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George Sphrantzes: A Brief Review

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When in 1786 and 1787 at Lausanne, Switzerland, Edward Gibbon was composing the sixth and final volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he had at his disposal for the famous chapter on the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 a mere handful of sources.² For the core of his narrative he drew upon three Greek works: Doukas' *Turko-Byzantine History*; Laonikos Chalkondylas' *Turkish History*; the larger of the two chronicles ascribed to the man now usually referred to as George Sphrantzes (Gibbon's Phranza);³ and upon the letter composed in Latin and addressed to Pope Nicholas V by Leonard of Chios, Latin archbishop of Mytilene on Lesbos,⁴ like Sphrantzes (and unlike Doukas and Chalkondylas) an established eyewitness to the siege. Not as yet available were two works that in the next century would come to enrich and refine the source material on Constantinople's fall. Of these, the first to be discovered was the diary (in Italian) of the Venetian ship's doctor, Nicolò Barbaro, an eyewitness to whom are owed precise dates for the course of the siege's events, the chronological framework to which the notices of the other sources must nowadays be fitted.⁵ The original manuscript of the *Giornale*, kept among the papers of the Barbaro family till 1829, came into the possession of the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice in 1837. It was edited by Enrico Cornet and published in Vienna in 1856.⁶

¹This piece was written in the early 1980s at the late Al. Oikonomides' request. It was to be a review article for *The Ancient World* with Marios Philippides' translation of Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477* (The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst 1980), as its point of departure. Also forthcoming at that time, but not yet available was Margaret Carroll's translation of Sphrantzes; this subsequently appeared as *A Contemporary Greek Source for the Siege of Constantinople 1453: The Sphrantzes Chronicle* (Hakkert: Amsterdam 1985; Carroll's Introduction is dated to 1978). This article got lost in the shuffle of *Ancient World* theme issues that began with those on Alexander the Great. Although it covers some of the same material as the introductions by Philippides and Carroll, its perspective and aims strike me as rather different from theirs, and it provides some details of antiquarian interest on the history of the Sphrantzes problem that they do not. These, I like to think, would have pleased Al., thereby rendering this presentation, stylistically revised but only marginally updated, an acceptable offering in his memory.

²Chapter LXVIII of the original edition. Volume VI was begun on May 18, 1786, and completed on June 27, 1787: see Gibbon's *Autobiography*, ed. M.M. Reese (London 1970) 114-15, and the extract from "Mr. Gibbon's Commonplace Book" printed by Reese as a footnote on 115. Gibbon's sources are explicitly mentioned in the text and in Gibbon's notes, which appear as marginalia in Bury's edition of *The Decline and Fall* (vol. III, 2327-61). For a succinct, and unfavorable, appraisal of Gibbon as Byzantinist, see A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire 324-1453* (repr. Madison, WI, 1958) 8-11. For a comprehensive overview of the sources, see the two extensive volumes of translations (with introductions, notes, and bibliographies) into Italian by Agostino Pertusi: *La caduta di Constantinopoli. Le testimonianze dei contemporanei* and *La caduta di Constantinopoli. L'eco nel mondo* (Fondazione Lorenzo Valla 1976).

³Ἐφραυρῆς was established as the original and authentic form of the name (instead of Φραυρῆς, the form that is standard especially in the manuscripts of the *Chronicon Maius*) by V. Laurent, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (*Festschrift Dölger*) (1951) 373-78; cf. *Revue des études byzantines* 9 (1951) 170-71. For the name's spellings (and variant misspellings) in the manuscripts of Minus, see V. Grecu, "Das Memoirenwerk des Georgios Sphrantzes," *Actes du XIIe Congrès international d'études byzantines* (Belgrade 1964) 333 (hereafter cited as "Memoirenwerk").

