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BYZANTINE MONASTERIES AND MONASTIC PROPERTY
IN THESSALONIKE AND CONSTANTINOPLÉ
DURING THE PERIOD OF OTTOMAN CONQUESTS
(Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries)

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It is a well-known fact that Byzantine monasteries in the Balkans survived under Ottoman rule and enjoyed certain privileges that allowed them to maintain their economic prosperity which was based first and foremost on their landholdings. This privileged status was the result of a policy of rapprochement monastic communities pursued *vis-à-vis* the Ottomans, which differentiated their fate from that of a large section of the region's lay landowners.⁽¹⁾ For instance, the monks of the monastery of Saint John Prodromos (Margarid) near Serres, placing themselves under the protection of Sultan Murad I in 1372/1373 (that is, well in advance of the Ottoman conquest of the city of Serres which took place in 1383), obtained as privileges the grant of liberty for themselves and for the monastery's properties, as well as the guarantee of future protection under the Sultan's successors.⁽²⁾ It has been argued that the monks of Mount Athos, following the example of their co-religionaries at Prodromos, may have accepted Ottoman suzerainty around the same time also, because no large-scale attacks against Mount Athos are attested after 1372/1373, even though Ottoman raids continued thereafter

1 See N. Oikonomidès, "Monastères et moines lors de la conquête ottomane," *Südost-Forschungen* 35 (1976): [hereafter: *SFo*] 1-10.

2 E.A. Zachariadou, "Early Ottoman Documentes of the Prodromos Monastery (Serres), *SFo*, 28 (1969): 1-12 [repr. in *eadem*, *Romania and the Turks* (c. 1300 - c. 1500) (London, 1985), no. XV] The *nişan* of Musa Çelebi (1412) and the *hükm* of Mehmed I (1419) published by Zachariadou in this article (pp. 3-7) confirm that the monastery's privileged status was indeed recognized by Murad I's successors, who furthermore granted it exemptions from several taxes. For later developments, see also N. Beldiceanu, "Margarid: un timar monastique," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 33 (1975): [hereafter: *REB*] 277-255 [repr. in *idem*, *Le monde ottoman des Balkans (1402-1566). Institutions, société, économie* (London, 1976), no. XIV].

throughout the rest of Macedonia, extending into Thessaly and Albania as well. When, therefore, direct Ottoman rule was established over Mount Athos in 1383, the monasteries there do not appear to have suffered, but to the contrary remained in possession of their property and continued to prosper.⁽³⁾ Following the political reversal that was brought about by Bayezid I's defeat at the battle of Ankara (1402), most regions of Macedonia including Mount Athos and Thessalonike were restored to the Byzantine Empire.⁽⁴⁾ In 1404, Emperor Manuel II, distrustful of the monasteries' stance towards the Ottomans, forbade them from having any direct contact with their former masters.⁽⁵⁾ Two decades later, however, in 1423 the Athonite monks, foreseeing the eventual conquest of Balkan territories by the Ottomans who in the meantime had completely recovered their strength, took the initiative of declaring official obedience to Murad II.⁽⁶⁾ Similarly, in the period prior to the battle of Ankara, the monasteries of "Kalabaka" (i.e., Meteora) had been granted privileges and exemptions by Bayezid I, no doubt in return for their submission to Ottoman authority.⁽⁷⁾

A common characteristic of the monasteries above that enjoyed privileges and continued to flourish under Ottoman authority is that all of them were large rural establishments. On the other hand, the experience of the smaller urban monasteries seems to have been somewhat different and their situation more precarious during the period of Ottoman conquests. Unfortunately our evidence concerning Byzantine urban monasteries is too scattered and sometimes contradictory to allow us to draw overreaching conclusions. Nonetheless, the existing data show that even inside the two major cities of the Byzantine Empire -Constantinople and Thessalonike- despite several exceptions, a large number of monasteries suffered economically as well as

3 Oikonomidès, "Monastères", pp. 3-6.

4 G.T. Dennis, "The Byzantine - Turkish Treaty of 1403," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 33 (1967): 72-88 [repr. in *idem, Byzantium and the Franks, 1350-1420* (London, 1982), no. VI].

5 *Gregorios ho Palamas* 2 (1918), p. 451. [In connection with the question of relations between Athonite monasteries and the Ottomans in the aftermath of the battle of Ankara, see V. Boskov, "Ein Nisân des Prinzen Orhan, Sohn Süleymân Çelebis, aus dem Jahre 1412 im Athoskloster Sankt Paulus," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 71 (1979): (hereafter: *WZKM*) 127-152.]

