

## WHEN DID LASKARIS KANANOS TRAVEL IN THE BALTIC LANDS ? (\*)

Geography and travel writing cannot be said to have been flourishing genres in Middle and Late Byzantium. On the rare occasions when Byzantine authors discussed lands beyond their own borders, they often relied on classical authors for information and tended to avoid concrete facts, personal experience and contemporary reality <sup>(1)</sup>. One exception, however, is a short account in Greek of a voyage made through Scandinavia and the Baltic lands written by an individual called Laskaris Kananos. The author describes how he visited Bergen, Stockholm, Riga, Danzig, Lübeck and Copenhagen before moving on to England and Iceland. His account is clearly the result of first hand observation, rather than classical mimesis, and it includes a number of verifiable details such as distances, climate and the diet of the locals.

The Greek text of the travelogue was first published by Spyridon Lambros (1851-1919) in 1881 from a unique sixteenth-century manuscript in what is now the Austrian National Library <sup>(2)</sup>. Since then it has

(\*) I am indebted to Michael Carr, Charalambos Dendrinis, Janus Møller Jensen and Eugenia Russell for their assistance with the research for this article and to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting numerous improvements.

(1) C. GALATARIOU, *Travel and Perception in Byzantium*, in *DOP*, 47 (1993), pp. 221-241 ; A. M. CAMERON, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, London, 1985, pp. 207-222 ; C. MANGO, *Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror*, Oxford, 1975, pp. 14-16, reprinted in C. MANGO, *Byzantium and its Image (Variorum Reprints. Collected Studies*, 191), London, 1984, No. II ; D. M. NICOL, *The Byzantine View of Western Europe*, in *GRBS*, 8 (1967), pp. 315-339, at pp. 315-316 ; C. N. CONSTANTINIDES, *A Marginal Note on Britain and the Britons in an Athonite Manuscript of Michael Glykas*, in Chr. STAVRAKOS, A.-K. WASSILIOU and M. K. KRİKORIAN (eds.), *Hypermachos. Studien zu Byzantinistik, Armenologie und Georgistik. Festschrift für Werner Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden, 2008, pp. 16-22.

(2) *Historicus* gr. 113, ff. 174-175 ; Sp. P. LAMBROS, *Κανάνος Λάσκαρις καὶ Βασίλειος Βατάτζης δύο Ἕλληνες περιηγηταὶ τοῦ ΙΕ' καὶ ΙΗ' αἰώνος*, in *Παρνασσός*, 5 (1881), pt. 1, pp. 705-719, at pp. 706-707.

been twice re-edited and published, translated into numerous languages and subjected to thorough analysis, particularly by scholars from Baltic countries for whom it naturally holds a special interest <sup>(3)</sup>. Not surprisingly, over the years attempts have been made to establish the identity of the author. Lambros suggested that he might be the same man as John Kananos, an equally obscure figure who wrote a short account of the Ottoman siege of Constantinople in 1422. There is, however, nothing to connect the two apart from the surname and there is no agreement among scholars as to whether their literary styles tally or not <sup>(4)</sup>. Consequently, the editors of the *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* wisely categorised the two Kananoi as separate individuals <sup>(5)</sup>.

While little progress has been made in establishing *who* Laskaris Kananos was, a convincing theory has been put forward with regard to *when* he might have made his journey. As long ago as 1904, Nicolaus Busch who was the town librarian of Riga, pointed out that in his travelogue Kananos mentions that Livonia was ruled 'by a duke of the grand master' (ὕπὸ τοῦ δουκὸς μεγάλου μαΐστορος). Normally the area was ruled by a regional master of the Teutonic Knights. It so happened during the years 1438-1439, however, that there was no regional master and so his functions were exercised by a governor on behalf of the Grand Master of the order in Marienburg until a new incumbent could be appointed. Busch therefore suggested that this must have been exactly

(3) The two most recent contributions to the literature are T. HÄGG, *A Byzantine Visit to Bergen : Laskaris Kananos and his Description of the Baltic and North Sea Region*, in *Graeco-Arabica*, 9-10 (2004), pp. 183-197 with an English translation at pp. 185-186 ; J. BLOMQUIST, *The Geography of the Baltic in Greek Eyes - from Ptolemy to Laskaris Kananos*, in ed. B. AMDEN, P. FLENSTED-JENSEN, Th. H. NIELSEN, A. SCHWARTZ and Chr. G. TORTZEN (eds.), *Noctes Atticae : 34 Articles on Graeco-Roman Antiquity and its Nachleben*, Copenhagen, 2002, pp. 36-51, with an edition of the text at pp. 45-47 and a list of previous literature to date at pp. 48-49. For a short discussion see : Kl.-P. MATSCHKE, *Commerce, Trade, Markets and Money : Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries*, in A. E. LAIOU (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium : From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, 3 vols, Washington DC, 2002, II, pp. 771-806, at p. 799.

