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I

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# ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΣ

Tome I

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# ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΣ

Књига I

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## MOUNT ATHOS IN THE HISTORICAL WORK OF NIKEPHOROS GREGORAS\*

Gregoras' description of The Holy Mountain is one among several geographical excursuses in the historian's work. The aim of this paper is to give a translation and commentary of his description, focusing especially on the question whether it should be perceived as a mere *locus amoenus* or as an intentional excursus of the author who, by narrating of the beauty and serenity of the place, wanted to show what it has become with the arrival of the Hesychasts and the emergence of their theological doctrine.

*Keywords:* Mount Athos, Nikephoros Gregoras, Gregory Palamas, Hesychasm, excursus

Gregoras' description of Mount Athos found its place in the XIV book of his historical work. Being one of the longest geographical descriptions, it represents a true *locus amoenus*. It is a picturesque portrayal of the Holy Mountain's nature and the serene life the monks enjoy there. Some of the historical data in his text the author probably excerpted from Herodotos and Diodore of Sicily.<sup>1</sup> There is no description of the monasteries nor is there any reference to their prestige and importance for the Byzantine empire. The entire excursus is concentrated on the natural beauties of the place, its serenity, piety, and finally, on the controversies that have threatened to jeopardize its peace and quiet and pollute the pious life of this community.

As we have already mentioned, the story about the Holy Mountain is not the only excursus of this kind in the historical work of Gregoras. It is known that Gregoras' occupation with geography, as well as ethnography, was an important and

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<sup>1</sup> P. K. *Vlachakos*, Νικηφόρος Γρηγοράς. Φυσική γεωγραφία και ανθρωπογεωγραφία στο έργο του, Thessalonikē 2003, 122 (= *Vlachakos*, Νικηφόρος Γρηγοράς). It is thought that this Gregoras' description has influenced later authors who wrote about Mount Athos. V. *Ibidem*.

inseparable part of his history writing.<sup>2</sup> Gregoras' geographical excursuses vary in length, depending on the writer's personal interest and his admiration for the matters he is writing about.<sup>3</sup> Since it is very long, we can conclude that Gregoras' description of Mount Athos was surely important to the author and that it was included in the History to serve a certain purpose. The purpose of composing such an extent excursus would therefore have to be searched in the text itself, in the political circumstances and theological climate that prevailed at the time the historian composed this part of his work. Since we cannot be precise when it comes to the dating of the XIV book, we can assume that it was written, together with books XII–XVII, in the period between 1346 and 1351, the year in which Gregoras was condemned at the Council of Constantinople.<sup>4</sup> Gregoras' XIV book recounts the events that occurred in the years 1345–1346 and ends with Kantakouzenos' entry into Constantinople, in February 1347. This book is full of Gregoras' accounts of the ill omens that have predicted all the misfortunes that befell the Empire.<sup>5</sup> In this manner the historian also begins his story of Mount Athos, stating that it is important to depart from his main narrative and give an account of the events that happened there.

#### Gregoras' excursus on Mount Athos (translation)

*We have woven together and we shall weave together (if we would be alive) in this history many of the numerous signs of lawful anger of a philanthropic God that have been revealed to us so that they [the signs] would seem great in every way, greater than the ones before, to those that now see it all at once and to those that will hereafter read [about it]. Nevertheless, it would all have been bearable, if not for everyone, then certainly for those, whom the experience of things inspires with sagacity, and whom the piety of soul taught to think of the Lord's teachings, following the holy scriptures, and to have to consider this as an education from the Lord and as a sort of medicine for innate and inveterate blemishes; it would have been bearable had not the shipwrecks of the church been added [to that] and had not the similar newborn goddesses of Death of scandals long ago asleep adhered and brought great destructions of soul and drowned it easily in the depths of perdition. Some of these things will also be briefly narrated by us here. To recount all these things together would not be*

<sup>2</sup> This is already clear from Gregoras' introduction to his historical work. V. Nicephori Gregorae Historia byzantina, Vol. I, cura L. Schopeni, Bonnae 1829, 5.16–22 (=Gregora, I). Gregoras' interest for geography is attested through the fact that he possessed *The Geography* of Claudius Ptolemy in his library. V. R. Guillard, Essai sur Nicéphore Grégoras. L'homme et l'oeuvre, Paris 1926, 276; O. R. Borodin, Razvitije geografiji v pozdnej Vizantiji, Kultura Vizantiji, XIII–pervaja polovina XVv, Moskva 1991, 378.

<sup>3</sup> *Vlachakos*, Νικηφόρος Γρηγοράς, 121.

<sup>4</sup> On the chronology concerning the composition of the XIV book of Gregoras' History v. J. L. Van Dieten, Entstehung und Überlieferung der Historia Rhomaike des Nikephoros Gregoras. Insbesondere des ersten Teiles, Lib. I–XI, Köln 1975, 15–16 (=Van Dieten, Entstehung und Überlieferung); H.-V. Beyer, Eine Chronologie der Lebensgeschichte des Nikephoros Gregoras, JÖB 27 (1978) 137, n. 66 (=Beyer, Chronologie); Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte, dritter Teil (Kapitel XII–XVII), übersetzt und erläutert von J. L. Van Dieten, Stuttgart 1988, 6–15 (=Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte, III).

<sup>5</sup> On Gregoras' perception of misfortunes compared to some other Byzantine historians v. A. Kazhdan, Nicetas Choniates and others: aspects of the art and literature, Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, edd. A. Kazhdan, S. Franklin, Cambridge 1984, 263–272.

