶² *Ibid.* I, 425–426, 429–431.

As we have seen, the Ottomans are portrayed simultaneously in a neutral or even positive light; however, when the narration shifts into the realm of folklore, they assume the traditional negative portrayal inherited from Byzantine times. Nevertheless, depictions of them as enemies and impious figures are relatively rare, with the most prominent example found in *Chronicle No. 56*, composed on Mount Athos and evidently shaped by the memory of the Fall of Constantinople.²⁶³ Another illustrative example is the personal and depressive lament for the lost capital city in *Short Chronicle No. 63*.²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the chronicles rarely include negative statements when listing the conquests of the Ottoman sultans who followed Mehmed II.²⁶⁵ Especially notable is *Chronicle No. 59*, where the anonymous compiler first recounts the Ottoman rulers from Osman to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, and later adds: “These are our lords, known as Ottomans.”²⁶⁶

In addition to this change in the Greek perception of the Ottomans, for whom they use various terms like “Turks”,²⁶⁷ “Hagarenes”,²⁶⁸ and “Ismaelites”,²⁶⁹ according to old byzantine tradition,²⁷⁰ or rarely “Ottomans”,²⁷¹ we also observe a modulation in their self-perception, as they are predominantly referred to as a “race of Christians” (γένος τῶν Χριστιανῶν) in these chronicles.²⁷² There are two possible explanations for this. Firstly, these chronicles are a reflection of a specific moment of their composition, thus they can just reflect the status they had in the Ottoman administration and society. Secondly, as the Greek-speaking Christians after 1453 lived in a dominantly non-Christian state, religion came through as the principal criterion that distinguished them from others. What is important for our topic is that, over time, they have placed their faith as the primary and main category of their identification. Of course, these chronicles also reveal the influence of geography as the regions and cities they mention are often adapted to the areas from which the chronicles originate.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* I, 407–409.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* I, 407–409; D. Korać, R. Radić, “Mehmed II, ‘The Conqueror’ in Byzantine Short Chronicles and Old Serbian Annals, Inscriptions, and Genealogies”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 45 (2008), 289–300.

²⁶⁵ Kilic, “Ottoman Perception”, 126–131.

²⁶⁶ “οὗτοι εἰσὶν οἱ αὐθένται μας οἱ λεγόμενοι Ὀτμανλίδες”, *Kleinchronike* I, 442.

²⁶⁷ Within the short chronicles, the Ottomans are most frequently referred to as “Turks”, a term that appears approximately 200 times (*ibid.* I, 64, 67, 70, 84, 95, 99, 103, 206, 214, 216–217, 235, 249–250, 252–254, 256, 261 et passim).

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* I, 64, 66, 110, 113, 203, 365, 388, 430–431, 471.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.* I, 111, 419, 436, 461, 560, 561; *ibid.* III, 159.

²⁷⁰ G. C. Savvides, “Some Notes on the Terms Agarenoi, Ismailitai and Sarakenoi in Byzantine Sources”, *Byzantion* 67 (1997), 89–96; Kilic, “Ottoman Perception”, 120–121.

²⁷¹ *Kleinchroniken* I, 378, 429.

²⁷² *Ibid.* I, 430. Additionally, in chronicles composed after the Fall, the term *Rhomaioi* continued to be used to designate the post-Byzantine Greeks (cf. *Ibid.* I, 299–301).

Finally, the third group of chronicles – the ‘local chronicles’. This third group represents genuine microhistories, primarily reflecting a local identification. The events they narrate are closely tied to the region of their origin. For example, in the *Chronicle Nos. 27 and 28* all chronographic notes are strictly connected with Cyprus. Similarly, the *Chronicle from Mytilene (No. 30)* begins with a mention of the Gattilusi family, who ruled over the island of Lesbos and centres the information it provides around Lesbos and its masters.²⁷³

Referring back to the previously mentioned memory landscape, some changes can be observed. They do not begin with the foundation of Constantinople; instead, the *Chronicle from Argos and Nauplio (Chronicle No. 32)* starts its narration with a note about the first bishop of Argos and Nauplio.²⁷⁴ Notably, some notes in the chronicle begin with a reference to the accession to the throne or the death of the reigning Byzantine emperor, likely serving as chronological markers. Moreover, *Chronicle No. 32* is not solely focused on events in Nauplio and Argos, but also includes accounts related to Constantinopolitan authority. Hence, the role of Byzantine imperial authority in their collective consciousness is clearly established, especially considering that they had been under Latin control since the early 13th century.

At the same time, in the short chronicles originating from other Venetian-controlled regions of the Peloponnese (*No. 50B, No. 51, No. 52*), the narrative begins with a parallel foundation story of Constantinople and Venice.²⁷⁵ *Chronicle No. 50B* begins with the founding of Constantinople by Constantine the Great and the construction of Hagia Sophia, then proceeds to recount the founding of Venice, the building of the Church of Saint Mark, and the translation of his relics from Alexandria.²⁷⁶ Thus, they reflect the influence of the current political reality, while still emphasising the importance of sacred authority in Constantinople.

It is important to note that most of these chronicles record the Fall of Constantinople in 1453.²⁷⁷ This indicates that it was an event that not only marked but also profoundly shaped the collective memory of the Greek people. Furthermore, in *Chronicle No. 50B*, there is a prophecy predicting the end of Ottoman rule during the reign of the fifth ‘Hagarian’ emperor (*basileus*) of Constantinople, identified as Selim II.²⁷⁸ This prophecy was said to have been inscribed on the tomb of Constantine the Great and, following the Fall of Constantinople, was interpreted by Gennadios Scholarios himself. Nonetheless, it likely belonged to the broader Greek folkloric milieu,

²⁷³ *Ibid.* I, 223–224.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* I, 227–237.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* I, 362–371.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* I, 362–366.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* I, 365, 369, 370.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* I, 365–366.

as it appears not only in the *Biblion Historikon*,²⁷⁹ composed in Constantinople, but also in the *Micrographiae* of Georgios Klontzas.²⁸⁰ On the other hand, we can also observe the influences of the new political situation, given that in *Chronicle No. 41*, compiled in the Peloponnese, the Sultan Suleyman I is mentioned as a “great emperor” (μεγάλος βασιλεύς) and as a conqueror of the whole of Morea.²⁸¹

The impact of local elements on identification is quite notable in *Chronicle No. 65*. This chronicle, whose first two parts were likely written in Rhodes and the last three in Crete – probably at the Apezanes Monastery – primarily narrates the local history of Crete and the Dodecanese, especially Rhodes. It also references significant events such as Saladin’s conquest of Jerusalem, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, and the cities of Modon and Coron.²⁸² Nevertheless, this chronicle – particularly in parts III to V, according to Schreiner – provides us with crucial information about the contemporary Cretan community. Namely, the anonymous chroniclers provide detailed accounts of plague outbreaks and natural catastrophes. More importantly, they draw a clear contrast between the Cretans and the Turks. As they write: “In the year 1645, the Hagarenes began a war against us Cretans (highlighted by Z. Jovanović) with a great fleet, and they first took Cydonia (Chania).”²⁸³

In the context of the importance of geographical provenance, *Chronicles Nos. 72a, 71a, and 60a* should be referred to. Sima Ćirković and P. Schreiner suggest that these three short chronicles were influenced by the Old Serbian Annals, or possibly translations of them, particularly in the case of *Chronicle 60a*. Whether they are translations or Greek revisions of the Old Serbian Annals, they provide evidence of foreign influence – specifically Serbian – on the formation of a historical legacy.²⁸⁴ This influence is evident in the selective portrayal of events, with a primary focus on Serbian–Ottoman conflicts. However, we can also trace elements of local collective memory, especially in *Chronicle 72a*. Notably, the mention of the Battle of Maritsa stands out; the note states that Sultan Murad’s victory over Uglješa, “the Despot of

²⁷⁹ *Biblion historikon*, 539–540.

²⁸⁰ See M. Nikolić, “Identifications on Post-Byzantine Crete: The Case of *Micrography* of George Klontzas”, in this volume.

²⁸¹ *Kleinchroniken* I, 320.

²⁸² *Ibid.* I, 498–512.

²⁸³ “κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἀρχιμέ’ ἔτος ἐστράτευσαν καθ’ ἡμῶν τῶν Κρητῶν οἱ Ἀγαρηνοὶ μετὰ μεγάλου στόλου. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν ἔλαβον τὴν Κυδωνίαν”, *ibid.* I, 512.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* I, 558–564; *ibid.* III, 149–170; С. Ђирковић, “Српски летописи и византијске кратке хронике”, у: *Српска књижевност у доба Десџошовине. Научни скуп, Десџошовац, 22–23. август 1997, Дани српског духовног преображења V*, ур. Г. Јовановић, (Деспотовац: Народна библиотека “Ресавска школа”, 1998), 101–107.

Serbia”, marked the beginning of the Ismaelites’ rule over Christian empires.²⁸⁵ This could indicate that the chronicle was prepared, revised or translated in the region known as the State of Despot Uglješa or on Mount Athos, particularly given the significance attributed to the Battle of Maritsa by its anonymous compilers.²⁸⁶ Additionally, a certain Dionysios – likely from Thessaloniki – included in his chronographic work (*Chronicle No. 49*), written after 1403, references to the dates of the death of the Serbian Emperor Stefan Dušan (20 December 1355), who had conquered all Byzantine territories surrounding Thessaloniki, and Despot Jovan Uglješa (26 September 1371).²⁸⁷ These notes underscore the significance of topical history and its role in the collective memory of the community.

As the foregoing discussion suggests, the collective consciousness and memory of wider social groups in post-Byzantine society were influenced by multiple factors, most notably geographical context and, subsequently, the political and cultural milieu. Yet, amid these variations, certain constant symbols persist – most prominently the central place of Constantinople and Hagia Sophia as emblems of divine chosenness, and the continued veneration of Byzantine emperors as representations of a lost but glorified past. Naturally, the shifting circumstances of life under Ottoman rule gave rise to a new mode of self-understanding among the population – one shaped by their position as subjects of the Ottoman sultans, who had become the central holders of political authority.

5. Concluding Remarks

In its entirety, this paper demonstrates that the analysis of historiographical narratives provides valuable insights into the process of identification. As shown, historical accounts and chronicles are shaped not only in their content but also their narrative framework, structure and textual context by the cultural, social and political

²⁸⁵ Kleinchronike I, 561; Despot Jovan Uglješa Mrnjavčević was the brother of King Vukašin Mrnjavčević, who, as co-ruler with Emperor Uroš V Nemanjić (1355–1371), had been appointed his successor. During the disintegration of the Serbian Empire, Jovan Uglješa gained control over southern Macedonia, including the region around Serres. His actions – particularly his patronage of the monasteries of Mount Athos and his efforts to reconcile with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople within his territory – left a significant mark on the memory of the Athonite community. (see Γ. Σούμποτιτς, Ι. Σιμωνοπετρίτης, *Ιωάννης Ούγγλεσης: Ο φιλόχριστος δεσπότης των Σερρών – Αφιέρωμα στα 650 χρόνια από την μάχη του Έβρου (1371 – 2021)* (Άγιον Όρος: Αγιορειτική Βιβλιοθήκη, 2022).

²⁸⁶ See also Γ. Острогорски, “Света Гора после Маричке Битке”, *Зборник Филозофској факултету Универзитета у Београду* (Сјоменица Ј. Тадића) 11/1 (1970), 277–282.

²⁸⁷ Kleinchroniken I, 352.

environment, reflecting the criteria for both collective identity and individual self-understanding. All the components of a historiographical work, as a consciously constructed representation of the past, are products of present circumstances. Analysing their variations over time reveals both the enduring elements and those shaped or newly formed by contemporary conditions. Additionally, comparing contemporary historical narratives from different spatial provenances unveils diverse concepts of identification prevalent at that time.

Namely, immediately after the Fall of Constantinople, four modes of identification emerged. All reflected common categories: shared descent, the Greek language, the consciousness of their chosenness by God, the concept of *translatio imperii*, and the understanding of Constantinople as the New Jerusalem and Hagia Sophia as the New Zion. The new circumstances resulting from the Ottoman conquest compelled the Byzantines to develop new modes of identification in response to the 'catastrophe'. The first mode was eschatological, linking the collapse of the Byzantine Empire to the End of the World. Thus, the previous concept of political identification – connected with Constantinople, the institution of the emperor, or the ruling Palaiologos dynasty – could not be transformed into a new one. The second was the idea of the emergence of a new empire, clearly Hellenic in character. The third mode, which emerged in a Latin environment, focused on religion as the main category of identification, contrasting Christianity with the 'polluted' Islam. Finally, the fourth was a pragmatic concept of political identification, in which the Ottoman sultan was regarded as the legitimate heir of the Byzantine emperor, consequently accepting the new social position of Greek society in the Ottoman Empire as *reaya*.

One century later, within the environment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the last proposed mode of identification – the pragmatic one – had fully emerged. As evidenced by historical narratives produced under the auspices of the Patriarchate, some traces of the older modes of identification – such as shared descent, the Greek language, and the consciousness of the Byzantine imperial past – were still present, while others, like the emphasis on historical continuity between the ancient Greeks and the Greeks of the 16th century, were inevitably lost. At the same time, the influence of Ottoman reality was reflected in the acknowledgement of the Ottoman sultan as the marker of political authority and in the emphasis on the Church as the bearer of certain attributes of the imperial institution. This is clearly illustrated by the description of the new patriarchal seat, the Church of Pammakaristos, as a New Zion. In this new world, religion became the primary category of othering, while the memory of the lost Empire remained alive through the remembrance of the tragic events of 1453 and the lamentation over Hagia Sophia. Furthermore, regarding the memory of the old imperial legacy, the Ottoman sultans were regarded as holders of Constantinople, with their legitimacy rooted in Byzantine tradition.

Around the same time, in the historical narratives of the lower strata of Greek-speaking society within the Ottoman Empire – devoid of official ideological propaganda – the memory of the lost Empire was preserved through lamentations over Constantinople and Hagia Sophia. Additionally, folk stories about these places and prophecies concerning the end of Ottoman rule spread throughout the farthest regions inhabited by Greeks. On the other hand, these narratives also reflect the realities of everyday life in the Ottoman Empire, shaped by interactions with their neighbours – the ‘Turks’ – who are portrayed in three ways: positively, neutrally, or negatively, depending on the context. Additionally, the main characters of the narration gradually became the Ottoman sultans. Due to the varied locations where these narratives were composed, they also bear the influence of local traditions and histories. More importantly, they reveal a strong identification with their specific region, or local world. Nevertheless, in these historiographical works, it can be noted that the primary criteria for identification were language and religion, which simultaneously served as markers of distinction from others – primarily the Ottomans. There are no traces of any connection to Ancient or Byzantine Hellenism, suggesting that the consciousness of historical continuity from the Ancient Greeks was preserved mainly within the highly educated circles of the Byzantine Empire. With the transition of those scholars to the West, this idea gradually faded among the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire.



In conclusion, the identification of Greeks from the Fall of Constantinople until the end of the 16th century was profoundly shaped by the Byzantine legacy. This is illustrated through the continued use of the socionym *Rhomaïos*, the cultivation of shared symbols – most notably Constantinople and the Hagia Sophia as emblems of sacred authority – and the enduring concept of the Chosen People, deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian tradition. The earlier Byzantine identification with Ancient Greek heritage became largely invisible during this period. Instead, language and religion emerged as a primary marker of distinction for the post-Byzantine identification. The influence of the new Ottoman world is evident in the recognition of a historical continuity not between the Romans and the Ottomans, but rather between the Byzantines and the Ottoman emperors as successive holders of Constantinople. Thus, it can be said that post-Byzantine Greeks remained Byzantines (*Rhomaioi*), though redefined within the framework of their new *reaya* status under Ottoman rule.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ *Rhomaioi*, or *Rûm* as the Ottomans called them, were undoubtedly Greek-speaking Christians, and this understanding persists to the present day in the continued use of the term *Ρωμιός*, by which the Greek inhabitants of modern Turkey still refer to themselves, thereby continuing and further developing identifications of this period.

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Narrating the Past, Locating the Self: Matthaïos of Myra and Synadinos of Serres, Two Clerics from 17th-Century Ottoman Europe¹

“(The insurgents) 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 [...] 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 do not succumb to injustice [...] 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.”²

“The same year, in the month of February, the entire town and all its Christians, young and old, expelled me, the priest Synadinos, from Serres, away from home – my wife

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¹ This a substantially revised and expanded version of an article previously published in German as “Wir, die armen Rhomäer’ Selbstverortungen christliche Geschichtsschreiber im Osmanischen Reich”, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 68/5–6 (2017), 250–264.

² “(...) καὶ νὰ ἐξολοθεύσουσι τὸ γένος τῶν Ῥωμαίων, / ὅς’ εἶναι εἰς τὴν τζάρα τοὺς νὰ μὴ φάνοῦσι πλέον, / ἄρχοντας καὶ ἀρχόμενους καὶ τὴν πτωχολογίαν, / ποῦ θρέφουσι τὰ σπίτια τοὺς ὅλοι μὲ πγαραγματεῖαν· / ἀλλ’ ὁ θεὸς δὲν ἤθελε σὰν ἤθελαν ἐκεῖνοι, / ἀμμή μὲ τὴν αἰτίαν τοὺς ἤθελε νὰ τοὺς κρίνῃ· [...] ἀλλὰ καὶ σεῖς πορσέχεσθε, ὧ ἄρχοντες Ῥωμαῖοι, / ὅσοι ‘ς τὴν κούρτην βρίσκετε καὶ ὅσοι ἀγοραῖοι· ἰδέτε καὶ προσέχετε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀδικίαν [...] θαρρῶ καὶ δυναστεύετε τοὺς ἐπτωχοὺς τοὺς Βλάχους, / καὶ ἡ πλεοωξία σας τοὺς κάμνει Ῥωμαιομάχους, / καὶ δὲν μποροῦν νὰ σᾶς ἰδοῦν μηδὲ ζωγραφισμένους·.” (“Ἐτέρα ἱστορία τῶν κατὰ τὴν Οὐγγροβλαχίαν τελεσθέντων, ἀρξαμένη ἀπο Σερμπάνου Βοηβόνδα μέχρι Γαβριὴλ Βοηβόνδα, τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος Δουκὸς”, in: *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire* [vol.] II, éd. É. Legrand, (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1881), 245–246; translation according to N. Panou, “Greek-Romanian Symbiotic Patterns in the Early Modern Period: History, Mentalities, Institutions. Part II”, *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 4 (2007), 82–83).

and my children, my belongings, and my homeland. A synod was held and I was judged and told: 'From today on, we do not want you any more in our city. You don't belong to us, because you have brought us harm and ruin. Just tell us, you worthless person, have you become a respected man who deserves to have his hands kissed? No, you deserve to be battered and pilloried!' [...] Thus they deposed me definitely and all anathematised me – young and old, in the church and everywhere – and called me by the base name: 'The wicked Synadi, the cursed.' They drove me out of the church and took my parish."³

To be an Orthodox priest in the Ottoman Balkans was to endure many hardships – not necessarily from the 'cursed Turks', but also, as these voices make clear, from one's own 'Christian brothers'. The first testimony belongs to Matthaïos, the abbot of the Wallachian Monastery of Dealu, who in 1611 witnessed popular rage against his fellow Greeks, while the second one is from Synadinos, a parish priest from the Macedonian town of Serres, who decries his deposition and expulsion sometime around 1639.

Both chronicles, from which these passages are taken, have received considerable scholarly attention, first, because they provide an exceptional insight into the social and political realities in two different areas of the Ottoman Balkans in the first decades of the 17th century and, secondly, because they are among the very few texts from the early modern period in which the individuality of the author vibrates through the narrative. In what follows, I will consider how these two perspectives – broadly speaking, the societal and the individual perspective – might usefully be combined, and what conclusions can be drawn from this exercise for the study of historical identities.

Drawing on the results of recent research on early modern ego-documents (part 1), I will present the two churchmen and their texts, which are at the centre of my paper (part 2). This is followed by a more detailed examination with particular focus on the authors' self-positioning in relation to their community (part 3). Based

³ “Τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ τὸν Φεβρουάριον μῆναν με ἐδίωξαν ἐμένα τὸν Παπασυναδινὸν ὅλοι οἱ Χριστιανοὶ καὶ ὅλη ἡ πολιτεία, μικροὶ τε καὶ μεγάλοι, ἀπὸ τὰς Σέρρας καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ σπίτι μου καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν γυναῖκα μου καὶ ἀπὸ τὰ παιδία μου καὶ ἀπὸ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν πατρίδαν μου. Καὶ σύνοδον ἔκαμαν καὶ με ἔκριναν καὶ με ἔλεγαν· ‘Πλέον ἀπὸ τὴν σήμερον δὲν σὲ θέλομε εἰς τὸ Κάστρον μας· δὲν εἶσαι διὰ τ’ ἐμᾶς, διότι μᾶς ἐχάλασες καὶ μᾶς ἐζημίωσες. Μπρὲ οὐδὲ τιποτένιε, ἐγίνης καὶ ἄνθρωπος καὶ φιλοῦν καὶ τὸ χέριν σου; Ἐσὺ εἶσαι διὰ τεπελέτισμα καὶ πομπή’ [...] Καὶ ἔτζι με ἐκάθηραν τελείως καὶ με ἀναθεμάτισαν ὅλοι, μικροὶ τε καὶ μεγάλοι, μέσα εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ παντοῦ καὶ μόνο ψιλὸ ὄνομα με ἔλεγαν “Κακὸ Συνάδη ἀναθεματισμένο”. Καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἔξω με ἔβγαλαν καὶ τὴν ἐνορίαν μου.” (*Conseils et mémoires de Synadinos, prêtre de Serrès en Macédonie (XVIIe siècle)*, éd. P. Odorico et al., (Paris: Editions de l'Association “Pierre Belon”, 1996), 140, 142).

on this analysis, I will offer some concluding remarks aimed at broadening the debates on early modern Orthodox understanding of the social world (part 4).

1. The Self in History: Approaches and Limits

The study of the history of individualisation, whether from the perspective of historical anthropology or the history of ideas, boasts an impressive bibliography, although most of it is limited to Western and Central Europe.⁴ With the cultural turn in history, the assumption of the European origins of individuality has been subject to substantial criticism: Individuality has been found to be merely ‘one’ among many other concepts of personhood, expressed and conceptualised differently at different periods and in different cultures. Proceeding from a ‘culturally open’ notion of personhood, historical research on self-testimonies, ego-documents, first-person narratives, or more recently, self-narratives (the term I prefer) has produced considerable results both in the area of source editing as well as in theory and methodology.⁵ Here, I would like to point out three aspects that are particularly inspiring for the study of pre-modern literacy: 1) The change of perspective advocated by this research strand is not focused on finding expressions of autonomous individuality, but on the ways people present themselves as placed in a network of relationships with others. Thus, narrative identity is created through forms of self-positioning in relation to others. 2) Studying the ways in which people wrote about their own lives is not confined to a specific genre. While particular types of sources – diaries, memoirs, letters, autobiographies, and so forth. – are certainly preferred, for the understanding of methods of presenting or creating the self, also other texts, with a potentially lower degree of

⁴ See, for example, *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, eds. T. C. Heller, M. Sosna, D. E. Wellbery, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. R. Porter, (London; New York: Routledge, 1997); R. van Dülmen, *Entdeckung des Ich. Die Geschichte der Individualisierung vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, (Cologne; Vienna: Weimar; Böhlau, 2001); *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* [vol.] 1–2, ed. M. Jolly, (London; Chicago: Routledge, 2001).

⁵ For a summary on the methodological aspects, see G. Jancke, C. Ulbrich, “From the Individual to the Person Challenging Autobiography Theory”, in: *Mapping The “I”: Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland*, eds. C. Ulbrich, K. von Greyerz, L. Heiligensetzer, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 15–33. For comparative perspectives, see *Selbstzeugnisse in der Frühen Neuzeit: Individualisierungsweisen in interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, Hrsg. K. von Greyerz, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007); *Räume des Selbst. Selbstzeugnisforschung transkulturell*, Hrsg. A. Bähr, P. Burschel, G. Jancke, (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007).

explicit self-referentiality, can prove just as insightful.⁶ 3) As a consequence, the specific possibilities and limits of textual expression must be taken into account. Thus, a comparative look both within and outside Europe shows that the relevant sources can vary considerably and that factors, such as the interplay of literacy levels, media dynamics and genre conventions, prove decisive in determining the period, the form and the extent to which self-referential writing appears and develops.⁷

With respect to the pre-modern Balkans, however, this perspective appears to be of limited merit, given the conspicuous paucity of texts that can be regarded as self-testimonies or personal narratives. An explanation of this apparent dearth must certainly take into consideration the well-known disparity in media development: If the Western and Central European modern period was characterised as a period “in which, as is well known, the proportion of writing, and within it self-referential writing, increased explosively”,⁸ south-eastern Europe was only marginally affected, or at a much slower pace, by the drastic processes of change in the field of writing development. The different evolution of writing media, however, does not mean by itself that the quest for self-testimonies is futile here, but rather points to the fact that different forms of expression of the self are to be expected. For example, research on Islamic-Ottoman writing culture has yielded some surprising results with studies on autobiography, sociability and conversion, to name some topics in the field, in which new sources were brought to light, or new approaches to already known texts were tested.⁹

⁶ As pointed out in the seminal article by B. von Krusenstjern, “Was sind Selbstzeugnisse? Begriffskritische und quellenkundliche Überlegungen von Beispielen aus dem 17. Jahrhundert”, *Historische Anthropologie* 2 (1994), 463.

⁷ W. Behringer, “Selbstzeugnisse”, in: *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit* [vol.] 11, Hrsg. F. Jäger, (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), 1082–1086.

⁸ S. Schmolinsky, “Selbstzeugnisse im Mittelalter”, in: *Das dargestellte Ich. Studien zu Selbstzeugnissen des späteren Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, Hrsg. K. Arnold, S. Schmolinsky, U. Martin Zahnd, (Bochum: Winkler, 1999), 22.

⁹ See *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. D. F. Reynolds, (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); *Zwischen Alltag und Schriftkultur: Horizonte des Individuellen in der arabischen Literatur des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Hrsg. S. Reichmuth, F. Schwarz, (Beirut; Würzburg: Nomos, 2008); *Many Ways of Speaking about the Aelf: Middle Eastern Ego-Documents in Arabic, Persian and Turkish (14th–20th century)*, eds. R. Eger, Y. Köse, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010). For a more recent overview of Ottoman research on ego-documents, see S. Karahasanoğlu, “Ottoman Ego-Documents: State of the Art”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53 (2021), 301–308, and with special regards to private letters, M. Sariyannis, E. Tuşalp Atiyas, D. Giagtzoglou, “Ottoman Personal Letters as a Source for Cultural History”, in: *Conversation in the Library – Συζητώντας στη βιβλιοθήκη – Kütüphanede muhabbet* [vol.] 1, (Istanbul; Rhodes: Hafız Ahmed Ağa & Ahmed Fethi Paşa Foundation, 2025), 479–487.

It seems, however, that Tijana Krstić's observation that "different autobiographical narratives, such as diaries, captivity narratives, travelogues, dream books, and records of mystical visions are well attested to in Ottoman manuscript collections"¹⁰ applies mainly to the Muslim writing culture of the Ottoman Empire. For the same cannot be said of the Orthodox realm, to which by far the largest proportion of the population in the European part of the empire belonged: Before the 17th century, we do not have a single fully-fledged self-narration of Orthodox provenance, such as a memoir, a diary or a personal letter.¹¹ Or is it, again, the lacking sensitivity, the methodological blind spot, which obfuscates the existence of such sources?

This finding is remarkable in itself, and suggests that we need to take a closer look at the peculiarities of Orthodox written culture when studying subjective expressiveness and self-consciousness. With the exception of pragmatic writing, it becomes evident that the utilisation of writing was predominantly connected with the religious sphere. This is evident in a number of ways, including the scribes' educational and professional background, the sites of text production, and their overall intellectual imprint and orientation. These factors collectively imposed constraints on the articulation of subjectivity, which was further shaped by genre conventions that gradually lost their regulatory function, thereby allowing for the emergence of diverse forms of expression.¹²

Historiography was no exception in this respect. In a characteristic manner, it was common for the writer to withdraw back into the posture of the humble scrivener, following the prevailing expectation of humility ('I, the humble/lowly/sinful/wretched/ unworthy one'). As a rule, the scribes presented themselves as

See also, the series *Life Narratives of the Ottoman Realm: Individual and Empire in the Near East* by Christoph Herzog and Richard Wittmann: https://www.routledge.com/Life-Narratives-of-the-Ottoman-REALM-Individual-and-Empire-in-the-Near/book-series/LNOR?srsId=AfmBOopnLUrPbrhjSASu46cYNuvXI-f8nK4h-r_AoNDMndmWojT095c (accessed 30.3.2025) as well as the inspiring monograph by S. Hanß, *Narrating the Dragoman's Self in the Veneto-Ottoman Balkans, c. 1550–1650* (London; New York: Routledge, 2023).

¹⁰ T. Krstić, "Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Sultanate: Self-Narratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confessionalization", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51/1 (2009), 36.

¹¹ Cf. the interesting parallels to Russian writing culture: C. Schmidt, "Grundmuster russischer Selbstzeugnisse im Mittelalter", in: *Vom Wir zum Ich. Individuum und Autobiographik im Zarenreich*, Hrsg. J. Herzberg, C. Schmidt, (Cologne; Weimar; Vienna: Böhlau, 2007), 63–76.

¹² Characteristically enough, subjective articulations were quite literally pushed to the textual margins, see T. Nikolova-Houston, "Marginalia and Colophons in Bulgarian Manuscripts and Early Printed Books", *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 8/1–2 (2009), 65–91; K. Petrovsky, "Marginal Notes in South Slavic Written Culture: Between Practicing Memory and Accounting for the Self", *Cahiers du Monde russe* 58/3 (2017), 483–502.

mere instruments of the divine will, i.e., as executors rather than creators of the text. Therefore, the personal pronouns ‘I’ or ‘we’, often used to introduce the writer are less, if at all, an expression of subjectivity than conventional, text-structuring phrases (e.g., ‘as we have said above’, ‘we return to’ etc.) in accordance with a century old tradition.¹³ Furthermore, references to the writer’s presence and testimony usually served the purpose of conferring increased credibility to the account.¹⁴ Other occasional self-references can be found in colophons, subscriptions or marginal notes, in which more detailed information on the circumstances of the creation of the text including the scribe’s role in this process are to be expected.¹⁵ Given the impression that historiography tends to reveal little about the authors as persons beyond their function as scribes, it can be argued that any search for the ‘subjectivity’, ‘ego’ or ‘self’ of the writer refers at best to a specific aspect rather than to a central motif of writing.¹⁶

This pattern remained largely unchanged in the Christian literatures of south-eastern Europe until well into the Ottoman period. However, the 17th century marked a period of significant transitions across many aspects of written culture, characterised amongst others by the increasing use of the vernacular, the (albeit hesitant and regionally limited) adoption of printing, and the articulation of competing confessional positions.¹⁷ In this changing environment, new directions in historiography emerged while the voice of the writers themselves were becoming more distinct.¹⁸ This was the general historical context of two clerics and chroniclers in the early 17th century, Matthaios and Synadinos, who, rather than being mere scribes in the traditional instrumental or self-effacing posture, appear as confident chroniclers of their own lives and times.

¹³ For a minute discussion, see M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 296f, and, with a special focus on the rhetorical means of authentication: R. Dostálová, “Die Byzantinische Zeitgeschichtsschreibung”, *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 8 (1984), 32–51.

¹⁵ Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen*; for methodological discussions and comparative approaches see, *Scribal Practice and the Global Cultures of Colophons, 1400–1800*, eds. C. D. Bahl, S. Hanß, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

¹⁶ Schmolinsky, “Selbstzeugnisse im Mittelalter”, 28. See also S. Schmolinsky, “Selbstzeugnisse finden oder: Zur Überlieferung erinnelter Erfahrung im Mittelalter”, in: *Self-Fashioning/ Personen(selbst)darstellung*, Hrsg. R. Suntrup, J. R. Veenstra, (Frankfurt; Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2003), 23–49.

¹⁷ D. P. Hupchick, *The Bulgarians in the Seventeenth Century: Slavic Orthodox Society and Culture under Ottoman Rule*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 1993); *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community*, eds. T. Krstić, D. Terzioğlu, (Piscataway; NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022).

¹⁸ For an assessment of the changing communicative environment, see K. Petrovszky, *Geschichte schreiben im osmanischen Südosteuropa. Eine Kulturgeschichte orthodoxer Historiographie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 31–101.

2. The Chronicles of Matthaïos of Myra and Papas Synadinos

2.1. Two Churchmen at the Beginning of the 17th Century

Despite all the differences in scope, style, and structure, to the best of our knowledge, these are the first chronicles in which the chronicler's persona becomes manifest. Matthaïos of Myra (d. 1624) was a widely respected scholar of his times, who excelled as a copyist, illuminator as well as author of liturgical and historical texts.¹⁹ Originating from the village of Pogoniani in Epirus, he worked as a scribe and copyist of theological and liturgical writings in Constantinople, Russia and Poland, before being appointed abbot (*hegoumenos*) of Dealu Monastery in Wallachia.²⁰ By then, the principality alongside Moldavia had already been firmly integrated into the system of Ottoman tributary states and became the central destination of migration from the Balkans and the Levant.²¹ Matthaïos personally witnessed the political instability of the period 1602–1618, which was accompanied by outbreaks of social violence and confessional overtones, and recorded the events in a voluminous chronicle written in fifteen-syllable verses in demotic Greek (the so-called Byzantine 'political verse'). A decade and a half after his death in 1624, the chronicle was published as *History of the Events in Wallachia from Șerban Voivod to Gabriel Voivod, the Current Voivod* (Ἱστορία τῶν κατὰ τὴν Οὐγγροβλαχίαν τελεσθέντων, ἀρξαμένη ἀπο Σερμπάνου Βοηβόνδα μέχρι Γαβριήλ Βοηβόνδα, τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος Δουκὸς) in Venice in 1638 and reprinted eleven more times during the 17th and 18th centuries.²²

The rather conventional title of the *History*, whose original title is unknown, conceals the fact that the text is actually made up of two rather different parts; after the strictly historical section of the chronicle, follows a second section which

¹⁹ O. Gratziou, *Die dekorierten Handschriften des Schreibers Matthaïos von Myra (1596–1624) – Untersuchungen zur griechischen Buchmalerei um 1600* (Athens: K. Michalas, 1982).

²⁰ In 1605, certainly in recognition of his many services to the Great Church, Matthaïos was appointed Bishop of Myra (a titular see in Asia Minor), a purely honorific but prestigious title.

²¹ V. Panaite, "The Legal and Political Status of Wallachia and Moldavia in Relation to the Ottoman Porte", in: *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, eds. G. Kármán, L. Kunčević, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9–42.

²² In print, Matthaïos' work is preceded by a heroic poem in honour of the Voivod Mihai Viteazul, written by a certain Stavrinos. Hence the title "The Other History of Events in Wallachia, from Șerban Voivod to Gabriel Voivod, the Current Prince" ("Ἔτερα ἱστορία τῶν κατὰ τὴν Οὐγγροβλαχίαν τελεσθέντων, ἀρξαμένη ἀπο Σερμπάνου Βοηβόνδα μέχρι Γαβριήλ Βοηβόνδα, τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος Δουκὸς"). The edition of 1638 is published in Legrand, *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire* [vol.] II, 231–333. On Matthaïos and Stavrinos, see A. Vincent, "Byzantium after Byzantium? Two Greek Writers in Seventeenth-Century Wallachia", in: *Byzantine Culture in Translation*, eds. A. Brown, B. Neil, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 212–241. Whether the joint edition was the editor's decision or Matthaïos' intention is still a matter of debate.

comprises spiritual advice (παράγγελίαι, “instructions”) to the country’s Voivode Alexandru Iliăş (r. 1616–1618).²³ The text ends with a “Lamentation for the fall of Constantinople” and its conquest by the Ottomans, one of the most prominent motifs in post-Byzantine literature.

The “Lamentation” became the most famous passage from Matthaios’ *History*. The first adaptation we know of was made by a parish priest from the Ottoman provincial town of Serres in what is known as the *Memoirs of Synadinos* or the *Chronicle of Serres*. Not only was “Papās” (fam. for priest, “father”) Synadinos familiar with the Lamentation, to which he added other passages from Matthaios’ preface and reworked them into his own chronicle. Apparently, he was also inspired by the structure of the *History*, because his own chronicle is also divided into a historical and a paraenetic section. In contrast to the elaborately crafted work of Matthaios, Synadinos’ chronicle, covering the period 1598–1642 on 440 pages, is an unpolished and unedited text, preserved as an autograph in the Monastery of Kutlumas on Mount Athos, and was relatively unknown until its discovery by modern scholars. Moreover, the manuscript’s rather irregular orthography and the absence of any internal structuring indicate a moderately educated scribe who was not interested in, or perhaps prevented from, revising the voluminous text.²⁴

The distinctly personal nature of Synadinos’ account is already evident in the fact that the second chronological entry reports his own birth: “I, Papasynadinos, was born in 7109 (1600), on September 21, on the second day of the week (Monday).”²⁵ It quickly becomes clear from the following entries that he was trying to keep some sort of running account of his own life. This includes occasional references to his notebook (τεφτέρι from Ottoman *defter*, “register”) in which he kept a record of relevant events, but also of financial matters.²⁶ Thanks to his meticulous notes, Synadinos’ life – spent entirely in the vicinity of his birthplace – is known in a wealth of details unparalleled by any other chronicle of his time. This includes the stages of his education, his chequered professional career, his engagement at the age of seventeen “to Avrampakina, the daughter of the goldsmith Kyriazes”,²⁷ their marriage six months later, the names of his six children who died at an early age, and much more.²⁸

²³ On the advice section, see in particular A. Vincent, “Byzantium Regained? The History, Advice and Lament by Matthew of Myra”, *Θησαυρίσματα* 28 (1998), 275–347, and Panou, “Greek-Romanian Symbiotic Patterns”.

²⁴ Cf. the most illuminating comments in Paolo Odorico’s introduction to the edition of *Conseils et mémoires*, 31–39 and 45–52.

²⁵ “Ζρθ’ – Σεπτεβρίω κα’, ἡμέρᾳ β’, ἐγεννήθηκα ἐγὼ ὁ Παπασυναδινός” (*ibid.*, 70, §2).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3. See also *ibid.*, 274–278 (= §31–32)

²⁷ “[...] μὲ τὴν θυγατέρα τοῦ Κυριαζῆ τοῦ χρυσοχοῦ, τὴν Ἀβραμπακίνα”, *ibid.*, 76, §8.

²⁸ Its value as a source for the study of everyday life is impressively demonstrated by the four studies that accompany the bilingual edition of the text.

2.2. Historiography as a Didactic Task

As mentioned above, both chronicles are framed by the shared reference to the loss of the Christian imperial city of Constantinople to the Ottomans. Since this is the only event in Matthaïos' *History* (which otherwise focuses on a specific period of his life spent in the principality of Wallachia) that occurred in the distant past, and given that Synadinos adopts Matthaïos' verses to preface his own writing, it testifies to the central role the conquest of the capital city held in post-Byzantine cultural memory.²⁹ It functioned as both a reminder of a Christian, more specifically *Romaian*³⁰ sense of belonging and a moral wake-up call: a universal memento of the sins of the Christians. This double function of the narrative points to the underlying conception of historiography as an ultimately didactic task.

