READING THE MIDDLE AGES

SOURCES FROM EUROPE, BYZANTIUM, AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

EDITED BY BARBARA H. ROSENWEIN • SECOND EDITION
23. [Provisions for enforcement including the proviso that anyone can denounce an offender before the podestà or capitano, and receive a quarter of the fine if the accusation is upheld; the word of one man worthy of belief is to be sufficient evidence of guilt, or the statements of four men testifying to the common belief.]

THE OTTOMANS

8.6 A Turkish hero: Ashikpashazade, Othman Comes to Power (late 15th c.). Original in Turkish.

Writing in the late fifteenth century, the chronicler Ashikpashazade (d. after 1484) based his account of the founder of the Ottoman Turks (Othman) on earlier sources and on his sense of the sort of heroic past such a leader needed to have. He depicted Othman creating a new empire through a combination of fate, “feigned friendships,” religious fervor, force, and cunning. How might you compare Ashikpashazade’s heroic image of Othman with Joinville’s picture of St. Louis on p. 416? How might you account for the differences?


How Othman Ghazi became Sultan

Ertugrul Ghazi heard that Sultan ‘Alaeddin’ of the Seljuk dynasty had become King of Rum. He said, “We have to determine the man’s quality. We’ll go to that country and perform the ghaza.” Ertugrul Ghazi had three sons, Othman, Gündüz, and Saruyatı. Together they started out for Rum. While they were nomadizing in the province of Ghazi Hasan of Mosul, Ertugrul Ghazi sent his son Saruyatı to ‘Alaeddin, saying, “Provide us with a homeland and we will go and perform the ghaza.” Sultan ‘Alaeddin was extremely happy at their coming. The tekfur of Sultan Önü and of Karaja Hisar was submissive, so Sultan ‘Alaeddin provided them with Söğüt as their homeland, which was between Karaja Hisar and Bilejik. In addition, he gave them the ranges of Mount Domanich and Ermeni Beli. They passed directly through Ankara and settled in that province.

Several years later, Ertugrul Ghazi died. They preferred Othman Ghazi to succeed him in Söğüt. As soon as Othman Ghazi succeeded his father, he began a policy of “feigned friendship” with the neighboring infidels. Meanwhile, he began hostilities with the emir of Germiyan because the latter was constantly harassing the populace of the surrounding countryside. Othman Ghazi also began to mount hunting expeditions far and wide.

How Othman Ghazi began from Time to Time to Make Raids at Nighttime and in the Day

At Inegöl there was an infidel named Aya Nikola. When Othman went to the summer pasture or to the winter pasture, Aya Nikola used to harass the migration. Othman Ghazi complained of this to the tekfur of Bilejik, and said, “What we would like from you is to let us deposit our baggage with you when we go to the summer pasture.” He agreed. So whenever Othman Ghazi went to

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1 Apparently ‘Ahl al-Din Kay Qubad III, who ruled intermittently between 1284 and 1302.
2 A reference to the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, i.e., Anatolia.
3 Ghaza means conducting raids on the infidels. The warrior who gains fame in the ghaza gains the title of Ghazi.
4 Byzantine prince or governor. (The title "tekfur" is used for Christian emirs, or commanders.)
5 Turkish emirate (beglik) of western Anatolia with its capital at Kütahya (ancient Cotaeum).
the summer pasture, he loaded his baggage on oxen and
sent them along with some women to be deposited in
Bilezik castle. And when they returned from the summer
pasture, they sent cheese and knotted rugs and flatweaves
and lambs in the way of gifts. Then they took back their
belongings and went on their way. These infidels trusted
them completely; but the infidels of Inegöl were wary of
Othman, and he of them.

One day, Othman Ghazi came through Ermeni Beli
with seventy men in order to set fire to Inegöl at night. A
spy informed the infidels, who set up an ambush. The spy’s
name was Araton. Othman Ghazi had a Balkan sailor in
his service. He came and informed them that the ambush
was situated where the pass of Ermeni Beli emerged into
the valley. The ghazis put their trust in God and marched
straight toward the ambush. They were all on foot. There
were many infidels. A great battle took place. Othman’s
brother Saruyati’s son, whose name was Bay Hoca, was
martyred. This occurred near the village of Hamza Beg,
where the pass of Ermeni Beli emerges. Also, there was a
ruined caravansary next to his shrine. From there, they
turned back and Othman went to the summer pasture.

When he awoke, he came to the sheikh and told him
the dream. The sheikh said, “Othman, my son! Sovereignty
has been granted to you and your descendants.
And my daughter Malhun is to be your wife.” He imme-
diately gave his daughter to Othman Ghazi and married
them.

This sheikh, Edemali, who interpreted Othman Ghazi’s
dream and gave tidings of sovereignty for himself and his
descendants, had a disciple with him whose name was
Kumral Dede, son of Dervish Durdi. That dervish now
spoke, “O Othman! Since sovereignty has been given to
you, it is proper for you to give us some token of grati-
tude.” Othman replied, “At whatever time I become king,
I will give you a city.” The dervish said, “This little village
is sufficient for us: we have renounced the city.” Oth-
man Ghazi accepted this. The dervish said, “Give us a
document to that effect.” Othman Ghazi replied, “Do
you think that I write documents, that you want a docu-
ment from me? Here is my sword. It was left to me by
my father and my grandfather. I will give it to you. And
I will also give you a goblet. Let them remain together
in your hands, and let them preserve this stamp. And if
God accepts me for this service, my descendants will
recognize this sign, and will accept your claim.” Now that
sword is still in the hands of Kumral Dede’s descendants.
And whenever any of Othman Ghazi’s descendants saw
that sword, they bestowed favors upon those dervishes
and they renewed the sword’s scabbard. Every one of the
House of Othman who has become king has made a pil-
grimage to that sword."

How Certain News Reached Sultan ‘Alaeddin,
and How the Infidels Were Treating the
Muslims

Now news reached Sultan ‘Alaeddin that the infidels had
fought against Othman Ghazi with large forces and had
martyred his brother Saruyati. The sultan said, “It is well-
known that the tektur of Kara Hisar is our enemy; also
that the emir of Germany does not like those strange-
gers [i.e., the Ottomans]. The greater part of the infidels’
activities is due to his heedlessness, I know that myself.
Now let our own army gather immediately! Shall we let
those infidels get away with such actions? Is the zeal of

1 In this context, sheikh refers to a holy man or religious leader, in this case the head of a dervish order.
2 A dervish was an ascetic belonging to one of several Islamic orders. Some performed whirling dances and vigorous chants as part of their devotions.
Islam no longer in us?” With this command, a great army gathered to attack Karaja Hisar.

Othman Ghazi also came and joined the battle on one side. After the fighting had gone on for a day or two, word arrived that the Tatar Bayinjan had taken Eregli, laid waste the houses and the people, and set fire to the city. Sultan Alaeddin summoned Othman Ghazi and handed over to him all the equipment which he had brought to take to Karaja Hisar. He said, “Othman Ghazi, my son! Upon you are many tokens of good fortune. There is no one in the world who will withstand you and your descendants. With you are my prayers, the favor of God, the aspiration of the saints, and the miracles of the Prophet.” With that, he returned to his province. Othman pressed the battle for several more days. In the end, he captured the fortress, took the tekfur, let the ghazis plunder the city, distributed the houses to the ghazis and to others, and made it a Muslim city. This victory occurred in 1288....

How Köse Mihal Had a Wedding Party, Giving His Daughter to the Emir of Göllübanız

Köse Mihal made elaborate preparations, in order that the wedding party gain renown. When everything was ready, he sent people to summon the surrounding infidels and tekfurs. He also invited Othman Ghazi, and he informed the tekfurs, saying, “Come, get acquainted with this Turk so that you will be safe from his evil.” They all came on the appointed day with elaborate gifts for the bride. Othman Ghazi arrived last. He brought good knotted carpets and flatweaves and herds of sheep. They were very pleased with Othman Ghazi’s gifts. In short, the festivity went on for three days, and the tekfurs were astounded at Othman Ghazi’s munificence. They found no opportunity to catch him up. As for Othman Ghazi, he showed great affection toward the tekfur of Bilejik. Previous to this, they had formed a friendship in absentia, as it were, since they had never met face to face; since Othman Ghazi used to deposit his goods in the Bilejik castle whenever he went to the summer pasture.