*easy for us, who are dealing with another study,<sup>6</sup> for it would be a great work, which requires great occupation. But first of all, here is the story about Mount Athos, which, at that time, succumbed to the Mesalians and the Bogomils.*

*It seems to me that Mount Athos is worthy of admiration, because it is cooled by the entirely pleasant air and because it is adorned with all sorts of plants, and because, in an easy way so to say, it generously welcomes the senses of its visitors and offers straightforwardly the pleasure of delight. Sweet scents and fresh colors of flowers flow from all quarters, as from treasuries. Mount Athos is, for the most part, in the company of the clear rays of the sun. It is rich in trees with all sorts of leaves, groves and various meadows, the works of human hands. All sorts of birds echo all around it. And beehives surround flowers there and the bees hum in the quietness of the air. And a certain unusual veil of delight is woven in that place, not only during the spring, but in any season and at any time, because the circle of the four seasons is always yoked together for the sake of the similar pleasure and delight of human senses. Indeed, from the middle of the grove and from those plants, the music of the nightingale sounds and, so to say, sings hymns to the Lord together with the monks there. For he [the nightingale] possesses a divine lyre in his breast, an innate Psalter and a harmonic music which sound around listeners entirely in unison. At the same time, this place is refreshed and completely overflowing with natural water from many sources. Rushing streams springing out, some from one place others from another, become the children of thousand springs and they quietly and secretly unite their current, as if stealing each other's way; just as they are themselves designedly silent, similar to those who apprehend by the senses, they seek after some rearing, giving great power to the monks there, who lead a peaceful life sending up wings of prayer silently to God. Moreover, it [Mount Athos] provides its natural goodness to those who want to pursue a heavenly life on Earth in quietness, and it provides, at all times, an adequate abundance in food of all sorts out of its own resources. And at the same time it is encircled by a large sea, which provides it with much grace all-around, so that it does not let it be solely an island, but it enables it, by means of a narrow passage, to enjoy the fruits of the outside land, unfolded in length and at the same time in width, without hardship. In a word, signs of virtue of the nature and of the asceticism of the inhabitants appear together from all quarters there. There are no dwellings with women, there is not an unbridled eye and no luxurious embellishment or whatever renews an old intercourse with snake or fills life with large potions or waves. There are no public trade markets and squares, no clerks at the markets, no courts, no public declamations and no vanity in the chair declaring the laws of appetency. Slavery and authority do not divide the life there, but equality in speech, moderation of spirit, dignity of character and nobility of justice dwell and dance round that place, and everything else that makes*

<sup>6</sup> Nicephori Gregorae Historia byzantina, Vol. II, cura L. Schopeni, Bonnae 1830, 714.15–18 (=Gregora, II). This sentence may support the thesis that Gregoras was uncertain about whether or not he should give a detailed account of the matters of the church. If we assume he is thinking of his History when he says “dealing with another study”, it can be concluded that he thought theological matters should be discussed in the separate work, since they deserve a more detailed analysis which should be conducted independently. He later wrote The Antirrhethika.

*it one of the divinely inspired states, and that accomplishes the real philosophy in the soul. No wealth, the expenditure of neither money nor lazy debauchery has citizenship there, but the whole ethos is truly revered and free-spirited, and it hastens to the palace of virtue and, in a Doric way,<sup>7</sup> is truly joined in good things.*

*It can be said that that place is spontaneously zealous and prevents and pushes away all the evil and that it adopts and settles only virtue within it. And as much as it is the lover of good, to that degree also it is the hater of bad. This mountain has long ago declared and foretold everything, not with mouth or by vocal instruments, but by its living acts that have the power to send and echo the proclamation of Good through the entire Earth and over the seas. Namely, barbaric and arrogant spirit of that ancient Xerxes, that was at the same time licentious and was making fun of the order of things, flattered himself to institute anew all the elements; after, he dug through the Mountain a narrow passage and changed it into an island, he carried his land forces over the moist bosoms of the sea and displayed his land army as a fleet;<sup>8</sup> the Mountain convicted him publicly in the stage of the worldly theater, it reduced the most part of his vanity to human measure and taught, through him, the emperors, military commanders and satraps to put away an inopportune pride and to be of a more moderate sense. And so, from the very beginning, nature made this place into a workshop of virtue and it attracts everyone from its heights to love it, not only those who have been granted to taste something of that sweetness of virtue and silence, but also those, who have, through hearsay, learned of the good things that happen there. So the inhabitants that have always been, and are until today, settled there, are much talked about – they who have preserved the orchard of virtue pure, unpolluted and free, keeping it clean from every weed. It banishes out, drives away with all its force (ὄλαις χερσίν ἐξελαύνει)<sup>9</sup> and rejects hypocrite and impure inhabitants.*

*And of the older times one can hear from the others that have talked about it sufficiently. I shall talk<sup>10</sup> about things that have happened recently, about Joseph the Cretan and George of Larissa, and about those that have celebrated their mysteries at their polluted altar, and especially about the abominable teachings into which the pupils have been initiated by their teachers. Further on, I shall talk about Moses, the*

<sup>7</sup> V. Nikephoros Gregoras. *Rhömäische Geschichte*, III, 325, n. 306.

<sup>8</sup> This is the only historical data Gregoras introduces in his description of Mount Athos. It is known that the Persian emperor Xerxes, on his way to Greece, stopped on Athos and dug this passage to make it easier for his army to cross. Herodotus explains that the Persian emperor did this out of his own pride in order to display his power over nature. Herodotus, *Histories*, with an English translation by *A. D. Godley*, Vol. III, Books V–VII, Oxford 1938, VII, 338, 24–25.

<sup>9</sup> Gregora, II, 718. 5–6. Gregoras uses the similar expression later on in his text.