⁴Early Italian translation of Leonard's letter in F. Sansovino, *Historia universale dell' origine et imperio de Turchi* (Venice 1568), Book III, 304-13. Leonard's letter seems to have been quite influential and itself the source for several other early accounts of the siege: Gy. Moravesik, "Bericht des Leonardus Chiensis über den Fall von Konstantinopel in einer vulgärgriechischen Quelle," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (*Festschrift Dölger*) (1951) 428-36. See also Pertusi, *Le testimonianze* (above, n. 2) 120 ff.

⁵Barbaro, as to be expected, presents the story of the siege from a Venetian point of view. In addition to his chronological specificity (where other sources are frequently vague), his account is valuable, because of his peculiar vantage point, for naval maneuvers and encounters, for ship arrivals and departures. In addition, he provides lists of leading Italian, especially Venetian, participants and casualties (cf. Geoffroy de Vilhardouin's interest in naming, insofar as he can recover them, the names of the Crusaders who engaged in the conquest of Constantinople two and a half centuries earlier). For a profitable employment of some of that information, see R. Browning, "A Note on the Capture of Constantinople in 1453," *Byzantion* 22 (1952) 379-87 (reprinted in *Studies on Byzantine History, Literature and Education* (Variorum Reprints: London 1977), chapter I).

⁶For brief summaries of the Barbaro and the (now to be mentioned) Kritovoulos discoveries, see Sir Edwin Pears, *The Destruction of the Greek Empire and the Story of the Capture of Constantinople by the Turks* (London 1903, repr. New York 1968) ix-xi.

The second major discovery occurred in 1865 when Dethier found in the Seraglio Point Library in Istanbul a 16th-century codex containing a history of the reign of Mehmet II the conqueror, beginning in 1451, breaking off in 1467, composed by one "Kritovoulos the Islander," of Imbros, a Greek who came to the Ottoman civil service in the aftermath of the 1453 siege. It is a curious work, encomiastic toward Mehmet, rhetorical in tone, anachronistic in its geographical and tribal labels, conscious and imitative of its ancient Greek forerunners, especially Thucydides.⁷ Its special value is that it presents the events from an Ottoman perspective (though with clear sensitivity toward the Byzantine situation) by a writer with access to both Greek and Turkish witnesses to the events he describes.⁸ Also not available in Gibbon's day were the so-called Diary of the Polish Janissary by Michael Constantinovic, a Serbian, and the *Slavic Chronicle*;⁹ the Turkish sources, literary and archival, that loom increasingly important as testimonies of those times;¹⁰ and a variety of lesser records in Greek, Latin and Italian.¹¹

Thus the years since Gibbon's chapter was written have seen a great increase in source material on Constantinople's fall and a widening of its claims on the historian's linguistic range. Few scholars, even from among the specialists in the period, can be expected to master the full array of languages (and dialects) of the sources; much less so can this mastery be expected of the general medievalist, still less, of the general public. So it is that translations are essential for the general reader, useful to the historian, and important even for the specialist, particularly when they are based on recent critical editions and when they incorporate in their introductions and commentaries the results of scholarship to date.

Into this category falls the first English rendering of George Sphrantzes, by Marios Philippides, under the title *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477* (The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst 1980). This translation, which includes Sphrantzes' *Minor Chronicle* (*Chronicon Minus*) complete and that portion of the *Major Chronicle* (*Chronicon Maius*) that is commonly referred to as the "siege-section," is based on V. Grecu's 1966 Bucharest edition. A general orientation on the history of the times and on Sphrantzes is provided in the introduction; more detailed points are taken up in the selective commentary notes at the back of the volume. A bibliography on the primary sources and on modern scholarship on Sphrantzes and his times is provided. A chronological list of salient events in Sphrantzes' life, line-drawn maps, tables of rulers, secular and religious, thumbnail sketches of the major participants—all serve to steer the reader through the welter of 15th-century events.

