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CONCERNING TURKISH ASSAULTS ON MOUNT ATHOS
IN THE 14th CENTURY, BASED ON BYZANTINE SOURCES

In works dealing with events on Mount Athos during the XIV century, or with the Turkish penetration of the Balkan peninsula, historians of monastic life and Byzantinologists in general speak of the Turkish attacks against Mount Athos. They frequently use documents of the Protaton, which clearly show that »from the middle of the XIV century, Mount Athos suffered from cruel Turkish attacks«¹. Among those who have drawn attention to this fact, N. Oikonomides is prominent. While giving a brief history of the monastery of Dionysiou, Oikonomides draws attention to the abundant information contained in the Lives (*Žitijà*) of prominent Hesychasts concerning the Turkish attacks on the Athos peninsula which started at the end of the first quarter of the XIVth century². In view of the frequency of these attacks, the disturbances and horrors which they caused among the monks, and their consequences which in many ways changed the way of life of the monasteries, it is necessary to collect and analyze all available information left by contemporaries. The Byzantine sources are all the more significant because testimonies about these events in the other contemporary sources are extremely poor (Serbian, Bulgarian) or non-existent (Turkish, Western).

Mount Athos, like the greater part of the Byzantine Empire, was exposed to continual Turkish assaults from land and sea. Sea attacks on the Athos peninsula began earlier than those from the land, since Turkish pirates posed a threat to the entire region of the Aegean, beginning at the end of the 13th and continuing throughout the 14th century. During the second half of the 13th century the Turks had conquered Asia Minor »all the way to the sea and had established their settlements

¹ G. Ostrogorski, *Serska oblast posle Dušanove smrti*, Beograd 1965, 126–127.

² *Actes de Dionysiou*, éd. N. Oikonomidès (Archives de l'Athos IV), Paris

1968, p. 8 n. 27; cf. also N. Oikonomidès, *Monastères et moines de la conquête ottomane*, *Südost-Forschungen* 35 (1976) 1–10.

on the coast itself« (... ἄχρι θαλάττης ἀπάσης καὶ πρὸς αὐταῖς ἤδη ταῖς ἀκταῖς μετοικήσαντες)³. These were Ghazi emirates: Menteshe, Aydin and Sarukhan⁴. Of a warlike disposition, these emirates built and maintained a pirate fleet whose lively activity was facilitated by the non-existence of a Byzantine fleet. It was exactly at the time when the Emperor Andronicos II Palaeologus (1282–1328) disbanded (1284) his fleet, due to lack of funds, that the pirates undertook new attacks. The Byzantine historians G. Pachymeres and N. Gregoras, sharply attack the above-mentioned Emperor's decision, pointing out the very undesirable and far-reaching consequences which it had on the Empire. Thus, N. Gregoras says that »the Latins would not have been so impudent towards the Romans, nor would the Turks have ever seen the maritime sand, if the Roman fleet had ruled over the seas as before« (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν ἄν οὐτε Λατίνους οὕτω κατὰ Ῥωμαίων θρασύνεσθαι, οὐτε ψάμμον θαλάσσης θεάσασθαι Τούρκους ποτέ, τῆς ναυτικῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων δυνάμεως θαλαττοκρατοῦσης ὡς πρότερον)⁵. It was frequently unemployed mariners who began to take up piratical activities and were thus forced »to go over to the enemy and together as pirates ravage the Roman regions« (τοῖς δὲ καὶ αὐτομολεῖν τοῖς ἐχθροῖς, ὥστε σὺνάμῃ ἐκείνοις πειρατῶν τρόπῳ Ῥωμαίων κακοῦν)⁶. Pachymeres further adds that »there arrived daily news of sufferings from all parts« and they were connected with the attacks of the Turks »not only from the land, but from the sea as well«⁷.

Thus, early on, Mount Athos also became an object of the Turkish attacks. The earliest mention of the sufferings caused at sea by »the godless pirates« is to be found in the founding charter of King Milutin (1282–1321) for Chilandar's pyrgos (tower) in Chrusia in 1300 or 1302⁸. This detail is confirmed in the exposition of the origin of Basil pyrgos (at Chrusia) in connection with the legal suit which the monks of that pyrgos brought against the monks of Chilandar before the metropolitan of Serres in May 1388. In this document it is argued that the main reasons for the building of the pyrgos were the lack of a port for the monastery and »the great damage which the monastery had suffered at the hands of the Turks who plundered it« (καὶ ζημίαν ὅτι πλείστην ὑφίστασθαι

³ N. Gregorae, *Byzantina historia* I, ed. L. Schopeni, Bonnæ 1829, 214, 5–7.

⁴ Concerning these emirates see: P. Wittek, *Das Fürstentum Mentesche. Studien zur Geschichte Westkleinasiens im 13.–15. Jahrh.*, Neudruck Amsterdam 1967, 24–57; P. Lemerle, *L'Emirat d'Ay-din, Byzance et l'Occident. Recherche sur »La Geste d'Umur Pacha«*, Paris 1957, 19–39; P. Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, Reprint London 1966, 34–36; Cl. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, London 1968, 308–309.

⁵ Gregoras I, 209, 5–8.

⁶ G. Pachymeris de Michaelae et Andronico Palaeologo libri tredecium II, ed. I. Bekker, Bonnæ 1835, 71, 4–8.

⁷ *Ibid.* 343, 10–344, 1–2.

⁸ *Actes de Chilandar. Deuxième partie: Actes slaves, publiés par B. Korablev, Viz. Vremeni* 19 (1912), Priloženie No. 10, 23–24.

