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Despots, Emperors, and Balkan Identity in Exile

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This article examines some of the exiled claimants to Byzantine imperial descent and to lands that had been lost to the Ottoman conquest. Rather than dismiss them as eccentrics or frauds, it argues that their titles and claims were, first, a way to gain sympathy and support from the host population while reminding them of the losses that the Christian Balkan population had suffered. Secondly, they were a way of signaling a claim to leadership among the Balkan diaspora. It briefly examines the first generation that fled to Italy in the later fifteenth century, then the second generation that inherited and continued to exploit those claims, notably Constantine Komnenos Arianites (1457–1530), who called himself Prince of Macedonia, Duke of Achaia, and despot of the Morea. Although men like Arianites had little success in vindicating their claims, they aspired to be the voice of irredentist sentiment among a dispossessed people.

IN APRIL 1527, ONE OF THE AGENTS OF CARDINAL WOLSEY, who was passing through Moravia, sent back a dispatch describing a strange encounter that he had had on his journey: "I met with an ambassador . . . who came from the king of Beem [Bohemia] and he schowyd me the manner of hym and of his oppynnyons. He calleth himself Emperor of Constantinople." This mysterious individual claimed that he had been sent to punish the Turks and to drive them out of Greece. He had no money and so lived off the generosity of the king of Hungary. He would not say where he came from or who his family were but there was no doubting his sincerity. He slept only two hours a night and prayed the rest of the time, ever vigilant for the day when he would be able to fulfill his mission.¹

Such encounters were not unusual in the sixteenth century for there was no shortage of putative descendants of the Palaiologoi, the family of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI (1449–53), who had perished defending the walls of Constantinople against the Ottoman Turks. Panaiotus Palaiologos, who lived in Vienna in the 1580s, declared in court when he was arrested and charged with forgery that he was a genuine Palaiologos and a prince of Lacedaemonia.² Others made no case for imperial descent but nevertheless adopted grandiose titles, claiming that they were the rightful rulers of the territory that had once been the Christian empire of Byzantium but was now occupied by the Ottomans. The Albanian historian Gioanni Musachi took to styling himself "despot of Epiros," a title that he claimed had been bestowed on one of his ancestors by the Byzantine emperor John V Palaiologos (1354–91). An individual called Diassorinus

¹*State Papers Published under the Authority of His Majesty's Commission: King Henry the Eighth* (London, 1830–52), 6:573–74.

²Peter Mallatt, "Byzantinische 'Kaiserrenkel' in Wien: Drei merkwürdige Herren," *Adler* 12 (1982): 280–81.

who was knighted at Brussels by the Holy Roman emperor in 1555 called himself "lord of several islands."³

Much of the existing scholarly literature to date on such individuals has tended to concern itself with some of the undeniably absurd aspects of their claims and the chicanery that often accompanied them. Andrei Pippidi pointed out that many produced carefully faked genealogies and documents to prove their credentials. A. C. F. Beales and Donald M. Nicol took delight in poking fun at those who persisted in their pretensions into relatively recent times, like the Irishman who wrote to the British Foreign Office in 1830 to assert his right to the throne of Greece on the basis of his descent from the Palaiologoi.⁴ In the context of the sixteenth century, however, it is worth considering whether some of the individuals like the "emperor" described by Wolsey's agent were perhaps something rather more than just harmless eccentrics, confidence tricksters, or self-deluding poseurs. On the contrary, the adoption of grand titles and claims could play two very important roles among the communities of Greeks and Albanians settled in Western Europe.

First, the titles and claims provided a way of reminding the host population of the sufferings that the Christian Balkan population had undergone as the result of their conquest by the Ottoman Turks and hence became a means of gaining sympathy and support. Surviving records indicate that individuals perceived as being of higher social class were more generously received by the authorities so that there was an incentive to talk up any noble or royal lineage and losses of land and status.⁵ Secondly, and more significantly, the titles were a way of signaling leadership of the dispossessed Balkan peoples. The diaspora communities in Italy had not lost their distinct identities and continued to look forward to a time when Turkish rule would be thrown off. Prominent exiles regularly harangued European crowned heads on the need to drive back the infidel

and when it was planned to settle a colony of Greek immigrants in the Maremma region of Tuscany, the project was specifically discussed in the context of a revival of the Byzantine empire.⁶ It was only natural that leaders should emerge to direct and exploit these sentiments, and the man met by Wolsey's agent was clearly one of them. The appeal was, moreover, not only to the Balkan diaspora. Titles such as "emperor of Constantinople" would have been familiar to the literate majority population as he sometimes appears as a character and a protagonist in the struggle against the infidel in the romantic fiction of the day.⁷ The individuals who tried to play this role in real life have usually been judged by their failures rather than by their intentions. This article will examine how these two aspects of their titles and claims worked in practice and assess the role that they played in sixteenth-century Balkan identity and irredentism.

REFUGEES AND PUBLICITY

Turning first to how claims to titles and lands were used to attract support and sympathy, one has only to look at the Balkan refugees who toured Western Europe gathering alms for the redemption of captives.⁸ Two early sixteenth-century examples are examined here, Michael Palaiologos and Isabella Laskarina. Michael Palaiologos was in Rome in 1505 where he recounted at the Papal Curia that he had fought for three months to defend his lands from the Ottoman Turks but in the end he had been defeated. His wife, children, and other family members had been taken prisoner and he now had to raise a ransom of twelve thousand ducats in order to free them. Pope Julius II (1503–13) received him sympathetically, provided him with letters addressed to the kings of France, England, Spain, and Portugal, and issued a forty-year indulgence for anyone who would contribute to the ransom.⁹

³Donald M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros, 1267–1479: A Contribution to the History of Greece in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 197; Nada Zečević, "Searching for Acceptance? A Fifteenth-Century Refugee's Family History," *Annual of Medieval Studies at Central European University* 6 (2000): 129–43; Karl Friedrich von Frank, *Standeserhebungen und Gnadenakte* (Senftenberg: Schloss Senftenegg, 1967), 1:228; Alain Ducellier et al., *Les chemins de l'exil: Bouversements de l'est européen et migrations vers l'ouest à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 410.

⁴Andrei Pippidi, "Fables, bagatelles et impertinences: Autour de certaines généalogies byzantines des XVI^e–XVII^e siècles," *Études Byzantines et Post-byzantines* 1 (1979): 269–305; A. C. F. Beales, "The Irish King of Greece," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 51 (1931): 101–5; Donald M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 118–27; Riccardo Maisano, "Su alcune discendenze moderne dei Paleologi di Bizanzio," *Rassegna Storica Salernitana* 5 (1988): 77–90; C. D. Webster, "The Palaeologos Legend," *Genealogists' Magazine* 22 (1986–88): 367–70; M. L. Bierbrier, "Modern Descendants of Byzantine Families," *Genealogists' Magazine* 20 (1980–82): 85–96.

⁵Jonathan Harris, *Greek Émigrés in the West, 1400–1520* (Camberley, UK: Porphyrogenitus, 1995), 84; Margo Todd, "A Captive's Story: Puritans, Pirates and the Drama of Reconciliation," *Seventeenth Century* 12 (1997): 52n2.

