

Jacobus Palaeologus in Constantinople, 1554-5 and 1573

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1. Jacobus Palaeologus: Admirer of Islam and Radical Antitrinitarian

The religious reform debates that disunited Western Christianity in the 16th century left a lasting imprint on Western civilization. Besides the traditional Roman Catholic Church, Protestantism with its various factions emerged as an alternative form of Western Christianity. The religious debates unleashed by the sixteenth-century Reformers demonstrably fuelled, in one way or another, many of the subsequent developments of the early modern West including the rise of capitalism, the Dutch and English early Enlightenment, and the pursuit of civil emancipation in seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century North America. Religious diversity turned out to be an enriching resource for Western societies that enlarged the pool of possible solutions in situations when new challenges demanded new ways of thinking and acting.

Special credit for contributing to the genesis of modernity goes to the Antitrinitarian thinkers of the 16th century who radically challenged one of the central dogmatic traditions of the Christian

religion, the doctrine of Trinity. Although they were relatively small in number and formed larger communities only in Poland and Transylvania, the Antitrinitarians, stigmatized and persecuted by the Protestants as much as by the Roman Catholics, anticipated key concepts of the Enlightenment and of modern political thought. The seminal implications of 16-17th century Antitrinitarian thought may explain the somehow disproportional attention that Antitrinitarianism, and especially its Socinian variety, has received from historians.¹

While the celebrated Italian Fausto Sozzini (1539-1604) and his disciples often have been claimed as direct ancestors of modernity, this obviously is not the case with Jacobus Palaeologus. Born in the 1520s on the island of Chios (Sakız), then under Genovese

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1 For an introduction to 16th century Antitrinitarianism, see Mihály Balázs, "Antitrinitarianism," in Howard Louthan / Graeme Murdock (ed.), *A Companion to the Reformation in Central Europe*, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2015 (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 61), 171-194. – Other recent contributions include: Mihály Balázs / Gizella Keserű (ed.), *György Enyedi and Central European Unitarianism in the 16-17th Centuries*, Budapest: Balassi, 2000 (Studia Humanitatis, 11); Piet Visser (ed.), *Bibliographia Sociniana: A bibliographical reference tool for the study of Dutch Socinianism and Antitrinitarianism*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2004; Martin Mulsow / Jan Rohls (ed.), *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Leiden: Brill, 2005 (Brill's Studies In Intellectual History, 134); Lech Szczucki (ed.), *Faustus Socinus and his Heritage*, Kraków: PAN, 2005; Mariangela Priarolo (ed.), *Fausto Sozzini e la filosofia in Europa*, Siena: Fondazione Monte dei Paschi, 2006; Luca Addante, *Eretici e libertini nel Cinquecento italiano*, Roma / Bari: Laterza, 2010; Ulrich A. Wien / Juliane Brandt / András F. Balogh (ed.), *Radikale Reformation. Die Unitarier in Siebenbürgen*, Köln: Böhlau, 2013 (Studia Transylvanica, 44); Sascha Salatowsky, *Die Philosophie der Sozinianer: Transformationen zwischen Renaissance-Aristotelismus und Frühaufklärung*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2015 (Quaestiones, 18); Kęstutis Daugirdas, *Die Anfänge des Sozinianismus. Genese und Eindringen des historisch-ethischen Religionsmodells in den universitären Diskurs der Evangelischen in Europa*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2016 (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, Abt. für Abendländische Religionsgeschichte, 240).

administration, and executed as a heretic in Rome in 1585, Palaeologus was a radical even within the Antitrinitarian camp. His idea of a consistently monotheistic reduction of Christian doctrine amounted to the vision of a new, universal religion that, in his imagination, would be acceptable to Christians, Jews and Muslims. Most of his vast oeuvre remained in manuscript. In the 1570s he exercised significant influence on the Transylvanian wing of Antitrinitarianism (or Unitarianism), and until the first decades of the 17th century there was a radical faction among the Transylvanian Unitarians whose doctrine was closer to Palaeologus's position than to the more moderate positions of the Socinians.² In any case, Palaeologus's writings fell into oblivion by mid-seventeenth century until they were unearthed by twentieth-century historians.³

According to Palaeologus, the entire doctrine necessary for salvation consists in the concise formula "God is one and Jesus is the Anointed," with the explanation that Jesus is not the incarnation of the Deity, but an elect human being. According to Palaeologus, the word Messiah or Christ, i.e. "Anointed," is an honorary title that was given to various figures in the Old Testament including kings, priests and prophets, and which is applied to Jesus in a special way because he was sent by God as an authorized messenger and after his death was taken up to heaven from where he acts as a spiritual ruler over the believers.⁴ The minimalistic creed proposed by Palaeologus, *Deum unum esse et Iesum esse Christum*,⁵ obviously imitates the Islamic *shahāda* which was familiar to contemporary

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- 2 Cf. Mihály Balázs, *Early Transylvanian Antitrinitarianism (1566-1571): From Servet to Palaeologus*, Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1996 (Bibliotheca Dissidentium, Scripta et studia, 7).
- 3 Cf. the seminal work by Antal Pirnát, *Die Ideologie der Siebenbürger Antitrinitarier in den 1570er Jahren*, Budapest: Akadémia, 1961.
- 4 Juliusz Domański / Lech Szczucki, "Jakuba Paleologa traktat «De christi cognomine»,” *Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej* 19 (1973), 265-288; for a comprehensive account of Palaeologus's doctrine see Lech Szczucki, "Le dottrine ereticali di Giacomo da Chio Paleologo. Saggio di analisi critica,” *Rinascimento* 22 (1971), 27-75.
- 5 Růžena Dostálová (ed.), *Iacobi Chii Palaeologi Catechesis christiana dierum duodecim*, Warszawa: PAN, 1971 (Biblioteka pisarzy reformacyjnych, 8), 103.

Christian reader in its Latin form, *Non est deus nisi Deus, Machumet nuncius Dei*.⁶

In fact, in his seminal treatise *De tribus gentibus*, “On the three nations,” composed in exile in Cracow, Poland, in 1572, Palaeologus declared that Christianity and Islam are but one religion.⁷ *De tribus gentibus* states that the Muslims of present time are, for the most part, physical descendants of the early Christians, and they have preserved everything that is substantial for Christianity. Hence they must truly be considered Christians. They profess Jesus as God’s messenger and explicitly call him the Anointed (*Mesih*). Indeed, the substance of Christianity has been preserved more purely by the “Turkish Christians” (*Turci Christiani*), as Palaeologus calls the Muslims, than by the Catholic Church whose religion had long been distorted by the tyranny of the popes: “Examining their [the Muslims’] writings, visiting their temples, I assert nothing less than that this [...] nation has preserved Christian doctrine and divine worship in a very pure condition, and that this nation has always been anxious to preserve their worship and piety unspoiled and their liberty uncurtailed.”

Employing motifs of Protestant rhetoric against the “idolatry” of the Catholics, Palaeologus praises the religion of the Turks as a form of Christianity uncorrupted by popish observances:

“This nation has preserved the original Christian liberty more than all other Christian nations that were subject to the tyranny of the popes. Evidence for this is their purer doctrine of the oneness of God, and that they do not consider Jesus Christ to be of divine nature. [...] Their temples, public places, and private homes are free from pictures and statues of saints or other images. [...] They pray in public and private only to the One God, not to saints, prophets, or others. [...] As I said before, they are Christians, as their faith shows, for they believe that Jesus is the Christ.”

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6 Cf. Theodor Bibliander (ed.), *Machumetis Saracenorum principis eiusque successorum vita ac doctrina ipseque Alcoran*, vol. 2, Basel: Oporinus [1543], 12.