παρὰ των πορθούντων ἐπὶ θαλάσσης Περσων)⁹. Among the Turkish attacks from the beginning of the XIV century, but which the contemporary writers did not set down, it is interesting to note a report of »the surprising attack of the Ismailites« (ἡ ἔφοδος των Ἰσμαηλιτων παρὰ προσδοκίαν ἐπιπεσοῦσα, — it is mentioned in the document of the Protos Theophanes of April 1312¹⁰. This attack prevented the Protos Lukas from carrying out the delimitation of the properties belonging to the monasteries Vatopedi and Veriota, which Protos Theophanes accomplished with the above-mentioned document. In view of the chronological limits during which Lukas was the Protos, it is possible to argue that the Turkish attack mentioned in the document of Theophanes could have happened between April 1306. and the first days of 1307.¹¹

In the above mentioned instances, as well as later in the course of the 14th century, Turkish assaults and destruction on Mount Athos posed no threat to the survival of the monks, mainly thanks to the existence of large and well-protected monasteries. However, there were places in which there was not adequate protection and which the monks were forced to abandon. It is interesting to cite in this connection the monastery Great Lavra which received in December 1305. from the archbishop of Lemnos a small monastery of Our Lady called τῆς Κακαβιώτισσης on the same island. This monastery was used for the accommodation of the monks of Great Lavra »with their mobile property and other goods« from the island of St. Eustrathios, where they suffered from the assaults of »the godless peoples« (διὰ τὴν ἔφοδον των ἀθέων ἐθνων)¹².

In the course of the first decade of the 14th century, most likely in the second half of 1307, Turkish detachments, constituting a part of the Catalan Company, had arrived at Mount Athos by land. This confirms the report left by Byzantine authors that, together with the Catalans, around two thousand Turks under the command of Melek and Halil came across into Thrace (συστάντες οὖν οἱ των Τουρκικων στρατευμάτων ἡλεμονεύοντες, ὃ, τε Μεληκ καὶ ὁ Χαλήλ)¹³. We know of the imminent danger which threatened Mount Athos from the Life of Sava the Younger, monk of the Vatopedi monastery. Its compiler, patriarch Philotheos, after telling about the alliance between the Catalans and Turks and their joint attack against Macedonia, points out the especial concern shown for Mount Athos by Emperor Andronicos II. He writes that the Emperor, »being unable to defend it (Mount Athos) with arms or an army, wrote

⁹ Actes de Chilandar, Première partie: Actes grecs, publiés par L. Petit, Viz. Vremennik 17 (1911), Priloženie No. 158, 95–96.

¹⁰ Акти Русского на Св. Афоне монастыря св. великомуи: Пантелеимона, Киев. 1873, No. 8, п. 92.

¹¹ Cf. Actes du Prôtaton, ed. D. Papa-

chryssanthou (Archives de l'Athos (VII) Paris 1975, p. 135.

¹² Actes de Lavra II, de 1204 à 1328, éd. par P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, D. Pappachryssanthou, Paris 1977, N. 100, 2.

¹³ Gregoras I, 245, 3–6 and 248, 18–19; Pachymeres II, 652.

a personal letter to the dispersed anchorites and monks living in monasteries without protective walls, urging them to seek well protected monasteries, or even better, to look for protection in the nearby cities¹⁴. In the Life of the Archiepiskopos Danilo II, it is also mentioned that the Turks, together with »other numerous people«, attacked Mount Athos at the time when Danilo was hegoumenos at the Chilandar monastery.¹⁵

Until the end of the first quarter of the 14th century contemporary sources do not contain information about the Turkish attacks against Mount Athos. However, from that time on, reports become rather frequent. These attacks were a permanent threat to the small monasteries, especially the poorly protected cells in the coastal area of the peninsula. These were mostly assaults of pirates coming from the emirates of Asia Minor. In the sources they are identified as follows: Ismailites, Achemenides, Persai, Mousoulmanoï, Tourkoi, Ounnoi and most frequently Agarinoi (Ἰσμαηλιῖται, Ἀχαιμενίδαι, Πέρσαι, Μουσουλμάνοι, Τουρκοί, Οὐννοί, Ἀγαρινοί). Contemporaries of these events were familiar with the fact that »the Agarins were usually called Turks« (Οἱ οὖν Ἀγαρινοί, Τουρκοί συνήθως καλούμενοι) and that they were »the sea pirates« (Ἀγαρηνοί, θαλασσίων δηλαδή πειραταί)¹⁶.

In addition to attacks from the sea, Mount Athos suffered assaults from the Turkish forces on the mainland, since the Byzantine Emperors in the era of civil wars constantly relied upon Turkish support. Writing to prominent Athinoites in 1322, Emperor Andronicos II speaks of the difficult situation which he had faced when the Turkish mercenaries refused to fight against the army of Andronicos III. »Now, the enemies are threatening from all sides, but most of all, the infidels, because their activity is intensifying« (ἄτε δὴ καὶ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἀρτίως πανταχόθεν ἐπικειμένων καὶ μάλιστα γὰρ τῶν ἀσεβῶν) it says in the prostagma written to

¹⁴ Sabas Athonites, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, V Petersburg 1898, 211, 4–11: Καὶ γράμματα τῆς αὐτοῦ χειρὸς αὐτίκα πρὸς ἐκείνους ἐφοίτα, τοὺς μὲν καθ' ἡσυχίας ἐρωτά πανταχῆ τοῦ ὄρου διεσπαρμένους μοναδικούς τε καὶ σύνδου, καὶ αὐτὰ δὲ φημι τὰ τῶν φροντιστηρίων ἀτείχιστα, ἢ καὶ ἄλλως εὐάλατα, διὰ σαθρότητα περιβόλων καὶ σπάνιν τῶν ἐνοικούντων πρὸς τὰ τῶν ὀχυρωμάτων δυσλαωτότερα μετοικίζεσθαι κατοχυρούμενα καὶ αἰθις ὀπδση δύναμις πρὸς τὰς ἐγγυτέρω πόλεις τοὺς βουλομένους, ἀποκρίπτοντας ἑαυτοὺς.

