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A late Byzantine *πεπαιδευμένος*:  
Maximos Neamonites and his letter collection\*

*With 1 figure*

*τῷ διδασκάλῳ μου*

Abstract: The present article sheds light on the life and activity of Maximos Neamonites, a little-known *πεπαιδευμένος* active in early fourteenth-century Byzantium. On the basis of his hitherto unpublished letter collection, the article portrays Neamonites as a resident of Constantinople, writing pleas to imperial and ecclesiastical officials; father to Ioannes Kalampakes; and monk at Nea Mone. Furthermore, Neamonites is presented as a schoolmaster in a constant quest to secure an income on the basis of his teaching activities; bibliophile; broker, occasionally lifting his pen to interfere on behalf of others; and letter-writer.

PROLEGOMENA

Upon the autopsy of the fourteenth-century codex Vaticanus Chisianus R. IV. 12 (hereafter Chis.)<sup>1</sup> one notices on its olive green cover a coat of arms consisting of an oak tree and six mountains topped with an eight-point star. This coat of arms belonged to Fabio Chigi – later pope Alexander VII (r. 1655–1667) –, a member of the prominent and wealthy family of Chigi from Siena. Chis. was part of Chigi’s collection of Greek manuscripts, many of which had belonged to the Piccolomini library founded by Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini (1439–1503) in the proximity of Siena Cathedral.<sup>2</sup> The codex bears testimony to its previous circulation and speaks of owners even further distant in the past. Thus, in the fifteenth century it was owned by Ciriaco de’ Pizzicolti (also known as Cyriacus of Ancona) (ca. 1391–1453), an Italian humanist, antiquarian, and avid collector of Greek manuscripts, who most probably purchased it during his travels in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> Although heavily crossed out, his name is readable on the very last folio of the codex (f. 176<sup>v</sup>).<sup>4</sup> An earlier owner was a certain Jerome of Modecia (nowadays Monza), as he himself wrote on the upper part of f. 1<sup>r</sup> where a Latin note reads *Iste liber est mei Ieronimi de Modocia*. On the same folio just above Jeronimo’s,

\* I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Niels Gaul for his invaluable academic advice and continuous support. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Alice-Mary Talbot, Stratis Papaioannou, Alexander Alexakis, István Perczel, Timothy Janz, Alexander Riehle, and Elena Cristina Balea for their insightful feedback on earlier drafts of the article. Moreover, I am grateful to the anonymous peer-reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions. I would furthermore like to thank the Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies (CEMS) and Central European University for the generous research grants that enabled me to conduct research at Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and purchase manuscript reproductions. Translations from Greek are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. FRANCHI DE’ CAVALIERI, *Codices Graeci Chisiani et Borgiani*. Rome 1927, 15–21; for a comprehensive codicological and palaeographical analysis of Chis., see I. PÉREZ MARTÍN, *El patriarca Gregorio de Chipre (ca. 1240–1290) y la transmisión de los textos clásicos en Bizancio (Nueva Roma 1)*. Madrid 1996, 332–338. Chis. gathers a non-thematic collection of Greek texts and excerpts stemming from different authors and periods of time; most likely it served for personal usage (“Hausbuch”) and reflects the literary interests of its compilers and owners; it transmits writings of Gregorios of Cyprus (ca. 1240–1290), and letters of Basileios of Caesarea, Libanios, Gregorios of Nazianzus, Isidoros of Pelusium, and Maximos Neamonites; for a folio sample, see the plate at the end of this article reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. FRANCHI DE’ CAVALIERI, *Codices Graeci Chisiani* vii–viii.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ODB* 571; see also Cyriac of Ancona, *Later Travels*, ed. and transl. E. W. BODNAR – C. FOSS (*The I Tatti Renaissance Library* 10). Cambridge, Mass. 2003.

<sup>4</sup> His name is written twice “Kuriacus Anconitan(us)”; cf. FRANCHI DE’ CAVALIERI, *Codices Graeci Chisiani* 21.

another Latin note of possession, most likely crossed out by him, indicates that the manuscript was at some point housed in the monastery of St Mary of the Angels in Florence,<sup>5</sup> a monastery well-known for its scriptorium which produced high quality manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> Chis. speaks further back in time of a fourteenth-century owner, Ioannes Kritopoulos (fl. 1320–1330).<sup>7</sup> The guard leaf VI<sup>r</sup> carries a monogram and a monokondylion with his name. Moreover, Chis. transmits a letter addressed to Kritopoulos by a certain Maximos Neamonites. In fact, this letter is part of a small collection of fourteen so far unedited *epistulae* (hereafter ep. or epp.) preserved on the last quaternion (ff. 166<sup>r</sup>–172<sup>v</sup>) of this Vatican manuscript<sup>8</sup> under Maximos Neamonites' name.<sup>9</sup> Only six letters have headings mentioning their

<sup>5</sup> The text reads *Iste liber est monasterii sancta Marie de Angelis de Florentia*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. G. R. BENT, The Scriptorium at S. Maria degli Angeli and Fourteenth Century Manuscript Illumination: Don Silvestro dei Gherarducci, Don Lorenzo Monaco, and Giovanni del Biondo. *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 55 (1992) 507–523.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *PLP* 13815; PÉREZ MARTÍN, El patriarca Gregorio 332, n. 44. F. D'AIUTO, Un manoscritto innografico del secolo XIV: il Vaticano Palatino Greco 138. *RBSN* (1991) 149–171, identified the hand of the main scribe and coordinator of Vat. Palat. gr. 138 as a certain Gabriel, monk and οἰκονόμος of the Constantinopolitan monastery of St Georgios of Mangana (*PLP* 3426). This Vatican codex transmits on ff. III<sup>v</sup>–IV<sup>r</sup> an incomplete copy of a testament through which the monk Gabriel bequeathed his personal library to the monastery of St Georgios. The volumes given to the church of the monastery are exclusively theological and liturgical; the part of the testament which lists the books given to the superior of the monastery – which may have included other types of codices – has not survived but only the first entry which mentions a codex with the letters of Isidoros of Pelusium; a selection of these *epistulae* appears on ff. 158–165 of Chis., a codex partly copied and organized by the monk Gabriel. The testament was studied and edited by S. G. MERCATI, Un testament inédit en faveur de Saint-Georges des Manganes. *REB* 6 (1948) 36–47, at 46–47 (reprinted in *IDEM*, *Collectanea Byzantina II*, ed. A. Acconcia Longo. Bari 1970, 54–65, at 64–65). Mercati's article includes a facsimile of the document. Pérez Martín further identified the hand of this monk Gabriel in a number of manuscripts (e.g., Vat. gr. 1390, Vat. gr. 495, Chis.) which he substantially restored and into which he inserted numerous missing texts, most probably having at his disposal a rich library. Gabriel's hand has also been identified in codices such as Vat. gr. 2207, Vat. Barb. gr. 239, and Laur. Plut. 57.45; cf. M. L. SOSOWER, *Palatinus Graecus 88 and the Manuscript Tradition of Lysias*. Amsterdam 1987, 14–19. The manuscript Par. gr. 1220 had the monk Gabriel as the main scribe and, according to B. MONDRAIN, La réutilisation de parchemin ancien dans les livres à Constantinople au XIV<sup>e</sup> et au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle: quelques exemples, de la 'collection philosophique' aux folios palimpsestes du Parisinus gr. 1220, in: *Libri palinsesti greci: conservazione, restauro digitale, studio*, ed. S. Lucà. Rome 2008, 111–130, at 121, as "le maître d'œuvre dans la constitution du volume." On the basis of Gabriel's considerable involvement in the production of the Par. gr. 1220, Mondrain hypothesized that he may have been its owner and identified him with Ioannes Kritopoulos, whose name is readable on f. 5<sup>r</sup> of the manuscript in a monogram. Kritopoulos' monogram and monokondylion feature in a number of other manuscripts he most likely possessed, e.g., Chis., f. VI<sup>r</sup> (monogram and monokondylion); Laur. Plut. 57.45, f. 2<sup>r</sup> (monogram); Marcianus gr. 613, f. I<sup>r</sup> (monokondylion) and f. 2<sup>r</sup> (monogram); Monacensis gr. 564, f. 1<sup>r</sup> (monogram). MONDRAIN, La réutilisation de parchemin 125–126, put forward the hypothesis that Ioannes Kritopoulos might have assumed later in his life the monastic habit under the name of Gabriel (Kritopoulos). Should the assumption that the monk Gabriel and Ioannes are one and the same person be too strong, Mondrain suggested that the monk Gabriel at the very least belonged to Kritopoulos' family, i.e., monk Gabriel Kritopoulos as it were, and concluded that "s'il ne s'agit pas d'une identité de personnes, le lien «familial» suggéré entre Jean Kritopoulos et Gabriel permettrait peut-être aussi de rendre compte de la très grande parenté d'écritures dans quelques-uns de ces manuscrits." See also S. KOTZABASSI, Kopieren und Exzerpieren in der Palaiologenzeit, in: *The Legacy of Bernard de Montfaucon: Three Hundred Years of Studies on Greek Handwriting: Proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium of Greek Palaeography*, ed. A. B. García – I. Pérez Martín (*Bibliologia* 31). Turnhout 2010, 473–482.

