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A Nostalgic Gaze Towards Antiquity: The So-Called ‘Palaiologan Renaissance’¹

Francesco Monticini

Abstract

This article offers a historical and cultural analysis of the so-called ‘Palaiologan Renaissance.’ In the author’s view, the Byzantines found themselves dealing with a profound identity crisis after the Fourth Crusade. Now that the Polis was occupied by foreign invaders for the first time in history, it became urgent for Byzantine people to re-read and reinterpret – at least in part – the tradition that derived from the Holy Scriptures, according to which the Roman Empire’s fall was the first sign of the end of the world. The author argues that the *fièvre de classicisme* of those scholars calling themselves ‘Hellenes’ in the early Palaiologan era was one of the reactions that the Byzantine ruling class developed to cope with this unprecedented historical turn of events. The Hellenes believed that ancient Graeco-Roman wisdom would allow them to find the correct interpretative key to reality and help them to deal with the issues of the moment more effectively. Finally, the author maintains that the Hellenes used cultural memory in a very different way from the Western humanists: firstly, the Hellenes’ classicism was based on a linear rather than cyclical concept of history; secondly, it did not imply any conflict between different social classes, as was the case in the West.

Keywords

Palaiologan Era; Cultural Memory; Humanism; Renaissance; Crisis

In the *Secretum*,² Petrarch reveals his personal crisis to St Augustine. There is also a woman present – Truth – but she listens to their entire dialogue in silence. Petrarch is tormented by his *accidia*, described by Augustine as *funesta quedam pestis animi*.³ In order to convey his internal anguish, the poet refers to Ypsilon – the ‘letter of the Pythagoreans’ – which had long been the traditional emblem of the two paths of vice and virtue:⁴

¹ This text has been translated by Emma Mandley.

² Petrarch probably wrote this work between 1347 and 1353. For more details, see Francesco Petrarca, *My Secret Book*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas Mann, The I Tatti Renaissance Library (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. VII–XVI.

³ *Secretum*, II. 13. 1 (Mann, p. 112).

⁴ Petrarch’s source is Lactantius, *Institutiones Divinae*, VI. 3. 6–18 (Lactance, *Institutions divines*, VI, ed. by Christiane Ingreteau, Sources chrétiennes 509 [Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2007], pp. 134–140).

Fr. En in ictu oculi trepidantis annorum meorum numerum seriemque recensui.

Aug. Quid reperis igitur?

Fr. Literę velut pithagoreę, quam audivi et legi, non inanem esse doctrinam. Cum enim recto tramite ascendens ad bivium pervenissem modestus et sobrius, et dextram iuberer arripere, ad levam – incautus dicam an contumax? – deflexi [...].⁵

Fr. In the blink of an eye I've reviewed every year of my life in order.

Aug. And what do you find?

Fr. That the theory of the Pythagorean letter – which I have heard and read about – has something to be said for it. When I arrived at the crossroads by the straight path, modestly and soberly, and was ordered to turn to the right, I turned aside – whether out of carelessness or arrogance I don't know – to the left [...].⁶

Petrarch is experiencing a crisis because he senses that he is at a crossroads – a situation that makes him feel truly anguished.⁷ He is perfectly aware that there is only one correct choice to make and he even knows which one it is. Yet his *accidia* means that in the end he cannot help turning left.

Byzantium at the Crossroads

But what exactly is a crisis? From an etymological perspective, the Greek word *κρίσις* derives from the verb *κρίνω*, which means 'to separate', as well as 'to choose' and 'to judge'. Thus a *κρίσις* may be defined as the 'turning point of a disease' or a 'sudden change for better or worse'.⁸ In other words, a crisis may be seen as the period of reflection that comes before a decision or a choice and after some trauma. Since it implies a decision that cannot be put off for long, it generally provokes anguish.

In 1204, during the Fourth Crusade, Constantinople was conquered by the Latins. It was the first time in history that the Polis of Constantine I was overthrown and sacked by foreign invaders.⁹ The event produced a vast symbolic echo in the collective Byzantine imaginary. To understand the impact of such a phenomenon, we need to be aware of the

⁵ *Secretum*, III. 5. 8–9 (Mann, pp. 170, 172).

⁶ English translation in Mann, pp. 171, 173.

⁷ For the link between choice and anguish (in the view of Søren Kierkegaard, anguish stems from the awareness that a choice is possible), see Francesco Monticini, 'Le rêve et l'énigme. L'oniromancie dans les commentaires byzantins du traité *Sur les songes* de Synésios', in *Savoirs prédictifs et techniques divinatoires de l'Antiquité tardive à Byzance*, ed. by Paul Magdalino and Andrei Timotin (Seyssel: La pomme d'or, 2019), pp. 435–446 (pp. 439, 443, nn. 19, 29).

⁸ *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 997.

⁹ For the Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople, see especially Michael Angold, *The Fourth Crusade: Event and Context* (Harlow: Longman, 2003); Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); see also the collection of essays *Urbs Capta: The Fourth Crusade and Its Consequences*, ed. by Angeliki Laiou (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005).

traditional concept of history that applied in the βασιλεία. It was essentially founded on the prophetic revelations contained in the Holy Scriptures. Based on the dogma of the Parousia, Christianity viewed history as a straight line leading to the end of time. The Byzantines, as Orthodox Christians, mostly adopted this concept and searched the Holy Scriptures for signs predicting of the end of the world. In the Old Testament, scholars focused primarily on Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.¹⁰ Some late explanations of this prophecy suggested that the βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων would be the last empire to exist on Earth, after the Assyrian-Babylonian, Persian and Macedonian empires.¹¹ In the New Testament, however, Byzantine scholars paid particular attention to a passage in the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Thessalonians,¹² on the basis of which it was thought that the Antichrist was 'restrained' by the Roman Empire, whose Fall would therefore represent the first sign of the world's end.¹³

In any event, Byzantine military power was not completely obliterated after the Crusaders occupied Constantinople. In 1261, as we know, the forces of Nicaea managed to reconquer the Second Rome. The regent Michael VIII Palaiologos then ordered the blinding of the legitimate emperor of Nicaea, John IV Laskaris, and became the sole sovereign of a restored Byzantine Empire.¹⁴

But what was the empire of the Palaiologan dynasty? Is it possible to view it as the legitimate continuation of the empire of the Komnenoi and Angeloi, so abruptly interrupted by the Crusaders' conquest? It is not at all simple to give a definitive answer to this question. Even modern academic literature is split. The Italian historian Mario Gallina, for example, dates the end of the Byzantine Empire as a (proclaimed) universal empire to

¹⁰ Daniel 2. 36–45 (*Septuaginta*, XVI.2 [*Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*], ed. by Joseph Ziegler [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999], pp. 254, 256, 258).