⁶Michael J. McGann, "A Call to Arms: Michael Marullus to Charles VIII," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 16 (1991): 341–59; J. Whittaker, "Janus Laskaris at the Court of Charles V," *Thésaurismata* 14 (1977): 76–109; The government of Siena to Cardinal Bessarion, 30 August 1472, in G. Cecchini, "Anna Notara Paleologa: Una principessa greca in Italia e la politica senese di ripopolamento della Maremma," *Bollettino Senese di Storia Patria* 9 (1938): 29; "Hic iam tandem vestrates homines vel nostri potius, certas ponere sedes et pacato evo fruentur et non magna sine spe omine Constantinopolis recuperande florentissimi quodam constantinopolitani imperii pars nonnulla resurget."

⁷See, for example, Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba, *Tirant Lo Blanc*, trans. David A. Rosenthal (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 600; Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. Lanfranco Caretti (Milan: Ricciardi, 1954), 1155 (canto 44.12).

⁸In general on Balkan refugees in the sixteenth century, see Harris, *Greek Émigrés*, 200–202; Claire S. Schen, "Greeks and 'Grecians' in London: The 'Other' Strangers," in *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland and Colonial America*, ed. Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton (Eastbourne, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2001), 268–75.

⁹Archivio Segreto Vaticano (hereafter ASV), armario 39, vol. 22, fol. 317r–v; British Library, London (hereafter BL), C110. e. 10; Bodleian Library, Oxford, arch. A.b.8 (33a–b); A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *Short Title Catalogue of English Books 1475–1640*, 2nd ed., ed. W. A. Jackson, F. A.

The 1505 papal letters and the indulgence that tell Michael's story leave no doubt that he was a person of some importance. The letters call him "brother of the Duke of Constantinople" and the indulgence "maternal cousin of the most illustrious grand duke of Constantinople." The latter adds that Michael was the ruler of the town of Capharia before it was seized and destroyed by the Turks.¹⁰ A later document from Flanders, on the other hand, describes him as "lord of the castle of Soudoires in the land of Constantinople."¹¹ None of this can be substantiated. Capharia might be the town of Caffa (modern Feodosiya) in the Crimea, but that had fallen to the Turks in 1475, thirty years before Michael Palaiologos reached Rome. Besides, Caffa had been under the rule of the Genoese before the Ottoman conquest and not that of a Greek nobleman. The name of the castle of Soudoires is hopelessly garbled and impossible to trace. As for Michael's illustrious surname and his claim to be related to the "Duke of Constantinople," it is all so vague as to give rise to suspicion that it was made up for the occasion.

Michael was probably not an imposter, however. Palaiologos may well have been his real name albeit only a part of it. In the later Middle Ages, the aristocracy of Constantinople and the Balkans had taken to adopting composite names that reflected their pedigree and connections. The surname of the mother would often be incorporated, especially if she was from a distinguished family such as the Palaiologoi. This practice could become quite cumbersome as in the case of the Byzantine nobleman Manuel Rhaoul Palaiologos Melikes or the Albanian Sgouros Boua Spata who briefly ruled Ioannina in 1399.¹² Michael Palaiologos probably bore a similar tripartite name but once in Italy he dropped all but the most prestigious and well-known element.

Ferguson, and K. F. Pantzer (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91) (hereafter *STC*), nos. 14077 118, 120–21.

¹⁰ASV, armario 39, vol. 22, fol. 317: "frater ducis Constantinopolitani"; BL, C110. e. 10: "Michael de Paleologo, frater consobrinus illustrissimi ducis Maior[is] Constantinopolitani. Qui quidem Michael in subsidio et supplantatione aliorum Christi fidelium in hac parte sibi inferendis firmiter sperando contra perfidos Turchos et fidei catholice penitus inimicos per spatium trium mensium resistit et pugnavit. Tandem, tamen, dicti Christi inimici prefatum Michaellem (quod dolendum est) in pugna superaverunt et civitatem Capharie dicti Michaelis possessionem destruxerunt et eiusdem civitatis ecclesias et alia loca sanctificata, in quibus divina officia solitum fuit celebrari, ac sacramenta ecclesie Christi fidelibus ministrari penitus miserunt incendio dicti insuper Turci, Christi fidelium inimici, decem milia christianorum, quindecim vero eiusdem numeri qui per eosdem Turchos ducti sunt et positi in carcerem exceptis gravem fecerunt subire mortem et dictos quindecim Christi fideles ad numerum duodecim milia ducatorum auri multaverunt."

¹¹Archives Départementales du Nord, Lille, B18834, no. 27231, fol. 307r–v (former ref. B855, no. 27231), "Michel Palalogo, seigneur du chateau de Soudoires au pays de Constantinoble." See *Inventaire-sommaire des archives départementales antérieures à 1790 (Nord)*, ser. B, ed. A. le Glay et al. (Lille, 1863–1906), 1.2:63.

¹²*Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. E. Trapp et al. (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976–96), no. 17789; Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 45; Giuseppe Schirò, "La genealogia degli Spata tra il XIV e XV sec. e due Bua sconosciuti," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 67 (1971–72): 76.

Moreover, his supposed connection to a Duke of Constantinople was not necessarily fictitious. He may have been related to or descended from Grand Duke Loukas Notaras, who had been the richest man in Constantinople before the Ottoman conquest. Notaras had married a member of the imperial dynasty and so members of his family would have felt entitled to adopt the Palaiologos name. The grand duke, however, had been active as a statesman as early as 1424 and ended his career shortly after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 when he was executed on the orders of the Ottoman sultan. It is therefore quite impossible that Michael could have been his elder brother as the papal letters say, for if he was, he would not have still been alive in the early years of the sixteenth century. The use of the word *consobrinus* or maternal cousin in the indulgence, on the other hand, suggests a more remote connection, perhaps with Notaras's descendants. Some of the grand duke's children had been able to escape to Italy and one of them, Anna (d. 1507), was still alive and living in Venice where she was extremely rich and influential. She did not hesitate to exploit her imperial connections, signing her letters "Anna Palaiologina, daughter of the late Grand Duke of the Romans."¹³ This is the type of connection that Michael and others like him hoped to exploit.

