

The Date of Laonikos Chalkokondyles' *Histories*

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ONLY TWO SUGGESTIONS have ever been made regarding when Laonikos stopped working on his *Histories* (*Ἀποδείξεις Ἱστοριῶν*), whose narrative peters out in the opening phases of the first great Venetian-Ottoman war, specifically in 1463–1464.¹ The work seems to be unfinished, but my concern here will be with when Laonikos stopped working on it. In the early 1920s, the editor of the *Histories*, E. Darkó, following an argument made originally in 1913 by the Hungarian scholar G. Miskolczi, claimed that one passage in the work regarding the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) showed an awareness of events in the mid to late 1480s, and so a date of ca. 1490 has been subsequently given to Laonikos by many scholars.² He is, accordingly, widely re-

¹ The standard edition of the work is E. Darkó, *Laonici Chalcocondylae Historiarum demonstrationes* (Budapest 1922–1923; cited here by volume and page numbers). There is a not entirely unreliable translation of the first three books by N. Nicoloudis, *Laonikos Chalkokondyles: A Translation and Commentary of the "Demonstrations of Histories" (Books I–III)* (Athens 1996). I omit early modern and Latin translations as well as translations of shorter excerpts or into eastern European languages. The text needs a new critical edition: H. Wurm, "Die Handschriftliche Überlieferung der *Ἀποδείξεις Ἱστοριῶν* des Laonikos Chalkokondyles," *ἸᾶByz* 45 (1995) 223–232. Studies of aspects of the *Histories* will be cited below as relevant. There is no comprehensive or standard modern study of the author or the text.

² J. (=E.) Darkó, "Zum Leben des Laonikos Chalkondyles," *BZ* 24 (1923–1924) 29–39. Even though they are clearly relying on this dating, some scholars place Laonikos ca. 1480, which is not possible, as Darkó's date hinges on events in the mid to late 1480s.

garded as the last of the four Byzantine historians of the Fall (after Doukas, Kritoboulos, and Sphrantzes).

In 1992, however, H. Wurm and E. Gamillscheg argued, on the basis of the events in question, for a date after mid-1469 but before mid-1470.³ I will outline below how they reached this precise conclusion (which I do not think is correct, though it is closer to the truth than that of Darkó). They also noticed that one of the many manuscripts of the *Histories* (*Paris.gr.* 1780) contains a watermark that was used between 1447 and 1459, and held that this supports their proposal regarding the work's earlier date that is based on its contents. Actually, it supports more an even earlier date, which is what I will argue for here.

It seems that the work of Wurm and Gamillscheg has remained largely unknown to non-German scholars, as most continue to follow the Darkó dating. Moreover, there has been no systematic investigation of the entirety of the text to find all possible internal traces of its date. In part, this is because of its difficult prose. It has not been reliably or fully translated into any of the main languages of scholarly research, and there appear to be few people who have read through the whole in Greek. The present article will track down for the first time all passages that can be used to date its composition, even if some prove to be inconclusive. I include these inconclusive internal markers of the date to forestall the possibility that future scholars might misunderstand them because of Laonikos' notoriously obscure prose and bring them forward as evidence that I missed. I will argue for a date between 1464 and 1468, and no later. If I had to guess within that range, I would say that Laonikos stopped writing in 1464. First, I will offer a new reading of the Matthias Corvinus passage. Second, I will collect and examine all passages that bear on the date of the text. Third, I will discuss a particularly problematic passage relating to the history of the Timurids. And fourth, I will offer some

³ H. Wurm and E. Gamillscheg, "Bemerkungen zu Laonikos Chalkokondyles," *ἸÖByz* 42 (1992) 213–219.

thoughts on the implications of this earlier dating for historians of the fifteenth century. I reserve for a separate article a study of the interpolations into the text of the *Histories* that will indirectly support this earlier date: the present article will instead focus on the internal evidence.

I want to make clear at the outset that this study concerns the dating of the text only and not the identity of Laonikos or the date of his death. Arguments about either must be based on identifying him with someone mentioned in other sources, such as Laonikos the Cretan priest who corresponded with Apostoles.⁴ I am skeptical of such arguments, and that one in particular, but they are not my concern here. I make this distinction, however, because much of the scholarship confuses the question of when Laonikos stopped working on the *Histories* with the question of when he died, as if they were the same. But the mere fact that the *Histories* is unfinished does not mean that Laonikos must have died at that point.

1. Matthias Corvinus and “the Bohemians”

Only one passage in the work indicates a possible knowledge of events after 1464, at least according to the dating scheme that has prevailed for most of the twentieth century, and this passage allegedly concerns the relations between the western emperor and Hungary in the mid-to-late 1480s. Such an asymmetry is odd and perhaps even unprecedented: to have, that is, a long work whose knowledge-horizon consistently ends in 1464, excepting a single passage that jumps forward to the 1480s with no revision to any other part of the work to reflect knowledge of events after 1464. In their concise 1992 article, Wurm and Gamillscheg showed that this passage did not, in fact, refer to the 1480s, in fact to no event after 1469. I believe, however, that we can date the events in question more precisely and thereby remove this passage from discussion of the date of composition. It refers to events even earlier than 1469,

⁴ E. Darkó, “Neue Beiträge zur Biographie des Laonikos Chalkokandydes,” *BZ* 27 (1927) 276–285.

in fact earlier than 1464.

The passage occurs in the following context: Laonikos has just described the unsuccessful Ottoman siege of Belgrade in 1456, and then turns to its heroes János Hunyadi and St. Giovanni da Capistrano, both of whom died soon thereafter. He then turns his attention to the (absent) Hungarian king, Ladislaus V the Posthumous (1445–1457), who was also to die soon. He goes back to recount his detention by the Habsburg emperor Friedrich III (Friedrich V of Austria in 1424; German king in 1440; Roman Emperor in 1452), whom Laonikos mistakenly calls “Albert,” perhaps confusing him with Ladislaus’ father Albert (Albrecht V of Austria in 1404 = Albrecht II as German king in 1438) or, more likely, with Friedrich’s own brother Albert (= Albrecht VI, archduke of Austria until his death in 1463). Anyway, Laonikos gets the main outlines of Ladislaus’ captivity, release, and elevation to the throne of Hungary more or less right. The wars between the Hungarians and “Albert” to which Laonikos refers in this part of his narrative (*Hist.* II 187–188) took place before Ladislaus’ release and were waged by Hunyadi in the late 1440s.⁵

Laonikos then recounts the political struggles in Hungary after the siege of Belgrade, including the murder of Ulrich II, Count of Cilli, by Hunyadi’s son László in 1456 and the elevation to the throne of Hunyadi’s other son, Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490), whom Laonikos never names. About Matthias Corvinus’ reign he then says (II 188–189):

It seems that he bribed many people with money and won them over to his side, maintained the largest army in the land of the Hungarians, and gained the kingship. Újlaki, who had previously been at odds with Hunyadi, now fell out with his son, who had gained the throne, and did not want to listen to him or obey him. But after that they came to an agreement on terms and he obeyed him. Thus the rule of the Hungarians came to the youngest son of Hunyadi. He waged war against Albert, the king

⁵ For an accessible survey see P. Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526* (London/New York 2001) 279–298.

of the Romans, performing great deeds, and he subdued Prague and the Bohemians so that both principalities became subject to him.

δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ χρήμασι πολλοῖς διαπραξάμενος καὶ ἀνακτώμενος, στρατόν τε ὡς μέγιστον τῶν κατὰ τὴν Παιόνων χώραν τρέφων, ἐπὶ τὴν βασιλείαν Παιόνων χωρῆσαι. Ἰλόκης μὲν καὶ πρῶτα Χωνιάτη διαφερόμενος, καὶ ὕστερον τῷ παιδί αὐτοῦ ἐς τὴν βασιλείαν παρεληλυθότι διενεχθεὶς οὐκ ἔσακούειν οὐδὲ πείθεσθαι ἤθελε, μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ συνέβη αὐτῷ ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς καὶ ἐπείθετο. οὕτω δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν Χωνιάτου παῖδα, ἐς τὸν νεώτερον περιελήλυθεν ἡ Παιόνων ἡγεμονία. καὶ πρὸς βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων Ἄλβερτον ἐπολέμει, μεγάλα ἀποδεικνύμενος ἔργα, καὶ Βράγαν τε καὶ Βοέμους ὑπηγάγετο, ὥστε οἱ ἄμφω τὰς ἡγεμονίας ὑπηκόους γενέσθαι.

After this passage, Laonikos returns to events that took place before 1459. What dates, then, are we to extract from this passage?

Újlaki is Miklós Újlaki (also known as Nicholas of Ilok), the ban of Mačva. He was implicated in the judicial murder of Matthias' brother László and, at first, opposed Matthias' accession. But he was reconciled to him and was made count of Teočak in 1464. In 1471, Matthias would make Újlaki (titular) king of Bosnia, but events prior to 1464 already satisfy Laonikos' account of their relationship.⁶

We come, then, to the war against the emperor "Albert" and the conquest of Prague and the Bohemians. The former does not present any problems. The main opposition that Matthias faced in the early years of his reign was precisely from Friedrich III and his Hungarian supporters, and this did involve military clashes. Their details need not concern us here. What matters is that an agreement was reached by 1462; it was ratified in 1463 and the fighting stopped, which allowed Matthias to be formally crowned, without opposition by

⁶ Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen* 312. For various aspects of the reign see now C. Gastgeber et al., *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit: Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinopel* (Vienna 2011).

Friedrich, on 29 March 1464 (though Laonikos does not differentiate between his election as king in 1458 and formal coronation in 1464). Darkó, however, took the final sentence of the passage quoted above as referring to a later series of wars between Matthias and Friedrich in the 1480s, which led to substantial conquests by Matthias, including the conquest of Vienna in 1485, which he made his new capital. These were “the great deeds” that he performed, according to Darkó. Also, Matthias had invaded Bohemia in 1468 and was elected king of Bohemia in 1469 by the Catholics of that land against their own Hussite-tainted ruler, Jiří (George) Podbrad (1458–1471). Matthias went on to conquer most of Bohemia by 1479.

In their response to Darkó, Wurm and Gamillscheg correctly note that the conflicts of 1458–1462 suffice to explain Laonikos' reference to the war with “Albert”; there is no reason to invoke the events of the 1480s. But they grant that Laonikos refers to the Bohemian events of 1469 and so offer that year as a terminus post quem for the composition of the work.⁷ It must first be observed, however, that Matthias never took Prague. That is a mistake by Laonikos whether he is referring to the 1480s or, as I believe, to the early 1460s. His information about Prague, its history and religion in particular, seems generally confused. His repeated claim that it was the last bastion of paganism in Europe until converted by Capistrano is wrong (Bohemia converted in the ninth century), and may have derived from a hostile account of the Hussites.⁸ But the most important question for us is: exactly whom does Laonikos mean by “the Bohemians” when he says that Matthias conquered them?

Certainly Laonikos knew that Prague was in what one might broadly call Bohemia, but I propose that he was also using the name in another sense that does not correspond to modern

⁷ Wurm and Gamillscheg, *JÖByz* 42 (1992) 216–217.

⁸ *Hist.* I 124, II 180, 186–187; see H. Ditten, *Der Russland-Exkurs des Laonikos Chalkokondyles* (Berlin 1968) 57–58.

labels. Specifically, in many passages when he says “Bohemia” and the “Bohemians” he means the Czech Hussite followers and territory of Jan Jiskra, the ally of the Austrians and enemy of Hunyadi. He notes that the Bohemians are also called Czechs at *Hist.* I 67 (ἐπὶ Βοέμους, τοὺς Κεχίους καλουμένους). At II 35, in his rather confused account of the struggles over the Hungarian succession in 1439–1442, Laonikos claims that Hunyadi and the Poles fought against the Germans and Bohemians, who must here be the Austrian interests supported by Jiskra’s Czechs.⁹ At II 97, in the lead-up to the Varna campaign, Laonikos says that the Hungarians made a peace-treaty with the Bohemians to cover their rear during the war. We know that this refers to Jiskra, because it was from him that king Wladislaus (the Polish Hungarian king, 1440–1444, who died at Varna) obtained an armistice on 24 April 1444.¹⁰ At II 110, Laonikos makes the connection explicit when he says that after Varna the Hungarians went to war with the Germans and the Bohemians. They elected Hunyadi as their leader, and “he gathered an army and marched against the Bohemians and fought against them for a long time. He even fought against Jiskra, a tactician whose fame had spread everywhere. Engaging with him, he was defeated, but later he went and engaged with him again, and prevailed.” These conflicts took place in 1449 and 1451 (the territory that Jiskra held was roughly Slovakia).¹¹

Therefore, to return to the passage that concerns us, when Laonikos says that Matthias Corvinus subdued Bohemia, it is likely that he is again referring to Jiskra and not to what we call the kingdom of Bohemia (proper), which Matthias invaded in 1468. In fact, we know that Matthias’ settlement with Friedrich

⁹ Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen* 282; C. Mureşanu, *John Hunyadi: Defender of Christendom* (Iaşi/Oxford/Portland 2001) 65–66.