¹¹ Paolo Odorico, 'La *translatio imperii* nella letteratura imperiale di età giustiniana. Un caso di dibattito identitario', in *De Imperiis: l'idea di impero universale e la successione degli imperi nell'antichità*, ed. by Lia Raffaella Cresci and Francesca Gazzano (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2018), pp. 291–312; see also Claudia Rapp, 'Hellenic Identity, Romanitas, and Christianity in Byzantium', in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. by Katerina Zacharia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 127–147 (p. 145). To cite just a few examples: in the time of Justinian, Chorikios of Gaza stated that the Roman/Byzantine Empire was the last in history; in the 10th century Andreas Salos prophesied that Constantinople would exist until the end of the world; two centuries later, Constantine Manasses hoped that the New Rome could continue to grow until the end; Ihor Ševčenko, 'The Decline of Byzantium Seen through the Eyes of Its Intellectuals', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 15 (1961), 169–186 (p. 183).

¹² II Thessalonians 2. 3–7 (*Novum Testamentum graecae et latinae*, ed. by Gianfranco Noll [Vatican City: Libreria editrice vaticana, 2001²], p. 1078).

¹³ Marie-Hélène 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*, ed. by Benjamin Lellouch and Stéphane Yerasimos (Paris: Harmattan, 1999), pp. 55–73.

¹⁴ Deno John Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West, 1258–1282: A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 13–115; *Le monde byzantin*, III (*Byzance et ses voisins, 1204–1453*), ed. by Angeliki Laiou and Cécile Morrisson (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2011), pp. 13–15.

1204.¹⁵ In our view, all that can be firmly said about this is that the Fourth Crusade was the starting point for a period of deep crisis for the people of Byzantium. Since the Polis had fallen – for the first time in history – it had become pressing for the Byzantines to reread and reinterpret – at least in part – the tradition deriving from the Holy Scriptures and to reconcile it with contemporary events. This was clearly not an easy undertaking. Although Constantinople was reconquered by its former occupants, the re-established βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων was constantly threatened by armed schismatics in the west and infidel hordes in the east (as the Byzantines viewed, respectively, the Latins and the Turks). It was not simple to establish whether God was effectively abandoning his chosen people and the end of days was really approaching. However, most Byzantines – certainly the most educated among them – would surely have been asking themselves these questions.

For all these reasons, we are absolutely convinced that the first Palaiologan era was truly a critical period. The Fourth Crusade was the trauma that sparked the crisis and the ensuing decades – until at least the 1340s, as we will shortly discover – represented the typical stage of reflection.

After 1204, the main question facing the Byzantine ruling class was whether or not it was appropriate to adopt the traditional historical model in order to provide a logical explanation for contemporary events. In other words, after the Fourth Crusade, the Byzantines had to try and answer the following question: could the ecumenical Christian empire, founded by Constantine I in the fourth century, be restored and continue to fulfil its historical role (to embody and preserve Christian truth) until the end of days? Some people answered that it could, others that it could not.

As in the case of the Pythagorean Ypsilon, the path divided into two branches: two possible responses to a single dilemma. On the one hand, the ‘path of man’ (or humanism) proposed an affirmative response to the dilemma, as we shall see, imagining the restoration of the former universal empire. On the other hand, the ‘path of God’, based on the mystical doctrines of Gregory Palamas, proposed instead that recognition of the true body of the Saviour on Earth, willed by God to preserve Truth until the end of days, was to be found in the Orthodox Church – and no longer in a decadent empire. The final choice of the crisis period, therefore, should in our view be assigned to the 1340s, after the civil war (1341–1347) between John VI Kantakouzenos and the guardians of John V Palaiologos – especially his mother Anna of Savoy and the μέγας δούξ Alexios Apokaukos – when Palamism prevailed over its opponents.¹⁶ In any event, in this article we will confine ourselves to consideration of the first, humanistic response and attempt to describe the

¹⁵ Mario Gallina, *Bisanzio. Storia di un impero (secoli IV–XIII)* (Rome: Carocci, 2008); Id., *Incoronati da Dio. Per una storia del pensiero politico bizantino* (Rome: Viella, 2016), p. 174.

¹⁶ It was in 1351, however, during a synod over which John VI Kantakouzenos presided, that Palamite theology became the official doctrine of Orthodoxy. Gregory Palamas was canonized in 1368.

profound conceptual reasons for this re-use of cultural memory. Finally we will propose – albeit very briefly – a comparison with the Western Renaissance.¹⁷

The Last Byzantine ‘Renaissance’

When Michael VIII entered the palace of Blachernae in 1261, he had significant difficulties getting himself recognised as the restored βασιλεὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων. After all, he was effectively a usurper with respect to the dynasty of the Nicaean Empire.¹⁸ Moreover, he did not represent the only existing Byzantine authority, despite controlling the Polis.¹⁹ Michael also had to guard against the many perils that came from the West, in particular the claim to the throne of Constantinople by the ambitious King of Sicily, Charles of Anjou, younger brother to the king of France, Louis IX.²⁰

To tackle all these problems, Michael VIII adopted a propaganda strategy that included the concept of the restoration of a universal empire. Going back to antiquity, this ideology included the idea of a Roman and Christian Mediterranean pitted against

¹⁷ For an analysis of the second response to the crisis, which we have described as the ‘path of God’, and for a comparison between the two alternatives, see Francesco Monticini, *Caduta e recupero. La crisi di età paleologa tra umanesimo e mistica*, Dossiers byzantins 19 (Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS, 2021), pp. 210–221.