Cf. F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches III*, München 1932, No. 2300.

¹⁵ *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, written by archbishop Danilo II, ed. D. Daničić, Zagreb 1866, 341; translated by L. Mirković, *Danilo II arhiepiskop, Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, Beograd 1935, 259.

¹⁶ As such they are mentioned in the Life of Athanasios, the founder of the Meteora, ed. N. Bees, *Συμβουλή εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῶν Μετεώρων*, Βυζαντίς I (1909) 243 and Dionysios Athonita, ed. B. Laourda, *Βίος τοῦ ὁσίου Διονυσίου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτου*, *Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου* 21 (1956) § 51, p. 64.

monk-priest Niphon, hegoumenos of Vatopedi monastery¹⁷. In the Emperor's letters to Protos Isak and Nicodim, monk of Vatopedi, Andronicos II talks about «Turkish attacks which last for a long time and on account of which the country is exposed to plundering» (τῆ τῶν ἀσεβῶν βαρβάρων ἐπιδρομῇ καὶ τῇ λύμῃ τῆς χώρας)¹⁸. Mount Athos in particular like the other parts of the Balkan Peninsula, was endangered by the collaboration of John Cantacuzenos (1347–1354) with the Turks. Brought to Thrace and Macedonia, the Turkish detachment did not miss the opportunity of attacking Mount Athos as well. An act of the Protaton of June 1345, speaks of attacks from both land and sea: «We have suffered and still suffer from the great horrors inflicted by the Godless pirates, not only from their open and hidden attacks from the land, but even more so, we suffer from the sea, since they approach the coast with their vessels» (Καὶ οὐ διὰ ξηραῶς μόνον γῆς φανερωσ τε καὶ ἀφανως συχναῖς ἐφόδοις τῶν ἀθεῶν πειρατῶν τὰ ἀνίηκεστα καὶ πεπόνθαμε καὶ ἔτι πάσχομεν, ἀλλὰ πολλῶ πλέον ἐκ θαλάττης, ταῖς οἰκίαις ναυσὶ τούτων περαιουμένων, τὰ πέρα δειπῶν ὑφιστάμεθα)¹⁹.

During the first half of the 14th century the number of hesychasts was growing constantly, since hesychasm was attracting new supporters and adherents. The most prominent hesychasts at the time were Gregorios Palamas and Gregorios of Sinai. They, as well as their numerous adherents and followers, dwelled in distant and badly protected cells, in order to be able to live in peace, undisturbed. At the time there were three hesychast centers: Glossia and Magoula, close to each other in the vicinity of the monasteries Philotheou and Karakalou, in the region of Provata and Milea, ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἀκροτάτῳ καὶ ἀπαρακλήτῳ ὄρει τῷ πρόποδι τοῦ Ἄθωνος²⁰. Glossia and Magoula were destroyed during the Turkish attacks carried out around 1325. The Patriarch Philotheos writes about it, telling how G. Palamas moved from the Great Lavra to Glossia, where he lived for two years with Gregorios the Great. They were not able, however, to enjoy «the best sojourn and silence» (καλλίστης διατριβῆς καὶ ἡσυχίας) throughout that time, the reason being, writes Philotheos, that «the Achaemenids constantly attacked Mount Athos, and especially those monks who preferred to live outside the strong walls in peace and quiet; they were haunted and disturbed almost every day, sometimes by surprise attacks, invasions, killing and imprisonment, and sometimes only by suspicions,

¹⁷ J. Bompaire – L. Mavromatis, La querelle des deux Andronic et le Mont Athos en 1322. Rev. Et. Byz. 32 (1974) 196, 8.

¹⁸ Ibid. 193 and 194, 4–5.

¹⁹ H. Ktenas, Ὁ Πρωτος τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους Ἄθω καὶ ἡ «Μεγάλη Μέση» ἢ «Σύναξις». ΕΕΒΣ 6, 1929, 270, 6–9.

²⁰ Bees, Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῶν Μετεώρων, 242.

²¹ Encomium Gregorii Palamae, ed. J. P. Mighe, P. G. 151, 569. Cf. J. Meyendorff, Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas, Paris 1959, 52–53.

since they were disturbed by fear and the lack of the desired silence . . . «²¹. G. Palamas left Glossia with eleven monks and arrived at Thessaloniki. The Magoula hesychasts, the future Patriarchs Isidore and Callistus, also left their lodgings. G. Sinaites, who was the first to build his cell in Magoula and afterward changed his residence in order to avoid being disturbed by people who wanted to see him and imitate his life, was forced to look for protection in Thessaloniki when »suddenly the godless barbarian people, the Agarins, began to attack and devastate Mount Athos«²². The same attack caused the cells belonging to the Lavra at Vulevtiria to be deserted²³.

The Patriarch Philotheos claims that the monks »being obedient to that law of God, which orders them to leave when they are disturbed and not to go together with the invaders, were forced to leave against their will«²⁴. However, not all the monks who lived through the horrors of the Turkish attacks were prepared to leave Mount Athos. Many decided to look for protection within the fortified monastery walls. Thus German the Hagiorite, after »leaving his lodgings outside of the monastery because there were great disturbances and disorders caused by the attacks of the Ounoi, lived in Lavra (. . . καὶ τὰς ἔξω διατριβὰς ὁ μέγας ἀπολιπὼν, ὡς πολὺτὸ ταραχῶδες καὶ συγκεχυμένον ἤδη προσκτισαμένας ταῖς τοῦ Οὐνικοῦ τούτου ἔθλους συνεχέσιν ἐφόδοις, τῆς Λαύρας ἐντὸς ἦν καὶ ἑαυτὸν διατριβῶν)²⁵.