This explains the peculiar twofold structure of both chronicles: a strictly historical section followed by extensive words of advice that build on the previous narrative.³¹ In the case of Matthaïos we are presented with a catalogue of virtuous conduct in the style of a mirror of princes.³² In addition to general guidelines for good governance, he provides specific recommendations, addressing various concerns in his immediate surroundings, such as the lack of schools and the ignorance of the clergy: "Your Excellency, should also do this: you should establish schools for the study of the Scriptures. [...] For there is not a single scholar of the Scriptures in your land, neither a priest nor a monk, neither a bishop nor a layman who is

²⁹ For more recent overviews of the literature on the subject, see A. Papayianni, "He Polis healo: The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 in Post-Byzantine Popular Literature", *Al-Masāq. Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 22 (2010), 27–44; A. Karanika, "Messengers, angels, and laments for the fall of Constantinople", in: *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean: Commemoration in Literature, Folk-Song and Liturgy*, eds. M. R. Bachvarova, D. Dutsch, A. Suter, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 226–251.

³⁰ The ethnonym 'Romaians', from gr. Ῥωμαῖοι (lit. Romans), which is common for the period, refers to the inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire and can only be approximately rendered by the term 'Greeks'. See M. Mantouvalou, "Romaïos–Romios–Romiossyni. La notion de 'Romain' avant et après la chute de Constantinople", *Επιστημονική Επετηρίς της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών* 21 (1979–1985), 34–72, with regards to Matthaïos' use of the term: L. Cotovanu, "Οι πολλαπλές αναπαραστάσεις των Ῥωμαίων/Ῥραικών' στις Παραδουνάβιες Ηγεμονίες: η μαρτυρία του Ματθαίου Μυρέων (αρχές του 17ου αιώνα)", στο: *Ἑλλην, Ρωμηός, Γραικός: Συλλογικοί προσδιορισμοί και ταυτότητες*, επιμ. Ὁ. Κατσαρδής-Hering et al., (Αθήνα: ΕΥΡΑΣΙΑ, 2018), 413–429.

³¹ The didactic nature of writing history is also evident in the fact that even the historical section is peppered with instructive remarks, exhortations, recommendations, and parabolic comments.

³² On the *Advice* see particularly Vincent, "Byzantium Regained".

competent. For nowhere can they learn to read and write.”³³ While Matthaïos urges the prince to remedy the many grievances of the country (e.g., lack of bridges, wells, etc.) for the sake of his redemption, he does not forget to demand equal attention for his own rank, pleading several times for the respectful treatment of churchmen.³⁴

Matthaïos’ recommendations and instructions maintain a polished literary style (including the conventional exhortations to lead a godly life), thereby keeping a rhetorical distance between himself and the grievances addressed. In contrast, Synadinos formulates moral or practical instructions – often interwoven with biblical or patristic set pieces – while primarily referring to experiences he has personally undergone: “And so I have written down for you, my brother, small instructions, all that times and circumstances commanded me, and what is more, if we continue to live, I will write down for you all that happens to people, as well as the instructions you need in order to enrich yourself with wisdom. Farewell, my brother.”³⁵

Whereas Matthaïos draws his examples of worthy or unworthy figures from the circle of Wallachian princes and pretenders to the throne, Synadinos draws from his peer group of clerics around Serres to derive memorable lessons from their virtues and shortcomings (see below, p. 14).

In this manner, the combination of personal experience and moral instruction, grounded in the didactic purpose of both texts, emphasises the chroniclers’ self-positioning. Consequently, the historical part of their writings should not be understood as a separate section, but only in conjunction with the paraenetic framework. Thus, the ideal ruler in Matthaïos (“my prince”) and the devout Christian or churchman in Synadinos (“my brother”) are both examples and addressees of the various ‘lessons of history’.

³³ “Ἀκόμι, ἐκλαμπρότατε, καὶ τοῦτο νὰ ποιήσης /σχολεῖον διὰ γράμματα νὰ ἀνοικοδομήσης. [...] διότι δὲν εὐρίσκεται κανεὶς γραμματισμένος/ ἐδῶ ὁ σὴν ἐπαρχίαν σου νὰ ᾔηται προκομμένος/ παπᾶς, οὐδὲ καλόγερος, οὐδὲ ἀρχιερέας,/ οὐδὲ ἀπὸ τοὺς λαϊκοὺς εὐρίσκεται κανένας/ διότι δὲν ἔχουν τὸ ποῦ γράμματα νὰ μαθαίνουν.” (“Ἑτέρα ἱστορία”, 308).

³⁴ See the titles of the relevant sections “It is not appropriate to speak ill of a churchman” (“Περὶ τοῦ μὴ κατακρίνειν ἄνθρωπον ἱερωμένον”, *ibid.*, 290–294); “It is not appropriate to disparage the angelic status of monks” (“Ὅτι δὲν πρέπει νὰ καταφρονοῦν τὸ ἀγγελικὸν σχῆμα τῶν μοναχῶν”, *ibid.*, 294–296); and “It is not appropriate for princes to interfere in the consecration of bishops” (“Ὅτι δὲν πρέπει τῶν Ἀφεντάδων νὰ ἀνακατώνονται εἰς τὰς χειροτονίας τῶν Ἐπισκόπων”, *ibid.*, 296–297) leave little doubt as to the urgency of the concerns.

³⁵ “Καὶ αὐτοῦ, ὦ ἀδελφέ μου, ὅπου σὲ ἔγραψα παρὰ μικρὰν παραγγελίαν, ὅσα ἐκάλεσεν ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἡ ὥρα, καὶ πάλιν μετὰ ταῦτα θέλω σὲ γράψαι ἐὰν ζήσωμε, καὶ τὰ ὅσα μέλλουν συμβεῖ εἰς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ὅσα ἀκόμη καθοδηγήματα πρέπει εἰς ἐσένα ὡς διὰ νὰ στολίσης τὴν καλὴν σου γνῶσιν· ἔρρωσο, ἀδελφέ.” (*Conseils et mémoires*, 278, §34).

3. Sense(s) of Belonging

In a seminal article on the study of the notion of self in 16th-century France, Natalie Zemon Davies argued that “the exploration of self [...] was made in conscious relation to the groups to which people belonged”.³⁶ Although self-exploration may not be the primary goal, it still plays a key role in Matthaïos’ and Synadinos’ writing, due to their personal involvement in the events described and the value placed on their self-testimony. Therefore, the following comparative discussion aims to explore how their selves are shaped through the ways they position and understand themselves in relation to their world.

3.1. Turning to the Vernacular – “so that everyone can understand”

Looking at the language of both texts is certainly a good starting point for unravelling the way their authors perceived and established connections with the concrete social environment. Indeed, it is striking that, in contrast to the established conventions of historiography, especially in the clerical milieu with its preference for the high literary standard of Hellenistic Greek, both chroniclers chose to write in the vernacular of their time and place.³⁷ Not only is there a markedly local colour to their language – more so in Synadinos’ uncouth writing than in Matthaïos’ polished style – but also, this shift is commented upon by both writers.

Matthaïos acknowledges the classic ideal in his introductory praise of writing: “Thus Homer tells us of the deeds of the Hellenes and praises them. How much time has passed since he wrote, and yet they still appear to you today like blossoming flowers.”³⁸ And yet, this does not prevent him from writing his verses in vernacular Greek and interspersing them with numerous Romanian terms that clearly reveal the context in which they were written and the addressees of his remarks.³⁹

³⁶ N. Zemon Davis, “Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France”, in: *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self*, 53.

³⁷ On the process of vernacularisation, see Alfred Vincent, “Finding ‘the common tongue’: The language of printed vernacular Greek verse from 1509 to the early eighteenth century”, in: *Storia e storie della lingua greca*, a cura di C. Carpinato, O. Tribulato, (Venice: Edizioni Ca’Foscari, 2014), 99–132.

³⁸ “ὥσάν ὁ μέγας Ὅμηρος ὅπου μᾶς διηγᾶται/Ἑλλήνων τὰ καμώματα καὶ μετ’ αὐτοὺς καυχᾶται. /Πόσος καιρὸς ἀπέρασεν ἀφ’ οὗ ἐκεῖνος γράφει/ καὶ φαίνεται σου σήμερον ἐξήνησαν σὰν ἄνθη.” (“Ἐτέρα ἱστορία”, 233).

³⁹ To name just a few examples: ὀτζινα (*ibid.*, 285, no. 1573) from rum. *ocină*, “property”; τζοκόωπητης (sic) (*ibid.*, 285, no. 1526) from rum. *ciocnici* (=ciocoi), a disparaging term for unscrupulous upstarts; ζολνήπους (*ibid.*, 241, no. 292) from rum. *jolnir* or Polish *żołnierz*, to designate Polish mercenaries in the service of the Moldavian prince; σφάτο (*ibid.*, 235,

Synadinos departs even more strongly from the norm of the high language: orthographic irregularity is the rule here, while words and entire expressions of predominantly Turkish origins are all over the text. Synadinos adopts a relaxed attitude towards his half-education, fully aware of the prevailing writing standards: “I speak simply and plainly.”⁴⁰ It is notable, however, that he does not succumb to the trope of modesty and ignorance, which one might respect from a ‘humble priest’, but instead emphasises the advantage of general comprehensibility “in this place”:

“And for this very reason, my brother, because I too am an uneducated man, but above all so that everyone can understand what is written in the book, I speak simply and plainly, as it is customary in this place, my brother. And don’t say that my words are sometimes too simple. There are also Turkish words in the text, it is true, but I will explain it to you well: just as all the people of this place, big or small, have the habit of speaking their language.”⁴¹

On the basis of statements of this kind, we have good reason to believe that the choice of linguistic register was not simply dictated by the rules of convention and the limitations of formal education, but was a conscious and well-considered choice, taking into account the audience and its expected familiarity with the realities described. Moreover, this choice serves to establish and foster a sense of belonging to a given community: Matthaios presents himself as a member of the Greek clergy and thus as a part of the emerging Greek elite in 17th-century Wallachia; Synadinos identifies himself as a priest and thus as a high representative of the Christian population in an Ottoman provincial centre in eastern Macedonia.

3.2. Strained Loyalties – “We, the poor Romans”

The particular contours of this self-location become more visible in their accounts whenever questions of power relations and disputes are discussed. As far as Matthaios of Myra is concerned, two levels should be distinguished in this regard. First, on a local level, he presents himself not only as a God-fearing churchman and

no. 116; in the Legrand edition probably erroneously as *ἐφάτο*) from rum. *sfat*, “council meeting”; *λέζια τζέρπη* (*ibid.*, 280, no. 1418 and 281, no. 1424) from rum. *legia țării*, “law of the land”.

⁴⁰ “[...] καὶ εἰς τοῦτο συντυχαίνω πολλὰ ἀπλὰ καὶ κοινὰ, καὶ ὡς καθὼς εἶναι ἡ τάξις καὶ ἡ συνήθεια τοῦ τόπου.” (*Conseils et mémoires*, 304, §13).

⁴¹ “Καὶ εἰς τοῦτο καὶ ἐγώ, ὃ ἀδελφε, ὡς ἀμαθής, ἀμὴ τὸ περισσότερο καὶ βεβαιότερον διὰ τὰ καταλάμβαινη πᾶσα εἷς τί λέγει, καὶ εἰς τοῦτο συντυχαίνω πολλὰ ἀπλὰ καὶ κοινὰ, καὶ ὡς καθὼς εἶναι ἡ τάξις καὶ ἡ συνήθεια τοῦ τόπου, ἔττι σὲ συντυχαίνω καὶ σὲ γράφο, ὃ ἀδελφε. Καὶ μὴν εἴπῃς ὅτι κάπου λόγια εἶναι πολλὰ ἀπλὰ· ὁμοίως καὶ τούρκικα παραφέρνει ἀληθῶς, ἀλλὰ καλὰ σὲ λέγο· ὡς καθὼς ἔχουν συνήθεια οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὅλοι.” (*ibid.*)

humble chronicler but also – often signalled by the use of “we” (“ἡμεῖς”) – as a member of the new upper class whose roots were in the southern Balkans. This group, favoured by the Wallachian princes, faced fierce opposition from the old aristocracy and rural population.⁴² In particular, the attacks against the Greeks, which he had to witness repeatedly during his lifetime, enraged him and led him to take a clear stand: thus he welcomed the decision of the Voivod Alexandru Iliș (to whom the following paraenetic section of the *History* is actually dedicated) to take action against those “who have agreed to murder all the Greeks in a single day”⁴³. After all, as Matthaïos puts it through the words of another ruler, the Greeks had a pioneering role in religious and cultural matters: “...for it is Romaïans 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?”⁴⁴

This sense of ‘Romaic exceptionalism’, however, does not prevent Matthaïos from reflecting on the reasons for ongoing hostilities against the Greeks and from warning his Greek compatriots in Wallachia:

“But you, too, you Greek boyars [ἄρχοντες Ρωμαῖοι] who are at court [κούρτη, rum. *curtea*] and you who trade, be careful and do not commit injustice; do not harass the Wallachians with your greed and do not be insatiable towards the poor [...]. These poor people feed us

⁴² For an overview of this complex topic, see C. Iordachi, “From Imperial Entanglements to National Disentanglement: The ‘Greek Question’ in Moldavia and Wallachia, 1611–1863,” in: *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* [vol.] I: *National Ideologies and Language Policies*, eds. R. Daskalov, T. Marinov, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 67–148, especially 117–131; L. Cotovanu, “‘Chasing Away the Greeks’: The Prince-State and the Undesired Foreigners (Wallachia and Moldavia between the 16th and 18th Centuries),” in: *Across the Danube: Southeastern Europeans and Their Travelling Identities (17th–19th C.)*, eds. O. Katsiardi-Hering, M. A. Stassinopoulou, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 215–252; K. Petrovsky, “‘Those Violating the Good, Old Customs of our Land’: Forms and Functions of Graecophobia in the Danubian Principalities, 16th–18th Centuries,” in: *Disliking Others: Loathing, Hostility, and Distrust in Premodern Ottoman Lands*, eds. H. T. Karateke, H. Erdem Çipa, H. Anetshofer, (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 187–214.

⁴³ “εἰς ἐκεῖνους ὁπ’ ἔκαμαν, τότε τὴν συμφωνίαν,/ διὰ νὰ κόψουν τοὺς Γραικοὺς, ὅλους ἡμέραν Μίαν.” (“Ἐτέρα ἱστορία”, 264).

⁴⁴ “αὐτ’ εἶναι [= τὸ γένος τῶν Ρωμαίων] ὁπ’ ἐγέμισαν τὸν κόσμον μὲ σοφίαν,/ μὲ γράμματα, μὲ ἄρματα καὶ μὲ θεολογίαν,/ τὴν πίστιν τῶν χριστιανῶν αὐτοὶ τὴν ἐδεχθῆκαν,/ κ’ εἰς ὅλους τὴν ἐμοίρασαν, χριστιανοὺς ἐποίησαν/ αὐτοὶ ἐσθὺς ἐβάπτισαν μὲ τὴν ὀρθοδοξίαν./ τὴν νὰ τοὺς σκοτώσετε δὲν εἶναι ἁμαρτία;” (*ibid.*, 245f, translation according to Panou “Greek-Romanian Symbiotic Patterns”, part I, 81).

and care for us; whether they like it or not, they call us masters [ζουπούνουλε, from. rum. *jupânule*]; we should therefore honour and love them as our brothers.”⁴⁵

By switching from “you” to “we”, Matthaïos aligns himself with the influential yet jeopardised community of Greek boyars and merchants (as noted in the passage quoted). In doing so, he positions himself as an admonishing authority striving to do justice to both sides by appealing to shared Christian values.

In addition to this testimony of local involvement, Matthaïos speaks, secondly, as a leading representative of Orthodox Christianity. Adopting a pragmatic, church-wide perspective, Matthaïos concluded that the interests of Orthodoxy, and especially of the Romanians as its chosen representatives, were best safeguarded under the rule of the Sultan. Living on the fringes of Orthodox Christianity and facing numerous enemies – “infidels, heretics, Lutherans, completely unbaptised and tyrants too”⁴⁶ – it is not surprising that he repeatedly expressed his sympathy for those princes who had the support of the High Porte.

It is true that Matthaïos’ loyalty is not unabashed – after all, he laments “we, the poor Romanians, who were made slaves”⁴⁷ after the fall of the Byzantine empire. However, it would be misleading, to confuse these attitudes with an inveterate anti-Ottoman stance or, more exactly, to see these attitudes as mutually exclusive. As an example of his advocacy of ‘higher interest’, Matthaïos places the following words into the mouth of the pretender to the throne Gavril Movilă, stylised as a model of political wisdom: “Without the will of the Turkish sultan, I cannot become your prince; I am only wasting my time, for the land [τζάρα from rum. *Ṭara*] is his, it is his own garden [γραδῖνα, from rum. *Grădină*].”⁴⁸ Based on this understanding of legitimate rule, Matthaïos consistently rebukes any conspiracy or attempt at insurrection throughout his chronicle.

In the *Chronicle of Serres*, which focuses more on local concerns than lofty views, the theme of the community under attack appears even more frequently. In Synadinos’ account, there are three types of threats that the Christians of Serres had to face time and again. First, there is the religious rivalry with the local Muslims,

⁴⁵ “ἀλλὰ καὶ σεῖς πορσέχεσθε, ὧ ἄρχοντες Ῥωμαῖοι,/ ὅσοι ’ς τὴν κούρτην βρίσκετε καὶ ὅσοι ἀγοραῖοι./ ἰδέτε καὶ προσέχετε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀδικίαν,/ τοὺς Βλάχους μὴ πειράζετε μὲ τὴν πλεονεξίαν./ μὴδὲ νὰ ἦστ’ ἀχόρταγοι ’ς τοὺς ἐπτωχοὺς ἀπάνω [...] Αὐτ’ οἱ πτωχοὶ μᾶς θρέφουσι καὶ μᾶς ἀποκυττάζουν,/ θέλοντες καὶ μὴ θέλοντες ζουπούνουλε μᾶς κράζουν,/ καὶ πρέπει νὰ τοὺς ἔχωμεν καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἀγαποῦμε,/ ὅτι μᾶς εἶναι ἀδελφοὶ, πρέπει νὰ τοὺς τιμοῦμε.” (“Ἑτέρα ἱστορία”, 246).

⁴⁶ “ἄπιστοι, αἰρετικοὶ, Λουτράνοι, καὶ παντελῶς ἀβάπτιστοι, μάλιστα καὶ τυράννοι” (*ibid.*, 284).

⁴⁷ “ἡμεῖς οἱ ταπεινοὶ Ῥωμαῖοι,/ ὅποῦ ἐσκλαβωθήκαμεν” (*ibid.*, 313).

⁴⁸ “ἐγὼ χωρὶς τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Τούρκου τοῦ σουλτάνου,/ ἀφέντης σας δὲν γίνομαι, μόν’ τὸν καιρὸν μου χάνω,/ ὅτι ἡ τζάρα εἶν’ αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτουνοῦ γραδῖνα” (*ibid.*, 259).

vividly depicted through numerous conflicts with the “Turks” (τούρκοι). Second, natural disasters and plague epidemics, to which Synadinos devotes significant portions of his chronicle. However, these two ‘afflictions’ are related and ultimately point to the third – and, according to Synadinos, the most significant – threat: the sinfulness of the Christians themselves.

The ultimate expression of sinfulness was, of course, apostasy, i.e., voluntary conversion to Islam. As expected, Synadinos’ indignation in such cases is boundless. The tone of the chronicle is filled with anger, using strong invectives and imprecations to make the reader (“my brother”) aware of the shameful nature of apostasy and its consequences.⁴⁹ However, Synadinos proves to be more concerned by more common and widespread forms of violations of the cardinal Christian commandments – adultery, drunkenness, gluttony, lust or avarice – which sooner or later leads to loss of reputation and status, and ultimately to social decline. See the example of *papas* Kriton, who was not without reason involved in a quarrel with a Muslim:

“He was a man of 30, with a full, black and long beard, and a handsome figure; but he was a drunkard, unpleasant and quick to draw a knife; he often beat his father, who continued to curse him for this. He also could not read or write and was illiterate. Do you see, my brother, what happens to the one who defies his father, how the Lord ends his life, and how he is lost to the world and all things that are?”⁵⁰

On numerous occasions, Synadinos offers detailed insights into intra-communal disputes that ended up either involving the Muslim authorities or instrumentalising Muslim religious sentiment to crush the rival party. He himself became the victim of scandalous machinations by church authorities, as he reports in several places in an accusatory and plaintive tone, as in the opening quotation. He openly admits his relationship with church authorities and doubts that it is possible to do good in a higher office:

“But, my brother, if you become a bishop today, in this time of the Turks, tell me, what good do you want to do when there is nothing you can do? Who are you going to lead to a pious way of life? What good will you be able to do if you become a bishop? [...] I think that you will do no good at all, at most you will unjustly punish another for the sake of a friend or [but you will] see the Sultan’s envoys coming to demand money from you

⁴⁹ Cf. for example *Conseils et mémoires* [book] I, §14 and §15.

⁵⁰ “Καὶ ἦτον ὡς λ’ χρονῶν ἄνθρωπος, πολυγένης, μακρυγένης καὶ μαυρογένης, ἔμορφος· ἀμὴ ἦτον κρασοπινάς, ῥωβιάρης, μαχαιροεβγάλης, καὶ πολλὰς βολὰς εἶχεν δαίρει τὸν πατέρα του καὶ ὁ πατέρας του ὅλον ἕνα τὸν ἐκαταροῦνταν. Ἦτον καὶ ἀγράμματος καὶ ἀπαίδευτος. Βλέπεις, ὦ ἀδελφέ μου, τί παθαίνει ἐκεῖνος ὅπου ἐναντιεῖται τὸν πατέρα, τὸ πῶς κόφτει ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ζωὴν του καὶ ὑστερεῖται τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὰ πάντα ὅλα;” (*ibid.*, 80, § 11).

that you cannot give them; and so, you will unjustly demand the money from the poor, the wretched who have no bread to feed their children.”⁵¹

What makes his account fascinating is that Synadinos’ defensive stance for Orthodoxy in times of trials and tribulations does not equate to outright hostility towards the Ottomans. Like a down-to-earth counterpart to Matthaios’ lofty discourse, Synadinos’ memoirs show multiple, complementary senses of belonging. Synadinos positions himself as a guardian of the faith and a representative of a Christianity under constant threat, as well as a member of a small-town society whose conflicts and celebrations transcend religious divisions. A notable example is the public celebration of Mehmed IV’s conquest of Baghdad (in 1638), which was attended by the entire city: “And all the world rejoiced, and all peoples, men and women, they all ate and drank and put on their best and had a good time; and the workshops were adorned with all kinds of decorations; and all the world rejoiced at the emperor’s victory.”⁵² Like Matthaios, Synadinos does not present himself as a static figure merely seeking to be the mouthpiece of an official church position. Instead, his chronicle sheds light on complex relationships and allegiances that challenge the binary logic of ‘Christians’ versus ‘Turks’. It is noteworthy that Synadinos cites his own father (*papas Sideres*) as an example of inter-communal conviviality that is worthy of imitation: “He was so hospitable that not a day went by without friends visiting him – Christians, Turks, Yürüks, Gypsies – and without [him] setting the table [for them] three or four times a day [...]. And there was no one, neither Christian nor Turk, who did not know his house and who had not eaten his bread.”⁵³

3.3. Personal Tribulations – “...so that I can be free of all this!”

Such scenes of conviviality and cheerfulness, which impressively demonstrate the permeability of boundaries, should nevertheless not obscure the fact that the greater

⁵¹ “Ὁ ἀδελφέ μου, ἀμὴ ἂν γένῃς τώρα εἰς τὸν τούρκικον καιρόν, εἰπές με τί καλὸν θὰ κάμεις ὅπου δὲν δύνησαι; Ποῖον θέλεις νὰ φέρῃς εἰς τὴν εὐσέβειαν; Τί καλὸν θέλεις νὰ κάμῃς ὡσὰν γένῃς ἀρχιερεὺς; [...] Θαρρῶ ὅτι τίποτες δὲν ἡμπορεῖς κανένα καλὸ νὰ κάμῃς, πάρεξ νὰ γένῃς διὰ φίλου ἀγάπῃ νὰ κρίνῃς ἄδικα καὶ νὰ ἔρτουν ἀπὸ τὴν βασιλείαν νὰ σὲ γυρεύουν ἄσπρα, καὶ ἐσὺ νὰ μὴν ἔχῃς· καὶ τότες νὰ πλεονεκτᾷς ἀπὸ τοὺς ταλαίπωρους ἐπτωχοὺς ὅπου ψωμὶ δὲν ἔχουν νὰ θρέψουν τὰ παιδία τους.” (*ibid.*, 290, §5).

⁵² “Καὶ ἐχαίρουνταν ὅλος ὁ κόσμος καὶ ὅλες οἱ φυλές, ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες, καὶ ἔτρωγαν καὶ ἔπιναν καὶ ἐφοροῦσαν καὶ ἐχαίρουνταν, καὶ τὰ ἐργαστήρια στολισμένα μὲ πᾶσα λογῆς στολίδια, καὶ ὅλοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι εὐφράνθησαν εἰς τὴν νίκην τοῦ βασιλέως.” (*ibid.*, 138, § 31).

⁵³ “Καὶ τόσον ἦτον φιλόξενος ὅτι δὲν ἔλειπαν φίλοι νὰ τὸν ἔλθουν πᾶσα ἡμέρα, Χριστιανοί, Τοῦρκοι, Κοϊνάροι, Ὀγύφτοι, δύο καὶ τρεῖς φορές νὰ βάνῃ τραπέζι τὴν ἡμέραν [...] Καὶ κανεὶς δὲν ἦταν Χριστιανὸς ἢ Τοῦρκος νὰ μὴν ἡξεύρῃ τὸ σπῆτιν του καὶ νὰ μὴν εἶχεν φάγῃ τὸ ψωμὶν του.” (*ibid.*, 126, §29).

part of Synadinos' account deals with suffering and violence, a theme which is also prominent in Matthaïos' chronicle. Addressing this issue is, however, complicated by the fact that representations of violent events generally loom large in both secular and religious historiography. And it is precisely because of its ubiquitous presence that it is hard to see beyond an established "topical representation of violence"⁵⁴, expressed in typical formulations such as "the land groaned" and "the country suffered", and to grasp what might be called the subjective dimension of violence. However, this is not to say that we should downplay the possibility of a personal involvement and affliction by the use of conventional patterns in the description of violent acts. Rather, conventions of genre and reader expectations should be factored into the assessment of the rules and limits of expressing oneself in a given period. To express it more schematically, staging does not contradict authenticity.

Matthaïos' chronicle is a case in point; for the multiple incidents of violence are consequently and eloquently refashioned in the narrative gesture of a personal testimony turned into a political and moral testament. It is obvious that the sequence of afflictions, experienced personally or as a repercussion on his immediate surrounding, are presented as constitutive experiences for his own trajectory as a member of a 'community under threat'. Again, the greatest threat is not identified with the rule of the Ottomans, as one might easily assume. Instead, behind the extensive depiction of devastation and violent changes of rule in the principality his greatest personal concern turns out to be, on the one hand, the confessional menace represented by the military incursions of Protestant-dominated Transylvania⁵⁵ and, on the other hand, the social menace emanating from the burgeoning Greekophobia in Wallachia.⁵⁶

In the case of Synadinos, the experience of being threatened is referred to as the triggering experience for the composition of the chronicle itself: "And this book I, your humble servant and priest Synadinos, Sakellarios of Serres, have written

⁵⁴ M. Braun, C. Herberichs, "Gewalt im Mittelalter: Überlegungen zu ihrer Erforschung", in: *Gewalt im Mittelalter: Realitäten – Imaginationen*, Hrsg. M. Braun, (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2005), 8.

⁵⁵ There are two earlier historical texts that can be considered preliminary works to his extensive *History*: first, the so-called *Notes* (πόμνημα) to the *Office of Saint Gregory of Dekapolis*, N. Iorga, "Manuscripte din biblioteci străine relative la istoria românilor. Întâiul memoriu", in: *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* [ser.] 2 [tom.] 20 (1897–98), 197–253, especially 240–247, and second, *A Short Account of the Unexpected Fall of Șerban-Vodă and the Arrival of Radu, son Mihnea-Voivod in Wallachia* (Διήγησις σύντομος περί τε τοῦ Σερμπάνου βοεβόδα τοῦ καὶ Ράδουλου, παρ' ἐλπίδα τῆς ηγεμονίας ἐκπέσοντος, καὶ Ράδουλου βοεβόδα, υἱοῦ Μίχνα βοεβόδα, ἐν τῇ Οὐγγροβλαχίᾳ εἰσέλθοντος), N. Iorga, "Manuscripte din biblioteci străine relative la istoria românilor. Al doilea memoriu", in: *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* [ser.] 2 [tom.] 21 (1898–1899), 1–27.

⁵⁶ See "Ἐτέρᾳ ἱστορίᾳ", 239–241 and 269–271. For research on the topic see above, note 40.

in Melkitsi, where I fled [because of the outbreak of the plague, K.P.], in the barn, where my workshop makes cloth.”⁵⁷

Throughout his extensive account, he repeatedly portrays himself as the victim of various machinations and conflicts within the local community. He interprets these as the consequence of the widespread sinfulness to which his fellow Christians succumbed. Thus, presenting himself as a sincere narrator of scandalous events, Synadinos dedicates no less than twenty manuscript pages to the most critical stage of his life. In this section, he not only provides a detailed account of the insults, humiliations, and persecutions he faced, but also expresses his feelings of despair (“Oh, earth, why don’t you open one of your graves and take me in as quickly as possible so that I can be free of all this!”)⁵⁸ and contemplates escape:

“And from my hiding place I fled to a place unknown to me on the Holy Mountain. And from there I wanted to mingle with the monks and go to Wallachia and from there move on to Russia to become a monk and stay there for the rest of my life. Because I knew only too well that I couldn’t stay in this place forever.”⁵⁹

Apparently, experiences like this prompted Synadinos to take up his pen again and again, continuing to write his chronicle, since his account concludes several times only to begin anew. As noted by students of his memoirs, Synadinos’ account is quite exceptional. For he clearly does not aim to present himself as a detached, authorial reporter of troubled, dissolute times, but rather as a tested man who bears witness (in the direct sense of *martyrion*) to his unshakeable firmness of faith, ready to share both his doubts and hopes with the reader.

4. Concluding Remarks: Self-Positioning vs Identity

Studying the rise of historiography in vernacular Greek at the turn of the 17th century, Alfred Vincent writes that “all of these works go well beyond the mere recounting of historical ‘facts’; they offer an attempt to ‘make sense’ of history in terms of a

⁵⁷ “Καὶ ἔγραψα ταύτην τὴν φυλλάδα ἐγὼ ὁ ἐλάχιστος δοῦλός σας Συναδινὸς ἱερεὺς καὶ σακελλάριος Σερρῶν εἰς τὰ φευγία εἰς χῶραν Μελικίτζι εἰς τὴν ἀχερώνα, ἐκεῖ ὅπου ἐδούλευαν τὰ ἐργαστήριά μου τὰ λουτρίκια.” (*Conseils et mémoires*, 280, §34).

⁵⁸ “Ὡ γῆ, καὶ ἄνοιξε ἀπὸ τοὺς τάφους κανέναν καὶ δέξε με τὸ γληγορότερον διὰ νὰ ἐλευθερωθῶ ἀπὸ τὰ πάντα ὅλα.” (*ibid.*, 148, §31).

⁵⁹ “Καὶ κρυφίως ἐπῆγα εἰς ἀνεγνώριστον τόπον εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος. Καὶ ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ ἐβούλομουν ὅτι νὰ σμίξω μὲ καλογέρους νὰ πάγω εἰς τὴν Βλαχίαν, ἔπειτα νὰ καταντήσω μέσα εἰς τὴν Ῥουσσίαν, ἐκεῖ νὰ μονάσω καὶ νὰ ἀπομείνω ἕως τέλος τῆς ζωῆς μου. Διότι τὸ ἥξευρα καλὰ ὅτι ἐγὼ πλέον δὲν ἤμουν διὰ τ’ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.” (*ibid.*, 144, §31).

Christian ideological framework”⁶⁰. This is certainly true of the texts discussed here, which were written by two churchmen of different ranks and operating in distinct contexts. Yet, what makes them particularly interesting is the self-referential and personal nature of their attempts ‘to make sense of history’. There are, of course, limits to their comparability which are grounded in the nature of the texts themselves. The chronicle of *Papas Synadinos*, which survives in his autograph, shows that he continued writing it spontaneously without having a completed work in mind. In contrast, *Matthaios’ History* is a well-composed poetic work, shaped to a much greater extent by the conventions of genre and style. What distinguishes the two texts more clearly from one another is the degree of involvement of their authors: while *Matthaios* makes explicit reference to his own life only intermittently, while offering a rather impersonal account of events over long stretches, *Synadinos’* chronicle – also dubbed memoirs by some researchers – comes close to a coherent life story. Much stronger and more explicit than in *Matthaios’ History*, the reported incidents are placed within a distinctly personal horizon of meaning.

By approaching the works of *Matthaios* and *Synadinos* as self-narratives I have sought to explore how they position themselves in relation to the communities they perceive themselves as part of, with particular focus on: a) the conscious use of the vernacular language, b) discussions of allegiance and belonging, and c) exposure to violence and personal threats. Although the distinction between these three dimensions may seem artificial (since they effectively overlap and imply one another), it has proven useful for understanding how the writers conceived of themselves in their texts – not by emphasising autonomous individuality, but by establishing “conscious relations to the groups to which people belonged”, to quote again N. Zemon Davis.

Second, a closer examination of the tones struck by the two writers has revealed varying levels of critical judgement and personal involvement. Thus, beyond certain expected elements (such as the rhetoric of the guardian of the faith and religious demarcation), *Matthaios* and *Synadinos* demonstrate a surprisingly nuanced perspective – at times polemical, but also reflective – as they engage with the clergy, their ‘brothers in faith’, or the broader political landscape.⁶¹

My final contention is that focusing on the self-narrative dimension – which assumes that the self is shaped narratively through reference to the social environment – leads to a more nuanced understanding of identity formation. What may conventionally be assumed as the ‘Christian identity’ of *Matthaios* and *Synadinos* proves, upon closer examination of their chronicles, to be a contested field

⁶⁰ Vincent, “Byzantium Regained?”, 308.

⁶¹ Cf. Vincent, “Byzantium Regained?”; O. Todorova, “The Ottoman State and Its Orthodox Christian Subjects: The Legitimistic Discourse in the Seventeenth-Century ‘Chronicle of Serres’ in a New Perspective”, *Turkish Studies* 1/1 (2010) 86–110.

of personal, affective, and ultimately political relationships – a framework of reference that is both unquestioned and threatened, and, in fact, continually renegotiated. Thus, rather than trying to determine the tenets of their identity, we should attend to the chroniclers' efforts to integrate the unsettling diversity of experience into a meaningful narrative – in other words, to position themselves. This could pave the way for new perspectives on early modern identity formation, conceived as strategies of self-identification, while avoiding the pitfalls of both essentialisation and circular reasoning that often accompany the concept of identity.

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Wallachians and Moldo-Wallachians: The Self-Fashioning Rhetoric of the Claimants to the Throne of Wallachia (Late 16th and Early 17th Centuries)

In the early 18th century, Dimitrie Cantemir, a claimant to the throne of Moldavia, composed a political satire entitled *Hieroglyphic History*.¹ The narrative centres on the epic struggle between two realms: one of quadrupeds, governed by the Lion, and the other of birds of prey, ruled by the Eagle. The political metaphor is somewhat apparent; however, Cantemir ensures readers grasp it by providing an explanatory key.² The dominion of the quadrupeds symbolised Moldavia, with the Lion as its prince, while the realm of the birds represented Wallachia under the rule of the Eagle. This straightforward political landscape showed each animal having its designated place: Wallachians of a feather must flock together. To further emphasise this point, Cantemir introduced in his allegory a character inspired by an Aesopian fable who defied the natural political order: the bat.³ Claiming to be both a quadruped and a bird, the bat was a peculiar creature, a Moldo-Wallachian hybrid. The historical figure ridiculed by Cantemir was Prince Mark, the grandson of a former Wallachian

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¹ D. Cantemir, *Istoria ieroglifică* [vol.] IV, eds. S. Toma, V. Căndea, N. Stoicescu, in: D. Cantemir, *Opere Complete*, (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1973). For a recent discussion on this rather strange text, see O. Olar, “The Unicorn in the City of Lust: The Ottoman Empire in Dimitrie Cantemir’s ‘Hieroglyphic History’ (Constantinople, c. 1706)”, in: *Writing History in Ottoman Europe (Fifteenth – Eighteenth Centuries)*, eds. O. Olar, K. Petrovsky, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2026), 385–469.

² At the end of the sole extant manuscript, Cantemir added an explanatory key for decoding his allegorical novel, see Cantemir, *Istoria ieroglifică*, 277–289.

³ The bat is described as “the kin without kin”, “a beast of no use” or “someone that defies the laws of nature, neither having a proper body, nor a meaning in life, as he neither flies, nor he walks”, *Ibid.*, 119, 137 and 138. For a discussion on how the bat did fit, or failed to fit, in Cantemir’s political taxonomy, see Olar, “The Unicorn”.



Fig. 1. A late 18th-century map of Wallachia and Moldavia, during a time when the political destinies of the two realms were increasingly intertwined. *Principati di Moldavia e Valacchia nel 1786*, mappa italiana di G. Pittori, tratta da cartografia di Giovanni Antonio Rizzi Zannoni

ruler who aspired to the thrones of both Wallachia and Moldavia.⁴ In Cantemir's view, Mark the Bat was a political intruder whose hybrid nature fuelled his hubris.

Such a critical perspective on the political cross-hybridisation of Moldavians with Wallachians ultimately ended up on the wrong side of history. In the decades following Cantemir's brief and unsuccessful reign, the two realms, Moldavia and Wallachia, became increasingly intertwined (fig. 1). When Nicolae Mavrocordat, who ruled consecutively over Moldavia (1709–1710, 1711–1715) and Wallachia (1715–1716, 1719–1730), sought to document the history of his reigns, it could only

⁴ In the explanatory key the bat is identified as “Marco pseudompeizade”. For the historical figure behind this character, see P. P. Panaitescu, “Marco pseudo-beizade. Un pretendent la tron în vremea lui Constantin Brâncoveanu”, in: *Fraților Alexandru și Ioan I. Lăpedatu la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani* (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1936), 639–644.

be a shared Moldo-Wallachian narrative account.⁵ The next step towards a shared ‘parallel’ Moldavian-Wallachian history was undertaken by Nicolae’s son, Constantin Mavrocordat, who transferred from the throne of one realm to the other multiple times from the 1730s to the 1760s.⁶ The final blow to Cantemir’s localist Moldavian perspective was struck in the 19th century when the modern Romanian state emerged from the union of the two principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. The dual nature of these realms became the cornerstone of the national historical narrative as the identities of ‘Moldavian’ and ‘Wallachian’ – each with its own intricate history, beginning as simple labels for the subjects of the rulers of Moldavia/Wallachia and evolving into distinctive markers for members of an imagined community – gradually merged into that of ‘Romanian’.⁷

Modern scholars have proposed various explanations for the interplay between the two types of identification – Moldavian/Wallachian and Romanian – that are partially overlapping but otherwise mutually exclusive. For essentialists, the Romanian identity, understood as transhistorical, stable and inherent, has always been central to any historical polity, which, by default, could only foreshadow the modern nation-state. Within this framework, late medieval and early modern Moldavia and Wallachia were automatically labelled as ‘Romanian lands’ or ‘Romanian principalities’. In contrast, constructivists argue that Romanian identification is a modern invention developed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. They contend that projecting this identification into the past serves merely an ideological purpose and is inherently anachronistic.⁸

Ironically, despite their opposition, both approaches face similar intrinsic limitations in addressing historical attempts to shape a Moldo-Wallachian self-identification. By equating Moldo-Wallachian with Romanian, essentialists fail to clarify why non-Romanians, such as the aforementioned 18th-century Mavrocordats, played a vital role in shaping this shared identity.⁹ Furthermore, essentialists

⁵ Ș. S. Gorovei, “Spre unificarea istoriografiei naționale: ‘Cronica paralelă’ (Iași, 1733)”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A.D.Xenopol* 25/2 (1988), 139–140.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 139–186. For the critical edition of this chronicle (whose paternity is still debated), see: A. Uricariul, *Cronica paralelă a Țării Românești și a Moldovei*, ed. G. Ștrempel, (București: Editura Minerva, 1993).