¹⁸ In fact the patriarch of Nicaea, Arsenios Autoreianos, defended the rights of the legitimate Laskaris dynasty and excommunicated Michael VIII, causing the so-called ‘Arsenite schism’ (for more details, see Savvas Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium, 1204–1453* [Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011], esp. pp. 13–44).

¹⁹ For example, the Empire of Trebizond continued to claim imperial status until 1461.

²⁰ Like the Normans before him, Charles aspired to occupy Byzantine territories. To do so, he wasted no time in coming to an agreement with Baldwin II, the last Latin emperor of Constantinople, whom he intended to restore to the throne (Geanakoplos, *Emperor*, pp. 189–257; Laiou and Morrisson, p. 16).

barbarian peoples.²¹ In other words, imperial propaganda implied a claim to the recovery of the prestigious Graeco-Roman heritage associated with forbears alive in antiquity. This was, in fact, the only political policy that could protect the restored βασιλεὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων from both internal schisms and external claims, in that it reinforced his power, attributing him with a universally recognized authority. In line with this policy, Michael VIII needed to secure an alliance in the West. The reunification of the Eastern Church with the Roman Church that occurred in 1274, during the Second Council of Lyon, must be interpreted in this light.²² On the one hand, this diplomatic move meant that Michael VIII could be recognized formally by all the Catholic authorities as the legitimate Byzantine βασιλεὺς (as head of the Orthodox Church); and on the other hand it enabled him to successfully contain the claims made by Charles of Anjou.²³

Although this (political) propaganda strategy allowed Michael VIII to stem the perils of the moment with immediate effect, there was no way that his restored empire could live up to the dream of a classical ecumenical empire. The reunification of the Churches in fact meant an act of submission by the Byzantine Church to the Roman Church and that is how it was perceived in Byzantium. Although the emperor even resorted to violent means

²¹ This ideology had its origins in antiquity; it certainly formed part of the Roman legacy of Byzantium (Silvia Ronchey, *Lo stato bizantino* [Turin: Einaudi, 2002], pp. 77–80; Ioannis Stouraitis, ‘Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 107.1 [2014], 175–220 [p. 218]). For Michael VIII’s politics (and their limitations), see Donald Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453* (London: Hart-Davis, 1972), pp. 45–96; for the emperor’s propaganda, see Michael Angold, ‘Byzantine “Nationalism” and the Nicaean Empire’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 1 (1975), 49–70 (pp. 68–69); Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 98–115. In the speech he made after the reconquest of Constantinople – as reported by George Pachymeres II. 30 (Georges Pachymères, *Relations historiques*, I, ed. by Albert Failler and Vitalien Laurent, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 24, 5 [Paris: Les belles lettres, 1984], p. 211) – Michael declared: τὸ γὰρ πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα πραγματευσαμένους περὶ αὐτῆς καὶ διὰ τοσούτων περαιοθέντας δεινῶν, μηδὲν ἐξανῆναι, πολλαπλασίους ὄντας τῶν ἐνοικούντων, δεικνύντος Θεοῦ ἦν ὡς ἔργον ἐκείνου καὶ μόνου ἐξ ἐλέους ἔσται τὸ δοῦναι, οὐδὲν δὴ καὶ τὸ λαβεῖν ἐπιστεύετο. Ἐφθασε τοίνυν ἡ τῆς εὐσπλαγχνίας κυρία, καὶ τὸ ξένον, ἡμῶν βασιλευόντων τῶν τις ἂν εἴποι ἀγαθὸν ἐχόντων. Καὶ δὴ εὐχαριστεῖν ἐστὶ δίκαιον ἀπολαβόντας τὴν πατρίδα καὶ γε ἐλπίζειν, ὥσπερ, καταπεσοῦσης ταύτης, συγκατέπιπτον τὰ λοιπὰ, οὕτως, ἀνακληθείσης αὐτῆς, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἀνακληθῆσεσθαι ταῦτα (‘If we have undergone so much fatigue trying to take Constantinople without securing any result (although we were greater in number than the defenders), it is because God wished us to recognize that the possession of the City is a grace that depends only on his bounty. He has reserved this to our reign through his grace, which obliges us to eternal appreciation, and, in according it to us, he makes us hope that with Constantinople we may retake the provinces that were lost with it’. English translation in Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society and Civilisation Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 37).

²² For the Second Council of Lyon, see *Dossier grec de l’Union de Lyon (1273–1277)*, ed. by Vitalien Laurent and Jean Darrouzès (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1976); Geanakoplos, *Emperor*, pp. 258–276.

²³ Although Byzantium was really only protected from Western threats by the so-called Sicilian Vespers (1282) and finally the death of Charles (1285) (Geanakoplos, *Emperor*, pp. 277–67; Laiou and Morriison, p. 17).

to force his subjects to accept the reform,²⁴ when he died in 1282 his son Andronikos II wasted no time in repudiating it.

