

Early Ottoman Documents of the Prodromos Monastery (Serres)

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The monastery of *Saint John Prodromos* near Serres, known to the Ottomans as the monastery of *Margaritis*, was a most important monastic centre during the late Byzantine period and the Tourkokratia. A rich archive must have existed in it including Byzantine, Serbian and Ottoman documents. Unfortunately, the originals of almost all the Byzantine and Serbian documents have been lost. However the texts of a considerable number of them are known thanks to two cartularies of the 14th century and their copies. As for the Ottoman part of the archive, its fate is still unknown.¹⁾ The Greek translation of one Ottoman document—probably the oldest one—has been preserved, namely that of a firman of 1372/73 by which *Murad I* gave privileges to the monks of the monastery.²⁾ Three other Ottoman documents of the years 1412, 1419 and 1460, preserved in Greek translation, were also published 58 years ago by Gedeon.³⁾ The aim of this article is to draw attention to these three documents which seem to have been ignored up till now.

We do not know when and how the document of *Murad I* was translated. From its language one would assume that the translation was made in the 19th century. As regards the other three documents, however, we know exactly when and under what circumstances the translations were made. From a letter of *Theodosios*, an higoumenos of the Prodromos monastery, published together with the texts, we learn that he went in person to Constantinople in 1835. The purpose of his journey was to renew certain privileges of his monastery. This is why he had with him several documents from its archive. During his stay in Constantinople *Theodosios* had translations made of the three documents which we are going to examine, as well as of "many similar royal Ottoman documents". The Greek translation was made by the

¹⁾ A. Guillou, *Les Archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrome sur le Mont Ménécée*. Paris 1955, p. 17—36; information about the archive. I. Dujčev, *Le cartulaire A du monastère de Saint-Jean-Prodrome sur le Mont Ménécée retrouvé: Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, vol. 16 (1958), p. 169—171.

²⁾ Guillou, *op. cit.*, p. 155 with full bibliography of earlier editions.

³⁾ Μ. Γεδεών, *Ἀρχεῖον Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Ἱστορίας* [Archive of Church History]. Constantinople 1911, p. 393—396.

venerable *Yiorgak Ağa*, who was then *kapu kehayia* of the Greek Patriarchate.⁴⁾

The preserved texts show that the translation was made rather carefully. Nevertheless the irregular structure of some phrases in the Greek betrays the fact that the texts are translations of Turkish originals. More important still, they contain several Turkish words, belonging to the terminology of the Ottoman administration and taxation system. *Yiorgak Ağa* did not always translate these words; he merely transcribed them into Greek script. These terms will be discussed in detail in the footnotes, as they constitute the best proof for the authenticity of the documents.

I reproduce first of all the text of the firman of *Murad I*, as I shall be obliged to refer to it several times, and then the texts of the other three documents. Each document will be preceded by a summary in English; I have not attempted to give an English translation taking into consideration the fact that, as the texts are themselves translations, from Turkish into Greek, to translate them again, from Greek into English, could lead us very far from their originals.

1. Προσταγή (*hüküm*) of *Murad I*.

774, 1st decade of *Receb*: 1372, 27th of December—1373, 5th of January.⁵⁾

[The Sultan] sets free the monks of the monastery of Margaritis, together with their villages, lands, vineyards, mills: i.e. their *vakfs*. None of his successors or his dependents shall cause trouble to them and if anyone denounces them in court he must not be heard but dismissed. Date.

Ἡ ἰδική μου προσταγή εἶναι αὐτή⁶⁾: τοὺς κρατοῦντας καὶ ἔχοντας ταύτην τὴν ἱεράν μου προσταγὴν καλογήρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας Μαργαρίτου, διὰ⁷⁾ τὰ χωρία των, κτήματά των, ἀμπέλια των, μύλους των, χωράφια των καὶ βακούφια⁸⁾ των τοὺς

4) Γεδεδών, op. cit., p. 396—397.

5) Guillou's date of the document has been corrected by Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, La prise de Serrès et le firman de 1372 en faveur du monastère de Saint-Jean-Prodrome: *Acta Historica*, vol. 4 (1965), p. 16, note 10.

6) For the structure and the character of the document see P. Wittek, Zu einigen frühosmanischen Urkunden (VI): *WZKM*, vol. 58 (1962), p. 196—197. I shall refer to his remarks again.

7) One may wonder at the meaning of the preposition διὰ in the expression "διὰ τὰ χωρία των, κτήματά των ... τοὺς ἔχω ἐλευθέρους". The word ἐλευθέρους makes one think of an exemption from taxes; but the word *azad*, kept in the text, means the liberated slave. I shall explain what I understand by "ἐλευθέρους" in this case (see note 16); I think that some omission has been made in the clause about the monastery's properties. The text is not clear. All we can say is that the sultan acknowledges them by referring to them.

8) See Beldiceanu's remarks on the use of the word *vakf*, op. cit., p. 21.