That said, the tactic does not seem to have been a success. The sympathetic reception that Michael received in Rome, where the name Palaiologos was familiar, was not repeated in northern Europe where it would not have been well known. Michael toured England and the Low Countries in 1510 having gone to the trouble of having the Latin text and an English translation of Julius II's indulgence printed for distribution. The printed sheets were headed with a picture of the crucifixion flanked by the papal arms and those of the kingdom of England.¹⁴ Sadly, these careful preparations proved unavailing and he came to grief when he reached Turnhout in Flanders. The local people became suspicious of him and denounced him to the authorities as "a false beggar and a Lombard sodomite." He was thrown into jail and nothing further is known of him.¹⁵

The case of Isabella Laskarina follows the same pattern with uncanny closeness. Like Michael Palaiologos, she bore an old imperial name, for the Laskarina family had ruled the Byzantine empire in exile at Nicaea between 1204 and 1259. She too claimed that she had lost everything at the hands of the Turks and was gathering the 1,300 ducats needed to ransom her four children. Arriving in Rome

¹³"Filia quondam magni ducis Romeorum," in Chryssa A. Maltezos, *Anna Palaiologina Notara: A Tragic Figure between the Byzantine and Modern Greek World* (Venice: Istituto Ellenico, 2004), 9–13, 64 (in Greek); Donald M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits, 1250–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 96–109; Thierry Ganchou, "Le rachat des Notaras après la chute de Constantinople ou les relations 'étrangères' de l'élite byzantine au XVe siècle," in *Migrations et diasporas méditerranéennes (Xe–XVe siècles)*, ed. Michel Balard and Alain Ducellier (Paris: Centre de Recherches d'Histoire et de Civilisation Byzantines, 2002), 149–229.

¹⁴For a list and description of the surviving copies, see *STC* 14077 117a–21.

¹⁵Archives Départementales du Nord, Lille, B18834, no. 27231, fol. 307r–v, "lui disant qu'il estoit ung faulx questeur et bougeron de Lombardie."

in 1507, she received letters of indulgence from Julius II. Her plan was, like that of Palaiologos, to travel to northern Europe to collect alms and when she arrived in England in around 1511, she applied to the king for permission "whereby she may ask almonse in any burgh, citie, town and place within this realm."¹⁶ She had the papal indulgence translated into English and printed by Richard Pynson of London.

Several copies of the printed indulgence survive and they are very informative as to Laskarina's claims. She was, they state, "a noble and true christen lady . . . comynge and descendynge of the noble blode of Constantinobyll" and the rightful owner of "a myghty stronge castell callyd The Castell Anaryne in the diocese of Motonence." The castle had been seized by the Turks and Laskarina's husband had perished defending it. She now hoped to raise the sum needed to redeem her four children from captivity.¹⁷ Again, these details might give rise to some skepticism because it is as impossible to identify Anaryne as it is Soudoires. That does not mean, however, that they were made up, but were merely garbled. "Motonence" could refer to the Venetian-held town of Modon in the southern Peloponnese or Morea, which had fallen to the Ottomans in August 1500. The record of Laskarina's English royal license to collect alms of 1510 or 1511 noted that her misfortune had occurred some ten years earlier. It had, moreover, been recorded at the time that three sisters of the Laskaris family had succeeded in escaping from the disaster at Modon. Isabella may have been one of them.¹⁸

The upshot was, sad to say, much the same as it was in the case of Michael Palaiologos for a wandering Greek raised as much suspicion in England as in Flanders. When Laskarina reached Lincoln, she and her companion, Frances Norreis, were arrested by the sheriffs in spite of their royal letters and kept in prison without charge. They must have had some friends on the outside for a plea was lodged with the lord chancellor outlining the plight of "your seyde besechers personnes born in ferre contre and come hedir for aide and socour" who were "like to dye without the gracious aide and socur of yowre goode lordship to theym shewed in this behalf. . . ." They pleaded for a writ to be issued compelling the sheriffs, William Miller and Christopher Burton, to release them so that their case could be heard in Chancery.¹⁹

That is as far as the documentation goes so the eventual outcome is unknown but the parallel fates of Michael Palaiologos and Isabella Laskarina bear witness

¹⁶National Archives, London, C82/362; *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509–14*, 2nd ed., ed. J. S. Brewer (London, 1920), no. 750(4). On the importance of obtaining a license to collect alms see Frank Aydelotte, *Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds* (Oxford, 1913), 23.

¹⁷Bodleian Library, arch. A.b. 8 (12); STC 14077 129–30. On Richard Pynson, see E. Gordon Duff, *The Printers, Stationers and Bookbinders of Westminster and London from 1476 to 1535* (London, 1906), 55–71, 158–68.

¹⁸National Archives, London, C82/362; *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic, 1509–14*, no. 750(4); Marino Sanudo, *I Diarii* (Venice, 1879), 3:906.

¹⁹National Archives, London, C1/1507/31.

to a certain skepticism and compassion fatigue that had long since set in among the Christian population of Western Europe. Typical was the warning voiced by the Scottish traveler and William Lithgow (1582–1645): "concerning vagabonding Greekes and their counterfeit testimonials: true it is there is no such matter, as these lying rascals report unto you, concerning their fathers, their wives and children taken captive by the Turke. . . ." ²⁰ Sir Thomas Roe (ca. 1581–1644), English ambassador to the Ottoman Porte, denounced them as "counterfeits." ²¹ Nevertheless, these cases clearly illustrate the use made by refugees of remote imperial connections and lost lands to enhance their appeal for financial assistance, however unsuccessful they ultimately may have been.

LEADERS IN EXILE: THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY BACKGROUND

The second way in which Balkan émigrés of the sixteenth century used claims to noble or royal descent was to assert leadership over the diaspora in any future attempt to reclaim their homelands from Ottoman rule. To explore this point fully, the background from the previous century must first be discussed. In the previous two generations there had been no shortage of potential leaders in exile, as one after another ruler of a small, tottering Christian principality fled the all-conquering Ottomans. Among them were Giovanni Asan Zaccaria (d. 1469), illegitimate son of Centurione II Zaccaria (d. 1432), who had ruled part of the Peloponnese, and the Albanian leader John Kastriotës (d. 1514), both of whom ended up living in Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century.²² The highest profile ruler in exile was Thomas Palaiologos, brother of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI, who in 1460 had fled from the Peloponnese where he had ruled with the title of "despot." He had made his way to Rome where he had been welcomed and provided for by Pope Pius II (1458–64).²³

While some of the dispossessed rulers were quite happy to take their pension and live out the rest of their lives in obscurity, Thomas Palaiologos entertained

²⁰William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures and Painfull Peregrinations* (Glasgow, 1906), 106.

²¹Thomas Roe, *Negotiations of Sir Thomas Roe in His Embassy to the Ottoman Porte*, ed. S. Richardson (London, 1740), 103: "I know that the Greeks who beg heere for captives are no better than counterfeits and they find little favor with mee."

²²Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976), 2:240n32; William Miller, "Balkan Exiles in Rome," in *Essays on the Latin Orient*, ed. William Miller (Cambridge, 1921), 502, 508–13; Nicol, *Despotate of Epiros, 1267–1479*, 213–14; Athanas Gegaj, *L'Albanie et l'invasion turque au XVe siècle* (Louvain: University of Louvain, 1937), 161–62; Paolo Petta, *Despoti d'Epiro e principi di Macedonia: Esuli albanesi nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Lecce: Argo, 2000), 28–39.