Welcome in itself, the translation is additionally welcome because it completes the series of English translations of major Greek and western¹² eyewitness and contemporary non-eyewitness accounts of the siege of 1453 that till now included: Riggs's translation of Kritovoulos; Jones's translations of Barbaro's diary and of seven other contemporary siege accounts; and Magoulias's translation of Ducas (Doukas) in his entirety.¹³ Moreover, present-day interest in the Palaiologan period (which this translation helps to advance) is on the

⁷Cf. also Kritovoulos's proem, clearly a paraphrase of Herodotus's opening; and at 1.3.8, his likening his own situation to that of Josephus, historian of the Roman-Jewish war of A.D. 66-70.

⁸Greek text, with extensive annotation, in C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, vol. V, 52-161. Müller's preface to the volume is dated to 1869, but the volume did not appear until 1883 (see Pears, above, n. 6, xi and n. 1).

⁹Extensive use, especially of the former (first edited in 1855), by Chedomil Mijatovich, *Constantine Palaeologus: The Last Emperor of the Greeks, 1448-1453* (London 1892, repr. Chicago 1968).

¹⁰Cf. F. Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit* (Munich 1953); H. Inalcik, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time," *Speculum* 35 (1960) 408-27; N. Moschopoulos, "Le siège et la prise de Constantinople selon les sources turques," *Le Cinq-Centième Anniversaire de la prise de Constantinople. Hellénisme contemporain 1453-1953* (Athens 1953) 23-40; and H.-J. Kornrumpf, *Osmanische Bibliographie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Türkei in Europa* (Leiden-Köln 1973).

¹¹Succinct survey in S. Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople* (Cambridge 1965) 192-98; cf. Pears's (above, n. 6) and Mijatovich's (above, n. 9) prefaces, and Carroll's (above, n. 1) Introduction 10-14.

¹²If catalogued as "western," the letter of Cardinal Isidore of Kiev is still hardly major; it is rather more important as an expression of attitudes than as a strictly historical account. No English translation as yet; Latin text in *Patrologia graeca* vol. 159, 953-56.

¹³Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, transl. Charles T. Riggs (Princeton 1954); Nicolò Barbaro, *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453*, transl. J. R. Jones (New York 1969); J. R. Melville Jones, *The Siege of Constantinople 1453: Seven Contemporary Accounts* (Amsterdam 1972), including the accounts of Tedaldi, Leonard of Chios, Chalcocondylas, Ducas, Riccherio, Dolfin, Lomellino, and an appendix with Mehmet's Treaty with the Genoese; Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, transl. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit 1975).

increase. Despite accretions of newer source material, the older known writers have retained their importance. Of these, it is Sphrantzes who has most taxed scholars' ingeniousness and has correspondingly experienced the greatest vicissitudes in the critical evaluation of the two chronicles traditionally attached to his name.¹⁴

The vicissitudes began when both chronicles fell, or seemingly fell, into oblivion after Sphrantzes' death (in or a few years after 1478).¹⁵ On rediscovery in the West, well over a century later, it was *Maius* that attracted earlier and greater notice. The number of surviving *Maius* manuscripts had no doubt raised the odds for its earlier rediscovery by bibliographers and manuscript-hunters.¹⁶ One of these, the Jesuit Latinist Jacobus Pontanus, found a manuscript of *Maius*, a chronicle whose narrative began "paulo supra annum Christi 1259," in the Bavarian Library in Munich; but rather than produce an edition of the Greek text, Pontanus, in 1604, produced an abridgement in Latin, omitting those portions of the *Chronicle* that he judged useless for history: the non-essential, the offensive; things like polemics on Mohammedanism, passages on the minutiae of Sphrantzes' own life, on meteorological portents, and on the schism between the Greek and Roman Churches.¹⁷ Nearly half a century later in his *Diatriba de Georgiorum scriptis* (1651), p. 426, Leo Allatios (Leone Allacci) mentioned that he had in his possession a Sphrantzes chronicle different from and shorter (it covered only the years 1401 to 1477) than the chronicle previously known. He further mentions that he had compared this with a manuscript of the same work in the Library of the Monastery of the Holy Apostles in Naples. Although he raises the question of the authorship of *Minus*, Allatios is more interested in asking whether *Minus* was a compendium distilled from *Maius*, or whether instead *Minus* was the earlier work, an aide-mémoire for the later, larger work. In the latter case, Sphrantzes' authorship of the shorter work (his authorship of the larger work is unquestioned) is implicitly accepted; in the former case it is at least subject to some doubt ("nescio an ab ipso auctore").¹⁸