<sup>8</sup> The Pinakes database of Greek manuscripts lists two Vatican codices transmitting letters written by Neamonites, Chis. (14 epp.) and Vat. gr. 1020, ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–9<sup>v</sup> (7 epp.). Their *initia* do not feature in M. GRÜNBART, *Epistularum Byzantinarum Initia (Alpha-Omega. Reihe A, Lexika, Indizes, Konkordanzen zur klassischen Philologie 224)*. Hildesheim 2001. The letters in Vat. gr. 1020 are anonymous and it is unclear on what basis they have been attributed to Neamonites. None of the epp. in Chis. are reproduced in Vat. gr. 1020. The folios 166–173, transmitting Neamonites' epp., have a watermark composed of three letters "GVP" (not catalogued), perhaps the initials of a paper manufacturer. Cf. J. IRIGOIN, Les filigranes de Fabriano (noms de papetiers) dans les manuscrits grecs du début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. *Script* 12 (1958) 44–50, and *IDEM*, Les filigranes de Fabriano (noms de papetiers) dans les manuscrits grecs du début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Note complémentaire. *Script* 12 (1958) 281–282. These folios have on average 27 to 32 lines of text written in one column, with the exception of f. 167<sup>v</sup> (22 lines) and f. 168<sup>v</sup> (completely blank). According to PÉREZ MARTÍN, El patriarca Gregorio 337, n. 65, Neamonites' epp. were copied by five different scribes: the so-called "anon(ymus) Chis(iani)" – perhaps a disciple of Gregorios of Cyprus – (ff. 166–167), "scribe 7" (f. 168), "scribe 8" (f. 169), "scribe 9" (ff. 170–171<sup>v</sup> l. 5), and "scribe 10" (ff. 171<sup>v</sup> l. 6 – 172–173).

<sup>9</sup> Maximos Neamonites' name is written with red ink on the upper left corner of f. 166<sup>r</sup>, reading μαξιμου (μὲν)αρχ(οῦ) τ(οῦ) νεαμονιτ(οῦ). The word (μὲν)αρχ(οῦ) is crossed out in the same red ink. Neamonites' name is written once again by the same

addressees: the μέγας λογοθέτης Theodoros Metochites (1270–1332) (ep. 7), the judge Gregorios Kleidas (*fl.* 1329–1337) (epp. 8 and 9), Ioannes Kritopoulos (ep. 11), and Ioannes Kalampakes (*fl.* 1320–1330),<sup>10</sup> Neamonites' biological son (ep. 12 and 13).

The only bits and pieces of data about Maximos Neamonites are scattered throughout hitherto unpublished epp. extant in manuscript format: 1) his own small letter collection transmitted in Chis., and 2) the epistolarion of Georgios Oinaïotes (*fl.* 1315–1327) carried by the fourteenth-century manuscript Laurentianus S. Marco 356.<sup>11</sup> Supposedly a spiritual disciple and perhaps former student, Oinaïotes addressed a letter (ep. 13) to Neamonites, and three more (epp. 36, 45, and 54) to Neamonites' son.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of this unpublished material the present article endeavors to bring to light the hitherto little-known figure of Maximos Neamonites. First, it will briefly introduce previous scholarship touching upon the chronology of the epp. (I); second, it will offer biographical spotlights by analyzing the scarce (auto)-biographical data embedded in the epp. (II); and third, it will attempt to portray Maximos Neamonites as schoolmaster, bibliophile, broker, and letter-writer (III).

### I. PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Maximos Neamonites has received little scholarly attention. *PLP* includes an entry (92630)<sup>13</sup> which highlights a few aspects of his life: he was a schoolmaster and subsequently a monk at Nea Mone; his *floruit* is established in the first half of the fourteenth century (ca. 1315–1330); he was the father of Ioannes Kalampakes and the addressee and friend of Georgios Oinaïotes. Finally, the entry mentions his fourteen epp. and an epigram he composed for a codex of Libanios.

Ep. 1, which Neamonites addressed to an (arch)bishop, was edited by Stavros Kourouses in his article on the letters of archbishop Gregorios of Ochrid (1312–1313/4).<sup>14</sup> He identifies Neamonites' addressee with the archbishop Gregorios and dates the ep. to 1314–1315. However, this identification would require additional evidence. Furthermore, he identifies, albeit mostly hypothetically, some of Neamonites' addressees. For epp. 2, 10, and 14 he proposes as addressee a certain σεβαστός Atzymes, whose name is mentioned in ep. 14, and whom Kourouses equates with the σεβαστός Michael Atzymes, the δομέστικος τῶν ἀνατολικῶν θεμάτων (1311–1315/19).<sup>15</sup> Although clear evidence

scribe on f. 173v: <ἐ>πίγραμμα<α> εἰς τ(ῆν) βίβλ<ον> τῶν λ<όγων> τ(οῦ) λιβανί<ου> τ(οῦ) νεαμονί<του>. Cf. FRANCHI DE' CAVALIERI, *Codices Graeci Chisiani* 18–19.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *PLP* 10252.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. E. REIN, *Die Florentiner Briefsammlung: Codex Laurentianus S. Marco 356*. Helsinki 1915. Laurentianus S. Marco 356 transmits the so-called "Florentine corpus" comprising 179 letters most of which hitherto unedited, whose author was identified by Stavros Kourouses as Georgios Oinaïotes. Cf. S. KOUROUSES, *Μανουήλ Γαβαλάς εἶτα Ματθαῖος μητροπολίτης Εφέσου*. Athens 1972, 99–121. Some of the letters have been edited by R. J. LOENERTZ, *Un Pachymère, Auteur des Lettres du San Marco 356?* *BZ* 53 (1960) 290–299, at 296–297; and G. H. KARLSSON – G. FATOUROS, *Aus der Briefsammlung des Anonymus Florentinus (Georgios Oinaïotes)*. *JÖB* 22 (1973) 207–218. The latter announced the complete edition based on three codices, i.e., Laurentianus S. Marco 356 and its later copies, Matritensis gr. 4796 and Monacensis gr. 198. See also M. MENCHELLI, *Giorgio Oinaïotes lettore di Platone. Osservazioni sulla raccolta epistolare del Laur. San Marco 356 e su alcuni manoscritti dei dialoghi platonici di XIII e XIV secolo*, in: *Vie per Bisanzio. Atti del VII Congresso Nazionale dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini*, ed. A. Rigo – A. Babuin – M. Trizio (*Due punti* 25). Bari 2013, 831–853. On Oinaïotes, see *PLP* 21026; *ODB* 1519; H. AHRWEILER, *Le récit du voyage d' Oinaïôtès de Constantinople à Ganos*, in: *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit. Referate des Internationalen Symposiums zu Ehren von Herbert Hunger*, ed. W. Seibt (*Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist Klasse, Denkschriften* 241). Vienna 1996, 9–27.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. REIN, *Die Florentiner Briefsammlung* 71–72. See also S. KOUROUSES, *Γρηγορίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Βουλγαρίας (τῆ/ἰδ' αἰ.) ἐπιστολαὶ μετὰ τινῶν βιογραφικῶν ἐξακριβώσεως*. *EEBS* 45 (1981–1982) 516–558, at 530, n. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *PLP* gives two separate entries for Maximos Neamonites, 16788 and 92630. *PLP* 92629 replaces *PLP* 16788 and refers to a certain monk Maximos from the fifteenth century.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *supra* n. 12. The text of ep. 1 is available on *TLG*. On Gregorios, see *PLP* 4482 and 91716.

