

# The Greek Sources of Laonikos Chalkokondyles' *Histories*

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LIKE HIS LITERARY MODEL, Thucydides, Laonikos Chalkokondyles does not mention any of the sources that he used in writing his history of the rise of the Ottoman Turks and fall of the Byzantine empire. The sole exception is in his account of the Ottoman budget, where he claims, believably, to have obtained his information from the accountants of the relevant bureau.<sup>1</sup> Laonikos' other classical model was Herodotos,<sup>2</sup> and this reference to a contemporary, foreign, and oral informant is a rare echo of Herodotean *historiê*. Like Herodotos, Laonikos also includes many ethnographic and geographic digressions in his *Histories*, discussing regions and peoples from Britain to Mongolia. Historians assume that he relied on mostly oral sources for these sections.<sup>3</sup> In a study (in

<sup>1</sup> The standard edition is E. Darkó, *Laonici Chalcocandylae Historiarum demonstrationes* (Budapest 1922–1923), here II 201; for this passage in general see S. Vryonis, “Laonikos Chalkokondyles and the Ottoman Budget,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976) 423–432. Translations are my own. There is one of the first three books by N. Nicoloudis, *Laonikos Chalkokondyles: A Translation and Commentary of the “Demonstrations of Histories” (Books I–III)* (Athens 1996), though it is not always reliable. I omit early modern and Latin translations as well as translations of shorter excerpts or into eastern European languages. A new critical edition has been promised: H. Wurm, “Handschriftliche Überlieferung der ΑΠΟΔΕΙΞΕΙΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΩΝ des Laonikos Chalkokondyles,” *ἸÖByz* 45 (1995) 223–232.

<sup>2</sup> A. Markopoulos, “Das Bild des Anderen bei Laonikos Chalkokondyles und das Vorbild Herodot,” *ἸÖByz* 50 (2000) 205–216.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. A. Ducellier, “La France et les îles Britanniques vue par un byzantin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle: Laonikos Chalkokondylis,” *Economies et sociétés au Moyen*

progress) of Laonikos as a historian I intend to expand on this point. In the 1450s and 1460s there was no library where he could have obtained all this information, and he was probably researching his *Histories* in Constantinople after the conquest.<sup>4</sup> His coverage of early Ottoman history also has many points of contact with Turkish traditions that were, during most of the fifteenth century, circulating orally as well, so oral sources have been postulated for that aspect of his work as well (though his testimony has not been compared in detail with that of Ottoman sources, something I intend to do).<sup>5</sup> In sum, Laonikos relied mostly, probably overwhelmingly, on oral sources, which makes the *Histories* a self-consciously Herodotean project, the first of its kind really since antiquity. I would read his evidence regarding Byzantine history in the same way. As a scion of the leading Greek family of Florentine Athens with at least one close relative (Demetrios) in Venice, as a student of Plethon who could guide Kyriacus of Ancona around Sparta in Italian (in 1447), and as a historian with access to Ottoman traditions and secretaries, Laonikos was well placed to gather information about many people and places, including his own.<sup>6</sup>

But can *any* written sources used by Laonikos be identified? I will restrict myself here to sources in Greek. Hardly any re-

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*Age: Mélanges offerts à Edouard Perroy* (Paris 1973) 439–445; “L’Europe occidentale vue par les historiens grecs des XIV<sup>ème</sup> et XV<sup>ème</sup> siècle,” *ByzF* 22 (1996) 119–159; N. Nicoloudis, “Observations on the Possible Sources of Laonikos Chalkokondyles’ *Demonstrations of Histories*,” *Byzantina* 17 (1994) 75–82.

<sup>4</sup> For the date and place see A. Kaldellis, “The Date of Laonikos Chalkokondyles’ *Histories*,” and “The Interpolations in the *Histories* of Laonikos Chalkokondyles,” *GRBS* 52 (2012) 111–136, 259–283.

<sup>5</sup> S. Baştav, “Die türkische Quellen des Laonikos Chalkondylas,” in F. Dölger and H.-G. Beck (eds.), *Akten des XI. internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses* (Munich 1960) 35–42.

<sup>6</sup> For his family see D. Kampouroglous, *Oi Χαλκοκονδύλαι* (Athens 1926). For Kyriacus (his preferred spelling) and Laonikos’ bilingualism see E. D. Bodnar (with C. Foss), *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2003) 298–299.

search has considered his possible written Latin sources,<sup>7</sup> though I have come to doubt that there were any, and the question of Turkish sources must be considered separately. The great challenge with respect to the Greek sources is that no large-scale Byzantine histories were produced between Gregoras and Kantakouzenos on the one hand and the historians of the 1460s on the other (i.e. Laonikos, Kritoboulos, and Doukas). Had Laonikos wanted to use Greek sources, there were probably few available. I will consider here all the texts about which a case has been or can be made (which is not to rule out the possibility that others may be found or proposed in the future). My concern is exclusively with contemporary works, not Laonikos' use of ancient sources, whether historical or geographical, or possible philosophical inspirations. (For the record, the ancient sources he can be shown to have used were Herodotos, Thucydides, Diodoros of Sicily, pseudo-Aristotle's *Meteorology* IV, some of Plutarch's essays, and possibly Ptolemy's *Geography*.)

#### The *Roman History* of Nikephoros Gregoras

It has become an established opinion that Laonikos used Nikephoros Gregoras<sup>8</sup> for the early parts of his narrative, set in the early fourteenth century. This was proposed in 1907 by E. Darkó, Laonikos' future editor, albeit in Hungarian,<sup>9</sup> so it is from A. Nimet's 1933 slightly more analytical presentation that the thesis has passed into later scholarship.<sup>10</sup> Since then it has

<sup>7</sup> H. Ditten, *Der Russland-Exkurs des Laonikos Chalkokondyles* (Berlin 1968) 10–11, 104, 106, proposed parallels with the geographic portions of pope Pius II's *Commentaries*, but they are loose, and I believe on mostly chronological grounds that it would have been impossible for Laonikos to gain access to this text or, probably, know that it existed.

<sup>8</sup> L. Schopen and I. Bekker, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* I–III (Bonn 1829–1855); transl. J. L. van Dielen, *Nikephoros Gregoras: Rhömische Geschichte* I–V (Stuttgart 1973–2003).

<sup>9</sup> His argument was summarized in the bibliographical notice of R. Vári in *BZ* 17 (1908) 221–222.

<sup>10</sup> A. Nimet, *Die türkische Prosopographie bei Laonikos Chalkokandyles* (Hamburg

become *communis opinio*,<sup>11</sup> though it rests on meager parallels and must studiously ignore many and large discrepancies between the two authors. Accepting dependence as a proven fact, scholars casually postulate Gregoras as a source for other passages in Laonikos, even when there are no verbal parallels and their accounts differ in content. We will examine some cases below. It is worth noting that the first reaction to Darkó's thesis, by K. Güterbock in 1909, was skeptical. He deemed the parallels superficial and pointed to substantial differences between the historians, in their narratives and in the spelling of Turkish names.<sup>12</sup> Even Nimet realized that the thesis hinged on two passages alone, and believed that Laonikos' sources were mainly oral. The case for skepticism needs to be restated, therefore, for it seems to have been forgotten.