¹⁴Detailed summary of Sphrantzes scholarship to the mid-1950s by Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica I: Die byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türkvölker*, 2nd. rev. edn. (Berlin 1958), 282-88. See further Philippides' select bibliography, pp. 164-65; John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologos (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1969) xliii-xliv and footnotes 19-21 to those pages; E. van Ivánka's introduction to the translation of the *Major Chronicle's* "siege-section" in volume I of the Byzantinischer Geschichtsschreiber series: *Die letzten Tage von Konstantinopel* (Graz-Vienna-Köln 1954); V. Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 327-28; Pertusi, *Le testimonianze* 214-15.

¹⁵This sentence, of course, suspends the problem of the authenticity of the chronicles ascribed as of old to Sphrantzes. For this vexed question and its implications, see the survey of scholarship below. The *Maius* text ends with a coda to the effect that Sphrantzes composed that chronicle in "old age and infirmity" at the request of certain prominent individuals of the island of Corfu and that it was completed on March 29, 1478. Philippides includes a translation of that paragraph on p. 95, at the closing of his translation of *Minus*, but with clear indication that it does not belong to it. For 1477 as Sphrantzes' possible year of death, see Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 339. Cf. idem, "Georgios Sphrantzes. Leben und Werk," *Byzantinoslavica* 26 (1965) 65-66 (hereafter cited as Grecu, "Sphrantzes").

¹⁶Manuscripts: cf. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* (above, n. 14) 285; J. B. Papadopoulos, preface to Teubner edition of *Maius*, Books I and II (Leipzig 1935); V. Grecu's 1966 Bucharest edition and the same author's article, "Memoirenwerk," 327-41. There are still only five *Minus* manuscripts in existence, but more than twenty for *Maius*.

¹⁷Pontanus' birthname was Jakob Spanmüller (b.1542, d.1626). Brief biographical synopsis in Ludwig Koch, S.J., *Jesuiten-Lexikon. Die Gesellschaft Jesu einst und jetzt* (Paderborn 1934) 1453-54, though too loosely ascribing a first edition of Sphrantzes to Pontanus. For what Pontanus actually did with the Munich Sphrantzes manuscript, see Pontanus' own words as reproduced in *Patrologia graeca*, vol. 156, 633 ff. Pontanus' translation was reprinted in 1733 in Venice, in a (now) rare book available at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library.

¹⁸Allatios's career: L. Petit, in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* I, 1 (Paris 1930) 830-33; Anthony Cutler's introduction, pp. xi-xiv, to his translation of Allatios' *The Newer Temples of the Greeks* (University Park, PA-London 1969)—brief summaries with reference to further, more detailed literature. Allatios and the *Minus* manuscripts: *Patrologia graeca*, vol. 156, 635-38; 1023-24; Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 327, 330-32. Allatios mentions the same *Minus* manuscript again in his *In Roberti Creightoni apparatus, versionem et notas ad historiam concilii Florentini* (1665). Grecu, in the manuscript search for his critical edition of *Minus*, was unable to locate the Naples manuscript noted by Allatios. The manuscript Allatios records as being in his possession may be that now contained in the fourth fascicle of *Codex Vallicellianus* 172. Alternatively, *Codex Vallicellianus* 172, fasc. 4, may be a copy by Allatios himself of the manuscript (*Codex Vaticanus Ottobonianus* 260?—see next footnote) he mentions in his writings. Cf. Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 330-32; "Sphrantzes," 67 n. 1. After his death, Allatios's papers and manuscripts were deposited in the library of the Oratory of Sancta Maria (Chiesa Nuova) in Vallicella, Rome (founded by the Portuguese scholar Achilles Statius in 1581); see Petit, loc.cit. Allatios had for many years worked in the Vatican Library. The two *Codices Vaticani Barberiniani Graeci* that carry texts of *Minus* indicate they were made "Ex Codice MS Leonis Allatii." Cf. Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 332.