ἔχω ἐλευθέρους, ἀζάτη⁹⁾, εὐχαριστία εἰς τὸν Θεὸν καὶ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ καὶ εἶθε νὰ εἶμαι καθαρὸς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀπὸ τὴν σήμερον καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς ἀπὸ τὰ ἰδικὰ μου παιδιὰ καὶ μονταλίκιδες σχετικούς μου ἀνθρώπους κανένας ἀπὸ τὸν αἰῶνα ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος νὰ μὴ ἐνοχλῆ αὐτοὺς διόλου, καὶ ὅστις ἤθελε νὰ τοὺς ἐνοχλήσῃ διὰ τῆς κρίσεως, νὰ μὴ εἰσακούηται αὐτός, ἀλλὰ νὰ διώκηται· καὶ οἱ μελετήσαντες τὸ ἔγγραφόν μου τοῦτο καὶ ἀκριβώσαντες νὰ τὸ στηρίξουν.

Ἐγράφη κατ' ἀρχὰς τοῦ Ῥετζέπ, ἔτους 774.

2. Σημεῖον (*nişan*) of *Musa çelebi*.

814, 3rd decade of *Ramazān*: 1412, 6th—15th of January.

Attribution of the document: Gedeon published this document under the title "Decree of the sultan Mehemmed" explaining in a footnote that its date led him to attribute it to *Mehemmed I*¹⁰⁾; it was issued in Edirne (Adrianople). Recent studies have proved that the only Ottoman ruler who could have issued a document in Edirne at the beginning of the year 1412 was *Musa çelebi*, one of the young sons of *Bayazid I*. Since 1410 *Musa* had governed the European provinces of the Ottoman state having his capital in Edirne; he ruled as a vassal of his brother *Mehemmed I* whose capital was in Brussa. By 1412 however the situation was different; the relations of *Musa* and *Mehemmed* changed, the contacts between Brussa and Edirne were interrupted and a struggle began between the two brothers for the sole supremacy over the Ottoman state.¹¹⁾ For these reasons the document must be attributed to *Musa çelebi*. Moreover, it seems that in this same year *Musa* acting as an independent ruler issued other documents too of the same character, i.e. documents confirming previous donations. At least one of these documents has been preserved: it was issued in March of 1412, two months after ours; it is a *mukarrername* concerning the *vakf* of the *şeyh Kızıl Delü*.¹²⁾

[The sultan], following the decrees of his father and grand-father, sets free the monks of the *Margarit* monastery and exempts them from the taxes on their goods and property, which consists of vineyards, mills, villages, lands, houses and the houses of their *reaya* in Zichna, and from the sheep-tax. He orders that they and their people shall be liberated from the *haraç*, that they shall be left to live in perfect tranquillity, not participating in the postservice, the corvées and the levies; and that no damage shall be done to their vineyards in Saint Anastasia. In addition, the churches, vineyards and trees found in the place Strongylon must be exempted from taxes, the monks' cattle may graze

⁹⁾ *Azad*: liberated slave; see notes 7 and 16.

¹⁰⁾ Γ ε δ ε ώ ν, op. cit., p. 395, note β.

¹¹⁾ Wittek, op. cit., (II): WZKM, vol. 54 (1957), p. 244.

¹²⁾ Wittek, op. cit., (II): WZKM, vol. 54 (1957), p. 240—255; V. L. Ménage, *Mūsā çelebi's nişān of 815/1412: Bulletin of SOAS*, vol. 26/III (1963), p. 646—648.

anywhere, except in cultivated places and the monks themselves must not be disturbed by the falconers. Date; place of issue.

Ὁ ὄρισμός τοῦ παρόντος σημείου¹³⁾ εἶναι, ὅτι ὁ μακαρίτης πατήρ μου καὶ ὁ πάππος μου¹⁴⁾ δόντες χούκμη¹⁵⁾ εἰς τοὺς καλογήρους τοῦ Μαργαρίτ μοναστηρίου ἠλευθέρωσαν τὰ ἄτομά των¹⁶⁾ καὶ τοὺς ἔκαμαν ἑλευθέρους καὶ ἀσυδότες¹⁷⁾ μετὰ τὰ πράγματα καὶ κτήματά των¹⁸⁾, τὰ ὁποῖα εἶναι καὶ συνίστανται εἰς ἀμπέλια, μύλους, χωρία, τόπους καὶ ὀσπήτια, καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὴν Ζίγναν ὀσπήτια τῶν ραγιάδων των¹⁹⁾, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὸ δικαίωμα τῶν προβάτων.²⁰⁾ Παρομοίως καὶ ἐγώ²¹⁾, κατὰ τὴν ἀπόφασιν ἐκείνων, ἔχων τους ἑλευθέρους, δέδωκα τὸν παρόντα μου ὄρισμόν. Ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους των χαράτζια²²⁾ νὰ μὴ λαμβάνωνται· νὰ εἶναι κύριοι τῶν ἄνω εἰρημένων γαιῶν τῶν οὐσῶν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς εἰς τὰς χώρας των²³⁾, καὶ τέλος πάντων ἀπὸ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ πάππου μου καὶ πατρός μου ἕως τὴν σήμερον καθὼς ἦτον, οὕτω νὰ εἶναι καὶ τὸ ἐξῆς· κανεὶς νὰ μὴ τοὺς ἐξετάζη

¹³⁾ The word σημεῖον (sign, mark) evidently stands for *nişan*; consequently the document began with the typical phrase "*nişan-i humayun hükmi ol-dur ki...*"; cf. a document of 1405, Witttek, op. cit., (III): WZKM, vol. 55 (1959), p. 135.