Since a classicist spirit was already widespread in the erudite circles of the Nicaean Empire,²⁵ we may be sure that the policies of Michael VIII – springing from his need to confront prevailing difficulties – were in tune with the contemporary cultural debate. However, the emperor’s propaganda must in turn have helped to strengthen this zeitgeist. This led to the cultural phenomenon, typical of the Palaiologan age, that modern scholars call *fièvre de classicisme*; in other words, an eager new interest in antiquity and in the Graeco-Roman legacy.²⁶

Classicism – by which we mean an author or style’s adherence to a standard typical of a past age and regarded not only as ‘classical’ but also as ‘classic’²⁷ – was certainly a trait that characterized the Byzantine civilization from Late Antiquity onwards. During the Palaiologan age, however, this phenomenon acquired a new meaning: it became newly relevant – newly ‘urgent’, as it were. This was the effect of the crisis. Before the Fourth Crusade, the Byzantine ‘line of history’ had never encountered any real critical turning point. Consequently, the Byzantines had never experienced any historical ‘break’ with the past and had never seen themselves as belonging to a new age, different from that of ancient Athens and ancient Rome. It could be said that before the Fourth Crusade most Byzantine authors had always seen the classical works that they revisited²⁸ as belonging to a shared historical dimension. Of course, the ‘trauma’ that occurred in 1204 was not a true ‘break’ in the Byzantine imaginary; as is well known, the concept of the ‘medieval’ never developed in Byzantium – it was more typical of the Western Renaissance.²⁹ Nevertheless, the Fourth Crusade represented the first real turning point in the history of the Eastern Empire; afterwards, the legacy of antiquity was never again viewed solely as something to be preserved and transmitted to posterity, but also became a lost asset that must be

²⁴ Edmund Boleslaw Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance, 1261–c. 1360* (Leiden; Boston; Cologne: Brill, 2000), p. 86.

²⁵ Above all, the school of Nikephoros Blemmydes. For more about this author, see Ihor Ševčenko, ‘Nicéphore Blemmydès. Autobiographies (1264 et 1265)’, in *La civiltà bizantina dal XII al XV secolo*, ed. by André Guillou (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1982), pp. 111–137; Nicéphore Blemmydès, *Œuvres Théologiques*, I, ed. by Michel Stavrou, Sources Chrétiennes 517 (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2007), pp. 35–121.

²⁶ Most scholars dedicated themselves to ancient Greek literature, but some also focused on Latin literature: a famous example is that of Maximos Planoudes. For a complete list of his Greek translations of Latin works, see Sophia Mergiali, *L’enseignement et les lettrés pendant l’époque des Paléologues, 1261–1453* (Athens: Société des amis du peuple, centre d’études byzantines, 1996), p. 36, n. 109.

²⁷ The adjective ‘classic’ is used here in the sense of something that is ‘standard or best’, ‘of the highest quality’. <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-italian/classic>> [accessed 1 August 2022].

²⁸ Typical Byzantine literary re-use of past works has been described by Paolo Odorico as the ‘*cultura della syllogè*’: Paolo Odorico, ‘La cultura della συλλογή 1) Il cosiddetto enciclopedismo bizantino. 2) Tavole del sapere di Giovanni Damasceno’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 83.1 (1990), 1–21; Id., ‘Cadre d’exposition / cadre de pensée: la culture du recueil’, in *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium?*, ed. by Peter van Deun and Caroline Macé, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 212 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), pp. 89–107.

²⁹ Fryde, pp. 388–398. Western humanists had a different – circular – concept of history: see below.

recovered. Assuming that the βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων was truly the ecumenical empire ordained by God to preserve Christian truth until the end of days, how could the Byzantines of the Palaiologan age continue to fulfil this task if not by imitating the ancients, who had subdued most other populations and had made their empire (the ancient Roman Empire) the most powerful on earth? If classicism, before the Fourth Crusade, had been a cultural practice that implied no critical significance, in the Palaiologan era it became a potential solution to the crisis. It was thought that copying, studying and commenting on classical authors would enable a grasp on what it was that enabled the ancient Roman Empire to become so great. Clearly, the ancients had subdued other peoples not only by force of arms, but also through the superiority of their culture. As a result, it was impossible to separate military and cultural supremacy. In short, it was thought that ‘extracting’ ancient Graeco-Roman wisdom from classical authors³⁰ would yield the right interpretative key to reality, so that contemporary problems could be addressed more effectively.

However, since Michael VIII could not afford to pursue the dream of the ecumenical empire, the *fièvre de classicisme* that absorbed most Byzantine scholars of the Palaiologan age could bring no tangible results. We have already alluded to the Byzantine concept of history: based on the expectation of the Second Coming, every event was necessarily considered irreversible. It was therefore inevitable that contradiction should cast a shadow over this cultural endeavour, since it is impossible to retrieve something from the past while adhering to a historical model that prevents any form of retrieval. The wisdom extracted from classical authors could perhaps help to provide a logical explanation of current events, but did not allow the difficulties actually to be addressed. This is why the classicism of the Palaiologan age took on a whiff of nostalgia: antiquity could be studied, analysed, ultimately mourned, but could not really be retrieved. The hands of history’s clocks could not turn backwards: Byzantium’s decline – and its inferiority complex in relation to the past³¹ – was thus without remedy.³²

In this vein, the eminent scholar Nikephorus Gregoras wrote as follows in his *Byzantine History*:

³⁰ Many scholars of the Palaiologan age realized that, in their time, the Byzantines had lost high level skills in subjects in which the ancients had conversely excelled (such as astronomy): see Francesco Monticini, ‘Fra Bisanzio e l’Islam. Lo studio degli astri lungo la Via del Deserto’, in *Bisanzio nello spazio e nel tempo. Costantinopoli, la Siria*, ed. by Silvia Ronchey and Francesco Monticini, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 307 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2019), pp. 149–167.

³¹ Ševčenko, *The Decline*, p. 171.

³² In the Monticini monograph, *Caduta e recupero*, pp. 203–206, the author compares the ‘whiff of nostalgia’ – or the sense of decadence – that was a feature of ‘Hellenism’ in the Palaiologan age with the attraction of ruins and rocky landscapes typical of 18th century classicism, making particular reference to pre-Romantic authors such as Goethe, Hölderlin and Foscolo. On the basis of this comparison, he describes the classicism of the Palaiologan age as ‘archaeological’.

