Patriarchal Chronicles of the Sixteenth Century

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Documents of any sort for the history of the Greek patriarchate of Constantinople in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are sadly lacking.¹ No Ottoman or patriarchal documents dealing with the early years of the so-called Great Church under the Ottoman sultans have survived. Yet this transitional period is crucial for the proper understanding of the history of the Patriarchate and of the Greek millet in general under the Ottoman sultans. This lack of documents can be attributed to several factors, the most significant of which seem to be the occasional fires at the Patriarchate, individual acts of destruction, and frequent displacements of the patriarchal church in this era. It is clear, however, that the need for documents was already felt by the patriarchs of the early sixteenth century,² who had no means, no written evidence from the days of the conquest, to prove to reigning sultans that Mehmed II Fatih (1451–1481) had endowed the Great Church with a number of privileges.³


² The need is aptly demonstrated by an incident ca 1520, when Sultan Selim I Yavuz attempted to convert most of the churches of Constantinople that were still in Greek hands. Patriarch Theoleptus I argued that these churches had been granted to the Greeks by the Conqueror; Theoleptus could not substantiate his claim, however, because, he maintained, the original document had perished in a fire at the Patriarchate. For this incident see M. Philippides, “An ‘Unknown’ Source for Book III of the Chronicon Maius by Pseudo-Sphrantzes,” Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines (forthcoming); Runciman (supra n.1) 189–91, and The Fall of Constantinople, 1453 (Cambridge 1969) 199–204; and J. H. Mordtmann, “Die Kapitulation von Konstantinopel im Jahre 1453,” BZ 21 (1901) 129–44.

³ Mehmed II Fatih annexed formally only the church of Saint Sophia, while that of the Holy Apostles was assigned to Gennadius II as the Patriarchate. During his reign as patriarch, Gennadius saw twelve more churches converted. The Holy Apostles was then demolished (together with the church of Lips) and the Greek architect of the Conqueror, Christodoulos (also known as the freedman Sinan), built on the site the
Although we do hear of the existence of some documents, in the form of berat or firman, in the few Greek chronicles of the sixteenth century, the oldest complete berat that we possess is not, strictly speaking, patriarchal, as it deals with Leontius, the metropolitan of Larissa; it was issued in the reign of Sultan Ahmed I (February 1604); this document survives only in its Greek vernacular version and not in its official Ottoman form. The oldest patriarchal berat in existence was issued to Patriarch Dionysius III and dates to 1662, more than two centuries after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks.

Relations between patriarchs and sultans, unless such documentation becomes available, can only be known in general terms. Scholars have tended to assume that the oldest existing berats reproduce, more or less, the tone and material of earlier berats that have not survived. Before such documents become elaborate in their terminology and assume an overly rhetorical nature, they show a tendency toward being most formulaic; perhaps it may be assumed that there were some duplications, especially since berats seem to have been issued to individual patriarchs, who succeeded one another with remarkable frequency. From 1623 to 1700, for instance, there were no fewer than fifty changes in the patriarchal throne.

What then do we actually know about the transitional period from Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Istanbul in connection with the Patriarchate? From the documentary point of view very little can be harvested, as no actual berats or firmans have come down to us, even though we do hear of their existence. Whether such early documents actually existed is even doubted, as it is not inconceivable that patriarch
archs in need of documentation may have simply argued for the existence of such documents in order to retain the privileges of the Patriarchate, which were often questioned by the successors of Mehmed II. The first patriarch under the Ottoman sultans was George Kourtetsis Scholarius, who took the name Gennadius II on his elevation. There had been no patriarch in Constantinople in the days before the siege of 1453. The last Byzantine patriarch had been the unionist Gregory III Mamas (1443–1450), who departed in 1451, and no successor was appointed. After the fall of the Byzantine capital, Sultan Mehmed II Fatih appointed, with the approval of the surviving bishops, Gennadius II to be the head of the Greek millet, on 6 January 1454. His elevation to the patriarchal throne, with the accompanying ceremonies, has been described in detail in the Chronicon Maius which used to be attributed to the pen of George Sphrantzes (1401–1477), the protoevstiaros of Constantine XI Palaeologus-Dragasis, the last Greek emperor of Constantinople. As long as the authenticity of the Maius was not questioned, the information supplied in the text was considered to be historical fact. It has gradually been proved, however, that the Maius is a late composition, authored by the well-known forger Makarios Melissenos-Melissourgos in Italy ca 1580. In Sphrantzes’ authentic work, the Chronicon Minus, Gennadius II is never mentioned, perhaps because this individual was a confirmed anti-unionist and was not welcome at the Byzantine court