The thesis rests primarily on Gregoras' and Laonikos' parallel accounts of the division of Asia Minor among the various Turkish emirs after the decline of Seljuk power:

Gregoras I 214–215: ἐς δὲ ξυμφωνίαν ἤδη ἐληλυθότες οἱ Τοῦρκοι κλήρω διέλαχον πᾶσαν, ὀπόση τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας ἐτύγγανε γῆ κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν. κατέσχον οὖν, ὁ μὲν Καρμανὸς Ἀλυσούριος τὰ πλείω τῆς μεσογείου Φρυγίας καὶ ἔτι τὰ μέχρι Φιλαδελφείας καὶ τῶν ἔγγιστα πάντων ἀπὸ τῆς περι Μαϊάνδρον

1933) 19–23.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* I (Berlin 1958) 393; H. Ditten, “Bemerkungen zu Laonikos Chalkokondyles' Nachrichten über die Länder und Völker an den europäischen Küsten des Schwarzen Meeres,” *Klio* 43–45 (1965) 185–246, here 227; N. Nicoloudis, *Laonikos Chalkokondyles: A Translation and Commentary* (Athens 1996) 68–69, 71–73; P. Katsoni, *Μία επταετία κρίσιμων γεγονότων: Το Βυζάντιο στα έτη 1366–1373* (Thessalonike 2002) 70 n.131; K. Zographopoulos, *Ο Λαόνικος Χαλκοκονδύλης και οι απόψεις του για τους Οθωμανούς Τούρκους* (Xanthi 2002) 51. And so matters stand today: J. Harris, “Laonikos Chalkokondyles and the Rise of the Ottoman Empire,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 27 (2003) 153–170, here 165 n.36, states that Gregoras was the only Byzantine source whom Laonikos seems to have used.

<sup>12</sup> K. Güterbock, “Laonikos Chalkondyles,” *Zeitschrift für Völkerrecht und Bundesstaatsrecht* 4 (1909) 72–102, here 102.

τὸν ποταμὸν Ἀντιοχείας· τὰ δ' ἐκείθεν μέχρι Σμύρνης καὶ τῶν ἐντὸς παραλίων τῆς Ἰωνίας ἕτερος, ὄνομα Σαρχάνης. τὰ γὰρ περὶ Μαγνησίαν καὶ Πριήνην καὶ Ἐφεσον φθάσας ὑφείλετο σατράπης ἕτερος, ὄνομα Σασάν· τὰ δ' ἀπὸ Λυδίας καὶ Αἰολίδος ἄχρι Μυσίας τῆς πρὸς τῷ Ἑλλησπόντῳ ὃ τε Καλάμης λεγόμενος καὶ ὁ παῖς αὐτοῦ Καρασῆς· τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν Ὀλυμπον καὶ ὅσα τῆς Βιθυνίας ἐξῆς ἕτερος, ὄνομα Ἀτμάν· τὰ δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ Σαγγαρίου μέχρι Παφλαγονίας μεμερισμένως ἐς τοὺς Ἀμουρίου διέβησαν παῖδας.<sup>13</sup>

Laonikos I 12–13: τούτους δὲ ἡγεμόνας ἑπτὰ γενομένους, ὅσων ὑπηγάγοντο ἀρχήν, διανεμῆσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα σφίσιν αὐτοῖς. λαχεῖν δὴ Καραμάνον τὴν μεσόγαιαν τῆς Φρυγίας ἄχρι Κιλικίας καὶ Φιλαδέλφειας, Σαρχάνην δὲ ἐντεῦθεν τὴν παράλιον τῆς Ἰωνίας χώραν ἔστε ἐπὶ Σμύρνην ἐλθεῖν, τὰ δὲ Λυδίας ἔστε ἐπὶ Μυσίαν Καλάμην σὺν τῷ παιδὶ αὐτοῦ Καρασῆ· τὰ πρὸς Ὀλυμπόν τε καὶ Βιθυνίαν Ὀτουμάνον λαχεῖν μετὰ Τεκίω· τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὸν Εὐξείνιον πόντον καὶ Παφλαγονίαν λαχεῖν τοὺς Ὀμούρεω παῖδας.<sup>14</sup>

The two lists must be related: their similarities are almost certainly not due to coincidence, nor their omissions (both, for instance, omit Mentеше and Aydın, to name only two of the most important ones, which Laonikos mentions often in his

<sup>13</sup> “The Turks had come to an agreement and divided by lot all the Asian territories that belonged to the Roman empire. So Karmanos Alisourios [Alishur] took over most of the inland of Phrygia as well as the region as far as Philadelpheia and around Antioch by the Meander river. The lands from there to Smyrna and the coast of Ionia were held by another, named Sarchanes [Saruhan]. The region around Magnesia, Priene, and Ephesos fell under the power of another satrap, named Sasa. The region from Lydia and Aeolis as far as Mysia by the Hellespont came to a man called Kalames [Kalamshah] and his son Karases [Karasi]. The region around Olympos and the adjacent territories of Bithynia fell to another, named Atman [Osman]. The lands from the Sangarios river to Paphlagonia were divided among the sons of Amur [Ömer].”

<sup>14</sup> “Their leaders were seven, and later they divided among themselves all the lands that they had acquired. Karamanos was allotted the interior of Phrygia all the way to Kilikia and Philadelpheia, and Sarchanes the coastal land of Ionia as far as Smyrna. Kalames and his son Karases were given Lydia as far as Mysia, while Olympos and Bithynia were given to Osman and Teke. The sons of Ömer received the lands toward the Black Sea and Paphlagonia.”

subsequent narrative). But it is not necessary to conclude that the second list was written by Laonikos with the text of Gregoras by his side.

Let us set aside the fact that Laonikos spells some names differently. He could have converted Gregoras' spellings to his own preferred system. There are, however, substantive differences. Laonikos omits Sasa bey<sup>15</sup> and adds the emirate of Teke, though he is wrong about its location.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, his seemingly minor spelling change of Karmanos to Karamanos had dramatic consequences. Gregoras was referring to the emirate of Germyian, which was in fact in Phrygia, centered on Kütahya. Its first known emir was Yakub (d. 1320), a descendant of Alishur, whence Gregoras' "Karmanos Alisourios." But throughout Laonikos' narrative "Karamanos" is the emirate of Karaman, in south-central Asia Minor. It seems that he (or an intermediary source) has here transposed Gregoras' accurate definition of the territories of Germyian to Karaman.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Laonikos goes on to mention Germyian right after the passage quoted above, though he calls it "Kermianos" (also in a much later passage: II 22). What he says there should be considered because it is omitted from discussions of his alleged dependence on Gregoras. But Laonikos could not have obtained the following fiction from Gregoras:

τὸν δὲ Κερμμιανὸν οὐ τῶν ἑπτὰ τούτων γεγονέναι φασίν, ἀλλὰ βασιλέα πρόσθεν γενόμενον Ἰκονίου τῆς Καρίας πόλεως, ἐν ᾗ τὰ βασιλεία ἐπὶ συχρόν τινα χρόνον διεγένετο τούτοις, ἀπελη-

<sup>15</sup> For Sasa see I. Mélikoff-Sayar, *Le Destan d'Umur Pacha* (Paris 1954) 38–39, 45–48.

<sup>16</sup> Teke was in southwestern Anatolia, near Attaleia, and founded ca. 1321 by Yunus b. İlyas b. Hamid (1321–1324). For all the emirates, see their individual entries in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, and C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (New York 1996) 219–238.

<sup>17</sup> Nimet, *Die türkische Prosopographie* 21, 90, 93; N. G. Nicoloudis, *Μεσαιωνική Μακεδονία, Θράκη και Μικρά Ασία: Προσεγγίσεις και αντιπαράθεσεις Βυζαντινών, Σλάβων και Τούρκων* (Thessalonike 2006) 151–164.

λαμένον ἐντεῦθεν ἐπὶ Ἰωνίαν ἀπᾶραι, κακεῖ ιδιωτεύοντα ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν.

They say that Kermianos [= Germiyan] was not among the original seven but that he had already become the king of Ikonion, the city of Karia, where their court used to reside for a long time. But he was driven from there and came to Ionia, where he lived out his life in a private capacity.