κρίματα γὰρ εἶναι ταῦτα θεοῦ πάντας θνητοὺς λογισμοὺς ὑπερβαίνοντα, εἰ μὴ ποῦ τις ἐξ εἰκασίας τινὸς στοχαζόμενος φάσκει παλαιωθεῖσαν κακίᾳ τὴν γῆν, καὶ δευσοποιοῖς τισι καπηλευθεῖσαν κηλίσι, καθαρὸν τε καὶ πάσης χαμερποῦς ἐμβριθείας ὑπέρτερον χαρίσασθαι βουληθέντος ταύτῃ πετρὸν, ἴν' ἐλευθέριον καὶ μετέωρον καὶ εἰρήνης ὀψέ ποτε ἀναπνεύσῃ τερπνότητα, εὐνομίας καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀγομένη κανόσι καὶ στάθμαις.³³

These are God's decrees, which surpass any human reasoning; unless someone, relying on conjecture, states that God wished to provide this earth – grown old in evil and corrupted by indelible marks – with a wing pure and loftier than all material weight, so that the earth – free and elevated – might inhale the pleasantness of peace, at this late point in time, and comply with the rules and laws of equity and justice.³⁴

Likewise, his teacher Theodore Metochites asserted:

ἀλλ' ἡμῖν ἄρα τοῖς ὀψέ τῶν χρόνων νῦν εἶναι πειρωμένοις τοῦ βίου, οὐκ ἔστιν ὀπηροῦν τῷ λόγῳ χρῆσθαι, εἴ τις ἀμέλει καὶ ὀτιοῦν χρῆσθαι δύναιτο [...]. Οὕτω δυστυχοῦμεν οἱ περὶ λόγους νῦν πόρρω πάνυ τοι τοῦ καιροῦ τὰ τῆς ἀφωνίας [...].³⁵

For us who are experiencing life now, late in history, it is not possible to use speech in any way whatsoever, even if someone should indeed have the ability of using it. [...] So unfortunate are we intellectuals nowadays, living late in time with regard to the impossibility of speech [...].³⁶

Metochites even doubted that the βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων was really the last empire on earth. He did not actually challenge the traditional historical model (which, as we know, had history as a straight line composed of irreversible events) – and precisely because of this experienced a feeling of melancholy and decadence – but adopted a view that was relativist,

³³ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historia byzantina*, XIII. 13. 1 (*Nicephori Gregorae Historiae Byzantinae*, II, ed. by Immanuel Bekker and Ludwig Schopen, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* 19 [Bonn: impensis Ed. Weberi, 1830], p. 687).

³⁴ English translation by the author. Compare this text with the following passage from Joseph Bryennios (Iosef Bryennios, *Ta eurethenta*, ed. by Eugenios Boulgaris [Leipzig: 1768 (repr. Thessaloniki: Ekdotikos oikos Bas. Regoroulou, 1991)], p. 129): εἶτα τοῦτων οὕτως ἐχόντων μετάθεσιν πίστεως πράξει ἡμεῖς ἀνεξόμεθα; καὶ ταῦτα μετὰ τὸ παραδραμεῖν τοσοῦτους κινδύνους, καὶ ὑπομείναι τοσαῦτα δεινά, νῦν ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ τῷ βαθεῖ τούτῳ γήρα, ὅτε ἡμῖν οὐδὲν ἄλλο προσδοκᾶται, ἢ τοὺς τῆς εὐσεβείας καὶ καρτερίας ὅσον οὐπω στεφάνους ἀπολαβεῖν; ('This being the case, are we going to tolerate a change of our faith? Are we going to tolerate it, after we have overcome so many dangers, after we have borne so many difficulties, now, at the end of the world, in this deep old age, when we do not expect anything other than getting a reward almost immediately for our piety and perseverance?' [English translation by the author]). See Ševčenko, *The Decline*, p. 182, n. 67.

³⁵ Theodoros Metochites, *Semeioseis Gnomikai*, I. 1. 3 (*Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy. Semeioseis Gnomikai 1–26 & 71*, ed. by Karin Hult [Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 2002], pp. 20, 24).

³⁶ English translation in Hult, pp. 21, 25.

as opposed to eschatological (Metochites seems also to return to the traditional interpretation of Daniel's prophecy):³⁷

ἤδη δέ τινες καὶ παρὰ πλείστοις ἔθνεσι τοῦθ' ὄργῃν ἐστίν, ἄλλοις ἐδούλευσαν, ἄλλων αὐτοὶ πρότερον ἄρχοντες, μεταλαβόντες ἐξ ἀμείνωνος τὴν χεῖρω τροπὴν καὶ τύχην, καὶ οὐκ ἐλεύθεροι μόνον καὶ αὐτοδέσποτοι πρῶτον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλῶν ἄλλων ἄρχοντες βαρβαρίαν δουλείας βιοτὴν ἠλλάξαντο, ὥσπερ πάλαι πρότερον Ἀσσύριοι κακῶς πράξαντες ὑπὸ Πέρσας ἐγένοντο, καὶ ὑπὸ Μακεδόνας Πέρσαι καὶ ὅσα τῆς αὐτῶν ἀρχῆς ἔθνη, καὶ Μακεδόνες ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους, καὶ αἰεὶ ταῦτ' ἐναλλάξ ἔρχεται ταῖς τοῦ χρόνου καὶ τῆς τύχης πεττεῖαις, καὶ οὐδὲν μόνιμον ἐν ἀνθρώποις οὐδ' ἄτρεπτον διαιωνίζον. ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐφ' ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἢ καὶ ὀνομαζομένου ζώου [ζώου] καὶ γένεσις ἐστὶ καὶ πρόσδος εἰς ἀκμὴν, καὶ ἀκμὴ, καὶ φθίσις ἔπειτα, καὶ τελευταία καθάπαξ φθορὰ καὶ θάνατος, οὕτω δὴ καὶ περὶ τῶν καθολικῶς ἐν ἀνθρώποις πραγμάτων καὶ πολιτειῶν, καὶ δεσποτειῶν αἰεὶ ῥεούσας καὶ μεταβαλλούσας ταύτας ὄργῃν ἐστὶ, καὶ κατ' οὐδὲν ἐστύσας μόνιμους, ἀλλὰ γιγνομένας τε καὶ προϊούσας καὶ κατ' ὀλίγον φθινούσας καὶ μεταβαλλούσας εἰς πᾶν τὸ ὑναντίον, τελευτώσας καὶ θανάσιμον πέρασ καὶ ἄλλας ἐξ ἄλλων γιγνομένας αἰεὶ καὶ μετ' ἄλλας, ὥσπερ ἐν περιστροφῇ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τοῦ παντὸς ἀνθρωπίνου γένους, ἀπαύστῳ γε οὕτως, ὡς καθόλου προσοργῆν, φαινομένην, αἰεὶ μὲν γε ἄλλοτ' ἄλλων κατὰ μέρη, καὶ οὐ τῶν αὐτῶν τῆς χορείας οὔσης.³⁸