²³Setton, *Papacy and Levant*, 2:226–30; Harris, *Greek Émigrés*, 111–12; Harris, *End of Byzantium*, 228–41; Silvia Ronchey, "Orthodoxy on Sale: The Last Byzantine and the Lost Crusade," in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London 21–26 August 2006*, ed. Fiona K. Haarer and Elizabeth Jeffreys (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 1:313–15.

real hopes of being restored to his lost lands. During the 1460s, as serious preparations were being made for a crusade to recover Constantinople, Thomas toured Italy to drum up support, carrying papal letters of indulgence and presenting himself as "a prince who was born to the illustrious and ancient family of the Palaiologoi . . . a man who is now an immigrant, naked, robbed of everything except his lineage. . . ." ²⁴ It was one thing to play the role of a leader but quite another to have that role widely accepted. There may well have been those among the diaspora who also had a low view of Thomas Palaiologos, remembering his wars against his own brother Demetrius in the Peloponnese that had helped to provoke the Ottoman invasion. The sixteenth-century Greek chronicler Theodore Spandounes described Thomas as "a bad lot" (*di mala sorte*) possibly reflecting the views of an earlier generation of émigrés from which Spandounes was descended. ²⁵ Certainly after Pius II's death in 1464, Thomas was largely bypassed and forgotten.

The next generation likewise produced an obvious claimant to leadership. After Thomas Palaiologos died in 1465, the pope recognized his eldest son, Andreas, as rightful despot of the Morea. From the 1480s he was going beyond this styling himself "emperor of Constantinople," a title that his father had never adopted. He sported this title on his seal, along with the double-headed eagle, the emblem of the Palaiologoi. It is clear that some among the Balkan diaspora accepted Andreas's claims. George Sphrantzes (1401–ca. 1468), one of Thomas Palaiologos's advisers from Patras who visited Andreas in Rome in 1466, described him as "the successor and heir of the Palaiologan dynasty" and as his lord (*kyr*). ²⁶ Likewise Andreas's sister Zoe (d. 1503), who was married to Grand Duke Ivan III of Moscow, was hailed as "Kaiserin und Königin von Konstantinopel" on her passage through Germany to Russia in 1472. ²⁷ It was not just a question of titles, for Andreas did make an attempt to vindicate his claims. In the late summer of 1481, he gathered funds and troops in the south of Italy in preparation for mounting an attack across the Adriatic against the Turks. In any event, the expedition never set out because the likelihood of an Ottoman civil war following the death of Sultan Mehmed II (1451–81) that he had hoped

to exploit had evaporated by the autumn. ²⁸ Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that Andreas was using his name and descent to assert leadership over his fellow exiles. That does not mean, of course, that Andreas was either a good leader or that he was successful in obtaining recognition as such. Like his father, Thomas, he was viewed rather cynically by contemporaries. Both the diarist Gherardi da Volterra and the later Theodore Spandounes portray him in a very jaundiced light as immoral and self-indulgent. ²⁹ By the end of his life, Andreas was as isolated and irrelevant as his father had been.

After Andreas Palaiologos died in 1502, there was no obvious replacement as a focus of political loyalty for Balkan exiles. In his will, Andreas bequeathed the title of Emperor of Constantinople to the rulers of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, in spite of having sold it to the king of France eight years earlier. ³⁰ He does seem to have had a son called Fernando who adopted the title of despot of the Morea, who is first heard of in July 1499, when the Duke of Milan sent him to Constantinople, possibly on a diplomatic or espionage mission. In general, however, Fernando seems to have made little impact. He was probably hampered by illegitimacy or was perhaps simply unwilling to play a prominent role. ³¹ The way was open for those with a rather more remote connection to the Byzantine imperial dynasty to stake their claim.

CONSTANTINE ARIANITES AND THE MARCH OF ANCONA

One of these claimants was Constantine Komnenos Arianites (1457–1530), an Albanian émigré living in Italy. He was descended from both Byzantine and Albanian noble families. His father, George Komnenos Arianites or more familiarly Topia Golemo (d. 1468), had been lord of Cerminizza and Catafigo in the area of Ragusa, but the family had originated in Constantinople. The middle component of his composite name asserted a connection with the imperial dynasty of Komnenos that had ruled in Constantinople between 1081 and 1185. ³² Constantine was also well connected to the local nobility through the marriages of his three

²⁴Ronchey, "Orthodoxy on Sale," 322; Harris, *Greek Émigrés*, 111–12.

²⁵Theodore Spandounes, "De la origine deli imperatori ottomani," in C. N. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce* (Paris, 1890), 9:157; Spandounes, *On the Origin of the Ottoman Emperors*, ed. C. N. Sathas, trans. Donald M. Nicol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 36.

²⁶George Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, ed. Riccardo Maisano (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1990), 132, 176; George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, trans. Marios Philippides (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 69, 87. An illustration of Andreas's seal is preserved in Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Hannover, MS XXVI (1520). See Eduard Bodemann, *Die Handschriften der königlichen öffentlichen Bibliothek zu Hannover* (Hannover, 1867), 330.

²⁷Günther Schuhmann, "Die 'Kaiserin von Konstantinopel' in Nürnberg," in *Archive und Geschichtsforschung: Studien zur Fränkischen und Bayerischen Geschichte, Fridolin Solleder zum 80 Geburtstag dargebracht*, ed. Horst Heldmann (Neustadt: Schmidt, 1966), 161.

²⁸Jonathan Harris, "A Worthless Prince? Andreas Palaeologus in Rome, 1465–1502," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61 (1995): 548–50.

²⁹Jacopo Gherardi da Volterra, *Diario Romano* (Città di Castello, 1904), 81; Spandounes, "De la origine," 157; Spandounes, *On the Origin of the Ottoman Emperors*, 37.

³⁰P. K. Enepekides, "Das Wiener Testament des Andreas Palaiologos vom 7 April 1502," *Akten des XI internationalen Byzantinisten Kongresses, München 1958*, ed. Franz Dölger and Hans-Georg Beck (Munich: Beck, 1960), 138–43; Harris, "Worthless Prince," 551.

³¹Sanudo, *Diarii*, 2:938, 17:73, 22:82. Fernando may have been the person referred to by Paride Grassi, "Diarium Curiae Romanae," in *Nova Scriptorum ac Monumentorum Partim Rarissimorum Partim Ineditorum*, ed. C. G. Hoffmann (Leipzig, 1731), 1:418–20. The question of the descendants of Thomas and Andreas Palaiologos is investigated in Peter Mallat, "Zur problematik byzantinischer Genealogien: Thomas Palaeologos und seine Nachkommen," *Adler* 14 (1988): 322–27.