¹⁴⁾ I. e. the sultans *Murad I* and *Bayazid I*. We remark that there are missing from the Greek translation the typical phrases following the names of dead sultans in the Ottoman documents. We can assume that *Yiorgak Ağā* found it difficult to translate them as they were written in Arabic and so he omitted them; this trivial omission does not of course affect the meaning of the document.

¹⁵⁾ *Hükme*: written command.

¹⁶⁾ The literal translation of the phrase is: "they set them free". I do not think that this implies an exemption from taxes (i. e. that they should be "free" from taxes) as the following phrase (τοὺς ἔκαμαν ἑλευθέρους καὶ ἀσυδότες) does; the phrase implies the liberation of the monks after a captivity. This is why we have the use of the verb "ἠλευθέρωσαν" together with an object "τὰ ἄτομά των" (their persons) while in the following phrase we have the use of the adjective "ἐλεύθεροι", widely attested to mean "exempt from taxes" in Ottoman documents written in Greek. The previous document of *Murad I* leads us to this same conclusion; for its translator kept the word *azad* (liberated slave) which must have been included in the original: the monks became *azad* and must never again be made prisoners *-esir-*. I could not find any Ottoman expression corresponding to "ἠλευθέρωσαν τὰ ἄτομά των". There is only a similar expression in an Ottoman document of 1479 written in Greek: "ὅλοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι νὰ εἶναι ἑλευθερωμένοι." *Acta et Diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*. Ed. F. Miklosich-J. Müller. Wien, I—VI, 1860—90, vol. III, p. 296.

¹⁷⁾ *Muaf ve müselleme*.

¹⁸⁾ *Mal ve emlâk*.

¹⁹⁾ The houses of their tribute-paying peasants; cf. expressions such as "*vakif yerlerinde yapılan evler*", "*üzerinde oturan evlû kâfirler*", Witttek, op. cit., (VI): WZKM, vol. 58 (1962), p. 172, note 22.

²⁰⁾ *Koyun hakkı*, see F. Kraelitz, İlk Osmanlı padişahlarının ısdar etmiş bazı beratlar [Some Documents issued by the first Ottoman Sultans]: *TOEM*, vol. 5/28 (1915), p. 244; a document of 1385; cf. Witttek, op. cit., (VI): WZKM, vol. 58 (1962), p. 193.

²¹⁾ Here the "dispositio" begins.

²²⁾ *Haraç*.

²³⁾ Most probably the word χώρας is due to a printing mistake or a slip of the copyist, the right word being χειρῶνας (*ellerinde*: usual expression in the Ottoman documents).

καὶ ἐνοχλῆ καὶ παραβαρύνῃ καὶ κανεὶς νὰ μὴ παραλλάξῃ ταῦτα· καὶ νὰ εἶναι ἐμπιστευμένοι ἀπὸ μεγάλους καὶ ἀπὸ μικροὺς καὶ ἐλεύθεροι ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ ἀβαρύσγια ντιβανιοῦ²⁴). καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὴν Ἁγίαν Ἀναστασίαν ἀμπέλια των νὰ μὴ καταθλίβῃ καὶ τζαλαπατῆ τινας. Οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες δὲ τὸν παρόντα μου ὄρισμὸν νὰ τὸν γνωρίζωσιν ἀληθῆ καὶ νὰ τὸν πιστεύωσιν.²⁵) Ἐγράφη περὶ τὰ τέλη τοῦ Ραμαζανιοῦ τὸ ἔτος 814 ἐν Ἀδριανουπόλει.²⁶) Ἔτι δὲ νὰ μὴ ἐπιβαρύνῃ τις τὰς ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἀμπέλια καὶ δένδρα ὅπου εὐρίσκονται εἰς τὸ Στρογγυλὸν ὀνομαζόμενον μέρος τῆς Μαργαρίτ ἐκκλησίας²⁷). καὶ αἱ ἀγέλαι των νὰ περιφέρονται εἰς ὅποιον μέρος κάμνει χρεία ἐλευθέρως· κανεὶς νὰ μὴν ἐξετάζῃ, πλὴν εἰς τὰ σπαρτὰ καὶ ἀλώνια νὰ μὴ τὰς ἐμβάζουν. Ἔτι δὲ καὶ οἱ δαγκυτζῆδες²⁸) νὰ μὴ τοὺς βάζουν εἰς κόπους. Οὕτω νὰ ἤξεύρουν.²⁹)

3. Προσταγὴ (*hüküm*) of *Mehemmed I*

821, 7th of *Zülhicce*: 1419, 5th of January.