The Protos Isak, who during this period of troubles remained as the head of Mount Athos, points out in his act of September 3, 1329, that the major reasons for the decline of monasteries were »frequent imprisonments and barbarians invasions« (ἡ ταῖς συνεχέσιν αἰχμαλωσίαις καὶ βαρβαρικαῖς ἐφόδοις)²⁶.

A temporary lull in the attack began in the course of the fourth decade, when the Turks did not disturb Mount Athos. This brought G. Sinaites and G. Palamas back to Athos. However, this does not mean that the Peninsula was completely relieved of the Turkish menace. In the summer of 1334, about sixty Turkish ships entered the harbour in the

^{21a} About that we are informed by Vita Patr. Isidori ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Zapiski istor.-filolog. fakulteta Sob. Universiteta* 76 / 1905/, 77, 33–34 and 78, 1–7.

αἰτοῖς, ἐπεὶ τοὺς ἔξω τειχῶν ἐπ' ἐρημίας ἀνχωροῦντας οὐκ ἦν ἡρεμεῖν, ἀλλοί μὲν εἶσω τῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει φρουρίων ἐκείνων καὶ βουλόμενοι δὴ ποῦθεν πρὸς ἀνάγκης εἶχον ἑαυτοὺς εἰσθεῖν. οἱ δ' εἰς ἐτέρας πόλεις μεταβάνειν καὶ χώρας, ὅσοις ἐκεῖνο μὴ ράδιον ἦν, τότε δὴ καὶ οὔτοι συνελαθέντες ὑπὸ ταυτησί τῆς ἀνάγκης εἰς Θεσσαλονίκην αἰθῆς σὺν ἐτέ-

ροῖς γέ τισιν ὑποστρέφουσιν . . .

²² Gregorios Sinaites, ed. I. Pomjalovskii, *Zapisi istor.-filolog. fakulteta SPb. — Universiteta* 35 (1896) 33.

²³ Actes de Kutlumus, éd. P. Lemerle (*Archives de l'Athos II*) Paris 1945. 15, 41.

²⁴ Encomium G. Palamae. *ibid.* 569.

²⁵ Germanos Athonites, ed. P. Joannou, *Vie de S. Germain l'Hagiorite par son contemporain le patriarche Philothée de Constantinople*, *Anacta Bollandiana* 70 (1952) 98, 24–28.

²⁶ *Kutl.* 15, 36–37.

vicinity of the town of Sermilia »which was a lively place before, but which was destroyed during a war« (τὴν Σερμυλίων πόλιν, πάλαι μὲν ὠκισμένην, νυνὶ δὲ ὑπὸ τινος ὡς εἶοικε πολέμου κατεσκαμμένην)²⁷. After landing on the shore, the Turks attacked villages in the vicinity belonging to Mount Athos monasteries (Dochiariou, Zographou, Vatopedi, Iviron). It is likely that they extended their plundering incursions as far as Mount Athos itself. Their further attacks were stopped with the arrival of the imperial troops, which inflicted a heavy defeat on them.

At the end of the fourth decade of the XIV century the Turks renewed their devastating raids around the Great Lavra (τὸ ρηθὲν βαρβαρικὸν ἔθνος τὸ ἐκεῖσε τόπον κατέτρεχεν). G. Sinaites who built cells for himself and his pupils in the vicinity of the monastery, moved to the Lavra.»since he was unable to live and pray in peace«²⁸. Soon he decided to leave Athos for ever. The Turkish pirates began to push their attacks on towards the hardly accessible area of Milea, which forced its inhabitants to abandon their hermitage. Old Moses with his pupil Stephen looked for protection in Iviron. The founder of the Meteora monastery Athanasios, also had to look for another asylum²⁹. From these incursions the monastery τοῦ Νεακίτου probably suffered^{29a}.

Several years later the Turkish attacks became more intensive. This led in the first place to the destruction of the numerous Protaton cells, lying in the vicinity of Karyes. We know of these cells from the act of Protos Anthony, of January 1348, which says that the cell of Gomatou »one of those which are under the Protaton, suffered with others equal devastation at the hands of the godless Turks« (Καὶ τὸ τοῦ Γομάτου κελλίον ἔν καὶ αὐτὸ τυγχάνον των ἐφ' ἡμῖν τελούντων, μᾶλλον δὲ των τῶ πρωτείῳ ὑποκειμένων, τὴν ἴσην καὶ αὐτὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις πέπονθε ἐρήμοσιν παρὰ των ἀθέων Ἀγαρηνων)³⁰. The attack described here was apparently more devastating than previous ones and remained long in the memory of the monks on account of the consequences it provoked. In the document of Protos Theodulos of June 1353, the assault was described as »a great, long and ferocious attack by the godless Turks« (. . . τὴν μεγάλην καὶ συνεχῆ καὶ σφοδρὰν ἐπίθεσιν των ἀθέων Ἀγαρηνων . . .)³¹. Even twenty years later, in April 1363, protos Dorotheos speaks of the attack as »the devastation and destruction which the Turks inflicted upon Mount Athos« (. . . τὴν γενομένην φθορὰν καὶ ἀπώλειαν εἰς τὸ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἅγιον Ὄρος παρὰ των Τουρκων). During that attack, in addition to unprotected cells, a small monastery, Katsari, was heavily damaged, »its tower burnt down

²⁷ Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum I. Bonnae 1828, 455, 10 sq.

²⁸ Gregorios Sinaites 38, 23–28.

²⁹ N. Bees, Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν των Μετεώρων, 244.

^{29a} Cf. Actes de Kastamonitou, éd diplomatique par N. Oikonomidès. (Archi-

ves de l'Athos IX). Paris. P. Lethielleux 1978, p. 12.

³⁰ Kutl. 23, 1–2.