7 Printed in Lech Szczucki, *W kręgu myślicieli heretyckich*, Wrocław: PAN, 1972, 229-241, the following quotations on pp. 238f.

What Palaeologus proposed was a revision of the relation between Christianity and Islam by deemphasizing everything that divided the two religions. The minimalistically redefined substance of Christianity, Palaeologus asserted, is fully acceptable not only for Muslims, but also for Jews providing that they are prepared to concede to Jesus the honorary title “Anointed”. Expanding the scope of the principle *una religio in varietate rituum* (“one religion in a plurality of rites”) that had been defined in the fifteenth-century merger negotiations between the Roman Catholics and the Byzantine Orthodox Church, Palaeologus described Christianity as one universal religion in three legitimate forms of appearance (hence the title, *De tribus gentibus*), i.e. the Jewish Christian, the Gentile Christian, and the Turkish Christian mode.

Palaeologus’s writings, written in an inelegantly bombastic style, propose, explicate and defend over and over again a reductionistic version of the Christian religion under the supremacy of the state (with the state churches of England and Byzantium, and the state religion of the Ottoman Empire, as models). His universalist monotheism may sound like an anticipation of Enlightenment Deism, but actually it was not, because for Palaeologus, in contrast to the rationalist Deists of later centuries, the source of religious knowledge was not reason, but revelation as witnessed in the Bible (except for some verses that were corrupted by the copyists, as Palaeologus claimed⁸). Palaeologus’s theological reasoning, although amounting to a coherent system, altogether lacks the rationalist approach, the exegetical thoroughness and philosophical consistency we find in the works of his Antitrinitarian contemporary Fausto Sozzini and the later Socinians.⁹

One cannot escape the impression that the original impetus behind Palaeologus’s radical reform project was neither theological nor philosophical in the proper sense, but rather political; and that it must have something to do with Palaeologus’s biographical

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8 Cf. Lech Szczucki, “Jakuba Paleologa traktat «De veritate narrationis novae S. Scripturae»,” *Odrodzenie i reformacja w Polsce* 15 (1970), 189-201.

9 On the Socinians cf. Salatowsky, *Philosophie der Sozinianer* (see fn. 1); Daugirdas, *Anfänge des Sozinianismus* (see fn. 1).

background in the Latin Christian community of the Levant that was so precariously threatened by the antagonism between Charles V and Süleyman the Magnificent. Seen in this context, it seems probable that Palaeologus's religious reform project was intended to serve as a base for an enduring peaceful coexistence of two empires under two Emperors, the house of Habsburg in the West and the Ottomans in the East.

Palaeologus¹⁰ was born as Petros Maxilaras in the 1520s on the island of Chios, of a Greek father and an Italian mother. Brought up as a Catholic, he entered the Dominican order as Frate Jacobo da Scio, and studied in Bologna and Ferrara where he started to use the assumed name of Palaeologus, claiming that there was a family tradition that linked his father's ancestors with the last imperial dynasty. After his return to the Levant in 1554, he joined the Dominican Convent of SS. Pietro e Paolo in Galata. In the Ottoman capital he built up a circle of friends and patrons including the Habsburg diplomat Antonio Veranzio (Verancsics). In 1555 he moved to his home island of Chios and served there as lecturer of theology in the Dominican Convent.

In Chios, Palaeologus soon became a popular preacher. He built up a group of personal friends and supporters among the local aristocrats, members of the families that formed the so-called *Mahona* of Chios, all of which bore the surname Giustiniani.¹¹ In

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10 For Palaeologus's biography see Gerhard Rill, "Jacobus Palaeologus (ca. 1520–1585). Ein Antitrinitarier als Schützling der Habsburger," *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 16 (1963), 28–86; Lech Szczucki, "Jakub z Chios-Paleolog. Zarys biografii (Jacob de Chios-Paléologue. Esquisse biographique)," *Odrodzenie i reformacja w Polsce* 11 (1966), 69–91, 13 (1968), 5–50; id., Art. "Paleologo, Giacomo", in Adriano Prosperi (ed.), *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, vol. 3, Pisa: Normale, 2010, 1159–1161; Martin Rothkegel, "Paleologo, Giacomo", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 80, Roma: Treccani, 2014 (online).

11 On Chios before the occupation by the Turks (1566), cf. Philip Pantelis Argenti, *Chios Vincita, or The Occupation of Chios by the Turks (1566) & their Administration of the Island (1566–1912)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941; Kenneth M. Stetton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, vol. 4, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984, 893–899; Geo Pistarino,

1557, a series of conflicts started between the secular authorities on the island and the ecclesiastical institutions. Palaeologus, his aristocratic patrons, and some of his fellow Dominicans sided with the secular power against the bishop, while the latter was supported by the inquisitor and by the Franciscans. Based on his opposition to the ecclesiastical authorities, the Roman Inquisition accused Palaeologus of heresy.¹² After a series of highly dramatic arrests and escapes in Genoa, Rome and Chios, he was sentenced to death in absentia in Rome in 1561.¹³

Meanwhile Palaeologus had made his way through the Mediterranean to Marseille where he arrived in late 1561. After an unsuccessful attempt to achieve reconciliation with the Roman Church at the Council of Trent, the hunted heretic found refuge in Prague in 1562, then the second capital of the Habsburg commonwealth, next to Vienna. In Prague he tried to win the Emperor's support for his rehabilitation into the Church and continuously pursued his return to Chios, at least until news about the Turkish occupation of the island reached Bohemia in 1566.

In exile, Palaeologus acquired the reputation of being an expert in the Greek Orthodox and the Islamic traditions (neither of which he actually was) and married the daughter of a wealthy Czech humanist. It was rumoured that he was not only a descendant of the Byzantine imperial dynasty (as his assumed name would suggest),

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Chio dei Genovesi nel tempo di Cristoforo Colombo, Roma: Istituto poligrafico, 1995; Enrico Basso, "Lochio drito de la città nostra de Zenoa: il problema della difesa di Chio negli ultimi anni del dominio genovese," *Ligures* 8 (2010), 67-76; Carlo Bitossi, "Genova e I turchi. Note sui rapporti tra genovesi e ottomani fra medioevo ed età moderna," in Franziska Meier (ed.), *Italien und das Osmanische Reich*, Herne: Schäfer, 2010, 87-117.

¹² See Simona Feci, "Su le estreme sponde del christianesimo. L'isola di Chio, la Repubblica di Genova e l'inquisizione romana alla metà del Cinquecento," in Carlo Longo (ed.), *Praedicatores, inquisitores III: I domenicani e l'inquisizione romana*, Roma: IHFP, 2008, 131-204.

¹³ The death sentence was printed in Rome as a placard, a copy is preserved in Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesarchiv, Urkunden I 3495 (1561 III 5: Sententia lata contra quendam Jacobum de Chio Apostatam).

but also a bishop exiled for his religious convictions. Obviously imitating the model of the famous humanist and diplomat Andreas Dudith, who in fact was a noble and an exiled bishop, Palaeologus made repeated attempts to be accepted into the Habsburg diplomatic service as an expert on Turkish affairs. However, the court remained reluctant and honoured Palaeologus's unrequested offers only with a modest stipend.