³²Demetrios I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London: Athlone, 1968), 103–4.

sisters. Angelina was the wife of Stefan Branković, despot of Serbia (d. 1476), and Gojisava had married John Crnojević, ruler of Zeta (1465–90). Andronica was married to none other than George Kastriot Skanderbeg (1405–68), who led the Albanian revolt against the Ottomans in the years 1443 to 1468.³³ The family had an impressive track record of resistance to the Ottomans. George Arianites had been the most successful Albanian commander in the revolt of the 1430s and he later joined Skanderbeg's war against the Turks. Arianites senior was not always a reliable ally, however. In 1456, with the backing of Venice, he challenged Skanderbeg's leadership and proclaimed himself "captain of all Albania." Skanderbeg soon snuffed out the rebellion, pardoning Arianites and receiving him back as an ally, but the incident reveals the far-reaching ambitions of the Arianites clan.³⁴

Both Skanderbeg and George Arianites died in 1468 and thereafter the Ottomans slowly but surely gained the upper hand. The Albanian lands were invaded in force in 1474 and 1479 and the area was incorporated into the Ottoman empire. But it was a slow process. It was not until 1501 that the important port of Durazzo fell into Turkish hands and the Albanian clans remained a very difficult element to govern and subdue, frequently refusing to pay the required tribute. While some clans adopted Islam, others remained Christian, and there was a great deal of emigration of the latter across the Adriatic to Italy.³⁵

George Arianites's son Constantine was part of that trend. In 1469, at the age of twelve, he was taken to Italy for safety. He went on to have a successful career in his adopted country. While still young, he attracted the notice of Pope Sixtus IV (1471–84) and was appointed apostolic protonotary with a pension of thirty-two ducats a month.³⁶ He made an advantageous marriage to Francesca of Montferrat and served as regent for his nephew William IX, marquis of Montferrat, in the 1490s. In 1504 he was sent as ambassador of the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian (1493–1519) to Rome where he greatly impressed Pope Julius II, who increased his monthly pension to 200 ducats and put him in

charge of a detachment of papal troops. His main occupation in the first decade of the sixteenth century was shuttling back and forth between the pope and the emperor Maximilian to facilitate the negotiations that were to culminate in the anti-Venetian League of Cambrai of 1508.³⁷

There was, however, another aspect to Arianites's career apart from his presence at the imperial and papal courts. From the 1490s, he was staking a claim to leadership of Balkan Christians in the way that his father George had. While George had styled himself only captain of all Albania, Constantine was claiming that he was the rightful ruler of Macedonia and Thessaly, a much larger tract of territory.³⁸ He took to describing himself as Prince of Macedonia and later added the title of Duke of Achaia, thus presumably asserting his right to the Peloponnese as well. Both titles were used in the letter of Emperor Maximilian appointing him ambassador to Rome in 1504, and after his death they were inscribed on his tomb in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Rome.³⁹ The Prince of Macedonia title was even inherited and continued by his son.⁴⁰

Unlike Andreas Palaiologos and the nameless individual encountered by Wolsey's agent, Constantine Arianites stopped short of declaring himself to be the emperor of Constantinople but he did the next best thing and adopted the title of despot of the Morea. This may have begun within a few months of the death of Andreas Palaiologos. In October 1502, Antonio Giustinian, the Venetian ambassador to the Papal Curia, wrote in a dispatch that the pope was considering an unnamed despot for the command of a cavalry unit. It may have been Arianites, rather than Andreas's son Fernando, that Giustinian was referring to for he is known to have been making visits to the Papal Curia at around that time.⁴¹ Arianites was certainly using the title from October 1507 when he was

³³Franz Babinger, *Das Ende der Arianiten* (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1960), 9–27; John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 561, 599, 603; Donald M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus), c. 1100–1460* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1968), 220; Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Sturdza, 1999), 217–18.

³⁴Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, 535, 556, 561; Gegaj, *L'Albanie*, 48–58; Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, trans. Ralph Mannheim, ed. William C. Hickman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 152; Alain Ducellier, "Genesis and Failure of the Albanian State in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Studies on Kosova*, ed. Arshi Pipa and Sami Repishti (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1984), 14–15, and reprinted in Alain Ducellier, *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise, Xe–XVe siècles* (London: Variorum, 1987), no. 12.

³⁵Spandounes, "De la origine," 165, 176; Spandounes, *On the Origin of the Ottoman Emperors*, 47–48, 60–61; Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, 598–602; Ducellier, *Chemins de l'exil*, 254–58.

³⁶Adolf Gottlob, *Aus der Camera Apostolica des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Innsbruck, 1889), 293; Miller, "Balkan Exiles," 512.

³⁷In general on Constantine Arianites, see Babinger, *Ende der Arianiten*, 30–85; Christine Shaw, *Julius II: The Warrior Pope* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 103–4, 106, 145, 147, 156, 186, 236, 299; Mario Brunetti, "Alla vigilia di Cambrai: La legazione di Vincenzo Querini all'Imperatore Massimiliano (1507)," *Archivio Veneto-Tridentino* 10 (1926): 23, 29–32; Winfried Stelzer, "Konstantin Arianiti als Diplomat zwischen König Maximilian I. und Papst Julius II. in den Jahren 1503–1508," *Römische Quartalschrift* 63 (1968): 29–48; Petta, *Despoti d'Epiro*, 138–80.

³⁸Philippe de Comynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Joël Blanchard (Geneva: Droz, 2007), 1:583–84; *The Memoirs of Philippe de Comines*, trans. Samuel Kinser and Isabelle Cazeaux (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 2:487–88.

³⁹Archivio di Tocco di Montemiletto, Archivio di Stato, Naples, fondo Privilegi, busta 2, perg. no. 67 (reference supplied by Nada Zečević); Laurentius Schrader, *Monumentorum Italiae* (Helmstadt, 1592), fol. 124; Sanudo, *Diarii*, 14:100; Grassi, "Diarium," 1:478.

⁴⁰Archivio di Tocco di Montemiletto, fondo Privilegi, busta 2, perg. nos. 78, 81, 83; Archivio di Stato, Naples, Fondo Atti Notarili, busta 7, perg. no. 271, fondo Scritture diverse, busta 48 (references supplied by Nada Zečević).

⁴¹Antonio Giustinian, *Dispacci di Antonio Giustinian, ambasciatore veneto in Roma dal 1502 al 1505*, ed. P. Villari (Florence, 1876), 1:164. G. E. Typaldos, "The Successors of the Palaiologoi after the Fall" (in Greek), *Deltion tēs Istorikēs kai Ethnologikēs Etaireias tēs Ellados* 8 (1922): 129–54; Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 184. These attribute a son called Constantine to Andreas, which must be a confusion with Arianites.

traveling north to Germany as part of his shuttle diplomacy between Rome and the emperor.⁴² His decision to style himself in this way may have been based on his connection with the house of Komnenos or his kinship to that of Palaiologos. He could claim the latter though his marriage alliance with the house of Montferrat whose marquises were descended from the Palaiologoi. Moreover, Arianites's niece, Maria Branković, daughter of the despot of Serbia Stefan Branković, had married Boniface III, Marquis of Montferrat (1483–94).⁴³