6 P. Schreiner, ed., *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. I. (Vienna, 1975), Chr. 63/4, p. 473. [On later developments regarding the status and privileges of Athonite monasteries following the establishment of permanent Ottoman rule, see H.W. Lowry, "A Note on the Population and Status of the Athonite Monasteries Under Ottoman Rule (ca. 1520)," *WZKM* 73 (1981): 114-135 and *idem*, "The Fate of Byzantine Monastic Properties Under the Ottomans: Examples From Mount Athos, Limnos and Trabzon," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 16 (1990): 275-311 [both repr. in *idem, Studies in Deftology; Ottoman Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Istanbul, 1992), pp. 229-275], with full references to former works on this subject.]

7 H. İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara, 1954), p. 175, n. 148. Cf. E.A. Zachariadou, "Ottoman Documents from the Archives of Dionysiou (Mount Athos) 1495-1520," *SFO* 30 (1971), p. 1, n. 4 [repr. in *eadem, Romania and the Turks*, no. XVI].

physically and went into decline in the face of Ottoman attacks. This discrepancy between the experiences of urban and rural Byzantine monasteries has already been noted by some scholars, but no one has yet investigated the problem thoroughly.⁽⁸⁾ While a thorough investigation cannot possibly be undertaken within the framework of a single paper, the aim of the present article is simply to shed further light on this phenomenon by focusing on two particular cases; namely, the situation of the monastic establishments within Thessalonike during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and those within Constantinople during the siege of Bayezid I.

In the case of Thessalonike, we are presented with a particularly turbulent historical background in the period under consideration. Within the space of a mere fifty years, the city passed under Ottoman domination twice, first by surrender in 1387, then by force of arms in 1430. The initial phase of Ottoman rule that ended with Thessalonike's restoration to Byzantine authority in 1403 was soon followed, moreover, by steady waves of Ottoman attacks that finally compelled the local governors to hand over the administration and protection of their city to Venice in 1423. The second and final capture of Thessalonike by Murad II transpired during the period of the Venetian administration.⁽⁹⁾

8 See A. Bryer, "The Late Byzantine Monastery in Town and Countryside," in *The Church in Town and Countryside*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1979), pp. 233-234, where the author notes that under Turkish pressure and conquest "rural monasteries had a six times better chance of survival than urban ones" and computes the following statistics: of the 417 urban monasteries known within the twelfth-century borders of the Byzantine Empire (325 in Constantinople), 80 still existed on the eve of the Ottoman conquests (18 in Constantinople), while only 20 survived beyond 1453, and 6 until modern times. In the case of the 283 rural monasteries known within the twelfth-century borders, 158 existed on the eve of the conquests, 91 survived them, and 62 continued to flourish until modern times. See also Oikonomidès, "Monastères," p. 4, where the author does not explicitly state the existence of a rural-urban dichotomy, but points out that the ability of Athonite monasteries to remain in possession of their lands in the post-conquest period "ne fut pas nécessairement le cas de tous les monastères en dehors de l'Athos," referring in specific to confiscations suffered by two monasteries within Thessalonike. [Finally, although strictly speaking Trebizond falls outside the scope of the present paper due to the fact that the Empire of Trebizond was a separatist state independent from the Byzantine Empire since the thirteenth century, it is of interest to point out that a similar situation existed there as well. It has been put forward that in the Province of Trabzon during the early years of the Ottoman domination "urban monasteries appear to have lost all their properties, while the major rural foundations such as Vazelon, Soumela and the Peristera did not." See H. Lowry, "Privilege and Property in Ottoman Maçuka in the Opening Decades of the *Tourkokratia*: 1461-1553," in *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society*, eds. A. Bryer and H. Lowry (Birmingham - Washington, D.C., 1986) [hereafter: *Continuity*] pp. 119-127 (p. 122 for the statement quoted above); *idem*, "Fate of Byzantine Monastic Properties," pp. 278-279; N. Beldiceanu, "Biens monastiques d'après un registre ottoman de Trébizonde (1487): Monastères de la Chrysoképhalos et du Pharos," *REB* 35 (1977): 175-213.]

9 For a general history of Thessalonike, see A. Vakalopoulos, *A History of Thessaloniki*, trans. T.F. Carney (Thessaloniki, 1972).