<sup>15</sup> KOUROUSES, *Γρηγορίου* 532–536; on Michael Atzymes see *PLP* 1633.

is lacking, it may be that the *sebastoi* in epp. 2 and 14 are the same. However, I would argue that ep. 10 had a different addressee; its concise style and lack of classical references and *similes* – profuse in epp. 2 and 14 – could point to a less-educated addressee. Moreover, Kourouses suggests that the addressee of ep. 4 may have been the patriarch Ioannes XIII Glykys (1315–1319) and dates it to 1315–1316. Kourouses reads “the first high-priest [i.e., Christ] who gave this episcopacy to you as a prize of your virtue ... to whom [i.e., to the patriarch] belong the throne of wisdom and the word” as referring to Glykys’ elevation to the patriarchal see.<sup>16</sup> However, in the absence of additional supporting evidence this remains a hypothesis.

Kourouses assumes that Neamonites’ fourteen epp. are arranged chronologically in the manuscript and dates the epistolographic collection to the period ca. 1314 to ca. 1323.<sup>17</sup> He dates ep. 7 to 1321 when its addressee, Theodoros Metochites, became μέγας λογοθέτης (1321–1328). However, it may also be that the title of ep. 7 was added in the superscription *ex post*, at a later date than the actual composition of the letter. Furthermore, Kourouses points to Neamonites’ words “time has now brought its proper change and unsettling (ἀναστάτωσις), and has moved the unmovable, rather to say, the fickle [things]”<sup>18</sup> and considers ἀναστάτωσις as an allusion to the turbulent political scene of the third decade of fourteenth-century Constantinople, more precisely, the end of the first phase (June 1321) of the civil war (1321–1328) between Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) and his grandson Andronikos III (r. 1328–1341). However, Kourouses’ argument is not convincing since political instability was pervasive in Palaiologan Byzantium, especially in the first three decades of the fourteenth century. He employs the same argument in dating epp. 12 and 13 to 1321–1322.<sup>19</sup> Again, this remains a hypothesis. Finally, Kourouses considers that epp. 8 and 9 postdate ep. 7 and given the headings of the epp., i.e., Γρηγορίῳ τῷ Κλειδῷ καὶ κριτῆι and τῷ αὐτῷ, he proposes 1329 as a *terminus ante quem*, the year when Gregorios Kleidas became καθολικὸς κριτῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων.<sup>20</sup> Thus, none of Neamonites’ epp. can be dated with absolute certainty. Moreover, none mentions the recipient’s office in the body of the text. Although this makes it more difficult to establish a chronological framework for the letter collection, the most likely period seems to be the second and third decades of the fourteenth century. Further supporting evidence can be derived from the epistolary activity of Georgios Oinaiotes, which can be approximately situated between 1315 and 1327. As already mentioned, there is one surviving letter from Oinaiotes’ correspondence with Neamonites.

In her seminal contribution on Gregorios of Cyprus (ca. 1240–1290) and the transmission of classical texts in late Byzantium, Inmaculada Pérez Martín provides a thorough palaeographical and codicological analysis of Chis.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, she briefly points out some of the addressees of the epp. (Gregorios of Bulgaria, Theodoros Metochites, Gregorios Kleidas, and Ioannes Kalampakes) and offers a diplomatic transcription of Neamonites’ epigram transmitted on f. 173<sup>v</sup> of the same codex. Listing a nomenclature of the technical terms used to designate the teachers of primary education in Palaiologan Byzantium (παιδευτής, διδάσκαλος, γραμματιστής, χαμαιδιδάσκαλος, and μυσταγωγός), Sophia Mergiali points out that the term μυσταγωγός appears in one letter (i.e., ep. 1)

<sup>16</sup> Chis., f. 167<sup>v</sup> ll. 6–7, 19: τῷ πρώτῳ ... ἀρχιερεῖ τῷ τὴν προεδρίαν ταύτην δόντι ἄθλον τῆς σῆς ἀρετῆς ... παρ’ ᾧ καὶ σοφίας θρόνος καὶ λόγος ἐστὶ. On Ioannes XIII Glykys, see *PLP* 4271.

<sup>17</sup> KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 535–536.

<sup>18</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 29–30: ὁ χρόνος καὶ νῦν τὴν οἰκείαν τροπὴν καὶ ἀ[να]στάτωσιν συνέφερε καὶ κινεῖ τὰ ἀκίνητα, μᾶλλον δ’ εἰπεῖν τὰ εὐρίπιστα.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Chis., f. 171<sup>v</sup> ll. 11–12: νῦν ἀνερίπισθη τὰ δεινὰ καὶ πάντ’ ἀνατέτραπται.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *PLP* 11781.

<sup>21</sup> PÉREZ MARTÍN, El patriarca Gregorio de Chipre 332–352.

written by Maximos Neamonites, a private schoolmaster, active in Constantinople in the early fourteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

## II. LIFE IN CONSTANTINOPLE

### II.1. INTERACTION WITH IMPERIAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICIALS

Although letter-writing was a prominent type of writing in Byzantium,<sup>23</sup> only a minor fraction of Byzantine letters has survived (approximately 15.500).<sup>24</sup> For instance, of the 280 letter-writers included in Grünbart's *Epistularum Byzantinorum Initia*, only 70 feature with more than 15 letters. The perishable materials on which most letters were written considerably shortened their lifespan. Moreover, deeply embedded in the socio-political *hic et nunc* of their creation, epp. were intended for the benefit of contemporary readers, not for future generations. Therefore, the letters which were copied in manuscripts had increased chances of being transmitted to posterity. This is also the case of Neamonites' fourteen epp. preserved in Chis.

