

## MAKARIOS MELISSOURGOS-MELISSEOS

(d. 1585)

## LIFE

M.M. was a refugee, an adventurer, and an accomplished counterfeiter, who even forged Palaeologan documents to win a dispute about ecclesiastical authority in his territory in the Morea. Both he and one of his brothers, Theodoros, participated in a rebellion against the Ottoman authorities after the battle of Lepanto (1571) and were then compelled to emigrate to Italy.

Very few details about the activities of the Melissourgos brothers can be found before the battle of Lepanto (Ναύπακτος) (3 October 1571). M.M. was the bishop of Monemvasia (Μονεμβασία) in 1570. It was in July of 1570 he enters into a dispute with the metropolitan of Christianoupolis (city in the Peloponnese; no longer exists), Sophronios, in regard to the jurisdiction of the see of Androusa (Ανδρούσσα). In 1571 M.M. becomes involved in rebellious activities against the Ottoman authorities by conspiring with Spanish agents, who were preparing the ground for intervention that led to the battle of Lepanto. After the battle, M.M. and his brothers continued their seditious activities on Ottoman territories from their base in the Mani peninsula (Μάνη), but with the departure of the western fleet from the Adriatic and the Ionian Seas the Melissourgos brothers fled from the Morea on board a Spanish ship to Italy. They settled in the Greek community of Naples, where M.M. produced his *Chronicon Maius* and died in 1585.

## WORK

① *Μέγα Χρονικόν* (usually cited by its Latin title: *Chronicon Maius*)

The chronicle that has been attributed to the pen of George Sphrantzes (d. 1477),<sup>1</sup> attendant to Manuel II Palaeologus (r. 1391-1425), diplomat of John VIII Palaeologus (r. 1425-48), and intended Grand Chancellor of the last Greek emperor, Constantine XI Palaeologus (r. 1448-53), has come down to us in two forms: a short version, the *Chronicon Minus* and a much larger account, the *Chronicon Maius*, which incorporates the text of the *Minus* and inserts a great deal of additional material. The *Minus* is comprised mostly of relatively brief notices and seems to represent the notes that George Sphrantzes had amassed in his career until his death in 1477. It also contains a short notice on the conquest of Constantinople (May 29, 1453) that mentions the death of the emperor and the fact that Sphrantzes and other members of his family were taken prisoners during the sack. It was once believed that the *Minus* was either a later epitome of the *Maius* or that it represented the brief notes that Sphrantzes had collected during his life in the imperial entourage, which he then organized and expanded into the *Maius* in his old age.

Since 1934 scholarly efforts have demonstrated clearly that only the *Minus* is the authentic work of Sphrantzes.<sup>2</sup> The *Chronicon Maius* is, in fact, an elaboration and

## HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

expansion of the *Minus*, composed more than a century after Sphrantzes' death by M.M., the metropolitan of Monemvasia.

The *Chronicon Maius* is an ambitious work written during M.M.'s Naples years (ca. 1580)<sup>3</sup> and offers a comprehensive history of the Palaeologan dynasty up to 1477 with extensive digressions on the history of the Ottomans and a heavy emphasis on religious events. It is comprised of a prologue and four books. The *Prologue* is derivative; its main theme is the usefulness of history but it has been elaborated from a prelude that opens the narrative of the thirteenth-century historian George Akropolites. Book I deals with the origins of the Palaeologan dynasty but also offers an extensive excursus into early Ottoman history.<sup>4</sup> An awkward transition incorporates and expands the opening passages of the *Minus*. Although the authentic *Minus* covers the events of the years between 1401 and 1412 in summary fashion, M.M. treats them *in extenso* and in detail. Book I concludes with the death of Emperor Manuel II in 1425 (r. 1391-1425). Book II gives an account of the events of the reign of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus (r. 1425-48), presents elaborated versions of the information encountered in the *Minus*, and adds irrelevant digressions.