(4) LAMBROS, *Κανάνος Λάσκαρις*, p. 708 but see the comments of HÄGG, p. 184. The description of the siege is published as JOHN KANANOS, *De Constantinopoli Anno 1422 Oppugnata Narratio*, in I. BEKKER, *Georgius Phrantzes, Ioannes Cananus, Ioannes Anagnostes (CSHB)*, Bonn, 1838, pp. 457-479.

(5) PLP, 10891 and 10892.

the time when Kananos was there. The theory is all the more plausible in that the date coincides with the time when large numbers of Byzantine Greeks were in western Europe in connection with the council of Ferrara-Florence. Kananos, Busch suggested, may even have been part of the delegation of ecclesiastical dignitaries who travelled from Russia to Italy via the Baltic to attend the council (6).

Plausible though Busch's theory is, it contains a number of flaws. 'Kananos's' words ὑπὸ τοῦ δουκὸς μεγάλου μαΐστορος could be interpreted as referring the governor who administered Livonia temporarily in 1438-9 but they could equally well mean the usual regional master of Livonia who likewise reported to the Grand Master (?). More importantly, if Kananos was travelling to the Council of Ferrara, then why did he take the route he apparently did ? He seems to have travelled in a circular direction to Bergen, over to Lübeck and then on to Riga and Reval before heading for England and Iceland ? As has already been pointed out, this would be a most peculiar route to choose if travelling from Russia to Italy (8).

#### *An Alternative Date : 1402-1403*

Given the weaknesses in Busch's thesis, the possibility remains that the journey was undertaken at some other time. One period that might be proposed instead is the very early years of the fifteenth century. In 1399, the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1391-1425) travelled to western Europe to seek help against the Ottoman sultan who was then besieging the Byzantine capital. While he was staying in Paris, Manuel sent gifts of holy relics to various Christian monarchs in the

(6) N. BUSCH, *Wann war Laskaris Kananos in Livland ?*, in *Sitzungsberichte der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Rußlands* 1903, Riga, 1904, pp. 230-233 ; HÄGG, pp. 186-187 ; BLOMQUIST, pp. 36-37, 46. On the journey of the Russian delegation to Ferrara, see G. STÖKL, *Reisebericht eines unbekanntenen Russen (1437-1440)*, in E. VON IVÁNKA (ed.), *Europa im XV. Jahrhundert von Byzantinern gesehen (Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber, 2)*, Graz, 1954, pp. 151-189 ; J. GILL, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge, 1959, p. 124.

(7) On the regional master of Livonia, see E. CHRISTIANSEN, *The Northern Crusades : The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier 1100-1525*, London, 1980, p. 199.

(8) E. KURTZ, review of BUSCH, *Wann war Laskaris*, in *BZ*, 13 (1904), p. 586 ; F. GRABLER, *Die Nordlandreise des Kananos Laskaris*, in IVÁNKA, *Europa im XV. Jahrhundert von Byzantinern gesehen*, Graz, 1954, pp. 101-105, at pp. 101-102.

hope of enlisting their aid. One portion of the tunic of Christ, which had allegedly healed the woman with an issue of blood, was despatched on 20 November 1402 to Margaret, Queen of Denmark, Sweden and Norway (1375-1412) <sup>(9)</sup>. The names of the individuals who carried the relic to Margaret's court are not recorded but it is known that Manuel II and his brother Theodore had in their service an individual called Kananos. In 1390, this Kananos had travelled from the Peloponnese to Constantinople apparently to help Manuel to suppress the revolt of his nephew John <sup>(10)</sup>. It could have been that he was later a member of the delegation that carried this gift and visited Queen Margaret's court and the lands round about. That might explain why the Baltic traveller then went to England, since Manuel himself had visited London in 1400-1401 and it would seem that he maintained contact with King Henry IV (1399-1413) after his departure <sup>(11)</sup>.

Once again, the theory has many weaknesses. There is nothing whatsoever to connect the Kananos of 1390 with the embassy to Denmark in 1402. Moreover, if the task of the embassy was to carry the relic from Paris, where Manuel II was, to Scandinavia, it would not explain the long itinerary through Riga and Lübeck. At best it is a plausible speculation and in the absence of further evidence, any proposed dates for Laskaris's journey would have to remain just that.

#### *A Second Possibility : Kananos Laskaris as Refugee*

There is, however, one neglected piece of evidence which may throw

(9) G. T. DENNIS, *Two Unknown Documents of Manuel II Palaeologus*, in *TM*, 3 (1968), pp. 397-404 at pp. 398-401 ; S. MERGIALI-SAHAS, *An Ultimate Wealth for Inauspicious Times : Holy Relics in Rescue of Manuel II Palaiologos' Reign*, in *Byz.*, 76 (2006), pp. 265-275, at p. 271.