Neamonites' letters offer very few biographical data about their author. Although these do not amount to a full biography, they do offer insights into his personal life and activity, allowing one to paint his figure with broad strokes. Neamonites' epp. give no details about his birth or education. It is most likely that he was educated in Constantinople where he appears to have lived in his youth, as he points out in ep. 7. In this ep., he addresses the μέγας λογοθέτης Theodoros Metochites asking for an exemption from a payment imposed on him by "the present-day πρωτοκυνηγός."<sup>25</sup> Before voicing his plea, Neamonites first praises Metochites for his virtues. He flatters him on his "good character

<sup>22</sup> S. MERGIALI, *L'enseignement et les lettrés pendant l'époque des Paléologues (1261–1453) (Kentron Ereunes Byzantiou 5)*. Athens 1996, 28, n. 70. Furthermore, see M. MITREA, *A Late Byzantine Swan Song: Maximos Neamonites and his Letters*. (MA thesis) Budapest 2011 (<http://goya.ceu.hu/record=b1152950~S0>, last accessed July 16, 2014). In his recent contribution on the late Byzantine θέατρον, N. GAUL, *Dancing with the Muses of Power and Subversion: Performative Communication in the Late Byzantine Theatron*, in: *Performing Byzantium: Papers from the 39<sup>th</sup> Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. M. Mullett (forthcoming), included Neamonites among the early fourteenth-century Constantinopolitan schoolmasters in whose houses one could acquire the first stage of παιδεία needed in order to successfully participate in the θέατρα. Cf. also IDEM, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik. Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit (Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik 10)*. Wiesbaden 2011, 190. See also M. MITREA, *Maximos Neamonites*, in: *Lexikon byzantinischer Autoren*, ed. M. Grünbart – A. Riehle. Berlin (forthcoming).

<sup>23</sup> Letters and correspondence occupy a central place among the genres constituting the rhetoric and classical legacy of Byzantium. See, for instance, M. MULLETT, *The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter*, in: *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition. Papers of the Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. M. Mullett – R. Scott. Birmingham 1981, 75–93 (reprinted in EADEM, *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium*. Aldershot 2007, II). For a comparable case from the pre-modern Islamic society, see A. GULLY, *The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society*. Edinburgh 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. S. ΠΑΠΑΙΟΑΝΝΟΥ, *Fragile Literature: Byzantine Letter-Collections and the Case of Michael Psellos*, in: *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat*, ed. P. Odorico (*Dossiers Byzantins* 11). Paris 2012, 289–328.

<sup>25</sup> The πρωτοκυνηγός, literally "first hunter," was a court title of middling status with no fixed function; cf. *ODB* 1745–1746. See also R. MACRIDES – J. A. MUNIZ – D. ANGELOV, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies 15)*. Farnham-Burlington 2013, 105, 303–305, 314, 466. *PLP* offers short entries on seven πρωτοκυνηγοί active in late Byzantium: Buzenos in the 13<sup>th</sup> c. (*PLP* 3016), Indanes Sarantenos around 1300 (*PLP* 24908), Raul in the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. (*PLP* 24107), Kontophre/Godefroi (*PLP* 13130) and Alyates (*PLP* 709) who were in office in Constantinople in 1329 and before 1348 respectively, Ioannes Batatzes in Thessalonike between 1333 and 1341 (*PLP* 2518), and Rizas in Lemnos during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. (*PLP* 24265). On Batatzes see M. C. BARTUSIS, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium. The Institution of Pronoia*. Cambridge 2012, xix, 307, 322, 331, 359. Of the seven, Raul, Kontophre/Godefroi and Alyates are most likely to have been the πρωτοκυνηγός whom Neamonites referred to. However, further evidence that would specifically point to one of them is lacking. Moreover, it is equally possible that Neamonites' πρωτοκυνηγός does not feature at all in the *PLP*.

firmly disposed towards the good”<sup>26</sup> and employs a carefully chosen *simile* praising his “natural advantages” through which “you are distinguished from those nowadays in power, both in your mind and habit, just as the moon from the other stars.”<sup>27</sup> Given Metochites’ intellectual pursuits in astronomy, Neamonites may have specifically chosen this *simile*, knowing the significance it would have for his addressee.<sup>28</sup> Neamonites confides that in his youth “a place suitable for my habit was found for me, who was longing for a quiet life; it was the court of the present-day πρωτοκωνηγός.”<sup>29</sup> It seems that the parents of the πρωτοκωνηγός had given this place to Neamonites’ parents as a gift which was subsequently passed on to him as inheritance.<sup>30</sup> However, at the time he writes this ep., the πρωτοκωνηγός is asking for some form of rent or financial benefit for the aforementioned place. To advance his cause and argue against this payment, Neamonites invokes the conditions under which the place was given to his progenitors:

The πρωτοκωνηγός, following in the footsteps of his parents, allotted to me this honor, as they [i.e., the parents of the πρωτοκωνηγός] had done to mine. And if/as they [i.e., Neamonites’ parents] received this honor because of their exceeding virtue, it was handed down to me through them as inheritance; and nothing was demanded from them. For how would it be a gift if a certain income were claimed? So then, I indeed am far from being obliged to give anything to the πρωτοκωνηγός as far as regards this <place>.<sup>31</sup>

Since “time has brought its proper change and unsettling, and moved the unmovable, rather to say, the fickle <things>,”<sup>32</sup> Neamonites turns to Metochites, encouraged by the latter’s virtue and sound mind which may cast a correct judgment regarding an “old gift,” i.e., Neamonites’ dwelling-place.<sup>33</sup> In order to add leverage to his request, he belittles himself by stressing his social status, that of a man who, unlike his addressee, has no “advantage of nature by which some have political leverage.” Finally, he concludes: “therefore, you could either include us, who have been worn out by time and illness, among those who have benefited from your nobleness, or disregard that, in addition to ‘our other afflictions’,<sup>34</sup> we are subjected to this unusual rent.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 13–14: τὸ σὸν εὐσταθὲς πρὸς τὰ καλὰ καὶ χρηστὸν ἦθος.

<sup>27</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 17–19: τὰ σα φυσικὰ προτερήματα καὶ ὧν διαφέρῃ τοῖς νῦν δυναμένοις, καὶ γνώμῃ καὶ τρόπῳ, καὶ ὅσα σελήνη τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. I. ŠEVČENKO, Études sur la polémique entre Théodore Métochite et Nicéphore Choumnos (*Corpus bruxellense historiae byzantinae. Subsidia* 3). Brussels 1962, 68–117. See also B. BYDÉN, Theodore Metochites’ Stoicheiosis Astronomike and the Study of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics in Early Palaiologan Byzantium (*Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 66). Göteborg 2003, 375–382 and 461–474.

<sup>29</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 22–24: ἐμοὶ γοῦν νέα πάνυ τῇ ἡλικίᾳ τὸν ἀπράγμονα βίον ποθήσαντι εὐρέθη τις καὶ τόπος οὐκ ἀσύμφωνός μου τῷ τρόπῳ, τοῦ νῦν πρωτοκωνηγοῦ ἦν ἡ αὐλή.

<sup>30</sup> This donation or tenancy could have been some form of πρόνοια. For terminology, criteria for identification, and nature of πρόνοια, see BARTUSIS, Land and Privilege in Byzantium (cf. *supra* n. 25) 283–335, 534–549, and 597–602.

<sup>31</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 24–29: ὃς τοῖς γονεῦσιν αὐτοῦ κατ’ ἔχνος βαίνων, ἀπένειμέ μοι τιμὴν, ὡς κάκεινοι τοῖς ἐμοῖς· κὰν ἐκείνοι δι’ ὑπερβάλλουσαν ἀρετὴν εἶχον τὸ αἰδέσιμον, ἐμοὶ δὲ δι’ ἐκείνους ὡς κληρὸς τις κατήχθη· καὶ οὔτε παρ’ ἐκείνους ἀπητήθη τι· πῶς γὰρ ἦν χάρις εἰ λημμά τι προσλαμβάνον; κἀγὼ δὲ πολλοῦ δέω τῷ πρωτοκωνηγῷ δοῦναί τι τούτου ἔνεκεν.

<sup>32</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 29–30: ἐπεὶ δ’ ὁ χρόνος καὶ νῦν τὴν οἰκείαν τροπὴν καὶ ἀ[να]στάτωσιν συνέφερε καὶ κινεῖ τὰ ἀκίνητα, μᾶλλον δ’ εἰπεῖν τὰ εὐρίπιστα.