¹⁰ Mureşanu, *Hunyadi* 97; C. Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45* (Ashgate 2006) 22.

¹¹ Mureşanu, *Hunyadi* 175–178.

in 1462 entailed the isolation of Jiskra, who “submitted to Matthias at Vác in May 1462 and handed over his castles ... Jiskra put his military skills at the disposal of his new lord and died an esteemed Hungarian baron shortly before 1471.”¹² This is what Laonikos means when he says that Matthias “subdued the Bohemians so that both principalities became subject to him.”

In conclusion, there is nothing in Laonikos' account of Matthias Corvinus that requires a date after 1462 or, at the latest, 1463.

2. Other passages that bear on the date of the *Histories*

Laonikos makes many statements that imply ignorance of events that took place in the later 1460s in cases where that knowledge would probably have qualified those statements.

At I 195 he discusses the recent history of Euboia and notes that it came under the power of the Venetians and remains in their possession even today (εἰσέτι καὶ νῦν διατελοῦσιν ἔχοντες). This could not have been written after 1470, when the Turks conquered it. This is the passage that Wurm and Gamillscheg used to argue for a new terminus ante quem, thereby narrowing the window for the completion of the work to between Matthias Corvinus' attack against Bohemia (1469) and the Turkish conquest of Euboia (1470).¹³ But I believe we can push these dates further back.

In discussing the circumcision ceremony for Mehmed II's sons, Laonikos digresses to comment on the unprecedented power of the Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović (II 196–197):

He became more powerful than any of the others who are said to have been previously powerful at the Ottoman Porte. For it is said that Hayreddin and his son Ali became powerful at the Porte of Murad, the son of Orhan, and then of his son Bayezid. But no one came into power such as he wielded, or had as ex-

¹² Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen* 300.

¹³ Wurm and Gamillscheg, *JÖByz* 42 (1992) 217.

tensive lands. Holding the first place among the lords at the king's Porte, he maintained his own, most sizable private army and attendants, and so attained and wielded enormous power.

Hayreddin and his son Ali (Çandarlı Kara Halil Hayreddin Pasha, Grand Vizier 1364–1387; Çandarlı Ali Pasha, 1387–1406) appear in Laonikos' early books, so he is here self-consciously engaging in a comparison. It is therefore unlikely that he would have written these words about Mahmud's unprecedented power, or written them in this way, had he known that he would dramatically fall from power in 1468 (and far less if he had known that he would be restored in 1472, dismissed again, imprisoned and executed in 1474).¹⁴ This suggests that Laonikos was writing before 1468.

It might be objected that Laonikos was referring only to Mahmud's power in the past without necessarily implying that he still held it. But this objection is difficult to sustain. We know that Laonikos was writing before 12 July 1470 (the fall of Euboeia) and Mahmud Pasha fell from power (the first time) in mid 1468. In other words, if Laonikos was writing after Mahmud's fall, it can only have been at a time when his comments on Mahmud's power would have seemed the most hollow. He was not writing about a distant, once-powerful vizier, but about the most powerful man in the Ottoman empire who had just fallen from power after a twelve-year run. If this is irony I have found no other traces of it in Laonikos, and I do not think he intended it here. Moreover, there is now reason to believe that he was writing in Constantinople (a thesis I intend to develop elsewhere),¹⁵ which means that we cannot claim that he was uninformed. It would also have heightened how wrong he was

¹⁴ T. Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2001).

¹⁵ A preliminary argument in this direction was made by D. Reinsch. While based in part on now-outdated paleographical identifications, the core of it remains valid: "Η θεώρηση της πολιτικής και πολιτιστικής φυσιογνωμίας των Ελλήνων στους ιστορικούς της Αλωσης," *Études balkaniques (Cahiers Pierre Belon)* 6 (1999) 69–86, here 79–80.

in his digression on the power of Mahmud. This digression, then, provides a new terminus ante quem: 1468.

Laonikos' use of the present tense to refer to ongoing reigns and events also points away from the end of the century and to its middle. Thus, in his digression on the Ottoman budget he observes in the present tense that the current sultan, namely Mehmed, is collecting a tithe from Muslims that his predecessors had not, in addition to requiring them to follow him to war (II 199, οὗτος δ' ὁ βασιλεὺς τὴν δεκάτην τε εἰσπράττει καὶ ἄγει, ὅποιοι ἂν στρατεύηται).¹⁶ This puts us before Mehmed's death in 1481.

Laonikos also recounts the Hundred Years' War in the past tense, closing his account with a vague description of the events of the 1440s, but he ends with a statement in the present: "The French are prevailing over the British in their battles, driving them into Calais and expelling them from their land" (I 86, μαχεσαμένους οἱ Κελτοὶ φέρονται πλέον τῶν Βρετανῶν, ἐς ὃ δὴ συνελαύνοντες αὐτοὺς ἐς τὴν Καλέσσην ἐξέλασαι αὐτοὺς ἐκ τῆς χώρας).¹⁷ The British would retain Calais until 1558, but this mopping up of their forces in France was more or less over by 1453. Laonikos probably received this information in the 1450s, so it was already outdated by the mid 1460s.

At I 125 Laonikos says that the capital of Black Bogdania (i.e., Moldavia after Bogdan I, ca. 1363–ca. 1367) is White Town, i.e. Belgorod Dnestrovskij (Turkish Akkerman). But this was the case only until 1455. As with the end of the Hundred Years' War, Laonikos must have received and recorded this

¹⁶ For this passage in general see S. Vryonis, "Laonikos Chalkokondyles and the Ottoman Budget," *IJMES* 7 (1976) 423–432.