[The sultan], following the decrees of his father and grand-father, grants to the monks of the monastery of *Margaritis* the right to collect taxes from their serfs; he gives them authority over their own goods and property, their gardens, houses, the houses of their *reaya* in Zichna and exempts them from the sheep-tax. He also exempts them and their

²⁴) This expression is very significant. A copy of an Ottoman document of 1383/84 confirming the privileges of a *vakf* includes the expression "*uladan ve suğaradan ve ... avamilden*", i. e. "from the great and the small and the officials". Recently Prof. Witttek proved that the expression is due to a misunderstanding of the copyist, and that in the original it was written "*uladan ve suhradan ve ... avarizden*", i. e. "from the post-service, the corvées and the levies". We can assume that a similar phrase existed in our document; therefore we can remark that *Yiorgak Ağa* misunderstood only the two first words (*uladan ve suhradan*) and then transcribed into Greek script the term "*avariz-i divaniyye*" (levies). See Witttek, op. cit., (I): WZKM, vol. 53 (1957), p. 309—311; cf. WZKM, vol. 54 (1957), p. 242. The expression "*ulaktan ve suhradan*" occurs also in a document of the year 1456; see H. İnalcık, *Fatih Devri üzerinde tetkikler ve vesikalar* [Research and Documents concerning Fatih's Time]. Ankara, vol. I, 1954, p. 224, line 9.

²⁵) The phrase constitutes a typical "sanctio" of the Ottoman documents.

²⁶) Here we have the date and the place of issue in accordance with Ottoman official usage. The document should normally finish here. The following part constitutes an addition; such additions are not rare in the Ottoman documents; when there was no room in the bottom of the document the scribe would usually write them in the right-hand margin; they usually finish with another "sanctio" such as the one here: οὕτω νὰ ἤξεύρουν (*şöyle bileler*).

²⁷) The foundation is mentioned here as a church and not as a monastery just as in the document of *Murad I*. The use of the word ἐκκλησία (*kilise*) with this meaning is not unusual. The monastery of Patmos is also mentioned as a church; see my article, *Συμβολὴ στὴν ἱστορία τοῦ Νοτιοανατολικοῦ Αἰγαίου* [A Study of the History of the South-East Aegean Sea]: *Σύμμεικτα, Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἐρευνῶν*, Ἀθῆναι 1966, p. 213.

²⁸) *Doğancı*; the word and the whole clause about the *doğancı* (falconer) is typical. A similar clause is included in the other document issued by *Musa* for the *vakf* of *Kızıl Delü*; see Witttek, op. cit., (II): WZKM, vol. 54 (1957), p. 240 and 249. For the *doğancı* see H. İnalcık, s. v. in EI².

²⁹) See notes 25 and 26.

successors from the *haraç* and the *adet*, from participation in the post-service, from providing the expenses of the *yolcu* and paying the levies. He orders that no damage shall be done to their vineyards in Saint Anastasia. Date.

Ταύτην τὴν αὐστηρὰν ἱερὰν μου προσταγὴν Κύριος φυλάξοι μέχρι συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.³⁰⁾ Ἔστω γνωστὸν ὅτι, εἰς τοὺς ἐπιφέροντας ταύτην μου τὴν ἱερὰν προσταγὴν, τοὺς καλογήρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας³¹⁾ τοῦ Μαργαρίτου, ὁ μακαρίτης πατὴρ καὶ πάππος μου³²⁾ ἔδωκαν προσταγὴν καὶ τὸ ἴδιον αὐτῶν νοφοῦζι ἐχάρισαν εἰς αὐτοὺς εἰσφορὰν³³⁾, τὸ μάλι καὶ ἱμλιάκια³⁴⁾ αὐτῶν καὶ παχτζέδες³⁵⁾ καὶ σπήτια των καὶ τὰ εἰς Ζίχναν ραγιαδῶν αὐτῶν ὀσπήτια³⁶⁾ καὶ δικαιώματα προβάτων³⁷⁾, τοὺς ἔχουσιν ἔλευθέρους καὶ τοὺς ἔκαμαν μουάφιδες.³⁸⁾ Κἀγὼ παρομοίως κάμνοντάς τους ἔλευθέρους, ἔδωκα εἰς αὐτοὺς ταύτην τὴν ἱερὰν μου προσταγὴν. Ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἰδίους καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ των³⁹⁾ χαράτσι καὶ τὸ σύνηθες⁴⁰⁾ νὰ μὴ παίρνουν καθὼς ἀνέκαθεν, ἔτσι καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς ὅλα ταῦτα εἰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ἀφίνονται· ὅλας τὰς ρηθείσας γαίας νὰ ἐξουσιάζουν· καθὼς καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ πάππου μου καὶ πατρός μου ἐξουσιάζον ταῦτα ἕως τώρα οὕτω καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς νὰ εἶναι εἰς τὸ ἴδιον καράρι⁴¹⁾· οὐδεὶς νὰ ἐνοχλῇ καὶ νὰ ἐμποδίξῃ οὔτε νὰ τζαλοπατῇ καὶ ἀλλάξῃ ταῦτα· καὶ

³⁰⁾ The initial phrase of the document constitutes the best guarantee for its authenticity. No doubt "κύριος φυλάξοι μέχρι συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος" corresponds to "anfazahu'llahu ta'ala ila yevmi'd-din". Another document of *Mehemmed I* begins with the same expression; it was issued between the 9th and 18th of March 1419; see *Witteck*, op. cit., (IV): *WZKM*, vol. 56 (1960), p. 267—278.