<sup>33</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> l. 32 – f. 170<sup>r</sup> ll. 1–5: νοῦν γὰρ ἔχων τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ ὑγιᾶ ... τοῦτο τὸ κριτήριον ἄχρα<v>τον διατηρῶν ἔχει καὶ περὶ τούτου τοῦ ἐμοῦ λέγω οἰκήματος ὀρθὴν τὴν ψῆφον διοίσειν· καὶ οὐ φθονήσει ἐνὶ κελεύσματι μὴ χάριν παλαιὰν διασώσασθαι καὶ προῖκα γενέσθαι εὐεργετικὸς καὶ φιλότιμος.

<sup>34</sup> The expression πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις δεινοῖς may be a tacit reference to Lucian, De mercede conductis 17. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>r</sup> ll. 5–11: ταῦτ’ ἐγὼ τοῖς πολλοῖς ὧν ἀγνώως ἐφῶ μῆτ’ ἀρετὴν κεκτησθαι ἦτις ἐπαίνειν εἰς φῶς τοὺς κατορθοῦντας μῆτε προτερῆμα φύσεως δι’ οὗ τινες παρρησιάζονται θαρρήσας τῷ μεγέθει τῆς σῆς ἀρετῆς ὑπέμνησα· σὸν οὖν ἐστὶ καὶ ἡμᾶς τετραχωμένους ὄντας χρόνῳ καὶ ἀσθενείᾳ ἐντάξει τοῖς εὐεργετηθεῖσι παρὰ τῆς εὐγενείας σου ἢ καὶ παραβλέψαι πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις δεινοῖς καὶ τῇ ἀσυνήθει ταύτῃ φορολογία τρέχεσθαι.

The dwelling-place Neamonites is speaking about, possibly also the venue for his teaching activities, seems to have been located in Constantinople. Evidence derived from other epp. also points to Constantinople as his place of residence. Thus, in ep. 1 Neamonites addresses an (arch)bishop, hypothetically identified by Kourouses as Gregorios of Ochrid, with whom he seems to be on very close terms. This can be seen in the affectionate tone of the ep. and the forms of address such as “your holiness, my honorable and most-beloved head” and “wonderful soul.”<sup>36</sup> Describing his friend’s condition, who is bereft of the benefits of Constantinople by residing in a remote western city, Neamonites’ tone of compassion betrays the insider perspective of a resident of the capital: “The arrival of your holiness, my honorable and most-beloved head ... caused as much joy – by your holy soul – as the best of the bishops caused grief while being absent [i.e., from Constantinople].”<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Neamonites uses bitter words for describing the see assigned to the (arch)bishop. They constitute a *ψόγος*, i.e., vituperation, against a city which cannot offer the same benefits as “the rose-fingered Morning” (Homer, *Odyssey* 2. 1):

Oh, how many times have I cursed <the city>, if I may say this, the city which was allotted to you, because it was built so far away from our frontiers, in such a savage place when it comes to the Hellenic tongue and custom, so far removed from all the benefits the rose-fingered Morning [i.e., Constantinople] offers, to say it with Homer.<sup>38</sup>

Neamonites accepts that providence rendered such a task for the (arch)bishop so that it “might tame the wildness of the west through your virtue and might subject to the yoke of the law what previously was insubordinate and disorderly.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, he greatly rejoices in his friend’s arrival, although he cannot “enjoy a face-to-face conversation straightaway” because of his demanding teaching activities. Thus, the ep. embodies an interim solution before the long-desired personal encounter between the two. Neamonites received the pleasant news of the (arch)bishop’s arrival from a young man whom he mentioned in the first lines of the same ep. This young man – perhaps Neamonites’ student and a relative or acquaintance of the addressee – “is coming everyday to my [house], claiming to have me as his *μυσταγωγός*.” Neamonites may refer to his private house<sup>40</sup> of *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία*.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Compare, for an earlier period, M. GRÜNBART, *Formen der Anrede im byzantinischen Brief vom 6. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (*WBS* 25). Vienna 2005, 210 (ἀγιότης), 285 (κεφαλή), 360 (ψυχή), an address typical for metropolitans and archbishops.

<sup>37</sup> *Chis.*, f. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 13–17, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, ll. 10–12: ἡ πρὸς ἡμᾶς τῆς τιμίας καὶ φιλάτης μοι κεφαλῆς τῆς σῆς ἀγιότητος ἀφιξίς παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἀγγελοῦσα, τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἡμᾶς νῆ τὴν ἱεράν σου ψυχὴν εὐφρανεν ὅσον ἂν ἀποδημῶν ἐπισκόπων ὁ πάντ’ ἄριστος ἦνία. On the permanent synod (σύνδος ἐνδημοῦσα) in Byzantium, see J. N. HAJJAR, *Le synode permanent* (Synodos endēmousa) dans l’Église byzantine des origines au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle (*OCA* 164). Rome 1962. For the late Byzantine church, see J. PREISER-KAPPELLER, *Hē tōn pleionōn psēphos*. Der Mehrheitsbeschluss in der Synode von Konstantinopel in spätbyzantinischer Zeit – Normen, Strukturen, Prozesse, in: *Genesis und Dynamiken der Mehrheitsentscheidung*, ed. E. Flaig (*Schriften des Historischen Kollegs* 85). Munich 2013, 203–227; IDEM, *Die hauptstädtische Synode von Konstantinopel* (Synodos endēmousa). Zur Geschichte und Funktion einer zentralen Institution der (spät)byzantinischen Kirche. *Historicum. Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 96 (2008) 20–31.

<sup>38</sup> *Chis.*, f. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 17–22, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, ll. 13–16: ὦ πόσα τῆς λαχούσης σε, εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, κατευξάμην ὅτι δὴ κατόικισται πόρρω τῶν ἡμετέρων ὀρίων, ἐν οὕτω μὲν ἀπηγριωμένῳ χωρίῳ ὅσα γε τῆς Ἑλληνίδος γλώττης καὶ ἔθους, οὕτω δ’ ἀπωκισμένῳ τῶν ὅσα γε καθ’ Ὀμηρον φάναι ἀνίσχει χρηστῶν ἢ ῥοδοδάκτυλος ἠώς.

<sup>39</sup> *Chis.*, f. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 25–27 – f. 166<sup>v</sup> l. 1, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, ll. 18–21: ὡς τοῦτ’ ἐγεγόνει προνοίας οὐκ ἄνευ τῆς ἀεὶ προσηκόντως διοικούσης τὰ πάντα, ἵν’ ἐξημερώσῃ τῆς ἐσπέρας τὸ ἄγριον τῆ σῆ ἀρετῆ καὶ ζυγῷ τοῦ νόμου καθυποτάξῃ τὸ πρῶην ἀφηνιάζον καὶ ἀτακτοῦν.

<sup>40</sup> The term “school” would imply a degree of institutionalization unlikely in late Byzantium. Cf. D. BIANCONI, *Tessalonica nell’età dei Paleologi*. Le pratiche intellettuali nel riflesso della cultura scritta (*Dossiers Byzantins* 5). Paris 2005. See also GAUL, Thomas Magistros.