¹⁷ A. A. Vasiliev, "La guerre de Cent Ans et Jeanne d'Arc dans la tradition byzantine," *Byzantion* 3 (1927) 241–250, offers a French translation of this digression; A. Ducellier, "La France et les îles Britanniques vue par un byzantin du XV^e siècle: Laonikos Chalkokondylis," *Économies et sociétés au Moyen Âge: Mélanges offerts à Edouard Perroy* (Paris 1973) 439–445, here 443–445, offers a summary; cf. J. Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven/London 2010) 69.

information before that date or shortly thereafter. H. Ditten, in his examination of the digression on Russia where the claim about Belgorod occurs, concluded that all its information generally dated to the middle of the fifteenth century, and mostly to just before 1455.¹⁸

At II 22–23 Laonikos refers to the final liquidation of the Anatolian emirate of Mentеше by Murad II in 1424. He says that its ruler “went to Rhodes and spent some time there but after that he sent a herald and went before the sultan, hoping to benefit in some way from him, and to this day he is still in attendance, being maintained by the Porte,” using the present tense in the final clause (ἐς δεῦρο ἔτι διατρίβων τὴν δαπάνην ἔχει ὑπὸ τῶν θυρῶν). Now, Ilyas Beg of Mentеше died in 1421 and was succeeded by his sons Layth and Ahmed, about whom very little is known, though Laonikos’ testimony has, as so often, not been used by modern historians of this emirate.¹⁹ Laonikos is presumably referring to one of the two sons. The Ottoman historian Ashik Pashazade reports that Ahmed was confined for two years, then fled to Kara Yülük (of the White Sheep), to Egypt, to his home (Menteshe?), and finally to Persia, so this is probably not him, though Ashik’s tales are often fanciful.²⁰ Other Ottoman historians report that Layth fled to

¹⁸ For the Russia digression in general, see Ditten, *Der Russland-Exkurs*, here 62 and 70–72 for the dates; cf. his “Bemerkungen zu Laonikos Chalkokondyles’ Nachrichten über die Länder und Völker an den europäischen Küsten des Schwarzen Meeres,” *Klio* 43–45 (1965) 185–246, here 220–222.

¹⁹ P. Wittek, *Das Fürstentum Mentеше: Studie zur Geschichte Westkleinasiens im 13.–15. Jh.* (Istanbul 1934) 98–102, 105; E. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Mentеше and Aydin (1300–1415)* (Venice 1983) 112.

²⁰ I am relying on the translation by R. F. Kreutel, *Vom Hirtenzelt zur Hohen Pforte: Frühzeit und Aufstieg des Osmanenreiches nach der Chronik “Denkwürdigkeiten und Zeitläufte des Hauses ‘Osman’ vom Derwisch Ahmed, genannt ‘Asik-Pasa-Sohn’* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne 1959) 153–154; cf. H. İnalcık, “How to Read Ashik Pasha Zade’s History,” in C. Heywood and C. Imber (eds.), *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage* (Istanbul 1994) 139–156.

Rhodes,²¹ so this must be the one Laonikos has in mind. We do not know how old he was in 1424, but it would be hard to push his lifetime far into the late fifteenth century, certainly not to the late 1480s. Again, this is more likely to be reference made in the 1450s or early 1460s.

A note on Laonikos' terminology: the expressions *ἐς δεῦρο ἔτι* and *ἐς ἔτι καὶ νῦν* are probably more precise than his more general *ἔστε ἐφ' ἡμᾶς*. Laonikos uses the latter to refer to the Komnenian rulers of Trebizond (II 219, *βασιλεύειν ἐνταῦθα ἔστε ἐφ' ἡμᾶς διαγενομένους*), even though he was about to recount their liquidation in 1461. That expression does not, apparently, refer strictly to the time of writing. To give another example, Laonikos says that the Gattilusi have ruled Lesbos down to our times (II 269, *ἐπὶ τὸν καθ' ἡμᾶς χρόνον*), even though he is about to narrate the end of their rule in 1462.

There are also present references that do not affect the argument for the date either way. Some of the more important ones should be mentioned here so as to prevent future confusion about them, which might well emerge given the trouble that Laonikos' prose has traditionally caused historians. Thus, the Mongols who took up service under king Casimir "still roam the land down to this day and offer him powerful assistance in his wars against his neighbors" (I 121). But Casimir—Kazimierz IV of Poland (1446–1492) and of Lithuania (1440–1492)—died in 1492, too late to make a difference here. Ditten observed that Laonikos calls him king of Lithuania only, and not also of Poland, and concluded that he might have been writing before 1447 or even before 1444;²² but this is to place too high an expectation of thoroughness and precision on this historian (who, to give another example, piles all of Sigismund's later titles upon him at the time of the Nikopolis Crusade in 1396, calling him German king and Roman emperor years and even

²¹ Quoted in Wittek, *Das Fürstentum Mentesche* 105.

²² Ditten, *Klio* 43–45 (1965) 225; also Nicoloudis, *Laonikos* 341 n.35.

decades before the fact).²³ We have seen his confusion regarding the name of the Roman emperor of his day (Albert for Friedrich).

Among other contemporary references, Laonikos also refers to the Mamluk capture in 1426 of the Lusignan king of Cyprus, Janus (1398–1432), and says that “since that time Cyprus pays a tribute to this sultan” (I 134). But the tribute continued to be paid to the sultan even after Venice took over the island in 1489,²⁴ so this could accommodate a later dating. At I 82 Laonikos says that those who inherited the war against the Moors in Spain from Charlemagne’s Paladins are still waging it “to this day” (οἱ δὲ διαδεξάμενοι τόνδε τὸν πόλεμον ἐς ἔτι καὶ νῦν τοὺς Λίβυας τούτους ἄγειν καὶ φέρειν νομίζουσι). But this was true for any time before 1492, when Granada was finally surrendered to the Catholic kings. At I 121–122 he says, in the present tense, that Russia pays tribute to the Golden Horde, which the Russians actually stopped paying in 1476 (followed, in 1480, by the Great Stand on the Ugra). This, however, cannot provide a reliable terminus ante quem, as it is conceivable that news of this change might not have reached Laonikos, even if he were writing as late as 1490.

Finally, there are two passages that might at first glance pose a problem to the early date I have proposed. At the end of the work, Laonikos is recounting the Venetian invasion of the Peloponnese in 1463 and refers to one Hieronymos Bernardos (Gerolamo Bernardo), who was sent to relieve Argos. His force was ambushed and destroyed. Bernardo himself escaped,

boarded a ship that was anchored in the vicinity, and announced that he was on a mission by the general and needed to sail to Aigina. When he arrived at Aigina, he then ordered the

²³ *Hist.* I 64. In fact Sigismund was elected German king in 1410 and made Roman emperor in 1433.