Of the two alternatives presented by Allatios, the first editor of *Minus*, Johann Franz, in 1837, preferred the first: namely, that *Minus* was the more recent work, an epitome of *Maius*.¹⁹ His reasons are mainly stylistic. *Minus* seems more recent because its dialect is cruder, its style marred by a great deal of "verborum constructionisque perversitas." Franz raised the spectre of an anonymous *Minus* epitomator, but concluded that there was no reason to doubt Sphrantzes' authorship: Sphrantzes simply exercised less care, employed a less perfect diction for the less important work. *Minus* was not likely ("certe non verisimile est")²⁰ to have been written earlier and to have provided the raw material for *Maius*. Its value was seen primarily, even exclusively, as providing variant readings toward emending the text of *Maius*.²¹ The other of Allatios's alternatives, that *Minus* was earlier and served as the basis out of which *Maius* was later elaborated, was resurrected in 1893 by the Russian scholar G. Destunis and adopted in Krumbacher's history of Byzantine literature.²² Under either alternative, of course, the standing of *Minus* in the presence of *Maius* suffered: its materials almost entirely subsumed into *Maius*, its style and diction inferior to *Maius*'s, *Minus* could for historiographical purposes safely be ignored.

Destunis's position was in 1932 questioned by J. B. Papadopoulos. In the course of preparing a critical edition of *Chronicon Maius*, Papadopoulos had been impressed by the number of places in which the text of *Maius* could be emended by reference to the text of *Minus*.²³ That *Minus* could be of use in correcting *Maius* was, as the preceding paragraph indicates, not a new idea. What was new were the constructions Papadopoulos put upon it: that only *Minus* was authentic, that *Maius* was the work of a later compiler, responsible for introducing both telltale mistakes and various excursions into the text of *Minus*. In his 1932 article, Papadopoulos comes close to, but stops short of, identifying the supposed compiler as a member of the prominent Melissenos family, a descendant of the Nikolaos Melissenos who figures in *Maius* as Sphrantzes' beloved intended son-in-law, but who receives no mention in *Minus*.

That step was taken two years later in a paper delivered in 1934 by Papadopoulos at the Fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Sofia, Bulgaria.²⁴ There the compiler allegedly responsible for the many interpolations about the Melissenos family in *Maius* (such passages being notably absent from *Minus*) was identified as Makarios Melissenos, metropolitan of Monemvasia, who flourished in the latter part of the 16th century, down to his death in 1585. The reception of Papadopoulos's paper was mixed, in some quarters even hostile. One distinguished Byzantinist went so far as to use the forum of a review of Papadopoulos's 1935 *Maius* edition, where the subject is touched more by bibliographical reference and by inference than directly, to assail Papadopoulos's 1934 Sofia paper. In that review,²⁵ the Papadopoulos thesis is labeled imaginary, chimerical, overbold. The reviewer argues, *inter alia*, for the authenticity of the Melissenos passages in *Maius* and mentions the existence of an early 16th-century *Maius* manuscript, overlooked by Papadopoulos in his search and fatal to his assertion that there was in existence no *Maius* manuscript earlier in date than 1575. In short, the Papadopoulos thesis was seen as the exact reverse of the

¹⁹Franz's edition (Rome 1837) in the series *Classicorum auctorum e Vaticanis codicibus editorum*, under the general editorship of Angelo Cardinal Mai, is based on Codex Vaticanus Ottobonianus Graecus 260, f. 113r-206v (manuscript described by Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 328-29); reprinted in Migne, *Patrologia graeca*, vol. 156, 1023-80.

²⁰Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 327, misconstrues the crucial sentence.