<sup>10</sup> In this paragraph, Gregoras narrates in the first person singular (“... ἐγὼ δὲ τὰ νεωστὶ διηγῆσομαι...”) V. Gregora, II, 718. 8). Up to that point he has used first person plural to recount the events (e. g. “... τῆδε τῇ ἱστορίᾳ συνυφάναμέν τε καὶ συνυφανοῦμεν...” Gregora, II, 714. 4–5; “... ἡμῖν... λελέξεται.” Gregora, II, 714. 15–16, except in the sentence in which he starts narrating about Mount Athos: “It seems to me that Mount Athos is worthy of admiration...” – “... τὸ ὄρος ὃ Ἄθως θαυμάζεσθαι ἄξιον εἶναι δοκεῖ μοι...” V. Gregora, II, 714. 21. Whether or not this was done with a purpose, other than variation in style, it is interesting to note that the author introduces this kind of change precisely at the time when he starts talking about the events and people that threatened to spoil the peaceful life on Mount Athos.

painter, and Isaac and David and Job,<sup>11</sup> of those who had entirely profane tongues and thoughts and hands, and who, defaming the virtue, maliciously intended to conceal the madness within and the impiety of soul with the names of the best of the people, just like the tombs, which on the inside smell of many foul smells, but are on the outside decorated with gold and white pebbles. They have taken over the appearance and the names of the best of the people, who have been distinguished by virtue, exactly as Orestes, Pylades, Theseus and Pelops behave in dramas, in order to conceal the poison of their own badness, which they disgorge against the guileless.<sup>12</sup> That their teachings are dirty and impure is said in the *Tomos* written against their impiety at the hands of the divine men from Mount Athos<sup>13</sup> and brought to the holy Byzantine council; it [the *Tomos*] points out, among other things, those that are not easy to bear to listen to for a person of sound mind, and that is how they secretly burn down holy icons, crushing them completely;<sup>14</sup> how they sprinkle upon their food the urine of their master, exalting him; how they do not believe in the holy order of incarnation and other things that are better to be unspoken of. Why to recount more in details and to defile pious ears? Those who want can learn better about it from the *Tomos*, because it describes their badness at full length and it is incorporated into the patriarchal codices. It was not possible to escape the notice of the pure and truthful eyes of those God-loving men, who live just for God, as if it would not be possible for absinth mixed with honey to escape the notice of those who possess the sense of taste, and it would be far less possible for an ill-smell mixed among the roses to escape the notice of those who possess the sense of smell. Therefore, inflaming their soul with divine zeal, like with forcible fire, they [the Athonite monks] turned towards more accurate search for evil, quietly and little by little, like huntsman, tracing to find the roots of evil from the outgrowth. And when these men [heretics] were found, some of them they [the Athonite monks] gave up to retribution, others they expelled further from that place [Mount Athos] with all their force (παλάμαις ἀπάσαις ἐκέλευν ἀπήλασαν).<sup>15</sup> There were those

<sup>11</sup> PLP, n<sup>os</sup> 9051, 3924, 19926, 8258, 5021, 8931. We shall deal somewhat more with George of Larissa further on in the text.

<sup>12</sup> It has been noted that Gregoras' allusions to poison are very similar to those that can be found in the Synodikon of Orthodoxy, in the part in which the Bogomils and similar sects are being anathematized! This is very important since the entire excursus and the usage of the terms *the Bogomils* and *the Mesalians* in Gregoras' description most probably refer to the Hesyachasts. V. Nikephoros Gregoras. *Rhomäische Geschichte*, III, 327, n. 312.

<sup>13</sup> This *Tomos* was probably written around 1342 and has not been preserved. V. Le registre synodal du patriarcat byzantine au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Étude paléographique et diplomatique par J. Darrouzès, Paris 1971, 314; Nikephoros Gregoras. *Rhomäische Geschichte*, III, 327, n. 310 and 328, n. 313. A. Rigo, *Monaci esicasti e monaci Bogomili. Le accuse di Messalianismo e Bogomilismo rivolte agli esicasti ed il problema dei rapporti tra Esicasmo e Bogomilismo*, Firenze 1989, 135–137 (= Rigo, *Monaci esicasti*). There were also synods which condemned the Bogomils in Bulgaria at that time. V. D. Angelov, *Zur Geschichte des Bogomilismus in Thrakien in der 1. Hälfte des 14. Jh.*, BZ 51 (1958) 374.

<sup>14</sup> That these *heretics* attacked the holy icons v. E. Werner, *Spätbogomilisch-adamitische Spekulationen und Praktiken in religions-historischer Sicht*, *Byzantine Studies* 1 (1974) 41 (=Werner, *Spätbogomilisch-adamitische Spekulationen*). On the connections between the Bogomils and the Iconoclasts v. J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, Paris 1959, 57 (=Meyendorff, *Introduction*); D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils. A study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, Cambridge 1972<sup>2</sup>, 214 (=Obolensky, *The Bogomils*).

<sup>15</sup> Gregora, I, 719.20–21. V. note 9.



who escaped from there [Athos] secretly, before their evil was completely discovered. Some of them went to the cities of Thessaloniki and Veroia and also to the City which rules over all of them. And being there they thought, I presume, to throw a shade over their own evil in this City, which is more than any other place a common hearth for all who come from all around the oikoumenē, and who at the same time speak a lot of languages and are of different opinion;<sup>16</sup> they imitated birds woodpeckers, which fly about the trees, strike off bark of trees with their beaks and run past everything that is healthy; they spend a lot of time sitting in their rotten and decayed places and they make them hollow in depth and feed on them.<sup>17</sup>

At this point Gregoras ends with his excursus and continues his main narrative.