In 1405, only two years after the return of Thessalonike to Byzantine rule, the Russian pilgrim Ignatius of Smolensk who visited the city noted that he saw there some "wondrous" monasteries, listing the names of Vlatadon, Kyr Isaak (=Perivleptos), Latomou, Akapniou, Nea Mone, Philokalou, Prodrornos, Pantodynamos, Gorgoepekoos, and the *metochion* of Chortiates.¹⁰ While Ignatius does not furnish any details about the state of these religious establishments he qualifies as "wondrous", we know from other contemporary sources and documents that many monasteries, including some of those mentioned by him, underwent major difficulties in the period prior to his visit to Thessalonike. To what extent they would have recovered by 1405 is hence open to serious questioning. For example, after assuming the rule of the city in 1387, it is reported that the Ottomans seized the monasteries of Prodrornos and Saint Athanasios, of which the former appears in Ignatius' list.¹¹ Whereas virtually nothing is known about the actual circumstances under which these seizures took place, we possess more substantial information with regard to the monastery of Akapniou, which too figures among Ignatius' "wondrous" religious foundations, and was one of the first in the city to suffer in the hands of the Ottomans.¹² Sometime during the siege of 1383-1387 that preceded the first Ottoman occupation, one half of the village of Achinos in the Strymon region that belonged to Akapniou was confiscated and bestowed by the commander Hayreddin Paşa to a certain Makarios Vryennios, who appears to have been an aristocrat from Serres.¹³ Subsequent to Thessalonike's surrender and the establishment of peace in 1387, Akapniou tried to reclaim its property that had been confiscated during the wartime and succeeded in receiving it back from its new owner, Makarios Vryennios. Yet, because of the economic difficulties it was undergoing then,

10 B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient* (Geneva, 1889; repr. Osnabrück, 1966), p. 147. Cf. M. Th. Laskaris, "Naoi kai monai Thessalonikes to 1405 eis to Hodoiporikon tou ek Smolensk Ignatiou," in *Tomos Konstantinou Harmenopoulou* (Thessalonike, 1952), pp. 315-331. The ten religious foundations Ignatius of Smolensk visited in 1405 must have constituted about a third of the thirty or more monasteries known in Thessalonike in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: see the catalogue of Thessalonian monasteries surveyed in R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), pp. 341-419.

11 F. Miklosich and J. Müller, eds., *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, vol. II: *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani, MCCCXV-MCCCCII* (Vienna, 1862) [hereafter: MM, II], nos. 660 and 661 (July 1401), pp. 518-524; J. Tsaras, ed., *Ioannou Anagnostou Diegesis peri tes teleutaias haloseos tes Thessalonikes* (Thessalonike, 1958), p. 56. For a Turkish translation of this important source, see M. Delilbaşı, *Johannis Anagnostis, "Selanik (Thessaloniki)'in Son Zaptı Hakkında Bir Tarih" (Sultan II. Murad Dönemine Ait Bir Bizans Kaynağı)* (Ankara, 1989). On the monasteries of Prodrornos and Saint Athanasios, see Janin, *Eglises et monastères*, pp. 406, 345-346.

12 On this monastery, see Janin, *Eglises et monastères*, pp. 347-349. On what follows, see J. Lefort, ed., *Actes d'Esphiqménou* (Paris, 1973), no. 30 and L. Petit, ed., *Actes de Chilandar*, vol. I (St.-Petersburg, 1911; repr. Amsterdam, 1975), no. 160.

13 See the prosopographic information provided in Lefort, *Esphiqménou*, pp. 172-173.

Akapniou could not retain the property in question for very long. Impoverished and heavily indebted, sometime before the beginning of 1393 it appealed to the city's archbishop Isidore and obtained his permission to sell the property in Achinos. Jacques Lefort, in his commentary to one of the two documents concerning this matter, has convincingly argued that Akapniou's debts at the time must have been due to the tribute (*harac*) demanded by the Ottomans, for it was only in the case of liabilities to the fisc that Byzantine religious foundations were legally allowed to alienate their property with the consent of an archbishop.⁽¹⁴⁾ Thus, we observe here two distinct ways in which a Thessalonian monastery was negatively affected by the Ottoman expansion in Macedonia, first by becoming subject to confiscation before the city's conquest and afterwards by the economic strains resulting from the monetary impositions of the conquerors.