²¹Which in 1837 indicated the 1796 Vienna edition of *Maius* by Carl Alter (available as a rare book at Northwestern University Library). Alter's edition was based on the same Munich manuscript as Pontanus' 1604 abridged Latin translation. In 1838 I. Bekker produced a new edition of *Maius* for the Bonn corpus, making use also of the readings of another manuscript, Parisiensis Regius, suppl. 80, which had been purchased for the Paris Library at Patrai in 1774 (see Bekker's preface)—"Monacensi recentior" [its writing was completed in 1763] but "non deterior," in Bekker's judgement.

²²Grecu, "Memoirenwerk," 327; K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527-1453)* (1897, repr. New York 1958) I, 308, n.1.

²³"Ἰωάννης Ἱ Παλαιόλογος καὶ τὸ Χρονικὸν τοῦ Φραντζῆ," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 32 (1932) 257-62. Papadopoulos's edition of *Maius*, Books I and II appeared in 1935; the projected edition of Books III and IV never appeared; Papadopoulos died in 1957. For a list of his articles on *Maius* and the "Sphrantzes-Problem," fourteen of which were later reprinted in a single volume, see R.-J. Loenertz, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 52 (1959) 97-98. Cf. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* 1, 282-88, esp. 287-88.

²⁴Published as "Phrantzès est-il réellement l'auteur de la Grand Chronique qui porte son nom?," *Actes du IVe Congrès international des études byzantines, Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique bulgare* 9 (1935) 177-89.

²⁵H. Grégoire, *Byzantion* 12 (1937) 385-91.

truth. Only *Maius* was affirmed as authentic; *Minus* was judged to be the product of an epitomator, composed well after Sphrantzes' death, but still of use in helping to establish the text of *Maius*.²⁶

It seems that in the wake of the withering attack Papadopoulos tacitly withdrew his claim that *Maius* was a complete forgery compiled by the wily metropolitan. He nevertheless clung to his belief in the priority of *Minus*, but now considered *Maius* to be an authentic work by Sphrantzes, a reworking of the vulgar *Minus* daybook into *Maius* with its literary and historical pretensions.²⁷ In that compromise position he received the ready concurrence and assistance of the doyen of Byzantine diplomatic studies, Franz Dölger, who held that *Maius* was a reworking of *Minus*, substantially by Sphrantzes himself but (as Papadopoulos also insisted) subject to some significant "Melissenos-interpolations" in the sixteenth century, interpolations for which Makarios Melissenos was verifiably responsible.²⁸ Papadopoulos's position received further support from St. Binon in 1938.²⁹ Then, in 1940, R.-J. Loenertz renewed the assault on *Maius*'s authenticity.³⁰

Father Loenertz' assault, partial at first, became comprehensive in 1946 with the publication of his article "Autour du Chronicon Maius attribué à Georges Phrantzès."³¹ In that article, Loenertz presented a detailed analysis of the structural components of the *Maius* text, the telltale signs of their patching together and their interpolations. Building on Papadopoulos's work, but far extending it, he dissected the *Maius* prologue to demonstrate how it had been adapted from *Minus* to justify *Maius*'s grander program, with as little verbal alteration as possible, but with a reversal in the intention of *Minus*: The *Maius* prologue promised to recount the very events explicitly excluded from recounting by the *Minus* prologue. Loenertz detailed *Maius*'s use and occasional misunderstanding of Chalcondylas for events of 1360 to 1402, and its reliance, less in extent, but more significant in proving forgery, on the 16th-century so-called Chronicle of Dorotheos. He concluded by reasserting what Papadopoulos had first proposed in 1934, that the compiler of *Maius* was none other than Makarios Melissenos.