²⁴ A. Fuess, “Was Cyprus a Mamluk Protectorate? Mamluk Policies toward Cyprus between 1426 and 1517,” *Journal of Cyprus Studies* 11/28–29 (2005) 11–28.

man to ferry him all the way to Euboia. He landed at Attica, and from there he went to the sultan. This man returned again to the Venetians not long afterward, and suffered great punishment. (II 300)

How long afterward did this punishment take place? We happen to know from Domenico Malipiero, a reliable Venetian historian, that this man's name was actually Gerolamo Valaresso and that he returned to southern Greece during the course of the operations that are subsequently recounted by Laonikos. He was in Venice by 17 November 1463 and was executed on 24 November.²⁵ Therefore, his subsequent fate does not pose a chronological challenge.

The other potentially problematic passage is Laonikos' brief encomium of Bessarion at II 68. Its opening may be taken to imply that Bessarion had died, though this is not necessary:

περὶ μὲν οὖν Βησσαρίωνος τοσόνδε ἐπιστάμενος μνήμην ποιήσομαι, ὡς ξυνέσει τε τῇ ἀπὸ φύσεως πολλῶν δὴ τῶν ἐς τοῦτο εὐδοκιμούντων Ἑλλήνων μακρῷ <πρῶτος> γενόμενος, καὶ κρίνειν τε ἐφ' ὃ τι ἂν γένοιτο κρᾶτιστος δοκῶν γενέσθαι.

The tense of this passage is ambiguous, perhaps deliberately, so that we cannot tell from it whether Bessarion is alive or dead (he died in 1472). The first part of this passage may be translated as "knowing his greatness, I will say more in honor of Bessarion's memory." Now *μνήμη* can mean remembrance, but in Herodotos, many of whose expressions Laonikos lifted, *μνήμην ποιήσομαι* is banal and means only to mention or notice a thing (LSJ s.v. *μνήμη* II). So we need not assume that Laonikos was implying that Bessarion was deceased, though he knew that for his future readers that would soon be the case. In the preface, he famously looks forward to a time when Greeks

²⁵ Domenico Malipiero, *Annali Veneti* s.a. 1462 (= *Archivio storico italiano* VII.1 [1843] 15–17). I thank Diana Wright for catching Laonikos' mistake about his last name and providing me with this reference. For the events in question see R. Lopez, "Il principio della guerra veneto-turca nel 1463," *Archivio Veneto* SER. V 15 (1934) 45–131, here 66–67.

will reconstitute their kingdom (I 2), so he took a long view of his work's reception.

In conclusion, there is nothing in the *Histories* that requires us to place the composition of the text at any time after 1464, and the way in which Laonikos discusses the power of Mahmud Pasha suggests that he was writing before 1468. Many of the geographic and ethnographic digressions in the work suggest, moreover, that Laonikos obtained much of that information in the mid-to-late 1450s.²⁶

3. The Timurid wars

Book 3 of the *Histories* is devoted to the reign and conquests of Timur, though much of it is taken up by ethnographic digressions on the peoples of Asia. At its end (I 155–158), Laonikos offers a garbled narrative of the succession wars of the Timurids that ranges from eastern Asia Minor to Samarkand. He repeats part of this story at the end of Book 7 in summary, probably because he believed that it belonged there chronologically (II 145–146). The advantages of this repetition is that (a) it helps us date these events (or, rather, ascertain when Laonikos thought they occurred, as some may be too garbled to count as historical); and (b) by rewriting the same events, Laonikos clarifies some of the syntactical obscurities in his original account (*who* did *what* is not one of his strong points as a writer).

We might have been able to avoid this garbled mess altogether were it not for the fact that Laonikos alludes to the ongoing wars of Jahanshah, ruler of the Black Sheep (Kara Koyunlu) Turkic empire (1438–1467), against the descendants of Timur, and that one historian, Nicoloudis, has argued that this refers to events of the late 1460s and after. I will argue that it refers to considerably earlier events. Readers who under-

²⁶ Also for Spain: see Ditten, *Der Russland-Exkurs* 11; A. Ducellier, “La péninsule iberique d’après Laonikos Chalkokondylis, chroniqueur byzantin du XV^{ème} siècle,” *Norba: Revista de historia* 5 (1984) 163–177, here 171: nothing after 1453.

standably want to avoid the morass of the Timurid wars may skip ahead to the next section. I will quote the relevant passages below, but some clarifications are first in order. Laonikos mangled the genealogical relationships among and between the Timurids and others. He is especially confused about the career of Juki, the son of Shahrukh (d. 1447); Juki in fact predeceased his father. When Laonikos refers to “the son of Juki” or “the son of Babur” we should not take this literally; he usually just means a Timurid claimant. Does the following narrative, then, refer to recognizable events? Jahanshah, at least, did most of the things ascribed to him here (I 157–158):²⁷

[Jahanshah] ruled Baghdad by Babylon and conquered the land of the Assyrians, subduing Tabriz to himself and warring against the son of Babur. He advanced on Erzinjan, besieged it, and took it, and he subdued all the land of the Armenians that is within the Euphrates.²⁸ When the son of Juki set out from Samarkand, he [the son of Juki: see the note] besieged Babylon and, when he [presumably Jahanshah] came against him, he [the son of Juki] defeated him in battle.²⁹ He took Babylon and marched against Tabriz,³⁰ *and is still waging this war*. In fact,

²⁷ I have annotated the translation to guide the reader who does not already know the history of this period (possibly all readers of the present article). The obscure syntax is clarified by the parallel presentation of these events at II 145–146.

²⁸ To simplify matters, we can say that Jahanshah was installed in power in Tabriz by Shahrukh, via his son Juki, in 1435. He later broke from the Timurids and took Iraq, much of western Iran, Hyrkania, and western Khurasan with Herat. Jahanshah took Baghdad in 1446 and Erzinjan in 1450. Babur's son Shah Mahmud was eleven when he succeeded to the throne in 1457, and was quickly expelled by other Timurids, so this cannot be who is meant.

²⁹ The syntax of this sentence is difficult. We must postulate that the subject of the main clause (that is, of *ἐπολιόρκει*) is the same as that of the genitive absolute. This reading is supported by the second presentation of these events at II 145–146. Mohammed Juki's sons Mohammed Qasim and Abu-Bakr governed briefly in the area of Balkh at the opposite end of the Timurid empire between 1444 and 1447. They cannot be meant here.