³¹ V. Mošin et A. Sovre, Supplementa ad acta graeca Chilandarii. Ljubljana 1948, 7, 1–2.

and every thing else destroyed« (προέβαινον εἰς παντελεῖ ἀπόλειαν καὶ τὸ τοῦ Κάτζαρη μονῆριον ἐκείη γὰρ ὑπ' αὐτῶν καὶ ὁ ἐκεῖσε ἰστάμενος πύργος καὶ τὰ ἄλλα συντέτριπται)³². The pyrgos belonging to the cell of St. Sava suffered as well, and the cell itself was reduced to a miserable condition.

The Turkish attacks on Mount Athos stopped around 1347, as we know since at the time of the arrival of Emperor Stephen Dušan and Empress Jelena at the Peninsula, and during their stay there, there are no references to the Turks. However, the period of peace did not last long. Around 1353, Jephrem, the future patriarch of Serbia, left Mount Athos because it was »attacked by the Agarins who committed many crimes«³³. Probably at that time Theodosios from Turnovo left Mount Athos because he could not make his home there »due to barbarian assaults«³⁴. In the act of the Protaton of April 1357, there is a report that »the cell of Ravduchou has been wiped out and completely destroyed by the attack of the godless Agarins«³⁵.

Concerning the energetic Turkish attacks on Athos in the course of the 1370s, we find testimonies in two acts of the Protaton from December 1369. Describing the reasons for the decline and miserable condition of the cells (Kamilavha, Skathi, Schoinoplokou) these documents emphasise »the attacks of godless Turks«³⁶. These allegations are confirmed in the Life of the hermit Niphon, where its author mentions that »the Turks have plundered the area around Vatopedi monastery« (. . . καὶ Ἀχαιμενιδῶν τὰ ἐκεῖσε μέρη ληϊζομένων)³⁷.

The defeat at the battle of Maritsa, on September 26, 1371, and the death of Despot Uglješa »caused a great disturbance and all the monks at Mount Athos, especially the anchorites and those who lived in deserted places, were filled with fear« (ἡ ἀναίρεσις τοῦ χριστιανικαὶ συγχύσεως καὶ δέους ἅπαντες οἱ μοναχοὶ ἐπληρώθησαν οἱ ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ ὄρει καὶ μάλιστα οἱ μονάζοντες καὶ ἐν ἐρήμοις τόποις καθήμενοι)³⁸.

³² Ross, p. 98.

³³ Žitije svetog patrijarha Jefrema, by bishop Marko, ed. Đ. Trifunović, Anali Filološkog fakulteta 7 (1967) 70. See D. Bogdanović, Pesnička tvorenija monaha Jefrema, Hilendarski zbornik 4 (1978) 109–130 and M. Purković, Srpski patrijarsi srednjeg veka, Diseldorf 1976, 101–115 and 123–126.

³⁴ Žitie i žizni prepodobnago otea našego Deudosia, ed. V. N. Zlatarski, Sbornik za narodni umotvorini, nauka i knižništvo XX, II, naučen otdel, Sofija 1904, 16, 18–20. See V. Sl. Kiselkov, Sv. Teodosii Tornovski, Sofija 1926, 18–22.

³⁵ Actes du Pantocrator, publiés par L. Petit, Viz. Vremennik 10 (1903), Prilo-

ženje No 2, 5–6.

³⁶ Actes de Zographou, Actes grecs, publiés par W. Regel, E. Kurtz et B. Korabiev, Viz. Vremennik 13 (1907) Priloženje No. 45; Kutl. 28.

³⁷ Niphonos, ed. F. Halkin, La Vie de S. Niphon, ermite au Mont Athos, Anal. Bollandiana 58 (1940) § 7 19, 1–8.

³⁸ Romylos, ed. F. Halkin, Un ermite des Balkans au XIV^e siècle. La Vie grecque inédite de Saint-Romylos (Byzantion 31 1 (1961) § 22 142, 21–22 and 143, 1–5. Cf. G. Ostrogorski, Sveta Gora posle Maričke bitke, Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta XI:1 (Beograd 1970) 278–279 and N. Oikonomidès, Monastères et moines lors de la conquête ottomane, 3.

Among the numerous monks who left Athos was Romylos (of Ravanica). Such a reaction among the monks was natural. Despot Uglješa was considered by them as »most Christian«; he visited Mount Athos as he was preparing for war against Turks. Therefore the news of his death caused a strong reaction. But, aside from this, after the defeat at Maritsa the inhabitants of Mount Athos became directly threatened, since »these Ismailites encouraged by this victory, collected an enormous fleet and attacked Mount Athos and all Christians with the plundered Serbian weapons and brought in instruments for breaking the fortresses on Mount Athos« (θρασυνθέντες οἱ τοιαῦτοι Ἰσμαηλιῖται συνήξαν στόλον μέγαν πλοίων καὶ ἦλθον κατὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους καὶ κατὰ πάντων των χριστιανῶν μετὰ των ὄπλων των Σερβῶν, βασιτάζοντες καὶ τειχομαχικὰ ἐργαλεῖα διὰ τὰ κάστρον τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους)³⁹.