It is certain that Laonikos confused “Karmanos Alisourios,” which in Gregoras refers to Germyian, with Karaman, for throughout his later narrative he refers to the emir of Karaman as “Karamanos Alisourios,” transferring the patronymic of the founder of Germiyan to the emir of Karaman. But it is also clear that he is not getting all this information directly from Gregoras, as it is too much changed.

We need not assume a direct dependence by Laonikos on this passage of Gregoras. First, the information is garbled enough that it may have gone through many phases of transmission, whether written or oral, before reaching Laonikos. I believe it unlikely that Laonikos read this passage of Gregoras because, as we shall see, there is no reason to think that he ever read any other part of Gregoras. Second, Laonikos had other sources of information on the origin of the emirates and it is possible that he received any Gregoran material through them as well. This is a more plausible thesis than that he had access to Gregoras but made use of only this passage (and maybe one other), yet garbled it so much in the process. The list of emirates probably circulated independently and had undergone many changes in the century (or more) between Gregoras and Laonikos.

The argument for dependence on Gregoras, then, ultimately hinges on whether other passages can be cited to demonstrate such dependence or whether their divergences rule out or complicate that possibility.

The second passage that is supposed to come from Gregoras concerns an army of Turks that crossed the Hellespont to raid Thrace (Gregoras places this in 1340):

Gregoras I 548: τῶν δὲ Τούρκων ὀκτὼ χιλιάδες διαπεραιωσάμενοι τὸν Ἑλλησπόντιον πορθμόν, μετὰ τῶν ὑποζυγίων οἱ πλείους, ἐληΐσαντο πᾶσαν τὴν ἄχρι Μυσῶν Θράκην, ἣν δὴ καὶ Ῥωμαίοις μὲν ἔρημόν τε καὶ ἀτριβῆ πεποιήκεσαν πᾶσαν· αὐτοὶ δ' ἄγοντές τε καὶ φέροντες οὐκ ὀκνοῦσι νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν καὶ τὴν μὲν λείαν πᾶσαν διαβιβάζοντες ἐς Ἀσίαν, αὐτοὶ δ' ἀπαλλάττεσθαι τῆς Θράκης οὐδ' ὄψε τοῦ χρόνου βουλόμενοι, ἅτε μηδένα τὸν ἐναντιωσόμενον ἔχοντες.<sup>18</sup>

Laonikos I 14: ἐπὶ τούτου βασιλεύοντος ὀκτακισχίλιοι Τούρκων ἐς τὴν Εὐρώπην διαβάντες περὶ Ἑλλησποντον, καὶ ἐν Χερρονήσῳ κατασχόντες φρούριον Ἑλληνικόν, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου ὀρμώμενοι, τὴν τε Θράκην ἐς Ἴστρον ἐλαύνοντες ἐληΐζοντο τὴν χώραν ἐπιδραμόντες, τὰ τε πολλὰ διήρπαζον, καὶ ἀνδράποδα ὡς πλείστα ἐλόμενοι ἐς τὴν Ἀσίαν διεβίβαζον, τοὺς τε Ἑλληνας καὶ Τριβαλλοὺς ἦγον καὶ ἔφερον.<sup>19</sup>

The problem with this alleged parallel is that the underlined words in Laonikos' passage, which ostensibly indicate his dependence on Gregoras, are used dozens of times throughout the *Histories*. Laonikos was a minimalist when it came to vocabulary, and these were precisely his favorite words (he even uses *διαβιβάζω* twice in this passage). If he were told that eight thousand Turks had crossed over into Europe at the Hellespont and plundered Thrace, this is exactly how he would have written it up. Again, we cannot rule out the possibility that

<sup>18</sup> “Eight thousand Turks crossed the straits at the Hellespont, most of them with their pack animals, and they plundered all of Thrace as far as Bulgaria, making all of it an impassable desolation for the Romans. They ranged far and wide and did not tire whether by night or by day; they transported all their plunder over to Asia, but they themselves did not want to depart from Thrace, even though it was late in the year, since there was no one there to oppose them.”

<sup>19</sup> “During his reign, eight thousand Turks crossed over into Europe at the Hellespont and seized a fort in the Chersonese belonging to the Greeks. They made it their base and marched through Thrace all the way to the Danube, devastating the land with their raids, looting throughout, and taking as many prisoners as they could enslave and convey over to Asia. Thus were the Greeks and Serbs buffeted.”

Laonikos' text is somehow genealogically related to that of Gregoras, but I do not believe this was because he had access to the text of Gregoras while writing his *Histories*. What especially argues against this is the context of the two passages, which has not been discussed by proponents of the thesis.

As no reader can miss, Gregoras places this episode in his narrative of the reign of Andronikos III (1328–1341), which he orders chronologically; specifically, he places it in 1340. Laonikos, however, places it in his account of the reign of Osman, who died ca. 1326. We might be tempted to suppose that Laonikos (again) misaligned Byzantine and Ottoman history, which he does frequently in his first books. But he cannot have learned of this event from Gregoras because he goes on to specify that it took place during the civil war between Andronikos II and Andronikos III, that is, in 1321–1328. No one who had the information about the raid from Gregoras would have made such a mistake. Moreover, Gregoras says that the Turks remained in Thrace as there was no one to oppose them. But that is not at all how the episode ends in Laonikos (I 14–15):

ἐν τούτῳ δὴ Σκυθῶν μοῖρα οὐκ ὀλίγη ἀπὸ Σαρματίας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰστρον ἐλάσαντες καὶ τὸν γε Ἰστρον διαβάντες, τοὺς τε Τούρκους ἐν τῇ Θράκῃ κατέλαβον καὶ μαχεσάμενοι ἐτρέψαντο, καὶ πλὴν ὀλίγων τινῶν διεχρήσαντο σύμπαντας ἀφειδέστατα. ὅσοι δὲ οὐκ ἐφθάρησαν, διασωθέντες ἐς τὴν Χερρόνησον, ἐς τὴν Ἀσίαν αὐθις διαβάντες οὐκέτι πάλιν ἀφίκοντο.<sup>20</sup>

The story has the exact opposite ending to that in Gregoras. Where did this ending come from?

According to Gregoras, some Mongols did cross the Danube and defeat a group of Turkish raiders, but this happened in 1337, in a different context.<sup>21</sup> It is possible that, in the century

<sup>20</sup> “Then a large contingent of Skythians came down from Russia to the Danube, and they crossed the Danube. They met the Turks in Thrace and routed them in battle. Except for a few, they mercilessly cut down their entire number. Those who were not slaughtered sought refuge in the Chersonese, and then they crossed over into Asia and never came back.”

<sup>21</sup> Gregoras I 535: ἀρχομένου γε μὴν ἤρος ἤδη πλῆθος Σκυθῶν διαβάντες

before Laonikos wrote his history, these otherwise unrelated events reported by Gregoras were conjoined. What is impossible to believe, however, is that Laonikos, using Gregoras, detached his account of the Turkish raid of 1340, gave it a different ending by conjoining it with the Mongol raid of 1337, and then set the whole thing in the 1320s; and that this, along with the passage on the emirates, was the sum total of his use of Gregoras, a historian who could have set him straight about so many other events. In fact, it is difficult to imagine even an intermediary author who, working with the text of Gregoras, managed to produce such a garbled version. The mechanics of transmission, if such did occur, were likely not textual in this case, and it is possible that there is no genealogical relationship here whatever.