Undoubtedly – one can observe this phenomenon in most nations – some people who have controlled some others were then enslaved by them. Thus, they went from a better condition and a better lot to a much worse situation; and not only individuals who were free and independent, but also people who commanded many others got the tough life of slavery. In Antiquity, the Assyrians were beaten and replaced by the Persians; the Persians and all people who were under their control were replaced by the Macedonians, the Macedonians by the Romans. Constantly, one event follows another, in the repetition of time and destiny, and nothing is stable for humans, nor remains unalterable for eternity. On the contrary, as is the case of human beings and animals, one sees a birth, a progressive development towards an acme, the acme, a decay, a final consumption, and death. So in the case of all things related to humans – including states and empires – one constantly notices that everything flows and changes, and it is not stable at all, but is born, develops, and quickly decays and transforms into its opposite, reaching the final stage of death; and some things arise from others and after others, in the revolution of events and of all human generations. This revolution seems unending, from a cosmic

³⁷ Both views in some respects coexist in the authors Alexios Makrembolites and Joseph Bryennios: Ševčenko, *The Decline*, p. 184.

³⁸ Theodoros Metochites, *Semeioseis Gnomikai*, CX (*Theodori Metochitae Miscellanea philosophica et historica*, ed. by Christian Gottfried Müller and Gottlieb Kiessling [Leipzig: sumptibus F. C. G. Vogelii, 1821 (repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1966)], pp. 725–726).

point of view. Although all constituent parts of the whole constantly disappear, their dance does not.³⁹

Byzantine scholars of the Palaiologan age, lovers of classical literature, often described themselves as ‘Hellenes’. The term was originally applied to non-Jews (the ‘Gentiles’) in the Holy Scriptures, but had acquired a pejorative meaning by Late Antiquity (especially in the context of Egyptian monasticism), when it began to be used to designate pagans.⁴⁰ In the Palaiologan age, the word ‘Hellene’ indicated a cultured individual whose rhetorical and literary style was similar to that of the classical authors. As we have seen, the so-called *fèvre de classicisme* originated in the Nicæan Empire, especially in the school of Nikephoros Blemmydes, immediately after the Fourth Crusade.⁴¹ From 1261 onwards, it developed in Constantinople and Thessalonike, especially during the reigns of Michael VIII and Andronikos II. In the various *θέατρα, κύκλοι, διδασκαλεία*,⁴² classical culture was studied and commented upon by scholars, the most important of whom were George Akropolites, George Kyprios, Nikephoros Choumnos, Maximos Planoudes, John Zacharias, Manuel Moschopoulos, Theodore Metochites, Joseph the Philosopher, Thomas Magistros, and Demetrios Triklinios.⁴³ Mostly, the subjects they passed on to their students were not

³⁹ English translation by the author. The dance metaphor is also found in Philo: Ševčenko, *The Decline*, p. 184, n. 78. Compare this text also with Aristotle’s *On Generation and Corruption* (Aristote, *De la génération et de la corruption*, ed. by Marwan Rashed [Paris: Les belles lettres, 2005]). There are some extraordinary similarities between Metochites’ concept of history and that expressed by Giambattista Vico in his *Scienza nuova*, where he writes of history’s ‘*corsi e ricorsi*’. It is not a truly cyclical view of history (like that of the historian Polybius, for example), but a linear view in which history can be described as a series of different cycles. Arnold J. Toynbee compared it to the wheel of a vehicle that turns upon itself but keeps moving forward. The idea that every human civilization necessarily experiences a birth, a growth and a decline also recalls Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*. For more on this subject, see Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

⁴⁰ For the meaning of the term ‘Hellene’ in Late Antiquity, see Glen Warren Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), pp. 9–11; Judith Margaret Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 286–289; Aaron Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1–9. For the various meanings of the word in Byzantium (especially in Late Byzantium), see Ihor Ševčenko, ‘The Palaeologan Renaissance’, in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revival of Late Antiquity and Middle Ages*, ed. by Warren Treadgold (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), pp. 144–171 (p. 163); Paul Magdalino, ‘Hellenism and Nationalism in Byzantium’, in Id., *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), no. 14, pp. 1–29, esp. pp. 9–12; Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. pp. 283–301; Gill Page, *Being Byzantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 63–67; Rapp, pp. 138–140. For Hellenism in Byzantium, see also the collection of essays *Byzance et l’hellénisme. L’identité grecque au Moyen-Âge*, ed. by Paolo Odorico (Paris: De Boccard, 1999).

⁴¹ See above.

⁴² See especially Herbert Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz. Die byzantinische Buchkultur* (Munich: Beck, 1989), esp. pp. 74–75, 110; Guglielmo Cavallo, ‘Sodalizi eruditi e pratiche di scrittura a Bisanzio’, in *Bilan et perspectives des études médiévales (1993–1998)*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), pp. 645–665.