To reiterate further the marked contrast between the conditions of urban and rural monasteries, it should be added that as Akapniou found itself compelled to sell its half share of the village of Achinos, three Athonite monasteries -Kutlumus, Chilandar, and Esphigmenou- vigorously contested and competed against each other for the right to purchase this property, which in the end passed into the possession of the latter. Already several years earlier, the events in Thessalonike had given the monastery of Esphigmenou another opportunity to expand its landholdings: seeing that the Ottomans had seized from a Thessalonian called George Anatavlas a piece of land in the region of Kalamira which happened to be adjacent to one of the monastery's own estates, the monks of Esphigmenou directly approached the Sultan and Ali Paşa to solicit this land and succeeded in retrieving it from the Muslim to whom it had been given.⁽¹⁵⁾

If, on the other hand, after 1387 Akapniou managed temporarily to regain possession of its holdings in Achinos, during the same period the Ottomans seized from the monastery another piece of land situated in the village of Kollydros. But instead of giving it to an individual as they had previously done, this time they made another monastery, the Nea Mone of Thessalonike,

14 *ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

15 *ibid.*, no. 29 (Feb. 1388). For an alternative dating of this document to the year 1403, see Oikonomidès, "Monastères," p. 4, n. 11.

16 MM, II, nos. 453 (Jan. 1394), 454 (Jan. 1394), 660 (July 1401), pp. 200-203, 518-520. On the Nea Mone, see V. Laurent, "Une nouvelle fondation monastique des Choumnos, la *Néa Moni* de Thessalonique" *REB* 13 (1955): 109-127; and Janin, *Englises et monastères*, pp. 398-399. It should be pointed out that caution must be used in dealing with references to grants and confiscations since they do not always necessarily indicate real awards or losses for monasteries. For example, among the Ottoman documents of the monastery of Vlatadon in Thessalonike, a *ferman* dating from 1446 records the bestowal of 20 units of imperial land and exemptions from certain taxes. A later *ferman* dating from 1513 reveals however that these lands and tax immunities had originally been given to Vlatadon by Murad II in exchange for other lands of the monastery which this Sultan had confiscated: I. Vasdravelles, *Historika Archeia Makedonias*, vol. III. (Thessalonike, 1955), pp. 1-2.

the beneficiary of the confiscated land.⁽¹⁶⁾ What we have here, therefore, is a perfect illustration of the differential treatment accorded by the Ottomans to certain monasteries within the city that somehow won their favor. Further inquiry into the affairs of the Nea Mone brings to light other incidents that bear hints of the monastery's dealings with the Ottomans. These concern, if not always directly the monastery itself, at least certain individuals who were associated with it. For example, in 1389 the Nea Mone received by an act of donation a small convent (the *monydrion* of Saint Photis) situated inside Thessalonike from Alexios Angelos Philanthropenos, who was a prominent man carrying the title of Caesar of Thessaly. It is reported that earlier Philanthropenos had made certain arrangements with the Turks ("Muslims") concerning this convent as well as other immovables of his. The exact nature of Philanthropenos' arrangements with the Turks is unclear; nevertheless, it was on account of these arrangements that he was allowed to retain his possessions in Ottoman-occupied Thessalonike and had the freedom to do whatever he pleased with them, choosing in the case of the *monydrion* of Saint Photis to donate it to the Nea Mone.⁽¹⁷⁾

Incidentally, back in 1384, Alexios Angelos Philanthropenos had already made another donation to the same monastery. The property in question then was his *kastron* of Kollydros.⁽¹⁸⁾ Bearing in mind that the land which the Ottomans took away from Akapniou and gave to the Nea Mone was situated inside the village of Kollydros, it may be postulated that the latter monastery, aspiring to have control over the whole terrain, approached the Ottoman authorities after 1387 and negotiated with them the appropriation of the plot of land belonging to a rival Thessalonian monastery in the same village.

One more detail to be noted in connection with the associations between the Nea Mone and the Ottomans is that during the years following the second capture of Thessalonike (1430) the monastery is seen holding business relations with a Turk to whom it leased a linseed-oil press it owned in the interior of the city.⁽¹⁹⁾ Thus, on account of its good relations with the Turks, the Nea Mone, founded around the third quarter of the fourteenth century, prospered during the period of Ottoman domination and survived the final conquest of Thessalonike in 1430. By contrast, during the interval between the two Ottoman occupations, the monastery seems to have temporarily

17 P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, D. Papachryssanthou, eds., *Actes de Lavra*, vol. III (Paris, 1979), no. 151, pp. 119-121. Cf. Laurent, "Une nouvelle fondation," p. 123; Janin, *Eglises et monastères*, p. 414.

18 *Lavra*, III, no. 150.