(10) MANUEL II PALAIOLOGOS, *Letters*, ed. G. T. DENNIS (*CFHB*, 8), Washington DC, 1977, pp. LVII, 34-7 ; *PLP*, 10889. The Kananos family is mentioned in a late Byzantine epic poem alongside other illustrious clans such as the Palaiologoi and the Kantakouzenoi, suggesting that it might have been more influential than is apparent from the little we know about it : *Ἱστορία τοῦ Βελισαρίου*, ed. W. F. BAKKER and A. F. VAN GEMERT, Athens, 1988, p. 188.

(11) D. M. NICOL, *A Byzantine Emperor in England : Manuel II's Visit to London in 1400-1401*, in *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 12 (1969-70), pp. 204-225, at p. 224 and reprinted in D. M. NICOL, *Byzantium : its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World (Variorum Reprints. Collected Studies, 12)*, London, 1972, No. X.

light on the question. Among the documents from the Venetian state archives calendared by Freddy Thiriet is a letter of the Venetian Battista Gritti dated 15 May 1454. Gritti was in Pera at the time where he was acting as vice-bailey and attending to Venetian interests in the wake of the fall of Constantinople one year previously. His letter was an affidavit in favour of a certain Michael 'Catacoxino' (presumably Kantakouzenos), stating that Michael had proved himself to be a friend of Venice in the past and that all Venetian officers and officials on the island of Crete were to aid and assist him<sup>(12)</sup>. Thiriet's summary of the letter is of interest in this context because mention was also made of Kantakouzenos's 'associate', called 'Laskaris Canani' who was to accompany him. The exact match of name raises the possibility that this is the Baltic traveller.

Unfortunately, the evidence of Gritti's letter is rather problematic. The full text of the letter was published in 1902 by Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) but his edition makes no mention of 'Laskaris Canani' only of Michael Kantakouzenos<sup>(13)</sup>. Indeed Thiriet himself discussed the letter in an earlier work but referred only to Kantakouzenos and not to any Kananos<sup>(14)</sup>. Kantakouzenos's associate is only included in Thiriet's later summary of the document. A search was made for the letter in the State Archives of Venice under the reference given by both Iorga and Thiriet: Archivio di Candia, Ducali e Lettere Ricevute, Quaderno 26. Unfortunately it proved impossible to locate the letter under that reference.

We are therefore dependent on Thiriet's summary for evidence of Kananos's presence in Pera in 1454. It is possible that the mention of Kananos was in a marginal note in the copy of Gritti's letter and this was why Iorga did not include it in his edition. Iorga was, after all, interested in the history of the Kantakouzenos family and so any peripheral

(12) F. THIRIET, *Délibérations des assemblées vénitiennes concernant la Roumanie*, 2 vols (*Documents et recherches sur l'économie des pays byzantins, islamiques et slaves et leurs relations commerciales au Moyen Âge*, 11), Paris, 1966-1971, II, p. 198 (no. 1488).

(13) N. IORGA, *Documente privatoare la familia Cantacuzino scoase în cea maimare parte din archiva d-lui G. Gr. Cantacuzino*, Bucharest, 1902, p. 2 (no. II).

(14) F. THIRIET, *La Roumanie vénitienne au Moyen Âge. Le développement et l'exploitation du domaine colonial vénitien (XII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (*Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome*, 193), Paris, 1959, p. 432 and note 3.

mention of anyone else may not have seemed worth including. If Thiriet's summary is accepted, however, it does provide some interesting information. It is clear, for example, that Kantakouzenos was the senior of the pair, since Kananos was described as his associate. It is also plain from its wording that Kantakouzenos and Kananos planned to travel since it had the effect of a safe conduct through Venetian territory. In the case of Kantakouzenos, it would seem that he did travel to Italy. Certainly someone of the same name was to be found a few years later enjoying a pension at the court of Naples <sup>(15)</sup>. The letter may therefore raise the possibility that Kantakouzenos and Kananos may have been among the refugees who headed for western Europe after Constantinople was captured by the Turks and their presence in Pera may mark the beginning of a journey that took Kananos first from Pera to Crete, from Crete to Italy and then to northern Europe. It is to this possibility that the discussion will now turn.

When Mehmed II took the Byzantine capital on 29 May 1453, a large proportion of the inhabitants of the city were taken prisoner. The wealthier ones were released if their families and friends could come up with an appropriate ransom. The courtier George Sphrantzes, for example, was ransomed in September after only four months of captivity and was able to secure the release of his wife a year later <sup>(16)</sup>. Not everyone was so lucky. Others, unable to raise the necessary ransoms, travelled to Italy where the pope issued them with letters of indulgence promising remission of penance to those who contributed to the ransom money. During the second half of the fifteenth century, wandering Byzantines bearing such letters and collecting alms for ransoms were to be found all over Europe <sup>(17)</sup>.