⁴³ For profiles of the most important Byzantine scholars of the Palaiologan age, see Monticini, *Caduta*, pp. 82–105. At least three women must be added to this short list: Theodora Raoulaina, Irene Choumnaina, and Irene ‘Panipersebast’ (daughter of Metochites).

limited to the so-called ἐγκύβλιος παιδεία⁴⁴ – the teaching of grammar and rhetoric – but often included the most elevated sciences of classical culture, such as philosophy, physics and astronomy. To understand the true importance of this transmission of knowledge, we must first take into account the significance of literary subjects, such as grammar, in the light of the propaganda context described above. Solid competence in classical Greek was not only the prime requirement for a brilliant career – whether in the ecclesiastical or secular ruling class – but was also the best way to ‘become acquainted’ with antiquity and ancient wisdom.⁴⁵ Equally, we must bear in mind that these scholars did not view ‘scientific’ subjects, such as physics and astronomy, as in any way separate from the ‘humanities’. In fact, since antiquity – especially in Platonic circles – mathematics and astronomy had been considered prerequisites for philosophical studies.⁴⁶

In this regard, it should be noted that the *fièvre de classicisme* of the Palaiologan age entailed a renewed interest in Platonic and Neoplatonic doctrines. This is a particularly striking phenomenon, since Platonism had been viewed with deep suspicion (at least officially) in Byzantium from the early Komnenian period, that is to say from the time of the Church’s condemnation of John Italos in the eleventh century.⁴⁷ As far as it is possible to reconstruct, this Platonic revival was initiated by George Akropolites: he studied Plotinos, Iamblichos and Proklos; his son Constantine owned a copy of the *Enneads*.⁴⁸ Platonism was an effective support for the study of secular works, being essentially suspicious of every kind of mysticism.⁴⁹ At the same time, it was the only philosophical trend that – thanks to its antiquity and authority – allowed its followers to set themselves apart both from the scholarly Aristotelianism of the West and from the intransigence of

⁴⁴ For ἐγκύβλιος παιδεία, see especially Guglielmo Cavallo, ‘Oralità, scrittura, libro, lettura. Appunti su usi e contesti didattici tra antichità e Bisanzio’, in *Libri di scuola e pratiche didattiche dall’Antichità al Rinascimento*, I, ed. by Lucio Del Corso and Oronzo Pecere (Cassino: Università di Cassino, 2010), pp. 11–36 (pp. 15–16); Daniele Bianconi, ‘Erudizione e didattica nella tarda Bisanzio’, in *Libri di scuola e pratiche didattiche dall’Antichità al Rinascimento*, II, ed. by Lucio Del Corso and Oronzo Pecere (Cassino: Università di Cassino, 2010), pp. 475–512 (pp. 478–479).

⁴⁵ For example, Manuel Moschopoulos and Thomas Magistros wrote dictionaries of Attic words (ἐκλογαί), while Maximos Planoudes and the patriarch John XIII Glykys composed grammatical treatises.

⁴⁶ Silvia Ronchey, *Hypatia: The True Story* (Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), pp. 17–185.

⁴⁷ Nigel Guy Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London: G. Duckworth; Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1996²), pp. 153, 180.

⁴⁸ Fryde, p. 203; Christian Förstel, ‘Untersuchungen zur Rezeption Plotins in der Palaiologenzeit: die Handschriften A und E (Laurentianus 87.3, Parisinus gr. 1976)’, in *Griechisch-byzantinische Handschriftenforschung. Traditionen, Entwicklungen, neue Wege*, II, ed. by Christian Brockmann, Daniel Deckers, Dieter Harlfinger and Stefano Valente (Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), pp. 419–426. The earliest manuscripts containing the works of Plotinos date to the Palaiologan era.

⁴⁹ Neoplatonism proposed an apophatic type of theology. A particular instance is Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, whose work was often the basis for the thinking of Barlaam of Calabria: Antonis Fyrigos, ‘Barlaam Calabro tra l’aristotelismo scolastico e il neoplatonismo bizantino’, *Il Veltro*, 27 (1983), 185–194 (pp. 187–190).

most Byzantine monks, whose study was often limited to the Holy Scriptures and some hagiographic works.⁵⁰

The Palaiologan ‘Renaissance’ and the Western Renaissance

In the history of Byzantine studies, the term ‘renaissance’ has blatantly been abused. It has been applied to an endless series of different periods – Theodosian, Justinianic, Macedonian, Komnenian, Palaiologan – with the result that the entire thousand-year span of the Eastern Empire ends in being described as a succession of so-called ‘renaissances’.⁵¹ It is clear that such a perception, like the alternative assumption that the Byzantine experience was a millennium of protracted decadence,⁵² cannot reflect historical reality. On the basis of what we have said so far, albeit very briefly, it is instead clear that the Palaiologan ‘renaissance’ was not the revival of a past culture after a period of neglect – as was the Western Renaissance – but a rereading, with a newly critical eye, of wisdom that had always underpinned the education of the Empire’s ruling class.⁵³

Unlike humanism and the Renaissance in the West, the *fièvre de classicisme* of the ‘Hellenes’ was not at all motivated by a kind of opposition between different social classes. As we know, the Western Renaissance, with its critical investigation of the past, had as its primary aim the emancipation of *virtus* – that is to say the free, individual will of the emerging classes – from any external, divine or transcendental interference, supporting it with the new *auctoritas* of books, which could replace, through a process of integration, the exclusive *auctoritas* of the Book.⁵⁴ In the East, conversely, the typical Byzantine distrust of trade⁵⁵ meant that a powerful middle class (μέσοι) never developed.⁵⁶ It is true that the civil war between the two Johns set the pro-aristocratic party of the μέγας δομέστικος

⁵⁰ Guglielmo Cavallo, “‘Foglie che fremono sui rami’”. Bisanzio e i testi classici’, in *I Greci. Storia, cultura, arte, società*, III (*I Greci oltre la Grecia*), ed. by Salvatore Settis (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 593–628 (pp. 626–628).