According to the author of Niphon's Life, all the Christians were so scared by the Turks that even the great primicerius John Palaeologus did not dare to meet them⁴⁰. Salvation came from another direction. Three Venetian vessels dropped their anchors before the Great Lavra. The author of the Life, naturally, ascribed their arrival to the prayer of the hegoumenos of the Lavra. The crew and the primicerius John succeeded in defeating the Turks. This attack of the Turks upon Mount Athos »had been prevented through the joint action of the Venetian galleys, which suddenly arrived on the scene, together with the forces of the great primicerius«⁴¹. If one dismisses certain exaggerations evident in Niphon's Life, in which the fact that the Turks came with arms taken from the defeated Serbs, deserves special attention, there can be no doubt that Mount Athos was the subject of Turkish attacks at that time. In the course of the following years the Turks did not cease to disturb the peace of Mount Athos. In the document written by Protos Gerasimos in January 1375, it is alleged that the cell of Jona's Chrisostomos ought to be taken away from the monastery Alypiou, but it was not possible »at this time on account of assaults of the Moslems« (τὸ δὲ νῦν ἀμήχανον διὰ τὴν ἔφοδον των Μουσουλμάνων)⁴². It was evident that the word »at this time« (νῦν) does not imply only one Turkish assault, but refers to a longer period of repeated Turkish attacks. In the third testament of Chariton, the hegoumenos of Koutloumousiou, there is mention of an assault which had occurred before July 1378 (the date of the composition of the testament). That such a

³⁹ Halkin, Vie de S. Niphon, § 18, p. 24, 18–22.

⁴⁰ Concerning John Palaeologus see Ostrogorski, Serska oblast posle Dušanove smrti, 147–154.

⁴¹ Ostrogorski, Sveta Gora posle Maričke bitke, 279–281; cf. and Oikonomidēs, Actes de Dionysiou, p. 9, n. 29.

⁴² It had to be accomplished according

to the instructions given by the Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople, namely that all the cells which were given away by the Protoi – Serbs should be returned to the Protaton: Kutl. 31, 13–15 and 20. Cf. G. Ostrogorski, Serska oblast 125–126 and idem, La prise de Serrès par les Turcs, Byzantion 35(1965)307–308.

⁴³ Kutl. 38, 13.

the strong pyrgos, leaving to others its completion«. In order to carry it out, Chariton endeavored to persuade Nicholas' son and successor, Duke John Vladislav (1364–1374), to help Koutloumousiou»with great effort and his own pains, with those of the fathers and the brotherhood of the monastery and with the participation and gifts of money of the above mentioned Duke . . . the strong castle was created, as it is seen today»⁴⁸.

There is an interesting report in the Life of St. Dionysios that during the building of the monastery of the same name (1356–1366), it was decided that a pyrgos should first be built»for defence against the pirates« (ἐφ' ᾧ πρῶτον πύργον πύργον γενέσθαι εἰς φρουρὰν τῶν ἐκ θαλάσσης ληστῶν)⁴⁹. It took a brief period of time to prepare the necessary material and a pyrgos was built.

We have seen that one of the results of the Turkish attacks was the destruction of those cells which were»far away from the monasteries, and which had no fortifications to protect them« (. . . τὰ πόρρω τῶν σεβασμίων μονῶν διακεείμενα κελλία πάντα ἀπόλλωντο τὴν ἐκ τῶν φρουρῶν ἀσφάλειαν ἀπορουῖντα . . .)⁵⁰. The most prominent reason for this was that the cells were left without inhabitants, being abandoned by those who escaped captivity. Thus the cells and hesychastiria in the Skite of Glossia were completely deserted by the middle of the 14th century (. . . τὰ τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἁγίου Ὁρους κελλία τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐρημούμενα . . .)⁵¹. In view of the fact that Glossia, although a rather large and populous Skite, could not survive the Turkish assaults, it is understandable that the smaller cells were declining even faster. The act of the Protaton of December 1369, after describing the decayed cells of Skathi and Schoinoplokou, indicates the sad condition they were in:»Neither are churches being preserved around these cells, nor living quarters, nor vineyards, nor olive trees; they are deserted, destroyed and ruined in every respect«⁵². Such was the destiny of many cells belonging to the Protaton. This fact greatly worried the Protos since economic decline of the cells meant, in fact, disruption of the regular income of the Protaton. This reason induced the Protaton to cede the cells to large, fortified and populous monasteries, which alone were able to restore them and thus save them from complete disappearance. In this way the Skite of Glossia was ceded to Great Lavra (April 1353), the cells Gomatou, Skathi and Schoinoplokou to Koutloumousiou (January 1348, December 1369) and Kamilavha to Zographou (December 1369)⁵³.

Moreover, it appears that it was not possible to live in the cells. In the same, above mentioned, act of January 1375, Protos Gerasimos,

⁴⁸ Kutl. 29, 17–24.

⁴⁹ Dionysios Athonita ed. Laourdas, Βίος ὁσίου Διονυσίου § 36, p. 57.

⁵⁰ Kutl. 23, 12–13.

⁵¹ I am grateful to Miss. D. Papachrysanthou who has kindly provided the xer-

ox-copy of the edition of Lavra III, manuscript No. 133, 3.

⁵² Kutl. 28, 11–13.

⁵³ Lavra III, 133; Kutl. 23 and 28; Zogr. 45.

while pointing out the idea of the legislators that the cells should be primarily given to the priests and the poor monks for the liturgical services, claims that »now it is not possible, . . . while it is convenient for the monastery since the monks will come out, go into liturgy and return to the fortification«.⁵⁴

The Turkish assaults of the 14th century helped create an atmosphere of insecurity which affected everyone living on Mount Athos, but the anchorites most of all. Death at the hands of the Turks, thought of as divine punishment, was not desirable in the least. Among the prophecies made by Maximos Kapsokalybes and the hermit Niphonos, well – known for their prophetic abilities, there is mention of »death from Ismailites«. Thus, Monk Athanasios Krokas was killed by the Turks as was predicted by M. Kapsokalybes. As for the monk Gabriel, who visited Iviron monastery, at a distance of 20 kilometers from the cave in which Niphonas lived, the holy prophet says that: »If he died, he was killed by Ismailites« (. . . ἐὰν ἀπέλθῃ κινδυνεύσει ἔχει ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰσμαηλιτῶν)⁵⁵.