8 Philippides (supra n.2). Also cf. Papadopoulos (supra n.1) 1–158, who assumes that such documents existed; in favor of this view, it should be noted that Manuel Malaxos was familiar with the term berat, which he reproduces in Greek as μπαράτιν (cf. M. Crusius, Turco-Graecia [Basel 1584] 178).


13 On the family of the Melissourgoi, who attempted to identify themselves with the Melissenoi, cf. I. K. Khasiotes, Μακάριος, Θεόδωρος και Νικηφόρος οἱ Μελησσονοί (Melissourgoi) (Thessalonica 1966).
in the last years of Constantinople's independent existence. The source of Melissenos-Melissourgos on the enthronement of Gennadius II has now been shown to be the work ascribed to Manuel Malaxos, who completed a Historia Patriarchica sometime after the middle of the sixteenth century.\(^\text{14}\) In fact, the work ascribed to Manuel Malaxos supplies most of our information about the history of the early patriarchs under the Ottoman sultans.

Manuel Malaxos was a member of the immediate circle of the patriarch.\(^\text{15}\) His sources have not been identified so far, but his importance as an early historian of the Patriarchate becomes obvious in the absence of other documentary evidence and in view of the fact that his work was influential on western historiography concerning ecclesiastical affairs of the east. Martinus Crusius (Martin Kraus), Professor of Greek at Tübingen from ca 1555, was one of the very few individuals in the west to display a lively interest in contemporary Greece under the sultans. Through the offices of Stephen Gerlach, a Lutheran chaplain in Constantinople, Crusius began a regular correspondence with officials at the Patriarchate and also was involved in an ill-fated attempt to bring the Lutherans and the Orthodox Church closer together.\(^\text{16}\) Crusius' lasting achievement, however, was the result of his correspondence, as he published two monumental books, the Germanograecia and the famous Turco-Graecia, the two main sources in the west for the history of late Constantinople and for the Greeks under the sultans in this era.\(^\text{17}\)

Especially fruitful was Crusius' association with Theodosius Zygomalas,\(^\text{18}\) the protonotarios of the Patriarchate, who supplied most of the

\(^{14}\) Philippides (supra n.2).

\(^{15}\) On Manuel Malaxos see G. Moravcsik, Byzantinomurcica I (Berlin 1958) 414–15; C. A. Papadopoulos, “Περί τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἑκκλησιαστικῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ ᾽Αἰ-\ένων,” Ἑκκλησιαστικός Φάρος 9 (1912) 410–54; F. H. Marshall, “The Chronicle of Manuel Malaxos,” Byz 16 (1922) 137–90. We have very few facts about the career of Manuel Malaxos. Crusius was told that he had been a pupil of Matthew Kamariotes, one of the last Byzantine scholars. He seems to have been the head of a small school in Constantinople.

\(^{16}\) Stephen Gerlach kept a diary of his stay at Constantinople, which was published long after his death: Stefan Gerlachs des Aelteren Tagebuch (Frankfort am Main 1674). On Gerlach cf. E. Benz, Die Ostkirche im Lichte der protestantischen Geschichtsschreibung (Freiburg 1952) 24–29. On the attempt of the Protestants and the Orthodox Church to come to an understanding through the efforts of Gerlach and Crusius, cf. Runciman (supra n.1) 246–58.