⁷ See L. Boia, *History and myth in Romanian consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001).

⁸ For a discussion on the main differences between the views of essentialists and constructivists on national identity/identification see the introduction to this volume written by Marija Vasiljević.

⁹ See R. G. Păun, “Legitimatio principis: Nicolas Maurocordato ou le savoir du pouvoir”, in: *Pouvoirs et mentalités. A la mémoire du Professeur Alexandru Duțu*, ed. L. Vlad, (București: Éditions Babel, 1999), 89–110.

neglect the social dimension of Moldo-Wallachian rhetoric by conflating political belonging with ethnolinguistic identification. The most detrimental political scenario for the late medieval and early modern Wallachian elite was not being ruled by a non-Romanian, but by a non-prince. In 1593, when a supporter from Constantinople wrote to Petru the Lamé, the former lord of Moldavia with Wallachian origins, to inform him about the prospects of obtaining the throne of either realm, he lamented their current state, blaming the plebeian nature of the previous rulers: “one shepherd, another servant and another Cossack (i.e., brigand).”¹⁰ The distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’ princes has always been more critical than the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, regardless of the meanings ascribed to these concepts.

As I will further argue, the Moldo-Wallachian identification, first articulated in the early 17th century, was fundamentally a princely tool of self-fashioning. While essentialists tend to reify national identities, constructivists often succumb to the myth of modernity, employing contrasting conceptual pairs, such as single vs. multiple identities, assumed vs. ascribed identities, ‘imagined communities’ vs. ‘living communities’ or ‘communities of practice’, among others.¹¹ As we shall see, analysing early 17th-century Moldo-Wallachian self-fashioning reveals that the distinction between pre-modern and modern discourses is misleading when framed in terms of a simplistic opposition between naturally-driven group bonding and artificially-instilled group identification.

This paper seeks to navigate between the Scylla of essentialism and the Charybdis of constructivism to analyse the self-fashioning rhetoric of claimants to the throne of Wallachia over four decades, approximately from 1590 to 1630. The starting point of my analysis is the enthronement of two princes of Moldavian origin, Ștefan the Deaf and Alexandru the Evil, as lords of Wallachia in the early 1590s.¹² Four other princes of Moldavian origins ruled Wallachia in the early 17th century: Simion Movilă (1600), Alexandru Iliaș (1616), Gavrilă Movilă (1616), and Leon Tomșa (1629).¹³ However, as we shall see, while all six lords claimed a

¹⁰ *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] XI (1517–1612), ed. N. Iorga, (București: Socec, 1900), no. 436, 309–310.

¹¹ See, for instance: S. Mennell, “The Formation of We-Images: A Process Theory”, in: *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. C. Calhoun, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 175–197.

¹² For the system of mnemonic sobriquets developed by the Wallachian chancery in order to keep track of the rulers sharing the same regnal name, see: M. Coman, “Naming and the Making of Historical Memory: The Politics of Princely Sobriquets in the Wallachian Chancery of the Sixteenth Century”, in: *Writing History in Ottoman Europe (Fifteenth – Eighteenth Centuries)*, eds. O. Olariu, K. Petrovsky, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2025), 225–266.

¹³ The reigns of these ‘Moldavian’ rulers of Wallachia are as follows: Ștefan the Deaf (1591–1592), Alexandru the Evil (1592–1593), Simion Movilă (1600–1601, 1602), Alexandru

Moldavian princely lineage, they were not always perceived as such by their Wallachian subjects. As for the Wallachian princes, they successfully claimed the throne of Moldavia through Petru the Lamé (1574), Mihai the Brave (1600), Radu Mihnea (1616), and his son, Alexandru the Child (1629).¹⁴ In addition to these successful attempts, there were several unsuccessful claims by pretenders, who sought the two thrones of Wallachia and Moldavia concurrently or consecutively.¹⁵ The upper chronological limit of my analysis is the year 1632, when Matei Basarab secured the throne of Wallachia, marking the beginning of a 22-year reign. He notably achieved this by consistently employing a localist rhetoric centred on a Wallachian dynastic identity.¹⁶ My analysis has a threefold structure. The first part explores the gradual emergence of a cultural component in Wallachian princely discourses, which have traditionally been characterised solely by a social form of legitimation. The second section discusses the earliest expressions of Moldo-Wallachian self-fashioning as a means of justifying the interchangeability of the two thrones.¹⁷ The third and final part focuses on the localist reaction that led to the assertion of a distinct Wallachian political and dynastic self-identification.

Iliș (1616–1618, 1627–1629), Gavrilă Movilă (1616, 1618–1620), and Leon Tomșa (1629–1632). As the throne of Wallachia was highly volatile during these decades, the reigning years are often disputed, as modern scholars tend to multiply the number of reigns, see: L. M. Ilie, “Domn sau pretendent? Câteva note referitoare la domniile lui Radu Mihnea”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 42 (2024), 125–136. To avoid making the text unreadable by including too many chronological brackets, I decided to keep things as simple as possible: the first mention of a ruler is followed by the year of his first ascension to the throne.

¹⁴ The reigns of these ‘Wallachian’ rulers of Moldavia are as follows: Petru the Lamé (1574–1578, 1582–1591), Mihai the Brave (1600), Radu Mihnea (1616–1619, 1623–1626), and his son, Alexandru the Child (1629–1630).

¹⁵ For Ștefan Bogdan see: L. J. Coulter, *The Involvement of the English Crown and its Embassy in Constantinople with Pretenders to the Throne of the Principality of Moldavia between 1583 and 1620* [PhD thesis] (London: University of London, 1993).

¹⁶ See D. Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation zwischen Tradition und Innovation. Repräsentation und Inszenierung von Herrschaft in der Rumänischen Geschichte in der Vormoderne und bei Ceaușescu* (Brașov: Aldus, 2007), 64–84 (the chapter *Dynastische Legitimation*).

¹⁷ My study focuses on the rhetoric of this interchangeability and not on the historical conditions that made it possible. The grand frame is, obviously, that of the Ottoman Empire, in which the tributary states of Moldavia and Wallachia came to be defined by an increasingly similar juridical status. For this see: R. G. Păun, “Conquered by the (S)word: Governing the Tributary Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (16th–17th Centuries)”, in: *The Ottoman Orient in Renaissance Culture*, eds. R. Born, M. Dziewulski, in collabor. with K. Twardowska, (Krakow: The National Museum in Krakow, 2015), 19–40.

1. Social Status and Political Communities in Princely Discourses

Each charter issued by the ruling lord of Wallachia included a self-presentation expressed through a self-assigned title (fig. 2). An essential aspect of these statements was the princely filiation, as nearly every ruler sought to emphasise the legitimacy conferred by his ‘princely blood’ or, to use the preferred Wallachian metonymy, by his ‘princely bone’.¹⁸ Thus, according to these self-styled titles, the rulers of Wallachia from 1590 to 1632 can be categorised into two distinct, though somewhat unequal, groups. The first group consisted of those rulers who claimed to be the sons of former lords. They consistently referenced their father and, occasionally, even their grandfather in their elaborate titles. For example, Mihnea the Renegade presented himself as ‘the son of the good and great Alexandru voivode’, sometimes adding, ‘the grandson of the late Mircea voivode’.¹⁹ The second group consists of those lords who, lacking a princely father, either omitted the filiation from their titles entirely or replaced it with a more convoluted claim. Such was the case with Simion (1600–1602), who, unlike all previous rulers of Wallachia, did not claim to be of ‘princely bone’. Nonetheless, he was part of the rapidly rising Movilă family, whose brother, Ieremia, ruled over Moldavia.²⁰ Simion became the first ruler of Wallachia to incorporate a

¹⁸ See M. Coman, “Cross-Cultural Genealogies. Wallachian Pretenders and Their Rhetoric of Birthright in the 16th Century”, in: *Genealogisches Wissen in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit. Konstruktion – Darstellung – Rezeption*, Hrsg. G. Cusa, T. Dorfner, (Berlin: De Gruyter Brill, 2023), 336–337.

¹⁹ Mihnea’s short title was ‘by the grace of God, Mihnea, voivode and ruler’, while the extended versions were ‘by the grace of God, Mihnea, voivode and ruler of the entire realm of Ungrovlahia, the son of the great and the good Alexandru, the late voivode’ and ‘by the grace of God, Mihnea, voivode and ruler of the entire realm of Ungrovlahia, the son of the great and the good Alexandru, the grandson of the late Mircea voivode’, in: *Documente privind istoria României. B. Țara Românească* (hereafter *DIR-B*), veacul al XVI-lea [vol.] 5 (1581–1590), ed. I. Ionașcu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1953), nos. 442, 443 and 480 (all three examples are from charters issued in 1590).

²⁰ Neither Ieremia, nor Simion, claimed to be of ‘princely bone’, as their father was a well-known Moldavian dignitary, the great logothete Ion Movilă, see: I. Miculescu-Prăjescu, “New Data Regarding the Installation of Movilă Princes”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 49 (1971), 217–222. For Ieremia, see: A. Pippidi, “Ieremia Movilă. Schiță de portret”, in: *Andrei Pippidi mai puțin cunoscut. Studii adunate de foștii săi elevi cu prilejul împlinirii vârstei de 79 de ani*, eds. M. Coman et al., (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2018), 206–219. When Ieremia’s Polish patron Jan Zamoyski backed him for the Moldavian throne, he contrasted the Movilă family’s local aristocratic origins, of “good blood”, with the other pretenders’ blatant lies about their “princely bone”: “non fictum quondam stirpis Palatinorum Valachiae (sicuti multi hactenus eiusmodi praetenderunt successionem) [Polish sources usually called Moldavia by the name of *Valachia*], nec aliquem Romanorum

dynastic sobriquet into his title, alongside the regnal name: ‘Simion Moghilă [Movilă].’²¹ He even added the family name to his *manu propria* signature,²² stating thus that his legitimacy rested mainly on his family’s power and wealth, not on some princely lineage.²³ By including the family name as a dynastic label in the *intitulatio*, Simion adhered to the model first established by his brother, Ieremia, in Moldavia.²⁴ Both brothers kept their baptismal names after assuming the throne, declining to adopt one of the traditional regal names, and both added a dynastic surname to their princely title.²⁵ For Wallachia, this marked a dramatic shift in political discourse, as until that moment, the princely chancery referred to the ruling lord by his regnal name or, in exceptional cases, by his baptismal name, but never by a dynastic label. It is no coincidence that the first dynastic sobriquet ever used by the Wallachian chancery originates from the reign of Simion, a Moldavian of non-princely origins.²⁶ Șerban, the Wallachian nobleman who successfully challenged Simion, restored the local political tradition. Șerban adopted the most used Wallachian regnal name, Radu, although most subjects continued to refer to him by his baptismal name.²⁷

[Iorga interprets this as a reference to the Wallachians], *sed gentis Valachiae nobilem, virum probum, qui est sanguis de sanguine*”, in: *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] XII (1594–1602), ed. N. Iorga, (București: Socecu, 1903), no. 157, 99. For the different versions of Zamoyski’s discourse, see: C. A. Bobicescu, “Din nou despre originea lui Ieremia Movilă. Partea I”, in: *Świat relacji polsko-rumuńskich / Lumea relațiilor polono-române*, eds. K. Stempel-Ganczarczyk, E. Wieruszewska-Calistru, (Suceava: Związek Polaków w Rumunii “Dom Polski”, 2012), 25–49.

²¹ Simion’s self-styled title was: ‘by the grace of God, Simion Moghila voivode [СИМІОН МОГІЛА ВОЄВОДА] and lord of the entire realm of Ungrovlahia’, see *DIR-B*, veacul al XVII-lea [vol.] 1 (1601–1610), ed. I. Ionașcu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1951), *passim*.

²² See the brief letter sent to Mihaiu from Târgșor preserved at the Library of the Romanian Academy, historical documents CXC VII/48 (for a photocopy of this document, see *DIR-B*, veacul al XVII-lea [vol.] 1, no. 26, 22–23 and 524).

²³ For the legendary wealth of this family, see I. Corfus, “Odoarele Movileștilor rămase în Polonia. Contribuții la istoria artei și a prețurilor”, *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 25/1 (1972), 29–60.

²⁴ Ieremia’s title in the Moldavian charters was: *БРЕМІІЖ МОГІЛА ВОЄВОДА*, in *Documenta Romaniae Historica. A. Moldova* [vol.] IX (1593–1598), ed. P. Zahariuc et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 2014).

²⁵ For Ieremia’s attempts to exploit the figure of the prophet Ieremia, see H. Riedler, “Die vielen Gesichter des Ieremia Movilă. Herrschaftslegitimierung und Herrschaftsinszenierung in der Moldau um 1600”, *Südost-Forschungen* 82/1 (2023), 127.

²⁶ For the present argument the origins of such a dynastic conception are rather less important, but everything seems to point towards a Polish influence, see: *ibid.*, 132.

²⁷ Some private charters issued during his reign are dated “in the days of Șerban voivode” and not of “Radu voivode”, see *DIR-B*, veacul XVII [vol.] 1, no. 78.



Fig. 2. Four examples of rulers' self-fashioning *intitulaciones* in the Wallachian charters. The first, issued by Mihnea the Renegade in 1581, emphasises the princely lineage: *Io Mihnea voivode and lord [...] son of Alexandru voivode, son of Mircea voivode*. The second, issued by Alexandru the Evil in 1593, retains the princely filiation but adds the Moldavian ancestry: *By the grace of God, Io Alexandru voivode and lord [the filiation that mentions his father and grandfather] from the realm of Moldavia*. The last two examples utilise the dynastic sobriquet: *Simion Mogila* (1600) and *Mateiu Basarab* (1640). Romanian National Archives, Bucharest, archival numbers 1182, 1498, 1668 and 3310

Radu-Șerban also lacked a direct princely lineage; however, unlike Simion, he went to great lengths to fabricate one, claiming to be the grandson of a former lord of Wallachia named Basarab.²⁸

²⁸ Radu Șerban's *intitulatio* entirely overlooks the filiation but regularly mentions the name of his grandfather: "Radu, grandson of the very kind and late lord Basarab". This change caused some confusion among the chancery scribes, as one of them miswrote the formula and entitled Radu, rather confusingly, "son of the great and very kind grandson of lord Basarab", *DIR-B*, veacul XVII [vol.] 1, no. 144.

All other lords who ascended to the throne of Wallachia from the 1610s to the early 1630s claimed to be the sons of former princes. However, there are some significant differences in their self-fashioning rhetoric.²⁹ Thus, Gavrilă Movilă blended the traditional Wallachian political discourse of the ‘princely bone’ with his father’s innovation of a dynastic name. Consequently, he styled himself not only as ‘Gavrilă voivode, son of Simion voivode’, but also as ‘Gavrilă Moghilă, son of Simion Moghilă’.³⁰ For the first time in the history of Wallachia, the princely lineage was not only asserted, but also explicitly dynastically labelled. The other diplomatic innovation in the chancery formulae, much more in line with the local political discourse, was introduced during Alexandru the Child’s reign (1623–1627). For the first time, a Wallachian ruler traced back his princely lineage in his *intitulatio* up to the third generation. Alexandru styled himself not only as the son of Radu voivode and the grandson of Mihnea voivode, but also as the great-grandson of yet another former lord of Wallachia, his namesake, Alexandru.³¹ Thus, Alexandru could boast of being the fourth consecutive generation on the throne of Wallachia. Although this family, usually labelled by modern scholars as ‘the Mihnești’, claimed a genealogical connection with the famous Corvinus line, they never assumed a dynastic sobriquet in their chancery charters.³² It was only with Matei’s ascension in 1632, that the princely filiation was again excluded from the title. Like Simion Movilă and Radu Șerban, Matei

²⁹ The double names used by modern scholars can be misleading, as they project some kind of naming uniformity: Radu Mihnea (1611–1616), Gavrilă Movilă (1618–1620), Alexandru Iliăș (1616–1618); Leon Tomșa (1629–1632). However, only one of these double names was used by his owner: Gavrilă Movilă. In contrast to the Movilă case, the dynastic names of Mihnea, Iliăș and Tomșa are modern scholarly labels. All other lords identified themselves by a regnal name and by their filiation, going back one, two and even three generations.

³⁰ The extended title used by Gavrilă was the following “By the Grace of God, Io Gavril Moghilă voivode and lord of the entire realm of Ungrovlahia, son of the great and good Io Simion Moghilă voivode”, in: *DIR-B*, veacul al XVII-lea [vol.] 3 (1616–1620), ed. I. Ionașcu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1953), nos. 212, 224, 228, 248. Gavrilă even included the dynastic sobriquet in the subscription of some of his charters – written in red ink in large letters at the bottom of the chancery documents, these were the most visually arresting parts of the charters – conflating the two names into a single monogram.

³¹ The extended title used by Alexandru’s chancery was the following: “By the Grace of God, Io Alexandru voivode and lord of the entire realm of Ungrovlahia, son of the great Io Radu voivode, grandson of the good and merciful Mihnea voivode and great-grandson of the late, great and merciful, the elder Io Alexandru voivode”, in *DIR-B*, veacul al XVII-lea [vol.] 4 (1621–1625), ed. Ion Ionașcu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1954), nos. 330, 348 and 445.

³² Both Mihnea and his uncle Petru styled themselves as descendants of the Corvinus royal house, in two inscriptions from Venice and Tyrol, see: Ș. Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae* [vol.] 2. *Relațiile politice dintre Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1601–1659* (București: Editura Albatros, 1989), 41.

did not claim to be the son of a former lord. Matei adopted Radu Șerban's model, asserting legitimacy by invoking an alleged grandfather, Basarab. This was the exact historical figure to whom Radu Șerban had turned three decades earlier, one who gradually became somewhat of a generic grandfather for the Wallachian nobles who ascended to the throne. As I shall argue in the third part of this study, Basarab was one step away from being transformed from a regnal name into a dynastic surname.

Based on their chancery production and self-styled titles, the taxonomy of lords who succeeded to the throne of Wallachia around 1600 entirely disregards the distinction between 'locals', Wallachians, and 'foreigners', non-Wallachians. The princely origins held far greater significance than their local ancestry in the eyes of the rulers and, presumably, in those of their subjects. When Ștefan the Deaf became lord of Wallachia in 1591, he referred to himself as: "Io Ștefan, son of the great and the good Io Ioan voivode".³³ No lord of Wallachia has ever borne the name Ioan, for Ștefan's father did not rule over Wallachia, but over Moldavia. As soon as the Sultan appointed Ștefan, the Christian diplomats in Constantinople sent reports informing him that he was the son of the rebellious Ioan of Moldavia, whose brutal execution remained vividly remembered twenty years later.³⁴ The Wallachian elites were fully aware of who Ioan had been, as his severed head was displayed at the main gate of Bucharest for several months.³⁵ Neither his father's post-mortem shaming nor his Moldavian origins deterred Ștefan from declaring his lineage. Regardless of Ioan's tragic fate, God had entrusted him with the reign, granting his descendants the legitimacy of the 'princely bone'. Ștefan was so proud of this ascendancy that he explicitly stated in a donation charter for his father's soul: "When God granted my late father,

³³ *DIR-B*, veacul al XVI-lea [vol.] 6 (1591–1600), nos. 11 and 12. Incidentally, the name of Ștefan's father slightly confused the Wallachian chancery scribes, as the custom was to add the theophoric name Io, a shortened version of Ioan, before the rulers' regnal names. Facing the repetition 'Io Ioan', the scribes of Ștefan's charters used three variants: 'son of Io Ioan' (less frequent), 'son of Ioan' (most frequent), and 'son of Io' (a single occurrence).

³⁴ According to a Spanish diplomatic report: "El embaxador del Emperador, por cartas de Constantinopla de 4 de Mayo, avisa: [...] que el nuevo Principe de Valachia, ántes que tomasse la posesión de aquel estado, havia sido depuesto y dádose el gobierno a un hijo de Juan Bayvoda que fué hecho quartos, atándole a quatro camellos", in: *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese din arhivele din Simancas*, ed. A. Ciorănescu, (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1940), 97. An Austrian Habsburg report from the same day, the 4th of May 1591, provides the same information, see in *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] III/1 (1576–1599) (București: Socec, 1880), no. 134, 148–149.

³⁵ The Polish traveller Maciej Strykowski, who entered Bucharest in 1575, described the head of the former lord of Moldavia, in: *Călători străini despre țările române* [vol.] II, eds. M. Holban, M. M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru, P. Cernovodeanu, (București: Editura Științifică, 1970), 455.

Ioan voivode, and me, the sceptre unto the throne of my lordship, in Wallachia.”³⁶ In Ștefan’s view, the direct connection between a prince and God was far more significant than the bond between a prince and a specific realm. God granted Ioan and Ștefan the authority to reign. It was insignificant that the former ruled Moldavia and the latter Wallachia. Indeed, after Ștefan lost the throne of Wallachia, he did not hesitate to ask the Sultan to appoint him to rule over Moldavia.³⁷ Clearly, in his own eyes, his birthright to reign was not limited to a specific realm.

Ștefan’s successor on the Wallachian throne, Alexandru, was another Moldavian. Alexandru asserted his claim to the Moldavian throne throughout his career as a pretender. His lineage remained somewhat ambiguous, as some diplomats in Constantinople regarded him as another son of Ioan of Moldavia, and thus a brother of Ștefan; however, he claimed instead to be a son of Bogdan Lăpușneanu.³⁸ The Sultan even appointed Alexandru to the throne of Moldavia, only to have his mind changed by the lobbying of one of his rivals.³⁹ The throne of Wallachia, which Alexandru held for less than a year, was merely a consolation prize. In the charters issued for his Wallachian subjects, Alexandru took pride in styling himself as the son of “the great, the good, and the merciful, the late Io Bogdan voivode” and the grandson of the “elder and late Io Alexandru voivode”.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he explicitly stated that his ancestors had reigned over the realm of Moldavia, without seemingly inciting any hostility among his Wallachian subjects.⁴¹

There is a stark contrast between the self-presentation rhetoric of the first Moldavian lords of Wallachia and that of the first Wallachian rulers of Moldavia. In the 1570s, the first Wallachian ruler of Moldavia, Petru the lame, was more

³⁶ *DIR-B*, veacul al XVI-lea [vol.] 6 (1591–1600), no. 61.

³⁷ In the autumn of 1594 Ștefan the Deaf was appointed lord of Moldavia, to replace the rebellious Aron. The Christian diplomats in Istanbul referred to him as to the “former lord of Wallachia” (*Stefano già Vaivoda di Valachia* or *Estefano, que lo fué de Valachia*), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] III/1 (1576–1599), 464 and *Documente*, ed. A. Ciorănescu, 104.

³⁸ See I. Minea, “Ceva despre Alexandru Vodă cel Rău”, *Cercetări Istorice* 10–12 (1934–1936), 344–345.

³⁹ According to a letter of the Venetian bailo dated 18th of July 1592: “Ad Alessandro poi che era eletto Principe di Bogdania hanno dato la Valachia, et privo l’altro innanzi l’anno del suo possesso, le quali mutationi mostranò l’instabilita perpetua di questa Porta”, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] IV/2 (1600–1650) (București: Socec, 1884), no. 120, 162–163.

⁴⁰ *DIR-B*, veacul al XVI-lea [vol.] 6 (1591–1600), *passim*.

⁴¹ There are at least two Wallachian charters in which Alexandru explicitly refers to his ancestors as former rulers of the Moldavian realm *DIR-B*, veacul al XVI-lea [vol.] 6 (1591–1600), nos. 70 and 74.

cautious in asserting his Wallachian origins in the charters he issued.⁴² Even so, Petru encountered resistance from his Moldavian subjects due to his perceived ‘foreignness’. Shortly after Petru’s appointment, various sources reported critical voices that challenged his authority based on his non-Moldavian origins: “because he does not belong to their people”,⁴³ “who is not from the realm”⁴⁴ or “not an heir of theirs, but a foreigner”.⁴⁵ Nothing similar occurred in Wallachia in the early 1590s when the Moldavians Ștefan and Alexandru ascended to the throne. Both had short reigns, marked by political strife, and Alexandru appears to have been particularly disliked by his Wallachian subjects; hence the nickname that was later given to him: ‘the Evil’.⁴⁶ Most notably, the Wallachian opposition never challenged Alexandru based on his Moldavian ancestry; instead, they accused him of having low social origins or of behaving tyrannically.⁴⁷ The late 17th-century Wallachian chronicles recalled that the

⁴² Ș. Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae* [vol.] 1. *Relațiile politice dintre Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1526–1593* (București: Editura Albatros, 1980), 163. A doctoral thesis recently dedicated to Petru the Lamé focused rather on his Moldavian supporters – the most prominent being the Movilă family – and less on the opposition, see: S. I. Amănălăchioaie, *Țara Moldovei în timpul domniilor lui Petru Vodă Șchiopul* [PhD thesis] (Iași: Universitatea “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2022).

⁴³ “perchè non è delle lor gente”. The phrase is taken from a letter of the Venetian bailo, see: *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] VIII (1376–1650) (București: Socecu, 1894), no. 261, 179.

⁴⁴ “qui ne soit du pays”, in T. Holban, “Documente românești din arhivele polone și franceze”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie ‘A.D. Xenopol’* 13 (1976), 290–291.

⁴⁵ “nit ein Erbling, sondern von der Fremd”. The phrase comes from the letter addressed to the Habsburgs by one of Petru the Lamé’s rivals to the throne, see: *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești* [vol.] 2 (1573–1584), ed. A. Veress, (București: Cartea Românească, 1930), no. 105, 139–141.

⁴⁶ Although the sobriquet was coined by modern scholars, there are numerous contemporary sources that refer to the Wallachians’ complaints with regard to Alexandru’s tyranny. An early 17th century French historian, Jacques Augustin de Thou, summarised Alexandru’s Wallachian reign in these terms: “sed cum Alexandru luxuria et libidine erga omnes injuriosus, tum nepotinis sumtibus gravis summum suorum odium meruisset, grandique aere alieno contracto, quod X auri sagmas, vulgo potuarias vocant, excedebat, populus insultis tributis onerasset”, in: *Mihai Viteazul în conștiința europeană* [vol.] II. *Cronicari și istorici străini. Secolele XVI–XVIII*, ed. I. Ardeleanu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1983), 120.

⁴⁷ Already in 1593, some Wallachians were speaking out to the Sultan about “le tirannie di Vaivoda et le gravezze insopportabili”, in: *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] III/1 (1576–1599), 457. In the same year, 1593, a supporter of Petru the Lamé mocked the base origins of some previous lords of Wallachia, including Alexandru’s, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] XI (1517–1612), no. 436, 309–310.

two rulers had brief reigns, yet they do not mention their ‘non-Wallachian’ origins.⁴⁸ Neither Alexandru nor Ștefan was remembered as a ‘Moldavian’ in Wallachian historical memory. It was a non-issue; the only thing that mattered politically was their princely ascendancy: their kingship was far more relevant than their kinship.⁴⁹ A few years later, the self-fashioning rhetoric was poised for a sudden shift.

With Mihai the Brave’s ascension to the throne in 1593, discourses on princely identity, both as legitimising self-identification and as contesting external designation, continued in the traditional Wallachian rhetorical format. Mihai claimed to be the posthumous son of a former lord, while his adversaries spread the rumour that he was nothing more than a parvenu of dubious origins.⁵⁰ An opposition group sought refuge in Moldavia and advanced the claims to the throne of Simion Movilă, the brother of the ruling lord of Moldavia, Ieremia Movilă. In September 1599, this group presented the Moldavian ruler and his Polish patrons with a letter reportedly endorsed by all Wallachian high clerics and nobles.⁵¹ This letter, written in Romanian, requested Polish-Moldavian intervention to replace Mihai with Simion on the throne of Wallachia. From a rhetorical perspective, the letter was a political game changer because the argument presented was framed not socially, but culturally: “as we all share the same faith and speak the same language, and the rulers of the two realms [i.e., Wallachia and Moldavia] would be close relatives; as we have had enough of

⁴⁸ V. Cârdea, “Letopisețul Țării Românești (1292–1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim”, *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 23 (1970), 688–689; I. Feodorof, “La chronique de Valachie (1292–1664). Texte arabe du Patriarche Macaire Zaïm. Introduction, édition du texte arabe et traduction française”, *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 52 (1991–1992), 57; *Istoria Țării Românești (1290–1690). Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, eds. C. Grecescu, D. Simonescu, (București: Editura Academiei, 1960), 54.

⁴⁹ It is worth contrasting the importance ascribed by the 17th century Wallachian and Moldavian chroniclers to the former rulers’ origins. Miron Costin and Grigore Ureche, the Moldavian chroniclers, dutifully noted the ‘foreign’ extraction of former rulers, going back to the 16th century: Despot the Italian, Ion the Armenian, Iancu the Saxon. The Wallachian-originated rulers, such as Petru the Lame or Radu Mihnea, are identified as such, even when they are praised (see Radu Mihnea labelled as “the Great” by Costin). I am grateful to Radu Păun who, after reading a preliminary version of this chapter, drew my attention to this aspect.

⁵⁰ Given the special place held by Mihai the Brave in the national Romanian historical pantheon, the question of his princely origins triggered a heated debate between Nicolae Iorga and Petre P. Panaitescu, see: P. P. Panaitescu, “În jurul lui Mihai Viteazul. Răspuns domnului N. Iorga”, *Revista Istorică Română* 7 (1937), 7–20. See, more recently: M. Maxim, “Michel the Brave’s appointment and the investiture – September 2nd/12th – in two unpublished documents”, in: M. Maxim, *L’Empire ottoman au Nord du Danube et l’autonomie des Principautés Roumaines au XVI^e siècle* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1999), 157–173.

⁵¹ The letter was edited and commented upon by Ș. Ștefănescu, “Știri noi cu privire la domnia lui Mihai Viteazul”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 5 (1962), 175–192.

Greeks and Franks and other thieves who came and reigned over us, as we are fed up with this one, with Mihai.”⁵² It is not difficult to understand why Simion’s supporters altered the traditional endorsement of a claimant to the throne of Wallachia. As they could not praise Simion’s princely origins, since none of his paternal ancestors were known to have been princes,⁵³ they emphasised his cultural affinity with his future subjects. In a sense, Simion’s supporters from 1599 adapted the argument previously presented for his brother, Ieremia, at his ascension to the Moldavian throne in 1595.⁵⁴ The only difference was that the cultural ‘localist’ argument seemed more fitting for Ieremia, a Moldavian candidate for the Moldavian throne, than for Simion, a Moldavian contender for the Wallachian throne.

In a letter addressed to the Polish Chancellor, Jan Zamoyski, the Wallachian nobles supporting Simion anticipated this objection and sought to defuse it with a historical argument: “in ancient times, the voivode of Moldavia became lord of Wallachia and the voivode of Wallachia became lord of Moldavia.”⁵⁵ This was a typical example of an invented tradition, as the interchangeability of the two thrones, Moldavia and Wallachia, was only a recent innovation.

2. The Moldo-Wallachian Princely Self-Presentation

When Simion’s supporters endorsed the idea of the interchangeability of the two thrones, only two decades had passed since the first Wallachian prince ruled over Moldavia, and just a few years had elapsed since the first Moldavian ascended to power in Wallachia. Contrary to the pro-Simion nobles’ deceiving claim, no voivode had yet transitioned from one throne to the other. Only in the early 1590s did some pretenders seek the thrones of either realm. As I have already shown, Ștefan the Deaf and Alexandru the Evil gained the throne of Wallachia, but they also aspired to rule Moldavia one day. Another self-proclaimed Moldavian prince, Ștefan Bogdan, pursued both thrones during the 1590s and 1600s, but ultimately failed in

⁵² *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵³ See I. Miculescu-Prăjescu, “New Data”, 222–223 and Ș. S. Gorovei, “Movileștii. Considerații finale”, *Cercetări istorice* 32 (2013), 177–194.

⁵⁴ See above footnote 20. For the latest discussion on this topic see: Riedler, “Die vielen Gesichter”, 117–139.

⁵⁵ *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki*, suplimentul II [vol.] 1 (1510–1600), ed. I. Bogdan, (București: Socec, 1893), no. 265, 487–490. To make their argument more compelling, the Wallachian nobles presented the Polish chancellor with a dark political alternative: the Ottomans would appoint either a Muslim or an “ordinary rascal” on the throne.

his endeavours.⁵⁶ Petru the lame, the first Wallachian to rule Moldavia, became a contender for his forefathers' throne only in the 1590s, after losing the Moldavian throne. In 1593, one of his men in Constantinople penned a partially encrypted letter that revealed his political agenda: "Because we are friends, the only thought on my mind is the following, for you to reign in one of these two realms."⁵⁷ One can safely conclude that the interchangeability of the two thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia was a relatively new concept, dating back only to the early 1590s.

The novelty of this political idea should not be underestimated. Throughout the 16th century, the destinies of Wallachia and Moldavia became increasingly intertwined as the two realms gradually integrated into the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁸ A Moldo-Wallachian political tandem was a long-standing strategy that had been repeatedly tested. The concept involved a duo comprising a Wallachian prince (or would-be prince) and a Moldavian ruler (or pretender to the throne). Since the early 15th century, Wallachian rulers have supported pretenders to the Moldavian throne, while Moldavian lords have often endorsed claimants to the Wallachian throne.⁵⁹ It was not uncommon for a pretender to the throne of Wallachia to coordinate his actions with a Moldavian claimant, or vice versa.⁶⁰ However, not once until the 1590s did a Moldavian pretender attempt to pursue the Wallachian throne. The reason for this significant change is revealed in a letter written by Petru the lame's agent in Constantinople, which I have already mentioned. In an alleged conversation with the Grand Vizier, Petru's agent outlined the primary cause of the escalating political instability and the cumulative financial failures of Wallachia and Moldavia. Instead of granting the thrones to someone "whose forefathers had been lords and whose entire lineage has been of

⁵⁶ For Ștefan Bogdan see: Coulter, *The Involvement*. Even after converting to Islam, Ștefan Bogdan still dreamt of ruling both Moldavia and Wallachia as an Ottoman bey, see the Venetian bailo's letter from March 1612: "che quel Steffano Bogdano già fatto Turco [...] Che si pensa di unire la Valachia, et Bogdania [Moldavia] in uno stato solo, et darne il commando a Musulmani", in: *Documente Hurmuzaki* [vol.] IV/2 (1600–1650), nos. 356, 338.

⁵⁷ See above, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] XI (1517–1612), no. 436, 309–310.

⁵⁸ See V. Panaite, *Ottoman Law of War and Peace: The Ottoman Empire and Its Tribute-Payers from the North of the Danube* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019).

⁵⁹ See M. Coman, "The Battle for the Throne: Wallachian Pretenders and Ottoman Troops (early 15th c. – early 17th c.)", in: *Turkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium*, eds. B. Kocaoglu, A. Taşdemir, (Istanbul: Turkish National Defence University, 2023), 59–86.

⁶⁰ A striking example, considering the geographical distance, is the attempt by Bogdan Lăpușeanu, a pretender to the Moldavian throne living in Moscow, and Mircea the Young, a claimant to the throne of Wallachia living in Aleppo, to coordinate their actions, see: *Relațiile istorice dintre popoarele U.R.S.S. și România în veacurile XV-începutul celui de-al XVIII* [vol.] 1 (1408–1632), ed. J. S. Grosul et al. (Moscow: Știința, 1965) no. 49, 138–144.

princely origins”, the Sultan appointed individuals of humble birth and crude appetites: “one shepherd, another servant, and another Cossack (i.e., brigand).”⁶¹ Behind the rhetorical distinction between the ‘true’ and ‘false’ princes, the letter highlighted a crucial historical phenomenon: as the pool of candidates for the Wallachian throne continued to grow, competition intensified, and costs skyrocketed.

There is a scholarly consensus that the fiscal pressure exerted by the Ottoman Empire on Wallachia peaked at an unsustainable level from the 1570s to the early 1590s.⁶² A significant aspect of this financial burden arose from the substantial amounts borrowed from diverse groups of creditors by the various claimants who vied for the throne. This pressure placed on the local political system transformed the rhetoric of legitimacy. Simion Movilă’s Wallachian supporters were the first to downplay the social argument – he could claim, at best, some princely origins on his mother’s side⁶³ – and to elevate the cultural one to the foreground. Unlike the previous lords, it was not his princely lineage that made Simion Movilă fit to rule, but his cultural affinity with the Wallachians. A direct consequence of this shift in discourse, which I will explore in the last part of this article, was the emergence of a ‘localist’ counter-narrative that emphasised the necessity for a ruler of Wallachia to be of Wallachian origin. Thus, around 1600, for the first time in the political history of Wallachia, the debates concerning legitimacy shifted from the princely lineage to the ‘native’ or ‘non-native’ origins of the claimants.

The next generation of the Movilă family, the sons of Ieremia and Simion, no longer suffered from a lack of legitimacy, as they were of ‘princely bone’. The success of their fathers, who had even endeavoured to secure a dynastic monopoly,⁶⁴ gained them a rightful place in the society of princes. Unsurprisingly, they were the first to

⁶¹ See above, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki* [vol.] XI (1517–1612), no. 436, 309–310.

⁶² The interpretation advanced by the classical studies written by M. Berza, “Haraciul Moldovei și Țării Românești în sec. XV–XIX”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 2 (1957), 7–47 and M. Berza, “Variațiile exploatării Țării Românești de către Poarta otomană în secolele XVI–XVIII”, *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 11/2 (1958), 59–71, had been confirmed and nuanced by the Ottomanists Mihai Maxim and Bogdan Murgescu. For the most recent discussion, with the previous bibliography, see: B. Murgescu, *Țările Române între Imperiul Otoman și Europa creștină* (Iași: Polirom, 2021), 81–102.

⁶³ In modern Romanian scholarship there is a debate regarding the maternal ancestors, especially to the hypothetical princely status of Ieremia’s and Simion’s mother, see: Ș. S. Gorovei, “Movileștii”, in: *Movileștii. Istorie și spiritualitate românească* [vol.] 1. *Casa Noastră Movilească* (Suceava: Mușatinii, 2006), 9–20.