The Wedding Party of the Tekfur of Bilejik

Now the tekfur of Bilejik also planned to have a wedding party, for he was to marry the daughter of the tekfur of Yar Hisar. First he summoned Mihal and consulted with him, arranging the plot against Othman. They completed all the arrangements for the wedding. Then he sent out messengers to invite the surrounding tekfurs. Even before the messenger got to Othman Ghazi, the latter sent a herd of sheep to the tekfur of Bilejik, saying, “Let my brother feed these to the servants at the wedding; and when I arrive, I shall bring my gifts for the bride, God willing, although I really have no gifts that befit my brother.” The reason he sent these even before the messenger arrived was that at Mihal’s wedding party certain

1 Leader of the Chingizid Mongol forces in Anatolia.
2 Khan was the old Central Asian term for a ruler.
arrangements had already been made, and the tekfur had sent Mihal to Othman Ghazi with the invitation. And he had also sent a number of gold and silver utensils. But when Mihal came, he informed Othman Ghazi what the intention of the tekfur was, and he warned him to be on his guard. He also delivered the invitation. Othman Ghazi gave him the proper rewards for serving as the messenger, and said, "Emir Mihal, go, extend many greetings from me to my brother. Tell him that now is the time for us to migrate to the summer pasture. Also that my wife and mother-in-law wish to become acquainted with my brother's mother. Also my brother knows well how things are between the emir of Germiyan and myself. He has always borne our burden until now. May he be so gracious as to bear it once again this year, and allow us to deposit in the castle the baggage belonging to my mother and myself."

Mihal went and delivered Othman Ghazi's message to the tekfur, who received it with great pleasure, then sent Mihal back to arrange the day on which Othman Ghazi was to arrive. In addition to all this, Othman, in his message, had said, "Our women are accustomed to the wide plateau. Bilejik is too narrow to hold the wedding party there." The tekfur agreed to this as well, and they held it at Chakir Pinar.

On the appointed day, Othman Ghazi loaded the oxen and sent them in the company of the women who always brought them. They entered the castle in the dark of evening. As soon as one or two trains of oxen had entered, out of the bales of felt poured men with naked swords, who cut down the gatekeepers. There were few men in the castle itself, since most of them had gone to the wedding celebration. The castle was taken.

Now let us see what Othman Ghazi was doing in the meantime. He had dressed a number of his head-risking ghazis in women's clothes, and he sent word to the following effect: "Let them be housed in a place apart so that our women will not be ashamed to see the tekfur's there." The tekfur was very pleased at this as well, thinking that the Turk's women as well as the men had fallen into his hands; so he housed them in a place apart. Othman Ghazi had also arranged with the oxen drivers to inform the tekfur that Othman himself would pay a visit at the time that they entered the castle. That very evening he did come, pretending that he did not wish his women to be left exposed. The tekfur received him cordially and put him up as a guest. But before the tekfur came to his own room, Othman Ghazi had mounted along with Mihal. The cry went up, "Hey! The Turk has escaped!" The tekfur also mounted, though he was rather tipsy, and pursued them as far as a nearby stream called Kadırayık, where he was caught. Othman Ghazi had the tekfur beheaded.

He continued riding and toward morning fell on Yar Hisar, captured its tekfur and the bride, and took most of the wedding guests captive. He then immediately sent Turgut Alp to Inegöl to prevent Aya Nikola from getting wind of events and escaping. Turgut Alp arrived in time and cordoned off Inegöl. Othman Ghazi brought all of the booty into Bilejik and saw to its disposition. Then they marched against Inegöl. As they approached, Othman Ghazi announced that the town would be open to plunder. When the ghazis heard the word "plunder," they raised a shout and poured into the castle. They cut up the tekfur, killed the men, and took the women captive, for this infidel had been the cause of many Muslims' being martyred.

To Whom They Gave the Bride Whom They Captured, She Being the Daughter of the Tekfur of Yar Hisar

Othman Ghazi gave her to his son Orkhan Ghazi. Her name was Lülüfer Khatun. At that time, Orkhan was still a young man. He also had another son [Áldeddn] whom he used to place in charge of the migration.

Once they had conquered these four castles [Karaja Hisar, Bilejik, Yar Hisar, and Inegöl] they established justice in their realm. All the surrounding villages prospered, even more than in the time of the infidels, and people began to come here from other provinces when they heard how well the infidels here were faring.

In short, Othman Ghazi made a wedding party and gave Lülüfer Khatun to his son Orkhan Ghazi. This is the same Lülüfer Khatun who built a dervish lodge at the foot of the Bursa citadel near the Kapluj Gate. She is also the one who had the bridge constructed over the Lülüfer River, which is therefore known by her name. Murad Khan Ghazi and Suleyman Pasha were her sons, both by Orkhan Ghazi. When she died, she was buried with Orkhan Ghazi in the Bursa citadel.

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1. Orkhan, the second Ottoman sultan, ruled 1324–1360. His son Murad I ruled 1360–1389.
In What Manner Othman Ghazi Established the Friday Prayer, and How This Occurred in Every Town

When he took Karaja Hisar, the houses of the town were left empty, and quite a few people came from Germiyan and from other provinces asking Othman Ghazi for houses. Othman Ghazi gave them to them, and in a short time, the town was repopulated. He also gave them a number of churches which they made into mosques. They also set up a market.

Now these people decided that they wanted to perform the Friday congregational prayer, also that they wanted to have a qadi. There was a holy man named Dursun Fakih who used to act as prayer-leader for those people. They explained their wish to him. He in turn came and spoke with Othman Ghazi’s stepfather Edebalı about it. While they were talking, Othman Ghazi came over and inquired into the matter. When he learned what they wanted, he said, “Do whatever seems correct to you.” Dursun Fakih said, “My Khan! We must request permission from the sultan.” Othman Ghazi replied, “I took this city by myself with my own sword. What does the sultan have to do with it that I should require his permission? God who bestowed the sultanate upon him also bestowed the office of khan on me by virtue of the ghaza. It is true that the sultan endowed me with this banner. But it is I who carried the banner into battle with the infidels! If he claims to be of the House of Seljuk, I claim to be the descendant of Gök Alp. And if he says that he came to this country before us, we say that my grandfather Suleyman Shah came before him.”

This satisfied those people. They gave the offices of qadi and khatib [preacher] to Dursun Fakih. The Friday sermon was read first in Karaja Hisar. The festival sermon was read in Eskishehir; and they performed the festival prayer there. The first sermon given in the name of Othman took place in 689 [1290].

Othman Ghazi’s Laws and Regulations

The qadi was established, the military commander was in place, the market was in operation, and the sermon was being read. These people wanted a law. A man came from Germiyan and said, “Sell me the tax concession on this market.” “Go to the Khan,” said the people. So he went to the Khan and repeated his request. “What is a tax?” said Othman Ghazi. The man replied, “For whatever comes into the market I shall take a small amount of money.” “Do you have a debt outstanding against the people of this market, that you wish to take money from them?” “My Khan,” he answered, “this is a custom. The rulers of all countries do this.” “Did God command this, or have the emirs themselves instituted it?” “It is a custom, my Khan, which has come down to us from the beginning of time.” At this Othman Ghazi became very angry: “Should a man’s earnings belong to another? It is his own property. What have I put into it that I should tell him to give me money? Out with you, scoundrel! Do not speak to me thus, or it will be to your own harm.”

Afterwards, the people came and said, “My Khan, it is customary to give a little something to the market guards.” Othman Ghazi said, “Now, since you say so, let everyone who sells one load give two akçe. But whoever sells nothing should give nothing. Anyone who breaks this law of mine, may God cause his ruin in this world and the next. Furthermore, upon whomever I bestow a land grant, let it not be taken from his hands without reason; and when he dies, let it be given to his son, however young he may be. And at the time of campaign, his servants should accompany him so that he will be fit to fight. Whoever holds to this law, may God be pleased with him; but if one of my descendants is caused to establish a law other than this law, may God not be pleased with him who established it and with him who causes it to be established.”