\(^{17}\) Turco-Graecia libri octo (Basel 1584) and Germanograecia (Basel 1585). For the negative reaction of a Greek scholar from Byzantium to the appearance of the Turco-Graecia, see G. Fedalto, “Ancora su Massimo Margounios,” BollHistStorVenez 5/6 (1964) 209–13.

\(^{18}\) Zygomalas on occasion acted as interpreter for Patriarch Jeremias II during visits by westerners. It was in fact Zygomalas who introduced Gerlach to the patriarch. Zygo-
material published in the *Turco-Graecia*. It was Zygomalas who brought to the attention of Crusius the *Historia Patriarchica* of Manuel Malaxos. In fact, before Malaxos' material was sent to Crusius, it was copied and corrected by Zygomalas himself. The work was sent in 1581, and in 1584 it appeared, with a Latin translation, in the *Turco-Graecia*.

The *Historia Patriarchica* has proved to be a treasure of information for the history of the patriarchs after the fall of Constantinople; given the lack of other documentation, it has been by necessity our basic source for this period, not only for the history of the Patriarchate but also for that of Ottoman Greece. Thus, it is because of Manuel Malaxos, through Crusius, that the western world knew the details of Gennadius II's elevation and of his immediate successors. There are persistent rumors in our sources, however, to suggest that Manuel Malaxos was not the actual author of the *Historia Patriarchica*; Stephen Gerlach believed that Manuel Malaxos was only the copyist of the manuscript that was sent to Crusius and not its author. More­over, Manuel Malaxos states in the text that he simply μεταγλώττισεν εἰς κοινὴν φράσιν, which implies that he merely changed the linguistic form of another, already existing source.

What then was this source, or original work, that has proved so influential for our views on the early Patriarchate? Damascenus the
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Studite has been neglected by modern scholarship. He was from Thessalonica, served as the metropolitan of Naupactus and Arta, and lived in this period. He composed a History of the Patriarchs of Constantinople from the time of Constantine the Great to ca 1570. He completed his work about 1572. From the evidence that is presented below it becomes clear that our ultimate source for the history of the Patriarchate is this work by Damascenus; his text was copied, elaborated slightly, and in some cases even supplemented by Manuel Malaxos and Theodosius Zygomalas; in this corrected form it was sent to Crusius and eventually appeared in the Turco-Graecia. By extension, Damascenus’ History is also the ultimate source for the last sections of Book III of the Chronicon Maius by Pseudo-Sphrantzes (i.e. Melissenos-Melissourgos), which are concerned with the elevation of Gennadius II and with early days of the Great Church under Mehmed II Fatih.

Malaxos has followed Damascenus’ text very closely, both in its lexical items and in the sentence structure; Pseudo-Sphrantzes, on the other hand, has allowed himself greater freedom and has changed both the linguistic items, giving them an archaic flavor, and the sentence structure, avoiding the simple paratactic style of both Damascenus and Malaxos. As to information, what is presented in the three texts is identical, with one innovation. Damascenus, the ultimate source, states that the patriarch and his retinue discovered a murdered man within the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Apostles (μέσα εἰς τὴν αὐλήν); Malaxos has omitted the reference to the courtyard; it appears, however, in a slightly different form, ἐν τῷ τοῦ ναοῦ περιαλείῳ, in Pseudo-Sphrantzes. Moreover, all three texts include the same Turkish word in their conclusions, sürgün. The linguistic dependence of Malaxos and Pseudo-Sphrantzes on Damascenus can be illustrated by the following passages: 22

DAMASCENUS: ἔδωκε δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν περίφημον ναὸν τῶν Ἀγίων Ἀποστόλων καὶ ἐκαμεν αὐτὸν πατριαρχεῖον καὶ ἐκεὶ ὅπου ἐκαθέζετον ὁ

21 There is no entry for Damascenus in Moravcsik (supra n.15). Runciman (supra n.1) 209–10 knows of him but erroneously calls his book an unpublished history of Constantinople.