19 *ibid.*, no. 168. But in 1432 the monastery cancelled its lease with the Turk and signed a new contract with a Greek, Constantin Manklavites, who seems to have offered more advantageous terms.

suffered from a diminution in the revenues it received from one of its properties within the city,⁽²⁰⁾ which further goes to show how much its prosperity was connected with the advantages it enjoyed under Ottoman rule. In this respect, its fate is to be distinguished from that of the city's most other monasteries and resembles rather that of Byzantium's rural monastic establishments, despite the fact that early in the fifteenth century Ignatius of Smolensk placed the Nea Mone side by side with Akapniou and Prodomos, classifying all of them as marvelous foundations without differentiation.

Therefore, leaving aside an exceptional case like the Nea Mone, it is evident that Thessalonian monasteries on the whole suffered in varying degrees and ways, sometimes directly in the hands of the Ottomans as we have already seen, and sometimes indirectly as a result of the confusion and uncertainty that accompanied the establishment of the Ottoman régime in the city. Even the city's highest ranking religious leader, its archbishop, was not entirely averse to grasping some advantage from the new circumstances created after the arrival of the Ottomans as the following example will demonstrate. In 1401, the archbishop Gabriel of Thessalonike received a letter from the patriarch of Constantinople, who openly accused him for having unjustly appropriated a fishery (*vivarion*) that belonged to the monks of the Prodomos monastery. This monastery, as it may be recalled, had been seized by the Ottomans after 1387. Thereupon its monks had taken refuge in the monastery of Akapniou, and according to Gabriel they had thus lost their rights over the remaining properties annexed to the Prodomos. The patriarch, however, rebuked Gabriel for having taken away from these unfortunate monks that which even the Muslim conquerors had spared them and ordered the archbishop to correct his wrongdoing by returning the fishery to its rightful owners without delay.⁽²¹⁾ Interestingly, before becoming archbishop in 1397, Gabriel had served as the superior of the Nea Mone and was indeed the very person who had received in the name of this monastery the plot of land situated in the village of Kollydros that the Ottomans had seized from Akapniou.⁽²²⁾

About the same time in 1401, Gabriel became the subject of yet another criticism from the patriarch of Constantinople for his loose conduct in a particular matter which too serves to illustrate how under Ottoman rule the generally precarious situation of the monasteries inside Thessalonike occasionally presented an opportunity for gain to others. The issue concerned the aforementioned convent of Saint Athanasios which the Ottomans had confis-

20 *ibid.*, no. 163 (March 1415).

21 MM, no. 660 (July 1401), pp. 518-520.

22 On Gabriel and his ties with the Nea Mone, see V. Laurent, "Le métropolitain de Thessalonique Gabriel (1397-1416/19) et le Couvent de la Nea Mone," *Hellenika* 13 (1954): 241-255; *idem*, "Une nouvelle fondation," pp. 109-127.

cated after 1387. Sometime later the Ottomans decided to dispose of it, and the superior of the Pantokrator monastery, Theodotos, claimed rights over it, pretending that it used to belong to his monastery even though it had actually been attached to the monastery of Exazenos. The Ottoman officials, either because they believed him, or because they entered some kind of a deal with him, gave the small convent to Theodotos. The latter demolished its cells, turned it into a secular structure, and sold parts of it, including its church, to a Turk. When the patriarch found out about this, he immediately wrote to the archbishop Gabriel, objecting to Theodotos' act on the following grounds: first, the superior of the Pantokrator had usurped another monastery's property; secondly, he had secularized it; and thirdly, he had sold it to a non-Christian. The third issue was the most distressing from the viewpoint of the patriarch, who cited in this connection various canonical regulations prohibiting the alienation of religious property to lay Christians so as to emphasize how much more inadmissible the sale of such property to a non-Christian was. He therefore instructed Gabriel to redeem the convent of Saint Athanasios from the Turk by returning the money the latter had paid for it to Theodotos. The property was then to be restored to the monastery of Exazenos, and Theodotos was to be duly deposed.⁽²³⁾ Whether or not Gabriel followed the patriarch's instructions, this case is a clear manifestation of the attempt made by the administrator of a monastery to turn to his institution's advantage the confusion and displacement brought about by the change of régime in Thessalonike which in effect hurt the interests of most other monasteries. But even those monasteries that managed to negotiate with and win the favor of the Ottomans do not appear to have been sufficiently secure or firmly grounded in their privileged status. Prompted perhaps by this awareness, in 1392 the Nea Mone took the initiative to have an act drawn up to confirm an unrecorded donation that had been made to it some sixteen years earlier.⁽²⁴⁾ The events following the second and final Ottoman conquest of Thessalonike in 1430 proved indeed how abruptly circumstances might change and that favors once bestowed might afterwards be taken back. Murad II, who at first granted to the city's monasteries "by letters and by word" the right to maintain their immovables together with their sources of revenue, reversed his policy around 1432-1433 and ordered that their buildings and lands be seized. After picking the most beautiful religious and secular structures of the city for distribution to members of his own family and to his favorite officials, the Sultan did allow part of the remaining Thessalonian monasteries to continue