1 Qadi: a judge of religious law.
2 A silver coin.
8.7 Diplomacy: Peace Agreement between the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II and the Signoria of Venice (January 25, 1478). Original in Greek.

Mehmed II's sack of Constantinople was part of a larger plan to reconstitute the Roman Empire under his own rule. After 1453, Mehmed moved into the Balkans and the Aegean, coming up against the other major power in the region, Venice. Between 1463 and 1478, the Ottomans and Venetians waged war, although for much of that time Venice was looking for a way to make peace. This they finally arranged in 1478. Although all sides confirmed its provisions, the agreement has no signatures. Only the Venetian copy has survived, a scroll 23 inches long and 9½ inches wide, composed of pieces of Venetian paper pasted together. The top piece, with a scissors watermark, has Mehmed's gold tugra, or formal emblem, while the bottom piece has an eagle watermark and the text of the agreement. The first ten provisions repeat agreements previously made between the Ottomans and the Venetians. (They echo, as well, earlier agreements that the Venetians made with the Byzantines.) The remainder provides for Venice to surrender various territories and to pay the sultan large quantities of gold.

[Source: State Archives of Venice, ASV Documenti Turchi Bk/2. Translated by Diana Gilliland Wright.]

I, the great lord and great emir, Sultan Mehmed-Bey,¹ son of the great and blessed lord Murad-Bey, do swear by the God of heaven and earth, and by our great prophet Mohammed, and by the seven musaf² which we Moslems possess and confess, and by the 124 thousand prophets of God (more or less),³ and by the faith which I believe and confess, and by my soul and by the soul of my father, and by the sword I wear:

Because my Lordship formerly had peace and friendship with the most illustrious and exalted Signoria of Venice, now again we desire to make a new peace and oath to confirm a true friendship and a new peace. For this purpose, the aforementioned illustrious Signoria

sent the learned and wise Sir Giovanni Dario,⁴ secretary, as emissary to my Lordship so we might make the said peace with the following old and new provisions. For this my Lordship swears by the above-written oaths that just as there was formerly peace and friendship between us, namely, with their lords and men and allies, I now profess good faith and an open peace by land and sea, within and without the Straits,⁵ with the villages, fortresses, islands, and lands that raise the banner of San Marco,⁶ and those who wish to raise the flag in the future, and all those places that are in their obedience and supervision,⁷ and to the commerce which they have as of today and are going to have in the coming years.

¹ Bey is a superior honorific in Turkish-related languages.
² The seven musaf were the seven accepted versions of the Qur'an: this emphasized Mehmed's Sunni allegiance.
³ The phrase "more or less" indicates that while they did not know the precise number of prophets, they did not wish to offend.
⁴ Giovanni Dario, the special Venetian emissary who brought the peace agreement to completion, was given a knighthood by Mehmed for his services. Dario's house, which Venice gave him in appreciation, can be seen in Venice: though small, it is one of the most conspicuous on the Grand Canal.
⁵ The Dardanelles, i.e., the strait that connects the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara, the body of water that touches Constantinople's southern shore.
⁶ The banner of San Marco is red with a gold Venetian lion and a book that reads, "Pace tibi, Marce, evangelista meus [Peace unto you, St. Mark, my Evangelist]." The patron saint of Venice, Mark's body is believed to be buried in San Marco.
⁷ This clause of the agreement refers to various other minor lords in the Aegean who gave nominal homage to Venice.
[Confirmation of Previous Agreements.]

[1] First, no man of my lordship will dare to inflict injury on or opposition to the Signoria of Venice or its men: if this happens, my Lordship is obligated to punish them according to the cause: similarly, the most illustrious Signoria is obligated toward us.

[2] Further, from this day forward, if either land or other goods of the most illustrious Signoria and its men is taken by the men of my Lordship, it will be returned: similarly, they are obligated to my Lordship.

[3] Their men and their merchandise may come by land and by sea to every land of my Lordship, and all the merchandise and the galleys and the ships will be secure and at ease; they are similarly obligated toward us in their lands.

[4] Similarly, the Duke of Naxos and his brothers and their lords and men with their ships and other boats are in the peace. They will not owe my Lordship any service, but the Venetians will hold them just as it all used to be.

[5] Further, all ships and galleys, that is merchantmen and the fleet of my Lordship, wherever they may encounter the Venetians, will have good relations and peace with them. Corsairs and klefts, wherever they are taken, will be punished.

[6] If any Venetian incurs a debt or commits other wrong in the lands of my Lordship, the other Venetians will bear no responsibility: similarly, the Signoria of Venice [vows the same] to our men.

[7] If any Venetian slave flees and comes into Turkish hands and becomes a Moslem, they will give his master 1000 aspers; if he is a Christian he will be sent back.

[8] If any Venetian boat is wrecked on the land of my Lordship, all the men will be freed and all the merchandise returned to their agent: they are similarly obligated to our men.

[9] If any Venetian man dies in the lands of my Lordship, without a will or heir, his goods are to be given to the Venetian bailo; if no bailo is found, they will be given into Venetian hands. Venice will write what to do.

[10] Further, the most illustrious Signoria will have the right and authority specifically to send a bailo to Constantinople, with his household, according to custom, who will be able to dispense justice and administer Venetian affairs, according to their custom. The governor will be obligated to give him aid and cooperation. [New provisions and conditions for peace.]

[11] If the said bailo wants to secure his position during this time, he is obligated to give my Lordship every year a gift of 10,000 Venetian florins from the commercial transactions.

[12] Further, the most illustrious Signoria of Venice is obligated for every debt lying between us and for all debts whether common or private or of certain of their men, for all the past time before the war until today, to give to my Lordship 100,000 Venetian ducats within two years. Further, my Lordship cannot look for past debts, either from the most illustrious Signoria of Venice or from its men.

[13] Further, the most illustrious Signoria of Venice is obligated to hand over to my Lordship the fortress called Skodra in Albania, except that it may remove the lord who is rector, and the council, and all the other
men\(^1\) who wish to depart, specifically, with their merchandise, if they have any. The Signoria will take the equipment and all other military materiel or whatever is found in the fortress at present without any opposition.

[14] Further, the most illustrious Signoria of Venice is specifically obligated to transfer to my Lordship the island of Lemnos, except that they will take the rettor and the Venetian citizens. The other men who want to go will take whatever they have to go wherever they want. Those who want to remain on the island will be pardoned for what they did up to this point.\(^2\)

[15] Further, the most illustrious Signoria of Venice will hand over to my Lordship the present fortresses and lands which were taken in the war from my Lordship, that is, the lands in the Morea,\(^3\) except that the men in their authority may go wherever they want with whatever they have. If any want to remain in the present territories and fortresses they will have complete pardons, specifically, for every act, if they did anything up to now.

[16] Further, my Lordship is obligated to hand over to them the occupied lands, that is, to the former borders of their fortresses which abut the lands of my Lordship on all sides.\(^4\)

The above-written provisions are confirmed and ratified and sworn.

The present writing was done in the year 6987, the 12th indiction, the 25th of the month of January, in Constantinople.\(^5\)

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**BYZANTIUM: DECLINE AND FALL**


This impassioned letter to Grand Prince Vasily I of Moscow from Patriarch Anthony IV (r.1389–1390 and again 1391–1397) evokes the imperial ideal that once held sway at Byzantium. But it was by Anthony's time only a memory. At the end of the fourteenth century, the ruler of Moscow could boldly disparage the emperor, and the emperor, Manuel II Palaeologus (r.1391–1425), a weak vassal of the Ottoman sultan, could give no reply to their critiques. Byzantium had shrunk to include only a bit of Greece, a few islands, and the city of Constantinople, while the Turks were largely in control of vast regions that had once been Byzantine. Under these circumstances, the patriarch of Constantinople, not the emperor, was the only man with enough standing to reply to Vasily.


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\(^1\) All the other men was understood to include the soldiers, and all other (male) residents, their families, movable possessions, and trade goods. The rettor was the governor.

\(^2\) This is a blanket pardon for anyone who might have fought against Mehmed. Lemnos was captured by Mehmed in 1456, then taken, retaken, and ravaged by both sides for the next 20 years. Its strategic location at the approach to the Dardanelles made possession essential for the control of shipping.