As it is clear from the first paragraphs of his description, Gregoras wanted to inform his audience of the misfortunes that have taken hold of the Empire during the years of the civil war between John Kantakouzenos and the regency in Constantinople (1341–1347). The signs of the lawful anger of God have already become evident by some other ill-omens the author has narrated, but the real display of God's wrath was yet to come with the events on the Holy Mountain. The historian slowly leads his audience into the story by presenting the peaceful life on Athos and the wonders of its nature. One can almost feel the breeze, smell the scents of the flowers and plants, hear the songs of birds, the humming of the bees and enjoy the divine prayer of the monks.<sup>18</sup> Then the author turns the course of his narrative to some very disturbing matters. The historian informs us of the expulsion of the Bogomils and the Mesalians<sup>19</sup> from Athos, who have threatened to infect the Holy Mountain. Gregoras' story is in no way an invention of the author, for it has been supported by the Life of St. Theodosios of Trnovo. As the Life of St. Theodosios informs us, the *heretics* went to Mount Athos and stayed there for three years before they were discovered and expelled probably around 1344/45.<sup>20</sup> The dealing with *heretics* on Athos can therefore be dated approximately to the year 1341 or a little later.<sup>21</sup> We learn from the Life that: *This heresy*

<sup>16</sup> For Gregoras' praise of Constantinople v. *E. Fenster*, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae*, München 1968, 215–221.

<sup>17</sup> Gregora, II, 714–720. For the German translation by Jan Louis van Dielen v. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhomäische Geschichte*, III, 125–129.

<sup>18</sup> Gregoras himself never visited Mount Athos so it is interesting to see how he portrays it. His description, ἀνεκφρασίς, does not go into details when it comes to the geography or the monasteries of Mount Athos, which the author does not even mention. We should, however, note that Gregoras' feelings of piety and respect for the life of the monks (Gregoras himself became a monk) date from his early childhood, for the historian was raised by his uncle Jean, the metropolitan of Heraclea Pontica. V. *V. Laurent*, *La personnalité de Jean d'Héraclée (1250–1328), oncle et précepteur de Nicéphore Grégoras*, *ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ* 3 (1930) 297–315; *V. Laurent*, *La vie de Jean, Métropolitte d'Héraclée du Pont*, *ΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ ΠΟΝΤΟΥ* 6 (1934) 3–63.

<sup>19</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine sources do not make any distinction between the Bogomils and the Mesalians. For them they are one and the same sect. V. *Obolensky*, *The Bogomils*, 222, 241, 253. For the 1341–1344 events on Athos v. also *Rigo*, *Monaci esicasti*, 135–186.

<sup>20</sup> *Obolensky*, *The Bogomils*, 256; *Werner*, *Spätbogomilisch-adamitische Spekulationen*, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Nikephoros Gregoras. *Rhomäische Geschichte*, III, 325, n. 310. We should note that Gregoras is not referring to the year 1325/6, when some of the monks fled from Athos because of the incursion of the Turkish pirates, as *Meyendorff* suggested. V. *Meyendorff*, *Introduction*, 53; Nikephoros Gregoras. *Rhomäische Geschichte*, III, 328, n. 317. For the expulsion of *heretics* from Mount Athos in Gregoras'

*spread about like that for three years if not longer. The holy fathers of that mountain [Mount Athos], being able to put up neither with that impious heresy nor with their too many calumnies and shamelessness any longer, called up a council and revealed their lust and cunning. They drove them out in any way possible and gave them up to eternal damnation.*<sup>22</sup> However, the fact that has to be taken into consideration is whether or not Gregoras had in fact someone else in mind rather than the Bogomils and the Mesalians when he attacked *the heretics* on Athos – namely, the Hesychasts and their spiritual leader, Gregory Palamas.

When one looks into the history of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium, one is faced with the story of theological disputes that have been aroused by the emergence of the Hesychast controversy. Beside philosophical debates between the leading intellectuals that marked the so-called *Palaiologan renaissance*,<sup>23</sup> theological disputes have surely marked the epoch of the Palaiologoi, questioning the essence and the nature of things and the work of the Creator himself.<sup>24</sup> One of the intellectuals involved in the dispute, that became part of his every-day life and an *obsession* until the end of his days, was the writer of *The Roman History*, Nikephoros Gregoras (ca. 1295 – 1359/60).<sup>25</sup>

Gregoras' first appearance in the dispute against the leading Hesychast, Gregory Palamas, came about through the persuasion of the empress Anne of Savoy in 1346.<sup>26</sup> According to Gregoras, the empress wished to show her good will towards Palamas, who was imprisoned at that time because of his friendship with John Kantakouzenos.<sup>27</sup> The empress, determined to make peace with Kantakouzenos, who was already at the gates of the City, ordered Palamas to be taken out of prison and brought to the palace. Wanting to show her agreement and acceptance of his doctrine, the empress invited Gregoras to take part in the dialogue with Palamas, believing this would prove fruitful and would end all disagreements and misunderstandings with Kantakouzenos.<sup>28</sup> However, Gregoras showed his utter disagreement with the doctrine of Palamas, paving the way for his own condemnation and imprisonment.

History v. also Nikephoros Gregoras *Antirrhethika I*, Einleitung, Textausgabe, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen von *H.-V. Beyer*, Wien 1976, 104–108 (= *Beyer*, *Antirrhethika I*).

<sup>22</sup> *K. Petkov*, *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh-Fifteenth Century: The records of a Bygone Culture*, Leiden–Boston, 2008, 297. The original text of the *Vita* was not available.

<sup>23</sup> *I. Ševčenko*, *Society and Intellectual Life in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, *Actes du XIV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Études byzantines*, I, Bucarest 1974, 69–92; *Idem*, *Études sur la polémique entre Théodore Métochite et Nicéphore Choumnos (La vie intellectuelle et politique à Byzance sous les premiers Paléologues)*, Bruxelles 1962.