In 1571, Palaeologus, who secretly cherished Antitrinitarian views but outwardly still pretended to be a Catholic, was forced to leave Prague as a result of the permanent attacks launched by the Jesuits and Papal diplomats. He then destroyed all the manuscript works which he had composed in Prague. His first place of refuge after leaving Bohemia was with Andreas Dudith, the Habsburg representative at the Polish court in Cracow. From Cracow, Palaeologus and his family moved further to the semi-independent principality of Transylvania in 1572. There he entered into the theological debates of the nascent Unitarian Church whose chief theologian, Ferenc Dávid, was soon won over to Palaeologus's radical Unitarianism.¹⁴ By 1575, however, the political situation under the Transylvanian prince Stephen Báthory became intolerable for Palaeologus, an ardent partisan of the Austrian Habsburgs. Palaeologus left Transylvania and resettled with his family in Moravia where a tolerant noble gave him shelter.¹⁵

From 1571 on, Palaeologus had literally been obsessed with writing. Although many of his works are lost, the copies of his preserved writings fill thousands of large folio manuscript pages. In 1576, the new Emperor Rudolf II deleted Palaeologus from the

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¹⁴ Cf. Mihály Balázs, *Ferenc Dávid (Ungarländische Antitrinitarier IV)*, Baden-Baden: Koerner, 2008 (Bibliotheca Dissidentium, 26).

¹⁵ For Palaeologus's exile in Bohemia, Poland, Transylvania and Moravia, cf. Domenico Caccamo, *Eretici italiani in Moravia, Polonia, Transilvania (1558-1611)*. *Studi e documenti*, Firenze: Lettere, 1970 (Storiografia e storia, 2), 153-167; Massimo Firpo, *Antitrinitari nell'Europa orientale del '500. Nuovi testi di Szymon Budny, Niccolò Paruta e Iacopo Paleologo*, Firenze: Nuova Italia, 1977; Růžena Dostálová, "Jacques Paléologue et la Bohême," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 17 (1991), 105-116.

payroll of the court and eventually complied with the requests for extradition which had constantly been repeated by the Papal diplomats. Following investigations triggered by the imprudent printing of one of his books, Palaeologus was arrested in his Moravian refuge in December 1581 and transferred to Rome, where he was executed on March 23, 1585.

While a comprehensive study of Palaeologus's views on the situation in the Levant, on Islam, and on the Ottoman Empire would go far beyond the scope of this paper, the following two sections will deal with the two short periods of time which Palaeologus actually spent in the Ottoman capital, first in 1554-5 as a monk in Galata, and then in 1573 as a temporary visitor.

2. Palaeologus in Constantinople, 1554-5: Heretical Networker and Local Partisan of the Habsburg Embassy

While no direct documentation on Palaeologus's sojourn in Constantinople has survived in the archives of the Dominican Convent of SS. Pietro e Paolo in Galata,¹⁶ a file of letters written between 1557 and 1561 by the inquisitors of the Levant to the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Rome¹⁷ contains about thirty letters reporting on Palaeologus and his adherents on the island of Chios and another dozen documents on Palaeologus's followers in Galata (or Pera, the name regularly used in these letters for the traditional neighbourhood of the Latin Christians).¹⁸

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16 On the history of the convent, cf. François Alphonse Belin / Arsène de Chatel, *Histoire de la Latinité de Constantinople*, Paris: Picard, 1894, 213-231; Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, "Les établissements dominicains de Péra-Constantinople," *Echos d'Orient* 34 (1935), 332-349; Claudine Delacroix-Besnier, *Les Dominicains et la chrétienté grecque aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles*, Rome: École française, 1997 (Collection de l'École française de Rome, 237), 9-11.

17 Città del Vaticano, Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Fondo Santo Ufficio, Stanza storica, b. Q3b, Lettere di vescovi della Dalmazia e del Medio Oriente, 1557-1629.

18 The documents were first studied by Elena Bonora, *Giudicare i vescovi. La*

The Dominican Antonio da Venezia, who had been appointed to the invidious office of the Inquisitor of Constantinople, and another friar of the same order, Cosmo da Tirano, reported about their struggle against a group of “Lutherans” (a term which sixteenth-century inquisitors used in a very broad sense) in Pera which originally had been gathered together by Palaeologus in 1554-5. After Palaeologus’s move to Chios in 1555, the group continued to meet and kept in contact with Palaeologus by correspondence. The local leaders in Pera were a Franciscan named Giovanni Battista Zeffo and a wealthy lay person called Giacomino Draperio. Fra Antonio reported that these two men and four or five other persons were actively disseminating their heretical doctrines among the locals. How many persons altogether were involved in the group remains unclear. Anyway, the inquisitor had the impression that the Latin Christian community of Pera (which at this time counted less than three thousand souls¹⁹) was quite “infected by Lutheran heresy.”

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definizione dei poteri nella Chiesa posttridentina, Roma / Bari: Laterza, 2007, 13-26; Feci, “Su le estreme sponde” (see fn. 12). – Precise source references for all details mentioned in the following paragraphs can be found in Martin Rothkegel, “Zum Werdegang des Antitrinitariers Jacobus Palaeologus bis 1561, I. Teil: Frate Jacobo da Scio und seine Anhänger in der Levante,” *Acta Comeniana* 26 (2012), 7-68.

- 19 On the Latin Community in Pera/Galata, cf. Luigi Tommaso Belgrano, *Documenti riguardanti la colonia genovese di Pera*, Genova: Sordo-Muti, 1888; Belin / Chatel, *Histoire de la Latinité* (see fn. 16); Georg Hofmann, *Il vicariato apostolico di Costantinopoli, 1453-1830*, Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1935 (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 103); Louis Mitler, “The Genoese in Galata, 1453-1682,” *Journal of Middle East Studies* 10 (1979), 71-91; Charles H. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453-1923*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 5-7, 28-30; Geo Pistarino, “The Genoese in Pera – Turkish Galata,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 1 (1986), 63-85; Halil İnalçık, “Ottoman Galata, 1453-1553,” in Edhem Eldem (ed.), *Première Rencontre Internationale sur l’Empire Ottoman et la Turquie Moderne (18-22 janvier 1985)*, Istanbul / Paris: Isis, 1991 (*Varia Turcica*, 13), 17-116; Eric Dursteler, “Latin-Rite Christians in Early Modern Istanbul,” in Feridun M. Emecen / Emrah Safa Gürkan (eds.), *Osmanlı İstanbulu I*, İstanbul 2014, 137-146.

As the Turkish authorities did not care much about doctrinal disputes among the local Catholics (as long as public order was not affected), the inquisitor found it difficult to proceed against the suspects according to the code of procedure prescribed by the Roman Inquisition. In Italy, an inquisitor would have the suspect arrested by the secular authorities, interrogate him, deliver a judgement, and in case the culprit was found guilty, the secular authority would execute the punishment. In Pera, in contrast, Fra Antonio was in the strange position that he could proceed against persons suspect of heresy only as long as they were on the loose and appeared to interrogations voluntarily. Once a troublemaker was arrested by the Turkish bailiffs the case was brought before the *kadı* with the inquisitor having no more say in the matter. When Zeffo was arrested by the Turks in March 1559 for causing commotion among the Latin Christians, the inquisitor had to bail him out in order to interrogate him. When in 1560 it was rumoured that Palaeologus, who had escaped from prison in Chios, was on the way to Constantinople, Fra Antonio even considered hiring a professional killer in order to have the heretic eliminated. No wonder then, that we do not hear of any inquisitorial trial that was regularly concluded nor of any physical punishments that were actually executed. In any case, by 1561 the relentless inquisitor eventually succeeded in suppressing the heretical activities by fuelling social pressure against the heretics in the tiny Latin community of Pera.