22 The extract from Damascenus’ work was first copied and published by Sathas (supra n.18) III (Venice 1872) 149, who also saw the dependence of Manuel Malaxos on Damascenus; no conclusions were drawn by Sathas, who thus failed to see the implications of Damascenus’ work for the history of the Patriarchate in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Manuel Malaxos’ text can be found in Crusius (supra n.8) 106 and in Migne, PG 160.316. The text of Pseudo-Sphrantzes is published in V. Grecu, Georgios Sphrantzes, Mémoires 1401–1477. In annexa Pseudo-Sphrantzes: Macarie Melissenos Cronica, 1258–1481 III (Scriptores Byzantini V [Bucharest 1966]) 13.
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πατριάρχης, μία νύκτα εύρηθη ἐνας σφαμένος μέσα εἰς τὴν αὐλήν τοῦ πατριαρχείου ως εἰδεν ὁ πατριάρχης καὶ ἡ συνοδεία αὐτοῦ τῶν ἀνθρωπον σφαγμένον, ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν, ἵνα μὴ σφάξουν καὶ αὐτοῖς ἔκει διότι ὅλος ἔκεινος ὁ τόπος τὸ γύρον τοῦ πατριαρχείου ἦτον ἔρημος, ἔσοντας ὅτι τελείω ἀνθρωποι δὲν ἐκατοίκουν εἰς τὴν γειτονίαν ἔκεινην, ὅτι ἐσφάγησαν εἰς τὸν πόλεμον. Ὁμώς ἔν τῷ ἀμα ὁ πατριάρχης εὐγνήκεν ἀπ’ ἐκεῖ καὶ ἀφῆκε τὸν ναὸν ἐκεῖνον σφαλισμένον καὶ ὑπῆργε εἰς τὸν σουλτάνον καὶ ἀνέφερα τὰ γενόμενα καὶ ἔξητησεν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ δώσῃ τὴν μονὴν τῆς Παμμακαρίστου νὰ τὴν ἐκάμη πατριαρχείον καὶ ὡς ἴκουσεν ὁ σουλτάνος τούτῳ, τῆς ὄρας ἐδοκεὶ αὐτοῦ ἀριστέμον καὶ ἐλάβεν τὸν ναὸν καὶ πατριαρχεῖον τὸν ἐκαμεν ... καὶ τούτος ὁ ναὸς τῆς Παμμακαρίστου ἦτον ὅλος ἐξωθέν τὸ γύρον κάτως, ἀνθρώπους τὰ ὁστάτα γεμάτη δὴ ἡ γειτονία καὶ ἑπάνω καὶ κάτω, διότι ἔφεραν σεργούνιδες ἀπὸ ἄλλα κάστρα καὶ τὸν ἐκατοίκησαν ἔκει ...

Manuel Malaxos: ἐδοκὲ τὸν δὲ καὶ τὸν περίβημα ναὸν τῶν Ἀγίων Ἀποστόλων καὶ ἔκαμε πατριαρχεῖον καὶ ἐκεῖ ὅπου ἐκαθέζον ὁ πατριάρχης, μία νύκτα εὐρήθη ἐνας ἀνθρωπος σφαμένος. καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μεγάν, ἵνα μὴ σφάξουν αὐτὸν ἢ ἀπὸ τὴν συνοδείαν αὐτοῦ ἔκει, διότι ὅλος ὁ τόπος γύρωθεν τοῦ πατριαρχείου ἦτον ἔρημος, ἔσοντας ὅτι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου δὲν ἐκατοίκουν εἰς τὸν πόλεμον. Ὁμweigh ἔν τῷ ἀμα ὁ πατριάρχης εὐγνήκεν ἀπ’ ἐκεῖ καὶ ἀφῆκε τὸν ναὸν σφαλισμένον καὶ ὑπῆργεν εἰς τὸν σουλτάνον καὶ ἀνέφερε τὰ γενόμενα καὶ ἔξητησεν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ δώσῃ τὴν μονὴν τῆς Παμμακαρίστου νὰ τὴν ἐκάμη πατριαρχείον καὶ ὡς ἴκουσεν ὁ σουλτάνος ἐν τῷ ἀμα τῆς Παμμακαρίστου ἦτον ὅλος ἐξωθέν τὸ γύρον κάτως, ἀνθρώπους τὰ ὁστάτα γεμάτη δὴ ἡ γειτονία καὶ ἑπάνω καὶ κάτω, διότι ἔφεραν σεργούνιδες ἀπὸ ἄλλα κάστρα καὶ τὸν ἐκατοίκησαν ἔκει ...