⁶⁴ For Ieremia’s efforts to gain the Sultan’s endorsement for the hereditary reign of his family in Moldavia, a wish fulfilled in the 1599 Polish–Ottoman treaty, see: Ș. S. Gorovei, “O lămurire: domnia ereditară a familiei Movilă”, *Revista de Istorie* 28 (1975), 1091–1094.

merge the two sets of social and cultural-political arguments and to formulate the notion of Moldo-Wallachian princely origins for the first time. The tombstone on Simion Movilă's grave, placed at the family's foundation in Moldavia, the monastery of Sucevița, emphasised that he reigned, successively, over Wallachia and Moldavia. Even more telling, the tombstone was inscribed by one of his sons at the moment of his ascension to the throne of Wallachia: "and this tomb fell into oblivion until the moment when, by the grace of God, his beloved son, Gavrilă voivode was raised on the first throne of his father, that of Wallachia."⁶⁵ Around the same time, Simion's wife donated a spectacular silver-gilded liturgical vessel to Sucevița, featuring the armorials of both Wallachia and Moldavia.⁶⁶ The statement made by Gavrilă and his mother was clear: the Movilă family had the right to rule over both Wallachia and Moldavia. Gavrilă was a Moldo-Wallachian prince, a hybrid figure according to Cantemir's political classification. The term Moldo-Wallachian prince was first consistently employed by Gavrilă's brother, Petru Movilă. After a brief and unsuccessful attempt to ascend the Moldavian throne, Petru turned to an ecclesiastical career, becoming abbot of Kyiv Pechersk Lavra and later Metropolitan of Kyiv, Galicia, and all of Rus'.⁶⁷ Proud of his ancestry, Petru self-styled himself "hereditary prince of Moldo- and Ungro-Vlahia"⁶⁸ and used a coat of arms that joined the armorials of both Moldavia and Wallachia.⁶⁹ When a third son of Simion, Moses, became the lord of Moldavia, Petru dedicated a liturgical book to his brother, which was printed in Kyiv in 1631. The preface was a parenetic rhetorical exercise, and Petru used this opportunity to call his brother not only the prince of Moldavia, but also "voivode of the fatherly lineage, inheritor of the Moldo-Wallachian realms" (воевода истинному и природному отеческии жребіемъ наслѣднику земель Молдовлахїнскимъ).⁷⁰

⁶⁵ O. Tafrali, "Le Monastère de Sucevița et son trésor", *Arta și Arheologia* 1/1 (1933), 6 [reprinted in *Movileștii. Istorie și spiritualitate românească* [vol.] 1, 175–219].

⁶⁶ P. Ș. Năsturel, "Asupra stemelor unite ale Moldovei și Țării Românești la începutul veacului al XVII-lea", *Studii și cercetări numismatice* 2 (1958), 372–373.

⁶⁷ P. P. Panaitescu, *Petru Movilă și românii* (București: Tipografia cărților bisericești, 1942) [reprinted in *Movileștii. Istorie și spiritualitate românească* [vol.] 1]; Ș. S. Gorovei, "Petru Movilă. Contribuții", in: *Movileștii. Istorie și spiritualitate românească* [vol.] 1. Casa Noastră *Movilească* (Suceava: Mușatinii, 2006), 159–172.

⁶⁸ S. Dragomir, *Contribuții privitoare la relațiile Bisericii românești cu Rusia în veacul XVII* (București: Editura Dominor, 2003), 115 [reprint of a 1912 article].

⁶⁹ See A. Sacerdoțeanu, "Sigiliul domnesc și stema țării. Conceptul de unitate a poporului român pe care îl reflectă și rolul avut în formarea ideii de unire", *Revista Arhivelor* 11/2 (1968), 66; J. Mănescu, "Stemele Movileștilor", *Arhiva Genealogică* 3/3–4 (1996), 321–326 [reprinted in *Movileștii. Istorie și spiritualitate românească* [vol.] 1, 21–30].

⁷⁰ This formula was used by Petru in the dedicatory preface of the 1631 Triodion printed in Kyiv, see: Panaitescu, *Petru Movilă*, 8.

One might expect similar contributions to the concept of a shared Moldo-Wallachian princely lineage from the Wallachians who ascended to the throne of Moldavia. However, that was not the case. Part of the explanation hinges on political failure. None of Mihai the Brave's descendants could capitalise on his legacy as lord of Moldavia. While in exile at the Habsburg court, Mihai's grandson, Mihai Pătrașcu, invoked his ancestors, claiming they had reigned over Wallachia, Moldavia, Transylvania, and even parts of Hungary.⁷¹ Thus, Mihai Pătrașcu positioned himself within a political discourse tradition that emphasised princely lineage over local roots. When Radu Mihnea ascended to the throne of Moldavia (1616–1619, 1623–1626), he became the second member of his family to do so, as his father's uncle had been Petru the Lamé. When he took the throne, Radu Mihnea brought his cousin, Petru the Lamé's daughter, to Moldavia, who seized the opportunity to restore her monastic foundation.⁷² Nonetheless, Radu seldom invoked the precedent, as he only referenced his lineage to Petru in a few chancery documents, referring to him as “the uncle of my lordship”.⁷³ Radu's reign in Moldova, particularly the second one during which he also ruled over Wallachia on behalf of his minor son, significantly contributed to the political mixing of the elites from both realms.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, while governing Moldavia, Radu remained wary of asserting his Wallachian origins.⁷⁵

⁷¹ See the 1634 petition addressed by Mihai to the Habsburg Aulic chamber: “Praedecessores mei piaie memoriae haeredes fuerunt Valachiae, Moldaviae ac partis Transylvaniae, sed etiam partis Hungariae”, in: *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești* [vol.] 9. *Acte și scrisori (1614–1636)*, ed. A. Veress, (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1937), no. 265, 341–342.

⁷² N. Iorga, “Întoarcerea unei pribege: doamna Maria Minio”, *Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* [ser.] III, 12 (1932), 225–229.

⁷³ “ҮНКҮ ГОСПОДСТВА МН”, in: *Documenta Romaniae Historica. A. Moldova* [vol.] XVIII (1623–1635), eds. I. Caproșu, V. Constantinov, (București: Editura Academiei, 2006), nos. 147 and 240. In addition to these two original documents, the same formula is to be found in two other charters, preserved in later copies (nos. 129 and 239). Significantly, the genealogical connection between Petru the Lamé and Radu Mihnea was not asserted every time a charter issued by the former was brought to the court of the later, see for instance nos. 144, 164 or 207.

⁷⁴ Nicolae Stoicescu counted 15 high dignitaries that changed realms during Radu Mihnea's reigns, moving from Wallachia into Moldavia, or the other way around, see: N. Stoicescu, “Un aspect al relațiilor politice dintre Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XVI–XVII: mutarea dregătorilor dintr-o țară în alta”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A.D. Xenopol* 11 (1974), 253–254. It should be noted, nonetheless, that some of these dignitaries were not of Wallachian and Moldavian origins, but of Levantine descent.

⁷⁵ This insightful observation was first made by Ștefan Andreescu, see: Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae* [vol.] 2, 41–42. An exception seems to be a 1616 charter issued by the Moldavian chancery that incorporated the Wallachian coat of arms, see: D. P. Bogdan, “Diplomatica

However, he held no reservations about proclaiming himself lord of Moldavia and Wallachia in front of some external audiences. Radu styled himself as the ruler of both realms in the 1617 treaty with the Transylvanian prince,⁷⁶ in a 1618 letter to Pope Paul V⁷⁷ and in the 1624 letters addressed to the Polish king and the Polish great hetman.⁷⁸ At a famous wedding that Radu organised for his son near the border between Wallachia and Moldavia, the nobles from the two realms were seated to face one another.⁷⁹ This wedding banquet might serve as a metaphor for Radu Mihnea's attempt to bring together the two realms without provoking the local political elites, especially the Moldavians. The most visible manifestation of Radu's Moldo-Wallachian dual reign is likely found in Wallachia. Following Radu's death, his son Alexandru organised an impressive funerary ceremony that transported his father's body from northern Moldavia to Bucharest, covering nearly 400 kilometres during a winter month. Additionally, Alexandru placed a tombstone adorned with an elaborate inscription and a double coat of arms representing Moldavia and Wallachia in the family monastic foundation in Bucharest.⁸⁰ When Alexandru became the lord of Moldavia, the charters issued by the chancery did not mention his 'Wallachian' ancestry whatsoever.⁸¹ It is worth contrasting the reluctance shown by the lords of Moldavia of Wallachian origins – from Petru the Lamé to Radu Mihnea and Alexandru the Child – to present themselves as Wallachians, with the willingness of the lords of Wallachia of Moldavian descent – from

slavo-română”, in: *Documente privind Istoria României. Introducere* [vol.] 2, (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1956), 149.

⁷⁶ “Nos Radulius Mihniae Dei gratia Moldaviae, Valachiae Transalpinaeque princeps ac eorundem legitimus perpetuusque haeres”, see: Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae* [vol.] 2, 66.

⁷⁷ “Radulius Michno Corvinus Dei gratia Terrarum Moldaviae ac Valachiae Transalpinae Dominus hereditarius que Princeps Io Radul Voevoda”, in: V. Vasiliu, “Il Principato Moldavo e la curia papale fra il 1606–1620”, *Diplomatarium Italicum* 2 (1930), no. 8, 58.

⁷⁸ “Radul Michno Corvin, z bożej laski hospodar i wojewoda ziemi Moldawskiej i Multańskiej”, in: *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Euxodiu de Hurmuzaki*, suplementul II [vol.] 2 (1601–1640), ed. I. Bogdan, (Bucureşti: Socecu 1895), nos. 236 and 237, 525–527.

⁷⁹ M. Costin, *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei de la Aron vodă încoace*, ed. P. P. Panaitescu, (Bucureşti: Fundaţia Regală pentru Literatură şi Artă, 1944), 71.

⁸⁰ The funeral inscription refers to Radu Mihnea as the “lord of Wallachia and Moldavia” who left the throne of Wallachia to his son when he moved into Moldavia and briefly recounts Radu Mihnea's funerary journey, from Hârlău (Moldavia) to Bucharest (Wallachia), from 13 January to 5 February 1626, covering approximately 400 kilometres, in: *Inscripţii medievale ale României* [vol.] 1. *Oraşul Bucureşti (1395–1800)*, eds. A. Elian et al., (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1965), no. 318, 346.

⁸¹ Alexandru's *intitulatio* is: “Io, Alexandru voivode, son of the late Radu voivode, by the grace of God, lord of the Moldavian realm”, in: *Documenta Romaniae Historica. A. Moldova* [vol.] XX (1629–1631), eds. I. Caproşu, C. Burac (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 2011), *passim*.

Ștefan the Deaf and Alexandru the Evil to Simion and Gavrilă Movilă – to assert their Moldavian origins. This difference highlights a significant discrepancy in the local political culture, particularly regarding the development of a regional political identity, i.e., the self-identification of the local elite as members of a political community.⁸²

Due to the scarcity of sources, measuring the impact of different discourses of princely self-presentation on the local political elite is rather challenging. Some princes who claimed a Moldavian lineage, such as Alexandru Iliaș and Leon Tomșa, were perceived by their Wallachian subjects as ‘Greeks’ rather than ‘Moldavians’.⁸³ Regarding Simion and Gavrilă Movilă’s efforts to assimilate into the Wallachian political milieu by presenting themselves as Moldo-Wallachians, there are some indications of success. Thus, one of his aristocrats who initially opposed Simion employed a highly localist rhetoric to reconcile with him: “I am the son of a noble from this realm, and my inheritance and wealth reside in this realm that God has entrusted to your hands [...], and I shall serve Your Highness as I have served the voivode Mihai.”⁸⁴ The Wallachian noble recognised Simion as the God-appointed ruler of Wallachia; however, it is problematic to ascertain whether he also regarded him as a Moldo-Wallachian prince. The most effective way to gauge the success of the Moldo-Wallachian political rhetoric championed by the Movilă princes is the emergence of a counter-discourse rooted in an invented regional political tradition: that of the Basarabs as the historical Wallachian dynasty.

⁸² On the late and protracted emergence of a ‘Wallachian regional identity’, see: D. Ursprung, “Raumvorstellungen und Landesbewusstsein: die Walachei als Name und Raumkonzept im historischen Wandel”, in: *Das Südosteuropa der Regionen*, Hrsg. O. J. Schmitt, M. Metzeltin, (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015), 473–550; D. Ursprung, “Țara Românească: regiune istorică, concept spațial și cultură memorială”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 40 (2022), 9–38.

⁸³ According to the Arab Wallachian chronicle, Leon was “a Greek from Constantinople” who climbed to the throne of Wallachia. Alexandru Iliaș also came from Constantinople, although the same chronicler did not explicitly label him as Greek, see: Căndea, “Letopisețul”, 690–691. However, when a group of dissident Wallachian nobles asked for the intervention of the Transylvanian prince, Gabriel Bethlen, they referred to Alexandru as “the Greek”, see the letter sent by Bethlen to the pasha of Buda, in: V. Motogna, “Relațiile dintre țările românești și Ardeal în veacul al XVII-lea”, *Anuarul Liceului Andrei Mureșanu* 15 (1933–1934), 31–40.

⁸⁴ The Wallachian noble Udrea, taken prisoner by the Poles, wrote these words to Jan Potocki in October 1600, asking him to intervene on his behalf with Simion Movilă, in: *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești* [vol.] 6 (1600–1601), ed. A. Veress, (București: Cartea Românească, 1933), no. 231, 256–257.

3. The Basarabs as the ‘Local’ Wallachian Dynasty

On 6 December 1632, just a couple of months into his reign, Matei Basarab (1632–1654) referred to his alleged forefather, Neagoe Basarab (1512–1521), using these terms: “the holy late ancestor of my lordship, the illustrious lord Neagoe Basarab voivode” (свѣтопочинившаго праотца господства дн свѣтлѣншаго господина Нѣгое Бѣсарба воєвода).⁸⁵ Throughout Matei’s reign, Neagoe became a crucial historical figure in legitimising the ruling lord. Matei, a Wallachian nobleman with only a distant and dubious princely ancestry, turned Neagoe into the cornerstone of his genealogy make-believe.⁸⁶ The parallelism between Matei and Neagoe became evident once they were both ascribed the same dynastic name, Basarab. The double name “Neagoe Basarab”, consisting of a baptismal name and a dynastic surname, was established by Matei’s chancery to serve his dynastic purposes.⁸⁷ The early 16th-century Wallachian lord referred to himself during his reign either as Neagoe, his baptismal name, or as Basarab, his regnal name.⁸⁸ While assigning the dynastic surname Basarab to Neagoe, Matei also incorporated it into his self-styled title. Thus, the genealogical pedigree ‘Matei voivode, the grandson of the good and elder Basarab voivode’ was gradually replaced by the straightforward dynastic sobriquet ‘Matei Basarab’, descendant of

⁸⁵ *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească* [vol.] XXIII (1630–1632), ed. D. Mioc, (București: Editura Academiei, 1969), no. 439, 639–641.

⁸⁶ The main two scholarly monographs on Matei are of little use for this subject: I. Sîrbu, *Mateiu-Vodă Băsărabăs auswärtige Beziehungen (1632–1654)* (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Friedrich, 1899); N. Stoicescu, *Matei Basarab* (București: Editura Academiei, 1988). For an insightful analysis of Matei’s legitimising strategies, see: Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation*, 64–73.

⁸⁷ The ‘Basarab family’ imagined by Matei has typically been studied using genealogical methods, with less attention being paid to cultural-historical approaches, see: C. Rezachevici, “Dinastiile ‘Basarabilor’. Precizări necesare și puncte de vedere noi”, *Academia Română. Memoriile secției de științe istorice și arheologie* [ser.] IV, 32 (2007), 133–153; C. Rezachevici, “Când apare ‘familia domnească a Basarabilor’?” in: *Națiunea română. Idealuri și realități istorice. Acad. Cornelia Bodea la 90 de ani*, eds. A. Zub, V. Achim, N. Pienaru, (București: Editura Academiei, 2006), 172–189; C. Rezachevici, “Cum a apărut numele dinastic ‘Basarab’ și când l-a adoptat Matei Vodă”, *Analele Universității din Craiova. Seria Istorie* 10 (2005), 7–29 and L. M. Ilie, *Schimbarea dinastică și succesiunea la tron în Țara Românească. Studiu de caz – Matei Basarab* (Craiova: Universitaria, 2013).

⁸⁸ There is a single charter in which Neagoe used both of his names, but even then, it is evident that they were not meant as a double name: “Io Neagoe called Basarab voivode” (Іо Нѣгое нарицаемн Бѣсарба воєвода), see: *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească* [vol.] II (1501–1525), eds. Ș. Ștefănescu, O. Diaconescu, (București: Editura Academiei, 1972), no. 189, 358–365. For a discussion on the specific contexts in which Neagoe used his baptismal or his regnal name, see Coman, “Naming”.

‘Neagoe Basarab’.⁸⁹ In transforming the regnal name of Basarab into a dynastic surname (fig. 3), Matei adopted an idea initiated by Radu Șerban, another lord without direct princely ascendancy, and expanded it in an unprecedented manner.

Before the early 17th century, Basarab was primarily, if not exclusively, a regnal name rather than a dynastic one.⁹⁰ Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, five lords of Wallachia bore the name of Basarab. The memory of the first two Basarabs, who ruled Wallachia between approximately 1320 and 1352 and, respectively, between 1442 and 1442, was already lost by 1500. Throughout the 16th century, the historical memory preserved by the Wallachian chancery recognised only three lords by this name: the Elder (1473–1477, with interruptions), the Young (1474–1482, with interruptions), and the Basarab (1512–1521), who required no additional sobriquet, i.e., Neagoe.⁹¹ This was the common ancestor selected in the early 17th century by both Radu Șerban and Matei Basarab, two Wallachian noblemen who could not claim to be the sons of former lords, to legitimise their rise to the throne.

Radu Șerban, who vaguely claimed a genealogical connection to Neagoe by referring to himself as Neagoe's grandson, initiated the transition of the regnal name Basarab into a family surname, a process later taken over and fully developed by Matei. In two dedicatory inscriptions on liturgical objects, the first commissioned by Radu himself for his son and successor, and the second by his great chancellor, Basarab was utilised as a family name.⁹² It seems more than coincidental that, only a few years after



Fig. 3. Venetian Portrait of Matei Basarab, ruler of Wallachia, by Marco Boschini (c. 1650). The dynastic name (*Bassaraba*) is placed near the Wallachian coat of arms, thus suggesting the close connection between the dynasty and the realm

⁸⁹ Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation*, 64–66; Rezachevici, “Cum a apărut”, 17–18.

⁹⁰ See Coman, “Cross-cultural”, 346–347.

⁹¹ Coman, “Naming”.

⁹² On an epitachelion donated to the Mărgineni monastery (1607–1608), Radu Șerban referred to his son as “Io Ion voievod Basarab”, see: *Inscripții*, no. 1052, 711–712. See

the dynastic surname was first used in Wallachia by Simion Movilă, his rival and successor, Radu Șerban, tentatively attempted to imitate him. Multiple sources confirm that the main argument against Simion's reign in Wallachia, presented not only by supporters of Radu Șerban but also by two other pretenders – Radu Mihnea and Marcu Cercel, the sons of two former Wallachian lords – was precisely his foreign status of origin. A Transylvanian Saxon chronicler stated that the Wallachian nobles rejected Simion because “he was a Moldavian and not a man of their nation or a Wallachian”.⁹³ The English ambassador in Istanbul wrote that the Wallachians required from the Sultan “a new Prince to be sent them of their owne Nation” to replace Simion.⁹⁴ The informative notes sent to the Spanish king from Constantinople in August and September 1601 emphasised that the Wallachians “do not want foreign princes, as Simion was”, and “do not want as their voivode the brother of the Moldavian prince, nor any other foreigner”.⁹⁵ Even the Sultan, in his deposition letter, informed Simion that the Wallachians refused to accept him because they wanted “a lord chosen from among the sons of their lords”.⁹⁶ The one who capitalised on this rhetoric was Radu Șerban, who started to craft the concept of a Basarab dynasty as a Wallachian princely lineage during this specific historical context. There is a contemporary source that directly links the dynastic names of Movilă and Basarab. In 1611, Matthias Habsburg negotiated a treaty with both the Moldavian and Wallachian lords, naming them “Constantin Mogilla” and “Radu Basarab”.⁹⁷ A previously unobserved detail supporting the idea that Radu sought to self-fashion himself as a ‘new Basarab’ is found in some of his charters. By styling himself as the “grandson of the late Io Basarab the Elder voivode”, Radu conflated the historical memories of two previous lords of Wallachia, Neagoe Basarab

Rezachevici, “Când apare ‘familia domnească’”, 34–35. In a donation note on a Gospel manuscript, Radu's great chancellor, Lupu, ascribed the dynastic surname to Radu himself: “Io Radu voivode Basarab”, in: I. Iufu, “Manuscrise slave în bibliotecile din Transilvania și Banat”, *Romanoslavica* 8 (1963), 453–454.

⁹³ “erat Moldavus et non suae nationis homo sive Valachus”, in: *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Brassó* [vol.] 5. *Chroniken und Tagebücher* (Brassó: Heinrich Zeidner, 1909), 306. Contrary to what Ștefan Andreescu thought, this was not “an ancient idea”, but a very new one, cf. Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae* [vol.] 2, 20.

⁹⁴ E. D. Tappe, *Documents concerning Rumanian History (1427–1601)* (London; The Hague; Paris: Mouton & Co, 1964), no. 218, 144.

⁹⁵ “no queriendo Principes forasteros, como lo era el Simon”, “no quieren por su Vayvoda al hermano del de Moldavia, ni ningún forastero”, in: *Documente*, ed. A. Ciorănescu, nos. 401 and 410, 192–193 and, respectively, 202.

⁹⁶ T. Holban, “Contribuții la istoria Domniei muntenești a lui Simion Movilă”, *Revista istorică* 23/4–6 (1937), 153.

⁹⁷ *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești* [vol.] 8 (1607–1613), ed. A. Veress, (București: Cartea Românească, 1935), no. 122, 160–162.

and Basarab the Elder, known as Laiotă. Historical accuracy mattered less than the implied continuity between the elder Basarab, Neagoe, and the newer Basarab, Radu Șerban himself. Among the charters in which Radu is implicitly depicted as a new Basarab, one in particular stands out. Issued on 29 June 1604, the charter recounts the political rivalry and military confrontations between Radu Șerban and Simion Movilă.⁹⁸ Throughout the charter, Simion is consistently portrayed as a foreigner who rose to the throne of Wallachia with the assistance of “the Turks, Tatars and Moldavians”, “the Turks, the Tatars, the Poles and the Moldavians”, or “the Turks, the Tatars, the Poles, the Moldavians and the Cossacks”. The message was clear: the ‘native’ Radu Șerban, a scion of the Basarab lineage, restored the lordship of Wallachia by driving out the ‘foreigner’ Simion, a member of the Moldavian Movilă family.

After Radu Șerban, the rhetorical emphasis on the ‘Wallachianness’ of the princes faded for approximately two decades, as none of the leading political actors were interested in promoting it.⁹⁹ The primary legitimising rhetorical strategy once again became the ‘princely bone’ ascendancy. For obvious reasons, princes of Moldavian origin, such as Alexandru Iliaș, Gavrilă Movilă, and Leon Tomșa, ignored the notion of the local Wallachian dynasty of the Basarabs. Meanwhile, the ‘Wallachian’ lords, such as Radu Mihnea and Alexandru the Child, whose princely origins were beyond any doubt, pursued a more ambitious genealogical strategy and saw little value in the concept of the Basarab dynasty.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the dispute between natives and foreigners remained at the forefront of Wallachian political debates. Still, it shifted from the princely throne to the socio-political elite, and, more importantly, its rhetorical focus became identifying the ‘Greeks’ as the outsiders *par excellence*.¹⁰¹ In the early

⁹⁸ *DIR-B, veacul al XVII-lea* [vol.] 1 (1601–1610), eds., Ion Ionașcu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1951), no. 137, 132–136.

⁹⁹ Most importantly, by that point, there does not seem to have existed a word for the concept of ‘Wallachianness’. In 1593, a Wallachian, in a letter written in Romanian, attempted to convince Petru the Lamé to claim the throne of Wallachia by using an incipient localist rhetoric. Instead of calling him ‘a Basarab’ or a ‘Wallachian’, concepts still to be invented, he framed his argument in very circumvoluted way: “people strive to live among their own, where their ancestors, parents and brothers are buried” or “remember how many churches had been built by your ancestors and by your brothers and by yourself”, see: *Crestomația limbii române vechi* [vol.] I (1521–1639), eds. A. Mareș et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 2016), no. 39, 154–155.

¹⁰⁰ See the previous section of this chapter.

¹⁰¹ It was precisely during these three decades that the discourse against the ‘Greeks’ emerged in Wallachia, see: M. M. Székely, “De la Anastasie Crimca la Matei Basarab. Manifestări ale sentimentelor antigrecești în Țările Române”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 41 (2023), 19–32; L. Cotovanu, “‘Chasing Away the Greeks’: The Prince-State and the Undesired Foreigners (Wallachia and Moldavia between the 16th and 18th Centuries)”, in: *Across the Danube: Southeastern Europeans and Their Travelling Identities (17th–19th c.)*, eds. O. Katsiardi-Hering, M. A. Stassinopoulou, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 215–252.

1630s, it was only with Matei Basarab that the autochthonous Wallachian princely lineage of the Basarabs returned and became central to the political landscape.

‘Our Basarab lineage’, ‘the most illustrious and the most ancient house of the brave Basarab lineage’, ‘the most illustrious coat of arms of the merciful lords Basarabs’, ‘the most celebrated lords Basarabs, our ancestors’, and ‘our Basarab lineage, native lords of the realm’ are just a few of the formulae coined and used during Matei Basarab’s reign. The authors of this innovative dynastic discourse are less pertinent to the present argumentation. However, it appears that the scholar Udriște Năsturel, a relative of Matei who worked in the princely chancery, played a significant role.¹⁰² The first instance of Basarab as a dynastic name dates to the initial weeks of Matei’s reign. In a document issued on 8 October 1632, Matei styled himself: “Io Matei Basarab voivode” (Io Матею Бѣсарѣвъ воєвода).¹⁰³ Throughout the whole reign, the chancery alternated the genealogical title ‘Matei voivode, the grandson of the good and elder Basarab voivode’ with the dynastic one ‘Matei Basarab’. The new dynastic discourse was disseminated through various media, including printed books and inscriptions. Thus, the preamble of a liturgical book printed with Matei’s endorsement glorified the ruling lord by referring to the “praised lords Basarabs, your lordship’s ancestors”.¹⁰⁴ Verses celebrating “the most illustrious coat of arms of the merciful lords Basarabs” and “the most illustrious and the most ancient house of the brave Basarab lineage” were reprinted several times.¹⁰⁵ And these examples are by no means exhaustive.¹⁰⁶

The Basarab legitimacy constructed by Matei, presented systematically and elaborately, served to depict him as a ‘native’ prince whose political programme aimed to restore the realm to the local elites by curbing the greed of the ‘foreigners’. At his ascension, Matei’s two main rivals were Leon Tomşa and Radu Iliaş, who claimed to be sons of Moldavian rulers, but whom the Wallachian elites identified instead as ‘Greeks’.¹⁰⁷ The rhetoric of a local princely lineage was equally effective

¹⁰² Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation*, 69–71 and D. H. Mazilu, *Udriște Năsturel* (București: Editura Minerva, 1974).

¹⁰³ *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească* [vol.] XXIII (1630–1632), ed. D. Mioc, (București: Editura Academiei, 1969), no. 421, 620.

¹⁰⁴ *Predosloviile cărților românești* [vol.] I (1508–1647), ed. A. Sacerdoțeanu, (București: Librăria Universitară I. Cărbăș, 1938), 69–75.

¹⁰⁵ These heraldic verses were printed in 1635, 1640 and 1644, see: *Stihuri la stema țării*, ed. T. Nedelcea, (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1995), 25–26 (the Slavonic verses composed by Udriște Năsturel), 29 (the Romanian translation).

¹⁰⁶ See Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation*, 121–131 (the subchapter entitled *Identitätsstiftung durch Abgrenzung*) and Rezachevici, “Cum a apărut”, 21–22.

¹⁰⁷ For the specific conditions of Matei’s ascension, see: Stoicescu, *Matei*, 1–35; P. Cernovodeanu, “Campania de înscăunare a lui Matei Basarab (august–septembrie 1632)”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Iași* 24/1 (1987), 311–317; M. Wasiucionek, *The*

against both the Moldavians (молдавѣни) and the Greeks (грѣци), providing a significant advantage that contributed to its adoption. The most strident use of this rhetoric is found in the charters associated with Matei Basarab's monastic reform, which aimed to emancipate the Wallachian monasteries ruled by 'foreigners'.¹⁰⁸ These charters vividly contrasted the previous lords of foreign origin, among whom the "Greeks" were explicitly identified, with the Wallachian princes, "our Basarab lineage and the native lords of the realm". Matei was called to restore the ancient and rightful order: "and they brought us, Io Matei Basarab, from the foreign lands, where we were wandering because foreigners had chased us away, and they chose us to reign, and they raised us to the throne of our ancestors."¹⁰⁹

Unlike Radu Șerban, for whom the Basarab dynasty was a means both to reject the Moldo-Wallachian aspirations of the Movilă family and to fashion his princely legitimacy, Matei Basarab instrumentalised the same concept against a different identity: that of the Christian-Ottoman 'Greeks'. According to his propaganda, Matei was the most suitable prince to defend the common good of the Wallachian realm due to his ancestry, both princely and native. In another of his charters, heavily endowed with historical legitimising references, Matei reads his ascension to the throne as another proof of God's love and care for "our Basarab lineage".¹¹⁰ Given his long reign, at least by Wallachian standards, Matei's dynastic discourse centred on the 'Wallachianness' of the House of Basarabs had proven to be a winning card.

It took two Wallachian noblemen, Radu Șerban and, twenty years later, Matei Basarab, to shape the idea of a 'local' dynasty. The main triggering factor appears to have been the innovation introduced in Wallachia by Simion Movilă, who was the first to employ a dynastic discourse to legitimise his reign. To counter the Movilă family's concept of a Moldo-Wallachian princely line, Radu Șerban promoted the

Ottomans and Eastern Europe: politics and borders in the early modern world (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019), 74–78. For the Wallachians' perception of Leon Tomșa, Alexandru Iliăș and Radu Iliăș as 'Greeks', see above footnote 83. Radu's father, Alexandru Iliăș, had successively ruled Wallachia (1616–1618) and Moldavia (1620–1621, 1631–1633).

¹⁰⁸ V. Barbu, G. Lazăr, O. Olar, "Reforma monastică a lui Matei Basarab", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 30 (2012), 9–54. For a slightly different interpretation, see: L. Cotovanu, "Le ktitorikon dikaion, les patriarches grecs et les limites du pouvoir absolu des princes valaques. Autour de la prétendue réforme monastique de Matei Basarab (1632–1654)", in: *Religious Rhetoric of Power in Byzantium and South-Eastern Europe*, eds. I. Biliarsky, M. Mitrea, A. Timotin, (Brăila: Editura Istros, 2021), 241–272.

¹⁰⁹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească* [vol.] XXVII (1639–1640), eds. V. Barbu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 2013), nos. 10 and 511, 10–16 and, respectively, 618–622.

¹¹⁰ *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească* [vol.] XXVIII (1641–1642), eds. O. Rizescu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 2018), no. 92, 158–163.

notion of a historic Wallachian dynasty, that of the Basarabs. Twenty years later, another Wallachian noble who ascended to the throne adapted this notion for his political purposes, laying the foundations of a cultural construct that would endure for centuries: the House of the Basarabs.

4. Conclusions

Cantemir would likely be astonished to discover that the figure of the bat in his political allegory was not a later hybrid creature, but predated the eagle, the native lord of the realm of birds. Furthermore, the bat played a key role in the emergence of the eagle as the 'native' ruler over the realm of birds. Unlike the Moldavian quadrupeds, who appear to identify politically as such and to expect to be ruled by 'one of them', Wallachians seem to have paid little attention to such matters. They did not have to for a long time. Due to the highly competitive nature of succession in Wallachia, numerous debates and controversies arose regarding the rights to the throne. Until the early 1590s, they all followed the same pattern: the pretender or lord claimed to be of 'princely bone', while his rivals spread rumours about his modest (and sometimes dishonourable) origins. Social self-fashioning was the only political tool used by the pretenders to the throne up to the late 16th century. The rhetoric of the 'princely bone', which emphasised the social pedigree of aspiring lords, provided the most effective strategy for legitimisation (or de-legitimisation). As a result, the Wallachian political debate traditionally focused on one-generation genealogy make-believe.

The political paradigm shifted dramatically from the 1590s to the 1630s, with the Movilă family as the prime mover of this transformation. The question of who was entitled to rule Wallachia became a different inquiry: who exactly could be labelled a Wallachian prince? Simion Movilă and his supporters were the first to introduce the concept of a 'foreigner' or 'stranger-lord' into Wallachian political debates. Seeking to shift the conversation away from his primary political weakness, the lack of 'princely bone', Simion self-fashioned himself as a 'Moldo-Wallachian' ruler, in contrast with the 'foreigners'. The next generation of the Movilă princes, freed from the usurper complex because they were of 'princely bone', took a further step by intertwining the cultural and social forms of legitimation, thereby further shaping the concept of a Moldo-Wallachian prince. Gavrilă Movilă presented himself as the descendant of a ruler who had held two thrones, thereby providing his successors with legitimate claims to both. However, once it entered the Wallachian political lexicon, the idea of a 'native prince' became a valid rhetorical currency that could also be shaped to their own ends by Simion Movilă's rivals. The first to adapt it to his purposes was Radu Șerban, who, like Simion Movilă, was a powerful nobleman lacking princely origins. But instead of contrasting 'Moldo-Wallachian' with foreigners, as Simion had done, Radu Șerban

redefined the concept of a ‘native prince’ by devising a new political notion, that of a Wallachian princely lineage of the Basarabs. His model of a Wallachian ‘native’ dynasty was a direct reaction to the Moldo-Wallachian princely lineage promoted by the Movilă family. Three decades later, another Wallachian nobleman-turned-ruler, Matei, further developed the idea of the House of Basarab and employed it as a rhetorical tool to promote his political programme of fending off ‘foreigners’, including Moldavians and Greeks alike. Such dynastic and political fluidity might seem highly unusual for early modern Europe. During that time, it became increasingly uncommon to elevate candidates from high-ranking noble families within the realm to the throne, as succession conflicts shifted from internal struggles to large-scale wars between dynasties interconnected through marriage.¹¹¹ In this respect, the politics of Wallachia and Moldavia, partially integrated into the Ottoman Empire, stand out in early modern Europe. Not only could noblemen still become princes, but they also enjoyed significant freedom to shape and define their dynastic labels to suit their political agenda.

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¹¹¹ J. Duindam, *Dynasties. A Global History of Power, 1300–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 132.

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Identifications on Post-Byzantine Crete: The Case of the Micrography of Georgios Klontzas

This paper examines the *Micrography*, a seminal work by the Cretan painter Georgios Klontzas, within the context of the profound political, religious, and cultural transformations that shaped the island of Crete during the period of Venetian rule and in the final years preceding its conquest by the Ottoman Empire. These transformations are analysed through the lens of continuity and/or reconfiguration of traditional modes of identification and self-understanding, as reflected in specific elements present within the *Micrography*. Klontzas' work offers an interpretative vision of Greek history, drawing upon a rich corpus of myths, symbols, and collective memories rooted in the Byzantine tradition, which he adapts in response to the exigencies of his contemporary socio-political context. Notably, the composition conveys a pronounced anti-Ottoman sentiment and articulates an explicit appeal for the initiation of a new Crusade against the Ottoman Empire.

1. Hellenic Identification and Self-Understanding in Byzantium and the Post-Byzantine Era

The question of Byzantine, i.e., medieval Eastern Roman, identifications and self-understandings has been the focus of numerous studies since the mid-20th century. This question has primarily been approached from the standpoint of modern Greek national discourse, which posits that Byzantium represented the medieval period of the history of the Greek state and nation.¹ On the other hand,

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¹ A. Vacalopoulos, "Byzantinism and Hellenism. Remarks on the Racial Origin and the Intellectual Continuity of the Greek Nation", *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968), 101–126; A. Vacalopoulos, *Origins of the Greek Nation: The Byzantine Period, 1204–1461* (New Brun-



Fig. 1. Geōrgios Klontzas, *Apocalypse and History*, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana gr. VII.22 (1466), ink on paper, 1591–92, mythical Byzantia with her husband, Romulus, and their three sons (Romulus, Urban, and Claudius), fol. 36v

many scholars have viewed Byzantium as a multi-ethnic empire, whose subjects considered themselves Romans.²

Recently, however, Anthony Kaldellis argued that the Byzantines' perception of their 'Roman identity' was, in fact, a national one. He asserts that Byzantium was a Roman polity, predominantly inhabited by ethnic Romans, along with several ethnic minorities. According to his view, it was a nation-state of the Romans, belonging to the same ἔθνος or γένος – a unified political community bound together by a shared language, religion, social values, and customs. As such, its people were considered 'shareholders' in the polity of the Romans.³

In contrast, Ioannis Stouraitis, focusing on the period between the 7th and 13th centuries, suggests that *Romanitas* was a feature of Constantinopolitan historiography. He argues that it was a politico-cultural discourse of self-identification among the intellectual and political elite in Constantinople.⁴

More recently, Georgios Steiris has emphasised the significance of *Hellenitas* in shaping both 'collective and individual identities'. He highlights that the term Hellene (Ἕλλην) became increasingly popular after the 13th century. The prominent Byzantine intellectuals of the 15th and early 16th centuries, who sought to base their views on cultural continuity and history, focused on *Hellenitas* as the central concept.

swick: Rutgers University Press, 1970); P. Charanis, "The Formation of the Greek People", in: *The "Past" in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, ed. S. Vryonis, (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1978), 87–102; S. Vryonis, "The Greek Identity in the Middle Ages", *Études Balkaniques* 6 (*Byzance et l'hellénisme: L'identité grecque au Moyen-Âge. Actes du Congrès International tenu à Treste du 1er au 3 Octobre 1997*) (1999), 21–36.

² J. Koder, "Griechische Identitäten im Mittelalter – Aspekte einer Entwicklung", στο: *Βυζάντιο-Κράτος και Κοινωνία. Μνήμη Νίκου Οικονομίδη*, επιμ. Α. Αβραμέα et al., (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, 2003); P. Magdalino, "Hellenism and Nationalism in Byzantium", in: P. Magdalino, *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), XIV. More detailed see I. Stouraitis, "Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107/1 (2014), 176 n. 2; C. Rapp, "Hellenic Identity, omanitas, and Christianity in Byzantium", in: *Hellenisms. Culture, Identity and Ethnicity from antiquity to modernity*, ed. K. Zacharia, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 127–147.

³ A. Kaldellis, *Romanland. Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 38–120; A. Kaldellis, "The Social Scope of Roman Identity in Byzantium: An Evidence-Based Approach", *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 27 (2017), 173–210; A. Kaldellis, "From Rome to New Rome, From Empire to Nation State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium's Roman Identity," in: *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Grig et al., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 387–404; A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42–119.

⁴ I. Stouraitis, "Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107/1 (2014), 175–220.

This attempt aimed to establish a new connection with the ancient Greeks, spanning from the Greco-Persian Wars to the time of Alexander the Great, in an effort to reshape their ‘national identity’. It was a creative reconnection with ancient Greece, enriched by Byzantine elements. This newly shaped *Hellenitas* ultimately became a constitutive element of ‘Modern Greek identity’.⁵

It is widely believed that in the fragments of Romania that came under Latin rule after 1204, the Church played a central role in the crystallisation of a new Greek ‘collective identity’.⁶ The entire population of these territories was Greek, and as Marin Sanudo Torsello famously noted, their “heart is devoted to Greek things”.⁷ Among these territories, however, Venetian Crete was probably the only region under Latin rule where ‘Roman national sentiment’ persisted.⁸ The inhabitants of Crete viewed their island as an occupied part of the Byzantine Empire until 1453. The Cretans’ ‘identity’ as *Rhomaioi*/Greeks – subjects of the Byzantine Empire, adherents of the Orthodox faith, and Greek speakers – was recognised both by themselves and by the Venetians from the very beginning of Venetian rule, and this identification remained largely unchanged until the modern era.⁹ In other words, even under Western rule, the Cretans continued to refer to themselves as *Rhomaioi*.¹⁰ The numerous revolts against Venetian rule in the 13th century clearly aimed at reuniting with Romania, and consequently, they received support from Nicaea and Constantinople.¹¹

The continuity between the Byzantine and post-Byzantine worlds in the former territories of the Byzantine Empire has primarily been discussed through individual

⁵ G. Steiris, “History and Religion as Sources of Hellenic Identity in Late Byzantium and the Post-Byzantine Era”, *Genealogy* 4/1 (2020), 1–17.