According to the inquisitor's reports, Palaeologus' adherents in Pera were in regular correspondence not only with Palaeologus and his patrons on Chios, but also with a like-minded circle in Salonica (Thessaloniki). The Salonica circle consisted of Marranos of Portuguese Jewish descent who recently arrived in the Levant after having been driven out of Portugal and Italy.²⁰ When Palaeologus

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²⁰ On the Marrano immigration of the 1550s to Salonica and Constantinople, cf. Joseph Nehama, *Histoire des Israelites de Salonique, t. 3/1: L'Age d'Or du Sefaradisme Salonicien (1536-1593)*, Paris / Salonique: Molho, 1936, 8-49, 57-64; Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora. Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540-1740)*, Leiden: Brill, 2002 (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies), 41-65; Minna Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in*

was imprisoned by the Inquisition on the island of Chios in 1560, his Marrano patrons in Salonica and Constantinople tried to obtain an order from the Sultan that would force the local authorities in Chios to release the prisoner. As Fra Antonio alerted the Holy Office in Rome, a certain Marrano lady was prepared to intervene on behalf of Palaeologus at the Sublime Porte. There can be little doubt that this woman was Dona Gracia Mendes-Nasi, the wealthy and influential merchant lady who had taken residence in Pera after her conversion to Judaism.²¹

As we know from additional sources, Palaeologus's contact persons Fra Giovanni Battista Zeffo and Giacomino Draperio were local collaborators of the Habsburg embassy. Latin Christian subjects of the Sultan had a problematic legal status because they did not belong to any of the recognized *millets*. Therefore it was not unusual for local Catholics to seek notarial or judicial assistance, or political patronage, from the French ambassador or the *bailos* of the Italian states or other diplomats. In turn, the diplomats were in a position to build up local clientele networks from which they also recruited their translators and informants.²²

The case was a bit different with the Habsburg embassy. Since 1555, Ferdinand I had permanent diplomats in the Ottoman capital. In contrast to most other Western representations, the Habsburg delegates did not take residence in Galata but were more or less confined to a large caravanserai compound near Çemberlitaş called *Elçi hanı* and could not move freely in the city. Precluded from

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Istanbul. The Formative Years, 1453-1566, Leiden: Brill, 2010 (The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage, 26), 95-98, 356f.

21 On her, cf. Marianna D. Birnbaum, *The Long Journey of Gracia Mendes*, Budapest / New York: Central European University Press, 2003.

22 Cf. Tommaso Bertelè, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Costantinopoli e le sue antiche memorie: ricerche storiche con documenti inediti*, Bologna: Apollo, 1932; Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore 2006; Maria Pia Pedani (ed.), *Il Palazzo di Venezia a Istanbul e i suoi antichi abitanti. İstanbul'daki Venedik Sarayı ve Eski Yaşayanları*, Venezia: Cà Foscari, 2013 (Hilâl. Studi turchi e ottomani, 3) [online].

building up everyday contacts with the local Latin community, the Habsburg diplomats were dependent on locals that for whatever reason actively sought contacts with Ferdinand's embassy and made the way from Pera to *Elçi hanı*.²³

Among those who offered their assistance to the Habsburg diplomats were Palaeologus, Zeffo and Draperio. The correspondence of the humanist and Habsburg diplomat Antonio Veranzio (Verancsics), bishop of Fünfkirchen (Pécs) in Hungary, includes several letters written from Constantinople between 1555 and 1557 which mention Jacobus Palaeologus and Giovanni Battista Zeffo among Veranzio's personal friends. When Palaeologus moved from Pera to the Dominican convent of Chios in the summer of 1555, Zeffo accompanied him, and Veranzio asked the two friends to collect ancient coins for him on the island. When Palaeologus got into trouble with the Inquisition in 1557, Veranzio paid the passage from Chios to Italy where Palaeologus hoped to be acquitted of the charges.²⁴

Like Palaeologus, the Franciscan Giovanni Battista Zeffo was born on the island of Chios.²⁵ Zeffo was the *commissario*, or chief representative, of his order in Constantinople, and served as a preacher in the church of Saint Francis in Pera, no longer in existence, but at the time the largest Latin church of the city.²⁶ At the same time

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23 Cf. Karl Teply (ed.), *Kaiserliche Gesandtschaften ans Goldene Horn*, Stuttgart: Steingrüben, 1968, 208-245; Semavi Eyice, "Elçi Hanı," *Tarih Dergisi* 24 (1970), 93-138.

24 Cf. László Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal összes munkái, IV: Első portai követség, 1555-1557*, Pest 1859 (Monumenta Hungariae Historica), 69-71, 93-96, 168f.

25 On him, cf. Rothkegel, "Werdegang" (see fn. 18), 50-57.

26 On the convent of S. Francesco (OFM Conv.) cf. Belin / Chatel, *Histoire de la Latinité* (see fn. 16), 187-212; Gualberto Matteucci, *Un glorioso convento francescano sulle rive del Bosforo. Il San Francesco di Galata di Costantinopoli, c. 1230-1697*, Firenze 1967 (Biblioteca di Studi Francescani, 7); id., *La missione francescana di Costantinopoli, I: La sua antica origine e primi secoli di storia (1217-1585)*, Firenze 1971 (Biblioteca di studi francescani 9); Alfonso M. Sammut, "I francescani nel cuore dell'Impero Ottomano," in Viviana Nosilia / Marco Scarpa (ed.), *I francescani nella storia dei popoli balcanici nell'VIII centenario della fondazione dell'Ordine*, Bologna 2011, 1-14.

Zeffo cherished Protestant doctrines and was married *alla turca* (a so-called *kepinion* marriage). In spite of Fra Antonio's efforts to convict him of heresy, Zeffo served as chaplain of the Habsburg embassy and received a regular salary between 1557 and 1570. Additionally he was the administrator of the abandoned monastery Saint Benoit in Galata which, due to its beautiful vista, was a popular location for the garden parties of rich Turks.²⁷ In 1570, Zeffo was kidnapped on the street and assassinated by the Janissaries. He probably became a target because his brother Domenico Zeffo, chief *dragoman* of the Habsburg embassy in the years 1560 to 1567, was involved in the conspiracy plans of the Habsburg secret agent Mihail Černović.²⁸

The other leader of the "Lutheran" circle of Pera was the wealthy merchant Giacomino Draperio, a member of the rich family of Genovese origin whose name is connected with the church of Santa Maria Draperis in Galata, founded in the 1580s by a lady from that family. Like Zeffo, he was in frequent contact with the Habsburg embassy and gave several large loans to ambassadors Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq and Albert de Wijs.²⁹ Draperio had business contacts in Ragusa and Venice. In 1557 he travelled to Italy where he looked after some legal and financial affairs on behalf of Zeffo and Palaeologus.

Draperio had a relative called Domenico Gayano (Gagliano) da Pera who owned a house in Venice. During an interrogation by

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27 Cf. Belgrano, *Documenti* (see fn. 19), 405, 408f.

28 On Domenico Zeffo, cf. Ralf C. Müller, *Prosopographie der Reisenden und Migranten ins Osmanische Reich (1396–1611). Berichterstatter aus dem Heiligen Römischen Reich, außer burgundische Gebiete und Reichsromania*, Leipzig: Eudora, 2006, vol. 10, 310–314; Josip Žontar, *Obveščevalna služba in diplomacija avstrijskih Habsburžanov v boju proti Turkom v 16. stoletju*, Ljubljana 1973, 156; Michele Lesure, "Michel Černović « explorator secretus » à Constantinople (1556–1563)," *Turcica* 15 (1983), 127–154; *Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch der von zween glorwürdigsten Römischen Kaysern, Maximiliano und Rudolpho, beyderseits den Andern dieses Nahmens [...] an die Ottomanische Pforte zu Constantinopel abgefertigten [...] Gesandtschaftt*, Frankfurt am Main: Zunner, 1674, 32–33, 131, 154, 159, 255, 283, 331, 375, 426, 506.