\(^3\) The Morea was the usual name for southern Greece.

\(^4\) This became a major issue in settling Venetian-Ottoman boundaries in Greece and required a series of boundary commissions in which representatives and the oldest inhabitants from both sides worked out what should be the dividing line.

\(^5\) The Ottomans used Byzantine dating. The year 6987 was 1490 (from the Creation in September to the Incarnation) 1478. As the Venetians counted their year from March 1, January was still 1478. While a number of Mehmed's letters and treaties use this dating, it is unclear whether this results from his secretaries following Byzantine precedents in dealing with the West, or whether it indicates his claim to rule the empire of the Romans. The peace agreement was not signed because in Ottoman tradition such documents, or "ahl-names," were considered to be issued unilaterally by the sultan.
The holy emperor has a great place in the church, for he is not like other rulers or governors of other regions. This is so because from the beginning the emperors established and confirmed the [true] faith in all the inhabited world. They convoked the ecumenical councils and confirmed and decreed the acceptance of the pronouncements of the divine and holy canons regarding the correct doctrines and the government of Christians. They struggled boldly against heresies, and imperial decrees together with councils established the metropolitan sees of the archpriests and the divisions of their provinces and the delineation of their districts. For this reason the emperors enjoy great honor and position in the Church, for even if, by God's permission, the nations [primarily the Ottoman Turks] have constricted the authority and domain of the emperor, still to this day the emperor possesses the same charge from the church and the same rank and the same prayers [from the church]. The basileus [emperor] is anointed with the great myrrh and is appointed basileus and autokratōr of the Romans, and indeed of all Christians. Everywhere the name of the emperor is commemorated by all patriarchs and metropolitans and bishops wherever men are called Christians, [a thing] which no other ruler or governor ever received. Indeed he enjoys such great authority over all that even the Latins themselves, who are not in communion with our church, render him the same honor and submission which they did in the old days when they were united with us. So much more do Orthodox Christians owe such recognition to him....

Therefore, my son, you are wrong to affirm that we have the church without an emperor, for it is impossible for Christians to have a church and no empire. The Basileia [empire] and the church have a great unity and community—indeed they cannot be separated. Christians can repudiate only emperors who are heretics who attack the church, or who introduce doctrines irreconcilable with the teachings of the Apostles and the Fathers. But our very great and holy autokrator, by the grace of God, is most orthodox and faithful, a champion of the church, its defender and avenger, so that it is impossible for bishops not to mention his name in the liturgy. Of whom, then, do the Fathers, councils, and canons speak? Always and everywhere they speak loudly of the one rightful basileus, whose laws, decrees, and charters are in force throughout the world and who alone, only he, is mentioned in all places by Christians in the liturgy.

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8.9 The fall bewailed: George Sphrantzes, Chronicle (before 1477). Original in Greek.

George Sphrantzes (1401–1477), born into a noble and pious family, was brought up at the imperial court in Byzantium and personally knew the last three emperors. For much of his adult life, until the fall of the Byzantine Empire, he served Constantine XI (r.1449–1453) as diplomat, ambassador, and spy. His Chronicle, which uses the vernacular Greek of the time rather than the classicizing Greek of most Byzantine historians, is an unusually personal and often eyewitness account. With the fall of Constantinople, Sphrantzes was briefly enslaved, as was his wife, whom he ransomed. He continued to work for the remnants of the imperial house until, in 1456, he and his wife retired to monasteries.


I am George Sphrantzes the pitiful First Lord of the Imperial Wardrobe, presently known by my monastic name Gregory. I wrote the following account of the events that occurred during my wretched life.

It would have been fine for me not to have been born or to have perished in childhood. Since this did not happen, let it be known that I was born on Tuesday, August 30, 1409 [1401]. The revered and holy Lady Thomais, as my godmother, sponsored my baptism....
28.7 On October 31, 6957 [1447], our emperor Lord John passed away. He was fifty-six years, ten months, and eleven days old. On November 1, he was buried in the Monastery of the Pantocrator. He had been emperor for twenty-three years, three months, and ten days.

29.1 On November 13 of the same year, Lord Thomas arrived by ship in the City [i.e., Constantinople]; he had heard of the emperor’s death only as he was passing through Callipolis.¹

2. His arrival put an end to the intrigues of his brother Lord Demetrius, or rather to those of his agents to declare him emperor. Demetrius was not a despot and had not been born in the purple; he had an older brother still alive, a man who excelled in all good activities and was free from misfortune. Proper claim and justice prevailed by command of the holy empress, her sons the despots, and by the opinion and will of the nobility.

3. On December 6, I set out with an embassy to inform the sultan that the empress, the brothers, right of birth, and the love and wisdom of nearly the whole population of the City chose Lord Constantine emperor. The sultan approved the choice and sent me away with honor and gifts.

4. In the same days lords from the City were sent to the Morea: Alexius Philanthropenos Lascaris, who had been dispatched to the City by my master together with Lord Thomas the despot, on the despot’s business with the emperor, and Manuel Palaeologus Lagrus. Lord Constantine the despot was crowned emperor at Mistra on January 6 [1448].²

5. On March 12 of the same year [1448], he came to the City on board a Catalan vessel and was received with joy by all.

6. In August of the same year, the honored despot Lord Thomas, who was born in the purple, departed for the Morea.

7. On September 3, 6958 [1449], Lord Demetrius the despot also left for the Morea. Before their departure, a reconciliation took place in the presence of their lady mother, their brother the emperor, and ourselves, the chosen nobles: they took oaths which they violated, and were rewarded with misfortunes, as I saw later. How they were disposed toward each other is not essential to my narration, as I was absent from the City and do not have accurate knowledge.

30.1 On October 14 of the same year [1449], I was dispatched to the mecês—that is king—of Georgia, King George, and to the emperor of Trebizond, Lord John Comnenus, with remarkable gifts and a great, impressive retinue consisting of young nobles, soldiers, celibate priests, singers, physicians, and musicians with their instruments.³ The Georgians knew the names of our instruments but had not seen them before and wished to inspect and hear them. For this reason many came from the furthest parts of Georgia to hear them.

2. My mission in those places was to arrange a marriage for my emperor [Constantine IX Palaeologus], whichever of the two families seemed suitable to me. He required me to submit my unbiased report on the advantages and disadvantages of each for his final decision. I sent messengers and letters by messengers, and my lord answered me by others. But his messengers’ boat was wrecked in the Amisus area⁴ and before my lord and emperor discovered what had passed and sent others, I spent two years minus thirty days in those parts.

3. While I was there, on March 23 of the same year [1450], our memorable holy empress, who had taken the veil under the name Patience and had become a nun, passed away and was buried next to her late husband, our memorable emperor, in the Monastery of the Pantocrator.

4. In February 6959 [1451], Sultan Murad died. I had not learned of his death while I was in Georgia, but, when I reached Trebizond, the emperor Lord John Comnenus said to me: “Come, Mr. Ambassador, I have good news for you and you must congratulate me.”

¹ Later, Callipolis became Gallipoli. “Lord Thomas” was one of the brothers of “Lord John”—Emperor John VIII Palaeologus (r.1425–1448). So were Lord Demetrius and Lord Constantine, mentioned below. Constantine became emperor (with the approval of Sultan Mehmed II). Demetrius and Thomas vied for control over the Morea (southern Greece); both were despots there until 1460, when they had to surrender it to the Turks.
² That the emperor of Constantinople was crowned at Mistra and not in the Church of Saint Sophia in Constantinople was thought by contemporary writers to be a serious break with tradition. Constantine is known to history as Constantine XI Palaeologus.
³ The empire of Trebizond was one of the Greek successor states that emerged in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, when, in 1204, crusader armies conquered Constantinople.
⁴ The Amisus area is the southern coast of the Black Sea.
I rose, bowed, and responded: "May God grant Your Holy Majesty a long reign, as you have always been kind to us in many ways. Even now you are about to grace us, once more, with good news. I regret I have nothing worthy of Your Majesty to compensate for this favor."

He related the sultan’s death and said that Murad’s son [i.e., Mehmed II] was now in power, had bestowed many honors on him, and had even decided to continue the friendship which that house had enjoyed with his father.