⁶ D. Jacoby, “From Byzantium to Latin Romania: Continuity and Change”, in: *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. B. Abel et al., (London: Routledge, 1989), 1–44; Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 348.

⁷ *Μάρινος Σανούδος Τορσέλλο, Ιστορία της Ρωμανίας*, επιμ. Ε. Η. Παπαδοπούλου, (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών 2000), 166–169.

⁸ Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 349.

⁹ C. Gasparis, “The Period of Venetian Rule on Crete: Breaks and Continuities during the Thirteenth Century”, in: *Urbs Capta. The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences*, ed. A. Laiou, (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), 236; X. A. Μαλτέζου, “Η διαμόρφωση της ελληνικής ταυτότητας στη λατινοκρατούμενη Ελλάδα”, *Études balkaniques* 6 (*Byzance et l'hellénisme: L'identité grecque au Moyen-Âge. Actes du Congrès International tenu à Treste du 1er au 3 Octobre 1997*) (1999), 105–119; X. A. Μαλτέζου, “Η Κρήτη ανάμεσα στη Γαλινοτάτη και τη Βασιλεύουσα”, *Cretan Studies* 6 (1998), 3–21.

¹⁰ Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 350–351.

¹¹ On the nature of the Cretan revolts see N. Σβορώνος, “Τὸ νόημα καὶ ἡ τυπολογία τῶν κρητικῶν ἐπαναστάσεων τοῦ 13ου αἰ.”, *Σύμμεικτα* 8 (1989), 1–13.

research on specific issues. This is not surprising, as many of these territories, particularly after 1204, came under different rulers.¹²

2. Continuity and Change on Venetian Crete (1204–1669)

The purchase of Crete by Venice in 1204, its conquest by Enrico Pescatore under the protection of Genoa in 1206, Pescatore's expulsion from the island by Venice, the appointment of the first Duke of Crete (1207–1209), and the first dispatch of colonists by Venice in 1211 were major political events at the outset of Venetian rule over the island.¹³ However, despite the change in the rule, the connections between the Cretans and Constantinople were multifaceted and persistent after 1204. It also indicates that the Cretan Greek population underwent a process of reshaped identifications and self-understandings, largely driven by external circumstances and developments.

One of the most significant changes imposed by the Venetians was the abolition of the local Orthodox Church and its replacement with the Roman Catholic Church. While the Orthodox dogma and rites were neither prohibited nor was the Catholic Church favoured, the absence of an Orthodox hierarchy made it difficult for the lower clergy to function properly.¹⁴ As the Orthodox Church in Crete was composed solely of priests, Venice was forced to manage their increasing numbers and to control their anti-Venetian activities,¹⁵ as well as the influence of the Patriarchate of Constantinople on the island. By the mid-13th century, there were no longer any Orthodox bishops on Crete. As a result, Venice introduced two 'dignitaries' – the Protopapas and Protopsaltis – for each of the three administrative regions of Crete (Candia with Siteia, Rethymnon, and Chania) to exercise control over the Orthodox

¹² On more recent scholarship see *The Problem of Modern Greek Identity: From the Ecumene to the Nation-State*, ed. G. Steiris et al., (New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2016); *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. J. Herrin, G. Saint Guillaing, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); *Hellenisms. Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. K. Zacharia, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

¹³ On the history of Venetian Crete see S. McKee, *Uncommon Dominion: Venetian Crete and the Myth of Ethnic Purity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); *Venezia e Creta, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi*, a cura di G. Ortalli, (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze, 1998); F. Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Édition-Diffusion de Boccard, 1975); S. Borsari, *Il dominio veneziano a Creta nel XIII secolo* (Naples: F. Fiorentino, 1963).

¹⁴ N. Coureas, "The Latin and Greek Churches in Former Byzantine Lands under Latin Rule", in: *A Companion to Latin Greece*, ed. N. I. Tsougarakis, P. Lock, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 156–157, 179; McKee, *Uncommon Dominion*, 104–107.

¹⁵ Z. N. Τσιρπανλής, *Κατάστιχο εκκλησιών και μοναστηριών του Κοινού (1248–1548)* (Ιωάννινα: Φιλοσοφική Σχολή Πανεπιστημίου Ιωαννίνων, 1985), 172–173.

priests. These dignitaries remained at the top of the Orthodox clergy throughout the Venetian period in Crete.¹⁶

Another significant issue for the Cretan Orthodox population was the ordination of priests, as there were no Orthodox bishops on the island. The ecclesiastical officers were sent from Constantinople, making the Byzantine Empire the primary source for new Orthodox priests in Crete.¹⁷ In response, the Venetian government established a committee of four Orthodox priests to oversee this process.¹⁸ Although by 1360 the arrival of Orthodox priests and monks to the island was prohibited, their numbers increased during the last decades of the 14th century, reaching a peak in the early 15th century.¹⁹

During the second half of the 14th and the first half of the 15th centuries, the activity of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Crete intensified. Several distinguished ecclesiastical figures, notably Anthimos of Athens and Joseph Bryennios,²⁰ were active on the island to encourage the Cretans' devotion to Constantinople.²¹ According to a document issued by the Venetian Senate in 1429, the Despot of Morea appointed a new Orthodox bishop in Mani, Peloponnese, at the initiative of the Patriarch of Constantinople and with the consent of the Byzantine Emperor, following a request from the priests of Crete who did not wish to be ordained by the Bishop of Venetian Coron.²²

Since Venice supported the Union of the Churches declared in Florence in 1439, but the local Cretan population was vehemently opposed to it, Venice forbade

¹⁶ Z. N. Τσιρπανλής, “Capitula (1408) για τον πρωτοπαπά και τον πρωτοψάλτη του Χάνδακα”, στο: *Ροδωνιά: Τιμή στον Μ. Ι. Μανούσακα* [τόμος] 2, επιμ. Χ. Μαλτέζου, (Ρέθυμνον: Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης, 1994), 531–540.

¹⁷ Ν. Θωμαδάκης, “Οι ορθόδοξοι παπάδες επί ενετοκρατίας και η χειροτονία αυτών”, *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 13 (1959), 39–72.

¹⁸ F. Thiriet, *Délibérations des Assemblées vénitiennes concernant la Romanie* [vol.] 1, 1160–1363 (Paris: École Pratique des Hautes études, 1966), 322.

¹⁹ Gasparis, “Venetian Crete”, 70–81.

²⁰ *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, Hrsg. E. Trapp, (Wien: ÖAW, 1976) sq, nos. 993, 3257.

²¹ Μ. Μανούσακας, “Μέτρα της Βενετίας έναντι της εν Κρήτη επιρροής του πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως και ανέκδοτα βενετικά έγγραφα 1418–1419”, *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* 30 (1960–1961), 84–144; Ν. Θωμαδάκης, “Μελετήματα περί Ιωσήφ Βρυεννίου: Α΄ Το ζήτημα των συνεισάκτων εν Κρήτη και Κύπρω (περί το 1400), Β΄ Χρονολογικά προβλήματα της ζωής και του έργου”, *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* 29 (1959), 1–33; Ε. Κουντούρα-Γαλάκη, Ν. Κουτράκου, “Ο Άνθιμος Αθηνών, πρόεδρος Κρήτης, και οι αντιθετικές τάσεις ορθόδοξης συσπείρωσης και διάσπασης στην ύστερη βυζαντινή εποχή. Μία προσέγγιση μέσω των λογίων αγιολογικών κειμένων”, *Θησαυρίσματα* 41/42 (2011–2012), 341–359.

²² H. Noiret, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la domination vénitienne en Crète de 1380 à 1485* (Paris: Thorin & fils, 1892), 337–338.

any new ordinations of Orthodox priests for five years starting in 1454. Moreover, by fabricating letters from the Byzantine Emperor, Venice accused the Orthodox priests of Crete of encouraging the rebellion of Sifis Vlastos in the district of Rethymnon during 1453–1454.²³ Venice continued to support the Union of the Churches until the 16th century, when the growing threat of Ottoman expansion forced the Serenissima to adopt a pro-Orthodox policy to secure the support of the Cretan population.²⁴

A very important change in the history of Crete during the period of Venetian rule was the development of its urban structure and economy, particularly through the growth of the island's four main cities: Chandax (Candia), Rethymnon, Chania, and Siteia. The increase in population and the local economy led to the rise of these urban centres, especially Candia, where a distinct social, intellectual, and artistic life developed between the early 13th century and its fall to the Ottomans in 1669. During this period, the native Greek population not only coexisted with the Latin elements but actually blended with them.²⁵

The artistic production that flourished in Crete from the 13th to the 16th century was a fusion of the Byzantine art of the late Palaiologan style with elements of Western Renaissance iconography.²⁶ This blend was further enhanced by the fact that artists from Constantinople began settling in Crete in the early 15th century, a trend that continued after the fall of the Byzantine capital in 1453.²⁷ While maintaining the framework of “Greek nationality and Orthodox dogma”, the Cretans developed a civilisation that combined traditional Byzantine and imported Western artistic features, as noticed by Panagiotis L. Vocotopoulos.²⁸

²³ Μ. Μανούσκακας, *Η εν Κρήτη συνωμοσία του Σήφη Βλαστού (1453–1454) και η νέα συνωμοτική κίνησις του 1460–1462*, (Αθήνα: Ανδρέας Γ. Καλοκαιρινός, 1960), 100.

²⁴ Gasparis, “Venetian Crete”, 77, 81; Π. Γουναρίδης, “Πολιτικές διαστάσεις της συνόδου Φεράρας–Φλωρεντίας”, *Θησαυρίσματα* 31 (2001), 107–129; Ζ. Ν. Τσιρπανλής, “Από τη φιλορθόδοξη πολιτική της Βενετίας στην Ελληνική Ανατολή”, *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* 39/40 (1972–1973), 295–311.

²⁵ Χ. Γασπάρης, *Catastici Feudorum Crete: Catasticum Chanee 1314–1396* (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, 2008), 56–88; Gasparis, “Venetian Crete”, 64–67; *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*, ed. D. Holton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²⁶ On this topic see M. Bacci, “Some Thoughts on Greco-Venetian Artistic Interactions in the Fourteenth and Early-Fifteenth Centuries”, in: *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art, Papers from the 42nd Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, London, 20–22 March 2009*, eds. L. James, A. Eastmond, (London: Routledge, 2013), 203–227.

²⁷ Ε. Δρακοπούλου, “Τρεις ημέρες ενός μαθητευόμενου ζωγράφου στο Χάνδακα”, στο: *Έργα και ημέρες στην Κρήτη, Από την προϊστορία στο Μεσοπόλεμο*, επιμ. Α. Χανιώτης, (Αθήνα: Πανεπιστημιακές εκδόσεις Κρήτης, 2000), 335.

²⁸ P. L. Vocotopoulos, “Renaissance Influence on Post Byzantine Panel Painting in Crete”, *Vostochnohristianskoe iskusstvo* 6 (2016), 177–184. In general, see Μ. Χατζιδάκης, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση (1450–1830)* [τόμος] 1, (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, 1987).

3. The Micrography of Georgios Klontzas

Georgios Klontzas (c. 1540–1608) was a renowned Cretan panel and miniature painter. He composed his well-known *Micrography* (Μικρογραφία), or *Apocalypse and History*, between 1590 and 1592. This work is part of Codex CL. VII No. 22 (1466), which is currently preserved at the Marciana Library in Venice. The manuscript contains 410 miniatures painted on folios and is considered the most important illustrated Greek manuscript of its time. In it, Klontzas presents an illustrated chronicle of world history, depicting significant historical events up to his own era. It is believed that Klontzas created the *Micrography* for personal satisfaction, as well as to educate his contemporaries and future generations.²⁹ Therefore, the work reflects his interpretations of identifications, influenced by the specific historical context of Crete.

It is noteworthy that Klontzas chose the form of miniature, a medium highly developed in Byzantine art, to express his views on history – views with which he strongly identified. This is especially significant given that the production of miniatures was quite limited in the Greek Orthodox world, particularly on the island of Crete, during the 16th and 17th centuries.³⁰ This choice underscores the artist's deep connection to Byzantine artistic traditions.

Klontzas begins his *Micrography* with miniatures illustrating the themes of the Old and New Testament. In this manner, the artist situates the entirety of the historical narrative he presents within a Christian, linear framework, further reinforced by apocalyptic traditions articulated through the visions and prophecies of Daniel, as well as the oracles attributed to Leo the Wise and Pseudo-Methodius of Patara, which collectively anticipate the restoration of a future Christian kingdom.³¹ Klontzas also employed a variety of Western narrative sources, in some cases even depicting their authors and recording their names. However, he likewise made use of Byzantine historical narratives, both indirectly through the aforementioned apocalyptic tradition

²⁹ Μ. Χατζιδάκης, Ε. Δρακοπούλου, *Έλληνες Ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση (1450–1830)* [τόμος] 2, (Αθήνα: Κέντρο Νεοελληνικών Ερευνών, 1997), 83–97; Α. Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας (c. 1540–1608) και οι Μικρογραφίες του κωδικός αυτού (μετά πινάκων VI+410+ιβ')* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Γρηγόρη, 1977), 65.

³⁰ Μ. Νικολί, “Byzantine History in Μικρογραφία of George Klontzas”, *Études byzantines et post-byzantines n.s.* [vol.] IV (XI) (*Byzantine Heritage in South-Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*) (2022), 422; Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 194; see also L. Brubaker, “Text and Picture in Manuscripts: What’s Rhetoric Got To Do With It?”, in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium. Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies: Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001*, ed. E. Jeffreys, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 255–272.

³¹ Νικολί, “Byzantine History in Μικρογραφία of George Klontzas”, 424.

and through direct engagement with them.³² Klontzas also situates the events within the general chronological framework of the four world empires – Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman – following the periodisation of the Prophet Daniel.³³ The *Micrography* concludes with an account of the reign of the Antichrist, the Second Coming, and the Last Judgement. It also includes references to Ancient Greek, Byzantine, papal, Venetian, and Cretan history, the rise of Islam, and the history of the Ottomans.³⁴

After the Biblical narrative, Klontzas shifts his focus to Alexander the Great. Drawing from the narrative of the Visions of Daniel and Pseudo-Methodius of Patara,³⁵ Klontzas portrays him as a Christian.³⁶ Klontzas depicts the Thracian ruler Byzas, the legendary founder of the city that would become the Byzantine capital, Constantinople. According to the story, Byzas marries Chouseth (Χουσήθ), the mother of Alexander the Great. After the death of King Philip, Chouseth returns to her father, the Ethiopian Emperor (βασιλεύς) Fole. Byzas and Chouseth had a daughter named Byzantia (Βυζαντία), after the city.

In the final miniature that connects Byzantine history with Alexander the Great, Byzantia is depicted with her husband, Emperor Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, and their three sons – Romulus, Urban, and Claudius. After their father's death, Romulus ruled Rome, Urban governed the city of Byzas, and Claudius ruled Alexandria.³⁷ Although it appears that the account of Alexander's mother Chouseth, which knits together the empires of Rome, Greece, and Ethiopia is an invention of Pseudo-Methodius,³⁸ by choosing this narrative, Klontzas links the history of Constantinople to Greek history, presenting the Byzantine Empire as the heir to Alexander the Great's world empire. One might interpret this as the artist's affirmation of his understanding of *Hellenitas*, further expressed through the use of the Greek language. At the same time, through the story of the marriage between Byzantia and Romulus, Klontzas demonstrates his awareness of the Roman

³² Παλιούρας, Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας, 93, 101–102, fig. 75, 111–116; Nikolić, “Byzantine History in Μικρογραφίαι of George Klontzas”, 423, 433–435.

³³ Παλιούρας, Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας, 87–88, fig. 47–50.

³⁴ Nikolić, “Byzantine History in Μικρογραφίαι of George Klontzas”, 422–423, 430; Ch. Barber, *Eccentric Renaissance: El Greco, Michael Damaskenos, Georgios Klontzas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 169–173.

³⁵ A. Vassiliev, *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina* [vol.] 1 (Moscow: Imperial University Press, 1893), 33–35; *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrian world chronicle*, ed. B. Garstad, (London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 28–31, 101–105.

³⁶ Παλιούρας, Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας, 78–87, 160–167, fig. 1–48, 58–59; *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, 23–27.

³⁷ Παλιούρας, Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας, 91–92, fig. 62–66; *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, 28–31.

³⁸ *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, xii.

foundations of the Byzantine state, presenting his view of *Romanitas*. The name of Byzas and Chouseth's daughter, Byzantia, is also indicative. The terms 'Byzantium' and 'Byzantine' originally referred to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople and to those from the 'Queen of Cities'. However, by the mid-16th century, a new meaning emerged, designating the historical phenomenon we now call Byzantium.³⁹

Although Klontzas appropriates narratives from a range of authors, he cannot be regarded as a mere compiler of their works. His selection is both deliberate and creative, suggesting that through this process the painter sought to articulate his own worldview. This is further underscored by the fact that Klontzas executed several miniatures devoted to the striking coincidence between the names of the first and last Byzantine emperors – Constantine the Great and Helena Augusta, and Constantine XI Palaiologos and Helena Dragaš Palaiologina.⁴⁰ It is striking that certain Greek texts of diverse provenance, composed immediately after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, emphasised the remarkable coincidence that the names of the first and the last Byzantine emperors – and of their respective mothers – were identical, thereby also offering a distinctive form of periodisation of Byzantine history, beginning and ending with Constantine and Helena, once again emphasising the significance of Constantinople.⁴¹ By adopting the same narrative model, Klontzas situates himself within the Greek literary tradition, thereby becoming an integral part of it.⁴² All this also suggests that Georgios Klontzas regarded Constantinople as the central axis of Byzantine history. The importance of Constantinople is further highlighted in the presentation of future events, particularly those connected to the Immortal Emperor.⁴³

The history of Islam and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the historical conflict between Christianity and Islam, occupy a significant portion of *Micrography*. In total, Klontzas painted 173 (out of 410) miniatures connected with the history of Islam, the Arabs and the Ottomans. This theme is introduced with a section dedicated to the life of the Prophet Muhammad.⁴⁴ First, Klontzas depicts the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius

³⁹ D. R. Reinsch, "Hieronymus Wolf as Editor and Translator of Byzantine Texts", in: *The Reception of Byzantium in European Culture since 1500*, eds. P. Marciniak, D. C. Smythe, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 43–53.

⁴⁰ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 115, fig. 180.

⁴¹ Nikolić, "Byzantine History in Μικρογραφίαι of George Klontzas", 432–434.

⁴² The texts in question are the account of the Fall of Constantinople by Nicolò Barbaro, the letter of Cardinal Isidore of Kiev, chronological annotations of Georgios Scholarios, History of Kritobulos of Imbros, two anonymous lamentations occasioned by the Fall of Constantinople and some Byzantine short chronicles, М. Николић, *Јелена Драгаш Палеологина – последња царица Ромеја* (Београд: Филип Вишњић, 2018), 13–32, 201–222.

⁴³ Nikolić, "Byzantine History in Μικρογραφίαι of George Klontzas", 425.

⁴⁴ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 93–98, 101, 116, 211–212, fig. 71, 73, 76, 77, 81, 84–86, 89, 90–96, 99, 109.



Fig. 2. Geōrgios Klontzas, *Apocalypse and History*, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana gr. VII.22 (1466), ink on paper, 1591–92, Emperor Heraclius meets Muhammad, fol. 48r

exalting the Holy Cross.⁴⁵ As is well known, Heraclius' exaltation of the Holy Cross followed his victorious campaign against the Persians, and since the 12th century, this event has been interpreted as the First Crusade.⁴⁶ A similar motif appears in Piero della Francesca's famous fresco, *The Exaltation of the True Cross*, in Arezzo, dating from the mid-15th century. However, in contrast to the Persian context, Klontzas links Heraclius with Muhammad and Islam. Two additional representations of Heraclius in *Micrography* closely resemble the portraits of this Emperor found on two bronze medals from the early 15th century.⁴⁷ In the context of *Micrography* this portrayal of the first Byzantine ruler to lead a Crusade is employed as a call for a Crusade against the Ottomans.

In the next miniature depicting Heraclius, the Emperor is shown on horseback, with a naked Muhammad standing before him. The inscription informs us that Heraclius granted Muhammad land to settle, in response to his supplication.⁴⁸ The subordinate position of Muhammad – and, by extension, Islam – in *Micrography* is further emphasised by the fact that Muhammad is depicted as a black man. This depiction is reinforced in two other works by Klontzas, where Muhammad's origin is linked to Ethiopia, a land associated with blackness both in Greek and Byzantine traditions, as well as in Venetian documents from the 15th and 16th centuries. This suggests that Klontzas intentionally constructed the image of Muhammad as a black, and therefore inferior, figure.⁴⁹ Although Klontzas does not directly associate Muhammad and the Muslims (Saracens and Arabs)⁵⁰ with Ethiopia, he does affirm in *Micrography* that Ethiopia was part of the Byzantine Empire, as seen through the lineage of Byzantia and the mother of Alexander the Great, Chouseth.

The religious dimension that favours the union of the Eastern and Western Churches is one of Klontzas' central themes, as evidenced in several miniatures, thus reflecting Venetian politics in Crete. In one, Klontzas presents the Pope and the Venetian Doge, each holding a model of Constantinople between them. The inscription

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, fig. 74.

⁴⁶ *Willelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 105–107.

⁴⁷ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, fig. 84, 186; S. K. Scher, *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 34–37, 65.

⁴⁸ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 211–212, fig. 84.

⁴⁹ Apart from *Micrography*, the story about black Muhammad is told in fragmentary remains of a more luxurious Klontzas' manuscript from the late 16th century and now-destroyed pair of images from the Museum of Art and History in Geneva, Ch. Barber, "Reading an Icon of the Black Muhammad. Georgios Klontzas on Islam", in: *After the Text. Byzantine Enquiries in Honour of Margaret Mullett*, eds. L. James et al., (London; New York: Routledge, 2022), 273–288; K. Lowe, "Visible Lives: Black Gondoliers and Other Black Africans in Renaissance Venice", *Renaissance Quarterly* 66 (2013), 416.

⁵⁰ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 100, fig. 97, 98, 104, 106.



Fig. 3. Geōrgios Klontzas, *Apocalypse and History*, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana gr. VII.22 (1466), ink on paper, 1591–92, Sultan Selim II, Death, the Venetian Doge, an Angel, and Russian Tsar Ivan IV “the Terrible” in Constantinople, fol. 140r

above reads: “The Pope and the Prince ruled Constantinople for 58 years.”⁵¹ The next miniature features two scenes: on the left, Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, who reclaimed Constantinople from the Latins, and on the right, the Council of Ferrara-Florence. Above them, the inscription states: “Emperor Michael, the first of the Palaiologoi, who took Constantinople from the Latins in 1262.”⁵² The inscription below reads: “The eighth Council that took place in Florence.” In this way, Klontzas expresses his clear affection for the Roman Catholic Church. However, whether intentionally or not, he erroneously connects Michael VIII Palaiologos with the Ferrara-Florence Council, even though this Emperor actually consented to the Union signed at Lyon in 1274. Additionally, Klontzas includes the Ferrara-Florence Council among the Ecumenical Councils of the Christian Church, granting it legal status for all Christians and presenting it as a model to be followed.⁵³

A particularly interesting miniature in this regard depicts Constantinople, with a column featuring seven crowned emperors in its upper and lower sections. Between them, five sultans are shown surrounding a long snake. The Ottoman Sultan Selim II (1566–1574) is portrayed alongside Death, as well as three other figures: the Venetian Doge (either Pietro Loredan, 1567–1570, or Alvise I Mocenigo, 1570–1577), an angel, and most likely the Russian Tsar Ivan IV ‘the Terrible’ (1533/47–1584). This image seems to address the prospect of an alliance between Venice and Russia. However, it was not an original creation by Klontzas. The artist was clearly familiar with an earlier version from 1570, which depicted the city as Constantinople, designated the angel as Archangel Michael, and named the Russian ruler. Klontzas also altered the text from the 1570 original, citing the prophecy of Leo the Wise, which predicted the end of Ottoman rule in Constantinople following the death of Selim.⁵⁴

In another miniature, which features the Silver Emperor, he is depicted as a monarch on horseback, holding a falcon, in front of Old Rome. The inscription above the image reads: “Union and Monarchy,” and below it: “This is the Old Rome, where the Silver Emperor will bring about the union of the Western and Eastern Churches.”⁵⁵

Klontzas frequently depicts the Popes of Rome, which is unsurprising given his personal support for Church union and the fact that he lived under Venetian rule. The artist also expressed his admiration for Venice in a miniature of the Serenissima,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 100, fig. 107.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 100, fig. 108.

⁵³ Nikolić, “Byzantine History in Μικρογραφίαι of George Klontzas”, 429.

⁵⁴ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 137, fig. 295; Barber, *Eccentric Renaissance*, 178, 180–184.

⁵⁵ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 148, fig. 344; Barber, *Eccentric Renaissance*, 220–227.

with the inscription: “The most Christian and the most honourable city of the Venetians, and the most beautiful of all (ὡραία παρὰ πάσας).”⁵⁶



In *Micrography*, Georgios Klontzas offers a personal interpretation of history, drawing upon a corpus of myths, symbols, and collective memories inherited from the Byzantine tradition and further reconfigured within the context of his own era. This history is framed within the traditional Byzantines’ fondness for a good story, which played a key role in shaping their collective memory of the past. Some of these stories were repeated across various sources of information and transmissions. However, this was not a case of plagiarism, but rather a means of demonstrating the authenticity and accuracy of the stories. The process of shaping the past was bidirectional, involving not only the storyteller but also the audience.⁵⁷ The audience was already familiar with these stories and was active in determining which ones should be preserved.

For Klontzas, the Christian linear framework and the narrative of a future Christian kingdom serve as the structure for all of human history. Christianity, therefore, functions as a foundation for both tradition and political reality. The basis for political history, which Klontzas views as fundamentally Greek, is established at the beginning of *Micrography* through the story of Byzantia, the daughter of King Byzas and sister of Alexander the Great. Klontzas emphasises the primacy of *Hellenitas* in his own self-understanding and identification, which is further underscored by his use of the Greek language. Through Byzantia’s marriage to Emperor Romulus, the founder of Old Rome, Klontzas connects Greek and Roman histories, thus uniting his notion of *Hellenitas* with his idea of *Romanitas*. As Byzantia was the daughter of Byzas, the founder of Byzantium (i.e., Constantinople), and the granddaughter of Fole, the Emperor of Ethiopia, she claimed the imperial background and heritage. It could be inferred that this imperial heritage gave her primacy in her marriage to Romulus, the founder of Old Rome. In this way, Klontzas grants primacy to New Rome over the Old, suggesting that New Rome was destined to play a significant role in the events associated with the Immortal Emperor and the Second Coming. This view is further supported by the narrative of Pseudo-Methodius of Patara, which states that Romulus gifted the city of Rome to his wife.⁵⁸ The political leadership of the Emperor in Constantinople is, therefore, indisputable throughout *Micrography*.

⁵⁶ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 124, fig. 228.

⁵⁷ R. Scott, “Text and Context in Byzantine Historiography”, in: *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. L. James, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 251–262.

⁵⁸ *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, 30, 102; Vassiliev, *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina*, 34.



Fig. 4. Geōrgios Klontzas, *Apocalypse and History*, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana gr. VII.22 (1466), Geōrgios Klontzas, *Apocalypse and History*, ink on paper, 1591–92, the Silver Emperor enters Old Rome to bring about the union of the Churches, fol. 170v

The fact that 173 out of the 410 miniatures in *Micrography* are dedicated to the history of Islam, the Arabs, and primarily the Ottomans, strongly suggests that the manuscript carries a clear anti-Ottoman sentiment. According to the artist, Emperor Heraclius of Constantinople was the first ruler to fight for the Cross, making him the ideal example to be followed. The narrative of Emperor Heraclius granting land to Muhammad to settle on is also used as a claim that the land the Ishmaelites (Muslims) occupied did not rightfully belong to them but to the Byzantine Emperor, or specifically, the Emperor of Constantinople. Although Klontzas does not directly link Muslims with Ethiopia in *Micrography*, he places the land – identified in his other works as the origin of Muhammad – in the context of the Greek-Roman, or Byzantine Empire. The land belonged to Christians, as Byzantia, as the granddaughter of Fole, the Emperor of Ethiopia, claimed it. Thus, the Ishmaelites were portrayed as inferior and settled on Christian land with the consent of the Christian Emperor.

Through several miniatures, Klontzas demonstrates his support for the union of the Eastern and Western Churches. However, according to one of the last miniatures in *Micrography*, this union was to be enforced under the political leadership of the Emperor in Constantinople, who would bring the union to the West.

In reminding the audience of past events as well as those leading up to the Second Coming, Klontzas sends a political message calling for the initiation of a new Crusade against the Ottomans. This is further emphasised in another miniature depicting an anonymous Byzantine Emperor, who offers hope to the Greeks that they will drive out the Turks and restore the Byzantine Empire.⁵⁹

During the 16th century, on the eve of its eventual fall to the Ottomans between 1646–1669, the island of Crete experienced a period of struggle reminiscent of the challenges faced by much of the Balkan Peninsula in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, when large parts of the region were conquered – culminating in the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Despite the Christian victory at Lepanto in 1571 – which ultimately failed to halt the Ottoman advance – and in the wake of the devastating plague that struck Crete in 1592,⁶⁰ the island remained under the looming threat of the Turks. In response to these crises, Georgios Klontzas created an illustrated guide encompassing Biblical, Ancient Greek, Roman, and Byzantine history. This work also functioned as a political pamphlet, calling for the organisation of a new Crusade under Venetian leadership. According to Klontzas, the union of the Churches was a necessary precondition for such a campaign. He envisioned the establishment of a new, Greek-led empire that would bring both political and spiritual unity to the New

⁵⁹ Παλιούρας, *Ο ζωγράφος Γεώργιος Κλόντζας*, 141, fig. 311.

⁶⁰ Barber, *Eccentric Renaissance*, 169, 214, 248.

and Old Romes.⁶¹ This empire, he believed, would defeat the Muslims and pave the way for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. It appears that many of his fellow Cretans shared this vision.

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⁶¹ *Laonici Chalcocondylae Historiarum Demonstrationes* [vol.] I, ed. E. Darkó, (Budapest: Budapestini Sumptibus Academiae litterarum hungaricae, 1922), 4–5.

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Creation of a Narrative and an Iconographical Model of Conversion: Blessed Osanna of Kotor**

This chapter examines how the Roman Catholic hagiographers perceived the Eastern Orthodox Christians using the example of the Blessed Osanna of Kotor (beata Osanna da Cattaro, blažena Ozana Kotorska, 1493–1565). We have an intriguing case of the identification of a young girl named Jovana, baptised as Katarina in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and then converted to Catholicism to become the Dominican tertiary and anchoress, taking the name Osanna, in honour of the famous Dominican female living saint from Mantua – Osanna Andreasi. Blessed Osanna of Kotor was revered as a living saint (*santa viva*) by the local community during her life. The place of her veneration, but also transformation, is the town of Kotor, a part of the Venetian Republic.

The formation of the cult of Osanna is a phenomenon rooted in the specific cultural and religious environment of the geographic borderland between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity, with the omnipresent Ottoman threat serving as the driving force of the story behind this case study. After outlining the social, religious, and cultural context of Osanna's cult, I will explain the (re)creation of her *fama di santità* by words and images, by analysing and contextualising step by step the main identitarian transformation of Osanna: first, her resettlement from an Orthodox village to the Catholic town of Kotor, followed by her conversion to Catholicism; second, her *recluserium* as a chosen ascetic category according to the post-Tridentine attempts for claustralisation (*la riforma claustrale*) for the Dominican tertiaries, by the most important author of her *vita*, Serafino Razzi, the Dominican friar from Florence.

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Following this, I will examine how the hagiographers of Osanna (in a chronological order) – Bazilije Gradić, Serafino Razzi, Juan López, Girolamo Ercolani and Domenico Maria Marchese – refer to her Orthodox origins, revealing their understanding and presentation of Otherness. The analysis will focus also on visual sources – especially those that were supposed to depict Osanna's saintly profile and were designed for her burial place. In this context, I will present the theme of the Conversion of Saint Paul as a chosen symbol and role model for her transformation and conversion.

At the beginning of the 16th century, due to poverty intensified by the Ottoman conquests, the young Osanna (then Jovana, baptised as Katarina) left her village in the hinterland (Releza, Lješanska nahija), and went to Kotor in search of a better life. The former shepherdess from the mountains of Montenegro, started working as a maid in the Buchia residence, one of the most distinguished and noble families in Kotor.¹ What makes this story of escaping poverty distinctive are Osanna's ecstatic visions, which she experienced from early childhood in her birthplace. The mystical visions – a form of seeing with the mind – which rendered her unconscious, insensible, and as if dead for hours (“alienata dai sensi, e come morta”), continued after her arrival in Kotor, influencing her final decision to spend her whole life as a Dominican recluse. In her hagiography written by Serafino Razzi, the desire to find a way ‘to see God’ was emphasised as the main reason for her relocation to Kotor.²

To understand the historical context in which Osanna lived, and subsequently in which her hagiographies were created, it is necessary to provide several basic facts regarding the nature of the complex relationship between Catholic and Orthodox Christians in the Kotor area and its surroundings. These contacts went through different phases and generally became more intense in parallel with difficult economic and wartime conditions.

In the 15th and 16th century in the walled city of Kotor there were only Catholic churches. The Orthodox population mostly lived outside the city walls and in the hinterland of Zeta. An extensive migratory phenomenon intensified after the fall of Zeta to the Ottoman Empire in 1496. The Ottoman conquest was accompanied by severe poverty among the local population, who, in such difficult conditions, increasingly left their homeland in search of a better life, mostly heading in the direction of the Bay of Kotor, as well as across the sea to Apulia and the Le Marche region in Italy.³

¹ N. Luković, *Blažena Ozana Kotorka. Jubilarno izdanje povodom 400. godišnjice smrti (1565–1965)* (Kotor: Biskupski Ordinarijat u Kotoru, 1965), 6–12.

² S. Razzi, *Vita della reverenda serva di Dio la madre suor Ossanna da Cattaro, dell'ordine di San Domenico. Scritta da Serafino Razzi dell'istesso Ordine, e Provincia Romana* (Firenze: Stamperia del Sermartelli, 1592), 10–15.

³ M. Sensi, “Fraternite di slavi nelle Marche: il secolo XV”, in: *Le Marche e l'Adriatico orientale. Economia, società, cultura dal 13. secolo al primo Ottocento*, a cura di A. Ventura, (Ancona:

When talking about the migration of the Orthodox population, it is important to underline the issue of the Union between the two denominations. Some parts of Osanna's hagiography should be interpreted in this context (especially those related to the question of the existence of Purgatory).⁴ A supporter of the Union in Kotor was Bishop Marino Contarini (Contareno) from Venice (Bishop of Kotor from 1429 to 1453) who attended the Council of Ferrara/Florence (1431–1445). During Contareno's bishopric, an active Unionist policy was pursued. The earliest evidence of this policy appears in the Orthodox Monastery Prečista Krajinska in Skadar (Shkodra), as well as in the Podlastva Monastery in Grbalj (Lastua di Zuppa). As for the Union in the old city of Kotor, within the walls, the situation was different. In the old town, until the 17th century, there were no Orthodox churches, nor altars. In the report of Bishop Angelo Baroni of Kotor in 1608, it is stated that about 3,000 souls live in the territory of the Kotor diocese and the area around Kotor is inhabited by *Rascianis*, *Graecis*, and *Schismaticis*.⁵ The bishops of Kotor pursued a policy of the conversion of the Orthodox population settled in the diocese and actively propagated the Union. This is also evident in the 17th century in *ad limina* reports (reports that the Catholic residential diocesan bishops are required to submit to the Pope in Rome every five years), as well as letters sent to the Sacred Congregation of the Council (*Sacra Congregazione del Concilio*) by the bishops of Kotor, especially Giovanni Antonio Sborovazio and Marino Drago.⁶ The archival documents of the mid-17th century mention that the Orthodox population from Grbalj (Zuppa) were in the Union with the Roman Church. They received an altar in the Catholic church of Saint Luke in Kotor. The practice of building churches with two altars – serving both the Catholic and Orthodox denominations – stemmed mainly from poverty and was sometimes in use at the time in the Bay of Kotor. The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Congregazione de propaganda fide*) was against this practice, as it was especially

Deputazione di storia patria per le Marche, 1978), 53–84; M. Sensi, “Slavi nelle Marche tra pietà e devozione”, *Studi maceratesi* XXX (1996), 481–501; V. Živković, “The Vow of Ivan Crnojević to the Virgin Mary in Loreto under the Shadow of the Ottoman Conquest”, *Balkanica* XLVIII (2017), 19–32.

4 V. Živković, “Non possedé cosa che del mondo fusse. Suor Osanna, la santa viva di Cattaro”, in: *Sante vive in Europa (secoli XV–XVI). Saggi per Gabriella Zarri*, a cura di A. Bartolomei Romagnoli, (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2020), 250. That the Orthodox deny purgatory is mentioned in *Relatio episcopi Cattarensis de statu suae ecclesiae* by Hieronymus Ep(iscopus) Cattarensis in 1592, see: М. Јачов, *Сѣиси ѿајної ваїиѿканскої архива XVI–XVIII века* (Београд: САНУ, 1983), 4.

5 *Ibid.*, 26–27.

6 A. Molnár, *Le relazioni “ad limina” dei vescovi di Cattaro alla Santa Sede (1592–1708) = Izvještaji “ad limina” kotorskih biskupa Svetoj Stolici (1592–1708)* (Podgorica: Art grafika, 2022), 223–359.

against building churches with Orthodox Christians outside the Union.⁷ In the first half of the 17th century, Timotej Cisilla in his book *Golden Bull (Bove d'oro)*, describing the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Kotor, says how the *schismatic* (Orthodox) priests from Luštica, Krtole and Liješeviči are under the spiritual competence of the bishop from Kotor, Monsignor Vincentije Buchia, who actively advocated a Union with Paštroviči and was for active conversion.⁸

The other important aspect of the relationship between the Catholic and the Orthodox denominations at the time when Serafino Razzi was writing a hagiography of Blessed Osanna, was the attempt to forge an anti-Ottoman coalition principally in the Balkans and among the Slavs. There were some actions, such as a diplomatic mission by a priest and Jesuit missionary Aleksandar Komulović (1548–1608).⁹

In short, this is the background of our story – the construction of the saintly profile of Osanna by her most important hagiographer, Serafino Razzi (1531–1613), a Dominican friar from the convent of San Marco in Florence, who had set out on a mission to promote the Dominican observance and post-Tridentine reforms to Dubrovnik and Kotor from 1587 to 1589.¹⁰ In Kotor, Razzi met with the living

Sources from the first half of the 19th century state that the Orthodox from the Boka Kotorska Bay were no longer in the Union see: A. Belan, "Crkva Svetog Luke u kanonskim vizitacijama kotorskih biskupa XVI–XVIII stoljeća", у: *Црква Свѣтої Луке кроз вјекове. Зборник радова са научної скупїа њоводом 800-годишњице цркве Свѣтої Луке у Коштору* (20–22. 10. 1995), ур. В. Кораћ, (Котор: Српска православна црквена општина Котор, 1997), 197–206; И. Божић, *Немирно Поморје XV века* (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1979); М. Спремић, "Срби и флорентинска унија цркава", *Зборник радова Византијолошкої инстїиїуїта* 24–25 (1986), 413–421; В. Ј. Ђурић, "У сенци фирентинске уније: црква Св. Госпође у Мржепу (Бока Которска)", *Зборник радова Византијолошкої инстїиїуїта* 35 (1996), 9–56; М. Спремић, "Односи између православних и римокатолика у српској деспотовини", у: *Црква Свѣтої Луке кроз вјекове*, 239–254; L. Blehova Čelebić, "Vjerska slika Boke Kotorske početkom XVI vijeka. Arhivska svjedočanstva", *Croatica Christiana Periodica* 31/60 (2007), 59–75.