29 Cf. Müller, *Prosopographie der Reisenden* (see fn. 28), vol. 2, 174–183, 256f.

the Venetian Inquisition, Gayano admitted that in 1554-5 Palaeologus had been his private tutor in Pera, that in 1557 Palaeologus had had a secret meeting with Giacomino Draperio in Gayano's house in Venice, and that in November 1558 Palaeologus had visited Gayano in Venice.³⁰ (A decade later, both Draperio and Gayano were among the confidants of Michail Černović. Draperio was even considered as a possible Habsburg envoy to the Persian *Shah* in 1566, a mission that never took place because Černović's plot was discovered in 1567).³¹

Palaeologus's stay in Pera in 1554-5 and the continuing "heretical" activities of his confidants Zeffo and Draperio provide clues to some specifically Levantine backgrounds of Palaeologus's radical Unitarianism. While it is extremely unlikely that the heretical doctrines which Palaeologus disseminated in Pera already included any explicit criticism of the doctrine of Trinity,³² Palaeologus's later minimalistic redefinition of Christianity, as displayed in his *De tribus gentibus* of 1572, can be read as a response to practical concerns confronting him in the Levant.

De tribus gentibus asserts that the dogmatic minimum required for salvation is available in Islam as well as in Christianity; hence conversion to Islam does not necessarily preclude salvation. Given the numerous conversions from Christianity to Islam in

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³⁰ Cf. Venezia, Archivio di Stato, Sant'Uffizio, busta 14, fascicolo processuale 14 (Fra Giacomo da Scio), deposition of Domenico de Gayano da Pera (1558 XII 2).

³¹ Cf. Josip Žontar, "Michael Černović, Geheimagent Ferdinand I. und Maximilians I., und seine Berichterstattung," *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 24 (1971), 169-222, esp. 219; id., *Obveščevalna služba* (see fn. 28), 152, 159; Lesure, Michel Černović (see fn. 28), 135.

³² The list of Palaeologus's heretical opinions included in the death sentence of March 5, 1561 (Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesarchiv, Urkunden I 3495; see fn. 13) does not mention deviations from the Trinitarian dogma, nor does the enumeration of Zeffo's heretical opinions in a letter sent by Antonio da Venezia to Michele Ghislieri in Rome (Pera, 1559 IV 4), ACDF, St. st., Q3b (see fn. 17), fol. 29r-v, 69r-v.

the Ottoman realm,³³ and seeing that Chios (until 1566) was the chief place of refuge for persons willing to reconvert from Islam to Christianity,³⁴ Palaeologus must have been concerned about the situation of persons hovering between Christianity and Islam. In *De tribus gentibus*, Palaeologus underlined that he did not intend to encourage conversions to Islam, but rather hoped that his interpretation of Christian doctrine would make it easier for Muslims to consider themselves Christians. Mission to the Muslims being one of the traditional objectives of the Dominicans in the Levant, Palaeologus introduced an innovative concept of mission that made the borderlines separating Muslim and Christian religious identities permeable in both directions without necessarily requiring formal rituals of conversion.

In Central Europe, where Palaeologus wrote *De tribus gentibus*, such ideas had little to do with everyday experience. From a Levantine Christian perspective, in contrast, such reasoning had highly relevant implications. As Palaeologus stated: to make his doctrine public

“would be a great comfort especially for those who fall, by a blow of fate, into slavery and, in order to regain liberty, are compelled to undergo, though with inner reluctance, the conversion rituals of a strange religion. They commit a sin in view of the fact that they let themselves be seduced to undergo this act against their conscience. Our intention, however, is not to justify conversion from us [Christianity] to them [Islam] but rather to demonstrate that they [the Muslims] can join as and be united with us without committing a sacrilege against their own religion.”³⁵

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33 Cf. Bartolomé Bennassar / Lucile Bennassar, *Les chrétiens d'Allah. L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, Paris: Perrin, 1991.

34 Cf. Argenti, *Chius Vincita* (see fn. 11), cxvii-cxviii (on the *Ufficio de' schiavi*, a clearing house for runaway slaves from the Ottoman Empire that wished to return to the West); Emile Pommier, “L'itinéraire religieux d'un moine vagabond italien au XVI^e siècle,” *Melanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome* 66 (1954), 293-322 (on Chios as a place to go for reconversion before returning to the West).

35 *De tribus gentibus* (1572), in Szczucki, *W kręgu myślicieli heretyckich* (see fn. 7),

De tribus gentibus further declares that Christians, without endangering their eternal salvation, can be circumcised and observe Jewish ritual Law, as long as they profess Jesus as the Messiah.³⁶ This sounds odd in the contexts of Bohemia, Poland and Transylvania where conversions of Christians to Judaism were extremely unusual. While in Central Europe the idea of practicing the Jewish Law and professing Jesus at the same time was no practical issue at the time when Palaeologus wrote *De tribus gentibus*,³⁷ it was of high relevance to many persons among the Marranos arriving in Salonica and Constantinople.

Brought up as Christians in families of Jewish origin that had been Christian for one or more generations, the Marranos found themselves collectively suspected, excluded and persecuted by the Roman Church. Driven out of Portugal, many of the “New Christians” resettled in Italy in the 1530s, just to face new persecutions in the 1550s that forced them to seek refuge in the Ottoman realm. The Portuguese “New Christian” community of Ferrara, the city where Palaeologus had studied prior to 1554, became the starting point of a Marrano reconversion movement to Judaism under the patronage of the afore-mentioned Dona Gracia Mendes-Nasi.³⁸ Ot-

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36 Ibid., 232-237.

37 This would change, however, a couple of years later when, not without the influence of Palaeologus’s argument, a Judaizing wing of the Transylvanian Unitarian movement emerged, cf. Robert Dán, *Matthias Vehe-Glirius. Life and Work of a Radical Antitrinitarian. With his Collected Works*, Budapest: Akadémia / Leiden: Brill, 1982 (Studia Humanitatis, 4); Réka Újlaki-Nagy, *Korai szombatos írások (Early Sabbatarian Writings)*, Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem, 2010 (Fiatal Filológusok Füzetei, 7); ead., “Sabbath-Keeping in Transylvania from the End of the 16th Century to the Early 17th Century,” in Anselm Schubert (ed.), *Sabbat und Sabbatobservanz in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2016 (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, 217), 167-200.

38 Cf. Renata Segre, “La Controriforma: espulsioni, conversioni, isolamento,” in Corrado Vivanti (ed.): *Gli ebrei in Italia, vol. I: Dall’alto Medioevo all’età dei ghetti*, Torino: Einaudi, 1996 (Storia d’Italia, Annali, 11), 709-778 (esp. 714-733) and 781-841; Maria Teresa Guerrini, “New documents on Samuel

her Marranos adopted semi-Jewish Unitarian-Christian views quite similar to Palaeologus's Unitarian theology, including one group that left Italy for Salonica in 1553.³⁹

Often hovering between Christian and Jewish identities, part of the Marrano refugees arriving in the Levant kept elements of Christian doctrine or practice even after their formal conversion to Rabbinical Judaism which was the obligatory prerequisite for obtaining a legal status in the Ottoman *millet* system.⁴⁰ It is evident that Palaeologus's argument in *De tribus gentibus* exactly addresses the dilemma that the Portuguese newcomers to Salonica and Constantinople were facing.