23 MM, II, no. 661 (July 1401), pp. 520-524. On the Pantokrator monastery, also known as the monastery of Vlatadon, see Janin, *Eglises et monastères*, pp. 356-358, 416-417; on Exazenos, see P. Magdalino, "Some Additions and Corrections to the List of Byzantine Churches and Monasteries of Thessalonica," *REB* 35 (1977), pp. 280-281.

24 *Lavra*, III, no. 153 (Oct. 1392).

functioning in a religious as well as an economic capacity. But these monasteries were permitted from then on only to exploit and draw income from their lands and other immovables, which they no longer held in full proprietorship (i.e., as *mülk*).⁽²⁵⁾

If we turn now to the situation of the monasteries within the Byzantine capital during the siege of Bayezid I (1394-1402), striking similarities with Thessalonike can be readily observed. Moreover, since Bayezid's siege lasted twice as long as the most extended Ottoman siege Thessalonike ever endured, we possess in some cases even more vivid evidence concerning the physical and economic decay suffered by certain Constantinopolitan monasteries. For example, the convent of Theotokos Vevaias Elpidos, founded in the early fourteenth century by a niece of the Emperor Michael VIII, was in a ruined state and needed reparations even though it had recently been restored two years prior to the siege. But because this convent enjoyed the good care of Eugenia Kantakouzene Philanthropene, a wealthy aristocratic woman who belonged to the founding family, it could be restored twice during the siege - first in 1398, then in 1401.⁽²⁶⁾ The monastery of Saint Basil was likewise in a bad state; in the spring of 1401 its overseer was forced to borrow a sum of 209 *hyperpyra*, intending to use part of it for essential repairs and the rest to enable the cultivation of a vineyard belonging to the monastery.⁽²⁷⁾ The vineyards and fields of the Charsianites monastery, too, remained barren throughout the Ottoman blockade, while additionally its tower was burnt down during an enemy attack.⁽²⁸⁾ Not even the monastery of Vassos, which was the private property of Emperor John VII's mother, could ward off destruction in the midst of the instability and insecurity that prevailed within the besieged capital.⁽²⁹⁾

25 Tsaras, ed., *Ioannou Anagnostou Diegesis*, pp. 56, 64-66. Cf. Zachariadou, "Ottoman Documents from Dionysiou," pp. 23-26; Sp. Vryonis, "The Ottoman Conquest of Thessaloniki in 1430," in *Continuity*, pp. 281-321.

26 Delehay, *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues* (Brussels, 1921), pp. 103-105. For the convent, see R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, Part I: *Le siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat oecuménique*, vol. 3: *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), pp. 158-160. For Eugenia Kantakouzene Philanthropene, see D.M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (ca. 1100-1460)* (Washington, D.C., 1968), no. 55, p. 164.

27 MM, II, no. 653 (June 1401), where the editors wrongly locate the monastery of Saint Basil in Caesarea, Kappadokia. For the Constantinopolitan monastery, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 58-60; V. Laurent, ed., *Les "Mémoires" du Grand Ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438-1439)* (Paris, 1971), pp. 1026, 1861.

28 H. Hunger, ed., "Das Testament des Patriarchen Matthaios I (1397-1410)," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 51 (1958), pp. 299-342, 301-14-25. For the Charsianites monastery, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 501-502.

29 MM, II, no. 573 (May 1400). Cf. J. Darrouzès, *Les registres des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1/6 (Paris, 1979), pp. 374-375; Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 61-62.