Was Laskaris Kananos among them? We do hear of an *archon* called Kananos acting as an intermediary between a refugee and an Ottoman judge in Thrace in July 1453 <sup>(18)</sup>. Another is mentioned as a refugee in

(15) F. FORCELLINI, *Strane peripazie d'un bastardo di casa di Aragona*, in *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, 39 (1914), pp. 172-214, 268-298, 459-494, 767-787, at p. 195.

(16) GEORGE SPHRANTZES, *Cronaca*, ed. R. MAISANO (CFHB, 29), Rome, 1990, pp. 134-135, 144-145 (xxxv. 11, xxxvii. 6).

(17) J. HARRIS, *Greek Émigrés in the West, 1400 - 1520*, Camberley, 1995, pp. 12-21.

(18) J. DARROUZÈS, *Lettres de 1453*, in *REB*, 22 (1964), pp. 72-127, at p. 90; *PLP*, 10890.

the correspondence of Francesco Filelfo (1389-1481), the prominent humanist and protégé of the Milanese Sforza family. Filelfo had good reason to be sympathetic to Constantinopolitan exiles. He himself had lived in Constantinople from 1420 to 1427 and while there he had married the daughter of John Chrysoloras. Following the Ottoman capture of the city, his mother-in-law and other members of his wife's family had been taken prisoner and Filelfo had written to the sultan to ask for their release<sup>(19)</sup>. Consequently, there are numerous letters among his correspondence recommending luckless Byzantine nobles to various individuals in positions of power. One such letter is that dispatched to the chancellor of France, Guillaume des Ursins, on 24 July 1455. In it Filelfo recommends Nicholas 'Trachaniotes' (more properly Tarchaniotes) and Alexander 'Cananus' (or Kananos), two nobles of Constantinople who had recently arrived in Milan and who planned to set out for France bearing Filelfo's letter. They had lost everything in the fall of Constantinople and although Tarchaniotes had succeeded in bringing with him a reliquary containing a fragment of the True Cross that potential source of money had subsequently been stolen<sup>(20)</sup>. Ursins was asked to treat Tarchaniotes and Kananos well and Filelfo provided them with a similar letter addressed to one Thomas Frank. Thomas was a Greek, who originally came from the Venetian colony of Coron in the Peloponnese and, as personal physician to King Charles VII (1422-61), he would have been an influential voice at the French court<sup>(21)</sup>.

At first sight there is little to connect the Laskaris Kananos of Gritti's letter with the Alexander Kananos of Filelfo's, apart from the surname.

(19) FRANCESCO FILELFO, *Cent-dix lettres grecques de François Filelfe*, ed. E. LEGRAND (*Publications de l'École des langues orientales vivantes. Série 3*, 12), Paris, 1892, pp. 63-68; K. M. SETTON, *The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance*, in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 100 (1956), pp. 1-76, at pp. 72-73 and reprinted in K. M. SETTON, *Europe and the Levant in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Variorum Reprints. Collected Studies, 29)*, London, 1974, no. I.

(20) FRANCESCO FILELFO, *Epistolarum Familiarum Libri XXXVI*, Venice, 1502, ff. 89r-v: 'Nicolaus Trachaniotes et Alexander Cananus qui tibi meas litteras reddiderunt, viri sunt et Constantinopolitani et nobiles quorum condicio eadem est, quae reliquorum Graecorum, qui Turcis impurissimis, Christi hostibus, querum nosissime serviunt. Hos igitur tibi plurimum commendo ut caeteros consuevi, qui in eadem positi sunt miseria'.

(21) *Ibidem*, f. 89. On Thomas Frank or Le Franc, whose name may originally have been 'Frangos', see HARRIS, *Greek Émigrés*, pp. 60-61, 90-93, 135-136, 164-168.

Nevertheless, there is one striking parallel: Kananos is clearly the junior partner in both letters. His name is given second in both and in Gritti's he is the 'associate' of Kantakouzenos. In Filelfo's it is explicitly stated that it was Tarchaniotes who had with him the valuable relic which he had no doubt hoped to sell, suggesting that he was the man of wealth and position<sup>(22)</sup>. In all probability, Kananos in both cases was either a social inferior or a younger man.