Another conclusion suggested by Palaeologus's activities in Constantinople in the mid-1550s is that his lifelong partisanship for the Austrian Habsburg cause goes back to this period of his life and hence should probably be explained with his experience in the Levant. One factor that contributed to Palaeologus's political orientation may have been the precarious situation of the island of Chios, the home of himself and his confidant Giovanni Battista Zeffo. Chios had been a colony of the Republic of Genoa since 1346. Since 1409 the *Mahona*, the corporation of Genovese merchant nobles that exploited and administered the island, paid a yearly

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Usque, the author of the *Consolaçam as tribulações de Israel*," *Sefarad* 61 (2001), 83-90; Gabriella Zavan, *Gli ebrei, i marrani e la figura di Salomon Usque*, Treviso: Santi Quaranta, 2004; Claude B. Stuczynski, Art. "Marranesimo", in *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione* (see fn. 10), vol. 2, 989-997.

39 Cf. Addante, *Eretici e libertini* (see fn. 1); Aldo Stella, *Dall'anabattismo al socinianesimo nel Cinquecento veneto. Ricerche storiche*, Padova: Liviana, 1967, 96, 100, 134; id., *Anabattismo e antitrinitarismo in Italia nel XVI secolo. Nuove ricerche storiche*, Padova: Liviana, 1969, 90, 94, 167.

40 Cf. Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini (ed.), *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti, vol. 1 (1548-1560)*, Firenze: Olschki, 1980, 228 (on crypto-Christians among the Portuguese Jewish immigrant communities of Salonica and Constantinople, 1555); Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora* (see fn. 20), 41-65; Pantaleão de Aveiro, *Itinerario da Terra Sancta, e suas particularidades*, Lissabon: Lopez, 1593, fol. 234r, 235v, 240r, 251r-252v (a Franciscan friar reports on his encounters with secret Christians among the reconverted Portuguese Jews in the Levant, 1563-6).

tribute to the Ottoman Sultans. In 1528 the Republic of Genoa with her glorious navy had become the ally of Emperor Charles V and the Spanish armada. Just a few years later, France entered into an alliance with the Sultan. Since then, Chios with its double allegiance to Genoa (that was neither able nor willing to defend the island) and the Porte (that had no reason to tolerate an enemy outpost in sighting distance of the shore) had been caught in the middle of the Spanish-Ottoman antagonism.

In a situation when neither Genoa nor other Christian sea powers were in a position to guarantee for the status quo of Chios, a stable peace between Ferdinand I and the Sultan may have appeared to Palaeologus as the most promising option. In case he had such hopes, they obviously failed. In 1566, the Turks occupied the island and deported the Latin Christian elite. In 1572 Palaeologus received the news that none of his former patrons remained on the island and that those who were still alive were in great poverty in exile and did not support his cause any more.⁴¹

3. Palaeologus in Constantinople, 1573: Wannabe Diplomat and Unitarian Missionary

Palaeologus escaped from Chios on July 10, 1561. His only temporary return to the Levant was a journey that started in the Transylvanian capital Klausenburg (Kolozsvár, Cluj-Napoca) in the early spring of 1573 and ended with his return on August 12, 1573. Four months later, on 10 December 1573, he wrote a travel report that was printed by an unknown publisher in 1591, six years after Palaeologus had been executed. Due to its curious content, the small booklet of 16 pages was reprinted several times.⁴²

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41 Vincenzo N. to Palaeologus “al molto mio carissimo et singolare patrono Jacobo Paleologho Siotto, alias Pater Patriae [!]” (Pera, 1572 V 12), printed in Karl Landsteiner, “Jacobus Palaeologus, eine Studie. Mit noch nicht gedruckten Urkunden und Briefen aus dem Archive des k. k. Ministeriums des Innern,” in *XXIII. Jahresbericht über das k. k. Josefstädter Ober-Gymnasium für das Schuljahr 1873*, Wien: Gerold, 1873, 1-54, 36f.

42 *EPISTOLA | IACOBI PALAEOLOGI, DE REBUS CONSTAN- | TINOPOLI*

On March 20 Palaeologus and his servant Nicolaus reached Törzburg (Bran) and crossed the Carpathians on March 23,⁴³ taking the way to Bucharest and further overland to Constantinople. In the city Palaeologus paid a visit to the Orthodox Patriarchate at the Pammakaristos Church (which a couple of years later became Fethiye Camii) where he was commissioned by Miloş Vodă (a Wallachian prince who lived in Constantinople as a clergyman of the Patriarchate) to carry a donation of 100 fl. to the Orthodox monastery Nea Mone on Chios. With the assistance of Dona Gracia's nephew Joseph Nasi, the famous Jewish banker known as the Duke of Naxos,⁴⁴ Palaeologus obtained a *ferman* and embarked for Chios. He arrived in the port of the island on 22 May 1573.

He found the town that he had left twelve years ago in a desolate state. Seven years after the Ottoman troops occupied the island and deported the Genovese oligarchy, none of Palaeologus' old friends and supporters remained. He did find, however, his bedridden elderly mother still alive; he paid a short visit and secured financial support for her. Living mostly on loans granted by wealthy friends in Poland and Transylvania, Palaeologus had promised his creditors that he would liquidate his inherited possessions on Chios in order to honor his debts and indeed his *ferman* mentioned that he was entitled to take care of his property on the island. If in fact such possessions had ever existed – it seems that in reality his parents were poor – these plans failed.⁴⁵

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ET CHII CVM EO | *actis, lectu digna.* | *Anno 1573.* | *M. D. XCI.* | s. 1., 4°, only known copy of this earliest known print: Praha, Strahovská knihovna, CU III 28.

43 Cf. extracts from the cash journal of Törzburg, printed in Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki / Neculaï Iorga (ed.), *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor, vol. XI: 1517-1612*, Bucuresci: s.n., 1900, 800.

44 On him, cf. Paul Frédéric Jean Grunbaum-Ballin, *Joseph Nasi duc de Naxos*, Paris / La Haye: Mouton, 1968 (Études juives, 13).

45 See the very angry comment by Andreas Dudith, in Lech Szczucki / Tibor Szepessy (Hgg.), *Andreas Dudithius, Epistolae, Pars II: 1568-1573*, Budapest: Akadémia, 1995 (Bibliotheca scriptorum medii recentisque aevorum, S. N., 13/2), 553 (Dudith to Thaddaeus Hájek, 1573 XI 21).

In his report, Palaeologus emphasizes the riots among the local Christian population caused by his arrival. Once he had been the most famous person on the island, he claims (and the reports sent to the Holy Office in Rome from Chios between 1557 and 1561 fully confirm that⁴⁶), but now his compatriots were so instigated by the Catholic clergy that they threatened to lynch him as a heretic. This was prevented by the protection granted by the Turkish administration, and Palaeologus used the opportunity to hold religious discussions with the Turkish representatives.

Before leaving the island on June 14, Palaeologus erected a cenotaph for his parents with a Greek inscription, praising the alleged imperial origin of his family and detesting the ungratefulness of his compatriots. Seeing Palaeologus's financial situation, the detailed description of the prestigious monument in the travel report⁴⁷ sounds almost incredible, but in fact two preserved monumental inscriptions erected by Palaeologus exist, one from 1567 in the main college hall of the university in Prague in memory of his friend, the humanist Matthaeus Collinus, and one dating 1575 in Alzen (Alțâna), Transylvania, in memory of his daughter, Despoina Palaeologa, who died immediately after birth.⁴⁸ Obviously Palaeologus took special pleasure in monumentalizing his own name and memory in spite of his permanent financial misery.