5. Overcome by grief, as if I had been told of the death of those dearest to me, I stood speechless. Finally, with considerable loss of spirit, I said: "Lord, this news brings no joy; on the contrary, it is a cause for grief." "How so, my friend?" he asked. And I responded: "The late sultan was an old man, had given up the conquest of our City, and had no desire of attempting anything like it again; he only wished for friendship and peace. This man, who just became sultan, is young and an enemy of the Christians since childhood; he threatens with proud spirit that he will put in operation certain plans against the Christians.

6. "Our City has been in financial stress and is in great need of funds since the days of the illness of the emperor, your son-in-law; my lord, the newly crowned emperor, wants a period of peace in order to straighten out the City’s affairs. If God should grant that the young sultan be overcome by his youth and evil nature and march against our City, I know not what will happen. Indeed God would have granted a joyous occasion if this man, Murad’s son, had died instead. It would have been truly good news, since Murad had no other son, and he would have become weaker from grief and died soon after. In the meantime that house would have become stronger and, at his death, increased into great honor."

The emperor responded: "You are one of the more prudent and most honored advisors of his house. You will know better about these matters. In any case, God has the power to bring about the best."

I said, "Indeed it is so, as you say." Our conversation was left at that.

31.1. After I heard this, and that the widow of the late sultan and daughter of the Serbian despot had returned to her parents with full honors, and as I was required to stay in Trebizond for many reasons, I sent by a boat leaving for the City some horses, two boys—whom the king of Georgia had taken as his booty in his expedition against Samahin and given to me as gifts—and some other things that had come into my possession as gifts or in other ways. I sat down and wrote a report to my lord the emperor concerning my mission in Georgia and my plans in Trebizond, as well as the reasons for my long stay.

2. Furthermore, I composed a second letter, the contents of which I will reveal presently, and gave one of the young nobles with me the letters. I sent him with the following instructions: "Present my first report to our lord the emperor when you pay your respects, and also give an oral, detailed version of our mission. Hand over my second letter on the following day."

3. The second letter ran as follows: "I was informed by the emperor of the sultan’s death when I reached Trebizond. I also heard that the sultan’s widow and cousin returned to her homeland and parents. So it seems to me better for many ends to propose marriage to her, should you agree to do it instead of my errand.

4. "I can discover only four arguments opposing this marriage: (1) Her family is inferior to yours; (2) the Church may object on the grounds of close kinship; (3) she has been married already; and (4) she is older and there is the factor that she may be in danger during childbirth, a common risk according to physicians.

5. "Against the first argument I suggest that it is not untoward, since she is not inferior to my lady, your memorable mother. Against the second, a marriage alliance with Trebizond will have to be pardoned by the Church if much money is donated to individual churches and to the poor. A pardon, on the other hand, will be more easily obtained if you marry in the Serbian House, in view of the fact that the Church, celibate priests, monks, nuns, and the poor are in the despot’s debt and have respect for him.

6. "About the third argument I maintain that it is not against tradition; Lady Eudocia had been previously married to a Turkish chief of an insignificant and poor principality and had even given birth to his children before she married your grandfather. Your potential bride, by contrast, was the wife of a very powerful monarch, and she, it is generally believed, did not sleep with him. As for the fourth, it is up to God, and His will shall prevail.

7. "As the other advantages of this match have been demonstrated and her parents will gladly accept it, send one servant of your house, or a monk to test this proposal. Let there be no delay; do it."

8. When my messengers arrived in the City on May 28 [1451], the emperor was away, hunting wild boars. As soon as he was told of the return of the envoys from Georgia, he finished the hunt and came from the estate in high spirits. He rejoiced at the advice on the Serbian match, as my account will reveal later.

9. On the same night of May 28 I had a dream: it seemed to me that I was back in the City; as I made a
motion to prostrate myself and kiss the emperor’s feet, he stopped me, raised me, and kissed my eyes. Then I woke up and told those sleeping by me: “I just had this dream. Remember the date.”

10. When my lord and emperor realized that I had not returned, but that the envoys were members of my retinue, he read my first report, became sad, appeared depressed, and accused me of tardiness. On the following day he read my second report and regained his cheer, as if I had returned. Immediately, he dispatched to Serbia Manuel Palaeologus, the nephew of Lady Cantacuzena, our protostrator’s wife, to test this proposal of marriage. Her parents listened to it with delight and were ready to settle the final details.

11. Then it was discovered that the sultan’s widow had made a vow to God and decided that if he freed her from the house of her late husband she would not remarry for the rest of her life, but would remain in His service, as far as possible. Thus the proposed match failed.

12. In August of the same year [1451], our patriarch Lord Gregory [Mamas] fled the City and became an exile.  

32.1. On September 14, 1450 [1451], I arrived safely in the City on board the ship of Antonio Rizzo, the good man who later suffered martyrdom for his faith in Christ. I had almost completed, or rather confirmed, a marriage with the House of Georgia, as I had come to the conclusion that a marriage with the House of Trebizond would be far less advantageous....

9. The document was prepared, signed, and sealed with gold. It specified that the daughter of the king would become the wife of the emperor and queen of Constantinople and that he would be her husband, according to the agreement reached by the king of Georgia and myself. We summoned the king’s nobleman of the second rank, who had come with me in the City, and in his presence, my lord the emperor drew with his own hand three crosses in red ink on the upper part of the document, thus providing the confirmation demanded by Georgian tradition. He handed the document to the envoy and, pointing at me, he said: “With God’s help, this man, in charge of three ships, shall arrive next spring in order to bring her to me.” The envoy bowed and departed.

33.1. In the beginning of the same year [September 1451], rumors began circulating that the sultan intended to occupy the straits around the district Asomatoss in order to build a castle. The emperor decided to send an envoy to the Morea to escort one of his brothers to the City, if he accepted and remained faithful to the terms of the agreement, so that if the need arose to review their policy toward the sultan, one of the two might travel to the rulers of the West.

2. Once this had been decided, the emperor one day issued the following orders to me: “First Lord of the Imperial Wardrobe, as I have decided, I command you to travel to the Morea and, however you manage it, see whichever of my two brothers is willing to come here. Then you are to sail on to Cyprus and visit my niece, the queen. I will prepare the necessary provisions so that, when you return from Cyprus, you will proceed to Georgia and bring your future empress.”

3. I responded: “My affection and loyal service demand a response to your command. I fear that my wife, your servant and mother of your godchildren, will be angry and leave me either to become a nun or to remarry. Only the other day I came back from Georgia and my twenty-three-month mission. If I am to depart again now, she will have good reason to pursue either course.”

The emperor laughed and said: “Tell her to agree that you undertake just these missions. I will make her an oath that I shall burden you no more in this way.

4. “Indeed, you know better what we have in mind and have both agreed together and plan to do. This is certain and needs no sworn statement: the embassies under you

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1 The significance of this dream undoubtedly had something to do with the date of May 28, as it was early in the morning of May 29, 1453 that Constantinople fell to Mehmed and the emperor perished in the assault.

2 The protostrator held an important post at the imperial court.

3 Gregory supported the provisions of the Council of Florence (1439), which declared the union of the Greek and Latin churches, recognized papal primacy, declared a form of the Creed congruent with the Catholic position, and recognized the existence of Purgatory. The whole package was extremely unpopular at Constantinople.

4 Although Sphrantzes does not refer to Rizzo again, we know his fate. After the construction of the Turkish fortress Rumeli Hisari, all vessels sailing south were ordered to stop and allow inspection of their cargo. Antonio Rizzo ignored these instructions, and his vessel was sunk on November 26, 1452. Rizzo and his crew were captured and killed.

5 Mehmed built the fortress of Rumeli Hisari on the European side of the Bosphorus.
will be discontinued.” By this agreement he meant that we should send word to Loucas Notaras, our grand duke, that he could not hold the position of chief intermediary.

The emperor went on: “Because of his status, it is impossible to take the position from him; he must give it up himself. Let him have the first place of honor in the court and the senate as well as some income from a different source. I must appoint two nobles, as my brother, the emperor, had done; not as intermediaries, but as officials who will be with me from early in the day until late in the night, while I perform my duties.” All this came to pass.