⁵¹ Ronchey, *Lo stato*, pp. 12–14; Paolo Odorico, ‘Différence non diversité: Les Grecs du Moyen Âge face aux autres Européens’, <https://www.academia.edu/34896457/Diff%C3%A9rence_%20non_diversit%C3%A9_Les_Grecs_du_Moyen_%C3%82ge_face_aux_autres_Europ%C3%A9ens> [accessed 1 August 2022].

⁵² Typical of 18th century Enlightenment, for example in the works of Montesquieu, Gibbon and Lebeau: Ronchey, *Lo stato*, pp. 154–158.

⁵³ Precisely because of this, Ihor Ševčenko preferred to speak of ‘revival’, for instance in the case of the Palaiologan era – by this he meant an increase in study and literary production – and to leave the specific connotations of ‘rebirth’ to the Western Renaissance alone: Ševčenko, *The Palaeologan Renaissance*, p. 145; see Fryde, pp. 388–398.

⁵⁴ Guido Cappelli, ‘Una modernità (im)possibile. L’umanesimo italiano come fenomeno storico’, in *Quaderns d’Italià*, 22 (2017), 57–74 (p. 70). The *artes* would thus no longer be *ancillae theologiae*.

⁵⁵ For this reason the Byzantines made many commercial concessions to Western merchants: Ronchey, *Lo stato*, pp. 65, 70, 131; Laiou and Morriison, pp. 117–120.

⁵⁶ Cities controlled by the μέσοι never achieved the same level of independence as Western communities, although the imperial authorities granted them some privileges (Laiou and Morriison, pp. 154–155).

Kantakouzenos against the faction of the μέγας δούξ Apokaukos, which was closer to the μέσοι⁵⁷ (a case in point is the Zealot regime in Thessalonike⁵⁸). Yet the war was a conflict between two individuals for control of the state rather than a confrontation between two different societal models. Instead, we must conclude that the crisis of the Palaiologan age, to which we have referred, played out entirely within the same ruling class. Palamas, for example, belonged to the same social class as the ‘Hellenes’ and received the same education. This fundamental factor explains why the classicism of the ‘Hellenes’ was so different from that of the Western humanists. While the second was the expression of a new emerging class – which sought to consolidate its own position by promoting a *Weltanschauung* that was entirely different from that of the old elite – the first consisted essentially of an attempt to restore the past. The humanists of the West had to justify the societal success of their patrons, who mostly belonged to the merchant and banking classes and who, as we have seen, based their power on *humana virtus* and not on divine right, in the way that medieval nobility had done. Conversely, in Byzantium, most ‘Hellenes’ belonged to the ruling class.⁵⁹ In the brief list above, for example, we have mentioned – apart from Nikephoros Blemmydes, who was tutor to Theodore II Laskaris, emperor of Nicaea – two λογοθέται (George Akropolites and Theodore Metochites), a patriarch (George Kyprios alias Gregory II of Cyprus) and two eminent members of court (Nikephoros Choumnos, who was also governor of Thessalonike, and John Zacharias, who was the emperor’s ἀκτουάριος, or doctor). It is therefore easy to see why the ‘Hellenes’ did not reject the traditional Byzantine historical structure. While Western humanists – belonging to an emerging social class – found it possible to break with tradition (reclaiming the ancient concept of history, understood as a series of cycles⁶⁰), the ‘Hellenes’ could not reject the structure that had allowed their own social class to hold onto power for centuries.

After Palamism became the official doctrine of the Orthodox Church – and especially after the condemnation of Prochoros Kydones (1368) – the ‘Hellenism’ of the early Palaiologan age gradually changed into a pro-Latin movement.⁶¹ Most of the anti-

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 33–34.

⁵⁸ It lasted no less than seven years (1342–1349): see Marco Di Branco, *Breve storia di Bisanzio* (Rome: Carocci, 2016), pp. 160–163.

⁵⁹ It must also be remembered that a true nobility never existed in Byzantium (*Le monde byzantin*, II [L’empire byzantin, 641–1204], ed. by Jean-Claude Cheynet [Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2006], p. 175).

⁶⁰ In fact, their version of classicism never acquired any suggestion of nostalgia. The cyclical concept of history – the so-called ‘return of the same’ – had a Neoplatonic (and even earlier, Stoic) origin.

⁶¹ Laiou and Morrisson, pp. 299–300. Prochoros Kydones was the most important Athonite opponent of Palamas. He translated the works of many Western theologians into Greek.

Palamites preferred Catholicism to Palamism.⁶² For this reason, many of them emigrated to the West, in some ways following in the footsteps of Barlaam of Calabria who, after losing his dispute with Palamas in Byzantium, moved in 1341 to the papal court in Avignon, where he became Petrarch's Greek tutor. In the Provençal city, Barlaam perhaps passed on to his pupil – or at least strengthened in him – the Pythagoreans' concept of Ypsilon; in other words, a choice between the 'path of man' and the 'path of God'. While in the end this second response to the crisis held sway in Byzantium, the West – including Petrarch – 'turned aside to the left'.

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⁶² Just as many followers of Orthodoxy preferred Turkish rule to union with the Catholic Church. The famous phrase attributed by Doukas (*Chronographia*, XXXVII. 10; Dukas, *Chronographia*, ed. by Dieter Roderich Reinsch [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020], p. 464) to Loukas Notaras is very significant in this context: κρειττότερον ἐστὶν ἰδέσθαι ἐν μέσῃ τῇ Πόλει φακιδόλιον βασιλεῦον, Τούρκων, ἢ καλύπτραν λατινικὴν ('It would be better to see the turban of the Turks reigning in the center of the city than the Latin miter' [English translation in Marios Philippides and Walter Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), p. 41, n. 120]).

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