These titles and the claims they imply sound like empty rhetoric and Arianites was certainly very bombastic in defending them. Apparently, he told the French statesman Philippe de Commynes (1447–1511) that his “patrimony” of Macedonia and Thessaly had once been the inheritance of Alexander the Great.⁴⁴ Far-fetched as his pretensions were, Arianites took them seriously enough to risk his life in attempting to implement them. In 1494, the French king Charles VIII (1483–98) invaded Italy and announced his intention to launch a crusade against Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512). As part of his preparations, in November 1494 Charles purchased the title of Emperor of Constantinople from the despot Andreas Palaiologos and took under his protection the claimant to the Ottoman throne, Bayezid's younger brother, Cem.⁴⁵ As the French king passed through northern Italy that autumn, he met with Arianites at Casale Montferrato where the latter was residing as recently appointed regent for his nephew the marquis. A plan was agreed whereby Arianites and Martin Albaro, Bishop of Durazzo, would create a diversion from Charles's expedition by stirring up a rebellion on the Albanian coast. Arianites and the bishop moved to Venice to make preparations but the enterprise was doomed from the start. The plans were not kept secret, largely thanks to the bishop's inability to keep his mouth shut, and the Ottomans soon became aware of what was afoot. There was little support for it on the other side of the Adriatic either. When the Ottoman claimant Cem died in January 1495, the Venetian government became alarmed that a war against the Ottomans would now be a much more dangerous proposition and sent an embassy to Constantinople to assure the sultan that Venice had nothing to do with the planned uprising in Albania. The Bishop of Durazzo was arrested by the Venetians, and Arianites only managed to avoid the same fate by fleeing by sea to Apulia.⁴⁶

⁴²A. Bertolotti, “Varietà Storico-gentilizie,” *Giornale Araldico-Genalogico-Diplomatico* 16 (1888–89): 47, citing Archivio di Stato, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, Copia Lettere.

⁴³De Commynes, *Mémoires*, 1:668; Kinser and Cazeaux, *Memoirs of Philippe de Comines*, 2:550. On the link between the Palaiologoi and the marquisate of Montferrat see Angeliki E. Laiou, “A Byzantine Prince Latinized: Theodore Palaeologus, Marquis of Montferrat,” *Byzantion* 38 (1968): 386–410.

⁴⁴De Commynes, *Mémoires*, 1:584; Kinser and Cazeaux, *Memoirs of Philippe de Comines*, 2:487–88.

⁴⁵Harris, “Worthless Prince,” 551; Setton, *Papacy and Levant*, 2:461–77.

⁴⁶De Commynes, *Mémoires*, 1:584–85; Kinser and Cazeaux, *Memoirs of Philippe de Comines*, 2:487–88; Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 3 vols., ed. Silvana Seidel Menchi (Turin: Einaudi,

That was not the end of Arianites's involvement with plans to mount an attack on the Ottoman Empire. He was deeply involved as a diplomat with the negotiations that led to the formation of the League of Cambrai. The League purported to be an alliance of Christian powers against the Ottomans, although it had made the elimination of Venice its first objective and ultimately failed to achieve even that.⁴⁷ The disappointing outcomes of these efforts aside, Arianites's involvement in them is evidence of his earnestness in making good his claims to his “patrimony” and his hopes of succeeding to his father's role of leadership.

That aim may also have been connected to his appointment in about 1514 as governor of the town of Fano by Pope Leo X (1513–21).⁴⁸ Fano is in the March of Ancona, a strip of territory that faces the Dalmatian coast across the Adriatic so that the area was a natural point from which to launch any expedition against the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Pope Pius II had used it as such when he prepared his crusade in 1464, ordering his fleet to gather in the port of Ancona. Leo X was now interested in reviving some kind of concerted Christian action against the Ottomans. In September 1513, he had issued the first crusade indulgences for many years and had renewed the efforts of his predecessors to promote peace and concerted action among the European powers. Both the March of Ancona and claims to Byzantine succession were to play a part in the project. In 1515, the pope announced to the doge of Venice that he was preparing a small fleet of galleys at Ancona, and during 1517 detailed plans were drawn up which envisaged that the pope would sail from Ancona with the French contingent to link up with the Spanish, Portuguese, and English fleets. At the same time, rumors were circulating that Leo had promised the crown of Constantinople to the new king of France, Francis I (1515–47), if he would lead the crusade.⁴⁹ The decision to dispatch Arianites to the March of Ancona may have been connected to these developments. It was, after all, only to be expected that Balkan Christians would support the preparations. In Rome, a Greek called Giovanni Gemisto addressed to the pope more than two thousand Latin verses in dactylic hexameters, full of advice and exhortation on the coming crusade.⁵⁰ Arianites's

1971), 1:157; Setton, *Papacy and Levant*, 2:481; Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, *Charles VIII et son milieu (1470–1498): La jeunesse au pouvoir* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1975), 283; Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, 603.

⁴⁷Brunetti, “Alla vigilia di Cambrai,” 23, 29–32; Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades: From Lyons to Alcazar 1274–1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 124.

⁴⁸*Leonis X Pontificis Maximi Regesta*, ed. J. Hergenröther (Freiburg, 1884–91), no. 8559; Pietro-Maria Amiani, *Memorie storiche della città di Fano* (Fano, 1751), 2:109; Babinger, *Ende der Arianiten*, 78–79; Petta, *Despoti d'Epiro*, 177.

⁴⁹Kenneth M. Setton, “Pope Leo X and the Turkish Peril,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 93 (1969): 381, 387, 403, 405, reprinted in Kenneth M. Setton, *Europe and the Levant in the Middle Ages* (London: Variorum, 1974), no. 9; Setton, *Papacy and Levant*, 3:77.

⁵⁰Han Lamers, “The Imperial Diadem of Greece: Giovanni Gemisto's Strategic Representation of Graecia (1516),” in *Discourses of Power: Ideology and Politics in Neo-Latin Literature*, ed. Karl Enenkel, Marc Laureys, and Christoph Pieper (Hildesheim: Olms, 2012), 65–94.

contribution may have been envisaged as something rather more practical, along the lines of his participation in the 1494 episode.

There may have been an additional reason behind the appointment, either in Leo's mind or Arianites's. The proximity of the March of Ancona to the Balkan coastline made it, along with Venice and Calabria, a natural area of settlement for Greek and Albanian refugees. The port of Ancona was an obvious arrival point, although to start with immigrants tended to pass through and settle elsewhere. Thomas Palaiologos had landed there in 1460 before moving on to Rome, and in 1436 some three hundred Albanians arrived at the port and then marched south to Recanati. From the late fifteenth century, numbers actually living in Ancona grew. The Constantinopolitan family of the soldier-poet Michael Maroullas (ca.1453–1500) probably settled there and by about 1520 there were some two hundred families in Ancona who were described as "Greek." By 1570 it was reckoned that there were a thousand Greeks in Ancona out of a total population of 18,500.⁵¹ Albanian settlement in the small towns of Fano and Pesaro to the north of Ancona had begun much earlier, in the 1430s and 1450s. In both towns, Greco-Byzantine and Albanian family names such as Costantino Boccali Greco, Andrea Bua Albanese, and Talianus Blaxii de Durazzo were widespread by 1500.⁵²

As a result of the immigration, the March of Ancona abounded in reminders of vanished Christian states of eastern Europe. The church of San Domenico in Ancona was filled with the funeral slabs of the more prominent refugees. To the south of Ancona, at Loreto, stood the house of the Virgin Mary which had supposedly been carried by angels from the Holy Land to Dalmatia after the fall of Acre in 1291. As the Ottoman threat grew, it was believed that the house had moved equally miraculously from the Balkans to the March of Ancona where it became a center for pilgrimage and healing. Among the visitors were Pope Pius II in 1464, en route to join the crusade fleet at Ancona, and the Byzantine émigré Frankoulios Servopoulos in 1474. To exiles from the East, like Servopoulos, the shrine would have had a particular significance, since it had followed the same journey that they themselves had taken. Hence the establishment of a confraternity of Slavs dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto.⁵³