⁸ A translation of *Bove d'oro* was published in: *Књижевност Црне Горе од XII до XIX вијека. Аналитички. Хроничари. Биографи*, (Петитње: Обод, 1996), 59.

⁹ A. Trstenjak, "Alessandro Komulovic SI, 1548–1608. Profilo biografico", *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 58 (1989), 43–86; A. Molnár, *Confessionalization on the Frontier. The Balkan Catholics between Roman Reform and Ottoman Reality* (Roma: Viella, 2019).

¹⁰ On Serafino Razzi, see: *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum recensiti, notisque historicis et criticis* [vol.] 2, eds. J. Quéfit, J. Echard, (Paris: J.B. Christophorum Ballard et Nicolaum Simart, 1721), 386–388; T. Chersa, *Degli illustri Toscani stati in diversi tempi a Ragusa. Commentario* (Padova: Tipi della Minerva, 1828), 19–21; O. Redon, “Hagiographies croisées dans la Toscane de la fin du XVI^e siècle”, in: *Raccolte di vite di santi dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, a cura di S. B. Gajano, (Brindisi: Schena, 1990), 143–157; P. Macey, “The Lauda and the Cult of Savonarola”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 45/3 (1992), 439–483. On Razzi’s sojourn in

memory of Osanna, and thus, he wrote *Life of the Reverend Servant of God, Sister Osanna of Kotor, of the Order of St Dominic* (*Vita della reverenda serva di Dio la madre suor Ossanna da Cattaro, dell'ordine di San Domenico*), which was published in Florence in 1592. Serafino lists several hagiographic writings he encountered in Kotor: one written by Don Eusebio Caboga, a Benedictine monk from Dubrovnik, and the other one written by Giovanni Boliza (di Bona), a nobleman from Kotor; as well as oral testimonials from the sisters from the Monastery of Saint Paul, especially from Suor Domenica who was 110 years old, according to Razzi, and had thus been a companion of Osanna ("compagna dell'ancilla di Dio Ossanna").¹¹

A sensitive and wise hagiographer with a refined sense for interpreting historical events, Serafino Razzi, in his *Vita di Osanna*, provided an extraordinary approach by combining the local memory of Osanna – who died in odour of sanctity – with models drawn from Italian Dominican female living saints.¹² Their religious profile had several obligatory elements: virtues; mystical, visionary, and prophetic experiences, penitential practices; and episodes of demonic temptation. A common model for the construction of these newly established cults of the female saints was the penitent, mystical and prophetic model of Catherine of Siena (*Caterina da Siena*).¹³ The memory of the Sienese *mantellata* intertwined with the promotion of the cult of Girolamo Savonarola and the Dominican Observant Reform.¹⁴ Serafino represents Osanna

Dubrovnik and Kotor, see: L. Ferreti, "Appunti biografici-critici", in: S. Razzi, *La storia di Ragusa scritta nuovamente in tre libri* (Ragusa: Tipografia Serbo-Ragusea A. Pasarić, 1903), 6–52; L. Ferreti, "Fra Serafino Razzi", *Memorie Domenicane* 20 (1903), 168–173, 211–216, 310–318, 361–366, 421–432, 456–464.

¹¹ Razzi, *Vita della reverenda serva di Dio la madre suor Ossanna da Cattaro*, 54.

¹² The topic of late medieval and early modern female living saints has become a well-researched area in recent decades, especially after Gabriella Zarri's publications on *sante vive*, female mystics and prophetesses who were revered as powerful spiritual protectresses especially between the 15th and 16th century. G. Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990); G. Zarri, "Female sanctity, 1500–1660", in: *The Cambridge history of Christianity* [vol.] 6. *Reform and expansion, 1500–1660*, ed. R. Po-chia Hsia, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 180–200.

¹³ *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, eds. C. Muessig, G. Ferzoco, B. Mayne Kienzle, (Leiden: Brill, 2011); *Virgo digna coelo. Caterina e la sua eredità*, a cura di A. Bartolomei Romagnoli, L. Cinelli, P. Piatti, (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013); *Catherine of Siena. The Creation of a Cult*, eds. J. F. Hamburger, G. Signori, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

¹⁴ On the promotion of *il movimento Cateriniano* held by Savonarola's followers, see: G. Zarri, "Le sante vive: Per una tipologia della santità femminile nel primo Cinquecento", *Annali dell'Istituto Storico-Germanico in Trento* 6 (1980), 371–445; G. Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte*, 121–122; T. Herzig, *Savonarola's Women. Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) [Italian edition: *Le donne di Savonarola. Spiritualità e devozione nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Roma: Carocci editore, 2014]. On the

by reusing some of the features of *le nuove Caterine*, Osanna Andreasi da Mantova, Stefana Quinzani, Lucia Brocadelli da Narni, Colomba da Rieti and Caterina de' Ricci.¹⁵

The theme of the transformation of the model of hagiography is evident when comparing Razzi's *Vita di Osanna* with one earlier hagiography that was written soon after Osanna's death. The local Benedictine monk Bazilije Gradić from Dubrovnik (*Basilio Gradich da Ragusa, monaco della Congregatione Casinense*), wrote a short hagiography of Osanna as a part of his volume on the holy virgins published first in the vernacular as *Libarze od dievstva i dievickoga bitya* (1567) and then in Italian as

relationship between the Dominican Observant Movement and Catherine of Siena, see: I. Gagliardi, "Caterina e l'osservanza domenicana", in: *Virgo Digna coelo*, 361–378. Central to spreading reform among many female houses was the convent of San Marco in Florence, which was particularly engaged in rehabilitating the memory of Savonarola, see: L. Polizzotto, *Elect Nation: The Savonarolan Movement in Florence 1494–1545* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 295, 395, 400, 440–441, 443; L. Polizzotto, "Savonarola, savonaroliani e la riforma della donna", in: *Studi savonaroliani. Verso il V centenario, Atti del primo seminario di studi, Firenze, 14–15 gennaio 1995*, a cura di G. C. Garfagnini, (Firenze: SISMEL, 1996), 229–244; M. Moreton, "A Voice from Savonarolan Florence: Fra Succhielli and his Sermon Diary (1481–1512)", in: *Mendicant Cultures in the Medieval and Early Modern World: Word, Deed, and Image*, eds. S. J. Cornelison, N. Ben-Aryeh Debby, P. F. Howard, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 65–104; L. Cinelli, "La Congregazione e il convento di San Marco", in: *Fra Bartolomeo 1517*, a cura di A. Assonitis, L. Cinelli, T. Marilena, (Firenze: Nerbini, 2019), 231–229.

¹⁵ A part from the hagiography of Caterina de' Ricci adapted by Serafino's brother Silvano can be singled out: *facendosi chiamare Caterina [...] con propositi d'imitare [...] quella da Siena del medesimo ordine*, see: S. Razzi, *Vite dei Santi e Beati Toscani De quali infino à hoggi comunemente si ha cognizione* (Firenze: Sermartelli, 1627), 860. On *le nuove Caterine*, see: G. Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte*, 102–103; S. Razzi, "Luccia da Narni e il movimento femminile savonaroliano", in: *Girolamo Savonarola: da Ferrara all'Europa*, a cura di G. Fragnito, M. Miegge, (Firenze: SISMEL, 2001), 99–116; G. T. W. Ahlgren, "Ecstasy, Prophecy, and Reform: Catherine of Siena as a Model for Holy Women of Sixteenth-Century Spain", in: *The Mystical Gesture: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Spiritual Culture in Honour of Mary E. Giles*, ed. R. Boenig, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2000), 53–65; T. Herzig, "The Rise and Fall of a Savonarolan Visionary: Lucia Brocadelli's Contribution to the Piagnone Movement", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte-Archive for Reformation History* 95/1 (2004), 34–60; *Dominican Penitent Women*, ed. M. Lehmijoki-Gardner, (New York; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2005); T. Herzig, *Savonarola's Women*; S. Mostaccio, "L'Osservanza femminile domenicana tra intelletto e contemplazione. Itinerari di pensiero e di manoscritti", in: *Il velo, la penna e la parola: le domenicane. Storia, istituzioni e scritture*, a cura di G. Zarri, G. Festa, (Firenze: Nerbini, 2009), 151–161; C. Warr, "Performing the Passion: Strategies for Salvation in the Life of Stefana Quinzani (d. 1530)", *Studies in Church History* XLV (2009), 218–227; L. Cinelli, "Le legendae della beata Osanna da Mantova, terziaria domenicana", in: *La beata Osanna e i Domenicani a Mantova. Atti del convegno, Mantova 10 giugno 2010*, a cura di A. Ghirardi, R. Golinelli Berto, (Mantova: Casandrea, 2011), 1–25.

Trattato della verginità et dello stato verginale (Treatise on virginity and the virginal state) in 1584. In contrast to Razzi, Gradić accentuated her asceticism, penitent practice, and demonic temptations, with the aim to construct the ideal virgin's humility, as the principal subject of his collection of hagiographies. On the other hand, Razzi emphasised her visionary mystical experiences and prophetic powers, as the two main characteristics of famous Italian female living saints, especially from the Dominican order. Serafino Razzi in his *Vita* outlined the deep bond of Osanna with her city – she also, like the other Italian *sante vive*, reflected the religious tensions of the society.

As a tertiary and anchoress, Osanna accepted a severe type of eremitism – *recluserium* – in the form of a small cell strongly connected to a female Dominican monastery of Saint Paul. There she lived for fifty-two years. Her asceticism caused surprise among the citizens who wondered how a hermit could be found in the middle of the city: “in mezzo alle città si potesse ritrovare l'eremo”.¹⁶ Although the enclosure limited her contacts with the outside world, Razzi stressed Osanna's active role in social, political, and military events in Kotor. The *recluserium* as a form of ascetic life was more usual for the late medieval period. In the case of Osanna, this rigid form of penitence was transformed in the post-Tridentine ideal of cloistered life for all religious women (that is both nuns and tertiaries). In 1592, the year of the publication of Razzi's *Vita di Osanna*, there were some testamentary bequests to recluses of the Monastery of Saint Paul (*murate de san Paullo*), as written evidence of the acceptance of the cloister life.¹⁷

Osanna's social and religious status was determined by the fact that she was a poor shepherdess (in this case it doesn't matter whether she belonged to the Orthodox or Catholic denomination, as only social and economic status was considered) and as such, she could only be a tertiary (sister), but not a nun.¹⁸ Indicative for our topic is a transformation of her religious status. Namely, due to her extreme asceticism, she was given a white scapular to wear as if she belonged to the second Dominican order (*moniales claustrales*), by the decision of Francesco Romeo da Castiglione, Master General of the Dominican Order, in 1547 and 1548.¹⁹

¹⁶ Razzi, *Vita di suor Ossanna da Cattaro*, 17. On the phenomenon of the medieval *recluse seu heremite* as a symbol of the mediation between city and desert, see. A. Benvenuti Papi, “*In castro poenitentiae*”. *Santità e società femminile nell'Italia medievale* (Roma: Herder, 1990).

¹⁷ Historical archives in Kotor (Istorijski arhiv, Kotor) IAK SN LXVII 1314 (last will of Jerolim Paltasich, 20. 01. 1592).

¹⁸ A. Benvenuti Papi, “La santità al femminile: funzioni e rappresentazioni tra medioevo ed età moderna”, in: *Les fonctions des saints dans le monde occidental (IIIe–XIIIe siècle) Actes du colloque de Rome 27–29 octobre 1988*, éd. J. Y. Tilliette, (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1991), 467–488.

¹⁹ Archivio Generale dell'Ordine dei Predicatori (AGOP) Regest. 1546–1553, IV/29, 93–95; Luković, *Blažena Ozana Kotorka*, 52.

Osanna converted from Eastern Orthodox Christianity to Catholicism. Certainly, that was the most significant transformation that makes Osanna not just particular, but rather unique within the *santa viva* model of female sanctity. This was emphasised with words (in various hagiographic compilations) and images (at her burial place) during a few beatification attempts from the end of the 16th century until the final approbation of the cult in 1927.

In *Vita di Ossanna*, Razzi pointed out that she was born into a Christian Eastern Orthodox family adding: “who in many things disagrees with the Roman Catholic Church and we consider them as Schismatics” (“I parenti suoi furono cristiani, ma imperò della setta dei Greci detti Rasciani, i quali in molte cose discordando dalla chiesa Romana, oggi da noi come scismatici sono tenuti”).²⁰ Describing Osanna’s religious origin, Razzi chose the term ‘Rasciani’ that refers to Raška, medieval Serbia, that was used at the time in Florence.²¹

In the 17th century, during one of the later, unsuccessful attempts at beatification, several Dominican writers included Osanna in their hagiographic volumes, stressing her origins. Especially emphatic was Girolamo Ercolani, the Dominican Doctor of Theology at the *Collegio di Padova* in his *The Heroines of Sacred Solitude* (*Le Eroine della solitudine sacra*) written in 1655: “I would consider her gold, freshly removed from the mine and therefore not even refined, because although she was born from Christian parents, they were Schismatics, Greek Orthodox Rasciani.”²²

Another Dominican friar and bishop of Pozzuoli, near Naples, Domenico Maria Marchese (1633–1692) is equally descriptive in his Dominican sacred diary (*Sacro diario domenicano*): “Just as the rose from the thorns, the lily from the rings and the day from night, so does the Lord very often allow creation of the light from darkness, grace from sins, and excellent children from bad parents. Such was Blessed Osanna.” Then he added: “Her parents were Greek Schismatics, who offered the Greek rite, according to the sect of the Rasciami [sic], which is held by the Patriarch of Constantinople, to whom they professed. She was born poor in the goods of fortune, for which reason in her education she could not have knowledge of the truth of our Catholic Faith.”²³ Marchese continues in the same spirit when he describes what

²⁰ Razzi, *Vita di suor Ossanna da Cattaro*, 9.

²¹ The same term was used by Rinaldo degli Albizzi the Florentine statesman and diplomat in 1426, see: I. Lazzarini, “Patterns of Translation: Contacts and Linguistic Variety in Italian Late Medieval Diplomacy (ca. 1380–1520)”, in: *Translators, Interpreters, and Cultural Negotiators. Mediating and Communicating Power from the Middle Ages to the Modern Era*, eds. F. M. Federici, D. Tessicini, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 29–47.

²² G. Ercolani, *Le eroine della solitudine sacra ovvero vite d'alcune delle più illustri romite* (Venezia: per Francesco Baba, 1655), 697–698.

²³ D. M. Marchese, *Sacro diario domenicano* [tomo] 2. *Nel quale si contengono le vite de'santi, beati, e venerabili dell'ordine de'predicatori, morti nelli due mesi Marzo et Aprile* (Napoli:

followed – that Osanna was fortunate when she went to Kotor to see her God, and to hold him close to her breast, and never leave him again. And then she became a maid in the noble house of the Senator of Kotor who, as Marchese emphasises, was a very good Catholic (*era molto buon Cattolico*).²⁴

Domenico Maria Marchese used as a template the hagiography of Osanna written by a Spanish Dominican friar, Juan López, O.P. (died 1632) who was Bishop of Monopoli in Puglia (1598–1608) and Bishop of Crotona in Calabria (1595–1598), in his Part Four of the General History of St. Dominic and his Order of Preachers (*Quarta parte dela Historia general de santo Domingo y de su orden de prediadores*). It seems that the Spanish Dominican did not distinguish between geographical and confessional designations, identifying Greece as her homeland: “*Soror Osanna* is commonly said to have been born in Kotor, but she was actually a native of a village in *Esclavonia* under the Turkish rule, called Komani. Her parents were schismatics, like many others in Greece, who do not recognise the supreme Roman Pontiff.”²⁵ Probably, the term used for the Orthodox (*ritum grecorum*)²⁶ in López’s hagiography has become the term Greece.

As we have seen in these hagiographies, Osanna’s origin and religious conversion is particularly emphasised. This aspect of her identification became a symbol firmly rooted in the historical context of the 17th century.²⁷ The construction of this same symbol is also clearly reflected in the visual language used at her tomb.

Osanna’s body was removed several times. The final translation of Osanna’s body took place after Kotor fell under Napoleon’s rule in 1809, when the French closed the Church of Saint Paul. Osanna’s body was transferred during the night

Girolamo Fasulo, 1670), 254–258 (28. di Aprile Vita della beata Osanna da Cattaro. Cavata dal Piò, Silvano, Razzi, Lopez nella quarta parte delle Cronache, Fra Giovanni di Santa Maria, ed altri).

²⁴ “Catarina (così nel battesimo havea havuto nome questa Verginella) di potere un giorno vedere il suo Dio, per stringerselo al seno, senza mai più lasciarlo. E furono così calde le sue preghiere, e si continue le sue istanze, che alla fine i suoi parenti, per compiacerla, l’accomodorno per serva in cassa di un Senatore di Cattaro, che era molto buon Cattolico: e non senza special provvidenza di Dio, che mosse l’animo di quel Signore a riceverla in casa”, *ibid.*, 254–255.

²⁵ “Soror Osanna comunmente se dize que nacio en el Cataro: pero ver daderamente fue natural de una villa de Esclavonia sugeta al Turco, que se llama Comani. Fueron sus padres cismaticos, como muchos otros de la Grecia, que non reconocen al sumo Pontifice Romano”, J. López, *Quarta parte dela Historia general de santo Domingo y de su orden de prediadores*, (Valladolid: Por Francisco Fernandez de Cordova, 1615), 442.

²⁶ For example, *ritum grecorum* is mentioned in *Relatio episcopo Cattarensis de statu suae ecclesiae*, 5. 10. 1592, Hieronymus Ep(iscopu)s Cattarensis, see: Ячов, Сїуси їаїної ваїи-канскої архива, 4. In the document made by Minutio Arciv(escovo) di Zara in 27. 4. 1599, there is a mention of *lo Schisma de Serviani, et di Greci*, *ibid.*, 5–9.

²⁷ Molnár, *Le relazioni “ad limina” dei vescovi di Cattaro*.



Fig. 1. Relics of Blessed Osanna of Kotor, the Church of Santa Maria Collegiata, Kotor

to the Church of Santa Maria Collegiata, together with the altar, where it is still located.²⁸ (fig.1) After her cult had been approved, in 1930. Antun Augustinčić made silver-plated reliefs for her sarcophagus depicting scenes from Osanna's life.²⁹

Of particular importance was the translation of Osanna's body in 1675. The Dalmatian Dominican Prior Provincial consulted with the Bishop of Kotor regarding whether her body could be exposed in a new crystal casket, under the main altar for the public worship of the faithful, despite the decree of Pope Urban VIII (which will be discussed later). Based on the uninterrupted veneration of Osanna since her

²⁸ Luković, *Blažena Ozana Kotorka*, 81, 131; Prijatelj, "Kotorska pala", 299.

²⁹ Archivio Generale dell'Ordine dei Predicatori (AGOP), *Sacra Rituum congregatione* (Cardinali Andrea Frühwirth) *Catharensis seu Ordinis praedicatorum Confirmationis cultus a longissimo tempore praestiti servae dei Hosannae de Catharo virgini tertii ordinis s. Dominici beatae vel sanctae nuncupatae Postitio super casu excepto* Romae 1927; Luković, *Blažena Ozana*, 85–88; I. Taurisano, *Blažena Ozana Kotorska dominikanka (1493–1565)* (Zagreb: Dominikanska naklada Istina, 2014), 179–82.



Fig. 2. Antonio Zanchi, *The Conversion of Saint Paul*, c. 1675, the Church of Santa Maria Collegiata, Kotor

death in 1565, it was concluded that this could be done. A procession followed on the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul in 1676; the body was first displayed in the Cathedral and then brought to the Church of Saint Paul and placed beneath the main altar. In 1675, a marble altar had been erected in the Church of Saint Paul and at the beginning of the following year the body of Blessed Osanna was transferred to this most elaborated burial place, at the Altar of Saint Paul.³⁰ The altar dedicated to the Conversion of Saint Paul, was adorned with a painting of the same subject, forming part of her tomb (fig. 2).

The donor of a new altar was a knight from Šibenik, Melchiorre Tetta (1642–c. 1713). After graduating in Padua in 1667, Melchiorre returned to Šibenik in 1672. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Kotor, where he was admitted to the noble council. As a gift, he received a stone that Osanna had used to strike her chest as an act of ascetic penitence. The commissioning of the altar and the painting of the Conversion of Saint Paul formed part of the preparations for a renewed attempt at beatification. Subsequently, in 1685, a request for Osanna's beatification was sent by the municipality via an emissary to the Venetian Senate with the aim of persuading the Pope. Melchiorre Tetta promised that he would arrange everything necessary.³¹

The altar painting is attributed to Antonio Zanchi (1631–1722) from Este near Padua, who belonged to the so-called tenebrism style characterised by dramatic illumination.³² It can be assumed that Melchiorre Tetta met the painter during his sojourn in Padua, or that he at least had the means to commission the painting. The altarpiece depicts an extremely dramatic scene of the Conversion of Saint Paul – like a whirlwind – in which a white horse rears up and leaps into the foreground. Saint Paul, blinded by the divine light and the transformation he has experienced, falls from his horse, while gazing towards the open sky from which the light bursts forth in full intensity. Below the sky, an angel – rendered in dark tones – flies beneath the source of radiant light.³³

The predecessor and symbol of Osanna's conversion was Saint Paul. We can compare the paragraph on the Conversion of Saint Paul in *Summa Theologica* by Thomas Aquinas, with the explanation of Osanna's origin and then process of her transformation through conversion by Domenico Maria Marchese. The same idea of a transformation by the grace of God is presented: "Now it sometimes happens

³⁰ Taurisano says that this was probably done with the consent of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, but there is no evidence of this, see: I. Taurisano, *Blažena Ozana Kotorska*, 180–181.

³¹ Luković, *Blažena Ozana Kotorka*, 40–41; R. Tomić, *Sveto i profano. Slikarstvo talijanskog baroka u Hrvatskoj. Katalog izložbe Galerija Klovićevi dvori* (Zagreb: Kerschhoffset, 2015), 148.

³² K. Prijatelj, "Kotorska pala 'Obraćanja sv. Pavla'", *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 30/1 (1990), 295–301.

³³ R. Tomić, Kataloška jedinica br. 51, in: *Zagovori svetom Tripunu. Blago Kotorske biskupije*, ur. R. Tomić, (Zagreb: Stega tisak, 2010), 221.

that God moves a man to good, but not perfect good, and this preparation precedes grace [...] And thus it happened to Paul, since, suddenly when he was in the midst of sin, his heart was perfectly moved by God to hear, to learn, to come; and hence he received grace suddenly.”³⁴

In the context of applying the powerful symbol of the Conversion of Saint Paul to construct the sacral profile of Osanna, it is important to note that in the rich *opus* of Serafino Razzi there is one devotional song (*lauda spirituale*) with the title *On the Conversion of St. Paul laude by Fra Serafino Razzi (Della conversion di San Paolo laude di Fra Serafino Razzi)*.³⁵ Fra Serafino Razzi was also a prolific composer and the author of large collections of *lauda* songs with music,³⁶ following Girolamo Savonarola’s promotion of singing in the monasteries of Dominican nuns. Razzi’s collections of *laude*, represent perhaps the first systematic attempt to bring together the most important Dominican motifs through music.³⁷

Also, Girolamo Ercolani, in his book *Le Eroine della solitudine sacra*, emphasised that Osanna could not have chosen a better place than the church dedicated to Saint Paul, a saint who was favoured by the Dominican order: “celluccia vicina alla Chiesa di S. Paolo: Colei che tanto bramava d’essere addottrinata ne’ misterij della nostra, fede non poteva, né doveva scieglersi per vicino, che Paolo dottor delle genti. Anzi, chi era per divenire figlia di Domenico, non poteva, come il padre, che à Paolo far ricorso.”³⁸

The *translatio* of Osanna’s body and visual shaping of her grave should be understood in the context of papal decisions. These regulations date back to the

³⁴ First part of the second part, Question 112: Of the Cause of Grace in the Treatise on Grace, in: *Summa Theologica*, <https://aquinas101.thomisticinstitute.org/summa/first-part-of-the-second-part/q-112-of-the-cause-of-grace#a-1>.

³⁵ *Libro Primo delle Laudi Spirituali da diversi excell. e divoti autori, antichi e moderni composte le quali si usano in Firenze nelle Chiese doppo il vespro ò la compieta à consolatione & trattenimento de divoti servi di Dio: con la propria musica e modo di cantare ciaascuna Laude, come si è usato da gli antichi, et si usa in Firenze raccolte dal R. P. Fra Serafino Razzi Fiorentino, dell’ordine de’frati predicatori, à contemplatione delle monache, & altre divote persone* (Venetia: ad instantia de’Giunti di Firenze, 1563), 57–58.

³⁶ He was also the author of: *Santuario di laudi, o vero rime spirituali, per le feste di ciaschedun santo, solennemente celebrato per tutto l’anno da S. Chiesa: con eziandio quelle delle Feste Mobili: e di alcune da cantarsi, nel vestire di Monache. Con brevi annotazioni in prosa. Composte dal padre F. Serafino Razzi, del sacro ordine de i Predicatori, Maestro della sacra Teologia, e professo del Convento di S. Marco di Firenze. Ad istanza, e richiesta di persone spirituali* (Firenze: Bartolommeo Sermartelli e Fratelli, 1609.)

³⁷ L. Anatrini, “Sulla creazione e la diffusione dell’offerta devozionale: il caso di Serafino Razzi”, in: *Plautilla Nelli. Arte e devozione sulle orme di Savonarola*, a cura di F. Navarro, (Firenze: Sillabe, 2017), 142–163.

³⁸ Ercolani, *Le eroine della solitudine sacra*, 711–712. On Ercolani, see: G. Vedova, *Biografia degli Scrittori Padovani* [vol.] 1 (Padova: Minerva, 1832), 368–369.

creation of the new Congregation of Rites (*Congregazione dei riti*) in 1588 and Congregation of Blesseds (*Congregazione dei Beati*) in 1602 by Pope Clement VIII, and especially with the decrees by Pope Urban VIII of 1625 and of 1634 (*Coelestis Hierusalem cives*). A distinction between the blessed and the saints was introduced, and public worship was formally prohibited in the absence of pontifical approval. The *casus speciales* were the cults of those saintly figures who were venerable and who had died more than 100 years before the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, and furthermore, who had always enjoyed a local cult.³⁹ It was this decree that prevented the approval of the Osanna cult during the attempts at beatification in the 17th century, and for whose needs the aforementioned hagiographies were created. So, during the attempts at beatification and approval of a cult, instead of depicting Osanna and scenes from her *Vita*, we have the scene of the Conversion of Saint Paul as a symbol of her conversion and religious life.

The peculiarity of Osanna and her newly forming cult was the fact that she was converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism. This was emphasised by all her hagiographers. The way they perceived Otherness shows the tensions of the time, but also their personal sensibilities. Serafino Razzi gives a historical perspective defining the group of Orthodox Christians primarily through theological questions about the salvation of the soul and Purgatory – topics which the Dominican friar regarded as significant across all confessions. Later writers adopted a more polemical tone reflecting the epoch in which they lived. This increasingly extreme approach to otherness is also evident in the *ad limina* reports submitted by the bishops of Kotor in the 17th and early 18th centuries, especially Sborovazzi and Drago. The stability of such interpretations is also reflected at the beginning of the 20th century: Friar Angelus Maria Miškov, the Dominican Vice Postulator for Dalmatia, wrote in a similar tone to the process for her beatification at the beginning of the 20th century how she was brought up in schism (“allevata nello scisma”), but in Kotor she met Catholic truth (“la verità della Chiesa Cattolica”), concluding that Osanna was the medium

³⁹ This committee had the task to deal with the problem of how to cope with pressure from various interest groups to canonise those recently deceased who enjoyed a saintly reputation and a public cult without papal dispensation. Those were ‘new blessed’ (*beati moderni*), so as to differentiate such potential candidates for canonisation clearly from those for whom evidence of a long-established local or regional cult (*ab immemorabili tempore*) could be found, see: M. Gotor, *I beati del papa. Santità, Inquisizione e obbedienza in età moderna* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2002); S. Ditchfield, “Tridentine worship and the cult of saints”, in: *The Cambridge History of Christianity* [vol.] 6. *Reform and Expansion 1500–1660*, ed. R. Po-chia Hsia, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 209–210; M. Gotor, *Chiesa e santità nell’Italia moderna* (Bari: Laterza, 2004), 49; G. Zarri, “Female sanctity, 1500–1660”, in: *The Cambridge History of Christianity* [vol.] 6. *Reform and Expansion 1500–1660*, 180–200.

of the union of Orthodox and Catholic (“Ipsa Hosanna erit medium unionis inter schismaticos et catholicos”).⁴⁰

In this unique example of the conversion of one female living saint we witness how her asceticism, mystical visions and penitence were interpreted depending on the time and the author. Emphasising and describing certain parts of her life form an important part of the formation of her cult. A significant and constitutive element in the construction of her cult is the chosen theme at her tomb: the Conversion of Saint Paul. It shows the importance of a visible and immediate power of images, as a communicative language, which becomes easily understandable to observers, transmitting a powerful symbolism. The reliability of this interpretation is strengthened by a comparative analysis of visual themes with written sources. To conclude, the conversion of Osanna – as a moment of religious and cultural transformation – represents the key to understanding the affirmation of her cult in Kotor, a city in the borderland zone (*Antemurale Christianitatis*), where there were close ties between the two Christian denominations.

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⁴⁰ AGOP, *Copia Publica, Transumpti Processus Ordinaria auctoritate constructi in Curia Ecclesiastica Catharensi super cultu ab immemorabili tempore praestito Servae Dei Hosannae de Catharo Virgini Terti Ordinis Sancti Dominici Beatae nuncupatae*. Vol. Unic. Gustavus Adv. Savignoni S. R. C. Cancellarius et Archivista (Anno, 1909), 21, 29.

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Contested Identifications: Eastern Christianity Between Rome and Constantinople (First Half of the 17th Century)¹

In the first half of the 17th century, two ecclesiastical institutions with universalist vocations asserted competing jurisdictional claims over Eastern Christianity: the Roman Church and the (Greek Orthodox) Patriarchate of Constantinople. Their “struggle for preponderance”² has generated a substantial body of scholarship, yet many aspects of the broader picture remain underexplored. This paper examines two nearly contemporary descriptions of Eastern Christianity that present it as a coherent whole: one by Kyrillos Loukaris, incumbent Patriarch of Alexandria and future Patriarch of Constantinople (d. 1638), and one by Francesco Ingoli, Secretary of the papal Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* (d. 1649). By reconsidering how these two principal actors positioned themselves and examining their respective narrative strategies, this study seeks to recover nuances that have been obscured by biased, hasty, or one-sided analyses. First, I introduce Ingoli’s *Report on the Four Parts of the World*. Second, I discuss Loukaris’ correspondence with the Dutch theologian and minister Johannes Wtenbogaert. A comparative reading of these texts – both serving practical purposes while also functioning as ‘identification documents’³ – illuminates the complexities of a long and intricate relationship, and its broader consequences for the Eastern Christian communities.

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² The formula was used by Germanos, Metropolitan of Thyateira, *Kyrillos Loukaris, 1572–1638: A Struggle for Preponderance between Protestant and Catholic Powers in the Orthodox East* (London: S.P.C.K., 1951). However, in my view, the representatives of the “Orthodox East” were principal actors in these events as well, not merely victims, contrary to what the title suggests.

³ For this concept, see M. Vasiljević, “Identifications and Self-Understandings in Early Modern Southeastern Europe” in this volume.

1. A Roman View of Eastern Christianity

In 1631, Monsignor Francesco Ingoli, first and long-serving Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, completed a comprehensive account of the missionary activities directed from Rome by his office.⁴ Framed as a series of five letters to the Capuchin friar and Apostolic missionary Valeriano Magni, the work – titled *Report on the Four Parts of the World* – offered a sweeping overview of the Catholic initiatives across the globe, before shifting attention to Rome itself. The first four chapters treated Europe, Asia, Africa, and America (in the collective sense). The final section detailed the measures undertaken by the papacy and its agents to advance the propagation of the Faith, particularly their strategies against heresy, schism, ‘Mahometanism’, idolatry, sectarianism, and atheism.⁵

The *Report* – written with the help of Ingoli’s friend Giovanni Battista Agucchi, titular bishop of Amasea and Apostolic Nuncio to Venice – was both an institutional showcase and a personal project. In early 1622, building upon earlier papal initiatives, Pope Gregory XV founded the *Propaganda Fide* and entrusted it with coordinating Catholic missions worldwide and with promoting Church unity, while at the same time curbing the influence of secular powers and religious orders over missionary policy.⁶ At its inception, the dicastery comprised thirteen Cardinals – one serving as Prefect – two Prelates, and a Secretary, with its membership gradually expanding in subsequent years.⁷ Less than a decade later, Ingoli highlighted the Congregation’s most significant achievements to suggest that, despite its recent establishment and modest scale, it was already operating as an exceptionally effective worldwide insti-

⁴ J. Metzler, “Francesco Ingoli, der erste Sekretär der Kongregation (1578–1649)”, in: *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum: 350 anni a servizio delle missioni, 1622–1972*, ed. Metzler [vol.] I/1: 1622–1700 (Rome; Freiburg; Vienna: Herder, 1971), 197–243 [Italian version: F. Ingoli, *Relazione delle Quattro Parti del Mondo*, a cura di F. Tosi, (Città del Vaticano: Urbaniana University Press, 1999), 291–332]; S. Giordano, “Il mondo di Propaganda Fide nelle istruzioni di Francesco Ingoli (1623–1648)”, in: *Diplomatische Wissenskulturen der Frühen Neuzeit. Erfahrungsräume und Orte der Wissensproduktion*, Hrsg. G. Braun, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 215–234. See also G. Pizzorusso, “Francesco Ingoli”, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 62 (2004), 388–391.

⁵ The manuscript is conserved in the State Archive of Rome (*Archivio Santacroce* 85).

⁶ G. Pizzorusso, *Governare le missioni, conoscere il mondo nel XVII secolo. La Congregazione pontificia de Propaganda Fide* (Viterbo: Sette città, 2018); Pizzorusso, *Propaganda fide* [vol.] 1: *La congregazione pontificia e la giurisdizione sulle missioni* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2022).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 101–128; Pizzorusso, “Cardinals and the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide”, in: *A Companion to the Early Modern Cardinal*, eds. M. Hollingsworth, M. Pattenden, A. Witte, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2019), 419–432.

tution. At the same time, the tireless Secretary drew his correspondent – a veteran missionary from a prestigious order with a strong evangelising tradition – and potential readers’ attention to reforms that could strengthen *Propaganda’s* ambitious mission.

The reality on the ground did not fully align with this idealised depiction: as shown by Christian Windler, “given the broad definition of its powers from 1622, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in the 17th and 18th centuries hardly qualifies as a success story”.⁸ Moreover, a General Congregation discussed the publication of the *Report* in June 1633, yet it was never printed.⁹ The *Report’s* restriction to internal circulation may have reflected its sensitive content. Its critiques of Spain’s violent colonial domination, which hindered missionary work, and its advocacy for greater involvement of the *Propaganda* in territories under Spanish and Portuguese royal patronage – most prominently, though not exclusively, in the chapter on the New World – made it politically delicate.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the *Report* is remarkable; by synthesising a wide array of sources, Ingoli persuades his readers that *Propaganda* truly possessed and fulfilled a universal vocation.

“The Congregation’s vigilance and pastoral care embraces the entire world, and will progressively extend even to those regions hitherto unknown or unexplored. Nor, indeed, since the creation of the world has any care so singular and exacting – guided by a single head and carried out by a small number of members – ever been simultaneously exercised across the whole world, as that of our Congregation.”¹¹

Propaganda was a component and an instrument of the Roman Curia, embodying the Holy See’s deliberate effort to centralise authority over all Church affairs – global missions included. Its Catholicism – in the very sense of the word – manifested Rome’s claim to universal spiritual jurisdiction and its vision of the Church as

⁸ Ch. Windler, “Ambiguous Belongings: How Catholic Missionaries in Persia and the Roman Curia Dealt with *Communicatio in Sacris*”, in: *A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. R. Po-chia Hsia, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 231.

⁹ F. Tosi, “La memoria perduta di *Propaganda Fide*”, in: Ingoli, *Relazione*, XXVIII–XXX.

¹⁰ G. Pizzorusso, “The New World by Francesco Ingoli, First Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*”, in: *A Companion to the History of the Roman Curia*, ed. D. S. Prudlo, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2025), 321–336. See also Ch. Windler, *Missionaries in Persia: Cultural Diversity and Competing Norms in Global Catholicism*, transl. P. E. Selwyn, (London etc.: I. B. Tauris, 2024), 20–22.

¹¹ “Abbraccia la vigilanza e la cura pastorale della Congregatione tutto il mondo, e sempre più alle parti di esso, sin’hora incognite, o non praticate si andrà estendendo. Né per certo, da poi che il mondo istesso è creato, alcuna cura così spetiale, e diligente d’un capo solo, e di un piccolo numero di membra, com’è quella della nostra Congregatione si è per tutto il mondo nel medesimo tempo distesa.” Ingoli, *Relazione*, 12.

a single, cohesive, and all-encompassing body. Ingoli was unequivocal: Europe was the most deserving and valuable part of the world, and Rome – the bride of Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles – was the “head of the Christian religion”.¹²

1.1. Christianity in Eastern and Southeastern Europe

The *Report* – whose title and coverage recall Giovanni Botero’s *Universal Relations*, first published in 1591¹³ – adopts a geographical framework, progressing from North to South and from West to East, to outline *Propaganda*’s achievements within each territorial unit and to propose strategies for their improvement. In the European section, for example, the author begins with Ireland and Britain, proceeds to the Low Countries, France, Spain, and Portugal, continues through Germany and Austria – that is, the Holy Roman Empire – then passes through neighbouring regions such as the Nordic states, Lorraine, Helvetia (the Swiss cantons), Raetia (the Grisons), and Alpine Italy. He next turns to the Polish kingdom and Muscovy, descends through the Cossack lands, Moldavia, Wallachia, Transylvania, Hungary, Slavonia (the former Roman province of *Pannonia Savia* or *Ripensis*), Croatia, Bosnia, and Dalmatia, crosses the realm of “Turkish barbarity” (stopping briefly in Albania), and concludes with the Greek-speaking lands and islands. Consequently, the Christians who belonged to the “Greek” – that is, Byzantine – rite do not form a single unit; they are treated separately in the European, Asian, and African sections.

Ingoli designates as ‘schismatics’ those who were not in Union with Rome but did not espouse any of the contemporary heresies, thereby emphasising their separation from the faith of the ‘Roman Catholic Church’. Therefore, the *Report* distinguishes schismatic and Catholic rites, along with their respective adherents: Greek schismatics and Greek Catholics, Ruthenian schismatics and Ruthenian Catholics.