Book III has always been considered the jewel of this composition as it discusses the disastrous reign of the last Greek emperor, Constantine XI Palaeologus (r. 1448-53), and includes a detailed narrative of the operations during the siege of Constantinople by the Ottomans. By contrast, the authentic *Minus* fails to describe the siege and takes notice of the conquest in a single entry (25.8). Historians have valued this section of M.M.'s narrative, as it was supposedly composed by a member of the imperial administration and of the diplomatic corps, who had contacts with influential members of the sultan's Porte. Scholarship, however, has demonstrated beyond doubt that this section is in fact a translation and a paraphrase into Greek of another account composed in Latin by an eyewitness, Bishop Leonardo Giustiniani (d. 1359) who wrote a summary of the observations he made during the siege. The authoritative Latin *epistula* by Bishop Leonardo Giustiniani which was completed and sent to Pope Nicholas V on August 16, 1453,<sup>5</sup> still remains one of the most authoritative accounts of the defense of Constantinople in 1453. In his Greek paraphrase of the bishop's letter M.M. added his own observations, changed a number of details, and improved on Leonardo's topography of Istanbul (with which he was familiar, as he spent a year in the Patriarchate involved in litigation over ecclesiastical jurisdiction regarding his territories in the Morea).<sup>6</sup>

Book IV relates the events surrounding the Ottoman conquest of the Morea. Numerous details presented here are not found in the *Minus*, especially in connection with Monemvasia, which was M.M.'s see. Numerous digressions have been added, including an essay on the origin of earthquakes. There is a great deal of material here, both derivative and original, which deserves a closer look by modern scholarship. Extremely valuable in this section is a narrative that deals with the early patriarchate under Mehmed II (r. 1444-46, 1451-81), the installment of the first patriarch under Ottoman rule, and the origin of the so-called privileges of the Patriarchate that were

## HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

supposedly bestowed on the first patriarch by the sultan himself. Some of the information here derives from the work of Damaskenos the Stoudite (d. 1577),<sup>7</sup> with whose work M.M. must have been unquestionably familiar,<sup>8</sup> and which, independently of M.M., also found its place in the monumental *Turcograecia* by Martinus Crusius (d. 1607).<sup>9</sup>

M.M. also included a proper ending to the work. While Sphrantzes' work, the authentic *Minus*, ends abruptly after an entry in the late summer of 1477, the *Maius* ends by informing its reader that the author (i.e., supposedly Sphrantzes) wrote his account upon the insistence of prominent citizens and that he was seriously ill. It further states that this account was completed on March 29, 1488.

Perhaps the ultimate motives for the elaboration of the *Minus* into the *Maius* had to do with the desire of the bishop to elevate his family into the Greek expatriate nobility, as he found himself at pains to enforce his own fabrication that his family (whose name he improved from "Melissourgos" with its humble origins to the more notable "Melissenos") was related to Sphrantzes himself.<sup>10</sup> In his efforts to glorify his family M.M. did not hesitate to invent personalities as defenders of Constantinople in 1453, who, he claims, died heroically, at the side of the emperor on the very day of the fall of the city.<sup>11</sup>

M.M. has been generally viewed as a negative figure by modern scholarship, which has emphasized his activities as a member of a family that is notoriously known for its forging and counterfeiting activities. However, it is maybe more appropriate to think of him as a 16<sup>th</sup>-century literary figure rather than an outright plagiarist. His elaboration of the *Minus* is more than a mechanical expansion of this prototype. His "paraphrase" of the Bishop Leonardo's letter demonstrates that he was not simply a mechanical translator, as M.M.'s Greek elaboration manages to raise his Latin prototype to a level that evokes pathos and improves the presentation encountered in the Latin original.