⁵¹G. Saracini, *Notizie storiche della città di Ancona* (Rome, 1675), 321–24, 362; Ducellier et al., *Chemins de l'exil*, 255, 260, 264; Carol Kidwell, *Marullus: Soldier Poet of the Renaissance* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 18–19; Peter Earle, "The Commercial Development of Ancona, 1479–1551," *Economic History Review* 22 (1969): 42–43; M. I. Manoussakas, "Structure sociale de l'hellenisme post-byzantin," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31 (1981): 809–10; Jonathan Harris and Heleni Porphyriou, "The Greek Diaspora: Italian Port Cities and London, c. 1400–1700," in *Cities and Cultural Transfer in Europe: 1400–1700*, ed. Donatella Calabi and Stephen Turk Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 69.

⁵²Amiani, *Memorie*, 2:115; Ducellier et al., *Chemins de l'exil*, 257–58, 265–68.

⁵³Michael J. McGann, "The Ancona Inscription of Manilius Marullus," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 42 (1980): 401–4; Kidwell, *Marullus*, 18; Cecchini, "Anna Notara Paleologa," 33; Ducellier et al., *Chemins de l'exil*, 366; Bernard Hamilton, "The Ottomans, the Humanists and the Holy House of Loreto," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 30 (1987): 1–19.

Such links with the past were deliberately fostered and perpetuated by immigrants to the area and their descendants. Tommaso Diplovatzio (1468–1541) was a successful jurist and lawyer who spent most of his later life in Pesaro. He was, however, a second generation immigrant. His father, George Diplovatzes, had been governor of the island of Lemnos in the last days of the Byzantine empire before taking refuge on Corfu where Tommaso was born. Raised and educated in Italy, Diplovatzio made much of his Byzantine heritage, styling himself as a "Patrician of Constantinople," and his biographers recorded that he was descended not from one imperial dynasty but two: the Vatatzes through his father and the Laskaris through his mother.⁵⁴

Diplovatzio's pride in his roots seems to have been purely a matter of antiquarian interest, but others used theirs to make wider claims. There was a branch of the Palaiologos family of Pesaro that claimed direct descent from the Byzantine imperial family.⁵⁵ Prosper Palaiologos settled in the town in 1537 and, as in the case of Diplovatzio, his descendants enthusiastically preserved the link with the past even though they had been born and raised in Italy. Prosper's grandson Theodore, who spent most of his career as an itinerant mercenary soldier and hired assassin, certainly did so. While living in Plymouth in the west of England during the 1620s, he wrote a letter to the Duke of Buckingham which he sealed with a double-headed eagle, much like that once used by Andreas Palaiologos.⁵⁶ When he died in 1636, his English friends placed a funerary brass on the wall of Landulph church in Cornwall listing his descent from Thomas Palaiologos, the despot of the Morea. The genealogy is almost certainly incorrect, since it attributes a son called John to Thomas Palaiologos and no contemporary source mentions his having a son of that name. That, however, is not the point at issue here. The information on the brass was presumably derived from Theodore himself and is evidence of the continued attachment among the diaspora in the March of Ancona to the vanished Christian empire of Constantinople.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Annibale degli Abati Olivieri Giordani, *Memorie di Tommaso Diplovatzio, patrizio constantinopolitano e pesarese* (Pesaro, 1771), v–ix; Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique des XVe et XVIe siècles* (Paris: Maisonneuve and Larose, 1962), 3:292–93; *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960), 40:249–52.

⁵⁵G. B. di Crollanza, *Dizionario Storico-Blasonico delle famiglie nobili e notabili Italiane estinte e fiorenti* (Pisa, 1890), 2:256–57.

⁵⁶National Archives, London, SP16/96/47, pp. 111–13; *Calendar of the State Papers: Domestic Series (1628–1629)*, ed. John Bruce (London, 1859), 27; J. H. Adams, "Theodore Palaeologus," *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* 6 (1970): 103–4. The wax seal described by Adams has since largely disappeared.

⁵⁷Adams, "Theodore Palaeologus," 106. The attachment to imperial descent eventually waned as the generations passed. Theodore's son Ferdinand inherited his name but seems to have made little of its significance. The tombstone on his grave in Barbados that traces his ancestry was put up centuries after his death; E. M. Shilstone, "Ferdinand Palaeologus," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 7 (1939–40): 160–69.

In view of the possibility of the launch of an anti-Ottoman crusade and the strong Balkan presence in the March of Ancona, it seems unlikely that it was pure coincidence that a Balkan exile should be appointed to administer Fano. In the event, no expedition against the Ottomans was launched during Arianites's tenure of the governorship, but he still may have hoped to be accepted as a figurehead by the Balkan immigrants there and to attract their political loyalty. It is possible therefore that he did play another role.

As the Balkan émigré communities in Italy grew, their members tried to obtain the use of a church where the services would be conducted according to the Greek or Slavonic Uniate rite, rather than in Latin. In Apulia and Calabria, where the Greek rite had been used for centuries, such places already existed,⁵⁸ but in the newer areas of settlement they had to be created. In Venice, where the number of immigrants was very large, this development began early. In 1442 a group of Albanians took to worshipping in the church of San Severo and in 1451 permission was given for the establishment of a confraternity of St. George and St. Trifone of the Slavs in the church of San Giovanni del Tempio. The Greeks of Venice were given a wing of the church of San Biagio in 1470 and in 1514 permission was given to build a dedicated Greek church. Among the smaller diaspora communities outside Venice, a chapel in the cathedral of Pesaro was given to the Albanians in the 1480s. A Greek chapel was established in Naples in 1518; churches were made available for the Uniate rite in Barletta in 1534, in Livorno in 1567, and in Rome in 1577.⁵⁹

It was not always easy to gain this concession as the ecclesiastical authorities were suspicious that once the exiles had a church of their own they would revert to the Orthodox liturgy and become schismatics like their coreligionists over the water. Leadership was important in pressing the case for a dedicated church. In Livorno, it came from Giovanni Manoli Voltera, a refugee from the island of Zante who was later to become governor of the city. It is noticeable that some of those involved in lobbying for a place of worship bore the Palaiologos name. Both the wealthy Anna Notara Palaiologina and the veteran soldier Theodore Palaiologos (d. 1432) took part in the negotiations to provide a place for Greek worship in Venice. Thomas Asanes Palaiologos, who established the Greek chapel at Naples, claimed to be the nephew of the last Byzantine emperor.⁶⁰ Constantine Arianites

may well have hoped to play such a role. It was, after all, in 1524, the very year that Pope Clement VII (1523–34) reappointed Arianites to the governorship of Fano, that the pope recognized the presence of a Greek community in Ancona and granted them the use of the church of St. Anna for their own rite. Arianites may have used his influence at the Curia to press for this concession or been involved in some other way.⁶¹