The focus, as stated at the very beginning, is on *Propaganda*’s main accomplishments. With regard to Poland, Ingoli highlights the role of Yosyf Veliamyn-Rutskyi, the Uniate Metropolitan of Kyiv, in attracting people to the Union, as well as the conversion of Meletii Smotrytskyi, a former champion of the ‘schismatics’, an event regarded as a miracle attributed to the Uniate martyr Josaphat Kuntsevych, who was killed by a ‘schismatic’ mob in 1623.¹⁴ Concerning the Uskoks – “a Wallachian

¹² “Capo della religione christiana.” *Ibid.*, 14.

¹³ Pizzorusso, “The New World”, 325. See also G. Pizzorusso, “Conoscere per convertire. Botero, le *Relazioni universali* e l’evangelizzazione”, in: *Un mondo di Relazioni. Giovanni Botero e i saperi nella Roma del Cinquecento*, a cura di E. Andretta, R. Descendre, A. Romano, (Rome: Viella, 2021), 135–175.

¹⁴ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 53–54. For details, see O. V. Olar, *La boutique de Théophile. Les relations du patriarche de Constantinople Kyrillos Loukaris (1570–1638) avec la Réforme* (Paris:

people of the Greek schismatic rite” recently settled in the Žumberak Mountains of Croatia – Ingoli mentions Bishop Simeon Vratanja, who converted to Catholicism and promoted union with Rome, and notes the mission to them entrusted by the *Propaganda* to Metodij Terleckyi, a Ruthenian Basilian monk.¹⁵ With regard to Bosnia and Albania, Ingoli refers to the canonical visitation conducted by Pietro Masarecchio (Pjetër Mazrreku) in 1623–1624.¹⁶ However, one element is clearly and intentionally minimised, if not entirely omitted – the question of ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

When speaking of Muscovy and of the possibility to unite the ‘Muscovite Ruthenians’ with the Roman Church, Ingoli downplays the role of Patriarch Filaret of Moscow and all Rus, considering him a mere metropolitan.¹⁷ In his discussion of the Cossacks, he refers to Metropolitans and priests sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople not only to the Cossack lands but also to Poland and Muscovy, yet he promptly downplays these connections, observing that the envoys were considered suspect as coming from the Ottoman Empire and were chased away.¹⁸ Of Moldavia and Wallachia, Ingoli admits they followed the Greek Church and rite, but claims they were initially Catholic and emphasises the continued presence of Catholic communities within these two tributary states of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ In reference to Crete, he merely notes that it had no Greek bishop – which was true – but he fails to mention that this was due solely to the restrictive colonial policies of Venice, that a archpriest (*protopapas*) existed, and that the island maintained strong ecclesiastical ties with Constantinople. With regards to the Ionian islands, he acknowledges the existence of a Greek bishop, but points out it was highly insufficient and leaves the readers to guess about its superior.²⁰ Furthermore, Theophanis Xenakis, the Greek Metropolitan of Philadelphia residing in Venice – who mentioned the Patriarch of Constantinople

EHESS – Centre d’études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2019), 183–188, 215–217.

¹⁵ “Un popolo Vallaco di rito Greco scismatico.” Ingoli, *Relazione*, 64–65. For details, see S. Senyk, “Methodius Terlec’kyj – Bishop of Xolm”, *Analecta Ordinis S. Basilii Magni* 12 (1985), 342–373.

¹⁶ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 66, 69. For the visitation, see A. Molnár, *Le Saint-Siège, Raguse et les missions catholiques de la Hongrie ottomane 1572–1647* (Rome; Budapest: Accademia d’Ungheria; Bibliothèque Nationale de Hongrie; Société pour l’Encyclopédie de l’Histoire de l’Église en Hongrie, 2007), 192–198.

¹⁷ “Patriarca, o più tosto metropolita.” Ingoli, *Relazione*, 57.

¹⁸ “Capitavano talvolta fra di loro de’ Metropoliti, e Papas inviati dal Patriarca di Costantinopoli, secondo che ne manda anche in Polonia, e in Moscovia: ma havendoli per lo più sospetti, per venir dal paese del Turco, ne gli hanno facilmente cacciati.” *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁹ “Erano anticamente catoliche; ma, fatto lo scisma da Greci, la cui chiesa, e rito per lo più seguitavano, divennero ancor esse Scismatiche.” *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

in the liturgy and recognised him as his de facto superior, and whose ecclesiastical authority covered the Greek-rite community in Venice and the Venetian realm – is not mentioned.²¹ In fact, according to Ingoli's *Report*, the Patriarch of Constantinople's authority was acknowledged only in Morea, Thessaly, Macedonia (which Western observers considered to include Epirus), Thrace, and Mount Athos – although the Athonite monks who often came to Rome to seek alms converted, sincerely or not, to Catholicism.²² 'Schismatics' could be found in many places, but their ecclesiastical hierarchy was virtually absent.

Ingoli devotes considerable attention to portraying the incumbent Greek Patriarch in very dark colours and speculates at length about strategies to depose him and counter his allegedly nefarious influence.²³ In Rome's opinion, Kyrillos Loukaris was by no means 'ecumenical'. Moreover, his position was illegitimate: the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 had led to the creation of a parallel institution – the Latin Patriarchate of Constantinople.²⁴ At the time the *Report* was composed, the holder of the see was Ascanio Gesualdo, Archbishop of Bari (who never set foot in Constantinople), and Rome had recently appointed a vicar residing in Pera, namely Livio Gigli, Archbishop of Edessa. As for the autocephalous Archbishopric of Ohrid (officially 'of Justiniana Prima and all Bulgaria') and the Patriarchate of Peć (İpek) – the later restored sometime before 1557 by order of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent with the support of the Vizier Mehmed Sokollu, and headed initially by his relative Makarije – neither institution is mentioned even once in this paragraph.²⁵

²¹ Gavriil Seviros, *arcivescovo di Filadelfia a Venezia, e la sua epoca. Atti della Giornata di studio dedicata alla memoria di Manussos Manussacas (Venezia, 26 settembre 2003)*, a cura di D. G. Apostolopoulos, (Venice: Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, 2004).

²² Ingoli, *Relazione*, 74.

²³ O. Olar, "Libertà et licenza... di stampare mille heræsie et schismi: The Propaganda Fide and the Greek Printing Press at Constantinople (1627–1628)", in: *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond*, eds. R. Dipratu and S. Noble, (Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2024), 89–120.

²⁴ For this institution, see G. Hofmann SJ, *Il Vicariato Apostolico di Costantinopoli 1453–1830* (Rome: PIO, 1935). See also D.I. Mureşan, "Girolamo Lando, titulaire du Patriarcat de Constantinople (1474–1497), et son rôle dans la politique orientale du Saint-Siège", *Annuario dell'Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica di Venezia* 8 (2006), 153–258.

²⁵ The Archbishopric of Ohrid – Αρχιεπίσκοπή τῆς Πρώτης Ἰουστινιανῆς καὶ πάσης Βουλγαρίας – was officially recognised as independent by Emperor Basil II in 1019 and lasted until 1767. The Archbishopric of Peć was elevated to the "Patriarchate of Serbia" by order of Stefan Dušan, as the king needed a patriarch to anoint him as emperor, despite opposition from Constantinople. The see remained vacant sometime after 1463. Re-established by the Ottomans as a Patriarchate, it was abolished in 1766. The incumbents of the see used the title "Archbishop of Peć and Patriarch of the Serbs, Bulgarians, Western Maritime Lands and

1. 2. Christianity in Asia and Africa

The sections on Asia and Africa follow the same pattern, with the only major difference being the emphasis on two specific strategies for achieving results: securing the favour of non-Christian (and sometimes hostile) empires, and making use of existing merchant networks for intelligence gathering, travel, and logistical support.²⁶

Ingoli's depiction of the Christians of Asia is similar to the ones found in earlier geographical and ethnographic accounts, such as Botero's *Universal Relations*.²⁷ The *Report* discusses the conversion to Catholicism of the 'Nestorians' of Aleppo and the ongoing negotiations for union with the Chaldeans of Mesopotamia, identified as "Nestorian heretics" – that is, East Syrians, members of the 'Church of the East', unjustly accused of following the teachings of Nestorius (d. 451).²⁸ It then refers to the Maronites of Mount Lebanon, their Patriarch in Antioch, and the Maronite Archbishop in Cyprus. This 'nation' had restored full communion with Rome in the 12th century – which during the pontificate of Gregory XIII founded a college to train Maronite clergy – and benefited from books printed in Chaldean by the *Propaganda's* polyglot press.²⁹ Considerable attention is devoted to the Georgian and Armenian Churches – both autocephalous, the former of the "Greek schismatic rite"

Northern Parts": N. S. Šuletić, "Usurpations of and Designated Successions to the Throne in the Serbian Patriarchate: The Case of Patriarch Moses Rajović (1712–24)", *Balkanica* 52 (2021), 50. For details, see M. Davidović, "Self-Understandings and Identifications of Orthodox Christians in Early Modern Serbian Marginal Notes 1450–1750" (in the present volume). For Vasilje Brkić, the penultimate Patriarch of Peć, see C. Pletuhina-Tonev, *The Patriarchate of Peć as a Contested Frontier of Faith and Loyalty: Islam, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism in the 18th-century Ottoman Balkans* [MA Thesis] (Budapest; Vienna: CEU, 2020).

²⁶ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 83.

²⁷ For Botero, see M. Farina, "«Chrétiens d'Asie» et Églises syriaques dans les *Relationi universali*: entre inscriptions géographiques et identifications religieuses", in: *Un mondo di Relazioni*, 459–490.

²⁸ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 87, 100–103. For the context, see H. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500–1850)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015).

²⁹ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 89–91. For the Maronites, see A. Girard, G. Pizzorusso, "The Maronite College in Early Modern Rome: Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Letters", in: *College Communities Abroad: Education, Migration and Catholicism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. L. Chambers, Th. O'Connor, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 174–197; A. Girard, "La construction de l'identité confessionnelle maronite à l'époque ottomane (XVI^e–XVII^e siècle)", in: *Les chrétiens de tradition syriaque à l'époque ottomane*, éd. B. Heyberger, (Paris: Geuthner, 2020), 153–200; A. Girard, "Le Collège maronite de Rome et les langues au tournant des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles. Éducation des chrétiens orientaux, science orientaliste et apologétique catholique", *Rivista storica italiana* 1 (2020), 272–299; S.

and Chalcedonian (that is, adhering to the Christological definitions of the Council of Chalcedon of 451), the latter non-Chalcedonian (rejecting those definitions) – due to the alleged pro-Uniate tendencies of the Georgians and the Armenian’s recognition of the Pope as undisputed ‘universal head of the Church’.³⁰ Likewise, the same for “schismatics” ‘Christians of Saint Thomas’, an ancient Syriac-rite population along the Malabar coast of India, are described as former ‘schismatics’ who, through the efforts of the Catholic missionaries and the local Catholic Archbishop came to acknowledge the authority of the Roman Pontiff.³¹

By contrast, several groups regarded by Ingoli as ‘heretical’ are mentioned only briefly, as they were not in communion with Rome: the ‘Jacobites’ (West Syrian Miaphysites who rejected the Council of Chalcedon); the followers of Dioscorus of Alexandria (d. 454) residing in Basra, whom Ingoli appears to conflate with the Monophysites; and the so-called ‘Christians of Saint John’, also attested in Basra (the Mandaeanes).³² Nevertheless, doubts are cast upon the Greek-rite monks of Mount Sinai, who supposedly claimed to be Catholic when they came to Rome for alms.³³ Similarly as in the European case, the Greek (‘schismatic’) Archbishopric of Cyprus, Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and Patriarchate of Antioch receive no attention.

The case of the African Christians is equally suggestive. Ingoli gives detailed consideration to the state of Christianity in Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia. Although fully aware that in Egypt there existed two major Christian denominations – one non-Chalcedonian, represented by the Copts, and one Chalcedonian, of Byzantine rite – both presided over by Patriarchs, his *Report* focuses exclusively on the former. While the Copts rejected the Council of Chalcedon, they are not formally regarded as

Kennerley, *Rome and the Maronites in the Renaissance and Reformation. The Formation of Religious Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (London; New York: Routledge, 2022).

³⁰ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 92–96 (Georgia), 96–100 (Armenia), 107–108 (Georgians and Armenians in Persia), 111 (Armenians in Basra), 113–114 (conversion to Catholicism of the Armenian Catholicos Movses III).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 123–125. For these communities, see I. Perczel, “Syriac Christianity in India”, in: *The Syriac World*, ed. D. King, (London; New York: Routledge, 2019), 653–697.

³² Jacobites: Ingoli, *Relazione*, 76, 107, 111, 114; Dioscorians: *ibid.*, 76, 111, 114; “christiani di S. Giovanni”: *ibid.*, 111. Despite the name given by such sources, the Mandaeanes were not Christians, but a (Gnostic) religious community that venerated John the Baptist and preserved distinct scriptures and theology. For their beliefs, see *The Mandaean Book of John. Critical Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, eds. Ch.G. Häberl, J.F. McGrath, (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2021). For the Catholic missions to them, see J. M. Flannery, *The Mission of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602–1747)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 149–184. For the missions to the Safavid Empire, see Windler, *Missionaries in Persia*.

³³ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 104.

heretical: their Miaphysite Christology – affirming one composite nature of God the Word incarnate – is viewed as less theologically objectionable than the Monophysite position, which effectively denied the fullness of Christ’s humanity.³⁴ Yet it appears, once again, that Church politics, rather than theology, guided the approach. The Coptic Patriarchate in Cairo – whose jurisdiction was said to extend over the Indian ‘Christians of Saint Thomas’ – is preferred to the Greek Patriarchate on grounds of legitimacy:

“In addition to the Patriarch of the Copts, who is Egyptian, there is also a Greek Patriarch in Alexandria, who has ties to that of Constantinople; but, as I have said, the one who resides in Cairo is regarded as the successor of the ancient Patriarchs of Alexandria, and it is only of him that I will speak.”³⁵

For Nubia, Ingoli’s principal source is *Prester John of the Indies*, a travelogue by the Portuguese chaplain Francisco Álvares, first published in Lisbon in 1540.³⁶ Ingoli maintains that the kingdom was originally “Christian, Catholic, and under the authority of the Roman Church”, which exercised ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the region and appointed the local bishops. However, as its spiritual condition deteriorated to the extent that “at present it is not known what faith is followed”, with the most favourable possibility being an extremely degenerate form of Christianity, he argues that missionary efforts should be undertaken to restore these “lost children” to their mother Church.³⁷

Conversely, Ethiopia or Abyssinia – still regarded as the Kingdom of Prester John – receives considerable attention, owing to the relative success of a Jesuit mission that had been ongoing since 1555. Ingoli’s optimism was, to some extent, justified: in 1613 Emperor Susenyos embraced Catholicism; in 1622 the Jesuit Alfonso Mendes was appointed Patriarch of Ethiopia, and in 1626 the union with Rome was formally proclaimed.³⁸ Nevertheless, the *Report* remains silent on the more complex aspects of the episode, such as the widespread opposition to the emperor’s decision

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 205. For other contemporary accounts, see A. Hamilton, *The Copts and the West, 1439–1822: The European Discovery of the Egyptian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁵ “Oltre al Patriarca de’ Cofti, il quale è Egittiano, trovasi anche un Patriarca Greco in Alessandria, che con quello di Costantinopoli ha corrispondenza: ma come ho detto, quello che nel Cairo risiede, si tien pe’l successore de gli antichi Patriarchi di Alesandria, e solamente di lui io parlerò.” Ingoli, *Relazione*, 206.

³⁶ A. Martinez, “Francisco Álvares”, in: *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History* [vol.] 7. *Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America (1500–1600)*, eds. D. Thomas, J. Chesworth, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 781–790.

³⁷ Ingoli, *Relazione*, 210–212.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 212–220.

and to the Catholic religious policies, which provoked violent unrest and ultimately led to Susenyos' abdication in 1632. His successor restored the traditional Ethiopian Miaphysite faith and expelled the Jesuits from the realm, thus bringing the Catholic project to an end. The presence among dissenters of a Greek Melkite monk from Mount Sinai, revered as 'Papa of Alexandria', indicates the wider dimensions of the conflict.³⁹ Suggestively, Ingoli does not mention it.

1.3. Wondrous Silence

As the recipient of numerous reports from all four parts of the world, Ingoli possessed a broad understanding of Eastern Christianity. His silences, no less than his statements, appear to have been deliberate.

Rome was informed about the complex relationship between Kyiv and Constantinople during the tenure of Patriarch Jeremias II Tranos (d. 1595), his visit to Moscow in 1588–1589, the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate – on January 26, 1589 Jeremias consecrated Job as the first Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus – and the Patriarchate's recognition by a synod held in Constantinople in 1593.⁴⁰ Ingoli was also knowledgeable about Patriarch Theophanes of Jerusalem's travels to Kyiv and Moscow in 1618–1620, that in Moscow he consecrated the new Muscovite Patriarch Filaret (1619), "more or less 're-founding' the institution" after a very turbulent period, and that in the Ruthenian lands he ordained a new, clandestine Greek-rite hierarchy intended to counter the Union with Rome.⁴¹

Pietro Masarecchio's visitation of the "four realms under Turkish dominion" in 1623–1624 had gathered substantial information on the religious landscape of "Servia", including details on the ecclesiastical jurisdiction exercised over the 'schismatics' by the "Patriarchate" of Peć and, with regard to the Greeks, by the Patriarchate of Constantinople.⁴² The *Propaganda* archives also preserved other records

³⁹ A. Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, *Envoys of a Human God: The Jesuit Mission to Christian Ethiopia, 1557–1632* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 298–299.

⁴⁰ B. A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform: The Kyivan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute; Harvard University, 1998).

⁴¹ N. Pissis, "Visions of Orthodox Unity in the Seventeenth Century", in: *Westliche Konfessionskirchen und orthodoxes Christentum als Thema der Interkonfessionalitätsforschung*, Hrsg. Ch. Alexiou, D. Haas, (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2024), 59.

⁴² K. Draganović, "Izvješće apostolskog vizitatora Petra Masarechija o prilikama katol(ičkog) naroda u Bugarskoj, Srbiji, Srijemu, Slavoniji i Bosni g. 1623. i 1624", *Starine* 39 (1938), 1–48, especially p. 28: "Hanno oltre i Vescoui che sono da per tutto, il Patriarcha di Peghi pur Seruiano, et è natiuo di Jagneuo il pñte; et li Greci quello, che risiede in Constantinopoli."

from the region, notably a letter dated February 1625 from Porphyrios Palaiologos, self-designated Patriarch of Ohrid, sent from Mantua.⁴³

Ingoli was equally acquainted with the Cretan-born Gerasimos Spartaliotes (d. 1636), who had succeeded Loukaris as Patriarch of Alexandria and was one of his closest collaborators. According to letters preserved in the *Propaganda* archives, Gerasimos, Loukaris, and Theophanes of Jerusalem engaged in secret negotiations with Roman agents in Constantinople in late 1626 about the ecclesiastical union.⁴⁴ As for the Byzantine-rite Arab Church of Antioch – referred to as “Melkite” – Rome was well aware of the prolonged competition for the patriarchal see between Kirillos Dabbās, the protégé of Loukaris, and Ignātyūs ‘Aṭiyyah, supported by the Druze emir Fakhr-al-Dīn II, which ended with the defeat and death of the former in 1628.⁴⁵ The *Propaganda* also corresponded with another fierce enemy of Dabbās, Malātyūs Karmah, Metropolitan of Aleppo and later Patriarch of Antioch under the name Euthymius II (d. 1635), who undertook a programme of translating liturgical books from Greek into Arabic as part of a wider liturgical reform, protected the Catholic missionaries active in his diocese, and remained favourably disposed towards union with Rome.⁴⁶ What, then, was the rationale behind such striking instances of intentional omission? Why is Peć overlooked? Why are the Patriarch of Constantinople and the four other Patriarchs of the Orthodox Church – those of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Moscow – treated with such evident contempt in the *Report*?

In the case of Peć, the silence may be due to Masarecchio’s blunt statement: since the “schismatic Serbians of the Greek rite” hated the Catholics, stubbornly rejected papal primacy and were liable to slip not only into schism but even into heresy,

⁴³ M. Јачов, *Сјиси коніреіацје за ўројаіанду вере у Риму о Србима, 1622–1644* [књ.] 1 (Београд: САНУ, 1986), 38–39 (no. 22).

⁴⁴ V. G. Tchentsova, “Le clergé grec entre Rome et Moscou au XVII^e siècle au prisme des archives italiennes et russes”, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique moderne et contemporain* 8 (2023), 217–261.

⁴⁵ For details, see R. M. Haddad, “Constantinople over Antioch, 1516–1724: Patriarchal Politics in the Ottoman Era”, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41/2 (1990), 217–238; B. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme Catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2nd ed., 2014); C. A. Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans: 1516–1831*, transl. B. Pfeiffer Noble, S. Noble, (New York: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2016); A. Girard, “Entre croisade et politique culturelle au Levant: Rome et l’union des chrétiens syriens (première moitié du XVII^e siècle)”, in: *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna*, a cura di M. A. Visceglia, (Rome: Viella, 2013), 419–437.

⁴⁶ Ch. Nassif, “La révision liturgique du métropolitel melkite d’Alep Malātyūs Karma et les réformes liturgiques dans les pays d’Europe de l’Est au XVII^e siècle”, in: *Europe in Arabic Sources: “The Travels of Macarius”, Patriarch of Antioch*, eds. Y. Petrova, I. Feodorov, (Kyiv: A. Krymsky Institute of Oriental Studies of the NASU, 2016), 117–134.

it was difficult, if not impossible, to convert them to Catholicism.⁴⁷ Consequently, they offered little of practical value to Ingoli's results-focused *Report*.

In the case of Moscow, one (partial) explanation may lie in the irregular creation of the Moscow Patriarchate. Jeremias II Tranos had been, in effect, coerced into elevating the Metropolitan of Moscow in rank and – most importantly – Rome had no say in the Synod of Constantinople in 1593, which confirmed the elevation. After all, many Greek hierarchs themselves were uneasy about the event.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the event challenged the century-old concept of the Pentarchy – the principle that only five patriarchs held authority over the Christian world.⁴⁹

In the case of Constantinople, one (possible) explanation may lie in Ingoli's stance towards Lutheranism and Calvinism. The *Report* lashes out several times at “the author of the heresies of our time, the perfidious and apostate heresiarch Luther”, as well as at “Calvin's worst sect”.⁵⁰ It reproaches both for their obstinate refusal to accept the real presence of the Saviour's body and blood in the Eucharist. All “Christian nations of the Orient and all the heretics and schismatics of Asia and Africa” were, Ingoli argued, in agreement with Rome on this point, except for Europe's heretics.⁵¹ Furthermore, in their effort to annihilate the Pope's supreme authority as Christ's vicar, the European heretics sought to eliminate order and ec-

⁴⁷ “Questi ancora (secondo il tempo pñte) sono inconuertibili”; “i Schismatici odiano li catolici latini, et sono inconuertibili, et ci tengono per iscommunicati, così instrutti da loro Monaci Basiliani, Vescoui et Preti, che quasi ogni Villa n'ha uno”; “duri, et difficili à conuertirsi”. Draganović, “Izvješće”, 7, 11, 28. For the 17th century attempts at union with Rome of the Serbian Orthodox Church, see A. Molnár, *Confessionalization on the Frontier: The Balkan Catholics between Roman Reform and Ottoman Reality* (Rome: Viella, 2019), 157–168.

⁴⁸ N. Pissis, “The Image of the Moscow Patriarchate in the Eastern Church: Status and Legitimacy”, in: *Russia's Early Modern Orthodox Patriarchate* [vol.] 1: *Foundations and Mitred Royalty, 1589–1647*, eds. K. M. Kain, D. Goldfrank, (Washington: Academica Press, 2020), 49–69. See also K. Vetochnikov, “The Creation of the Moscow Patriarchate: Acts, Canonical Consequences and Reception by the Ancient Patriarchs”, in: *Autocephaly: Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* [vol.] 1, eds. E. G. Farrugia, Ž. Paša, (Rome: PIO, 2023), 1099–1135. For Rome's diplomatic efforts towards Muscovy, see L. Ronchi De Michelis, “La diplomazia pontificia alla conquista della slavia ortodossa: dall'Unione di Firenze ai ‘falsi Demetri’”, in: *Papato e politica internazionale*, 345–361.

⁴⁹ E. Morini, *Patriarcati, concili, imperatore. Ricerche storico-ecclesiologiche tra Oriente e Occidente* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2018). See also D. I. Mureșan, “Rome hérétique? Sur les décisions des conciles de Moscou et de Constantinople (1589, 1590 et 1593)”, *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 126 (2014), 275–288.

⁵⁰ “L'autore dell'heresie de' nostri tempi, il perfido apostata, et heresiarca Lutero;” “la pessima setta di Calvino.” Ingoli, *Relazione*, 27, 72.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 76–77.

clesiastical hierarchy from the Church. All Christian nations, insisted the *Report*, no matter how heretical or schismatic, had at one point maintained a hierarchical structure – except for the Calvinists.⁵² In this context, Ingoli's conviction that the Calvinist "venom" had infested Loukaris, who in turn sought to corrupt "the Greek Church and the entire East", decisively shaped his attitude towards the Patriarch and his office.⁵³ The *Report* diminishes the Greek Church, portraying it as confined to a very limited territory and an exclusively Greek-speaking flock, and treating its head as an unworthy heretic.

Yet the principal reason behind the contemptuous attitude towards the five Eastern Greek Patriarchs was the question of Rome's primacy. For Ingoli, there could be only one head of the Church: just as in political and temporal matters the best form of government is the rule by a single person, so too in spiritual matters order and efficiency required one supreme head. Since this head could only be the Pope, the Eastern Patriarchs who refused to acknowledge his superiority were devoid of legitimacy.⁵⁴ In this void of authority, Rome and its agents – Cardinals, bishops, and missionaries – could and should step in, assume control, and shed the light of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church into what they perceived as the abyss of ignorance.

Ingoli possessed a clear understanding of the *Propaganda's* 'methods and ways' of disseminating the faith. Rome, he argued, required properly trained and morally upright personnel, as well as adequate schools and books. Consequently, he advocated closer cooperation between his Congregation and the local bishops, more careful selection of missionaries – preferably from the ranks of the secular rather than the regular clergy – and sustained investment in educational institutions and a polyglot printing press.⁵⁵ The *Report on the Four Parts of the World* had a limited circulation, as it remained in manuscript. Nevertheless, Ingoli's long tenure as Secretary of the *Propaganda* – from 1622 to 1649 – and his commitment to his role, which resulted in a vast correspondence with the Congregation's agents and a myriad of notes attached to the letters and reports he received daily, shaped missionary policies as well as missionary discourse.⁵⁶

⁵² *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵⁵ J. Metzler, "Mezzi e modi per l'evangelizzazione dei popoli secondo Francesco Ingoli", *Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana. Annales* 341 (1967–1968), 38–50; W. Henkel, "Francesco Ingoli, erster Sekretär der Propaganda Fide, über Druckerpresse und Mission (I–II)", *Communicatio Socialis* 3 (1970), 60–72, 160–173. See also N. Kowalski, "Il testamento di Monsignor Ingoli, primo segretario della Sacra Congregazione «de Propaganda Fide»", *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionsgeschichte* 19 (1963), 272–283.

⁵⁶ For the impact of the *Propaganda* on Rome's attitude towards the Christian East in the early modern period, see C. Santus, "The Roman Curia and the Eastern Churches, 1500–1800:

Rome's centralising initiatives, however, encountered determined internal resistance.⁵⁷ The Portuguese and Spanish monarchs, the Society of Jesus, and the Holy Office were all reluctant to accept any curtailment of their traditional prerogatives, while France's 'Most Christian' king sought instead to expand his own religious protectorate. In the field, the situation proved more complex than the official reports suggested: missionary orders competed with one another while being confronted with complex confessional, social, and political contexts, thereby giving rise to diverse strategies of adaptation.⁵⁸ External opposition likewise coalesced in reaction to these policies, with Kyrillos Loukaris – Patriarch of Alexandria from 1601 to 1620 and, on five occasions, Patriarch of Constantinople between 1620 and 1638 – at its forefront.

2. Eastern Christianity Through the Eyes of an Eastern Christian Patriarch

By 1631, Rome was waging an all-out war against Loukaris. Branded a Calvinist and accused of disseminating heretical works along with a heterodox Confession of Faith, he had become one of the Papacy's most loathed adversaries. In Ingoli's words, the "schismatic" Patriarch was perhaps "the worst of many and great evils" afflicting Greek Christianity.⁵⁹ Yet this perspective was clearly unilateral and biased. From the early 6th century onwards, the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople held the title 'Archbishop of Constantinople New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch', the term 'ecumenical' denoting his jurisdiction and spiritual primacy over the inhabited world.⁶⁰

Diplomacy, Cultural Policy, Mission, and Confessional Control", in: *A Companion to the History of the Roman Curia*, 285–301.

⁵⁷ Pizzorusso, *Propaganda fide*.

⁵⁸ See, for example, E. Borromeo, "Le clergé catholique face au pouvoir ottoman. Les brevets de nomination (*berât*) des évêques et des archevêques (17^{ème} siècle)", in: *Contacts and Controversies between Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Pre-Modern Iran*, eds. C. Adang, S. Schmidtke, (Würzburg: Ergon, 2010), 207–222; E. Muntán, "Uneasy Agents of Tridentine Reforms: Catholic Missionaries in Southern Ottoman Hungary and Their Local Competitors in the Early Seventeenth Century", *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 7/1 (2020), 169–170.

⁵⁹ "L' maggior male fra molti, e grandi, che vi sono." Ingoli, *Relazione*, 71.

⁶⁰ "By the grace of God, Archbishop of Constantinople New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch" (ἐλέω Θεοῦ, ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Νέας Ρώμης καὶ οἰκουμενικὸς πατριάρχης). For the evolution of the title, see V. Laurent, "Le titre de patriarche œcuménique et la signature patriarcale. Recherches de diplomatie et de sigillographie byzantines", *Revue des études byzantines* 6 (1948), 5–26.

Once elected Ecumenical Patriarch, Loukaris lived up to his title: he contested the pope's primacy and resisted Rome's attempts at ecclesiastical union.

Loukaris' relationship with Rome was complex. Born in Venetian Crete in 1570 and educated in Venice and Padua, he had been a disciple of the union-minded Maximos Margounios, Bishop of Cerigo and a distinguished humanist residing in Venice. Sent by the Patriarch of Alexandria, Meletios Pegas, as his representative to Poland at the time of the Union of Brest (1596), Loukaris initially adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the Roman Church. In 1608, as Patriarch of Alexandria, he even recognised papal primacy. From 1612, however, his stance changed dramatically. Loukaris polemised with a Latin missionary in Constantinople, quarrelled with the allegedly pro-Roman Patriarchs Neophytos II and Timotheos II, excommunicated the 'Latins', cultivated a friendship with the Dutch representative to the Porte, Cornelis Haga – who became a lifelong political ally – and emerged as a key promoter of an alliance between the Ottoman Empire, Muscovy, and the European Protestant states against the Catholic powers (Rome included).⁶¹ When one adds Loukaris' efforts to support education, hinder Jesuit and other Catholic missionary activity, promote vernacular preaching, establish a Greek printing press in Istanbul, and engage in anti-Latin and anti-Union polemics, it becomes evident that his programme of confession-building could only conflict with Rome's claim to universal spiritual authority. While Rome operated within a union-minded framework, Loukaris did not. Indeed, as early as 1483–1484, a Constantinopolitan synod officially condemned the decisions of the Council of Ferrara–Florence, establishing a precedent of anti-union sentiment that shaped later patriarchal policy.⁶²

Confession-building went hand in hand with efforts to capitalise on the inevitable transformation of the Patriarchate into an Ottoman official institution.⁶³

⁶¹ For the alliance, see G. Hering, *Οικουμενικό πατριαρχείο και ευρωπαϊκή πολιτική, 1620–1638*, transl. D. Kourtovik, (Athens: MIET, 2003); V. Tsakiris, "Cyril Loukaris' Grand Anti-Polish Plan and the Dutch-English Policy in Eastern Europe", in: *Trame controluce. Il patriarca "protestante" Cirillo Loukaris / Backlighting Plots. The "Protestant" Patriarch Cyril Loukaris*, a cura di V. Nosilia, M. Prandoni, (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2015), 45–65.

⁶² Δ. Γ. Αποστολόπουλος, *Ο "Ιερός Κώδιξ" του Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως στο β' μισό του ΙΕ' αιώνα. Τα μόνα γνωστά σπαράγματα* (Αθήνα: ΕΙΕ – ΚΝΕ, 1992), 124–133; Μ. Παϊζη-Αποστολοπούλου, Δ. Γ. Αποστολόπουλος, *Επίσημα κείμενα του Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Τα σωζόμενα από την περίοδο 1454–1498* (Αθήνα: ΕΙΕ – ΙΙΕ, 2016), 183–190; S. Paschalidis, "Concilium Constantinopolitanum 1484", in: *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta*, vol. IV/1: *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches: Decisions and Synodika. From Constantinople 861 to Moscow 2000*, eds. A. Melloni, D. Dainese, (Brepols: Turnhout, 2016), 219–228.

⁶³ For a detailed presentation of the argument, with extensive bibliography, see E. Gara, O. Olar, "Confession-Building and Authority: The Great Church and the Ottoman State in

Re-established under the patronage of Mehmet II ‘the Conqueror’, the Patriarchate of Constantinople resumed its functions in early 1454 and was officially fused into the Ottoman fiscal apparatus about twenty years later, when it began paying an annual tax to the imperial treasury.⁶⁴ The ‘adjustment’ to Ottoman realities and the restoration – or, in some cases, imposition – of the Patriarchate’s authority in regions beyond the empire’s core lands, was a gradual process marked by setbacks, yet it advanced steadily, aided in large part by the continued Ottoman expansion.⁶⁵ In Moldavia and Wallachia, for instance, full recognition of the patriarchal authority was achieved only in the first half of the 16th century, as both the princes and the local ecclesiastical hierarchy sought to preserve their de facto autonomy.⁶⁶

The documents issued by the Ottoman authorities reflect this phenomenon.⁶⁷ The Patriarchate of Constantinople was not the only ecclesiastical institution within the Ottoman realm seeking state support. In the Balkans, for example, clashes of

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- the First Half of the Seventeenth Century”, in: *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th–18th Centuries*, eds. T. Krstić, D. Terzioğlu, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022), 159–214.
- ⁶⁴ M.-H. Blanchet, “L’ambiguïté du statut juridique de Gennadios Scholarios après la chute de Constantinople (1453)”, in: *Le Patriarcat œcuménique de Constantinople aux XIVe–XVIe siècles: rupture et continuité. Actes du colloque international Rome, 5–6–7 décembre 2005*, éd. P. Odorico (Paris: EHESS – Centre d’études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2007), 195–211; M.-H. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400 – vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’empire byzantin* (Paris: Institut Français d’Etudes Byzantines, 2008).
- ⁶⁵ D. G. Apostolopoulos, “Continuity and Change: The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 1: The Survival of a Byzantine Institution”, in: *A Companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, eds. Ch. Gastgeber et al., (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 103–117; M. Païzi-Apostolopoulou, “Continuity and Change: The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 2: Institutions and Administration: Continuity and Rupture”, in: *A Companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, 118–129.
- ⁶⁶ L. Pilat, *Studii privind relațiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun și Patriarhia Ecumenică (secolele XIV–XVI)* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2012); T. Teoteoi, *Byzantina et Daco-Romana: Studii de istorie și civilizație bizantină și românească medievală* (Bucharest: Omonia, 2008), 283–294, 295–319.
- ⁶⁷ P. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques et politiques entre le patriarcat orthodoxe de Constantinople et l’administration ottomane de 1453 à 1600 (d’après les documents grecs et ottomans)* [PhD Thesis] (Paris: Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1985); E. A. Ζαχαριάδου, *Δέκα τουρκικά έγγραφα για την Μεγάλη Εκκλησία (1483–1567)* (Αθήνα: ΕΙΕ – ΚΒΕ, 1996); Π. Κονόρτας, *Οθωμανικές θεωρήσεις για το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο, 1705 – αρχές 2000 αιώνα* (Αθήνα: Αλεξάνδρεια, 1998); H. Çolak, E. Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church as an Ottoman Institution: A Study of Early Modern Patriarchal Berats* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2019); Ph. Kotzageorgis, “The Newly Found Oldest Patriarchal Berat”, *Turkish Historical Review* 11 (2020), 1–27; D. Gürkan, *Economic Interaction between*

church jurisdiction had been attested on a more regional level around the same time and slightly earlier. In 1530, Metropolitan Pavle of Smederevo contested Ohrid's authority and proclaimed himself Patriarch of Peć. Immediately, Prohor of Ohrid appealed to the Patriarch of Constantinople, who deposed Pavle and declared that Peć and Serbia were under the jurisdiction of Ohrid.⁶⁸ Shortly afterwards, in 1544–1545, Patriarch Jeremias I of Constantinople clashed with the same Prohor of Ohrid over questions of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and tax collection. Jeremias obtained from the sultan official recognition of his authority over Moldavia and Wallachia, also claimed by Prohor.⁶⁹ The underlying reality, however, was that both hierarchs relied on Ottoman officials to assert their authority or resolve their disputes. From the perspective of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the ecclesiastical sees of Ohrid and Peć were merely archbishoprics. Conversely, in the eyes of the Ottoman administration, they held patriarchal status – Jeremias was a *patrik*, but so was Prohor – a designation understood primarily in terms of tax-farming. In other words, for the sultan, each was “the holder of a lease on the church taxes due from the territory under his jurisdiction”.⁷⁰

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- the Greek Orthodox Church and the Ottoman State in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Documents [MA Thesis] (Ankara: TOBB University of Economics and Technology, 2023).
- 68 П. Костић, “Документи о буну Смедеревског епископа Павла против потчињавања Пећке патријаршије архиепископији Охридској”, *Сѿоменик СКА* 56 (48) (1922), 32–39; М. Παϊζη-Αποστολοπούλου, Γ. Ευαγγέλου, Δ. Γ. Αποστολόπουλος, *Επίσημα κείμενα του Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* [τόμος] 2: *Τα σωζόμενα από την περίοδο 1498–1565* (Αθήνα: ΕΙΕ – ΠΕ, 2021), 157–160 (no. 29). For details, see Н. С. Шулетић, “Српска црква после 1459. године: о интеграцији српског клера у турски фискални систем”, у: *Пад Српске деспотијовине 1459. године: зборник радова са научној скупа, одржаног 12–14. новембра 2009. године*, ур. М. Спремић, (Београд: Српска Академија наука и уметности, 2011), 331–349; А. Krstić, “The Orthodox Church in Northern Serbia during the First Century of Ottoman Rule (1459–1557)”, in: *Politics and Society in Central and South-East Europe: Life under the Shadow of the Ottoman Empire’s Expansion (15th–16th Centuries)*, ed. Zs. Copeczny, (Cluj; Napoca: Mega, 2021), 21–36.
- 69 М. Maxim, “Les relations des Pays Roumains avec l’Archevêché d’Ohrid à la lumière de documents turcs inédits”, in: М. Maxim, *L’empire ottoman au nord du Danube et l’autonomie des principautés roumaines au XVIe siècle. Études et document* (Istanbul; Piscataway, NJ: The Isis Press; Gorgias Press, 1999), 83–107. The case of Prohor was thoroughly studied by Т. Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan: Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 126–137. For Ohrid in general, see И. Снѣгаровъ, *История на Охридската архиепископия-патриаршия* [том] 2: *От падането ѝ под турците до нейното унищожение (1394–1767)* (Sofia: АИ “Проф. Марин Дринов”, 1995).
- 70 Н. С. Шулетић, “Подаци о братима архијереја Пећке и Охридске архиепископије у дефтеру прихода Канцеларије црквених муката (ВОА, КК 2542–33), *Српске сѿудује* 1

Later representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople came to recognise even better the potential benefits of the Church's integration within the Ottoman state apparatus.⁷¹ Loukaris was one of them. Throughout his patriarchal tenures, he pursued a deliberate policy of consolidating and extending the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. His plans met with variable success. After the Synod of Ra's Ba'albek (1628) ruled in favour of his opponent, Kīrillos Dabbās was deposed and subsequently died under unclear circumstances, thereby thwarting Loukaris' plan to install a protégé as Patriarch of Antioch. Yet Loukaris managed to cultivate excellent relations with Patriarch Filaret of Moscow and his son, Tsar Michael I Romanov, as well as with Moldavian and Wallachian princes.⁷² Furthermore, he employed established mechanisms such as the *stauropegion* (σταυροπήγιον) – the status by which churches, monasteries, and other ecclesiastical institutions were placed directly under the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople, bypassing local hierarchies – and the patriarchal exarchate as instruments for enhancing the authority of the patriarchal office.⁷³

(2010), 177–193; N. Šuletić, “Usurpations”, 50. See also H. İnalcık, “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans”, *Turcica* 21–22 (1991), 407–435.