Those are the passages on which the dependence thesis rests. This is not to say that there are no other verbal parallels between the two authors. Scholars have even adduced their common use of the terms *hegemon* or *basileus* for non-Roman rulers (e.g., of the Serbs).<sup>22</sup> But these parallels indicate only that the two authors (and Kantakouzenos) were following the same stylistic conventions of late Byzantine neo-Attic prose. The way in which they report the fall of Prousa to the Turks (in 1326) is almost identical, but the vocabulary is again so banal that we should not draw any robust conclusions from the parallel: Gregoras I 384 ἡλώκει δὲ καὶ ἡ Προυσαέων τῷ λιμῷ πολιορκηθεῖσα πόλις, cf. Laonikos I 13 ὑπὸ λιμοῦ ἐκπολιορκῆσαι

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τὸν Ἰστρον κατέδραμον τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν Θράκην ἄχρι θαλάττης Ἑλλησποντίας. ἔνθα δὲ καὶ, συμβάν οὕτωςί πως, Τούρκων τισὶν ἐντυχόντες, ὅποσοι ληστρικόν τινα τρόπον κατὰ τὸ συνεχὲς περαιούμενοι τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον τὴν παράλιον πᾶσαν ληίζονται Θράκην, τοὺς μὲν δῆσαντες ἀπήνεγκαν, τοὺς δ' ἀντιστάντας κατέκοψαν, πολέμιοι πολεμίους, ὥσπερ κύνες τεθνηκότι σώματι πολλάκις ἄρδην ἐπεισπίπτοντες. Ditten, *Klio* 43–45 (1965) 234 n.1, is unsure whether this was Laonikos' source.

<sup>22</sup> Zographopoulos, *Ο Λαόνικος Χαλκοκονδύλης* 51. He cites Ditten, *Klio* 43–45 (1965) 188 n.11, but the latter does not cite these terms to establish textual dependence, only for the purpose of “cf.”

ἐλόντα τὴν πόλιν. These words appear often in both authors.

Nicoloudis has claimed that Laonikos' account of the battle of Philokrene (10 June 1329, between Andronikos III and Orhan) follows that of Gregoras even though there are no verbal parallels, because they both omit the battle by the city fought on the following day, after the emperor's departure (which is mentioned by Kantakouzenos).<sup>23</sup> But that they would both omit a clash that took place after the Byzantines had been defeated and the emperor had departed is perhaps not surprising. Beyond the fact that Laonikos offers a more condensed narrative, they differ on crucial aspects of the battle. Gregoras says that after the battle, at night, the Romans, who were not then under attack, panicked when they saw that the emperor was going inside the city to have his wounded leg treated, and they fled in disorder, leaving a mostly empty camp for the Turks to find the next morning. Laonikos makes the flight to the city an extension of the battle itself: "As they turned to go to the city, the barbarians gave chase and attacked from behind, killing many of the Greeks. The rest were corralled and besieged in the city, but as this is a coastal city Orhan could do nothing against it." In fact, Orhan did not besiege Philokrene, but there was the minor battle the next day (the one omitted by Gregoras and Laonikos). It is again unlikely that Laonikos was using Gregoras here.

I will now argue that the dependence thesis creates more problems than it solves. While some information from Gregoras may have reached Laonikos via channels that we cannot identify, it can be ruled out that Laonikos had access to Gregoras when he was writing his history. The divergences between the two on many points confirm this. I will give some striking examples.

Laonikos gives an extremely confused account of the events of 1308–1312. He begins with the clashes between "the em-

<sup>23</sup> Nicoloudis, *Laonikos* 163 n.49, on Laonikos I 20–21, Gregoras I 433–437, Kantakouzenos I 341–363. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453* (Cambridge 1993) 169–170.

peror” (actually Andronikos II) and Halil, a Turkish raider in Thrace. He knows that the emperor brought Serbs and Italians to blockade Halil in the Chersonese but claims that “the Turks escaped without detection and crossed over to Asia at night.” In fact, they were massacred, as Gregoras reveals clearly.<sup>24</sup> Laonikos then goes back to the Catalan presence in the Chersonese and their departure for Greece in 1308—though he does not know that he is going back in time. Halil had in fact broken off from the Catalans at that time (in 1309 or 1310) to pursue his fortune in Thrace, with the results discussed above, but Laonikos does not seem to know this. Gregoras is, again, clear about it all, albeit in a previous segment of his narrative, of course.<sup>25</sup> Laonikos, moreover, seems to put these events in the time of the strife between Andronikos II and III, fifteen years too late, an error he would not have made if he had Gregoras. There is absolutely no reason to suppose, as Nimet did, that Laonikos borrowed anything from him at this point.<sup>26</sup>

Laonikos also believed that the Serbian ruler Stefan Dušan (1331–1355) seized territory from Andronikos II—he is emphatic about this: Ἀνδρονίκου, τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου βασιλέως φημί (I 25). In fact, the latter was deposed in 1328 and died in 1332, and Dušan’s conquests belong to the 1340s. No one who had read Gregoras could make such a mistake. Laonikos also claims that Serbian armies operated as far east as Constantinople, whereas Gregoras is explicit that they reached only as far as the Christopolis pass (mod. Kavala).<sup>27</sup> Laonikos also

<sup>24</sup> Laonikos I 15–16, cf. Gregoras I 269. For the events see Nicol, *Last Centuries* 138–139.

<sup>25</sup> Laonikos I 16, cf. Gregoras I 254–255. See Nicol, *Last Centuries* 133–134, 138–139.

<sup>26</sup> Nimet, *Die türkische Prosopographie* 80.

<sup>27</sup> Gregoras II 746. It is curious to observe that Nicoloudis, *Laonikos*, who believes that Laonikos used Gregoras, constantly corrects Laonikos’ grossest errors in the commentary by himself using Gregoras. Elsewhere he says that “it seems that Chalkokondyles had either not studied Gregoras thoroughly

claims that Dušan's successors remained at peace with each other, which is directly contradicted by both Gregoras and Kantakouzenos in no uncertain terms.<sup>28</sup>

No one who had read Gregoras could think that Orhan's son Süleyman was alive when his father died ca. 1362, that he succeeded him on the throne before his brother Murad I, or that he was the victor at the battle of Černomen (Marica), where the Serbs were annihilated on 26 September 1371. This is fiction, probably derived from oral Turkish sources that eulogized the gazi Süleyman. Gregoras is explicit about the date of Süleyman's death in 1356 or 1357, before that of Orhan.<sup>29</sup>

These are not cases of Laonikos possibly 'disagreeing' with Gregoras, that is, of deliberately giving a different version of events. Rather, they are cases of Laonikos' inability to coordinate events in the early fourteenth century, which he could have done if he had Gregoras. Historians who genuinely disagree (e.g., Gregoras and Kantakouzenos) usually differ only on points of detail that cast a different light on events. Laonikos, by contrast, misplaces events by decades and cannot correlate the raw information that he had from his sources, whatever they were. Gregoras would have sorted out basic problems of chronology for him. Nor does it make sense that Laonikos would have taken from Gregoras only two garbled little passages, if he had access to the whole of his history. That a manuscript of the latter was copied out in the Peloponnese a decade before Laonikos is attested at Mistra does not even qualify as circumstantial evidence.<sup>30</sup>

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or could not refer to his work when he was writing his own history": *Byzantina* 17 (1994) 80.

<sup>28</sup> See Nicoloudis, *Laonikos* 167 n.78.

<sup>29</sup> Laonikos I 22–23, 26–29; Gregoras III 560. See Nicoloudis, *Laonikos* 164–165 n.57. For Turkish traditions about Süleyman (none of which puts him as late as 1371, however) see H. Inalcik, "The Conquest of Edirne," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 3 (1971) 185–210; K. Silay, "Ahmedi's History of the Ottoman Dynasty," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 16 (1992) 129–200, here 138.