<sup>41</sup> *Chis.*, f. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 1–2, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, ll. 1–2: καθεκάστην ἐς τὴν ἡμετέραν φοιτῶντα μυσταγωγῶ δῆθεν χρώμενον νεανίαν τουτονί. For private and public education in late Byzantium, see C. N. CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher Education in*





turning to Kleidas. As the schoolmaster is only “satiated with the necessities,” he would be all the more grateful to the judge for supporting his cause and making justice.<sup>52</sup>

## II.2. SICKNESS AND OLD AGE – NEAMONITES’ SWAN SONG

Writing to Metochites, Neamonites mentions that he has just recovered from a resilient and severe suffering that kept him from performing his usual activities – most likely referring to his teaching activities: “the long-lasting sickness made me completely inactive to such an extent that those who knew my affairs did not even believe that I was still alive.”<sup>53</sup> He ends the same ep. reminding his addressee that he is “worn out by time and illness.”<sup>54</sup> The theme of sickness – widely encountered in Byzantine epp.<sup>55</sup> – is also frequent in Neamonites’ letters. Repeatedly referring to his physical afflictions and penning himself as having a poor health condition, in this particular letter to Metochites, Neamonites may have had very specific strategic reasons for doing so. Furthermore, toward the end of ep. 14, he complains about a kidney disease which rendered him “almost incapable of moving” and thus forced him to “put forward my supplication by means of a letter rather than in person.”<sup>56</sup>

In ep. 5, sent to an unknown addressee,<sup>57</sup> Neamonites employs elegiac tones and laments the wretchedness of his existence that is drawing near its twilight. Ep. 5 opens with the image of a swan which “as the proverb says, close to the last moments of its life, sings very gracefully and sweetly so that, I think, the remembrances of its song and singing would remain for those still living as some inducement of yearning for it.”<sup>58</sup> Neamonites confesses that he “runs a course similar” to the swan and partakes in the same kind of suffering. This may imply that he is old and approaching the end of his life. However, unlike the bird, he does not possess the mastery needed for leaving something of delight behind, which is to his utmost sorrow:

I, suffering the same as that bird and running a similar course, do not possess anything argumentative or euphonious, or anything befitting the expressed (προφορικός) or the immanent (ἐνδιάθετος) reason (λόγος),<sup>59</sup> such as to delight my friends in the future, and from which to derive some seed of a friendly disposition.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>v</sup> ll. 4–8: οὐκ ἂν ἠδέως πηδήσουσιν, ἀνακληθεῖσαν ταύτην θεώμενοι καὶ εὐφήμους φωνὰς ἀνυψῶσι τῷ τροπωσαμένῳ τὴν ἐπιπολάζουσαν ἀδικίαν, τσοαὐτ’ ἔτι καὶ τὴν δίκην ἅλιν ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου οἷον ἰδρυσάμενῳ, πάλαι τῇ καλῇ διαίτη τῶν καλῶν ἑλληκαυῖαν κριτῶν, μᾶλλον εἰπεῖν ὑποκριτῶν.

<sup>53</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 10–11: ἡ πολυχρόνιος νόσος ἀργὸν παντάπασιν πεποίηκέ με καὶ τοσοῦτον, ὥστε καὶ τοῖς εἰδόσι τὰμὰ μὴ πιστεύεσθαι ζῆν.

<sup>54</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>r</sup> ll. 8–9: ἡμᾶς τετραχωμένους ὄντας χρόνῳ καὶ ἀσθενείᾳ.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. MULLETT, *The Classical Tradition* 80. See also P. TIMPLALEXI, *Medizinisches in der byzantinischen Epistolographie* (1100–1453) (*Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe VII, Medizin. Abt. B. Geschichte der Medizin* 9). Frankfurt am Main 2002.

<sup>56</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 18–22: εἰ δὲ δὴ γραφῇ τὴν ἰκετείαν προβάλλομαι καὶ μὴ καταπρόσωπον ὃ μᾶλλον ἐχρῆν καὶ κατὰ τὸν σὸν ποιητὴν γουνάσασθαι ἐκμειλίζασθαι τε πρὸς τούτοις εἴ που τέ τι καὶ ἀντιβαίνει θαυμάσεις μηδέν· τὸ γὰρ ἐν νεφροῖς πάθος μικροῦ καὶ ἀκίνητον τίθησι. Cf. TIMPLALEXI, *Medizinisches* 66, n. 265.

<sup>57</sup> Judging from the content of ep. 5, the addressee was a person acquainted with Aristotle’s logic, possibly a writer of a commentary on Aristotle’s *Organon*.

<sup>58</sup> Chis., f. 168<sup>r</sup> ll. 1–4: ὁ μὲν κύκνος, ὡς ἡ παροιμία φησι, περὶ τὰ λοιπὸν οἱ τοῦ βίου εὐμουσώτατα ᾄδει καὶ λιγυρώτατα ὄπως οἶμαι, τῆς αὐτοῦ μνημεῖα ταῦτα μούσης καὶ μέλψεως περιεῖη τοῖς ἔτι ζῶσι καὶ οἰοεῖ τινα τοῦ περὶ ἐκείνου ἐρεθίσματα πόθου.

<sup>59</sup> Neamonites may refer to his presumed inability to express thoughts, emotions, etc. in language, either through speech or internally. The distinction between ἐνδιάθετος and προφορικός is of Stoic origin. See H. F. ARNIM, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* II. Leipzig, 1964, 135, 223. Cf. also NEMESIUS, *On the Nature of Man* cap. 14 (Περὶ τοῦ ἐνδιαθέτου καὶ προφορικοῦ λόγου), transl. R. W. SHARPLES – P. J. VAN DER EIJK (*Translated Texts for Historians* 49). Liverpool 2009, 123–125: “Immanent reason is a motion of the soul which occurs in the speech function without any speaking aloud, which is why we often go through a whole reasoning process by ourselves in silence . . . Expressed reason has its activity in speech and in conversation.” This distinction between ἐνδιάθετος and προφορικός λόγος was already sketched by Aristotle in *Analytica Posteriora* I 10, 76b24–25: οὐ γὰρ πρὸς τὸν ἕξω λόγον ἡ ἀπόδειξις, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ συλλογισμός.

Neamonites places the roots of this ineptitude in his senses, which have become “worn out” by the long suffering of the body through “many and frequent illnesses.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, it appears that his son’s misfortune brings his misery to a climax. Although he does not offer any particular details as to what happened, the language he uses is emotionally loaded: And the colophon, I mean the grief, concerning my dearest son, which came in addition to these <illnesses> – oh, which ought not to have happened –, did not bring <to me> my impossible desire, but rather reserved for me a Tantalian suffering.<sup>62</sup>

Similar to Tantalus’ never-ending agony, Neamonites does not find solace in death, but lives instead with the constant thought of his son’s potential death:

For this grief, which was for me the most violent of all, should have brought the end of my life, but this did not happen. I am still alive for no reason other than to pay off the penalties of a wretched life, always imagining the death of that one [i.e., my son], so that the remaining soft part of the body may be consumed mercilessly by the suffering. All my affairs are somehow in this manner.<sup>63</sup>

Lamenting his wretched state, which must be taken however *cum grano salis*, Neamonites gives further insights into his life and family. If in ep. 7 he mentions his parents, in epp. 5, 12 and 13 he speaks of a “dearest son.”

### II.3. NEAMONITES’ SON – IOANNES KALAMPAKES

The main source of information on Ioannes Kalampakes is his father’s letter collection, which offers no indication whether Neamonites had any other children. If Kalampakes was in fact a byname,<sup>64</sup> it could indicate that Ioannes was born or resided at some point in the region of Kalampaka (Stagoi), in northwestern Thessaly.<sup>65</sup> Ep. 12 reveals that he was away from his family, residing in a place remote from Constantinople. Much to his parents’ unease and pain, he does not seem to have sent any letters to bridge this physical separation (χωρισμός).<sup>66</sup> This prompts Neamonites to write that “your affairs are unknown to us to such a degree that no man has ever indicated to us that you are still among the living” and to reproach his son for the lack of sympathy and heartlessness shown towards his family

<sup>60</sup> Chis., f. 168<sup>r</sup> ll. 5–9: ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦτὰ τῷ πτηνῷ πάσχων καὶ δρόμον τρέχων τὸν ὁμοιον οὐδὲν τι λογικοῦ χάριεν οὐδ’ εὐηχῆς ἔχω οὔτε μὴ τοῦ προφορικοῦ ἢ ἐνδιαθέτου προσήκον λόγον καὶ οἶον εἰς τοεξῆς φίλους εὐφρᾶναι καὶ σπέρμα φιλικῆς διαθέσεως ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καρπωθῆναι.