<sup>24</sup> *Meyendorff*, Introduction; *H. G. Beck*, *Humanismus und Palamismus*, XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Études byzantines, Ochride 1961, 63–82; *J. Meyendorff*, *Humanisme nominaliste et mystique chrétienne à Byzance au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *Byzantine Hesychasm: historical, theological and social problems*, VR, London 1974, 905–914; *Idem*, *Society and Culture in the Fourteenth Century: Religious Problems, Byzantine Hesychasm: historical, theological and social problems*, VR, London 1974, 51–65.

<sup>25</sup> For Gregoras' biography v. *Beyer*, *Chronologie*, 127–155; Nikephoros Gregoras. *Rhömäische Geschichte*, übersetzt und erläutert von *J. L. van Dieten*, erster Teil (Kapitel I–VII), Stuttgart 1973, 1–35.

<sup>26</sup> *H.-V. Beyer*, Nikephoros Gregoras als Theologe und sein erstes Auftreten gegen die Hesychasten, *JÖB* 20 (1971) 171–188.

<sup>27</sup> *Gregora*, II, 768.

<sup>28</sup> *Gregora*, II, 722–725.

Gregory Palamas and the story of the Hesychast controversy are introduced slowly into Gregoras' historical work. One gets the impression that the historian is occasionally uncertain whether to pursue these theological matters in his work or not.<sup>29</sup> Once this theological dispute became an inseparable part of Gregoras' life (which happened in 1351), the Hesychast controversy is given a central place in his History. One of the first episodes in which Gregoras attacked the Hesychasts could be his excursus on Mount Athos. This claim can be supported by the prosopographical evidence. Namely, some of the *heretics* Gregoras mentioned by name were the ones that belonged to the circle of Palamas' supporters. This was the case with George of Larissa, who has been identified with David Disypatos.<sup>30</sup> A letter of George Akindynos mentions George of Larissa as the leader of heretics who fled from Mount Athos, and who had very close relations with some of the leading Hesychasts of the period. In his letter to Iakobos Koukounarios, metropolitan of Monembasia,<sup>31</sup> dated to the years 1344–1346, Akindynos says: *Moreover, this heresy [the Hesychasm] appeared now along other disgraceful acts and along the attack on the icons, in the Holy Mountain, here [in Constantinople] and in Thessaloniki. The first responsible for this deviance is that George, who came to Thessaloniki and lived together with Isidoros [future patriarch of Constantinople] for a while.*<sup>32</sup> George of Larissa, thus, no doubt, belonged to a very narrow circle of Palamas' supporters, since the patriarch Isidoros Boucheiras,<sup>33</sup> who is mentioned along with him, became the first Hesychast patriarch in 1347, when Kantakouzenos' party finally triumphed. Thus, the story of the expulsion of the Bogomils and the Mesalians can be perceived as an attack of the author on the Hesychasts and their spiritual leader, Gregory Palamas.<sup>34</sup> This taken into account, we can conclude that the main point of Gregoras' excursus was to allude to his adversaries – the contrast he made by describing the beauties and wondrous scents of the place, confronting them with most evil heretics, their Bacchic behaviour and terrible smell, was supposed to create a strong effect on his audience and to provoke a strong

<sup>29</sup> This can be seen from the fact that he says he will not deal with these matters (the Hesychasm) in more detail, because other people have already done that. V. Gregora, II, 725–726. It is interesting to follow how Gregoras introduces Palamas and the story of the Hesychast controversy into his work. One gets the feeling that this story will not be of great importance and that it will not matter very much for the future narrative. This is because the author himself was at that point unaware of how much he would become involved in the dispute. The historian introduces Palamas in his narrative when he narrates about the dispute of the latter with Varlaam of Calabria. Gregoras informs us of how Palamas and his followers were accused of the Mesalianism, and how they would all have been condemned at the Council, had not the emperor Andronikos III died. Gregoras was invited, from both parties, to participate in this discussion, but his migraine prevented him from involving any further at that particular moment. V. Gregora, I, 556. 14–558. 17.

<sup>30</sup> V. H.-V. Beyer, David Disypatos als Theologe und Vorkämpfer für den Hesychasmus, JÖB 24 (1975) 107–128.

<sup>31</sup> PLP, no 13408.

<sup>32</sup> Gregorii Acindyni epistulae selectae IX, ed. R.-J. Loenertz, EEBS 27 (1957) 91.49–52. For English translation v. also Letters of Gregory Akindynos, Greek text and English translation by A. C. Hero, Washington D.C. 1983, 223.

<sup>33</sup> PLP, no 3140.

<sup>34</sup> That Gregoras is attacking the Hesychasts and not the Bogomils or the Mesalians has already been pointed out by D. Obolensky. V. Obolensky, The Bogomils, 256, n. 1. It is true, however, that Palamas and his followers came into contact with the Bogomils. V. Meyendorff, Introduction, 50–51.



reaction against anyone who would dare make any kind of innovation in the matters of the established theological doctrines.

Gregoras is, however, at this point, still mild in his confrontation and in his attacks on his adversaries. One must bear in mind that this part of his historical work was probably written before his condemnation at the Council of Constantinople in 1351 and after his first debate with Palamas in 1346. However mild, Gregoras expressed his opposition to Palamas, if not openly at that very moment then still clearly enough for his audience, but also for his opponents, who knew and supported Palamas' teachings. This is especially true when it comes to John Kantakouzenos in whose historical work one cannot find any information related to the 1341–1345 events on Mount Athos! However, the *megas domestikos* must have been acquainted with what was happening on Mount Athos concerning the mentioned *heretics*, since the Athonite monks acted as his peace envoys in 1342 (the year in which the *Tomos* against the *heretics* is supposed to have been edited and brought to Constantinople, according to Gregoras) at the court of Anna Palaiologina.<sup>35</sup>

One other thing that would deserve our attention is the text of Gregoras' theological treatise against Palamas, *The Antirrhethika*, which, to a certain degree, repeats the Mount Athos excursus from his historical work.