The gardens and vineyards of several other monasteries in the city lay fallow or produced low yields like those of Saint Basil and Charsianites. Some among the more enterprising monasteries sought to remedy this problem by entrusting their unproductive lands to the care of laymen. For instance, a garden belonging to the convent of Panagia Pavsolye was given to two brothers bearing the family name Spyridon, who were expected to transform it into a profit-yielding vineyard within five years. Thereafter, the wine produced from the output was to be divided equally between the two parties, while the convent for its part was required to pay the brothers 6 *hyperpyra* at harvest time each year. In addition, the brothers were granted the right to transmit the vineyard to their heirs as long as the latter agreed to abide by the same conditions. Whereas the convent used to earn scarcely 20 *hyperpyra* from the entire garden prior to this agreement, in 1401 it started receiving more than 50 *hyperpyra* from only its own share of the vineyard. The five-fold increase in the total income derived from this garden/vineyard, even after the probable effects of inflation and devaluation are taken into consideration, signals a considerable rise in its productivity which must be attributed to the successful management of the Spyridones.⁽³⁰⁾ Sometime towards the end of 1401 or beginning of 1402, the Perivleptos monestery leased a plot of land to a man called Manuel Katalanos who agreed to exploit it as a vinery for an annual rent of 20 *hyperpyra*. The lease was to last for the duration of Katalanos' lifetime and was transferable to his heirs afterwards.⁽³¹⁾ Here we see a different kind of arrangement made by a monastery which, just like the aforementioned convent of Pavsolye, was trying to put one of its unproductive or underproducing lands to a better use. Instead of sharing the profit from the output produced, however, Perivleptos found it preferable to receive a fixed rent payment from its tenant. This may well be due to the unstable conditions created by the Ottoman siege which must have rendered successful managers like the Spyridones unique and exceptional. During the same year that the latter were noted for having substantially raised the productivity of the garden entrusted to them, the nuns of the convent of Saint Andrew in Krisis filed a suit against two laymen to whom they had leased a vineyard on the similar condition that the tenants would work on ameliorating the land for four years and thereafter share with the convent half of the yield. The nuns were dissatisfied with the work done on the vineyard in the course of the two years that had transpired and wished to cancel the contract. The experts who were sent to examine the vineyard agreed with the nuns' assessment of the

30 MM, II, no. 650 (May 1401). For the convent of Pavsolye, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, p. 217.

31 H. Hunger, "Zu den restlichen Inedita des Konstantinopler Patriarchatsregisters im Cod. Vindob. Hist. Gr. 48.," *REB* 24 (1966), no. 1, pp. 58-59; Darrouzès, *Regestes*, 1/6, no. 3249, p. 469. For the monastery, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 218-222.

two men's performance, and the lease was accordingly cancelled.⁽³²⁾ Yet, even in cases when monastic property was leased out in return for a fixed rental fee in order to avoid such risks as in the previous example, there was still no guarantee that the lessee would necessarily deliver the due payment. This is illustrated by the example of George Evdokimos, who refused to pay the annual rent of 28 *hyperpyra* for a garden he leased from the monastery of Magistros, alleging as an excuse what appears to have been an extra tax demanded at that time for the reconstruction of the fortifications of Constantinople.⁽³³⁾

The sale of monastic property to laymen, which was prohibited by canon law except under unusual circumstances, also came to be more commonly practiced in Constantinople during Bayezid's siege, serving as another indicator of the economic problems encountered by religious foundations at this time. In April 1400, the monastery of Christ Akataleptos, lacking adequate funds to pay an upcoming tax on its vineyards (*to voutziatikon*), obtained the patriarch's permission to sell a small plot of land to the Emperor's cousin Manuel Philanthropenos for a sum of 32 *hyperpyra*.⁽³⁴⁾ During the patriarchate of Antonios (1391-1397), the Constantinopolitan monastery of Hodegoi was likewise allowed to sell a house to a man called Panopoulos, on the grounds that the sale would be beneficial to the monastery. Interestingly, this house had come to the Hodegoi's possession in 1390 through the donation of a lay couple. Thus, within less than a decade, it changed three hands and was almost surrendered to a fourth person who temporarily held it as security against a sum of 300 *hyperpyra* that the most recent owner, Panopoulos, borrowed from him.⁽³⁵⁾

The strains imposed by Bayezid I's blockade also appear to have given rise to some instances of misconduct in the utilization of religious property. In January 1401, Eirene Palaiologina made an accusation against her uncle, the monk David Palaiologos, and her brother, Andronikos Palaiologos, with the two of whom she shared the ownership of the church of

32 MM, II, no. 654 (June 1401). For the convent of Saint Andrew in Krisis, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 28-31.

33 MM, II, no. 651 (May 1401), p. 501. Cf. Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, p. 313.

34 MM, II, no. 567. Cf. Darrouzès, *Regestes*, I/6, p. 370 and Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 504-506. For the kinship of Manuel Philanthropenos with the imperial family, see A.Th. Papadopoulos, *Versuch einer Genealogie der Palaiologen, 1295-1453* (Munich, 1938), no. 79, p. 50.