³⁰ If this refers to Jahanshah, it just repeats the information given at the

Hasan the Tall [Uzun Hasan], a descendant of Iskender who had once held Erzinjan and of the tribe of Kara Yülük, came to power among the Armenians, and the sons of Kara Yülük marched with him.³¹ For when they were besieged in Shemakha³² by king Jahanshah, the son of Kara Yusuf, they did not know what to do and so begged Babur to invade Media. He agreed and invaded, whereupon Jahanshah picked up and went against him, partly by engaging with him and partly by plundering his territories.³³ Meanwhile, the other rulers, Mentеше, Aydın, and Saruhan, were ordered by Timur to reclaim their lands when Bayezid was captured, so each of them was restored to his own land.³⁴ Hasan saw that a significant force was attacking him, he subdued the land of the Armenians and Janids, and made peace with the kings of Kolchis through a marriage alliance.³⁵

start of the passage. This kind of duplication happens often in Laonikos. It is not a second set of events, unless it refers to a conquest of Babylon by “the son of Juki.”

³¹ Uzun Hasan was the grandson Kara Yülük, ruler of the White Sheep (Ak Koyunlu) federation, whom Laonikos calls “Armenians,” and he ruled 1453–1478. He was not descended from Iskender, ruler of the Black Sheep federation, who was his main enemy (before Iskender’s brother and rival Jahanshah took that role). In fact, Kara Yülük was killed in battle with Iskender in 1435, when Shahrugh intervened against the Black Sheep and set up Jahanshah against Iskender. Uzun Hasan warred against Jahanshah and would destroy him in 1467, though Laonikos seems unaware of this development (see below).

³² Laonikos is generally confused about Shemakha, or means something else by it, but that will not concern us here. In this instance, it may refer to Kemah.

³³ For these last events, see the discussion below.

³⁴ This sentence refers to events fifty years before those of the surrounding narrative.

³⁵ Janik was on the northern Anatolian coast, to the west of the empire of Trebizond (“Kolchis”). Hasan is not known to have attacked it. He did marry Theodora Komnene, daughter of the emperor Ioannes IV of Trebizond (1429–1459), in 1458.

[Τζανισᾶς] Παγδατίης τῆς Βαβυλῶνος ἐπήρξε, καὶ Ἀσσυρίων τὴν χώραν καταστρεψάμενος Ταβρέζην τε ἑαυτῷ ὑπηγάγετο καὶ πρὸς τὸν Μπαῦμπούρεω παῖδα διεπολέμει. ἐπελάσας δὲ πρὸς Ἑρτζιγγάνιν ἐπολιόρκει παραστησάμενος, καὶ τὴν Ἀρμενίων ἐντὸς Εὐφράτου χώραν ἐτύγχανεν οὖσαν ὑπηγάγετο. μετὰ δὲ τοῦ Τζοκίω παιδὸς ὠρμημένου ἀπὸ Σαμαρχάνδης τὴν τε Βαβυλῶνα ἐπολιόρκει, καὶ αὐτὸν ἐπιόντα οἱ μάχη ἐπεκράτησε. καὶ τὴν Βαβυλῶνα ἑλών, ἐπὶ Ταβρέζην ἐλαύνων, ἐς τόνδε συνδιαφέρει τὸν πόλεμον. Χασάνης μέντοι ὁ μακρός, Σκενδέρεω τοῦ τὸ Ἑρτζιγγάνιν διακατέχοντος ἀπόγονος ὢν καὶ τῆς Καραϊλούκεω μοίρας, ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν παρεγένετο τὴν Ἀρμενίων, συνελαυνομένων αὐτῷ τῶν τε Καραϊλούκεω παίδων. οὗτοι γὰρ ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Τζανισᾶ, Καραϊσούφεω παιδός, ἐν Σαμαχίῃ πολιορκούμενοι ἐν ἀπόρῳ εἶχοντο, προσεδέοντο τοῦ Μπαῦμπούρεω ἐσβαλεῖν ἐς τὴν Μηδικήν, ὃς πεισθεὶς τε ἐσέβαλε, καὶ ἀπανεστή τε ὁ Τζανισᾶς ἀποχωρῶν πρὸς τὸν Μπαῦμπούρη, τὰ μὲν συμβάλλον, τὰ δὲ ληϊζόμενος τὴν χώραν ἐκείνου. οἱ μέντοι ἡγεμόνες, ὃ τε Μενδεσίας, Αἰδίνης καὶ Σαρχάνης, ἀλόντος Παιαζήτεω τὴν τε χώραν κατέλαβον ἐπικελεύοντος Τεμήρεω, καὶ ἐς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ χώραν καθίστατο ἕκαστος. ὁρῶν δὲ Χασάνης συμβαλλομένην αὐτῷ δύναμιν ἀξιόχρεων, τὴν τε Ἀρμενίων χώραν ὑπηγάγετο καὶ τοὺς Τζάνιδας, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Κολχίδος βασιλεῖς ἐπιγαμίαν ποιησάμενος εἰρήνην ἐποιήσατο.

The normal grammatical reading of the sentence into which I have placed the many brackets is that the son of Juki set out, whereupon Jahanshah besieged Babylon—even though this makes little narrative sense, for he had already taken it—and defeated the son of Juki. But we have to take the son of Juki as the subject of ἐπολιόρκει (a violation of the rules of the genitive absolute that is in fact typical in Laonikos) because of the parallel presentation at II 145–146, which clearly alludes to the passage quoted above:

It was during his reign [i.e., of Janishah] that Juki, one of the descendants of Temür, set out from Samarkand, conquered the land of Kara Yusuf's son, and besieged the city of Baghdad by Babylon, as I said in my earlier narrative, and he called Hasan the Tall and sent him into Asia Minor and against Armenia to make the land there subject to himself.

ὑπὸ τούτου μὲν οὖν τὴν χώραν τοῦ Καραϊσοῦφω παιδὸς Τζοκίης τῶν Τεμήρω ἀπογόνων ὠρμημένος ἀπὸ Σαμαρχάνδης κατεστρέφετο, καὶ τὴν τε Παγδατίνην πόλιν τῆς Βαβυλώνος ἐπολιόρκει, ὡς ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθέν μοι ἐλέγετο, καὶ Χασάνην τὸν μακρὸν καλούμενον ἐς τὴν κάτω Ἀσίαν καὶ ἐπὶ Ἀρμενίαν πέμπων τὰ ἐς τήνδε τὴν χώραν ὑποχείρια ἐποιεῖτο.