Moreover, substantial fear and concern among the Athonites were caused by frequent imprisonments of which the Patriarch Philotheos and the Protos Isak speak in the second quarter of the 14th century. The Turks took the monks in the hope of returning them for a good ransom. For the members of the Protaton, caught during their return trip from Esphigmenou monastery, together with their companions and crew, the Turks demanded over 500 perpers⁵⁶. When the monk Gabriel who had visited Vatopedi, did not return on a certain day, his father, the monk Dositheos, feared that he had been captured by the Turks. From the Life of Niphonos we know that the Turks captured the priest Ioannikios together with the other monks and their ship on their way from Lavra to skete⁵⁷. Attacking not only at sea, the Turks would also land on the coast and capture monks. In this way Theodosios, hegoumenos of the monastery Philotheou, and the monks who went with him to the coast to catch fish for the monastery celebration (25 March) were captured before 1348. The Turkish ship arrived and the Turks suddenly attacked and caught all the monks. »After leaving Mount Athos the ship sailed towards the east« (πρὸς τὴν ἑὼ ἀπέτρεχε κατὰ δὲ τὴν τῆς Προύσης ἐπαρχίαν) and the Agarins sold the monks for money in the district of Bursa. From the Life of Dionysios we know about the destiny of the Philotheou monks. After paying ransom, certain devoted Christians let them go wherever they wanted. Almost all of them went back to their monastery⁵⁸. In view

⁵⁴ Kutl. 31, 17–21.

⁵⁵ Maximos ὁ Κωσοκαλύβης, ed. E. Kourilas et F. Halkin, Deux Vies de S. Maxime le Kausokalybe, ermite at Mont Athos (XIV), Anal. Boll. 54 (1936) p. 51, 28–92, 32; Halkin, Vie de S. Niphon, 26, 4–5.

⁵⁶ Ktenas, Πρωτος τοῦ Ἁγίου Ορους, No 26, p. 269–273.

⁵⁷ Halkin, Vie de S. Niphon, 19, 5–7 and 26, 15–17.

⁵⁸ Laourdas, Βίος ὁσίου Διονυσίου § 39, p. 58.

of such occurrences, the problem of collecting and paying ransom was gaining ever increasing attention from the brotherhoods and individuals. Speaking in his testament, written in July 1378, about the problem facing Mount Athos from the growing threat from the Turks, Chariton, hegoumenos of Koutloumousiou monastery, elaborated on the problem of prisoners. He says that the Turks would catch two or three monks, although on one occasion they took fourteen of them. The monastery was able to pay ransom for their release thanks to generous presents given by Emperor Dušan's widow, the nun Elisabeth. Chariton left to his brotherhood his liturgical vestments with the provision that the money got for it should be used for paying ransom⁵⁹. The hegoumenos Jeremia, Chariton's successor in that post, had been caught by the infidels and ransom was paid for him prior to October 1386 (ὄ τε τιμώτατος καθηγούμενος ἄρτι τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας ῥυσθεῖς)⁶⁰.

The Life of Dionysios describes how the Turks »who came from the sea« (νασιποροῦν) attacked the monastery during the absence of Dionysios 1377/78, in spite of the existence of a rather sizable pyrgos. The Turks were very numerous, writes the author of the Life: »A swarm of no small number of Agarins attacks the monastery using different equipment and, entering into it, they ransacked it; all the monks were tied up as prisoners and after taking numerous objects the enemy left the place«. The fact that Dionysios travelled to Asia Minor, (εἰς Ἀσίαν τῆς ἕω), possibly in the district of Smyrna to look for his brotherhood, shows that the invaders were Turks from the emirate of Aydin. The monks were sold off here and there. Dionysios, »after discovering them in various places, paid ransom for them, freed them and returned to the monastery, taking them with him« (ἐπιζητῶν καὶ εὐρῶν πολλαχόσε διεσπαρμένην αὐτὴν καὶ ἀργυρίου συχνοῦ τάντην ἐξωνησάμενος καὶ ἐλευθερώσας μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ τε λαβῶν, εἰς τὴν μάνδραν μετὰ πλείστης ὅτι χασᾶς ἐπανέρχεται)⁶¹.

However, it was not only the hegoumenos of a monastery who took care of collecting the necessary ransom. It was frequently the monks themselves, especially hermits, who collected money to pay ransom for the captives. Thus we find the monk who, while informing hermit Niphonos of the capture of the above-mentioned Ioannikios and other monks, says: »And now we are collecting money to buy them off, and so I gave a gold coin« (Καὶ νῦν συνάσσουν ἀργύρια ἵνα αὐτοὺς ἐξαγοράσωσι καὶ δέδωκα κἀγὼ δι' αὐτοὺς ἓνα χρυσόν)⁶². It was, therefore, necessary for

⁵⁹ Kutl. 36, 27–28 and. 1. 59–63.

⁶⁰ Kutl. 38, 19.

⁶¹ Laourdas, Βίος ὁσίου Διονυσίου § 51 and 52, p. 64–65: ... οὐκ ὀλίγων Ἀγαρηῶν... νασιποροῦν προσβάλλει τῇ μονῇ, οἱ μηχαναῖς παντοίαις χρησάμενοι καὶ ἐντὸς εἰσπηδήσαντες, πορθο-

ῦσι ταύτην καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὡς αἰχμαλώτους δῆσαντες καὶ ὅσα τῶν χρησίων ἦν αὐτόθι λαβόντες, ἐκεῖθεν ἄχοντο. Cf. Oikonimidès, Actes de Dionysiou, p. 12, n. 43.

individuals to have at their disposal a certain amount of money for paying ransom. This contributed to the growth of a belief in the necessity of having larger amounts of money than was thought necessary in previous times. At the same time, the possession of certain financial means at their disposition enabled the monasteries to attain substantial independence and thus, in the first place, along with certain other factors (the spread of hesychasm), helped the establishment of the idiorhythmic way of life on Mount Athos⁶³. The Life of the above-mentioned hermite, Germanos Hagiorite, a kelliote and not koinovite of the Great Lavra, throws to some extent more light on the development of the idiorhythmic way of life. Thus, while he lived outside of the monastery, he did not receive food and dress from the hegoumenos, as was prescribed, in the typikon of Athanasios. For his part, he did not give the hegoumenos the products of his calligraphic work⁶⁴.