This parallel between the two Kananoi raises the question of whether they could be the same person. It is a possibility that cannot be ruled out in view of the fondness of the late Byzantine aristocracy for multiple names. Individuals were often known by both their father's and mother's surname and in some cases they added the name of some illustrious marriage alliance in the distant past. That of Laskaris, a family that had provided a number of emperors during the thirteenth century, was particularly popular. Thus we find Alexios Philanthropenos Laskaris who held the office of Grand Stratopedarch in the 1430s and 1440s and Demetrius Laskaris Leontaris who governed Thessalonica between 1403 and 1421<sup>(23)</sup>. To make matters more confusing, these individuals were not always referred to by their full composite name, especially when non-Byzantines were involved. Manuel Laskaris Asanes who governed the Byzantine island of Imbros between 1442 and 1444 appears in a surviving inscription under his full name but the Anconitan traveller, Cyriac of Ancona calls him simply 'Manuel Asan'<sup>(24)</sup>. It is therefore quite possible that similar contraction of names has occurred in Gritti's and Filelfo's letters and that they both referred to the same individual, Alexander (or Alexios) Laskaris Kananos.

The question is further complicated when the subsequent movements of Tarchaniotes and Kananos are traced. By the end of December 1455 they were back in Milan, bringing Filelfo news of the Greek Physician, Thomas Frank<sup>(25)</sup>. Some years later, in 1459, they appear to have been again in France where they received a number of gifts of

(22) For other examples of refugees selling relics, see: HARRIS, *Greek Émigrés*, pp. 81-83.

(23) *PLP*, 14676 and 29753.

(24) *CIG*, IV, p. 499 (no. 9444); CYRIAC OF ANCONA, *Later Travels*, ed. E. W. BODNAR, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003, pp. 92-93, 96-97, 99; *PLP*, 1507.

(25) FILELFO, *Epistolarum*, f. 91': 'Nicolaus Trachaniotes et Alexander Cananus a vobis in Italiam redeuntes ...'.



money. In the surviving records of those gifts, however, Tarchaniotes's companion's name has changed. For example, in the accounts of the French treasury for 1458-1459, recording a gift of 15 Ecus, 61 livres and 17 sous, they are described as 'Nicolas Trazanioti' and 'Jehanus Alexander' <sup>(26)</sup>. In the accounts of the city of Paris for the same period they are called 'Nicolas Traghanot' and 'Jehan Alexandre' <sup>(27)</sup>. In August 1459 they were in Brussels in the Duchy of Burgundy. This time the document recording the twenty livres that they were given by the duke of Burgundy calls them 'Nicolas de Tartanoty' and 'Jehan Miles' <sup>(28)</sup>.

It is not difficult to recognise Nicholas Tarchaniotes here. His long Greek name seems to have given the French scribes some trouble but the result, mangled though it is, clearly refers to the same man as the bearer of Filelfo's letter of 1455. In the case of his companion, on the other hand, the name has undergone a complete transformation with the name Kananos being replaced by 'Jehan', a medieval spelling for 'Jean'. Even so, once again there is common ground. As in the Gritti and Filelfo letters, we are clearly dealing with a junior partner here. Jehan Alexandre's name appears after that of the aristocratic Tarchaniotes in all three French documents and, in the Brussels one, the former is designated by the relatively humble rank of *miles* or knight. This could, therefore, simply be another case of the name being garbled. To the hard pressed scribes who wrote these documents, 'Alexander' or even 'Alexios' would have been familiar enough for them to insert 'Alexandre' as an equivalent of the Byzantine first name. On the other hand, they might have had trouble with the difficult and exotic 'Kananos'. It would only be natural to replace it with a more homely 'John' with the word 'Laskaris' being dropped altogether.

(26) *Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms. français 32511, f. 209<sup>v</sup>*, accounts for the year ending in September 1459. These accounts survive only in a seventeenth-century copy included in the so-called Cabinet de Titres, a vast collection of documents gathered to provide genealogical information on the French nobility.

(27) *Comptes du domaine de la ville de Paris*, ed. A. VIDIER, L. LE GRAND, P. DUPIEUX and J. MONICAT, 2 vols, Paris, 1948-1958, II, p. 177.

(28) *Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord, B2034, ff. 193<sup>v</sup>-194* (Chambre des Comptes de Lille, Recette Générale des Finances, January-September 1459); A. LE GLAY et al., *Inventaire sommaire des archives départementales antérieures à 1790 (Nord)*, series B, 10 vols, Lille, 1863-1906, IV, p. 208.

*Can the Refugee Kananos be Linked to the Baltic Lands ?*

To recap on the argument so far : surviving letters and records give us a number of examples of an individual or individuals bearing the name Kananos moving west in the wake of the fall of Constantinople. The identification of the Laskaris Kananos of the Gritti letter with the Alexander Kananos and Jehan Alexandre of the Filelfo letter and the French archival documents is tentative at best but there remains the possibility that these are all one man whose name was Alexios or Alexander Laskaris Kananos.