The case, at last well and fully made, prevailed. Many, including Philippides and Carroll, now accept that Makarios Melissenos was the "author" of *Chronicon Maius*; even those with doubts about the putative authorship are convinced *Maius* is a forgery.³² This "new orthodoxy" has lifted *Minus* from the shadows of *Maius*. It now stands on its own to be evaluated in and for itself. Such assessment indicates *Minus* to be extremely valuable on several grounds. Among these is the constant flow of chronological data it provides: not just relative orderings of events, but many absolute dates (by day, by month, by season, by year), especially for such occasions as births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths in his own and in the imperial family, but also for transfers of imperial and patriarchal power, for arrivals in and departures from the capital, for plagues, treaties, and military operations. Such dates are so frequently given that they lead to the inescapable conclusion that Sphrantzes during his official career kept a diary that at some point later in his life constituted the raw material for the drafting of his "Memoirs," *Chronicon Minus*. It was not, however, a complete

²⁶Questions of the Greek language (the demotic cast of *Minus*, the puristic cast of *Maius*) and their possible implications are also discussed. Reference is made to further arguments against the Papadopoulos thesis presented by V. Grumel in his review of Papadopoulos's *Maius* edition in *Échos d'Orient* 40 (1937) 87-94. These include an argument based on the respective dating systems used in the *Maius* and *Minus* manuscripts, to which Papadopoulos replied in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938) 324 (full bibliographical data on this article in next footnote).

²⁷Papadopoulos, "Über 'Maius' und 'Minus' des Georgios Phrantzes und über die Randnöten des angeblichen Pachomios," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938) 323-31.

²⁸Dölger, "Ein literarischer und diplomatischer Fälscher des 16. Jahrhunderts: Metropolit Makarios von Monembasia," *Otto Glauning zum 60. Geburtstag Festgabe* (Leipzig 1936) 25-35, reprinted in Dölger, *Byzantinische Diplomatik* (Speyer am Rhein 1956) 371-83. Cf. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938) 323 n. 1, 489-91.

²⁹"L'histoire et la légende de deux chrysobulles d'Andronic II en faveur de Monembasie. Macaire ou Phrantzès?," *Échos d'Orient* 37 (1938) 274-311.

³⁰"La date de la lettre Θ de Manuel Paléologue et l'inauthenticité du 'Chronicon maius' de Georges Phrantzes," *Échos d'Orient* 39 (1940) 91-99.

³¹*Miscellanea G. Mercati*, vol. III (Studi e Testi Vaticani 123) (Vatican City 1946) 273-311.

³²Makarios Melissenos as author of *Maius*: Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, vol. I (2nd edn.) 284-85; Grecu "Memoirenwerk," 328; Grecu, "Sphrantzes," 67 ff.; Philippides, 6-10; Carroll 7-10. Cf. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, xlv, n. 21 (use of term Pseudo-Phrantzes in reference to *Chronicon Maius*); D. R. Dudley and D. M. Lang (edd.), *Classical and Byzantine, Oriental and African Literature* (The Penguin Companion to Literature 4: Harmondsworth 1969) 209.

reworking of diary into memoirs because though many diary notices were expanded to a form more suitable for memoirs, many other diary notices seem to have been incorporated direct and unchanged into *Minus*.³³ Such briefer notices, though on the one hand disappointing, are on the other hand often refreshing; they contribute to the impression that *Minus* is a source that is not overly embellished and can therefore more readily be trusted.

That impression is further advanced by what is known or can be deduced about the credentials, character, purpose, and limits of the author:

Credentials: an intimate of, and relative by marriage to the Palaiologan household, Sphrantzes had a long career of government service, occasionally as an administrator, but more frequently as a roving ambassador to various and sundry places within and beyond (e.g., to Caucasian Georgia and to the court of the sultan) the pale of the Byzantine world.³⁴ His rewards were partly material, partly honorary, taking the form of court titles, including the one most commonly affixed to his name, *protovestiarius*,³⁵ "First Lord of the Imperial Wardrobe."³⁶

Character: generally straightforward and honest. His biases are patent and therefore easily taken into account. He is unswervingly loyal to the imperial household, implacably hostile to his court rival Loukas Notaras, the Grand Duke,³⁷ and his family.