³¹⁾ See note 27.

³²⁾ See note 14. This document confirms our view that the previous one of 1412 was issued by *Musa*; for we do not find in it any hint of an earlier document of *Mehemmed I*. When sultans made decrees on subjects on which they had already issued firmans, they usually mentioned their previous ones. In the present document we read that *Mehemmed I* had taken into consideration firmans of his grandfather and of his father, but there is nothing about any earlier firman of himself. It can be easily explained why there is no mention of *Musa's* firman. After the war between the two brothers finished with *Mehemmed's* victory, *Musa* was considered as an illegal pretender and his decrees did not need to be mentioned.

³³⁾ *Nüfus* means population, taxable population, see *J. W. Redhouse*, *A Turkish and English Lexicon*. Constantinople 1921, p. 2094. The whole phrase means that the sultans granted to the monks the right of collecting taxes from their serfs. It is not sure whether the word *nüfus* appeared in the original document or it was used as a technical term by *Yiorgak Ağa*.

³⁴⁾ See note 18. Here *Yiorgak Ağa* transcribed the Turkish words into Greek script as he did in many cases when translating this document. This is why the analysis of this document helps to understand some points of the previous one.

³⁵⁾ *Bahçe*: garden.

³⁶⁾ See note 19.

³⁷⁾ See note 20.

³⁸⁾ Ἐλευθέρους: *müsellem*; μουάφιδες: Greek plural of *muaf*.

³⁹⁾ Παιδιὰ obviously stands for "successors".

⁴⁰⁾ *Haraç ve adet*.

⁴¹⁾ *Ber karar*: according to the decision; cf. κατὰ τὴν ἀπόφασιν in the previous document.

ἀπὸ Ταταρέους⁴²⁾ καὶ ἀπὸ διαβάτας⁴³⁾ καὶ ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ ἀβαρούσγια ντιβανιοῦ⁴⁴⁾ νὰ εἶναι ἀνενόητοι· καὶ τὰ εἰς τὴν Ἁγίαν Ἀναστασίαν ἀμπέλια των νὰ μὴ τζαλαπατῶνται.⁴⁵⁾

Ἐγρόφη εἰς τὰς ἑπτὰ τοῦ Ζιλχιτζέ, ἔτος 821.

4. Σημεῖον (*nişan*) of *Mehemmed II*.

864, 5th of *Receb*: 1460, 26th of April.

[The sultan], in accordance with the cadastre, gives to the monks of the monastery of *Margaritis* authority over a mill in Serres, three gardens and six vineyards in Zichna and a dormitory (?) and a refectory (?). He orders that nothing shall be claimed from the monks for these properties, that nobody shall trouble them and that they shall remain exempt from the taxes, from the *haraç*, *ispence* and the sheep-tax, without any interference. Date.

Ἡ δύναμις⁴⁶⁾ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ σημείου εἶναι, ὅτι μὲ τὸ νὰ εἶναι γεγραμμένον εἰς τὸ τεφτέρ⁴⁷⁾ ὅτι εἶναι ἐπάνω εἰς τοὺς καλογήρους τοῦ Μαργαρίτ μοναστηρίου ὁ εἰς Σέρρας ἕνας μύλος καὶ τρεῖς παχτσέδες καὶ ἕξ ἀμπέλια εἰς τὴν πολιτείαν τῆς

⁴²⁾ We may assume that the Tatars are the postmen (*ulak*) who were usually Tatars; see Redhouse, *Lexicon*, p. 472, and supra note 24 concerning also the post-service. It is not sure whether the word appeared in the original document or it was used as a technical term by *Yiorgak Ağa*.

⁴³⁾ Most probably *Yiorgak Ağa's* word διαβάτης is a translation of the Turkish word *yolcu* appearing in the document of *Kızıl Delü*; see Wittek, op. cit., (II): WZKM, vol. 54 (1957), p. 240 and 242.

⁴⁴⁾ See note 24: *avariz-i divaniyye*.

⁴⁵⁾ The *sanctio* is missing; the place of issue is also omitted. It is difficult to guess where the document was issued for we know little about the sultan's movements early in the year 1419; all we know is that in March of 1419 *Mehemmed* was on the Anatolian coast of the Bosphoros; see Wittek, op. cit., (IV): WZKM, vol. 56 (1960), p. 278—279. Perhaps the monks met him in order to ask for the renewal of their privileges while he was encamped in an insignificant place whose name was not known to *Yiorgak Ağa*; he could not decipher it and so he omitted it.