M.M.'s elaboration of Sphrantzes' authentic work occupies a special position in the annals of Ottoman historiography as it provides a sixteenth-century bridge to the end of Byzantine historiography. Moreover, as it furnished a long narrative of the operations of the siege of Constantinople, it exercised immense influence on scholarship, as the events that it relates were purportedly written by Sphrantzes, an eyewitness who was a member of the imperial administration close to the emperor himself and had maintained personal contacts with officials at the Porte, until modern scholarship demonstrated the secondary nature of this document. The immense popularity of the *Chronicon Maius* in the Ottoman centuries attests to the high literary quality of the narrative.

## HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### ① *Μέγα Χρονικόν (Chronicon Maius)*

*Manuscripts:* The work was very popular and numerous manuscripts (especially of the seventeenth century) survive throughout the Balkans. The earliest and most important (which have been utilized in modern printed editions) include:

(1) Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, *Codex Ambrosianus P 24 (sup. gr. 613)*. 1578. Copyist Andreas Darmarios (close to MM). (2) Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, *Codex Ambrosianus P 123 sup. (gr. 641)*; 16<sup>th</sup> century; copyist John Santamaura (close to MM). (3) Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, *Codex Vallicellianus Graecus CLXXII*, fasc. 4, 17<sup>th</sup> century. (4) Turin, Biblioteca nazionale universitaria, *Codex Taurinensis B 11 20 (gr. 102 bis)*; 16<sup>th</sup> century; copied by the circle of Andreas Darmarios (close to MM). (5) Turin, Biblioteca nazionale universitaria, *Codex Taurinensis 246 (B VI 20)*. 17<sup>th</sup> century. (6) Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, *Codex Ottobonianus Graecus 260*; fols. 113-206, 16<sup>th</sup> century. (7) Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, *Codex Vaticanus Barberinianus Graecus 175*; fols. 1-97, 17<sup>th</sup> century (“*ex codice ms Leonis Allatii*”). (8) Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, *Codex Vaticanus Barberinianus Graecus 176*; fols. 1-81, 17<sup>th</sup> century.

A complete list of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts, with pertinent discussion, can be found in R. Maisano, “Il manoscritto Napoletano II E.25 e la storia della tradizione dello pseudo-Sfranze.” *Ἰταλοελληνικά: Rivista di cultura greco-moderna 2* (1989), 126-129.

*Editions & Translations:* 1) I. Bekker. *Georgius Phrantzes, Ioannes Cananus, Ioannes Anagnostes* (Bonn, 1838). It includes a Latin translation of the entire text. 2) V. Grecu. *Georgios Sphrantzes, Τὰ καθ' ἑαυτὸν καὶ τινα γεγονότα ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ, 1401-1477, cum Pseudo-Phrantzes in appendice sive Macarii Melissenis Chronicon, 1258-1481* (Bucharest, 1966). It includes a Rumanian translation of the entire text. 3) I. Papadopoulos Georgios Phrantzes: *Chronicon*, vol.1 (Leipzig, 1935). No complete translation of the *Chronicon Maius* into English exists. The section on the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II (Book III) has been translated into English: 4) Marios Philippides. *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477* (Amherst, 1980), 99-151. 5) M.G. Carroll. *A Contemporary Greek Source for the Siege of Constantinople, 1453: The Sphrantzes Chronicle* (Amsterdam, 1985).

#### *General Bibliography*

J.B. Falier-Papadopoulos. “Ἰωάννης Ζ' ὁ Παλαιολόγος καὶ τὸ Χρονικὸν τοῦ Φραντζῆ.” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 32 (1932), 257-262. J.B. Falier-Papadopoulos. “Phrantzès est-il réellement l’auteur de grand chronique qui porte son nom?” *Aktes du IV<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des études byzantines*. Известия на Българския Археологически Институт 8; *Bulletin de l’Institut Archéologique Bulgare* 9-10, vol. 1 (Sofia, 1935-1936), 177-189. F. Dölger. “Ein literarischer und diplomatischer Fäl-

## HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

scher des 16. Jahrhunderts: Metropolit Makarios von Monembasia.” *Otto Glaunig zum 60. Geburtstag, Festgabe aus Wissenschaft und Bibliothek* (Leipzig, 1936), 25-36 [= *Byzantinische Diplomatie* (Ettal, 1956), 371-383]. S. Binon. “L’histoire et la légende de deux chrysobulles d’Andronic II en faveur de Monembasie: Macaire ou Phrantzès?” *Echos d’Orient* 37 (1938), 274-311. J.B. Falier-Papadopoulos. “Über ‘Maius’ und ‘Minus’ des Georgios Phrantzes und über die Randnoten des angeblichen Pachomios.” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938), 323-331. J.B. Falier-Papadopoulos. “Bemerkungen zu dem *cod. Hierosol.* 38.” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938), 68-70. J.B. Falier-Papadopoulos. “Η περί Αλώσεως τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Ἱστορία Λεονάρδου τοῦ Χίου,” *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 15 (1939), 85-95. R.-J. Loenertz. “La date de la terre θ’ de Manuel Paléologue et l’inauthenticité du ‘Chronicon Maius’ des Georges Phrantzès.” *Echos d’Orient* 39 (1940-1942), 91-99. R.-J. Loenertz. “Autour du Chronicon Maius attribué à Georges Phrantzès.” *Miscellanea G. Mercati II, Studi e Testi* 123 (Vatican City, 1946), 273-311. I.K. Khasiotes. *Μακάριος, Θεόδωρος καὶ Νικηφόρος οἱ Μελισσηνοὶ (Μελισσουργοὶ) (16<sup>ος</sup>-17<sup>ος</sup> αἰ.)* (Thessalonica, 1966). I.K. Khasiotes. “Ἐνα Ἰδιότυπο Εἰκονογραφημένο Κείμενο τοῦ Ἰωάννου Ἁγιομαύρα (1578).” *Hellenika* 19 (1966), 108-113. M. Carroll. “Notes on the Authorship of the ‘Siege’ Section of the Chronicon Maius of Pseudo-Phrantzes, Book III.” *Byzantion* 41 (1971), 28-44; 42 (1972), 5-22; 43 (1973), 30-38; and 44 (1974), 17-22. Marios Philippides. “The Fall of Constantinople: Bishop Leonard and the Greek Accounts.” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 22 (1981), 287-300. E.D. Dzhagatspanian. “Мировоззрение Византийского Историка XV в. Георгия Сфрандзи,” *Кавказ и Византия* 3 (1982): 45-63. E.D. Dzhagatspanian. “Некоторые Замечания по Поводу Авторства Большой Хроники Псевдо-Сфрандзи,” *Византийский Временник* 43 (1982), 45-63. Marios Philippides. “Σύγχρονες Ἐρευνες στὰ Κείμενα τοῦ Σφραντζῆ.” *Παρνασσός* 25 (1983), 94-99. Marios Philippides. “An ‘Unknown’ Source for Book III of the *Chronicon Maius* by Pseudo-Sphrantzes.” *Byzantine Studies/Etudes byzantines* 10 (1984), 174-183. R. Maisano. “Il manoscritto Napoletano II E.25 e la storia della tradizione dello pseudo-Sfranze.” *Ἰταλοελληνικά: Rivista di cultura greco-moderna* 2 (1989), 103-121. Marios Philippides. “The Name Sphrantzes in Ubertino Pusculo.” *Ὄνόματα: Revue Onomastique* 13 (1989-1990), 208-211. T. Ganchou. “Le Mésazon Démétrius Paléologue Cantacuzène a-t-il figuré parmi les défenseurs du siège de Constantinople (29 Mai 1453)?” *Revue des études byzantines* 52 (1994), 245-272. T. Ganchou. “Sur quelques erreurs relatives aux dernier défenseurs grecs de Constantinople en 1453.” *Θησαυρίσματα: Περιοδικὸν τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἰνστιτούτου Βυζαντινῶν καὶ Μεταβυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν τῆς Βενετίας* 25 (1995), 61-82. Marios Philippides. “The Fall of Constantinople, 1453: Bishop Leonardo Giustiniani and his Italian Followers.” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 29 (1998), 189-227.

## HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

<sup>1</sup> On the life of George Sphrantzes (1401-1477), cf. V. Grecu, “Georgios Sphrantzes: Leben und Werk - Makarios Melissenos und sein Werk - Die Ausgaben,” *Byzantinoslavica* 26 (1965), 62-73; V. Grecu, “Das Memoirenwerk des Georgios Sphrantzes,” in *Actes du XIII<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des études byzantines* (Ohrid, 1961), 327-341; and Marios Philippides, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477* (Amherst, 1980), esp. 17f. The controversy in regard to his name, which is sometimes cited as “Phrantzes” and sometimes as “Sphrantzes” is rather old. To Italians at least, this man was known as “Sphrantzes” and not as “Phrantzes.” To differentiate this author from his elaborator, sometimes M.M. is referred to as “Pseudo-Sphrantzes” or as “Pseudo-Phrantzes.”

<sup>2</sup> Suspicions on the authenticity of the *Maius* were first expressed by J.B. Falier-Papadopoulos, who showed that the section of Book III dealing with the siege of Constantinople depended heavily on the Latin *epistulalaviso* of August 16, 1453, by Bishop Leonardo Giustiniani in “Ἡ περὶ Ἀλώσεως τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Ἱστορία Λεονάρδου τοῦ Χίου.” His further research confirmed his initial suspicions. The identification of the elaborator/forgery was established through the efforts of F. Dölger (“Ein literarischer und diplomatischer Fälscher des 16. Jahrhunderts: Metropolit Makarios von Monembasia”) and R.-J. Loenertz (“La date de la terre θ’ de Manuel Paléologue” and “Autour du Chronicon Maius”). This widely accepted position was later questioned in a series of articles by M.G. Carroll (“Notes on the Authorship of the ‘Siege’ Section of the Chronicon Maius of Pseudo-Phrantzes, Book III”), who speculated that M.M. actually used a now lost version of the siege by Sphrantzes himself. In spite of the ingenious arguments (none of which were linguistic or textual), her speculative attempt to elevate the siege section of the *Maius* to respectability as a primary source proved unconvincing. The suggestion that M.M. may have expanded a different version of the *Minus*, lost to us, which dealt with the siege of 1453 and which was composed by Sphrantzes himself, lacks credibility and most arguments she offered are based on omissions of events in both the *Minus* and the *Maius*. Most importantly, this speculation fails to recognize the importance of Leonardo’s text in the composition of the siege section of the *Maius*. Modern research has thoroughly confirmed the elaboration/forgery carried out by M.M. and demonstrated that Leonardo indeed the primary source of Pseudo-Sphrantzes, Languschi-Dolfin, Francesco Sansovino, and of the Greek *Anonymous Barberini Chronicle*. Cf., among others, Marios Philippides, “The Fall of Constantinople: Bishop Leonard and the Greek Accounts,” “Σύγχρονες Ἐρευνες στὰ Κείμενα τοῦ Σφραντζῆ,” “An ‘Unknown’ Source for Book III of the *Chronicon Maius* by Pseudo-Sphrantzes,” “The Fall of Constantinople 1453: Bishop Leonardo Giustiniani and his Italian Followers”; T. Ganchou, “Le Mésazon Démétrius Paléologue,” and “Sur quelques erreurs relatives aux dernier défenseurs grecs de Constantinople en 1453;” and E.D. Dzhagatspanian, “Некоторые замечания по Поводу Авторства Большой Хроники Псевдо-Сфрандзи.”