⁷¹ See, for example, Π. Κονόρτας “Η οθωμανική κρίση του τέλους του ιστ' αιώνα και το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο”, *Τα Ιστορικά* 2/3 (1985), 45–76; O. Cristea, O. Olar, “War and Diplomacy in the Black Sea Region during the Long War (1593–1606)”, in: *From Pax Mongolica to Pax Ottomanica: War, Religion and Trade in the Northwestern Black Sea Region (14th–16th Centuries)*, eds. O. Cristea, L. Pilat, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2020), 228–248.

⁷² For Muscovy: V. G. Tchentsova, “Moscou face à la tentation protestante du patriarche oecuménique Cyrille Loukaris”, in: *L'Union à l'épreuve du formulaire. Professions de foi entre Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (XIIIe–XVIIIe siècle)*, éd. M.-H. Blanchet, F. Gabriel, (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 311–340. For the Romanian Principalities: A. Pippidi, “Diplomație și ortodoxie: Moldova în proiectele propagandei calvine (1630)”, in: *Viam inveniam aut faciam: In Honorem Ștefan Andreescu*, eds. O. Cristea, P. Zahariuc, Gh. Lazăr, (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2012), 349–366.

⁷³ To date, no systematic study has addressed either Loukaris's use of *stauropegion* status or the activity of his appointed representatives. Still, the extant scholarship points to the potential of such an investigation: Y. Evangelou, “Les relations entre les monastères et le patriarcat de Constantinople à l'intérieur des frontières ottomanes au XVI^e s.: quelques hypothèses”, in: *Le patriarcat oecuménique de Constantinople et Byzance hors frontières (1204–1586). Actes de la table ronde organisée dans le cadre du 22e Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Sofia, 22–27 août 2011*, éd. M.-H. Blanchet, M.-H. Congourdeau, D. I. Mureșan, (Paris: EHESS – Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2014), 339–350; Μ. Παϊζη-Αποστολοπούλου, *Ο θεσμός της πατριαρχικής εξάρχιας, 1405–1905 αιώνας* (Αθήνα: ΕΙΕ – ΚΝΕ, 1995).

2.1. The Aristocracy of Bishops

Loukaris never authored a text comparable to Ingoli's *Report on the Four Parts of the World*. Nevertheless, a letter addressed to the Dutch theologian and minister Johannes Wtenbogaert, leader of the Remonstrant party, in September 1613, includes a description of Eastern Christianity that allows us, at least partly and with all necessary caveats, to reconstruct the Patriarch's perspective on his Church, Rome, and the broader Eastern Christian world.

Loukaris first contacted Wtenbogaert in May 1612, while serving as Patriarch of Alexandria, at the suggestion of the Dutch diplomatic representative to the Porte. Seizing the opportunity to form ties with adversaries of Rome, he addressed his interlocutor "as a minister to a minister, and a pastor to a pastor", both serving Christ, the Good Shepherd. He lamented the evils afflicting the Church, particularly its susceptibility to a flurry of "human opinions and innovations" and the replacement of faith with "vain philosophy". At the same time, he expressed satisfaction that, despite Turkish tyranny and persecution, the Eastern Church had persevered in the "simple" faith of the apostles and forefathers, rejected all novelty, preserved "untainted orthodoxy", and remained ready to sacrifice itself for the true faith.⁷⁴ Wtenbogaert's answer has not survived, but from Loukaris' reply, dated 9 September 1613, we know that he had sent the disputations of Jacobus Arminius, whose teachings the Dutch minister followed.⁷⁵

On 22 September of the same month, the Patriarch sent another letter in which he provided a detailed account of the faith, rituals, and organisational structure of the Eastern Church.⁷⁶ For starters, he stressed his intention to open his heart and speak honestly, convinced that, even if he were to err, he would not be

⁷⁴ C. Hartsoecker, P. Van Limborch, *Præstantium ac eruditorum virorum epistolæ ecclesiasticæ et theologicæ varii argumenti...* (Amsterdam: Henricus Dendrinus, 1660), 369–371. For the English translation, see J. Beaven, "Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Constantinople", *The British Magazine and Monthly Register of Religious and Ecclesiastical Information, Parochial History, and Documents Respecting the State of the Poor, Progress of Education, &c.* 22 (1842) [September 1], 243–244; it was reproduced in J. M. Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Church: The Patriarchate of Alexandria* [vol.] 2 (London: Joseph Masters, 1847), 366–368.

⁷⁵ *Brieven en onuitgegeven stukken van Johannes Wtenbogaert* [vol.] 1: 1584–1618, red. H. C. Rogge, (Utrecht: Kemink en zoon, 1868), 218–219 (no. CXLVIII); É. Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés par des Grecs au dix-septième siècle* [vol.] 4 (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1896), 291 (no. 96).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 292–313 (no. 97). For a fragmentary English translation, see Beaven, "Cyril Lucar", 245–253; it was reproduced in Neale, *A History*, 369–383. My translation departs at times from Beaven's.

thrown in a furnace, stretched over red-hot coals, or threatened with torture. The universal faith of Christ was not upheld by such tyranny, but rather undermined by it. Loukaris further requested fraternal admonition and affirmed that, should a similar situation arise for his correspondent, he would respond in the same spirit. Above all, he insisted, both correspondents must be guided by a single principle: the words of Scripture and the Gospel remain true and infallible, unlike the “mere opinions of men”.⁷⁷

Loukaris extended this rhetorical appeal to goodwill by agreeing with Wtenbogaert that there was no difference in rank between them, since both were mortal, servants of God, and in need of divine grace. As a Remonstrant, the Dutch theologian upheld the principle that all ministers were fundamentally equal and that ecclesiastical governance should be exercised by presbyters and synods rather than by bishops. The Patriarch then turned to the substance of the discussion, noting that the Christian faith concerns either the divinity or the incarnation of the Word. In the first case, one considers either the essence or the distinction of the persons. Regarding the essence, he observed, there is no controversy between the Eastern Church and that of Wtenbogaert: both anathematise the Arians, the Paulinians, and all heretics who deny the consubstantiality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As for the distinction of the persons, a difference exists: the Eastern Church does not accept the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son. According to Loukaris, the Church of Rome, fond of innovations, had introduced the doctrine of the *filioque*, treating the ‘Greeks’ as schismatic or impious and demanding acknowledgement of papal primacy. Nevertheless, the Eastern Christians remained faithful to the dogmas of the original Church, maintaining that the Holy Spirit proceeds personally from the Father alone. Loukaris cited St. Jerome, who affirmed this; Augustine, who taught that the Spirit proceeds from the Father internally and through the Son in external action; and Arminius, who held that the Spirit ‘emanates’ from the Father and is sent by the Son. On this basis, Loukaris concluded, the question of the *filioque* does not arise.

The Patriarch then turned to the incarnation of the Word, noting that the differences between his Church and that of his correspondent were minimal. By contrast, regarding the Sacraments, he emphasised Baptism and the Eucharist as “the most important and principal”.⁷⁸ Both commemorate the Passion and Death of the Lord: through Baptism, Christians partake of the divine nature; through the Eucharist, they are reborn; and through both, they are justified. Responding to Wtenbogaert’s expectations, Loukaris outlined the Baptismal rite of the Orthodox Church and described in detail the Divine Liturgy, emphasising that the eucharistic Bread

⁷⁷ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 294; Neale, *A History*, 370.

⁷⁸ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 300–302. See also Neale, *A History*, 370–372.

and Wine become the honoured Body and precious Blood of Christ, noting that the faithful receive Communion in both kinds, and stressing that the ceremonies are rooted in Holy Scripture.

The ecclesiastical organisation received even more extensive treatment. Opposed to a ‘monarchical’ regime, Loukaris argued for a mixed and tempered Church government, modelled on the ‘aristocracy of bishops’ instituted by God in the Judaic Church, with Moses as its head.⁷⁹ He then sketched an institutional portrait of Eastern Christianity, affirming that “the Greek Church is divided into several nations: the Iberians, the Colchians, the Arabs, the Chaldeans, the Ethiopians, the Egyptians, the Muscovites, the Ruthenians, the Bulgarians, the Serbs or Slavs, the Albanians, the Karamanians, the Wallachians, the Moldavians, and the Greeks”. Despite local variations of ceremonies and even superstitions, which he attributed to “obstinacy and ignorance”, but which did not affect the essence of the faith, Loukaris emphasised that “all these nations are steadfast in the faith of Christ, obedient to the Greek Church and its rite”.⁸⁰

Four Patriarchates – Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem – manage their spiritual affairs fraternally and without claims to primacy. Originally, claimed Loukaris, the Patriarch of Alexandria held precedence, but this order was altered by Constantine the Great so that his ‘new Rome’ would host a major prelate. At the emperor’s request, the Patriarch of Alexandria voluntarily ceded primacy to the former Archbishop of Constantinople – now Patriarch – in exchange for significant privileges and a superior title, namely ‘Judge of the World’. Beyond this honorific arrangement, all other bishops enjoy equal rights and authority within the Church.

Loukaris’ explanation of the peculiar title was self-serving: as the incumbent Patriarch of Alexandria, he sought to make clear to Wtenbogaert the antiquity and importance of his office.⁸¹ In the footsteps of his predecessors, he proceeded to define his role in terms of guardian of orthodoxy and of ecclesiastical order throughout the entire Eastern Christian world.

⁷⁹ “Aristocratia episcoporum.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 302–303; Neale, *A History*, 372–373.

⁸⁰ “Græca ecclesia in plures nationes dividitur, in Hyberos, Cholcos, Arabes, Chaldæos, Æthiopes, Ægyptios, Moscovitas, Ruthenos, Bulgaros, Servos vel Sclavos, Albanenses, Caramanos, Valachos, Moldavos et Græcos. Omnes istæ nationes in fide Christi constantes sunt, græcæ ecclesiæ suoque ritui obtemperantes.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 303; Neale, *A History*, 373.

⁸¹ The origins of the title Κριτῆς τῆς Οἰκουμένης are unclear. According to Dositheos of Jerusalem, it was granted to Theophilos of Alexandria (d. 1020) for mediating a dispute between Emperor Basil II and Sergios II, Patriarch of Constantinople: Dositheos of Jerusalem, *Ιστορία περὶ τῶν ἐν Τεροσολύμοις πατριαρχευσάντων* (Bucharest: *sine loco*, 1715), 746. Most likely, Dositheos had his own agenda in promoting this version.

According to Loukaris, all patriarchs – except that of Constantinople – were lawfully elected, and their elections were conducted solely with the interests of the Church in view. The Patriarch of Alexandria ensured that the rules, especially those pertaining to matters of faith, were not transgressed. The see of Constantinople, by contrast, was not filled through election but, under the Turkish yoke, was effectively awarded to the highest bidder. The Patriarch of Alexandria could do little more than protest, as he was unable to oppose Turkish coercion effectively and was geographically distant. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Loukaris remarked, was the most powerful of them all, owing to his proximity to the emperor – that is, the Sultan – but also the most unfortunate, for the same reason. The position of the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem was precarious, owing to their lack of resources. As for the Patriarch of Alexandria, he was feared and distrusted, since his efforts to defend himself against wrongful interference were perceived as attempts to impose his own candidates on the other patriarchal sees.⁸²

When speaking of ‘the Patriarch of Alexandria’ – a position he himself then occupied – Loukaris felt the need to adopt the third person and to provide further explanations, all the more so as Wtenbogaert may have been informed, through other channels, of the open conflict between his correspondent and the Patriarch of Constantinople of the time. Admittedly, Loukaris had confirmed Athanasios in the see of Antioch, contributed directly to the election of Theophanes as Patriarch of Jerusalem, and paved the way for Timotheos to ascend the ecumenical throne by expelling Neophytos. Neophytos, however, had been deposed because of his pride and tyrannical behaviour: he had surrounded himself with dubious individuals and had introduced into the Church certain Roman scoundrels – preachers who taught errors and deceived the faithful. Despite repeated warnings, he refused to amend his conduct. It was therefore necessary, Loukaris insisted, at this point switching to the first person, to depose him for the common good of the Church. As for Timotheos, he had occupied the vacant post by paying money to the Turks, a fact that, according to Loukaris, made him fear the Patriarch of Alexandria.⁸³

Loukaris’ oscillation between third- and first-person reference is deliberate: by initially presenting his actions as those of an office rather than of an individual, he sought to frame them as institutional and canonical rather than personal. The following section, concerning the election of patriarchs, metropolitans, and bishops

⁸² “Potentior est Constantinopolitanus propter latus imperatoris, sed omnium infelicior. Antiochenus et Hierosolymitanus, probi ac humiles praelati, vix sibi sufficiunt. Alexandrinus malus est, quia sine vi fratrum infandos aliquando debellat conatus, semperque iis formidolosus et suspectus est.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 304; Neale, *A History*, 373–375.

⁸³ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 304–305; Neale, *A History*, 375.

follows the same pattern.⁸⁴ According to Loukaris, all high ecclesiastics were elected by the most capable members of the community – ἄριστοι τῆς πολιτείας – and clergy, with the exception of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who assumed office only after paying a sum to the Ottoman authorities. The Patriarch of Alexandria, by contrast, neither gave money nor allied with the Ottomans, being fully aware of the dangers such a gesture would entail. Loukaris then described the ceremonies of consecration and briefly outlined the situation of archbishops and bishops, emphasising that Alexandria possessed only chorepiscopi, that is, patriarchal deputies. By insisting on this point, Loukaris appears to signal that his authority was exercised more directly than that of other patriarchs, who presided over bishops and metropolitans; at the same time, it could also serve to underline the relatively smaller size and limited hierarchy of his Church compared with other Eastern patriarchates.

2.2. The True Oriental Church

Yet there were shadows on the canvas. Despite its attachment to the traditions of the ancestors, Eastern Christianity included four ‘sects’: the Armenians, the Copts, the Maronites, and the ‘Jacobites’. Loukaris considered their adherents heretics, with debased rites and crude ceremonies, deeply ignorant but obstinate in their superstitions and errors. “In habits and other circumstances of an ecclesiastical nature, one would say that they differed in nothing from beasts”, he boasted insultingly, employing hyperbolic rhetoric to emphasise his contempt.⁸⁵

Loukaris labels the Armenians as Manichaeans and heaps slander upon insult while ostensibly describing their beliefs. He claims that the Armenian clergy would be regarded as gods on earth because they abstain from vegetables during fasting periods. He further recalls a dispute he had in Jerusalem with an Armenian named Barsabas: when confronted with Loukaris’ numerous arguments that Jesus truly suffered and that his Passion was not merely apparent – as the Armenians allegedly maintained – Barsabas was unable to respond adequately and instead invoked abstention from vegetables during Lent as decisive proof of the superiority of the Armenian religion, much to the amusement of the audience.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 305–306; Neale, *A History*, 375–376.

⁸⁵ “Quatuor adhuc usque sunt sectæ eorum, quibus ecclesia nostra non communicat: armenica, coptica, maronitica et jacobitica, quarum deformis est ritus plusque brutæ cæremoniæ: in fidei ratione hæretici, in moribus et aliis circumstantiis ecclesiasticis, dices eos nihil belluis differre, tot tenebris ignorantiae offusi ut vix sciant si credant vel quid credant: unaquæque tamen obstinata est in propriis superstitionibus & erroribus.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 306; Neale, *A History*, 377.

⁸⁶ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 306–308; Neale, *A History*, 377–378.

The depiction of the Copts likewise combines invective with personal, biased observation. According to Loukaris, this “foul and barbarous nation” adhered to the heretical teachings of Dioscorus of Alexandria and Eutyches, condemned by the Council of Chalcedon.⁸⁷ Contrary to the claims advanced in Cardinal Cesare Baronio’s *Ecclesiastical Annals*, their supposed union with Rome during the pontificate of Gregory XIII was illusory. Their superior, whom Loukaris avoids calling Patriarch, preferring instead the title *abuna* (literally ‘our lord’), was unsuited to the office. During a meeting with Loukaris in Cairo, the *abuna* – either Gabriel VIII Shenouda (d. 1603) or Markos V (d. 1619) – kept his head covered with a cloth, leaving only his eyes visible, and remained entirely silent while one of his attendants spoke on his behalf. “But you will say he is a ghost in a tragedy”, the self-professed loquacious Loukaris complained.⁸⁸ The Patriarch then concluded the excursus by asserting that a Coptic priest who visited him frequently lamented the errors of his own religion.

The Maronites receive only limited treatment, as Loukaris regarded their ‘sect’ as “semi-Roman”, on the verge of becoming fully Roman. Many Maronites studied in Rome; their ecclesiastical hierarchy declared itself ‘papist’, and almost all were in communion with Rome. The Patriarch’s primary concern was that this people would “infect” their neighbours. Despite sustained efforts by both Loukaris and the Patriarch of Antioch, the (Christian) Arabs were unable to restrain the evil that crept among them.⁸⁹

On the ‘Jacobites’, Loukaris has little to say beyond insults – “the most vile and foul nation” – and an unsubstantiated accusation of Nestorianism.⁹⁰ Other topics are likewise left untouched, as they would have required more nuanced treatment. Instead, Loukaris presents himself as an enemy of ignorance: he criticises the lack of education among the priests and bishops of the Greek clergy; denounces the opportunism of Jesuit missionaries active in Constantinople and engaged in the education

⁸⁷ “Spurca natio et barbara.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 308–309 (the quote is on p. 308); Neale, *A History*, 378–380.

⁸⁸ “Sed dices larvam esse tragicam.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 309; Neale, *A History*, 379–380. For Rome’s attempts at Church union, see Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, 58–76; R. J. Clines, *A Jewish Jesuit in the Eastern Mediterranean: Early Modern Conversion, Mission, and the Construction of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 173–200. For an accurate account of the the Coptic Church, see O. F. A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002).

⁸⁹ “Maronitica secta est semiromana, imo incipit esse tota romana... et modo quasi tota gens illa sequitur romanam religionem.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 309; Neale, *A History*, 380.

⁹⁰ “Vilissima et spurcissima natio.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 310; Neale, *A History*, 380.

of the young – effective, he remarks, “like foxes among the chicken”; condemns the persecution of his co-religionists by the Church of Rome in the Polish kingdom; deplores both his own and his predecessor Meletios Pigas’ lack of success in assisting the Christians of Greek faith of Poland and Lithuania; and congratulates Wtenbo-gaert on the measures taken against Catholic “yeast”.⁹¹ Thanking his correspondent for the works of Arminius, requesting a catalogue of books on the Bible and other subjects – theology, philosophy, the liberal arts, and mathematics – and offering to send manuscripts of interest, the Patriarch then takes his leave.

The labels employed by Loukaris were by no means new. Nevertheless, several aspects are striking. Why does Moscow not appear among the legitimate Patriarchates? What criteria does he apply in classifying the Armenians, Copts, Maronites, and ‘Jacobites’ as sects? And where did his information about them come from?

As in the case of Ingoli, both the silences and the emphases are revealing. Loukaris sought to highlight for his correspondent the ancient character and the continuity of the main institutional pillars of his Church. Moscow was probably omitted because it was a recent addition to the group and because Muscovy itself was undergoing significant turmoil.⁹² After the Romanovs came to power in 1613 and began strengthening both the state and the Church, Loukaris devoted significant energy to building ties with Tsar Michael I and Patriarch Filaret.⁹³ In fact, he never abandoned them thereafter, not even at the sultan’s direct request – a refusal that ultimately led to his execution in the summer of 1638.

Loukaris’ account misrepresents Armenian theology by conflating it with Manichaeism and Docetism, and by reducing ascetic disciplinary practices to markers of doctrinal error. An undated sermon – possibly composed in 1607 – which deals with spiritual blindness, also alluded to the claim that both Copts and Armenians did not accept that Jesus was a true and perfect man.⁹⁴ A sermon delivered in March 1609 on the ‘Sunday of Orthodoxy’ likewise condemned Arianism, Apollinarianism, and Nestorianism, as well as the teaching of Dioscorus of Alexandria, with a veiled reference to the Armenians and Copts.⁹⁵ Yet the Armenian Church explicitly rejected Manichaeism and affirmed the real incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ; its disagreement with Chalcedonian theology concerned the mode of union between the divine and human natures, not the reality of the Passion. The story of Barsabas

⁹¹ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 311–312; Neale, *A History*, 381–383.

⁹² Pissis, “The Image”, 50.

⁹³ Tchentsova, “Moscou”.

⁹⁴ D. Paradoulakis, *Kyrillos Loukaris as an Author of Sermons (1602–1626): Inventory of the Autograph Codices in the Collection of the Metochion of the Holy Sepulchre* (Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter; Oldenbourg, 2025), 106–107 (MITT 262, 331v–335v).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193–195 (MITT 439, 196r–201r).

functions as a humiliation narrative, portraying Armenian theologians as incapable of theological reasoning and reinforcing the narrator's authority before his audience. Loukaris' anecdote therefore serves a polemical and rhetorical purpose rather than an accurate description of Armenian belief. The very fact that the Patriarch quotes Euripides' *Hippolytus* via Lucian's satirical dialogue *Philosophies for Sale* is itself suggestive of a parodic framing.⁹⁶ In doing so, he aligned himself with earlier East Roman anti-Armenian polemic. Loukaris explicitly quotes an oration on Saint Basil the Great by Gregory of Nazianzus, in which Basil is portrayed as triumphing over "dissembling and crafty" Armenian neophytes in Athens through reasoned argument, with the assistance of Gregory himself.⁹⁷

The Maronites, in Loukaris' letter, paid for their communion with Rome. His slandering of the Copts and West Syrian Miaphysites was directly proportional to their ecclesiastical significance. The Copts, for instance – whom he even described as a "plague" – far outnumbered his own flock in Egypt and resisted the attempts of Loukaris' predecessor to bring them back onto the right track.⁹⁸ Loukaris appears less concerned with their doctrinal positions, which he consistently misrepresents, than with their authority as rival Churches. In an undated sermon on human labour for the salvation of the soul, the Patriarch condemned the sects that followed Arius and Dioscorus in denying Christ's dual nature – namely, the Copts – criticising both heretics and Christians who, through their inability to recognise true faith, had strayed from the right path.⁹⁹ But the Copts were, in fact, Miaphysites, affirming the unity of Christ's divine and human natures "without confusion or separation". The so-called 'Jacobites' were likewise Miaphysites, not Nestorians – the latter label being a long-standing misnomer.¹⁰⁰ The letter to Wtenbogaert naturally emphasises those details that cast the Greek Church in the most favourable light.

Loukaris carefully avoided all potentially contentious issues, such as the episcopal form of government; the number of sacraments (seven in the Eastern Church, two

⁹⁶ Ἡ φρήν ἀλγήσει, ἡ δὲ γλῶττα ἔσται ἐνάληγτος ("The mind will suffer, but the tongue will not": Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 307; Neale, *A History*, 378. The Euripidean original was ἡ γλῶσσ' ὁμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρήν ἀνώμοτος ("My tongue took oath; my mind has taken none"): *Lucian* [vol.] 2 (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1968), 468–469.

⁹⁷ Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 42–43*, éd. J. Bernardi, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992), 156–161 (Greek text and French translation). For an English translation (by L.P. McCauley SJ), see *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose*, Introduction by M. R. P. McGuire (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1968), 41–43.

⁹⁸ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 308. See also Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, 181.

⁹⁹ Paradoulakis, *Kyrrillos Loukaris*, 183–184 (MITT 439, 167v–170r, 305v–307r).

¹⁰⁰ S. P. Brock, "The Nestorian Church: A Lamentable Misnomer", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78/3 (1996), 23–35.

in the Reformed Churches); free will; predestination; and justification. The extremely diplomatic manner in which he explained that there was, in fact, no difference in rank between himself – a patriarch – and his correspondent – a minister – is highly suggestive of his conciliatory attitude. The Patriarch of Alexandria thus addressed Wtenbogaert as the sole representative of the ‘true’ Eastern Church – legitimate, upright, learned, sincerely concerned for the fate of the faithful entrusted to his care, and ready to defy all odds and all enemies while leading his flock towards salvation.

The letter’s resonance within the Republic of Letters can be assessed. It circulated among Wtenbogaert’s friends. It was included in the collection of “ecclesiastical and theological letters of outstanding and erudite men” compiled and published by the Remonstrants Christianus Hartsoeker and Philippus van Limborch in 1660.¹⁰¹ The fragment on the Copts was quoted in the introduction to Yūsuf ibn Abū Dhaqn’s posthumously published *History of the Jacobites or Copts in Egypt, Libya, Nubia, Ethiopia, and part of the island of Cyprus*, which – given Loukaris’ remarkable fame – helps to account for “the distaste with which most Protestants regarded the Copts” in the 17th century.¹⁰²

Conversely, due to the letter’s personal nature, it is difficult to determine how representative it was of Greek Orthodox ecclesiastics more broadly. For now, it can be noted that the letter coincides with Loukaris’ shift in stance towards Rome and is consistent with his subsequent attitudes and policies towards the Reformed Churches of Western Europe and the Eastern Christian Churches.¹⁰³ For example, in April 1614, in a Good Friday sermon delivered in Iași (Moldavia), the Patriarch rejected Armenian (and Muslim) beliefs concerning Christ’s Passion.¹⁰⁴ In December 1614, in a sermon on the Eucharist delivered in Târgoviște (Wallachia), he condemned the Latins’ use of unleavened bread and criticised Jewish and Armenian positions on the matter.¹⁰⁵ The following year, while still in Wallachia, Loukaris anathematised both the “Latins”, treated as ‘heretics’, and those who entered into communion with Rome, treated as “wolves”. His own flock were “Romans” (Ῥωμαῖοι), the “true children of the Holy Universal, Apostolical and Eastern Church of Christ”, in contrast to the “Franks” (Φράγγοι) and other innovators, against whom they defended “our orthodoxy” (τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας μας).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ A Dutch translation of Hartsoeker and van Limborch’s *Præstantium ac eruditorum virorum epistolæ* appeared in 1662. An expanded Latin edition was published in 1684 (Amsterdam: Henricus Wetstenius); it was reedited in 1704 (Amsterdam: Franciscus Halma).

¹⁰² Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, 179–181.

¹⁰³ With the exception of Muscovy, as we have already seen.

¹⁰⁴ Paradoulakis, *Kyrillos Loukaris*, 276–277 (MIT 263, 184r, 184v–197v).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 252–255 (MIT 263, 79v–84v).

¹⁰⁶ Olar, *La boutique de Théophile*, 107–108.

In March 1618, writing from Cairo, Loukaris supplied his friend, the Dutch merchant David Le Leu de Wilhem, with information on the Copts and Nestorians that closely mirrored – in both bias and patronising tone – what he had earlier conveyed to Wtenbogaert. He sent his correspondent the sixth volume of Baronio’s *Ecclesiastical Annals*, explicitly presenting it as the only source of information on the Copts available to him. Loukaris further remarked on the recent growth of the Nestorian presence alongside the Copts and Armenians. He claimed that the Copts communicated with the “heretic” Nestorians – “the blind with the blind” – who had been assigned the church of Saint Minas outside Cairo. “In doctrine, in learning, and in moral conduct”, he wrote, “they are much inferior to the Copts”. Yet even the Copts themselves, in his view, were headed towards total ruin, since “they do not want to submit themselves to our authority”. As his predecessors had attempted in vain for many years to remedy the situation, Loukaris resolved not to involve himself further in the undertaking.¹⁰⁷

The Patriarch of Alexandria wrote to Wtenbogaert from Wallachia, a principality he aimed to turn into a power base. He had parted ways with Rome and was in open conflict with Patriarch Timotheos II of Constantinople. In June 1613, shortly before writing to the Remonstrant minister, Loukaris addressed two long and venomous letters to Timotheos, indicative of the irreparable gulf between them.¹⁰⁸ In this tense context, his correspondence with Wtenbogaert – a potential political ally – provides a fascinating example of self-fashioning. Loukaris deployed every tool in his polemical and political panoply to identify and thus distance his beleaguered ‘orthodox’ community from its internal and external adversaries. When asked by Wtenbogaert to present Eastern Christianity to an audience largely unfamiliar with the topic, he seized the opportunity and delivered a self-serving depiction of the ‘true’ Oriental Church, an extremely exclusive one.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ “De dottrina, de scientia, de moribus, sono molto inferiori alli Copti;” “per non volersi sottoporre al governo nostro.” Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 322–325 (no. 107 – quotes at p. 324). For the correspondence, see M. I. Μανούσακας, “Αυτόγραφο γράμμα (1617) τοῦ Κυρίλλου Λουκάρεως στὸν Ὀλλανδὸ λόγιο David de Wilhem”, *Μεσαιωνικά καὶ Νέα Ἑλληνικά* 1 (1984), 453–461; Olar, *La boutique de Théophile*, 116–120.

¹⁰⁸ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, 269–281 (no. 92), 281–289 (no. 93).

¹⁰⁹ On the process of the sharpening of confessional boundaries (16th–18th centuries), see C. Santus, “A Triangular Relationship: The Role of Eastern Patriarchates, Rome, and Ottoman Authorities in Shaping the Christian Communities of the Empire”, in: *La division de l’Église rûm d’Antioche en 1724 et la construction des identités confessionnelles orthodoxe et catholique*, éd. B. Heyberger, Ž. Paša, R. el Gemayel, (Beirut: CEDRAC 2024), 85–113.

3. Concluding Remarks

Kyrrillos Loukaris' account of Eastern Christianity contained in the letter to Wtenbogaert is no less polemical than the one proposed by Francesco Ingoli's *Report*. Both authors condemn ignorance, stubbornness, and deviation from the true faith, and their tone – sometimes patronising but always militant – is remarkably similar. The major difference lies in the recipients of their accusations, reflecting divergent stances on communion with Rome: Ingoli advocated pro-Union policies, while Loukaris sought to build an anti-Roman front. If for Ingoli the Greek Church was 'schismatic', for Loukaris the Roman Church was 'tyrannical'.

Despite differences in genre and scope, the identifications proposed by the Ecumenical Patriarch and those formulated by the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith share one essential feature: both served practical purposes dictated by the circumstances in which they were conceived. In a rapidly changing world, inherited categories were losing explanatory power. Ingoli sought to articulate a framework consistent with the global vocation of his Roman office, while Loukaris aimed to identify his Church amid complex political realities, profound social transformations, and pastoral, theological, and jurisdictional challenges.

At ground level, the situation was far more complex than the bird's-eye views of the ecclesiastical elite might suggest. Local contexts and developments were crucial: despite the 'universal' claims of Rome and Constantinople, their initiatives often had paradoxically local effects, reinforcing rather than dissolving regional identifications and communal allegiances. Ingoli's systematic efforts to document Christian and non-Christian communities, evaluate their alignment with Catholicism, and inform strategic missionary policy were mirrored by Loukaris' increasingly coherent confession-building practices. The clash between these institutions in the first half of the 17th century impacted their policies and profoundly influenced the strategies by which they delineated jurisdictions and defined the faithful in order to ensure salvation.

One principal by-product of this entangled process was the consolidation of religious communities. In the long run, Loukaris' confession-building policies and Ingoli's Rome-centred missionary project contributed to reinforcing confessional traits and sharpening confessional boundaries across Eastern Christianity. The comparison of the two texts, the letter to Wtenbogaert and the *Report on the Four Parts of the World*, highlights how self-fashioning, missionary strategy, and institutional rivalry intersected to shape Christian identifications locally and transregionally, within the Ottoman Empire and beyond.

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Afterword

This volume analysed the identifications of Orthodox Christians in Southeastern Europe over the course of the first centuries of Ottoman rule. The authors researched different practices, used different methodologies, and focused on specific subjects in particular periods and areas. This diversity has highlighted disparate aspects of identifications, underscoring the need to diversify the vocabulary used in the research on this topic. The authors used the terms ‘identification’ and ‘self-understanding’, followed by ‘commonality’, ‘groupness’, ‘community’, ‘self-positioning’, ‘self-fashioning’ and ‘self-presentation’, while some opted to retain the terminology of their sources. In addition, some authors continued to use the term ‘identity’ to emphasise the work of identification – namely the ‘participants’ primordialism, i.e., the belief among the people of the time in the continuity and stability of the examined identifications. If needed, this vocabulary can be further refined in future research.

The chapters delved into the following practices: official communication between the Ottoman authorities and monasteries (Ognjen Krešić), history writing (Zoran Jovanović, Konrad Petrovsky, Maja Nikolić, and Marija Vasiljević), the veneration of saints (Marija Vasiljević, Irena Plaović, Aleksandra Ivanović, and Valentina Živković), writing marginal notes (Milena Davidović), monastic patronage (Ognjen Krešić), nurturing monastic foundation legends (Nikolaos Livanos), the self-presentation of the claimants to the throne (Marian Coman), and official reports of the church institutions and official correspondence (Ovidiu Olar). Through these practices, the researchers shed light on the identifications and self-understandings of Orthodox Christians by those outside of the purported communities (Krešić, Živković, and Olar) and by the members of the communities themselves (Krešić, Jovanović, Petrovsky, Nikolić, Vasiljević, Plaović, Ivanović, Davidović, Livanos, Coman, and Olar). This not only illuminates the juxtaposition between these types of identifications but also the reactions to the categorisation by others, which most often included focusing on a different category for comparison and altering the meaning assigned to a certain category.

The papers confirmed that the shared macro-contexts – religion and the Ottoman presence – shaped the identifications. In some cases, both aspects are in the forefront of the identifications: namely they strongly (re-)shaped the understanding of inherited categories and brought the new ones to the forefront. A particularly interesting example is analysed by Maja Nikolić where, even though the island of Crete was under the Venetian rule in the researched period, the local identification was based upon the Byzantine heritage, while still focusing on the Ottomans. In other cases, usually on the (imaginary) borders of the Empire – as shown by Coman, Živković, Olar and Livanos – the Ottomans were ignored or were in the background. The mentioned examples show the relative unpredictability of the identifications and their deep connections to particular contexts and practices.

The differences in the identifications were brought about in the micro-contexts, i.e., local conditions, traditions and practices. As this was expected, what came as a surprise is that one practice in the same place and in the same/similar time could generate different meanings. The papers that deal with the history writing and the veneration of saints illustrated this phenomenon.

For example, Zoran Jovanović showed how the complex landscape of post-Byzantine historical works – those that focus on the Fall of Constantinople, those written in the circles connected with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the short chronicles – displayed similarities across the periods and regions. However, there were significant discrepancies among different types of works and their authors. Similar things could be said of the brief historical texts written in Serbian Church Slavonic analysed by Marija Vasiljević: while they shared a focus on the Serbian dynasty, differences between types of texts and also between different redactions of the same text showcase the lack of uniformity.

The divergence of identifications is also visible in the veneration of saints. The papers by Marija Vasiljević, Irena Plaović and Aleksandra Ivanović, sometimes addressing the same Serbian saints, are particularly illustrative as they show how different foci can uncover distinct aspects of identifications. Respectively, they focused on the categories of identifications in hagiographies, on the rhetorical mechanisms of identifications in encomia and on the creative use of *topoi* and hagiotypes in offices. For example, hagiographies often highlighted local and regional identifications, and among them one can find texts that can be considered among the most elaborate treaties on identifications in this period. Encomia were marked by stepping out of historical contexts by means of maximal abstraction and generalisation, thus fostering a sense of belonging both locally and to the religious community. The use of *topoi* and hagiotypes in the offices was dynamic insofar as they reflected local life conditions and the belonging to the (universal) church at the same time. To this should be added the practice of writing marginal notes – Milena Davidović depicted

how their complexity and varied subjects deeply affected their authors' self-understandings and identifications in them.

This also touched on the question of the methodology which influenced the research results. Konrad Petrovsky compared two Greek chronicles and showed how each can only be understood with the close analysis of their local contexts (Dealu Monastery in Wallachia and Koutloumousiou on Mount Athos) and authorial self-understanding. Maja Nikolić drew attention to visual material (an illustrated world chronicle written in Crete), which could also be used to convey differing myths, symbols and elements of collective remembering, while simultaneously adapting to contemporary circumstances. By researching the often-neglected monastic foundation legends, Nikolaos Livanos showed how they could be a window into the (re-) articulation of ethnic categories in the surroundings otherwise focused on the universality of Orthodoxy on Mount Athos. The contribution by Marian Coman stands out as it analyses the variety of sources which can be used to encompass the complexity of the self-fashioning rhetorics by the claimants to the Wallachian throne over the course of several decades.

Valentina Živković highlighted the diachronic stability but also the change in the perception of the Orthodox Christians by Roman Catholic officials on the example of the veneration of the Blessed Osanna in Kotor and analysed the interplay between the written and visual material. Finally, the chapters by Ognjen Krešić and Ovidiu Olar, which comparatively examined the identifications employed by those outside the Orthodox Christian communities and contrasted them with those used within the communities themselves, represent one of the most fruitful approaches to this subject. Ognjen Krešić examined the identifications employed by the Ottoman administration to describe Orthodox Christian monks, comparing different types of official documents and also how Christians themselves defined their new elites. Ovidiu Olar compared the official report of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, and letters of the Patriarch of Constantinople to a Dutch theologian and minister, thus highlighting the perspectives of the highest church officials and their own understanding of the (Orthodox) Christian world.

These examples of various topics, practices and methodologies showcased how the circular causality model worked: macro-context → micro-context → practice → micro-context (→ macro-context). The differences of identifications across time and space were thus created and later used by the 'nationalising states'. Furthermore, the project demonstrated that the researchers were themselves powerful identifiers. Namely, different foci – for example, the self-positioning in the post-Byzantine historical works or the use of topoi in hagiographies – would produce different results.

Through the research presented in this volume, the identifications of Orthodox Christians proved to be considerably more complex than first imagined, with

numerous media and multiple means within each medium. In the sources, local, regional, occupational, social, religious and other communities were defined and referenced through various means and for differing purposes. This, of course, is not the final word on the identifications and self-understandings of Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Southeastern Europe in the early modern period. In fact, this marks just the beginning of research that can lead to countless approaches, highlighting diverse perspectives and contexts. Each paper in this volume may be understood as a signpost indicating possible directions for future inquiry, while the volume as a whole demonstrates the benefits of collaboration among researchers with different backgrounds and areas of expertise.

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