5. Word was sent to our grand duke by Neophytus, the spiritual brother and celibate priest, the godfather of his children and mine, who resided at the Kharsianites Monastery. Notaras obeyed, whether willingly or unwillingly, I cannot tell. At any rate, he made it known that it had been his wish also to do so in the hope that his sons would be honored. So it was decided but did not come to pass, as our common misfortune overwhelmed all of us.

6. The emperor commanded that I fill one of the positions, and he was considering Nicolaus Goudeles for the other. He added that if we were to find each other’s company agreeable, a match could be arranged between my son and Goudeles’ daughter. This appointment would bring the end of my missions as ambassador.

7. Then the emperor said: “I really wished to dispatch to the Morea some older official. But I want to issue instructions written by my own hand, which will include five options: it will list the first possible compromise; then a second, third, fourth, or, if necessary, a fifth. But I believe that if anyone is sent other than you, they will promise to him a village with a silver-sealed confirmation, or a hereditary estate, and he will immediately consent to grant to them the fifth alternative, which would be difficult for us.

8. "Concerning Cyprus, do you know the monk I met a few days ago? He brought me a message from my niece that she is in need of something; she would have told me in her own voice what she wanted; had it been possible, she would have sent her message through a loyal, trusted courtier, but she has none. As she does not have one and cannot make the trip, I must send a man whom I consider appropriate to hear her message.

9. "Who is more qualified? To reach a conclusion, there is no need for argument: it is you, since you have acted and made decisions for me, know me personally, and have been informed. How could anyone else complete this mission?”

I gave my answer to the emperor: “Admittedly it is as you say. My wife, your servant, agrees, since the circumstances demand it and because she will enjoy, as you promised me, a position, honors, and fame above the other noblewomen. As for the rest, I really have no advice for you.” As it was time for lunch, I went home….

35.1. On March 26 of the same year 6960 [1452], the sultan occupied the Straits with the intention of constructing his castle. I kept postponing my mission from day to day, because a land route was now out of the question and would be dangerous; I had to locate a suitable ship.

2. In June of the same year the war was finally brought to our area; the Turkish army charged, captured all inhabitants found outside the walls, and blockaded the City. When the erection of the castle had been completed, the sultan left on August 31 and attacked the fortifications of the City.

3. On September 3, 6961 [1452], he departed for Adrianople; for two days he had been apparently securing his castle and its position.

4. In autumn of the same year Turahan, with his sons and a huge army, invaded the Morea. At that time the inhabitants of the Morea captured one of his sons.

5. On January 17 of the same year [1453], Lord Andreas Palaeologus was born, the successor and heir of the Palaeologan Dynasty.

6. On April 4 of the same year [1453], the sultan returned and laid siege to the City with all sorts of engines and stratagems by land and sea. He surrounded the entire 18 miles of the City with 400 small and large vessels from the sea and with 200,000 men on the land side. In spite of the great size of our City, our defenders amounted to 4,773 Greeks, as well as just about 200 foreigners.

7. I was in a position to know the exact figure of our strength for the following reason: the emperor ordered the tribunes to take a census of their communities and to record the exact number of men—laity and clergy—able to defend the walls, and what weapons each man had for defense. All tribunes completed this task and brought the lists of their communities to the emperor.

8. The emperor said to me: “This task is for you and no one else, as you are skilled in arithmetic and also know

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1. Goudeles was a powerful noble in Constantinople.
2. Turahan was a Turkish general.
how to guard and keep secrets. Take these lists and compute, in the privacy of your home, the exact figure of available defenders, weapons, shields, spears, and arrows.” I completed my task and presented the master list to my lord and emperor in the greatest possible sadness and depression. The true figure remained a secret known only to the emperor and to myself.

9. On Tuesday May 29 [1453], early in the day, the sultan took possession of our City; in this time of capture my late master and emperor, Lord Constantine, was killed. I was not at his side at that hour but had been inspecting another part of the City, according to his orders. Alas for me; I did not know what times Providence had in store for me!

10. My late emperor, the martyr, lived for forty-nine years, three months, and twenty days. His reign lasted four years, four months, and twenty-four days. He had been the eighth emperor of the Palaeologan Dynasty. The first was Michael, the second Andronicus, the third Michael, the fourth Andronicus, the fifth John, the sixth Manuel, the seventh John, and the eighth was Constantine. The Palaeologan Dynasty ruled over the City for 194 years, ten months, and four days.

11. I was taken prisoner and suffered the evils of wretched slavery. Finally I was ransomed on September 1, 1453, and departed for Mistra. My wife and children had passed into the possession of some elderly Turks, who did not treat them badly. Then they were sold to the sultan’s Mir Ahor (i.e., Master of the Horse), who amassed a great fortune by selling many other beautiful noble ladies.

12. My children’s beauty and proper upbringing could not be concealed; thus, the sultan found out and bought my children from his Master of the Horse for many thousand aspers. Thus their wretched mother was left all alone in the company of a single nurse; the rest of her attendants had been dispersed.

36.1. Perhaps one would like to know the emperor’s preparations before the siege, while the sultan was gathering his forces, and the aid that we received from the Christians abroad.

2. No aid whatsoever was dispatched by other Christians. On the contrary, an official of the sultan was sent to the Serbian despot Lord George in order to ask him to be the intermediary for the treaty with the Hungarians. Even though a Christian scribe in the retinue of the envoy had been instructed by certain members of the Turkish Council to inform the despot that the sultan intended to march against Constantinople once the treaty was signed and to delay the conclusion of this treaty, the despot paid no attention to him; the wretch of a despot did not consider the fact that once the head has been removed the limbs perish also.

3. An important meeting of the senate was held in Venice. The doge Francesco Foscari was opposed to dispatching aid not because he was inept (indeed, our emperor Lord John and others who had met him and talked to him maintained that they had not seen a wiser man in Italy), but because of spite and malice; for spite generally overlooks advantage. The reason for his attitude was the following: Foscari had sent Alvise Diedo as his intermediary to Lord Constantine—who was then the despot of the Morea—to propose marriage between his daughter and Lord Constantine, promising a handsome dowry. Lord Constantine agreed to this betrothal, not so much because of the dowry, but because his territories would be joined to those of Venice. I advised him to agree more forcefully than others, and he took my advice.

4. Once Constantine had become emperor and come to the City, this marriage was out of the question. What nobleman or noblewoman would ever receive the daughter of a Venetian—even though he might be the glorious doge—as queen and lady for more than a short time? Who would accept his other sons-in-law as the emperor’s fellow sons-in-law, and his sons as the brothers-in-law of the emperor? The doge insisted on the marriage and, after our final rejection, this man became our enemy. Thus during this meeting of the senate, even though the noblemen Alvise Loredano and Antonio Diedo argued and demonstrated that Venetian interests would be hurt if the City fell, they were unable to prevail.

5. In Rome what measures were taken by the Church to prevent our downfall? The cardinal of Russia happened to be in the City and I argued, as his intermediary to my late lord, the emperor, that he should be appointed patriarch in the hope that various advantages would come from him and the then pope, or, at least, that the name of the pope should be commemorated in our services.1

6. After many consultations and deliberations, my

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1 Isidore, formerly the metropolitan of Kiev and later the cardinal of all Russians, arrived in Constantinople on October 26, 1452, to enforce the decisions made at the Council of Florence. He was accompanied by a force of 200 archers. He remained in Constantinople during the siege, was taken captive during the sack, but managed to conceal his identity and escape to the West.
late master and emperor decided to abandon the first alternative altogether, since the appointed patriarch requires the obedience of all; otherwise riots and war ensue between him and those who are opposed to his appointment; especially at this time, when we were facing extreme war, what a misfortune to have a war inside the City as well! The emperor consented to have the pope’s name commemorated in our services, by necessity, as we hoped to receive some aid. Whoever were willing would pronounce the commemoration in Saint Sophia; the rest would incur no blame and remain peaceful. These services took place on November 12.¹ Six months later we had received as much aid from Rome as had been sent to us by the sultan of Cairo.²

7. Although it was possible for the despot of Serbia to send money secretly from many places and, similarly, men, did anyone see a single penny? On the contrary, they provided huge financial aid and many men to the sultan who was besieging the City. Thus the Turks were able to boast in triumph that even Serbia was against us.³

8. Which of the Christians, the Trebizondian emperor, the lords of Walachia, or the Georgia king, contributed a single penny or a single soldier to our defense, openly or secretly?