Pseudo-Sphrantzes: (Melissenos-Melissourgos): καὶ οὕτως ἄρχου τοῦ σεπτοῦ Ἀποστολείου συνώθεσαν αὐτοῦ ... αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ ἀποστόλων τέμνενος δέδωκεν ὁ ἀμαρρίς εἰς πατριαρχεῖον. ποὺς ἵκουσεν ὁ πατριάρχης ἐν τῷ σεπτῷ Ἀποστολεῖῳ καιρὸν ἐλέγον, ἐπετα θεωρῶν ὅτι ἐν ἐκεῖνοις τοῖς μερεῖς τῆς πόλεως οὐδεὶς ταλάπινως Χριστιανός ἐναπέμεινε, καὶ φοβηθεὶς μὴ τι ἐναντίον συμβῆ κατ’ ἐκεῖνοις διότι ἐν μαίνὲ τῶν ἡμέρων εὐρήθη τῷ Ἀγαρινῷ πεφωνεμένου ἐν τῷ ναὸν περιπατεῖν, καὶ ταῦτα τὰς οἰκίας ὁ πατριάρχης ἦτε πολὺς τῆς μονῆς

23 The Turkish term is sūrgūn, which denotes persons who were forcibly brought to Constantinople from conquered territories. On the policy of deportation and forced resettlement in the Ottoman Empire see Ö. Barkan, “Les déportations comme méthode de peuplement et de colonisation dans l’Empire Ottoman,” Revue de la Faculté des sciences économiques de l’Université d’Istamboul 9 (1949/50) 67–131. In the three texts the closest phonetic approximation of this word appears in Pseudo-Sphrantzes.

24 This word may perhaps prove that Melissenos worked directly from the text of Damascenus and not from Malaxos, as no courtyard is mentioned in Malaxos, while it appears in both Damascenus and in Pseudo-Sphrantzes.
Damascenus was a prolific writer; most of his work consists of homilies which are still used in the Orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{25} Unfortunately his \textit{History of the Patriarchs of Constantinople} has never been published and is still awaiting an editor.\textsuperscript{26} It is to be hoped that this important work will be published in the future; the entire text will undoubtedly assist in our better understanding of the early days of the Patriarchate under the Ottoman sultans. The evidence presented here suggests that Damascenus’ text is the original source of both Manuel Malaxos and Pseudo-Sphrantzes; the diagram given as \textit{Figure 1} illustrates the relationship of the texts of the \textit{Historia Patriarchica}.

\textbf{The University of Massachusetts, Amherst}

\textit{January, 1984}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (Damascenus) {Damascenus \textit{History of the Patriarchs} (1572)};
  \node [below of=Damascenus] (Malaxos) {Manuel Malaxos \textit{Historia Patriarchica}};
  \node [below of=Manuel Malaxos] (Zyg) {Theodosius Zygomas (1581)};
  \node [below of=Zyg] (Crusius) {Martinus Crusius \textit{Turco-Graecia} (1584)};
  \node [right of=Manuel Malaxos, xshift=3cm] (Sphrantzes) {Ps.-Sphrantzes \textit{Chronicon Maius} (1580)};
  \draw (Damascenus) -- (Malaxos);
  \draw (Malaxos) -- (Zyg);
  \draw (Zyg) -- (Crusius);
  \draw (Malaxos) -- (Sphrantzes);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textit{Figure 1}

\textsuperscript{25} Runciman (\textit{supra} n.1) 210.

\textsuperscript{26} The manuscript (569) is now housed in the Patriarchal Library; formerly it was in the Metoechia of the Holy Sepulchre of Constantinople.