It has already been discussed by the scholars that Gregoras gave the same description of the Holy Mountain in his first *Antirrhethika* as in his *History*.<sup>36</sup> The question is whether *The Antirrhethika* preceded or followed the text of *The Roman History*. The editor and translator of Gregoras' *Antirrhethika*, Hans – Veit Beyer, was of the opinion that Gregoras first wrote his theological treaty against Palamas and then the XIV book of his *History*. However, Jan Louis van Dieten, the translator of Gregoras' *Roman History* provided very convincing arguments that this book of Gregoras' historical work preceded his *Antirrhethika*.<sup>37</sup> Van Dieten's arguments seem more convincing to us, most of all due to the fact that the books XVIII–XXVII of his *History* have been preserved together with his *Antirrhethika*, whereas his XIV book was preserved in another codex.<sup>38</sup>

The two texts do not differ much from one another, except in one part. It is the part in which Gregoras recounts the expulsion of the heretics from the Holy Mountain. In his *History*, Gregoras mentions Cretan Joseph, George of Larissa etc., describing the terrible things they did, that led to them being expelled from the Holy Mountain. Among these *heretics* one does not find the name of Gregoras' greatest adversary, Gregory Palamas. In his *Antirrhethika*, however, Gregoras names Palamas as the ring

<sup>35</sup> V. Gregora, II, 620. 16–17; Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhomäische Geschichte*, III, 271–272, n. 115; *Ibidem*, 275, n. 129a. Diplomatic missions of the Athonite monks were a common thing. V. M. Živojinović, *Monasi Hilandara u ulozji diplomata izmedju srpskog dvora i Vizantije*, *Osma kazivanja o Svetoj Gori*, Beograd 2013, 77–96.

<sup>36</sup> Gregoras' theological treatises against Palamas were entitled *Antirrhethika* by the author himself. V. Guiland, *Essai*, 287–292. For Gregoras' excursus on Mount Athos in the first *Antirrhethika* v. *Meyendorff*, Introduction, 56, n. 64; *Beyer*, *Antirrhethika* I, 123–133.

<sup>37</sup> For the dating of the XIV book of Gregoras' *History* and his *Antirrhethika* v. n. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Van Dieten*, *Entstehung und Überlieferung*, 16.

leader of these *heretics*, who fled to Thessaloniki in order to avoid the punishment they deserved. Even though the two texts differ in this matter, we should, however, examine more closely the Greek text of the passage where the two works diverge from one another.

<p>Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia, ed. <i>L. Schopen – I. Bekker</i>, II, Bonnæ 1830, 719. 19–23 – 720. 1.</p>	<p>Nikephoros Gregoras Antirrhethika I, Einleitung, Textausgabe, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen von <i>H.-V. Beyer</i>, Wien 1976, 133, 135.</p>
<p>Καὶ εὐρόντες ἔστιν οὓς μὲν αἷς προσῆκε προήκαντο τιμωρίαις, ἔστι δ' οὓς ὡς πορρώτάτω <i>παλάμαις ἀπάσαις</i> ἐκείθεν ἀπήλασαν. ἦσαν δ' οἱ καὶ λαθόντες ἐκείθεν ἀπέδρασαν, πρὶν ἢ τελέως ἔκπυστον τὴν κακίαν γενέσθαι· οἱ δὲ καὶ πρὸς πόλεις μετερῶρηκεσαν Θεσσαλονίκην καὶ Βερόριαν, καὶ ἢ κατὰ πασῶν ἅπαν ἔσχε τὸ κράτος.</p>	<p>Ἵν ἐν περινοίᾳ γενόμενος, ἐκ πρώτης φάναι, βαλβίδος <i>ὁ Παλαμᾶς</i>, θιασώτης ὧν καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς μυσαρᾶς ἐκείνης χορείας, ὡς πολλὰς τε διὰ πολλῶν τοῖς πολλοῖς εἰκασίας παρέσχε τοιαύτας καὶ ἡμῖν ὁμοίως ἐν ὑστέροις ἐκ τῶν τῆς αὐτοῦ κακίας ἔγνωσται δογμάτων, καὶ δέισας, μὴ πρὸς τοῦμφανές ἐλθόντος τοῦ δράματος κᾶπειτα τοῖς ἄλλοις, ἐπειδὴν ἀλώσι, τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπομείνη δίκην καὶ πρὸς ἀξίαν ἔχων ψυχὴν πυρὸς παρανάλωμα κατ' ἐκείνους γένηται καὶ τὸ σῶμα, λάθρα φυγῶν ὄχρητο ἀπιῶν ἐς Θεσσαλονίκην πρὶν ἢ φωραθῆναι.</p>
<p>Translation: And when these men [heretics] were found, some of them they [the Athonite monks] gave up to retributions, some of them they expelled further from that place [Mount Athos] with all <b>their force</b>. There were those who escaped from there [Athos] secretly, before their evil was completely discovered. Some of them went to the cities of Thessaloniki and Veroia and also to the City which rules over all of them.</p>	<p>Translation: <b>Palamas</b>, being a leader of that abominable Bacchic dance (game), being aware, at the very beginning, so to say, that he also produced, to many, many of these things through many of them and that, in the like manner, was acknowledged by us in the badness of his teachings in the later times, fearing, if the action would become evident, not to be submitted to this justice himself as the others and for his body not to become a victim of fire, since he possessed a fire worthy soul,<sup>39</sup> and fleeing secretly he thought to depart to Thessaloniki before he is searched after.</p>