<sup>61</sup> Chis., f. 168<sup>r</sup> ll. 9–10: προκατείργαστο γάρ μοι τὰ αἰσθητήρια ταῖς πολλαῖς καὶ συχναῖς νοσηλίαις τοῦ σώματος.

<sup>62</sup> Chis., f. 168<sup>r</sup> ll. 10–13: ὁ δὲ κολοφόν, ἢ λύπη λέγω, τοῦ φιλάτου υἱοῦ, ὡς μὴ ὄφελεν ἐκεῖνοις ἐπιγενομένη, <ἀδύ>νατον τὸ ἐμοὶ καταθύμιον οὐκ ἐπήνεγκεν, ἀλλὰ ταντάλειον τιμωρίαν ἐταμιεύσατο.

<sup>63</sup> Chis., f. 168<sup>r</sup> ll. 13–20: χρῆν γὰρ σφοδροτάτην ταύτην ἀπασῶν γενομένην μοι συμφορῶν καὶ ζωῆς παῦλαν τέως τῆς ἐν ἐμοὶ ποιῆσαι τέως τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἐγένετο· περίεμι δὲ ἕως τουνῦν οὐδ’ ἄλλο τι ἢ τοῦ τίνειν με δίκας τοῦ ταλαιπώρου βίου εἰδωλοποιούντος αἰεὶ τὸν ἐκεῖνου θάνατον, ἵνα τὸ περιλειπόμενον τῷ πάθει τοῦ σώματος πιμελῆς μέρος ἀφειδῶς διατήκοιτο· τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐμὰ ᾧδέ πως ἔχει.

<sup>64</sup> *PLP* identifies four more persons bearing this name: Manuel Kalampakes (10253) and Michael Kalampakes (10254), both in the region of Smyrna, and two certain Kalampakes, one residing perhaps in Constantinople (93686) and the other in Macedonia (93687). Kalampakes might have also been a family name.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. J. KODER – F. HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia (TIB 1)*. Vienna 1976, 262–263.

<sup>66</sup> For the “essence” and “function” of letters, see, for instance, S. ΠΑΠΑΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ, Letter-Writing, in: *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson. London 2010, 188–199; P. HATLIE, Redeeming Byzantine Epistolography. *BMGs* 20 (1996) 213–224. See also *A Companion to Byzantine Epistolography*, ed. A. RIEHLE (forthcoming).

by not sending any news.<sup>67</sup> Maximos further exhorts Kalampakes to write a letter through which “you would strengthen afresh us who are half-dead from longing after you.”<sup>68</sup> Finally, Neamonites entreats his son to return home and be his consolation and staff of senescence.<sup>69</sup> His beautiful appearance, i.e., physical presence, would then be regarded not as profit, but as complete happiness.<sup>70</sup> Neamonites ends the ep. with a collective greeting coming most probably from the whole family: “All of us are doing well and greet you.”<sup>71</sup>

In ep. 13, Neamonites uses more sorrowful tones and gives a stronger voice to the themes of death and sickness, already found in ep. 5. Having his son away, Neamonites painfully misses him and is troubled by the thought that he might even be dead:

You will learn, my most beloved son, from the one bringing these letters to you how much we are affected because of the grief and privation with regard to you, and even more because of the bitter death, which many people often confirmed to us that you have undergone during the harshest time of winter.<sup>72</sup>

Neamonites writes that the news of Ioannes’ physical suffering “has indeed brought us grief, and now – like a flame – it kindles our souls because it turns out that you are not physically dead, yet [you might die] violently because of bareness and coldness.”<sup>73</sup> Maximos seems to be tormented by the thought that the harsh winter conditions can jeopardize his son’s life. One may surmise that Ioannes was practicing some extreme form of asceticism, perhaps in the vicinity of Stagoi.<sup>74</sup> As will be further discussed, Neamonites’ entire family might have assumed monastic habit.<sup>75</sup> The uncertainty surrounding Kalampakes’ situation is at some point dispelled by a man who testifies to having seen him alive in the month of March. In order to assure Neamonites that it was really his son that he had met, the man paints a brief physical and moral portrait of Kalampakes:

But if this man earnestly maintained the truth to us with formidable oaths that during the month of March he saw you alive, and as we asked him for proof for the confirmation of his account, he said that “he [i.e., you] carries a skin tag between <his> eyebrows and very beautiful hair and the name Kalampakes and highest humbleness and is friendly to speak with.”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>r</sup> l. 32 – f. 171<sup>v</sup> ll. 1, 3–8: τὰ σὰ παρ’ ἡμῖν τοσοῦτον ἄδηλα ὅσον οὐδὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐδεὶς ἐν ζῶσιν εἶναι σε δεδήλωκε ... τάντεῦθεν ἕκ τε τῆς σῆς ... ἀσυμπαθείας καὶ ἀσπλαγχνίας τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς μικροῦ τῆ δόξης ταύτης περιπεπτώκαμεν ... τέως μὲν οὖν ἐν τούτοις ἤμεν τὸ πρότερον καὶ γραφὴν ἐν ἀδήλοις ἐπαφειναί σοι οὐκ ἦν· προσκεχηνότες δὲ μόνον ἐμένομεν ὅποτε λαβεῖν ἀφορμὰς παρὰ σοῦ τοῦ γράφειν ἵνα μὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν ἀσημάντοις βάλλοντες ὦμεν.

<sup>68</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>v</sup> ll. 30–31: ἡμᾶς ἡμιθνήτας ὄντας πόθῳ τῷ σῷ ἀναρρώσεως τῆ σῆ γραφῆ.

<sup>69</sup> This echoes the exhortation of the father of St Symeon the New Theologian: “But for now you surely do not want this separation from you to grieve me, when you know that you alone are the staff of my old age and the comfort for my soul.” See Niketas Stethatos, *The Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*, transl. R. P. H. GREENFIELD (*Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 20). Cambridge, Mass. 2013, 22–23. Cf. A.-M. TALBOT, *The Byzantine Family and the Monastery*. *DOP* 44 (1990) 119–129, at 126.

<sup>70</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>v</sup> ll. 25–27: εἰ θεασόμε<θά> σε τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς εἰ τὸν φίλτατον ἡμῶν ὠλένης περιλάβομεν, εἰ τοῦ καλοῦ σου εἶδους ἐμφορηθῶμεν οὐ κέρδος λέγω, ἀλλ’ εὐδαιμονίαν πᾶσαν τοῦθ’ ἠγησόμεθα.

<sup>71</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>v</sup> l. 31: οἱ ἡμέτεροι ὑγιαίνουσι καὶ προσαγορευοῦσίν σε.

<sup>72</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>v</sup> l. 32 – f. 172<sup>r</sup> ll. 1–3: μάθοις ἂν νιέ μου παμφίλτατε παρὰ τοῦ φέροντός σοι ταῦτα τὰ γράμματα, ὅπως ἡμεῖς διὰ τὴν σὴν λύπην καὶ στέρησιν διακειμέθα· μᾶλλον δὲ διὰ τὸν πικρὸν θάνατον, ὃν πολλοὶ πολλὰκις ἡμῖν ἐβεβαίωσαν ὑποστῆναί σε τὸ δριμύτατον τοῦ χειμῶνος.