35 MM, II, no. 568 (April 1400). Cf. A. Failler, "Une donation des époux Sanianoï au monastère des Hodègoi," *REB* 34 (1976): 111-117. For the monastery, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 199-207. The money-lender who came close to being the next owner of the house was Thomas Kallokyres, on whom see my forthcoming article, "Economic Conditions in Constantinople during the Siege of Bayezid I (1394-1402)," in *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, ed. C. Mango.

molyntos. Claiming that her relatives wanted to use the church as a storehouse for the grapes they harvested on some adjoining vineyards, she requested from the patriarch of Constantinople the installation of a priest who would perform regular services in the church. The patriarch granted her request, thus preventing the transformation of a private religious foundation into an economic one by two aristocrats who were probably responding to the material opportunities presented by the wartime economy of shortages.⁽³⁶⁾ In July 1401, on the other hand, three monks from the Kosmidion monastery signed a promissory note, declaring that they would no longer sell sacred objects belonging to their monastery. It seems that these monks, hardpressed by the misery and poverty that struck nearly everyone in the besieged capital, attempted to earn some extra income by trafficking in the marbles of the Kosmidion.⁽³⁷⁾

But if the generally sad state of the monasteries of Constantinople illustrated by the foregoing examples resembles in many ways the situation we already observed in connection with Thessalonike, no less important is the fact that there were some notable exceptions as well, just like in the case of Thessalonike. For example, sometime between late 1397 and late 1399, the Constantinopolitan monastery of Saint Mamas was financially strong enough to afford purchasing a field at the high price of 800 *hyperpyra* from an aristocrat who had fallen into the grips of poverty as a result of the siege.⁽³⁸⁾ Around the same time (ca. 1398), the monastery of Myrelaion bought an estate for 100 *hyperpyra* from a young aristocrat called Jacob Tarchaniotes, who was similarly struck by the negative consequences of the siege. Two years later, when Tarchaniotes objected that his estate was worth much more than what he had received for it, the value of the property was reestimated, and the monastery paid him an additional sum of 95 *hyperpyra* and 8 *keratia*.⁽³⁹⁾ In this case, then, we are not only dealing with a monastery that was

36 MM, II, no. 621 (Jan. 1401), pp. 457-458. Although not a monastery but a private church, the case of Amolyntos has been included in the present discussion since one of its owners was a monk. It might also be added that during Bayezid's siege some of the smaller churches of Constantinople faced problems and difficulties similar to those encountered by their monastic counterparts: see MM, II, nos. 579 and 627. Even the great church of Saint Sophia lay in critical condition and suffered economically as it was deprived of its external revenues due to the persistent blockade: see MM, II, no. 629, pp. 469-470.

37 MM, II, no. 657. On the Kosmidion monastery, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 286-289.

38 MM, II, no. 528 (October 1399). The owner of the field was Manuel Palaiologos Rhaoul, on whom see S. Fassoulakis, *The Byzantine Family of Raoul-Ral (I) es* (Athens, 1973), nos. 41 and 48, pp. 56-57, 63. For the monastery of Saint Mamas, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 314-319.

39 MM, II, no. 553 (February 1400). For the monastery of Myrelaion, see Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* 2, 1/3, pp. 351-354.

relatively well-off and capable of augmenting its property despite the difficult times, but one that actually tried to benefit from the prevailing circumstances by buying property that was clearly underpriced. Nevertheless, if some among the more prominent and better endowed monasteries of the capital like Myrelaion or Saint Mamas managed to maintain their economic strength and relative prosperity during Bayezid's siege, still larger numbers of monasteries in the city were unable to sustain themselves during the siege years and underwent economic decline as well as physical decay.

In conclusion, viewed against the background of what is known about the fate of some well-established Byzantine rural monasteries in the Balkans during the age of the Ottoman conquests, the evidence presented in this paper with regard to the monastic foundations of Thessalonike and Constantinople reveals that the experiences of the former were by no means universal. In particular crisis situations such as sieges or military attacks on which this paper has deliberately focused, the distinction between larger rural and smaller urban monasteries became especially more pronounced and visible. Lacking the freedom and independence that allowed the monastic institutions of the Byzantine countryside to bargain and come to terms with the Ottomans, the monasteries within the walls of Thessalonike and Constantinople crumbled when faced with Ottoman attacks and could, at best, hope to earn some privileges only after the conquest of the cities in which they were located.