This leads to the next point : whether this tentative Kananos can be linked in any way with a journey through the Baltic lands. The copies of the French treasury accounts for 1459 in the Bibliothèque Nationale which record the gift mentioned above connect Tarchaniotes and Kananos with a third individual called 'Mons. Demetrius Paleologus'. The gift was apparently to be shared between the three of them <sup>(29)</sup>. Like them, this Demetrius Palaiologos had been wandering around Europe gathering alms for ransoms for some time. He had been in France first in 1454 before moving on in late 1455 to London where he received a gift of ten pounds from the king of England and a letter of indulgence from the bishop of Salisbury. November 1456 found him back in Italy, receiving charity from the commune of Genoa. In June 1459 he was in Milan, where, like Tarchaniotes and Kananos before him, he was given a letter by Francesco Filelfo recommending him to John, Marquis of Montferrat, before evidently returning to France where he fell in with Tarchaniotes and Kananos <sup>(30)</sup>.

The identity of this Demetrius Palaiologos is again problematic. He was certainly not the most famous Demetrius Palaiologos of the period,

(29) Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms. français 32511, f. 209v.

(30) London, National Archives, E403/806, dated 5 December 1455 ; Trowbridge, Wiltshire County Record Office, Register of Richard Beauchamp, vol. 1, 2nd series, ff. 43<sup>v</sup>-44, dated 20 March 1456 ; Ch. DU FRESNE DU CANGE, *Historia Byzantina*, Paris, 1682, p. 255 ; H. DE L'ÉPINOIS, *Notes extraites des Archives Communales de Compiègne*, in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 4 (1863), pp. 471-499, at p. 498 ; L. BALLETO, *Greci a Genova dopo la conquista Turca di Costantinopoli*, in ed. S. KOLDITZ and R. C. MÜLLER (eds.), *Geschehenes und Geschriebenes : Studien zu Ehren von Günther S. Heinrich und Klaus-Peter Matschke*, Leipzig, 2005, pp. 351-365, at pp. 360-361 ; FILELFO, *Epistolarum*, f. 107.

the brother of the emperor Constantine XI who ruled as despot at Mistra until 1460<sup>(31)</sup>. The Demetrius who was wandering around Europe was clearly of much lower rank, being described in the records simply as 'miles'. Besides, his peregrinations coincide with a period when the Despot Demetrius is known to have been in the Peloponnese<sup>(32)</sup>. In all probability he was someone who had a remote connection with the Byzantine ruling family and so according to common practice added the name Palaiologos to his own. Matthew Palaiologos Asanes, brother-in-law of the Despot Demetrius, did so as did Andronicus Palaiologos Iagaris whose links with the imperial family were probably much more tenuous<sup>(33)</sup>. When minor nobles like this became refugees in the west, they appear to have dropped their family name and kept only the Palaiologos, no doubt in the hope of advancing their importance in the eyes of their hosts. Anna Notaras, daughter of the Byzantine grand duke Loukas Notaras, who lived in Italy from about 1450 until 1507, often described herself as Anna Palaiologina, apparently on the basis of her mother's connection with the imperial house<sup>(34)</sup>. So the refugee Demetrius Palaiologos might have been Demetrius Palaiologos Dermokaites who is attested in the Peloponnese in 1450<sup>(35)</sup> or the Demetrius Palaiologos who is known to have escaped from Constantinople in May 1453

(31) *PLP*, 21454.

(32) For a discussion of his identity, see H. L. GRAY, *Greek Visitors to England in 1455-6*, in C. H. TAYLOR (ed.), *Anniversary Essays in Medieval History by Students of Charles Homer Haskins*, Boston, 1929, pp. 81-116, at pp. 86-87. For discussions of various individuals with similar names see : D. M. NICOL, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus), c. 1100-1460. A Genealogical and Prosopographical Study* (*DOS*, 11), Washington DC, 1968, no. 75, pp. 192-195 ; A. T. PAPADOPOULOS, *Versuch einer Genealogie der Palaiologen 1259-1453*, Munich, 1938, no. 170, p. 90 ; E. BRAYER, P. LEMERLE and V. LAURENT, *Le Vaticanus Latinus 4789 : histoire et alliances des Cantacuzènes aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, in *REB*, 9 (1951), pp. 47-105, at p. 99 ; D. M. NICOL, *The Byzantine Family of Dermokaites, c. 940-1453*, in *Bsl*, 35 (1974), pp. 1-11 at no. 21, p. 9.

(33) *PLP*, 1508, 7808.

(34) G. CECCHINI, *Anna Notara Paleologa - una principessa greca in Italia e la politica senese di ripopolamento della Maremma*, in *Bollettino Senese di Storia Patria*, 9 (1938), pp. 1-41, at p. 34 ; D. M. NICOL, *The Byzantine Lady : Ten Portraits, 1250-1500*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 97.