On the 21 June 1573, Palaeologus was back in Constantinople. The whole sojourn in the capital is described as a series of encounters and conferences with political and religious representatives and influential persons. On July 8 he joined a Wallachian delegation travelling to Bucharest where he was honorably received by the Wallachian prince Alexander II Mircea, whose wife, Ecaterina Salvaresso,

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46 Cf. Rothkegel, "Werdegang" (see fn. 18), 25, 36-49.

47 *Epistola Iacobi Palaeologi* (see fn. 342), fol. A4r-v.

48 Cf. Bohumil Ryba, "Matouš Collinus a jeho vergiliovská universitní čtení," in Otakar Jiráni / František Novotný / Bohumil Ryba (ed.), *Pio vati. Sborník prací českých filologů k uctění dvoutisícího výročí narození Vergiliova*, Praha: Jednota českých filologů, 1930, 95-III, esp. 110f; Gustav Gündisch, "Zum siebenbürgischen Aufenthalt des Jacobus Palaeologus," in *Révue des études sud-est européennes* 4 (1966), 71-79.

was a Catholic from Pera with family connections to Chios. On 12 August, 1573 Palaeologus and his servant were back to Klausenburg.

Palaeologus mentions at the beginning of the text that he had sent another travel report to Emperor Maximilian II in Vienna,⁴⁹ which sounds credible although this “official” dispatch is not extant anymore. The text preserved in the printed booklet appears to be a more private version, probably written to one of the sponsors of the journey to whom he had to give an account of why he returned from the Levant without the promised money. The text reveals that the unknown recipient was a partisan of the Habsburgs who detested the French-Ottoman alliance, supported the Habsburg aspiration for the Polish throne against Henri de Valois in 1573, and sympathized with Palaeologus’s radical religious ideas.⁵⁰

Throughout the text one finds defensive responses to slanders spread by Palaeologus’s enemies: There was a rumour that he had converted to Islam during his stay in Constantinople, more exactly, during a drinking party with some Turks in a pub (which possibly alludes to the fact that the convert Adam Neuser whom Palaeologus met in the city was a notorious drinker), and there were doubts about his right to use the splendid name of Palaeologus. He countered these rumours by asserting that he never attended pubs,⁵¹ and by extensively quoting documents issued by the Turkish authorities that explicitly called him a Christian and named him Palaeologus.⁵² Another piece of evidence quoted verbatim was a Greek letter of recommendation issued by the chancellery of the Ecumenical Patriarchate that addresses him as τὸν εὐγενέστατον ἄρχοντα, κύριον Ἰάκωβον τὸν Παλαιολόγον (“the most noble lord, Lord Iakobos Palaiologos”).⁵³ Even years after the journey, Palaeologus kept the Turkish *fermans* as evidence for the high esteem which he enjoyed in the Levant. They were found when Palaeologus was arrested in

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49 *Epistola Iacobi Palaeologi* (see fn. 42), fol. A2r.

50 *Ibid.*, fol. B2v-B3r.

51 *Ibid.*, fol. B4r.

52 *Ibid.*, fol. B3r.

53 *Ibid.*, fol. B1r.

Moravia in 1581 and his papers were confiscated (and aroused the suspicion that he was a spy of the Turks).⁵⁴

Another purpose of the 1573 *Epistola* obviously was to recommend Jacobus Palaeologus to the Habsburgs for diplomatic or intelligence services. Between 1562 and 1576, Palaeologus had penned a series of supplications and dispatches to the Emperor, some of which are preserved in the archives in Vienna.⁵⁵ From these letters it becomes obvious that Palaeologus's character was lacking pivotal prerequisites for a diplomatic career: although he had some interesting contacts and insights, almost every page breathed personal ambition, narcissism or even features of megalomania.

Ostentatiously including some pieces of information of the sort typically contained in diplomatic dispatches, the 1573 *Epistola* reports on troop movements Palaeologus had witnessed or heard of, even adding exact numbers of the ships and boats available to the Turkish navy.⁵⁶ The encounters with Turkish secular and religious dignitaries described by Palaeologus suggested that he enjoyed access to all levels of the administrative hierarchy. Most of the conversations allegedly ended with the offer of a highly-paid and prestigious position if he were to convert to Islam – we must assume that in reality he was not offered more than the title *bey* that was sometimes granted to prominent converts in connection with a regular stipend. Palaeologus even claimed that the chief *kadı* of Chios promised to procure the office of the governor of the island for him.⁵⁷ In Constantinople the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Paşa allegedly expressed the wish to meet him. When this meeting

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54 Cf. Szczucki, "Jakub z Chios-Paleolog" (see fn. 10), 39; Martin Rothkegel, "Jacobus Palaeologus und die Reformation: Antireformatorische Polemik in der verlorenen Schrift Pro Serveto contra Calvinum," in Wien / Brandt / Balogh (ed.), *Radikale Reformation* (see fn. 1), 91-134, esp. 108f.

55 Palaeologus's communications to the Emperor are located in Wien, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Hungarica 110, Konv. C; Hungarica 111, Konv. B; Polonica 13/8; Rom Varia 3; most of these letters are dealt with in Rill, "Jacobus Palaeologus" (see fn. 10).

56 *Epistola Iacobi Palaeologi* (see fn. 42), fol. B2r.

57 *Ibid.*, fol. A4r.

did not come about, Palaeologus supposedly met instead a certain Amurathus Aga, adoptive son of the admiral of the Turkish navy, i.e. Murad Ağa, who was a renegade from Lucca and the “right hand man” of Kılıç Ali.⁵⁸

Another invitation came from the Greek Orthodox Patriarch (Jeremias II Tranos⁵⁹), but Palaeologus declined with the excuse that he, in spite of being a Greek himself, was not used to Greek food and Greek drinking habits. Finally the Jew Joseph Nasi made a generous offer: If Palaeologus wanted to be his guest, he could have one of the seven islands that Nasi possessed in the Aegean, another temptation that Palaeologus gallantly resisted.⁶⁰ Curiously, the *Epistola* is completely silent about contacts with the Habsburg delegation in the Ottoman capital which had arrived with ambassador David Ungnad a couple of months prior to Palaeologus’s sojourn.⁶¹

During his journey to Chios and Constantinople, Palaeologus tried to make his religious ideas known to Muslim interlocutors wherever he could. As he had probably anticipated, his new interpretation of Christian doctrine made a favourable impression on Muslims. On Chios the *sheikh* of a dervish order and several other notables were deeply impressed.⁶² Palaeologus boasted: had he had more time in Constantinople, he would have arranged for a meeting with the chief *müfti* of the Empire and would have preached to him

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58 On him, cf. Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 236.

59 On the Patriarch’s contacts with Habsburg diplomats and German Protestant theologians, cf. Dorothea Wendebourg, *Reformation und Orthodoxie. Der ökumenische Briefwechsel zwischen der Leitung der Württembergischen Kirche und Patriarch Jeremias II. von Konstantinopel in den Jahren 1573–1581*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1986.

60 *Epistola Iacobi Palaeologi* (see fn. 42), fol. Biv.

61 On that well documented delegation, cf. Andreas Ferus, *Die Reise des kaiserlichen Gesandten David Ungnad nach Konstantinopel im Jahre 1572*, unpublished M.A. thesis, Wien: Universität Wien, Historisch-Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät, 2007 (online).

62 *Epistola Iacobi Palaeologi* (see fn. 42), fol. A3r.

the Christian doctrine like the Apostle Paul had preached to the Athenians⁶³ – to wit: “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23).