As we have already stated, Gregoras did not mention Palamas among the ones who fled from Athos in his historical work. This is because Palamas was not among the people who actually escaped from the Holy Mountain in the 40-s, when the whole

<sup>39</sup> Gregoras was here alluding to the Bogomil Basil, who was burnt on the pyre in the reign of Alexios I Komnenos. *V. Beyer*, Antirrhethika I, 134, n. 12. For this episode, which was described in the Alexiad of Anna Komnene v. *Obolensky*, The Bogomils, 203–205.

incident took place.<sup>40</sup> Gregoras, in fact, does not explicitly state the names when he talks about the persecution itself, but it is clear who he refers to, for he names Joseph the Cretan, George of Larissa and the others when he begins the entire story about the *heretics*. Although Gregoras did not mention Palamas in his History, he referred to one of the persons closest to him: George of Larissa, that is, David Disypatos whom we already discussed. However, it might have been that Gregoras did not miss making an allusion to his adversary, for it could be assumed that a game of words was in action in this paragraph of Gregoras' History. We would like to propose the following: by using a word ἡ παλάμη, that could have pointed out to his audience whom he actually referred to, Gregoras might have made an allusion to his theological opponent, Palamas. This word in fact denotes the palm of the hand and when used in a metaphorical sense, it can refer to a cunning art, a device, a method, force. Even though Gregoras used the word to refer to the way in which the monks expelled the heretics (*with all their force*), one cannot help but ask oneself whether the historian intentionally used this particular word, similar to the name of his adversary, for the story of the expulsion of the *heretics*, among who were some of the Hesychasts. That it would not be the first time Gregoras used this particular word when making reference to Palamas is testified in his Vita of St. Theophano,<sup>41</sup> which was probably written at the same time in which Gregoras wrote this part of his History, 1346/1347.<sup>42</sup> While praying to the empress saint to protect the City, which is facing a lot of troubles from everywhere and is in danger not just from Europe and Asia, but from within (an allusion to the civil war 1341–1347),<sup>43</sup> the author finally adds that it (the Empire, Theophano's fatherland) awaits the danger from within: *as pine and cypress [await] when, I presume, a heavy hand (βρίθουσα παλάμη) of a woodman would strip them off their foliage*.<sup>44</sup> Apart from the apparent allusion to the civil war, the danger from within, in Gregoras' view, could also have referred to the danger that was to emerge with the Hesychast controversy. Apart from this, one other interesting point that should also be perceived, as far as the metaphor of the trees awaiting a hand to strip them off their foliage is concerned, is Gregoras' employment of a similar metaphor which included the stripping off barks

<sup>40</sup> Palamas first escaped from Mount Athos in 1326 fleeing from the Turkish pirates. His second stay on Athos ended in 1338, when he came to Thessaloniki to continue his dispute against Varlaam of Calabria. V. Beyer, *Antirrhethika* I, 105–106.

<sup>41</sup> Beyer, *Antirrhethika* I, 109–110; I. Paraskevopoulou, *Τα αγιολογικά έργα του Νικηφόρου Γρηγορά, Διδακτορική Διατριβή*, Thessalonikē 2008, 66–67 (=Paraskevopoulou, *Τα αγιολογικά έργα*) I. Paraskevopoulou, however, is not certain whether the mention of this word could point to the anti-hesychast allusion of Gregoras! It is known, however, that Gregoras used the word *παλαμναίοι* – the ones guilty of violence, blood-guilty men and murderers – to denote Palamas' followers. V. H. Hunger, *Aspekte der griechischen Rhetorik von Gorgias bis zum Untergang von Byzanz*, Herbert Hunger Epidosis. *Gesammelte Schriften zur byzantinischen Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte*, edd. W. Hörandner, J. Koder, O. Kresten, München 1989, 14.

<sup>42</sup> We have accepted the explanations of M. P. Leone, concerning the date of the composition of this Vita. For the discussion on the exact date when the work was composed v. Paraskevopoulou, *Τα αγιολογικά έργα*, 67–68.

<sup>43</sup> “...αὐτὴ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν σφόδρα ἐκπεπολέμωται.” Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano, die Gemahlin Kaisers Leo VI, herausgegeben von E. Kurtz, *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des sciences de St.-Petersbourg* 1998, 44.27 (=Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano).

<sup>44</sup> Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano, 44. 30–32.

of trees in the passage of his *History* where he mentions the heretics who went to Constantinople, Thessaloniki and Veroia.<sup>45</sup>

Even though this *game of words* could be an interesting point for discussion we cannot be entirely certain whether this was an allusion to Palamas or not. What is more, we would like to underline that Gregoras' use of the word ἡ παλάμη and the very expression παλάμαις ἀπάσαις in the excursus on Mount Athos in his *History* may also be attributed to the fact that he simply wanted to avoid the repetition of a similar phrase used in some of the previous passages (the phrase ὄλαις χερσίν), which would, therefore, have nothing to do with Palamas!<sup>46</sup>

The Mount Athos excursus of Nikephoros Gregoras was introduced into his historical work at the point when the historian narrates about misfortunes and ill-omens that befell the Empire. By his story of the heretics that have taken it, the author wanted to inform his audience that there was no place within the Empire that remained totally untouched by the calamities that emerged in the years of the civil war (1341–1347) and immediately after it. Not even the Holy Mountain and its inhabitants that Gregoras admired and respected,<sup>47</sup> resisted the uncertainties of life and changes that would mark the history of the Byzantine empire forever. Gregoras' excursus was made to serve a purpose for the historian knew that he would go back to his story on the expulsion of the *heretics* and their false teachings.<sup>48</sup> The author wanted to achieve his aim – to attack his theological opponents and through them possibly, their great supporter, his former friend, John Kantakouzenos. Gregoras wrote of his former friend in his XII book: *Had not Kantakouzenos, himself misled by the novelties of my persecutors, allowed them [the Hesychasts], like the empress Anna, to bring forward a storm upon the church of God, he would have been the greatest of the emperors, and at the same time he would have achieved, through himself, great progress for the Empire.*<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> See the very end of the translation of his Mount Athos excursus.