8.10 After the fall: Archbishop Genady of Novgorod and Dmitry Gerasimov, The Tale of the White Cowl (end of the 15th c.). Original in Russian.

A cowl is a hood. Drawing on the belief that Constantine had given his empire to the papacy as well as predictions about the coming of the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit, Archbishop Genady of Novgorod and his co-writer, Dmitry Gerasimov, wrote of the fate of the White Cowl, symbol of Christ’s Resurrection. First Emperor Constantine gave it to the pope. Then, as the papacy fell into heresy (from the point of view of the Greek Church), it was given to Philotheus, the patriarch of Constantinople. He, in turn, gave it to Vasily, archbishop of Novgorod, where it was to remain, crown of the “Third Rome.” The idea was one of transmission, from “old” Rome (the Rome of Italy) to the “second” Rome (Constantinople) to the “final” Rome (Novgorod). Written thirty or forty years after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the “prediction” of the triumph of Islam in the story was a foregone conclusion. But the pre-eminence of Novgorod in the story was only a pipe dream: already in 1478 Ivan III (r.1462–1505), ruler of Muscovy, had conquered the Republic of Novgorod and made Moscow the center of the Russian Church.


¹ On December 12, 1452, the union of the two Churches was solemnly celebrated in the Church of Saint Sophia. The Greek monks and most of the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople were opposed to the union. Consequently, on the eve of the fall, Constantinople was a divided city. Two political parties were formed: the unionists, headed by the Palaeologoi and other Greeks, and the anti-unionists, headed by the grand duke Loucas Notaras, and by George Courtetsis Scholarius, who became the first patriarch under Mehmed’s rule. It is no exaggeration to say that the situation in Constantinople was chaotic before—as during—the siege.

² In fact, Isidore’s 200 archers were paid by the pope, and preparations in the West were under way to aid Constantinople. Venetian ships had been equipped by means of financial aid from the pope and had reached Chios when news of the fall reached them; consequently, they returned to Venice.

³ The Serbian ruler was the vassal of the sultan.
At that time the Patriarch of Constantinople was Philotheus, who was distinguished by his strict fasting and his virtuous ways. Once, he had a vision in the night of a youth from whom emanated light and who told him:

"Blessed teacher, in the olden times the Roman Emperor, Constantine, who, through the vision of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, was enlightened by God, decided to give Blessed Pope Sylvester the White Cowl to glorify the Holy Apostolic Church. Later, the unfaithful popes of the Latin heresies wanted to profane and destroy this cowl, but I appeared to the evil pope, and now this pope has sent this cowl to you. When the messengers arrive with it, you must accept it with all honors. Then send the White Cowl to the Russian land, to the city of Novgorod the Great with your written blessing. And there this cowl will be worn on the head of Vasily, Archbishop of Novgorod, so that he may glorify the Holy Apostolic Cathedral of Holy Sophia and laud the Orthodox. There, in that land, the faith of Christ is truly glorified. And the popes, because of their shamelessness, will receive the vengeance of God." And having spoken these words, the youth became invisible.

The patriarch awoke filled with awe and joy and was unable to sleep throughout the remainder of the night. And he contemplated this vision. In the morning he ordered that the bells should sound the Matins, and when day came he summoned the Church council and revealed his vision. And all praised God, perceiving that a holy angel had appeared to the patriarch. Yet they did not fully understand the meaning of the message. When they were still in council and were filled with awe due to their great joy, there arrived a servant of the patriarch, and he announced to them that messengers had arrived from the Pope of Rome. The patriarch ordered that they be brought before him. The messengers came, bowed low to the patriarch, and gave him the message. The patriarch read the message and pondered it, praising God. He announced its contents to Emperor John who was reigning at that time and whose name was Cantacuzenus. And then he went with the entire council to meet the bringers of the divine treasure which lay in an ark. He accepted it with all honors, broke the seal, and took from the ark the Holy White Cowl. He kissed it with reverence, and looked upon it with wonderment both for its creation and for the wonderful fragrance that emanated from it.

At that time the patriarch had diseased eyes and constant headaches, but when he placed the White Cowl upon his head, these afflictions immediately ceased to be. And he rejoiced with great joy and rendered glory to Christ, our Lord, to Constantine's blessed memory for his creating this wonderful cowl for Blessed Pope Sylvester. And he put the Holy Cowl on the golden salver tray that was also sent by the pope. He placed them in the great church in an honorable place until he could make a decision with the emperor's counseling.

After the White Cowl was sent from Rome, the evil pope, who was counseled by heretics, became angered against the Christian faith and was driven to a frenzy, extremely regretting his allowing the White Cowl to be sent to Constantinople. And he wrote an evil letter to the patriarch, in which he demanded the return of the White Cowl on the golden salver. The patriarch read this letter and, understanding the pope's evil and cunning design, sent him a letter in return that was based on Holy Scripture, and in it he called the pope both evil and godless, the apostate and precursor of the Antichrist. And the patriarch cursed the pope in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Holy Apostles, and the Church Fathers. And this letter came to the pope.

When the pope had read the letter and learned that the patriarch intended to send the White Cowl with great honor to the Russian land, to the city of Novgorod the Great, he uttered a roar. And his face changed and he fell ill, for he, the infidel, disliked the Russian land and could not even bear to hear of this land where the Christian faith was professed.

Patriarch Philotheus, having seen that the White Cowl was illumined with grace, began to ponder how he might keep it in Constantinople and wear it on his own head. He consulted with the emperor about the matter several times, and wanted to write to the other patriarchs and metropolitans to summon them to a council. After Matins one Sunday, the patriarch returned to his chambers and, after the usual prayers, lay down to rest. But he slept but lightly, and in this sleep he saw that two men, who were unknown to him, came through the door. And from them there emanated light. One of them was armed as a warrior and had an imperial crown upon his head. The other wore a bishop's vestments and was distinguished by his venerable white hair.

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1 Philotheus (r.1353–1354; 1354–1356) was patriarch of Constantinople.
2 Vasily (r.1330–1352) was archbishop of Novgorod.
3 John VI Cantacuzenus was emperor of Byzantium (r.1347–1354).
The latter spoke to the patriarch, saying: “Patriarch! Stop pondering your wearing of the White Cowl on your own head. If this were to be, our Lord, Jesus Christ, would have so predestined it from the founding of this city. And for a long time did divine enlightenment come from heaven, and then God’s voice came to me and I learned that Rome had to betray God and embrace their Latin heresies. That is the reason I did not wish to wear this cowl upon my head, and thus I instructed other popes not to do so. And this imperial city of Constantinople will be taken by the sons of Hagar because of its sins, and all holy shrines will be defiled and destroyed. Thus has it been predestined since the founding of this city.

“The ancient city of Rome will break away from the glory and faith of Christ because of its pride and ambition. In the new Rome, which will be the City of Constantinople, the Christian faith will also perish through the violence of the sons of Hagar. In the third Rome, which will be the land of Russia, the Grace of the Holy Spirit will be revealed. Know then, Philotheus, that all Christians will finally unite into one Russian nation because of its orthodoxy. Since ancient times and by the will of Constantine, Emperor of the Earth, the imperial crown of the imperial city is predestined to be given to the Russian tsar. But the White Cowl, by the will of the King of Heaven, Jesus Christ, will be given to the archbishop of Novgorod the Great. And this White Cowl is more honorable than the crown of the tsar, for it is an imperial crown of the archangelic spiritual order. Thus, you must send this Holy White Cowl to the Russian land, to the city of Novgorod the Great, as you were told to do in the vision of the angel. You should believe and trust in what I say: And when you send it to the Russian land, the Orthodox Faith will be glorified and the cowl will be safe from seizure by the infidel sons of Hagar and from the intended profanation by the Latin pope. And the grace, glory, and honor which were taken from Rome, as well as the Grace of the Holy Spirit, will be removed from the imperial city of Constantinople after its capture by the sons of Hagar. And all holy relics will be given to the Russian land in the predestined moment. And the Russian tsar will be elevated by God above other nations, and under his sway will be many heathen kings. And the power of the patriarch of this imperial ruling city will pass to the Russian land in the predestined hour. And that land will be called Radiant Russia, which, by the Grace of God, will be glorified with blessings. And its majesty will be strengthened by its orthodoxy, and it will become more honorable than the two Romes which preceded it.”