⁴⁶⁾ The use of the word δύναμις seems puzzling at first sight; but we find the explanation in the following lines, thanks to the expression ἰερά ἰσχύς; there is no doubt that there ἰερά ἰσχύς means "*hükmü şerif*". So we realise that *Yiorgak Ağa* was translating with these two synonymous words—δύναμις, ἰσχύς—a single Turkish word *-hükm-*; therefore the first phrase of the document must be the typical phrase: *nişan-i humayun hükmü ol-dur ki . . .*

⁴⁷⁾ In this document the sultan does not refer to previous decrees of his ancestors but to the *defter*, i. e. the cadastre in which the monastery's properties were registered. This is probably due to the general land-census which took place in Rumili in 1455; see H. İnalcık, *Suret-i defter-i sancak-i Arvanid* [The Cadastre of the Sancak of Albania]. Ankara 1954, p. XVIII, note 80. This is why the monastery's properties are precisely enumerated in this document. In two documents of *Mehemmed II* of 1479 and 1480 written in Greek the term appears as κατάστιχον τῆς αὐθεντίας; see Miklosich-Müller, *Acta et Diplomata*, vol. III, p. 294 and A. Bombaci, *Nuovi firmani di Maometto II*: BZ, vol. 47 (1957), p. 313, line 16 and 22.

Ζίχνας, καὶ εἷς πεστερχανές⁴⁸⁾ καὶ σαφραλήκι⁴⁹⁾, δέδωκα εἰς χεῖράς των τὴν παροῦσαν ἰσχυρὰν ἱερὰν ἰσχὺν⁵⁰⁾ καὶ ἐπρόσταξα ὅτι ἀπὸ τὰ εἰρημμένα πράγματα κανεῖς νὰ μὴ ζητῆ τίποτε καὶ βάζοντάς⁵¹⁾ τους εἰς κόπον νὰ μὴ τοὺς παραβαρύνῃ· καὶ καθὼς ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς ἔφθασαν νὰ εἶναι ἀσύδοτοι καὶ ἐλεύθεροι⁵²⁾ ἀπὸ χαράτζια καὶ σπέντζες⁵³⁾ καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν συνήθειαν τῶν προβάτων⁵⁴⁾ κατὰ τὸ παλαιὸν καράρι⁵⁵⁾, πάλιν νὰ εἶναι ἐλεύθεροι καὶ ἀσύδοτοι· καὶ περὶ τούτου κανεῖς, ὅποιος καὶ ἂν εἶναι, νὰ μὴ τοὺς ἐξετάζῃ καὶ ἀνακατώνηται καὶ ἐνοχλῆ καὶ τοὺς βάζῃ εἰς κόπον καὶ παραβαρύνῃ. Οὕτω κατὰ τὸ ἱερὸν σημεῖον νὰ πιστεύουν.
Ἐγράφη τῇ 5 Ρετζεπῇ τῷ 864 ἔτει.⁵⁶⁾

Our analysis of the documents seems to show that they are authentic. This being so we can use them as a basis in order to draw certain conclusions concerning the history of the Prodromos monastery and the history of the town of Serres.

It is well known that this town was captured by *Stephen Dushan* in the year 1345; it remained under Serbian rule together with all the territory of Eastern Macedonia until 1371, when the Serbian army was crushed by the Ottomans in the battle of Maritsa. Nevertheless it seems that the Ottomans did not then become masters of Eastern Macedonia but that the Serbian domination was succeeded there by the Byzantine one. A considerable number of Greek documents show clearly that the Byzantine administration was reestablished in Eastern Macedonia and

⁴⁸⁾ The word is not recorded in the Turkish dictionaries known to me. As it is a compound word, I guess that its first part is the Persian word *bister* (mattress, bed); if this is so, the word *bisterhane* may mean house with beds, dormitory.

⁴⁹⁾ This word too is missing from the dictionaries I consulted. The word *safralık* (breakfast) does not fit the context. So we may guess that it derives from the word *sofra* (low table) with the ending *-lık* indicating the place. See J. D e n y , Grammaire de la langue Turque. Paris 1920, p. 331, paragraph 527. If this is so, *sofralık* means the place where sofas are, refectory.

⁵⁰⁾ See note 46.

⁵¹⁾ Βιάζοντας in G e d e o n ' s edition, op. cit., p. 395.

⁵²⁾ See notes 17 and 38.

⁵³⁾ *Haraç ve ispence*.

⁵⁴⁾ Literal translation of the term *adet-i agnam*; see O. B a r k a n , Kanunlar [Laws]. Istanbul 1943, Index s. v.; cf. *koyun-adeti* in a document of *Mehemmed II* of 1456; see H. İ n a l c ı k , Fatih devri üzerinde tetkikler ve vesikalar, vol. I, 1954, p. 224, line 8; cf. also *koyun-hakkı*, supra, note 20.