<sup>30</sup> Mentioned by Nicoloudis, *Byzantina* 17 (1994) 77–78; *Μεσαιωνική Μα-*

The (alleged) *Chronicle* of Ioannes Chortasmenos

D. Nastase has argued that one of the sources used by Laonikos (and Doukas) was a chronicle by Ioannes Chortasmenos (ca. 1370–1437).<sup>31</sup> His position has been reported by subsequent scholars, though not necessarily accepted.<sup>32</sup> The reason for this is that his argument is a series of conjectures. Specifically, he has claimed that (a) a brief Slavonic chronicle regarding the rise of the Ottomans, covering the years 1296–1413 and preserved in a mid-sixteenth-century copy, displays narrative biases which indicate that it was not written from a Bulgarian point of view but a Byzantine one, and was therefore presumably translated and adapted from a lost Greek original.<sup>33</sup> Based on the evidence that he presents, this conclusion is, in my view, possible but not certain. (b) The original Greek text must have been written by Chortasmenos because of some similarities between what it reports about the siege of Constan-

κεδονία 127.

<sup>31</sup> D. Nastase, “Une chronique byzantine perdue et sa version slavou-roumaine (La chronique de Tisniana 1411–1413),” *Cyrrilomethodianum* 4 (1977) 100–171; which was later summarized in “La chronique de Jean Chortasmenos et le dernier siècle d’historiographie byzantine,” *Symmeikta* 8 (1989) 389–404; and enhanced in “La version slave de la Chronique byzantine perdue de Jean Chortasmenos,” in E. Popescu and T. Teoteoi (eds.), *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines* 5 (2006) 321–363. For Chortasmenos in general see H. Hunger, *Johannes Chortasmenos (ca. 1370–ca. 1436/37): Briefe, Gedichte und kleine Schriften* (Vienna 1969). Hunger later gave this putative chronicle a tentative entry in his *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* II (Munich 1978) 482.

<sup>32</sup> Nicoloudis, *Laonikos* 72; Zographopoulos, *Ο Λαόνικος Χαλκοκονδύλης* 51.

<sup>33</sup> The first edition was made by J. Bogdan, “Ein Beitrag zur bulgarischen und serbischen Geschichtschreibung,” *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 13 (1891) 481–543, here 526–535, with a Latin translation by V. Jagic, 536–543. We now have an edition and French translation by Nastase, in *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines* 5 (2006) 346–363, and an English translation by K. Petkov, *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh-Fifteenth Century: The Records of a Bygone Culture* (Leiden 2008) 456–464 (no. 211).

tinople by Bayezid (1394–1402) and comments that Chortasmenos, who was there, wrote about it in the margins of a manuscript that he copied, and also because of its similarities to a sermonish text about the siege that may or may not have been written by Chortasmenos.<sup>34</sup> But Chortasmenos is nowhere said to have written a history, so I find this step in the argument even more conjectural. Still, that is not as important for our purposes as the claim that (c) the original form of the chronicle was used (among others) by Laonikos as one of his sources for the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

For the purposes of the present discussion we can bypass almost all of Nastase's argument and focus only on the final step, which is unconvincing. The putative parallels between 'Chortasmenos' and Laonikos that Nastase cites are really only references to the same important events or to stories that would have been widely disseminated, such as the versions of Murad I's death at Kosovo in 1389.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Nastase overlooks the fact that the two texts differ regarding important facts and have an utterly different, in fact virtually opposite, outlook. Specifically, the chronicle is anti-Latin and its purpose is to reproach Christians for their sins, which brought the Turks upon them as a punishment, and to ascribe the deliverance of Constantinople to the intervention of the Theotokos.<sup>36</sup> Still, theological differences are not decisive, for Laonikos could well have lifted the historical facts and discarded the interpretive framework. But here too there are many divergences and no significant parallels.

For example, the chronicle reports, with Scriptural allusions, that after the battle of Nikopolis (1396) Bayezid marched to

<sup>34</sup> Ed. and transl. P. Gautier, "Un récit inédit du siège de Constantinople par les Turcs (1394–1402)," *REByz* 23 (1965) 100–117. The back-and-forth debate over its attribution is summarized by Nastase, *Symmeikta* 8 (1989) 392–393.

<sup>35</sup> Nastase, *Cyrrillomethodianum* 4 (1977) 145, 157–158; *Symmeikta* 8 (1989) 399–400.

<sup>36</sup> See esp. Nastase, *Symmeikta* 8 (1989) 391–392.

Buda and returned triumphantly bringing many captives, whereas Laonikos says that he marched against the city but turned back because of an attack of gout, and so did not reach it.<sup>37</sup> While the chronicle correctly says that Bayezid's siege of Constantinople lasted for eight years, Laonikos says ten.<sup>38</sup> Laonikos' brief mention of the siege entirely lacks the details about it that he could have lifted from 'Chortasmenos'. The chronicle is thick with images of Turkish arrows darkening the sky (not only in relation to the siege), which Laonikos, who was prone to classical and especially Herodotean imagery, also failed to pick up.<sup>39</sup> Finally, as we saw above Laonikos was confused about important aspects of the battle of Černomen (or Marica), and this chronicle would have set him straight; he might, for instance, have known the name of Vukašin, and would not have had to call him "the Kralcs."<sup>40</sup>

In sum, there is no reason to think that Laonikos used a chronicle by Ioannes Chortasmenos, assuming that such a text existed.

#### Manuel II Palaiologos' *Funeral Oration for his Brother Theodoros*

It is not entirely true, as I implied above, that we have no Byzantine histories between Gregoras and Kantakouzenos on the one hand and the historians of the Fall on the other. Manuel II's *Funeral Oration for Theodoros Palaiologos*, his brother and despot at Mistra (1382–1407), is, in its way, a historical

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Bogdan, *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 13 (1891) 531–532, and Nastase, *Cyrrillomethodianum* 4 (1977) 110, with Laonikos I 71.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Bogdan, *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 13 (1891) 534, and Nastase, *Cyrrillomethodianum* 4 (1977) 111, with Laonikos I 77. On the siege see D. Hatzopoulos, *Η πρώτη πολιορκία της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως από τους Οθωμανούς (1394–1402)* (Athens 2004).

<sup>39</sup> Bogdan, *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 13 (1891) 530–531, 533; Nastase, *Cyrrillomethodianum* 4 (1977) 115 n.75, 129.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Nastase, in *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines* 5 (2006) 348, and *Symmeikta* 8 (1989) 397, with Laonikos I 28.

narrative, covering the period 1376–1407.<sup>41</sup> Plethon, Laonikos' teacher at Mistra in 1447, even wrote a *protheoria* for this speech,<sup>42</sup> and Laonikos explicitly refers to the speech itself (I 202–203):

ἐπάνειμι δὴ ἐπὶ Θεόδωρον τὸν βασιλέως παῖδα, ἡγεμόνα Σπάρτης τε καὶ ἄλλης Πελοποννήσου, ὃς ὑπὸ Θεοδώρου τοῦ πάτρως ἐξετρέφετο ἅμα καὶ ἐπαιδεύθη, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα κατελείφθη ἐς τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτοῦ ἡγεμών. ἐς τοῦτον δὲ ἀφικόμενος ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλος ὁ Βυζαντίου βασιλεὺς τὸν τε παῖδα καθίστη ἐς τὴν ἀρχὴν βεβαιότερον, καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ἀδελφῷ ἤδη τετελευτηκότι λόγον ἐπικήδειον ἐξετραγῶδει διεξιὼν ἐπὶ τῷ τάφῳ αὐτοῦ, ἀπολοφυρόμενός τε ἅμα τὸν ἐπιτήδειον ἀδελφόν. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα μεταπεμπόμενος τοὺς Πελοποννησίους ἐς Ἴσθμὸν τὸν τε Ἴσθμὸν ἐτείχισε καὶ φυλακὴν καταστησάμενος αὐτοῦ ἀπήει ἀποπλέων ἐπὶ Βυζαντίου, ἔχων μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τοὺς Πελοποννησίων ἄρχοντας ἐν φυλακῇ.