Purpose and Limits: by and large autobiographical, to recount the events that occurred during his lifetime, and of these, only those of which he had accurate knowledge. This means that he often provides information only of those events he himself witnessed or participated in, that he is commendably reticent to write about what he has not seen. He is often most expansive when recounting some of the diplomatic episodes and conversations in which he personally shared.

If *Minus*, therefore, is now judged a valuable, though sometimes too brief, insider's account of the events leading up to and following Constantinople's fall, *Maius* has now fallen into that class of documents that Professor Allan Nevins would label "dubious."³⁸ It cannot be wholly dismissed from consideration. Its integrity is not entirely shattered, merely incomplete. Its pure metal must be extracted from the dross, initially through the process of source criticism initiated by Papadopoulos and Loenertz and now carried on by others.³⁹ Surprisingly, Philippides, while including in his book the *Maius* siege-section which he assigns to Makarios Melissenos, seems to have overlooked the series of articles by Margaret Carroll in which, following a suggestion by Loenertz at the end of his major article,⁴⁰ Sphrantzes' authorship of the siege-section is reasserted.⁴¹

³³Greco, "Memoirenwerk," 333 ff.; Greco, "Sphrantzes," 66-67.

³⁴The course of Sphrantzes' career is readily and fully traced by reading *Minus* in Philippides' translation with its chronological and other aids. Cf. William Miller, "The Historians Doukas and Phrantzes," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 46 (1926) 63-71, at 65-71 (based, however, on the Bonn edition of *Maius*, still believed authentic); Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* I, 282-83; Greco, "Sphrantzes," 62-66.

³⁵This title was awarded to him in 1432 and is appended to his name in the *Minus* prologue. In 1451, after touchy negotiations and in secretive circumstances, Constantine XI named him Grand Logothetes (cf. Philippides' translation, 64-69). For the episode and titles under consideration during those negotiations (and other contemporary court titles), see R. Guiland, "Le protovestiarite Georges Phrantzes," *Revue des études byzantines* 6 (1948) 48-57. Knowledge of that appointment was supposedly restricted to the emperor and to Sphrantzes and his immediate family. Perhaps because it was not more widely known, Sphrantzes contented himself with using *protovestiarius* in the title prefixed to *Minus*.

³⁶Philippides' translation, p. 22.

³⁷For whom, cf. Philippides' thumbnail sketch, 161.

³⁸Allan Nevins, *The Gateway to History* (rev. edn., Garden City, N.Y., 1962), chapter VI.

³⁹E.g., E. Voordeckers, "Les sources du Chronicon Maius du Pseudo-Phrantzes," *Byzantion* 37 (1967) 153-63.

⁴⁰"Autour du Chronicon . . .," cited in text above and in n. 31, suggesting (311) the possibility that Makarios in compiling *Maius* had at his disposal a version of *Minus* longer and more detailed than the one that has survived.

⁴¹Using a variety of arguments in a thesis very difficult to prove. They are all published in the journal *Byzantion*. See "Notes on the Authorship of the 'Siege' Section of the Chronicon Maius of Pseudo-Phrantzes, Book III": "1. Corresponding Omissions in the *Maius* and *Minus*," *Byzantion* 41 (1971) 28-36; "2. Parallel Treatment of References to the Megaduke Lucas Notaras," *ibid.*, 37-44; "3. Comparison of Interpolations," *ibid.* 42 (1972-73) 5-22; "4. The Significance of Discontinuity in the *Minus*," *ibid.* 43 (1973) 30-38. See also "Puzzling Names in the 'Chronicon Maius' of Macarius Melissenos: Pseudo-Phrantzes," *ibid.* 44 (1974) 17-22.

If Carroll is right, then there is even greater unity to the two separate selections—the entire *Minus*, the *Maius* siege account — included for translation in the *Philippides* volume. Whether she is right or wrong, continuing study of the *Maius* sources remains worthwhile and might now, in the wake of the diverse articles written on the subject, best be carried out in the framework of an extensive commentary on the *Maius* text.⁴²

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⁴²See now, of course, Carroll's translation of *Maius*, with introduction and commentary, cited above, n. 1.