On the other hand, there is no specific evidence that he did do so and this in itself may be instructive. For although Arianites undoubtedly aspired to leadership of Balkan exiles in Italy it is probable that, like Thomas and Andreas Palaiologos before him, he failed to be accepted as such either by most immigrants or by the majority population. One can detect some cynicism among the Italians over his high-sounding titles. Lines in the two versions of the comedy *La Cortigiana*, by Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), mock his pretensions. The earlier 1525 edition is the most specific:

If noble blood were all that was needed to bring honor to men who don't deserve it, then the king of Cyprus and the prince of Fiossa wouldn't be in such bad shape. Signor Constantino would get the principality of Macedonia back; he'd think it beneath his dignity to be governor of Fano.⁶²

The later 1534 edition, which was printed and circulated widely, is more restrained and the sarcasm is merely implied rather than voiced overtly: "But who is more noble than Signor Constantine who was despot of the Morea and prince of Macedonia and now is governor of Fano?"⁶³ The Venetian Antonio Giustinian had a similarly low view of the despot of the Morea that he encountered in 1502, who may have been Arianites, and who was described as being of little worth (*poco valore*).⁶⁴ Moreover, Arianites was not a popular governor of Fano, among the Italians, Greeks, or Albanians who were seething with discontent over heavy papal exactions to pay for recent wars. On the last day of the carnival in 1516, a riot broke out in the town forcing Arianites to flee ignominiously to the castle. Leo X shortly thereafter gave the governorship of Fano to Lorenzo II de' Medici (1492–1519), who had recently obtained the dukedom of Urbino. It was not until 1524 that Arianites returned as governor after being reappointed by Clement VII.⁶⁵

The hostile reaction to Arianites's claims and titles was a much commoner one than the rather sympathetic account sent by Wolsey's agent of his "emperor

⁵⁸Pietro de Leo, "Condizioni economico-sociali degli Albanesi in Calabria tra XV e XVI secolo," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 35 (1981): 55; Ducellier et al., *Chemins de l'exil*, 415–16.

⁵⁹Ducellier et al., *Chemins de l'exil*, 212, 214–15, 368; Heleni Porfyriou, "La presenza greca in Italia tra cinque e seicento: Roma e Venezia," in *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri XIV–XVIII secolo*, ed. Donatella Calabi and Paolo Lanaro (Rome: Laterza, 1998), 21–38; Harris, *Greek Émigrés*, 24–31; Harris and Porphyriou, "Greek Diaspora," 69–72.

⁶⁰Harris and Porphyriou, "Greek Diaspora," 72; Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice: Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning from Byzantium to Western Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 65; D. Ambrasi, "In margine all'immigrazione greca nell'Italia meridionale nei secoli XV e XVI: La comunità greca di Napoli e la sua chiesa," *Asprenas* 8 (1961): 157.

⁶¹Saracini, *Notitie*, 362; Harris and Porphyriou, "Greek Diaspora," 69.

⁶²Pietro Aretino, *Cortigiana*, ed. Angelo Romano (Milan: Rizzoli, 1989), 75 (act 1, scene 12); Aretino, *Cortigiana*, trans. J. Douglas Campbell and Leonard G. Sbocchi (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 2003), 65–66. The king of Cyprus is probably one of the illegitimate sons of James II of Cyprus (r. 1463–73), Eugenio or Giovanni; see George F. Hill, *A History of Cyprus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 4:654–56.

⁶³Pietro Aretino, "La Cortigiana," in Aretino, *Tutte le commedie*, ed. G. B. de Sanctis (Milan: Mursia, 1968), 127 (act 1, scene 9).

⁶⁴Giustinian, *Dispacci*, 1:164.

⁶⁵Amiani, *Memorie*, 2:110, 129; Babinger, *Ende der Arianiten*, 79–80; Petta, *Despoti d'Epiro*, 177.

of Constantinople." Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609), who encountered a Palaiologos claimant at some point during his career, concluded bitterly that he was a deceiver and that all the Greeks found in the west were too, echoing the warning of Lithgow about the "vagabonding Greeks."⁶⁶ No doubt there was deception and pretension, but nothing is easier than to pour scorn on those who have lost the political fight yet still cling to their claims, legitimate or otherwise. Some two hundred years after Arianites's death, another political exile found refuge in Italy, Charles Edward Stuart (1720–88), claimant to the thrones of England and Scotland. His pretend court at Florence was mocked not only by his Hanoverian enemies but even by his former wife, the countess of Albany, who ridiculed Charles's bestowal of empty titles and honors.⁶⁷ Perhaps it is the fate of all rulers in exile to be lampooned and derided as the hopelessness of their cause becomes obvious to everyone except themselves and their dwindling band of adherents.

CONCLUSION: LEADERSHIP AND IDENTITY

This article set out to examine how claims to imperial descent and titles were used by Balkan émigrés both as a means of gaining sympathy and support and as a way of signaling leadership of Christians dispossessed by the Ottoman conquest. Clearly they were not always successful on either count. Michael Palaiologos and Isabella Laskarina ended up in prison and their ultimate fates are unknown. The "emperor of Constantinople" described by Wolsey's agent disappeared without a trace, and Constantine Arianites ended his days as an unsuccessful governor of an Italian town, his grandiose titles giving rise to mirth rather than respect.

The failure is not the significant point here. In a world without modern notions of ethnic nationalism, the pretensions of Arianites and others were closely connected to identity and self-definition. They were trying to appeal to people who defined themselves partly through their families and their place of origin, partly through their religion and their language, but also through their allegiance to a sovereign, under whose rule they had been born.⁶⁸ For the Balkan émigrés in Venice, the March of Ancona and other parts of Italy, many of those markers of identity were slowly being eroded: they had abandoned their homeland, they were under pressure from the ecclesiastical authorities to accept the Uniate Catholic rite in their churches rather than the Orthodox, and inevitably their second generation was growing up speaking the local Italian dialect as a first language. In this widening void, a connection with the toppled elites

of Byzantium and the Balkans was not just an empty affectation but a genuine appeal to a shared past and a recognizable marker of identity. Just as Charles Edward Stuart's claims, which he attempted to vindicate in an uprising in 1745, represented the aspirations of the considerable group of Catholics and Highland Scots who had lost out as a result of the Hanoverian Protestant succession, so Constantine Arianites and others aimed to act as a focus for the victims of Ottoman success. Whatever their personal failings, they were voicing irredentist sentiment in the language of their time. ✠

⁶⁶Scaligeriana (Geneva, 1666), 251.

⁶⁷BL, Add. MSS 34634, fol. 70, cited in Frank McLynn, *Charles Edward Stuart: A Tragedy in Many Acts* (London: Routledge, 1988), 544.

⁶⁸Anthony A. M. Bryer, "The Pontic Greeks before the Diaspora," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4 (1991): 323; Jonathan Harris, "Being a Byzantine after Byzantium: Hellenic Identity in Renaissance Italy," *Kambos: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek* 8 (2000): 29. On contrasting modern markers, see Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 14.