I return to Theodoros [II], the son of the emperor and ruler of Mistra and the rest of the Peloponnese [in 1407–1443]. He had been raised and trained by his uncle Theodoros [I], and later succeeded him as ruler of the principality. He was visited by his father Manuel, the emperor of Byzantium, who confirmed the position of his son. He also delivered in tragic tones a funeral oration for his brother, who had already died, and visited his tomb, lamenting his dear brother. It was after this that he summoned the Peloponnesians to the Isthmos, fortified the Isthmos, installed a garrison there, and sailed away to Byzantium, taking with him, under guard, the Peloponnesian lords.

Laonikos does not anywhere else in his history refer to a text that might have been a source in this way, so it is possible that he read it; he was certainly aware of it. However, I have been unable to find any evidence that he used it in writing his *Histories*. There are no parallels between the *Histories* and the

<sup>41</sup> J. Chrysostomides, *Manuel II Palaeologus: Funeral Oration on his Brother Theodore* (Thessalonike 1985).

<sup>42</sup> Chrysostomides, *Manuel II* 67–69; C. M. Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford 1986) 88–91.

*Oration*, other than that both refer to the Golden Gate fort as the “akropolis” in connection with the war in 1373, when Andronikos IV seized power.<sup>43</sup> But this, like many of the putative parallels with Gregoras, is banal. Beyond that, Theodoros I is the only person whom Laonikos calls a “Porphyrogennetos” (I 193), and he does so only once, perhaps to differentiate him from Theodoros II, Manuel’s son, who was being sent to him. But Theodoros II was also a Porphyrogennetos, so it is possible that Laonikos was influenced here by the title of the *Funeral Oration*, which also calls Theodoros I a Porphyrogennetos.

More important, however, is the fact that Laonikos evinces no knowledge of the version of events in the *Oration*, including none of Manuel’s personal eye-witness testimony about the dynastic conflict among the Palaiologoi or about his brother’s career. Manuel’s account of their three-year imprisonment by their brother Andronikos (1373–1376) is incompatible with Laonikos’ odd report that Andronikos confined them in a wooden cage suspended within a tower.<sup>44</sup> Where Manuel speciously argues that the final outcome of Theodoros’ deal to sell the Peloponnese to the Hospitallers was what his brother had planned all along (its implementation was blocked by popular opposition and it had to be retroactively cancelled in 1400), Laonikos correctly claims that “the matter turned out in the opposite way than he planned.”<sup>45</sup> This might be taken as a tacit correction of the *Oration*, if we had any reason to believe that Laonikos was responding to it at all. That assumption, however, is basically ruled out by Laonikos’ garbled account of the the so-called congress of Serres and Bayezid’s subsequent march on Greece. Manuel gives a long and lucid account of how Bayezid summoned his Christian vassals, including Manuel and Theo-

<sup>43</sup> Laonikos I 56–57; Manuel II *Funeral Oration* 101. For the historical context see Nicol, *Last Centuries* 278–279; J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick 1969) 27–28.

<sup>44</sup> Manuel II *Funeral Oration* 100–109, with Laonikos I 57.

<sup>45</sup> Manuel II *Funeral Oration* 204–205, with Laonikos I 91.

doros, to Serres in the winter of 1393–1394, where they suspected that he intended to murder them. In the spring, the sultan marched into Greece, whereupon Theodoros escaped to the Peloponnese to plan the defense of his realm.<sup>46</sup> Laonikos, by contrast, does not seem to know that all this formed one set of events. He split the congress from the invasion of Greece and placed the former first, many pages earlier in an unrelated context.<sup>47</sup> Again, Laonikos was probably trying to coordinate two reports without the benefit of chronological indicators. The *Oration* was not among his sources, otherwise he would have been able to reconstruct a plausible sequence. Nor, then, and for the same reason, is it likely that he had Plethon's three-page summary of it either.

What, then, did Laonikos know about the *Oration*? What he says is that Manuel delivered an oration at his brother's tomb (λόγον ἐπικήδειον ἐξετραγῶδει διεξιὼν ἐπὶ τῷ τάφῳ αὐτοῦ) when he was at Mistra in 1407–1408 to strengthen the position of his newly installed son Theodoros II. Manuel did not then deliver the *Oration* that we have, which was composed afterwards.<sup>48</sup> It has been argued that Laonikos' report refers to the words spoken by the emperor at that time and not to the *Oration* that we have. Laonikos could have known about those words from Plethon or other people he knew at Mistra.<sup>49</sup> In

<sup>46</sup> Manuel II *Funeral Oration* 134–143. For the events see Barker, *Manuel II* 112–120.

<sup>47</sup> Laonikos I 61–64 and 74–77. P. Katsoni has claimed that what have usually been seen as chronological errors in Laonikos are really only “flash-backs” to give context, but she does not offer any argument in favor of this reading and, significantly, does not take on the splitting up and confused order of the events of 1393–1394: “Σύντομη χρονολογική αποκατάσταση σ' ένα τμήμα του κειμένου των Ἀποδείξεων Ἱστοριῶν,” *Πρακτικά του ΙΑ' Πανελληνίου Ἱστορικοῦ Συνεδρίου* (Thessalonike 1991) 89–104.

<sup>48</sup> The conventional view is that Manuel composed the *Oration* during the two subsequent years, but C. G. Patrinelis and D. Z. Sophianos, *Manuel Chrysoloras and his Discourse addressed to the Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus* (Athens 2001) 16–23, argue for 1412.

<sup>49</sup> Barker, *Manuel II* 525–527; Chrysostomides, *Manuel II* 29–31.

other words, Laonikos may not have known about the *Oration* that we have; he knew only that the emperor gave a memorable speech.

Manuel's letters have also been used as primary sources by historians,<sup>50</sup> but there is no reason to believe that Laonikos used these either, especially the letters that Manuel wrote about Bayezid's campaigns deep into Asia Minor in the early 1390s, which he was forced to accompany.<sup>51</sup>

#### Leonardo Bruni's *Constitution of the Florentines*

This was a western source albeit written in Greek, so it belongs in this discussion. Bruni, the chancellor of Florence, wrote this brief treatise (4–5 modern pages) in connection with the Council of Ferrara-Florence, which moved to Florence in January 1439.<sup>52</sup> It is likely that Bruni dedicated it to Georgios Amiroutzes, the Trapezuntine intellectual and supporter of Union (who would clash there with Plethon).<sup>53</sup> It was probably meant to 'explain' Florence to visiting Byzantine dignitaries and intellectuals, but its subsequent popularity in the west indicates that readers there were also drawn to its curious attempt to re-represent Italian republicanism, with all its ancient roots, back into a Greek idiom. As it happens, Plethon, Laonikos' future teacher, was among its original (intended?) readers, for we have his copy of it with corrections to Bruni's prose.<sup>54</sup> La-

<sup>50</sup> Ed. G. T. Dennis, *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus* (Washington 1977).

<sup>51</sup> Barker, *Manuel II* 87–105; E. A. Zachariadou, "Manuel II Palaeologos on the Strife between Bāyezīd and Kādī Burhān Al-Dīn Ahmad," *BSOAS* 18 (1980) 471–481 (repr. *Romania and the Turks (c. 1300–c. 1500)* [London 1985] IV).

<sup>52</sup> Introduction, edition, and commentary in A. Moulakis, "Leonardo Bruni's Constitution of Florence," *Rinascimento* 26 (1986) 141–190; transl. in G. Griffiths et al., *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni* (New York 1987) 171–174; ed. and transl. P. Viti, *Leonardo Bruni: Opere letterarie e politiche* (Turin 1996) 771–787.

<sup>53</sup> J. Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes: The Philosopher and his Tractates* (Leuven 2011) 7.

<sup>54</sup> Moulakis, *Rinascimento* 26 (1986) 166, 168; see also R. and F. Masai,

onikos devotes a full paragraph to the constitution of Florence at the point in his narrative where the Council moves there. Did he know Bruni's treatise?