<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps no accident that the earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Maius* were copied in Naples, where M.M. had been very active. In addition, the copyists were known acquaintances and fellow forgers of M.M. The manuscripts in question include the *Ambros. P 123 sup (gr. 641)*, which was copied by none other than John Santamaura (16<sup>th</sup> cen.), a well-known associate of M.M. A second manuscript of the work, the *Taurin. B II 20 (gr. 102 bis)*, had been copied by the circle of Andreas Darmarios (16<sup>th</sup> cen.), another associate of M.M. Also, in 1578, Darmarios himself copied the *Codex Ambros. P 24 (sup. gr. 613)*, which found its way, early on, to the library of the cardinal of Burgos and Toledo. Moreover, there is the *Codex Monac. gr. 329 (olim 203)*, which has a certain Neapolitan origin, as well as the *Codex Neapol. II E 25*. All of these manuscripts, the earliest *codices* of the *Maius*, have a definite association with M.M. himself, with his close associates, or with the area where M.M. put the final touches on his elaboration. For M.M.’s associates (and perhaps contributors to the elaboration of the *Minus* into the *Maius*), cf. I.K. Khasiotis, “Ἐνα Ἰδιότυπο Εἰκονογραφημένο Κείμενο τοῦ Ἰωάννου Ἀγιομαύρα (1578);” R. Maisano, “Il manoscritto Napoletano II E.25 e la storia della tradizione dello pseudo-Sfranze”; and, more exhaustively, Marios Philippides and Walter K.

## HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

Hanak, *The Pen and the Sword: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies on the Siege of Constantinople (1453)*, forthcoming, Ch. 3.

<sup>4</sup> It is clear that in his presentation of early Ottoman history M.M. had not availed himself of an admirable work on Ottoman ethnography that had been earlier produced by the brilliant linguist and Greco-Venetian diplomat who had often traveled to Istanbul, who was, in fact, the first western visitor after the conquest: Nikolaos Sekoundinos, who composed his *Nicolai Secundini de Familia Otthomanorum Epitome* for Pope Pius II (r. 1458-63). For a modern edition of the Latin text (with English translation and commentary), cf. Marios Philippides, *Mehmed II the Conqueror and the Fall of the Franco-Byzantine Levant to the Ottoman Turks: Some Western Views and Testimonies* (Tempe, 2007), 55-93.

<sup>5</sup> Leonardo Giustiniani, *De Expugnatione Constantinopolis (Patrologiae Cursus Completus 159, col. 944: Datum ex Chio 16 Augusti, MCDLIII.*

<sup>6</sup> On his topographical knowledge of Constantinople, cf. Marios Philippides, “The Fall of Constantinople: Bishop Leonard and the Greek Accounts.”

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the entry on [Damaskenos the Stoudite](#) in *Historians of the Ottoman Empire*.

<sup>8</sup> Marios Philippides. “An ‘Unknown’ Source for Book III of the *Chronicon Maius* by Pseudo-Sphrantzes.” *Byzantine Studies/Etudes byzantines* 10 (1984), 174-183.

<sup>9</sup> Martinus Crusius, *Turcograecia libri Octo à Martino Crusio, in Academia Tybigensi Graeco & Latino Professore, vtraque lingua edita. Qvibus Graecorum status sub imperio Turcico, in Politia & Ecclesia, Oeconomia, & Scholis, iam inde ab amissa Constantinopoli, ad haec usque tempora, luculenter describitur* (Basel, [1584]).

<sup>10</sup> For all documents pertaining to this notorious family, cf. I.K. Khasiotes, *Μακάριος, Θεόδωρος και Νικηφόρος οί Μελισσηνοί (Μελισσοουργοί)*. For M.M.’s counterfeiting activities, cf. S. Binon. “L’histoire et la légende de deux chrysobulles d’Andronic II en fateur de Monembasie: Macaire ou Phrantzès?” *Echos d’Orient* 37 (1938), 274-311.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak, *The Pen and the Sword*, Ch. 3.

Marios PHILIPPIDES

November 2008