While this wish would not come true, Palaeologus found attentive interlocutors among a group of renegades gathered around Adam Neuser (c.1530-1576). Neuser, once a leading theologian of Reformed Protestantism in Germany and a superintendent in Heidelberg, had embraced Antitrinitarian doctrines, escaped to Poland and Transylvania and during his wanderings happened to be imprisoned by the Turkish governor in Temesvár (Timișoara) in 1572. In order to regain his freedom, he converted to Islam and resettled in Constantinople where he served as an assistant to the *dragomans* of the Sublime Port.⁶⁴ Neuser knew Palaeologus from Transylvania and when they met again in Constantinople, they spent several days together.

Among other things, they had a discussion on a Turkish-Latin bilingual book, written by an old translator of the Sultan who once had been a Christian. Palaeologus read the book within one day. When Neuser asked Palaeologus whether this reading had persuaded him to turn Muslim, Palaeologus commented that most of the book was just moral philosophy based on Greek philosophy, framed by some Islamic religious formulas in the beginning and at the end, and that such a book was hardly the best way to convert a reader to Islam. In a recent study of some newly discovered letters written by Neuser in Constantinople, Martin Mulsow convincingly identified the book mentioned by Palaeologus as the *Kitâb tesviyetü t-teveccüh ila l-Hakk* (“Guide to Conversion”), a conversion treatise addressing Latin Christian readers, written by Murad ibn Abdullah

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63 Ibid., fol. B4r.

64 On him, cf. Christopher J. Burchill, “Adam Neuser,” in id., *The Heidelberg Antitrinitarians*, Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1989 (Bibliotheca dissidentium, II), 107-156; Martin Mulsow, Art. „Adam Neuser“, in David Thomas / John Chesworth (ed.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, vol. 7: Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America (1500-1600)*, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2015 (The history of Christian-Muslim relations, 24), 420-425.

(Balázs Somlyai, 1509- c. 1586), the well-known chief dragoman of Hungarian origin.⁶⁵

According to Palaeologus, Neuser was not completely happy with his conversion to Islam. In his intimate conversations with Palaeologus, Neuser told about the horrifying experience of a series of executions of Muslim religious dissenters. On June 7, 1573, while Palaeologus was on Chios, Neuser eye-witnessed the execution of the Bosnian Hamzevî *sheikh* Hamza Bâlî. Neuser explained to his guest (who probably was not aware that the Muslims persecuted their own heretics in the same way as the Roman Inquisition did away with Christian dissenters) that Hamza Bâlî was executed because he confessed a strict scriptural principle similar to the Protestant *sola scriptura*, accepting only the *Qur'an* as the normative basis of faith and rejecting the *hadith*.⁶⁶

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65 Cf. Martin Mulsow, "Adam Neusers Brief an Sultan Selim II. und seine geplante Rechtfertigungsschrift. Eine Rekonstruktion anhand neuer Manuskriptfunde," in Friedrich Vollhardt (ed.), *Religiöser Nonkonformismus und frühneuzeitliche Gelehrtenkultur*, Berlin: Akademie, 2014 (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte des Antitrinitarismus und Sozinianismus in der Frühen Neuzeit, 2), 293-318; id., "Fluchträume und Konversionsräume zwischen Heidelberg und Istanbul. Der Fall Adam Neuser," in id. (ed.), *Kriminelle Freidenker Alchemisten. Räume des Untergrunds in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Köln et al.: Böhlau, 2014, 33-59. – On Murad cf. Franz Babinger et al. (ed.), *Literaturdenkmäler aus Ungarns Türkenzeit*, Berlin, Berlin / Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1927 (Ungarische Bibliothek, I/14); Pál Ács, "Tarjumans Mahmud and Murad: Austrian and Hungarian Renegades as Sultan's Interpreters," in Bodo Guthmüller / Wilhelm Kühlmann (ed.), *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000, 307-316; Tijana Krstić, "Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Sultanate: Self-Narratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confesionalization," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 (2009), 35-63; ead., *Contested Conversions to Islam. Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011; ead., Art. „Murad ibn Abdullah“, in *Christian-Muslim Relations* 7 (see fn. 64), 698-704.

66 *Epistola Iacobi Palaeologi* (see fn. 42), fol. B4r; cf. Mulsow, "Fluchträume" (see fn. 65), 46-48; Paul Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité. Le courant Melâmî-Hamzevî dans l'Empire ottoman*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013, 418-423.

Neuser's sympathy with the executed *sheikh*, based on a slightly distorted perception of Hamza Bâli's doctrine, confirms that the ex-Protestant cherished a "Protestantized", reductionist version of Islam or rather a minimalistic Christian-Muslim Unitarianism. In a letter to Szymon Ronemberg, a Polish Antitrinitarian, written on March 21, 1573, "Adam Neuser, now Mustafa Bey" protested against the rumour that he changed his faith and accepted the religion of the Muslims, asserting that he still confessed the true faith of Moses, Jesus and the Apostles and still considered Ronemberg and the Christian Unitarians as his brethren in faith.⁶⁷ Just two months later, Neuser would try to convince Palaeologus to convert to a semi-Christian Islam while Palaeologus tried to convince Neuser to return to a semi-Muslim Christianity, two missionaries with strikingly similar messages, but clearly on different sides of the lines separating their religious identities.

Eventually, Palaeologus did not become a diplomat; nor did he make any converts among the Muslims or renegades in the Levant. Neither was he ever given the opportunity to present his universal religious reform project to the political rulers who probably were its intended audience. Instead of a conclusion, this paper will close with an epilogue exhibiting Palaeologus's own, fantastic assessment of the historical significance of his theology:

In the *Disputatio scholastica*, a kind of a utopian novel written in the year after his return from the Levant, Palaeologus claimed to describe a prophetic dream or vision: religious scholars from all nations and all periods of history meet for a Universal Council convoked by the Almighty Himself and sponsored by the Emperor Maximilian II and Prince John Sigismund of Transylvania on the one side, and the Sultans Süleyman the Magnificent and Selim II on the other (while the King of France was not even admitted to the plenary session by the gatekeeping angels). While the Council revises the theological opinions advanced by divines of past and

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67 Cf. Lech Szczucki, "Fragmenta haeretica," in Géza Galavics / János Herner / Bálint Keserű (ed.), *Collectanea Tiburtiana. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor tiszteletére*, Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem, 1990 (=Adattár XVII-XVIII századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez, 10), 171-178, esp. 172.

present, a delegation reports that their investigations on Chios confirmed Palaeologus's imperial descent and that he had a huge following in the Levant. Thus the Universal Council rehabilitates Palaeologus, correcting the injustice that he had suffered from the Roman Inquisition. In contrast to the Council of Trent with its preposterous dogma and decrees, the heavenly Universal Council examines and approves Palaeologus' doctrine.⁶⁸

The *Disputatio scholastica* was left unfinished; but we can assume that Palaeologus planned a happy end, resulting in a lasting peaceful coexistence of the religions and empires of the East and the West.

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68 Juliusz Domański / Lech Szczucki (ed.), *Iacobus Palaeologus, Disputatio scholastica*, Utrecht: Bibliotheca Unitariorum, 1994 (Bibliotheca Unitariorum, 3); Lech Szczucki, *Humanisci, heretycy, inkwizytorzy. Studia z dziejów kultury XVI i XVII wieku*, Kraków: PAU, 2006, 157-173; Mihály Balázs, "Von Valla bis Bodin: Über den literaturhistorischen Kontext der Disputatio scholastica von Jacobus Palaeologus," in Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann / Georges Tamer (ed.), *Kritische Religionsphilosophie. Eine Gedenkschrift für Friedrich Niewöhner*, Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 2010, III-129.