As with Gregoras and Manuel II, there are tantalizing hints of a textual relationship here, but nothing conclusive, and verbal resonances are countered by substantive differences. For example, Laonikos says that the magistrates are chosen from among the common citizens and the leaders of the guilds: τοὺς δὲ ἄρχοντας αἰροῦνται ἀπὸ τοῦ δήμου, δημότας τε ὄντας καὶ τεχνῶν τινῶν ἐπιστάτας (I 67). Bruni, who wishes the constitution to appear more mixed and moderate, fudges matters when he says that only two of the nine Priors were chosen from this class: δύο μόνον εἰσὶ δημοτικοὶ ἀπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν (18)—the same words, then, but a different content. Ioannes VIII, in the *chryso-boullon* that he issued at Florence granting legal privileges to the Florentine authorities, specifies that they were nine, viz. “the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia and the other eight who are with him, the first among the guilds.”<sup>55</sup> The Gonfaloniere di Giustizia is called σημαιοφόρος in all these texts. Bruni distinguishes between the two Consigli, of the Popolo with three hundred members and of the Grandi with two hundred (28–30), but Laonikos fuses them into only one of five hundred (II 66). Both authors have important matters referred first to the magistrates and then to the *boule*, including matters πόλεμον φέροντες ἢ εἰρήνην (Laonikos) / περὶ πολέμου τε καὶ εἰρήνης (Bruni 34–35). But these expressions were so conventional when it came to the business of any *boule* that there is no effective verbal parallel here.

The strongest parallel relates to the two foreign judges who

“L'oeuvre de Georges Gémiste Pléthon,” *BAB* (1954) 536–555, here 548; F. Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris 1956) 68; A. Diller, “The Autographs of G. Gemistus Pletho,” *Scriptorium* 10 (1956) 27–41, here 38–39.

<sup>55</sup> Ioannes VIII Palaiologos, *Chrysoboulla regarding the Florentines*, ed. S. P. Lambros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά* III (Athens 1926) 334–352, here 335. For the context see J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge 1961) 301.

were brought in to try cases impartially. Both authors explain the division of labor between the two in similar terms and in a similar construction, and they then offer the same rationale for them. There are, however, no close verbal parallels:

Laonikos (II 66): καὶ ἄνδρες δύο πάρεστον αὐτοῖς ἐπήλυδες, οὓς μεταπέμπεται ἡ πολιτεία, τιμώντες. τὸν μὲν δικαστὴν ἐπιστᾶσιν αὐτῇ τῶν ἐγκλημάτων τῆς πόλεως, τὸν δὲ ἐς τὸ τὰς ἄλλας δίκας δικάζειν τῆς πόλεως αὐτὸν ἀμφὶ τὴν τῆς πόλεως ἄλλην διοίκησιν ἔχουσιν. ἐπήλυδας δὲ οὗτοι ἐπάγονται τοὺς ἄνδρας αὐτούς, ὡς ἂν μὴ πολῖται, οἳ τε δικάζοντες δίκην τινά, ἐπὶ θάτερα ταλαντεύοιντο.<sup>56</sup>

Bruni (90–97): τῶν ἰδίων δὲ πραγμάτων δικαστήρια εἰσὶ καὶ νόμοι καὶ ἄρχοντες ἄλλοι, μήτε πολῖται οὗτοι ἀλλὰ ξένοι. αἰροῦνται γὰρ πρὸς ταῦτα ἄνδρες γνώριμοι καὶ εὐπατρίδα ἐξ ἄλλων τῶν πόλεων, μισθὸν ἔχοντες ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ, ἵνα ἐλθόντες δικάσωσιν ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ πόλει ... εἰσὶ δὲ οὗτοι ἄρχοντες δύο, ὧν ἕτερος μὲν ἐξουσίαν ἔχει περὶ τὰ δίκαια ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς ἀγῶσι τε καὶ συναλλάγμασι καὶ τοιούτοις, ἕτερος δὲ μᾶλλον περὶ κολάσεις ἐστὶ καὶ τιμωρίας τῶν ἀσεληγημάτων.<sup>57</sup>

Bruni goes on, at greater length than Laonikos, to explain that this arrangement was designed to ensure impartiality and to prevent hatreds from arising among the citizens.

Another interesting feature that both texts have in common is their silence regarding Cosimo de' Medici, who had taken

<sup>56</sup> “There are also two foreign men, whom the state invites in and honors. They appoint one as judge over the crimes that take place in the city while they keep the other one to preside over the other cases of the city, those that relate to the rest of the city’s administration. They bring these foreign men in so that their own citizens cannot show a bias in favor of one side or another, if they were to preside over a certain trial.”

<sup>57</sup> “The laws and magistrates concerned with private law are different, the latter not being citizens, but foreigners. For this function, notable and well-born persons from other cities are chosen. They receive their salary from the community, to induce them to come to serve as judges in our city ... They are of two categories: one of them has authority over financial and commercial cases and the like. The other is responsible rather for the correction and punishment of evil-doers.”

power in 1434, before the Council and Bruni's treatise. To be sure, Cosimo's power was notoriously unofficial and so difficult to fit into a constitutional description without making Florence look like what Laonikos would probably have called a 'tyranny'. We can understand why Bruni would have wanted to suppress certain facts about political life in his city, but Laonikos had no reason to be inhibited, so this may indicate a reliance on Bruni as a source.

As far as I know, no one has yet proposed a relationship between these two texts, and it should not be ruled out. But direct use seems, again, to pose more problems than it solves: it is difficult to explain away the substantive differences, especially the conflation of the two Councils. If a relationship has to be postulated, it might be more distant one. Laonikos may have read the treatise at Mistra, years before he wrote his own history, or its contents may have been summarized to him, perhaps by Plethon himself, effectively transforming it into yet another oral source.

*Plethon's Corrections to Some of the Mistakes in Strabo*

Laonikos does not name his sources for geography any more than he does those for history. He certainly relied on Herodotos, especially for ethno-geography;<sup>58</sup> in two passages he seems to rely on the pseudo-Aristotelian *Meteorology* IV (though possibly through intermediaries; see below); and he may have known Ptolemy. But there has been no systematic study of this question, which concerns his use of ancient sources and so is not central to our investigation. Nor does he draw attention to how his own information corrected or updated the testimony of the ancient writers.

It has been asserted that Laonikos may have known his teacher Plethon's *Corrections to Some of the Mistakes in Strabo*, a brief collection of notes that for the most part correct Strabo on the basis of Ptolemy and deal only with Strabo's theoretical discussion of the shape of the inhabited world (i.e. Strab.

<sup>58</sup> Ditten, *Der Russland-Exkurs* 7–8.

2.5.13–33).<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Plethon was working on Strabo after his return from Italy, that is, in the 1440s, when he became acquainted with Laonikos. Three specific debts have been proposed.<sup>60</sup>

1) Plethon (1, p.442) corrected Strabo's statement (2.5.18) that the Caspian Sea was open to the outer ocean. He adds that Aristotle (*Mete.* 351a) says that many rivers flow into it and that it is connected to the Black Sea through an underground channel. Neither Plethon nor pseudo-Aristotle names those rivers. Laonikos says that "this sea is large because many rivers flow into it and it stretches over many stades; it is said not to open out into the outer ocean at any point. But I have learned that there is a channel that leads from it and flows out into the Indian Ocean" (I 110). Plethon *may* be the authority behind the "it is said," but there are no verbal parallels between the two. Moreover, Laonikos names the Indian Ocean, not the Black Sea, as the outlet of the channel, and he names the rivers that pour into the Caspian Sea (the Araxes and Choaspes). In fact, both Herodotos (1.202–203) and Ptolemy (*Geog.* 7.5.4) claimed that the Caspian was an enclosed sea that did not communicate with the outer ocean; the debate between them and proponents of the opposite view had been laid out by Eustathios in the twelfth century.<sup>61</sup> This tradition was presumably the basis for Plethon's correction and likely for that of Laonikos as well. Laonikos' description of the peoples who live by the Caspian, following immediately upon his description of it, is similar to that in Herodotos of the peoples of the Caucasus, following immediately upon his account of the Caspian (Hdt. ἔθνεα δὲ

<sup>59</sup> Ed. A. Diller, "A Geographical Treatise by Georgius Gemistus Pletho," *Isis* 27 (1937) 441–451. Cf. Diller, *Scriptorium* 10 (1956) 32; Woodhouse, *Plethon* 181–186.