Besides, we have seen that the group of monks led by the most prominent hesychasts were leaving Mount Athos, as a consequence of the Turkish assaults. They had created monastic centers in places which were not as yet threatened by the Turks, such as Meteora, Parapolia, Avlona. However, in spite of the evident lack of security, of which speak the Lives of prominent hesychasts and other sources from the XIV century, the fortified and well protected monasteries were even then considered to be safe and secure asylums.

For this reason, numerous prominent and wealthy nobles made adelphata for themselves in the Mount Athos monasteries, thus contributing to the increase of monastic wealth.

All these elements induced the Mount Athos monks, who were concerned, as always, for their privileges and properties, to recognize the supreme Turkish authority in 1386, for which they had to pay harach.

S u m m a r y

CONCERNING TURKISH ASSAULTS ON Mt. ATHOS IN THE 14th CENTURY, BASED ON BYZANTINE SOURCES

In this article the course and frequency of Turkish assaults on Mt. Athos will be exposed on the basis of available sources, as well as the repercussions they had on the monks living there. The conclusion arrived at is that the first Turkish attack took place in conjunction with the invasion of the Catalan army. The Turkish forces most

⁶³ Halkin, Vie de S. Niphon, p. 26, 18–19.

⁶⁴ For the causes of idiorhythmia see P. de Meester, De monachico statu iuxta

disciplinam byzantinam, Vaticanos 1942, 78–79 and 380–381.

⁶⁵ Joannou, Vie de S. Germain l'Hagiorite, § 19, p. 87–90 and 40.

probably undertook a somewhat independent attack on the Mt. Athos monasteries as well (1307—8), about which we have the testimony of a Protaton act of April, 1312.

Turkish assaults on the Athos peninsula began from the end of the first quarter of the 14th century. Information from Byzantine sources allows us to conclude that from that time on the Turks undertook at least one extensive and forceful attack in the course of each decade, in addition to less serious ones, whose consequences disturbed and disquieted the inhabitants of the Holy Mountain. Infantry assaults were undertaken by the Turks who were called to aid the Byzantine emperors at the time of the civil wars. However, Mt. Athos was much more dangerously exposed to constant naval attacks by the pirates of the emirates of Asia Minor. Those most endangered by these attacks were isolated ascetics — anchorites, about whom the Lives of the most important of the Hesychasts of that time speak (G. Palamas, G. Sinaites, M. Kausokolivites). On account of that, some of them left Mt. Athos, temporarily or permanently.

The unprotected cells of the Protaton, which were at some distance from the fortified monasteries, also succumbed to attacks. Thus, the Protaton ceased receiving revenues from them. For this economic reason he ceded them to the more populous, fortified monasteries. In addition, it must be emphasized that the Turks captured Athos monks whenever the opportunity presented itself. Ransoms were a major motive behind the Turkish attacks.

All of this had long-lasting consequences for the entire organization and way of life of the monks on Mt. Athos. The ties between the mother monastery and its cells became increasingly weaker. With the growing independence of the cells and at the same time on account of the continual insecurity, that is on account of the everpresent possibility of having to flee or of being taken captive, it became necessary to create a special fund in order to have a certain sum of money available. This in turn strengthened the independence of the monks living in cells with the respect to the higoumènos and to life in the community. This development must also be mentioned in connection with the appearance of idiorrhymia in the 14th century.

R e z i m e

O NAPADIMA TURAKA NA SVETU GORU U XIV VEKU NA OSNOVU VIZANTIJSKIH IZVORA

Sveta Gora je već od početka XIV veka bila izložena napadima sa mora koje su preduzimali turski pirati maloazijskih emirata. Turski odredi, pod vodstvom Meleka i Halila, stigli su na Svetu Goru u sastavu Katalanske kompanije, najverovatnije u drugoj polovini 1307. godine. Vesti o učestalim turskim napadima počinju krajem druge

četvrtine XIV veka. Pored napada sa mora, Sveta Gora je bila izložena i napadima Turaka sa kopna, naročito za vreme građanskih ratova.

Od tih napada na prvom mestu su stradali usamljeni podvižnici — anahorete. O tome govore Žitija najčuvenijih isihasta toga vremena (G. Palame, G. Sinaita, patrijarha Isidora, M. Kavsokalivita itd). Oni su privremeno ili zauvek napuštali Svetu Goru i osnivali nove monaške centre u mestima kojima još uvek nije pretila opasnost od Turaka. Nezaštićene protatske kelije, koje su bile udaljene od utvrđenih manastira, takođe su stradale i propadale. Protat ih je tada, zbog ekonomskih razloga, ustupao velikim zaštićenim manastirima. Zarobljavanje monaha od strane Turaka i briga da se obezbedi potrebna otkupnina mnogo je doprinosilo stvaranju opšte nesigurnosti na Svetoj Gori. Međutim, utvrđeni i dobro zaštićeni manastiri i tada su smatrani za sigurna i bezbedna utočišta, te su mnogi veoma ugledni i bogati velmoži stvarali u njima adelfate.

Sve je to imalo trajnih posledica za čitavu organizaciju monaškog života na Svetoj Gori. Potreba da se uvek raspoláže izvesnom novčanom svotom — eventualnom otkupninom, doprinosila je jačanju nezavisnosti monaha u odnosu na igumana i život u zajednici. To je, uz još neke okolnosti, doprinelo nastanku idioritmičkog načina života na Svetoj Gori.