(35) *MM*, III, p. 258 ; Sp. P. LAMBROS, *Παλαιοιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 4 vols, Athens, 1912-1930, IV, p. 231 ; NICOL, *Byzantine family of Dermokaites*, no. 21, p. 9 ; *PLP*, 5207.

in a Genoese ship even as the victorious Turks swept into the city<sup>(36)</sup>. Beyond that it is impossible to tell.

As far as this article is concerned, however, Demetrius Palaiologos's importance lies not in his identity but in his connection with Laskaris Kananos. We have already seen that Nicholas Tarchaniotes and 'Jehan Alexandre', who may be the same man as Laskaris Kananos, were associated with Demetrius Palaiologos in Paris in 1459. Perhaps the three had decided to travel together for greater safety and to pool their resources. While there is no further indication of their being connected, there is one significant piece of evidence which may throw light on the Baltic journey. In June 1468, Demetrius Palaiologos was in Copenhagen. Described as a knight and count of Constantinople (*miles et comes Constantinopolitanus*) he received a letter from King Christian I of Denmark (1448-1481) giving him permission to gather alms for the redemption of his family<sup>(37)</sup>.

One might wonder why Demetrius should choose to move away from Italy, France and England and try his luck in Denmark. One likely reason may be found in the fact that his presence there coincided with that of Ludovico da Bologna, a Franciscan friar, who styled himself as patriarch of Antioch and papal legate to the East<sup>(38)</sup>. Ludovico's claim to these grandiose titles was somewhat dubious. He had been sent as legate to the East by Pope Pius II in October 1458 and was later appointed patriarch of Antioch but he later fell out of favour in Rome when he had returned from his legatine mission with a group of spurious ambassadors<sup>(39)</sup>. Nevertheless, he continued to travel widely in Europe and

(36) K. D. MERTZIOS, *Περὶ τῶν ἐκ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως διαφυρόντων τὸ 1453 Παλαιολόγων*, in *Actes du XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Études Byzantines. Ochrid, 10-16 sept. 1961*, 3 vols, Belgrade, 1963-1964, II, pp. 171-176, at p. 172.

(37) *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi*, ed. J. LANGEBEK and P. F. SUHM, 9 vols, Copenhagen, 1772-1878, VIII, p. 443; A. HUITFELDT, *Danmarks Riges Krønike: Christian I's Historie*, Copenhagen, 1599, p. 178; J. M. JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades, 1400-1650*, Leiden, 2007, p. 113.

(38) O. DALIN, *Geschichte des Reiches Schweden*, trans. J. K. DÄHERT, 4 vols, Leipzig, 1756-1763, II, p. 592; M. LANDWEHR VON PRAGENAU, *Ludwig von Bologna, patriarch von Antiochien*, in *Mittheilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 22 (1901), pp. 288-296, at pp. 293-294; A. B. SEVERI, *Nuovi documenti su Fr. Ludovico da Bologna, al secolo Lodovico Severi, nunzio apostolico in Oriente*, in *Archivum Franciscum Historicum*, 69 (1976), pp. 3-22, at p. 9.

(39) PIUS II, *Commentaries*, trans. F. A. GRAGG and L. C. GABEL (*Smith College Studies in History*, 22, 25, 30, 35, 43), Northampton, Massachusetts, 1936-1957,

the East, supposedly as the ambassador of the pope. In 1465 he was in Poland and in 1475 he was encountered in Persia<sup>(40)</sup>. Ludovico seems to have been invited to Denmark to act as a mediator in the war between Christian I and the Swedish king, Karl Knutson.

It seems very likely that the journeys of Demetrius Palaiologos and Ludovico da Bologna to Denmark were connected. Ludovico's life mission was to highlight the plight of the Christians of the East. Consequently it would seem that refugees from Constantinople attached themselves to him during his travels. While Ludovico and his companions were in France in 1460-1461, for example, another Byzantine nobleman called Isaac Palaiologos had been there too. Isaac had travelled from Italy with his son Alexios and was collecting alms for the ransoms of his daughters<sup>(41)</sup>. Isaac and Ludovico's movements ran remarkably parallel. During the summer of 1461, Isaac had visited the duke of Burgundy at St. Omer and so had Ludovico and his companions. In August 1461, when Philip the Good had travelled from St. Omer to Reims to attend the coronation of the new king of France, Louis XI, both Isaac and Alexios and Ludovico and his party had followed him<sup>(42)</sup>. Consequently, it seems likely that Isaac and Ludovico were travelling together.

pp. 371-374, 790-792 ; Fr. BABINGER, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time*, ed. W. C. HICKMAN, trans. R. MANHEIM, Princeton, New Jersey, 1978, pp. 186-189 ; A. A. M. BRYER, *Ludovico da Bologna and the Georgian-Anatolian Embassy of 1460-1*, in *Bedi Kartlisa : Revue de Kartvélogie*, 19-20 (1965), pp. 178-198, reprinted in A. A. M. BRYER, *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos (Variorum Reprints. Collected Studies, 117)*, London, 1980, no. X.