<sup>60</sup> Ditten, *Der Russland-Exkurs* 45 (but see below), 91; Nicoloudis, *Byzantina* 17 (1994) 78–79; Zographopoulos, *Ο Λαόνικος Χαλκοκονδύλης* 51–52, who gives a long list of information that Laonikos could not, in fact, have drawn from Plethon.

<sup>61</sup> Eustath. *Comm.Dion.Per.* 48 (GGM II 227).

ἀνθρώπων πολλά καὶ παντοῖα, Laon. ἔθνη πολλά τε καὶ ἄλλκιμα). And the way that Laonikos conjoins the names Hyrkania and Kaspia for this sea follows Ptolemy, not Plethon. It is not necessary to conclude that Laonikos was following Plethon here. The only point that they have in common is that the sea was enclosed, and there was a solid ancient tradition behind that.

2) In supplementing Strabo with new information about the extreme north of Russia, Plethon (6, p.444) is the first author to mention the Permians,<sup>62</sup> and he adds that they live from hunting alone. Laonikos (I 123) also mentions them and says that they live from hunting. It is sensible to assume that he learned this from Plethon, but matters are not that simple, for Laonikos seems to know more about them than Plethon records:<sup>63</sup> “The Permians live in the north beyond the Russians; they are neighbors of the Russians, and the Russians speak the same language as the Permians. It is said about the Permians that they are a race who make a living for themselves mostly through hunting and ...” (the lacuna has obliterated the rest). We notice that he does not say that they live by hunting *alone* but “for the most part” (Plethon’s ἀπὸ θήρας μόνης vs. Laonikos’ ἀπὸ ἄγρας τὸ πλεόν τοῦ βίου σφίσι ποιούμενον καὶ ...). Moreover, Plethon calls them an ἔθνος ἄβιον (“a people with a life scarcely worth living”), whereas Laonikos, with his usual Herodotean open-mindedness, allows them to have a *bios* of their own. Finally, Plethon records further information about the peoples and rivers of the extreme north that Laonikos does not include, though it is his purpose here to record precisely such information.

3) The third alleged point of convergence is scarcely worth mentioning, being only that Russia is bounded on the north by the Arctic Sea (Plethon 6, p.444; Laonikos I 122). This was common knowledge and the two authors’ accounts of the Rus-

<sup>62</sup> Diller, *Isis* 27 (1937) 448–449.

<sup>63</sup> So Ditten, *Der Russland-Exkurs* 45.

sian north are quite different, with each containing much information that the other does not. In fact, they have only the Permians in common.

To offset these (rather meager) parallels, there is at least one substantive difference of opinion: Plethon (2, p.443), following Ptolemy (2.5.3), accepts the theory that the Nile flows down from the mountain of the Moon (*Selenaion*), whereas Laonikos (I 132), following pseudo-Aristotle (*Mete.* 350b), says that it flows from the Silver mountain (*Argyron*).<sup>64</sup> Plethon (7, pp.444–445) knew that the *Sinai* and *Seres*, who encompassed what we call the Chinese, lived to the east of the Indians and Skythians, whereas Laonikos seems to confuse Σίνη with India (I 152–153: the MSS. Σύήνη was emended by Tafel to Σίνη, but Laonikos may have been using a different spelling too).

In sum, it is unlikely that Laonikos had before him Plethon's *Corrections* when he was writing his history. He clearly had other sources for most of what he wrote. He may have heard Plethon say that the Caspian Sea does not open to the outer ocean and that the Permians live by hunting in the far north, though he might have known both facts from other sources. This is of course not to deny that Plethon exerted considerable influence over his young pupil. In a separate study I will show that Laonikos picked up and further developed Plethon's ideas about the identity and history of the Greek people; his philosophical outlook and especially his philosophical ethnography, which shaped his presentation of Islam and Mohammed as a lawgiver (*nomothetes*); the nature of the Peloponnese and the importance of the Hexamilion wall to its defense; and the Slavic continuum from the Adriatic to the Russian north. But most of these issues

<sup>64</sup> Laonikos (I 64) seems to have taken the notion that the Tartesos river (the Guadalquivir?) originates in the Pyrenees from *Mete.* 350b too, though from the latter text it had passed into the mainstream geographical tradition. The error that Germany begins at the Pyrenees is unique to Laonikos, though there may be serious textual problems here: H. Ditten, "Bemerkungen zu Laonikos Chalkokondyles' Deutschland Exkurs," *ByzF* 1 (1966) 49–75, here 51–58.

were certainly discussed in person between the two and Plethon's influence was not necessarily textual. That is why I have concentrated on the *Corrections to Strabo*, about which specific claims have been made. Nevertheless, many of the classical texts that lay behind these geographical discussions were exciting the interest of intellectual elites broadly at this time and should not be reduced to the circle of Plethon. In 1465–1466, when Laonikos was finalizing his *Histories*, Ptolemy was being made available to Mehmed II himself by Georgios Amiroutzes and his son, and then by Georgios of Trebizond.<sup>65</sup>

To conclude, Laonikos' *Histories* presents a curious profile. Its style and classical approach reflect extensive book learning and immersion in the highest register of Greek rhetoric and historiography. Yet the contents of the work are drawn primarily from oral sources and, as I will show in a separate study, often represent a classicization of popular legends and vernacular poems in French, Italian, possibly Spanish, and Turkish. The boundaries of the known world were expanding rapidly, and Laonikos, who was multilingual and moved among Byzantine, Italian, and Ottoman elites, was well positioned to receive news from all directions. Even if we assume that he never traveled outside of Greece and the lands of the dying empire, those lands had never before hosted so many travelers with news to tell, among them Byzantine diplomats to the west.<sup>66</sup> We know little of what they reported, but Laonikos had entry into their circles. Kyriacus found him at Mistra in the company of not only Plethon but also the despot, Konstantinos (XI) Palaiologos himself. An elusive figure named Laskaris Kananos wrote a

<sup>65</sup> F. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time* (Princeton 1992) 248–250; J. Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *DOP* 37 (1983) 15–34, here 24; Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes* 9–10.

<sup>66</sup> S. Mergiali-Sahas, "A Byzantine Ambassador to the West and his Office during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *BZ* 94 (2001) 588–604.

brief account of the far north around this time.<sup>67</sup> Laonikos was not limited to Greek informants. A glimpse into what might have been available in terms of western sources is the account in Bertrandon de la Broquière, a traveler to the Levant, of how he told the incredulous court of Ioannes VIII the story of Joan of Arc.<sup>68</sup> As for specific Greek sources, however, our search has been inconclusive. There are texts with which partial affinities can be seen, and Laonikos knew them perhaps through unknown and possibly oral intermediaries, but there are none with which we can confidently proclaim a direct relationship.

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<sup>67</sup> Among a flurry of recent publications, see T. Hägg, "A Byzantine Visit to Bergen: Laskaris Kananos and his Description of the Baltic and North Sea Region," *Graeco-Arabica* 9–10 (2004) 183–198; J. Harris, "When Did Laskaris Kananos Travel in Baltic Lands?" *Byzantion* 80 (2010) 173–187.

<sup>68</sup> J. Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven 2010) 69.