⁵⁵⁾ See note 41.

⁵⁶⁾ Here too the place of issue is missing. The reason may be similar to that causing the omission in the previous document (note 45). We know that *Mehemmed II* left Adrianople on 13 April 1460 and reached Corinth after 20 days; then he conquered the Despotate of the Morea; see G. S p h r a n t z e s , Memorii, ed. Grecu. Bucarest 1966, p. 537 and cf. F. B a b i n g e r , Mahomet II le conquérant et son temps (1432—1481). Paris 1954, p. 210—11. Perhaps the monks of Prodromos met him encamped somewhere on his march against the Peloponnese; *Yiorgak Ağā* could not decipher the name of the place and he omitted it.

that it lasted up to the year 1380 approximately. The town of Serres was captured by the Ottomans in 1383.⁵⁷⁾

On the other hand there is some evidence that the relations between the Ottomans and the Prodromos monastery of Serres started before these dates. According to a legend found for the first time in the work of *Yazıcıoğlu*⁵⁸⁾, the monks of the monastery of Margaritis, in the time when sultan *Osman* lived in Soğut, had foreseen that the Ottomans were going to conquer the Byzantine empire. So they travelled to Soğut bearing presents for sultan *Osman*, whom they met; he at once granted them a *nişan* exempting them from all sorts of taxes.⁵⁹⁾ This story, although clearly imaginary, suggests that the relations between the Ottomans and the monastery started in a very early period and before the conquest of the region of Serres.

Be that as it may, the document of *Murad I* of the year 1372/73 witnesses that the monastery was under Ottoman protection at least from this year onwards. But this seems incompatible with the establishment of Byzantine administration in Eastern Macedonia after 1371, which seems to be a historical fact. The first to point out this problem was Prof. Paul Lemerle.⁶⁰⁾

Recently Prof. Ostrogorsky offered a solution: the monastery which received privileges from *Murad I* is called in the document of 1372/73 the "church" of *Margaritis* (ἐκκλησία). We know something about this *Margaritis*: he was an important landowner possessing properties in various parts of the Byzantine empire. Starting from this point Prof. Ostrogorsky expressed some doubts whether "the church of *Margaritis*" was identical with the monastery of Prodromos near Serres: he suggested that the foundation which received privileges from *Murad I* was not the monastery of Prodromos in Eastern Macedonia but the "church of *Margaritis*" found somewhere else.⁶¹⁾ Now after the finding of the three other documents I think that this point cannot be supported. In all three documents the monastery is called the monastery or the church "of *Margaritis*". All that is written about it shows that it is

⁵⁷⁾ For a full analysis of the documents showing the situation in Eastern Macedonia in the seventies in the 14th century see P. L e m e r l e , *Philippe et la Macédoine Orientale à l'époque Chrétienne et Byzantine*. Paris 1945, p. 214—218. Also G. O s t r o g o r s k i j , *La prise de Serrés par les Turcs: Byzantion*, vol. 35 (1965), p. 302—319.

⁵⁸⁾ He was writing in 1436—37; see P. W i t t e k , *Das Datum von Yazıcıoğlu's Oğuznâme: Türkiyat Mecmuası*, vol. 14 (1965), p. 263—265.

⁵⁹⁾ F. T a e s c h n e r — P. W i t t e k , *Die Vezirfamilie der Ğandarlyzāde (14. bis 15. Jhdt.) und ihre Denkmäler: Der Islam*, vol. 18 (1929), p. 72, note 1; cf. B e l d i - c e a n u , *op. cit.*, p. 20—21.

⁶⁰⁾ See L e m e r l e , *op. cit.*, p. 215—217.

⁶¹⁾ O s t r o g o r s k i j , *op. cit.*

identical with the monastery of Serres; the documents concern a monastery having properties in Serres, in Zichna and in Saint Anastasia exactly as the Byzantine and Serbian documents of the monastery of *Saint John Prodromos* published by Guillou report.⁶²⁾

Ostrogorsky's study coincided with an article of Mrs. Beldiceanu-Steinherr on the same subject.⁶³⁾ Mrs. Beldiceanu tried to prove that *Murad's* firman is either a fake or a later document attributed by mistake to *Murad I*. She based her opinion on the study of the situation in Macedonia at the end of the 14th century, and on a detailed analysis of the document; but, although her arguments seem convincing, we cannot accept her point any more, because in the documents of *Mehemmed I* and *Musa çelebi* the existence of a firman of *Murad I* is clearly mentioned. It seems very probable therefore that this firman corresponded to the one of the year 1372/73.