(40) M. CROMER, *De Origine et Rebus Gestis Polonorum Libri XXX*, Basel, 1558, pp. 584-585 ; BRYER, *Ludovico da Bologna*, p. 19.

(41) *Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Reg. Vat. 503*, ff. 239<sup>v</sup>-240, dated 6 September 1460 ; DE L'ÉPINOIS, *Notes extraites*, p. 498.

(42) Lille, *Archives Départementales du Nord*, B2040, ff. 241<sup>v</sup>, 249<sup>v</sup> (Chambre des Comptes de Lille, Recette Générale des Finances, October 1460-September 1461) ; LE GLAY, *Inventaire-sommaire*, IV, pp. 211-212 where it is noted that Isaac and Alexios Palaiologos 'sont venus après monseigneur (the duke of Burgundy), de Saint-Omer en la ville de Paris où monseigneur estoit lors alé au couronnement du Roy nostre sire'. For Ludovico and his companions, see J. DU CLERCQ, *Mémoires*, in *Collection des chroniques nationales françaises*, ed. J.-A. BUCHON, 47 vols, Paris, 1826-1828, XXXIX, pp. 142, 145 ; BRYER, *Ludovico da Bologna*, p. 192. Philip the Good was at St Omer for much of May and early June 1461 before travelling to Reims in August : H. VAN DER LINDEN, *Itinéraires de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne et Charles, comte de Charolais*, Brussels, 1940, pp. 427-429, 431.

The same pattern could have repeated itself in Denmark in 1468 with Demetrius Palaiologos travelling there in company with Ludovico da Bologna. Demetrius may not have been the only Byzantine in the company for while in France he had had two companions, Tarchaniotes and 'Jehan Alexandre' who may have been Kananos. Once in Denmark, Demetrius and his companions may have travelled around the Baltic gathering alms. Kananos's description, therefore, may belong to this context. It would certainly explain why he travelled in a circle around the Baltic rather than simply passed through as he would have done had he been en route to Italy in 1438. It might also explain why Kananos then went to England. By 1468, a number of Byzantine Greeks had settled in London, some working as merchants and craftsmen, some as scribes<sup>(43)</sup>. Indeed, Kananos's possible connection with this group might explain a peculiar feature of his text that has been pointed out by its German translator. Although written in Greek, the account often uses Italian or Latin versions of place names such as 'Inghilterra' for England and 'Datia' or 'Dacia' for Denmark. It is clear from surviving records that those Greeks who settled in London during the fifteenth century lived in the Italian quarter of the city, conducted their business in collaboration with Venetian and Genoese merchants and even witnessed their wills. Probably travelling on Italian vessels, Kananos would have heard places that he was encountering for the first time described in this way and would naturally have adopted those forms rather than ones adapted from ancient Greek literature<sup>(44)</sup>.

In the final analysis, any link between the author of the travelogue and the other bearers of the name Kananos discussed in this article must remain speculative until further evidence emerges. The notion of him as a wandering refugee, on the other hand, rather than a diplomat or merchant has a great deal to recommend it. It provides a reason for

(43) HARRIS, *Greek Émigrés*, pp. 34-38 ; IDEM, *Two Byzantine Craftsmen in Fifteenth Century London*, in *Journal of Medieval History*, 21 (1995), pp. 387-403 ; IDEM, *Greek scribes in England : the Evidence of Episcopal Registers*, in R. Cormack and E. Jeffreys (eds.), *Through the Looking Glass : Byzantium through British Eyes* (Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Publications, 7), Aldershot, 2000, pp. 121-126.

(44) STÖKL, *Reisebericht*, p. 102. On the close ties between Italian merchants and Byzantines in fifteenth-century London, see HARRIS, *Greek Émigrés*, pp. 60-62.

his journey to the Baltic lands and a context in which he might have undertaken it in or around the year 1468.

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#### SUMMARY

Laskaris Kananos's Greek description of a journey around the Baltic was first published in 1881. Nicolaus Busch argued that the journey was probably made in 1438 and that Kananos might have been connected to the Russian delegation that travelled to the Council of Ferrara. On the basis of neglected literary and archival evidence, this article proposes a later date of around 1468 and suggests that Kananos may not have been a merchant or diplomat as has been supposed but a refugee who was gathering alms to pay ransoms.