And saying this, the man of the vision who was dressed in a bishop’s vestment wished to leave, but the patriarch, seized by great awe, fell before the bishop and said: “Who are you, my lord? Your vision has seized me with great awe; my heart has been frightened by your words, and I tremble to my very bones.”

The man in the bishop’s vestments answered: “Don’t you know who I am? I am Pope Sylvester, and I came to you because I was ordered by God to reveal to you the great mystery which will come to pass in the predestined time.” Then, pointing to the other man in the vision, he added: “This is blessed Emperor Constantine of Rome to whom I gave rebirth in the holy font and whom I won over to the faith of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He was the first Christian emperor, my child in Christ, who created and gave me the White Cowl in place of the imperial crown.” And saying this, he blessed the patriarch, and became invisible.

Waking up, the patriarch was seized with awe, remembering the words about the White Cowl and the conquest of Constantinople by the pagan sons of Hagar. And he wept for a long time. When the hour of the divine Mass arrived, the patriarch went to the church, fell before the icon of the Holy Mother of God, and remained lying there for some time. Then he arose, took the White Cowl with great reverence, kissed it piously, placed it upon his head, and then put it to his eyes and his heart. And his adoration for this cowl increased even more. And doing this, he wept. His clerics, who were around him and saw that he wept inconsolably, did not dare to inquire as to why he was weeping. Finally the patriarch ceased crying and told his clerics in detail of the vision of Pope Sylvester and Emperor Constantine. Having heard these words, the clerics wept sorrowfully, and exclaimed, “Thy will be done!”

The patriarch, mourning the forthcoming misfortunes of the city of Constantinople and fearing to trespass the divine will, told them that he must fulfill the will of the Lord and do with the White Cowl as he was commanded to do. After having deliberated with blessed Emperor John, he took the White Cowl and the golden salver, put them in the aforementioned ark, sealed it with his seal, and, as he was commanded by the holy angel and

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1 Both the Byzantines and the Russians called all nomads, whether they were Turks, Mongols, or Arabs, the sons of Hagar. “Hagar” refers to the handmaid of the biblical patriarch Abraham. Here it refers to the Ottomans.
Blessed Pope Sylvester, put in his epistle with his blessings, and in it he commanded Archbishop Vasily and all other bishops who would follow Vasily to wear the White Cowl upon their heads. He added many other honorable and marvelous gifts from his clergy for the bishopric of Novgorod the Great. And he also sent vestments with their embroidered crosses for the glorification of the Holy Apostolic Church. And all this was placed in another ark. And he gave these arks to a bishop named Eumeny, and sent him forth with both joy and sorrow.

In the bishopric of the city of Novgorod the Great was Archbishop Vasily who distinguished himself by his fasting and virtuous ways. Once, in the night, he prayed to God and then lay down to rest, but he slept but lightly, and had a dream in which he saw the angel of God. This angel of God, who had a handsome appearance and radiant face, appeared before him in the garb of a monk and with the White Cowl upon his head. With his finger he pointed to his head and in a low voice announced: "Vasily! This White Cowl which you see on my head is from Rome. In olden times the Christian Emperor Constantine created it in honor of Sylvester, Pope of Rome. He gave it to this pope to wear upon his head. But God Almighty did not permit the White Cowl to remain there because of their Latin heresies. Tomorrow morning you must go from the city with your clergy and meet the bishop and messengers sent by the patriarch. And they will bring an ark, and in this ark you will find the White Cowl upon a golden salver. Accept it with all honors, for this White Cowl symbolizes the radiant Resurrection which came to pass on the third day. And from now on, you and all other archbishops of this city will wear it on your heads. And I have come to you to assure you before hand that all is as God wills it and to assuage any doubts you may have." And saying this, the angel became invisible.

Waking up, Archbishop Vasily was seized with awe and joy, pondering the meaning of the vision. The next morning he sent his clerics outside the city, to the crossroads, to see whether the messengers really would appear. In the vicinity of the city the servant of Archbishop Vasily met a Greek bishop who was unknown to him and who traveled to the city of Novgorod. They made a low obeisance [bow] and returned to the archbishop and told them all they had seen. The bishop then sent his messenger into the city to summon the clerics and the entire population.

And he ordered the tolling of the bells, and both he and his clerics donned their vestments.

The procession had not gone far from the Cathedral of Holy Sophia when they met the aforementioned bishop, sent by the patriarch and bearing the ark that had been sealed by the patriarch, and which contained the venerable gifts, came to Archbishop Vasily, made a low obeisance before him, and gave him the epistles of the patriarch. They blessed and greeted each other in Christ's name. Archbishop Vasily accepted the epistles of the patriarch and the ark bearing the venerable gifts. And he went with them to the Cathedral of Holy Sophia, the Wisdom of God. There he put them in the middle of the church in an honorable place and ordered that the patriarchal epistles be read aloud. When the Orthodox people, who were in the cathedral, heard these writings read aloud, they rendered glory to God and rejoiced with great joy. Archbishop Vasily opened one of the arks and removed the cover. And a wonderful fragrance and miraculous radiance spread through the church. Archbishop Vasily and all present were in wonderment, witnessing these happenings. And Bishop Eumeny, who was sent by the patriarch, wondered about these blessed deeds of God that he had witnessed. And they all rendered glory to God, and celebrated the service of thanksgiving.

Archbishop Vasily took the White Cowl from the ark and saw that it appeared exactly like the one he had seen on the angel's head in his vision. And he kissed it with reverence. At that same moment there came a sonorous voice from the icon of the Lord, which was in the cupola of the church, saying, "Holy, holy." And after a moment of silence there came the same voice, which thrice announced, "Ispola eti despota." And when the archbishop and all those present heard these voices, they were seized with awe and joy. And they said, "The Lord have mercy upon us!" And the archbishop then ordered that all present in the church be silent, and he revealed to them his vision of the angel and his words concerning the White Cowl. And he told of his vision as it had happened and in detail, even as it was told to him by the angel in the night.

Giving thanks to God for sending this cowl, the archbishop went forth from the church, preceded by the deacons in holy vestments carrying tapers and singing hymns. And they proceeded with serenity and piety. And the people crowded round, jostling each other and jump-

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1 Ispola eti despota is Greek for "Many years to the lord," or, more loosely translated, "Long live the bishop." The Russians used this expression during the Church service, and it was always pronounced in Greek.
8.11 Chivalric and non-chivalric models: Froissart, *Chronicles* (c.1400). Original in French.

Born in Valenciennes, just outside the kingdom of France, Jean Froissart (1337–c.1404) served the rulers of Hainaut, especially Philippa of Hainaut, wife of the English king Edward III (r.1327–1377). His most famous work was the *Chronicles*, a wide-ranging account of the first half of the Hundred Years’ War. Late in life, he began to revise this work thoroughly, although he finished only a small section. Nevertheless, the result, parts of which are presented below, reflected his mature thinking on topics that Froissart had long written about: the glory of great feats of arms and the nature and purposes of chivalric warfare. What forms of violence did Froissart think knights were right to engage in? Were there limits to the violence that Froissart justified and celebrated? In what ways were Othman’s ambitions and sense of chivalry in Ashikpashazade’s *Othman Comes to Power* (above, p. 451) similar to and different from those of the Western knights who populate the pages of Froissart?


Chapter 78: Walter de Manny begins the War [1339]

As soon as Lord Walter de Manny discovered and realized that a formal declaration of war had been made against the king of France and that the bishop of Lincoln was on his way back [from delivering the king of England’s declaration of war to the king of France], he gathered together 40 lances,1 good companions from Hainaut and England, and left Brabant and rode by night and day until

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1 The best guess of the meaning of “one lance” is that it was made up of two men, one the combatant and the other his servant, and two horses.