<sup>46</sup> V. note 9. I would like to thank my colleague Dr Dejan Dželebdžić for pointing this out and for helping me with the translation. However, the phrase ὄλαις χερσίν has also been employed by Gregoras in his *Vita* of St. Theophano, in the passages preceding the one in which he used the expression βρίθουσα παλάμη. V. Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano, 44.26.

<sup>47</sup> This is seen from Gregoras' narration about the Athonite monks, which is mainly very positive. Still, when he starts narrating about the coming of Kallistos I to the patriarchal throne, Gregoras uses the very worst of expressions. This is understandable since Kallistos was also a Hesychast. Gregoras states that nothing of the things Kallistos did was in accord neither with the garments he wore nor with the place he said to have come from (Mount Athos). V. Gregora, II, 873–874.

<sup>48</sup> He refers to his Mount Athos excursus later on in his *History* when he starts narrating about the trial against the patriarch Kallistos I, who was accused of the Mesalianism. V. Gregora, II, 876. 3–8. On the processes against the patriarch Kallistos and, afterwards, against Niphon Scorpius, that have also been described by Gregoras v. A. *Rigo*, Due note sul monachesimo athonita della metà del XIV secolo, ZRVI 26 (1987) 87–113; A. *Rigo*, Il Monte Athos e la controversia palamitica dal concilio del 1351 al *Tomo sinodale* del 1368. Giacomo Trikanas, Procoro Cidone e Filoteo Kokkinos, Gregorio Palamas e oltre studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino, ed. A. *Rigo*, Firenze 2004, 1–178; M. *Hinterberger*, Die Affäre um den Mönch Niphon Skorpius und die Messalianismus-Vorwürfe gegen Kallistos I., Gregorio Palamas e oltre studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino, ed. A. *Rigo*, Firenze 2004, 211–248.

<sup>49</sup> Gregora, II, 590. 14–19.

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## СВЕТА ГОРА У ИСТОРИЈСКОМ СПИСУ НИЋИФОРА ГРИГОРЕ

Екскурс о Светој Гори у историјском спису Нићифора Григоре један је од многобројних описа којима се Ромејска историја иначе одликује. Овај екскурс, међутим, не треба схватити као опште место, већ као намерну дигресију аутора, којом се желео постићи одређени циљ.

Григорин опис Атона налази се у 14. књизи његове Историје, која је највероватније написана у периоду између 1346. и 1351. године. У питању су година у којој је Григора први пут јавно иступио против свог противника, Григорија Паламе (1346. година), и година осуде Нићифора Григоре на црквеном сабору у Цариграду (1351. година). Григора приповеда о природним лепотама Атона, мирном и побожном животу његових становника, а потом своје излагање наставља причом о јеретцима, богумилима и месалијанцима, који су четрдесетих година XIV века боравили на Светој Гори. Они су својим учењем претили да упрљају миран и непорочан живот, те су стога били осуђени на сабору (вероватно 1342. године) и избачени са Атона. Треба имати у виду да је Григорино нападање месалијанаца и богумила, међу којима се у византијским изворима XIV и XV века не прави никаква разлика, заправо његов напад на исихасте.

Овај Григорин екскурс о Светој Гори налази се такође на страницама његовог теолошког списа Антиретика (Против јеретика), који је упућен његовом највећем противнику, Григорију Палами. Два текста, готово у потпуности иста, разликују се у једном: у свом теолошком спису, Григора директно помиње Паламу као вођу јеретика и наводи да је и он, у току прогона јеретика са Свете Горе, побегао у Солун, пре него што су његова учења била откривена и осуђена; у историјском спису нема директног помена Паламе, али се може полемисати, да је Григора речју *παλάμαις* алудирао на вођу исихаста и да је тиме његовој публици требало да буде јасно да је и Палама био један од поменутих јеретика. Чињеница да Палама није експлицитно поменут у групи јеретика који су прогнани са Атона четрдесетих година XIV века, међу којима су били неки од Паламиних најближих сарадника (Давид Дисипат) може се објаснити тиме што се он међу њима заправо тада и није налазио. Како историографски жанр подразумева приповедање о истинитим догађајима, Паламино учешће у реалним догађајима тих година није могло наићи на оправдање, али се могло скрити у вештој игри речи коју је спровео аутор Ромејске историје. Отворени напад на Паламу је у Историји тек требало да уследи, док је у Григорином теолошком спису, насталом после 14. књиге, дакле, после 1351. године, отворено иступање против Паламе било сасвим очекивано. Осим тога, слична употреба речи *παλάμη*, којом је Григора могао алудирати на свог најљућег противника, посведочена је и у Григорином житију свете царице Теофане, написаном највероватније 1346/47. године.

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Григорин екскурс о Светој Гори је стога имао веома јасну поруку и сврху – да покаже ауторово неслагање и његову осуду било каквих *иновација* у погледу догме. Григора је тиме осудио не само вођу исихастичког учења, Григорија Паламу, већ, највероватније, и Паламиног заштитника, Јована Кантакузина.