Doubtless the preserved Greek text of this crucial document is not a "translation" of the one mentioned by *Musa çelebi* and *Mehemmed I*; but it must include at least a kernel of the document of *Murad I*. According to Prof. Wittek's short remarks, the Greek version of this document betrays the existence of a Turkish original, the interpolated document of *Murad I*: "Es mag hier ein späteres Bestätigungsschreiben (muqarrername) in das ursprüngliche Biti eingearbeitet worden sein."⁶⁴⁾

So another solution must be found. As the document of *Murad I* seems more trustworthy now, thanks to the other two documents, let us examine again whether its existence is incompatible with the Byzantine domination in Serres. Father G. T. Dennis has already answered this question. According to him "the document issued by Murad does not necessarily prove that he actually held Serres at that time, for the monastery of St. John Prodromos was situated outside the city walls and . . . exposed to pillage by Murad's troops".⁶⁵⁾

The date of the firman (Dec. 1372—Jan. 1373) is near to the date of the battle of Maritsa (September 1371) which constitutes a time-limit

⁶²⁾ Guillou, op. cit., p. 12, 44—46, 53—59, 114—118, 129, 139, 141. There is one exception: in the document of 1412 we find a place Στρογγυλόν not mentioned in the Greek ones. However, we must not forget that Στρογγυλόν appears in a translation; in the original this place-name could have been transcribed into Arabic script or rendered with a Turkish word corresponding to its Greek meaning (round). Consequently the present word Στρογγυλόν may correspond to a place-name such as Θόλος or Τουμπίτσα (both mentioned in the Greek documents; see Guillou, op. cit., p. 12, 144 and 148), which was translated into Turkish and then retranslated into Greek by *Yiorgak Ağā*.

⁶³⁾ See note 5, supra; cf. also Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, *Recherches sur les actes des règnes des sultans Osman, Orkhan et Murad I*. Munich 1967, p. 180—182.

⁶⁴⁾ Wittek, op. cit., (VI): WZKM, vol. 58 (1962), p. 196—197.

⁶⁵⁾ G. T. Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica, 1382—1387*. Rome 1960, p. 66—67.

in the history of the Balkans. The history of the years that preceded the battle is very obscure as we are short of sources. We only know that Turkish troops—regular and irregular—overran Thrace since the forties of the 14th century.⁶⁶⁾ The warriors of Islam had crossed from Asia Minor to the Balkans.⁶⁷⁾ The sultan did not participate yet in the holy war in person. It was still its first stage: the Turks were devastating the countryside and blockading the towns in order to destroy all transport and communications. These tactics were intended to ensure that the permanent conquest would be achieved quickly and easily.

The battle of Maritsa itself was not fought by the regular Ottoman army. The sultan did not personally take part; he was not yet in Rumili. It seems that he was occupied with matters concerning Anadolu.⁶⁸⁾ It was the army of the *gazis* which defeated the Serbian rulers of Macedonia. But the *gazis* did not conquer the towns; they merely overran the countryside. In the towns the Byzantine administration started replacing that of the Serbians. *Manuel Palaeologos* entered the town of Serres in November 1371⁶⁹⁾; but at exactly the same time the *gazis* were making raids from Macedonia against Albania and Thessaly.⁷⁰⁾ The fortified towns could resist; but the countryside was overwhelmed by the Ottomans.

One can well imagine that under the menace of the *gazi* raids the monks of the Prodromos monastery, situated at a certain distance from the town of Serres, had every reason to visit the sultan, who was probably somewhere in Asia Minor, and try to obtain his protection by getting a firman from him. Moreover, the sultan was eager to satisfy their demand, realising that their acknowledgement of their dependence upon him as a protector would greatly increase his prestige among the Christians.

If these conclusions are correct we can place the documents within their historical frame in a more positive way, as, in my opinion, they reflect the procedure of the Ottoman conquest in Macedonia. The document of *Murad I* issued at a time when the Ottoman domination had not yet taken roots is of rather vague content. At any rate, according to the present text, the sultan decreed that the monks must be liberated (*azad*) i. e. they must not be prisoners (*esir*). This is a very important clause if we remember that the taking of prisoners was one of the main

⁶⁶⁾ See J. de Hammer, *Histoire de l'empire Ottoman* (transl. Hellert). Paris 1835, vol. I, p. 187—205; also N. A. Oikonomidès, *Actes de Dionysiou*. Paris 1968, p. 8—9.

⁶⁷⁾ P. Wittek, *Deux chapitres de l'histoire des Turcs de Roum: Byzantion*, vol. 11 (1936), p. 302—319.

⁶⁸⁾ See Beldiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 18, note 25.

⁶⁹⁾ Lemerle, *op. cit.*, p. 214 and note 5.

⁷⁰⁾ C. Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*. Gotha, vol. 1, 1911, p. 438—440.

aims of the Muslim warriors. Moreover the sultan acknowledges the monastery's properties and commands that no-one should be allowed to disturb the monks by denouncing them in the tribunal. It is typical that the whole document aims at ensuring the safety and freedom of the monks.

The documents of *Musa* and *Mehemmed I* bring full evidence that the situation was quite different in 1412 and 1419. The two *çelebi* do not refer vaguely to the free state of the monks. They enumerate the monastery's properties and they order its exemption from taxes which they name precisely. The Ottoman administration was well established in Macedonia by then.