In other words, Jahanshah held Babylon, Tabriz, and Erzinjan, whereupon “the son of Juki” besieged and took Babylon, and defeated Jahanshah in battle. But how was Jahanshah able to then besiege Hasan in “Shemakha”? And why did Hasan need to call in “Babur” at that point? In the first passage Hasan calls in Babur and then, inexplicably while under attack, Hasan moves against Asia Minor and Armenia; in the second passage Hasan seems to be called in by the son of Juki and sent by him against Asia Minor and “Armenia.”³⁶ It is possible that Laonikos did not think that these were two interventions at all, but one and the same, that is, Jahanshah of the Black Sheep was expanding in power, putting pressure on the White Sheep, whereupon they called in a Timurid to defeat him, or took advantage of a Timurid invasion, but the war was not over at the time of writing. Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain from Laonikos’ confused genealogy whether he might have thought that Babur was a son of Juki. In reality, Babur (whom we will discuss below) was Juki’s nephew; “son of Juki” might be a way of designating someone of the same family but in the next generation.

Let us briefly look forward in time to frame the argument. In 1467 Uzun Hasan of the White Sheep crushed and killed Jahanshah of the Black Sheep and eventually annexed his realm. The Ottoman sultan Mehmed II also clashed with Uzun

³⁶ While the syntax at the end of the second passage favors the translation given above, it is possible that Laonikos garbled it, and that what he meant to say was that Hasan called in the son of Juki and then took Asia Minor and Armenia for himself, as at the end of the first passage. In a number of passages, Laonikos plays loose with accusatives and with agreement between subject, participle, and verb.

Hasan a number of times before defeating him in 1473. But Laonikos is unaware of any of these developments. As far as he knew, Jahanshah was still alive and fighting, which again means that he was writing before 1467. This confirms our *terminus ante quem* from a different direction.

Nicoloudis, however, the translator of these sections of the *Histories*, has proposed, or rather assumed, that the passages quoted above refer to the events of 1467, when Uzun Hasan defeated and destroyed Jahanshah. He then takes Laonikos' Timurid invader to be Sultan-Abu Sa'id Miranshahi, the grand-nephew of Shahrukh who briefly joined Jahanshah's son Hasan Ali in resisting Uzun Hasan, in 1467–1469.³⁷ But that requires us to set aside too many elements of Laonikos' narrative, especially the fact that it does focus on Jahanshah who is not said to have been killed. As with most of Laonikos' foreign digressions, we should probably be looking for events before 1460, though a number of Timurid interventions are to be found both before and after. Moreover, as we have seen, Laonikos presents these events twice, namely at the end of Book 3, where they form an epilogue to the history of Timur, and again at the end of Book 7, where they seem to belong chronologically. Book 7 ends with the accession of Mehmed II in 1451 and Book 8 begins with his preparations to attack Constantinople, in 1452. What was Jahanshah up to during those years?

Unfortunately, Near Eastern history at that time is both complicated and understudied, and the sources are untranslated or unpublished, notably Abu Bakr Tihrani's history of Uzun Ha-

³⁷ N. G. Nicoloudis, *Μεσαιωνική Μακεδονία, Θράκη και Μικρά Ασία: Προσεγγίσεις και αντιπαραθέσεις Βυζαντινών, Σλάβων και Τούρκων* (Thessaloniki 2006) 193–194. For the events to which Nicoloudis refers, see J. E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City 1999) 97–100. Elsewhere, however, Nicoloudis claims that Laonikos was unaware of Jahanshah's death in 1466 and seemingly also of Uzun Hasan's activities after 1460: "Observations on the Possible Sources of Laonikos Chalkokondyles' *Demonstrations of Histories*," *Byzantina* 17 (1994) 75–82, here 82 n.33.

san and the White Sheep Turks.³⁸ Jahanshah took Baghdad in 1446; he laid siege to the White Sheep in Erzinjan in 1450, and took the city.³⁹ It is reasonably clear that it is these events to which Laonikos is alluding in his account. What he does not say is that the White Sheep were, at that time, divided between Jahangir and his brother Uzun Hasan, which was to erupt into a civil war. But what about the Timurid intervention? As it happens, at just that time, that is in 1450/1, a great-grandson of Timur, Abu al-Qasim Babur (1447–1457)—Laonikos' own Babur!—fought his rival Sultan Muhammad in Media, which is precisely where Laonikos places his invasion. Babur then was embroiled in a struggle with none other than Jahanshah, who actually forced him back east, taking most of Iran from the Timurids.⁴⁰ By late 1452, Jahanshah had moved into Shiraz, but Laonikos does not know this. His knowledge of the post-Timurid world seems to end generally in 1451. I propose, then, that these events match the descriptions in Laonikos far better than anything that took place in the 1460s.

There are two problems with this thesis, but they are not major. The first is that Babur seems not to have taken Baghdad in his invasion, which remained in Black Sheep hands. But Laonikos makes greater mistakes about events closer to home and, as we have seen, his account of the multiple(?) captures of the city is syntactically obscure. The second is that Laonikos has Babur invade at the behest of the White Sheep and not because of internal Timurid conflict. But the timing of events could have led to such an interpretation, especially from the standpoint of someone writing in the far west, and there may

³⁸ In Persian: N. Lugal and F. Sümer, *Abu Bakr Tihrani: K̄tab-i Diyārbakriyya* I–II (Istanbul 1962–1964). I thank my colleague Parvaneh Pourshariti for looking through this text. She found some suggestions of an alliance between the White Sheep and the Timurids against Jahansha (at I 229), but the text is dense, full of names, and needs to be studied carefully.

³⁹ Woods, *The Aqqyunlu* 74–75.

⁴⁰ For these events see H. R. Roemer, “The Successors of Timur,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran* VI (Cambridge 1986) 98–146, here 112–123.

well have been communication between Babur and the White Sheep, for they had a common enemy, Jahanshah.

We have again established that there are no events in the *Histories* that have to be dated after 1464, and in the process we have cast light on some of the more obscure passages of that work.

4. Some implications of the new date

From what he says (I 6–7) about the extent of Byzantine territories at the time of his birth, we can estimate that Laonikos was about thirty-five years old in the mid-1460s when he stopped writing the *Histories*. Much of the information in his foreign digressions points to the mid-to-late 1450s, so we can also conclude that he was gathering this material as a man in his twenties.

His relation to the other post-Byzantine historians of the Fall also needs to be reassessed as does his relation to Ottoman historiography. With regard to the former, we can now confidently say that, at least as far as he knew, Laonikos was not the last in the group. Doukas' narrative ends in 1462, though we do not know when he stopped writing or for how long he was writing. Many have thought that he was killed in the siege of Mytilene that took place in that year, as he was probably there for it (in the employ of the Gattilusi) and his account stops dead in the middle of narrating it. Be that as it may, Doukas' history survives in only one manuscript (*Paris.gr.* 1310) and there is no evidence that anyone read it at the time when it was written.⁴¹ It is probable that he and Laonikos were writing their histories in ignorance of each other, though Doukas was by far the older man, perhaps thirty years older. Thus both of them, as post-Byzantine historians, were engaged in a revo-

⁴¹ The standard edition is by V. Grecu, *Ducas: Istoria Turco-Bizantină, 1341–1462* (Bucharest 1958); English transl. H. Magoulias, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks, by Doukas* (Detroit 1975); in general, see H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich 1978) I 490–494.

lutionary type of project, given the gap in historiography since Gregoras and Kantakouzenos and the unprecedented nature of the events they were called on to recount, each in a very different way.

Kritoboulos (the pen name of Michael Kritopoulos) was likewise between twenty and thirty years older than Laonikos, and finished writing his ostensibly panegyric *History* of Mehmed II in 1467. The *History* was written in stages and may have been started already in 1453.⁴² In other words, we have here a total of three probably independent historiographical projects ongoing at the same time, being written in the late 1450s and early 1460s. But, as with Doukas, the *History* of Kritoboulos survives in only one manuscript, the very one that was presented by the author to the sultan and kept in his personal library (*G. I.* 3). It was not discovered by scholars until the nineteenth century.

Finally, we have the memoirs (*Chronicon Minus*) of Georgios Sphrantzes, who was also twenty or thirty years older than Laonikos. This series of autobiographical notes was completed in 1478 but is not a history like the others and should not really be classified with them.⁴³ At any rate, there is no evidence that he knew or used the other historians of the Fall, and it is unlikely that any of them used the others, with one exception.

Now that we have moved Laonikos to 1464–1468, it becomes possible for him to have been read by Kritoboulos, especially if Laonikos was based in Constantinople. There are

⁴² The standard edition is by D. R. Reinsch, *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae* (Berlin/New York 1983), whose introduction contains all the relevant information, esp. at 84*; English transl. C. T. Riggs, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Kritoboulos* (Princeton 1954).

⁴³ The most recent edition is by R. Maisano, *Giorgio Sfranze: Cronaca* (Rome 1990); English transl. M. Philippides, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401–1477* (Amherst 1980). For the correct spelling of his name see now M. Philippides and W. K. Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies* (Ashgate 2011) 139–143.

in fact a number of parallels between the two works that deserve to be more closely studied. Based on the older dating for Laonikos, Reinsch proposed that Laonikos might have used Kritoboulos,⁴⁴ but we can now consider the possibility that the opposite might have been the case. In his preface, Kritoboulos refers to “many” prior historians who have written of the victories of the sultans and their conquest of the Greeks. He promises to write another book on that theme with accurate dates (1.2.1–2), making it likely that he has Laonikos in mind here, who has not a single date in the whole of his *Histories*. But Kritoboulos’ subsequent criticisms of these unnamed historians open the field widely: their narratives were disorderly, written in a haphazard way, however they happened to personally remember the events, or based solely on their own experiences, or inaccurately. Some of these criticism may apply to Laonikos, if we want to press the issue, and Kritoboulos may have had others in mind too.

Be that as it may, now that Laonikos has been moved back, all three historians of the Fall should be seen as a group reacting at the same time to the same events, but mostly independently of one another and in very different ways. Still, Laonikos prevailed over the competition and attained almost total dominance over his field and theme. His *Histories* survives in almost thirty manuscripts and began to be disseminated widely soon after he ceased to work on it. It passed quickly into both the eastern and the western historiographical traditions.

The second set of implications concerns Ottoman historians, though here I must necessarily be even more brief, as this is not my field. But having surveyed it in an effort to better understand the *Histories*, I have the impression that this text is, to put it mildly, underutilized by scholars of early Ottoman history, who tend to use Doukas and Kritoboulos, who are translated,

⁴⁴ Reinsch, *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae* 84*–85*; “*Η θεώρησις*” 81. There are many more parallels between the two works than those listed here by Reinsch, though it remains to be determined whether they are due to independent recording of the same events in a roughly similar style.

but not Laonikos, who is not.⁴⁵ Doukas and Kritoboulos offer much valuable information when it comes to the history of the wars, but it is Laonikos who sets out to tell us, among many other things, about the recruitment and training of janissaries, the organization of the sultan's camp and army, and the light cavalry raiders, about whom there has been so much controversy: were they holy warriors or opportunistic plunderers and slavers? Laonikos' support for the latter interpretation has not been brought into this debate.⁴⁶ More important than all this, however, is the fact that Laonikos preserves Turkish traditions about the early history of the Ottoman emirate and then the empire. His *Histories*, as is well known, is structured and centered more on the rise of the Ottomans than the decline of the Byzantines, and to that end he used Turkish informants, including secretaries in what we might call the budget office.⁴⁷ Reading the text in tandem with Ottoman sources yields both parallels and divergences. But the date for the composition of the *Histories* proposed here would make Laonikos Chalkokondyles one of the earliest sources for Ottoman history in any language.⁴⁸ He is some twenty years earlier than Ashik Pashazade and an exact contemporary of Enveri's *Düsturname*. Much can be said regarding these implications, so I

⁴⁵ There is now a Turkish translation of Books 5–7, a dissertation available online: F. Kırıldökme Mollaoğlu, *Laonikos Chalkokondyles'in Kroniği ve değerlendirilmesi (V.–VII. bölümler)* (Ankara 2005). I cannot comment on its reliability.

⁴⁶ For example, H. W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (New York 2003) 46–47, uses Doukas to establish the latter alternative, but not Laonikos, who would provide stronger support for his argument.

⁴⁷ For the accountants see *Hist.* II 201; cf. Vryonis, *IJMES* 7 (1976) 423–432. For his Turkish sources in general, see S. Bashtav, “Die türkische Quellen des Laonikos Chalkondylas,” in F. Dölger and H.-G. Beck (eds.), *Akten des XI. internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses* (Munich 1960) 35–42.

⁴⁸ The standard introductions to the Ottoman tradition are H. İnalcık, “The Rise of Ottoman Historiography,” in B. Lewis and P. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London 1962) 152–167, and V. L. Ménage, “The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography,” 168–179.

will conclude only with this: a critical comparison between his testimony and that in the other sources that are traditionally more utilized in that field is, at this stage, absolutely necessary, and will require the collaboration of classical, Byzantine, and Ottoman scholars, for Laonikos seems to have taken oral Turkish traditions and transformed them into his Herodotean-Thucydidean narrative prose. But that is the subject of another study.⁴⁹

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