<sup>73</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>r</sup> ll. 3–5: ὁ καὶ μᾶλλον ἀνῆπτε τὴν λύπην ἡμῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ νῦν δίκην φλογὸς ἐμπιπρᾷ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν ὅτι μὴ κατὰ φύσιν συνέβη τεθνᾶναι σε, ἀλλὰ βιαίως τῆ τε γυμνώσει καὶ τῆ ψυχρότητι.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. D. NICOL, *Meteora. The Rock Monasteries of Thessaly*. London 1975, 78–80; A. RIGO, *La “Cronaca della Meteore.” La storia dei monasteri della Tessaglia tra XIII e XVI secolo (Orientalia Veneziana 8)*. Florence 1999.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *infra* the section II.4. Maximos – Monk at Nea Mone.

<sup>76</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>r</sup> ll. 16–21: ἀλλ’ εἰ μὲν ἀληθῆ διετεινετο πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος μεθ’ ὄρκων φρικτῶν, ὡς κατὰ τὸν μάρτιον μῆνα ζῶντα ἐθεάσατό σε· καὶ σημεῖα παρ’ ἡμῶν ἀπαιτούμενος εἰς πίστωσιν τοῦ λόγου· αὐτῶν μεταξὺ τῶν ὀφρῶν, ἔλεγε, μῶλωπα φέρε καὶ κόμην πάνυ ὠραίαν καὶ τοῦνομα Καλαμπάκης καὶ ταπεινώσιν ἄκραν καὶ ὀμιλεῖν ἐπιτήδειος.

And Neamonites continues:

If this is so and you are as he asserts with regard to your tokens of recognition, oh, my son, my Kalampakes, sweetest name, bend yourself to pity so that you would return to us together with him [i.e., the carrier of the letter] and you would fend yourself and us from another long-lasting and bitter grief, and from [our] daily tears you would recall to life the souls breathing the last moments.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, Neamonites entreats his son to return home in the company of the man delivering the letter, possibly the same one who brought the good news that he was alive. Lest material constraints should prevent this from happening, Neamonites instructs the carrier of the letter to provide all necessary means to Kalampakes, for which he would be later reimbursed.<sup>78</sup>

As Neamonites reveals, only the senselessness brought about by death could make him forget the memory of his son. Moreover, it is with “sighing and tears” that he remembers him every time. Thus, the burden of his supposed weakness, most likely caused by old age, is doubled by his son’s absence:

Every day we do not partake either in food, or drink, or sleep without tears, but also the scarcest discussion with someone, in the midst of which your memory comes to my mind, happens not without sighing or tears; in this way our life is passing by; thus, we are racked twice by grief: both from our great weakness and from your departure, and we are longing for death so that meanwhile it may render us senseless since otherwise it is impossible for us to be set free from your memory.<sup>79</sup>

Neamonites uses the motif of imminent death as a means of persuading Kalampakes to return home. In a powerful image, Maximos describes his death as a *descensus ad inferos*: “hasten to return quickly before death would take us, for it rushes to throw us towards Tainaros and through Acheron to escort us to Pluto.”<sup>80</sup> Returning home as if from death to life, Kalampakes – similar to Lazarus, who was resurrected by Christ (John 11) – would enliven and bring joy to the souls, i.e., Neamonites’ and perhaps of his wife, allegedly breathing the last moments: “May God decide that we see each other again and we shall impart the same glory which the sisters of Lazarus imparted.”<sup>81</sup> Finally, Neamonites ends his ep. reminding Kalampakes that his mother and all the nuns are paralysed and barely breathing in his absence, but are taking heart at the expectation of his return.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 21–25: εἰ μὲν οὕτως ἔχει καὶ αὐτὸς εἶ καθὼς φάσκει καὶ τὰ παρ’ ἡμῖν σα γνωρίσματα κάμφθητι, υἱέ μου, Καλαμπάκη μου, γλυκύτετον ὄνομα ἵνα μετ’ αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐπαναλύσης καὶ τῆς μακρᾶς ἄλλης παύσης σαυτὸν καὶ ἡμᾶς λύπης πικρᾶς καὶ καθ’ ἡμερινῶν δακρῦων καὶ ἀναζώσης ψυχᾶς πνεοῦσας τὰ λοιίσθια.

<sup>78</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 25–28: μὴ τις γοῦν ἐξοδος ἢ γύμνωσις κωλυσάτω σε ἐπεὶ παρρηγγέλθην οὗτος ὁ τι χηρίζεις παρ’ αὐτοῦ λαβεῖν, καὶ οὗτος πάλιν μεταπροσθήκης λάβοι τὸ ἐφοδιασθέν σοι καὶ μετ’ εὐχῆς.

<sup>79</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 6–12: ὁσημέραι οὔτε τροφῆς οὔτε πόσεως οὔθ’ ὕπνου χωρὶς δακρῦων μεταλαμβάνομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ σπανιωτάτη μετὰ τινος ὁμιλία, μετὰ μνήμης τῆς σῆς ἐμπεσοῦσης, οὐκ ἄνευ στεναγμῶν καὶ δακρῦων γίνεται· οὕτω διαβιβάζεται ἡμῶν ἡ ζωὴ· οὕτω διχῶς τῆ λύπῃ κατατεινόμεθα· ἔκ τε τῆς μακρᾶς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ σοῦ χωρισμοῦ καὶ ποθοῦμεν μὲν τὸν θάνατον ἵνα τέως ἀναισθήτους ἡμᾶς ποιήσῃ ἐπεὶ τῆς σῆς μνήμης ἄλλως οὐκ ἔνι ἀπαλλαγῆναι.

<sup>80</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 29–31: σπεῦσον οὖν ταχέως ἐλθεῖν προτοῦ καταλάβοι ἡμᾶς ὁ θάνατος· ἤδη γὰρ ὠθεῖ βαλεῖν ἡμᾶς πρὸς τὸ Ταίναρον καὶ διὰ τοῦ Ἀχέρωντος παραπέμψαι τῷ Πλούτωνι.

<sup>81</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> l. 32 – f. 172<sup>v</sup> l. 1: ὁ Θεὸς ἀξιώσειεν ἀλλήλους ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καὶ δόξαν αὐτῆν ἀπονέμοιμεν ἢν καὶ αἱ σύγγονοι τοῦ Λαζάρου ἀπένειμαν.

<sup>82</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 2–3: ἡ ἐλεεινὴ σου μήτηρ καὶ αἱ μοναχαὶ πᾶσαι ἀκμὴν ἀναπνεύουσιν· ἡ προσδοκία δὲ τοῦ ἰδεῖν σε τοῦτο ποιεῖ ἐπεὶ τὸ πλέον νενέκρῳνται.

Neamonites' epp. to his son offer few but important data which serve as a basis for sketching Ioannes Kalampakes' portrait. It seems that, like his father, Kalampakes was highly educated, as evinced by the numerous classical and biblical references employed throughout epp. 12 and 13 (e.g., Abaris the Hyperborean, Lynkeus, Pluto, Tainaros, Acheron, Lazarus). Georgios Oinaiotēs' epp. 36, 45 and 54 offer further information on the education and intellectual pursuits of a son of Neamonites. As the letters do not mention the name of their addressee, it is uncertain whether they were addressed to Ioannes Kalampakes or to another son of Neamonites.<sup>83</sup>

It seems that Oinaiotēs sent his literary compositions for peer review and feedback both to Neamonites (ep. 13) and to his son, most probably to prepare for a performance in the public gatherings, the so-called *θέατρα*.<sup>84</sup> From ep. 36<sup>85</sup> one gathers that Oinaiotēs sent to Neamonites' son a "newly produced *λόγος*" by which he set to expose the slander "of some uneducated persons." Thus, Oinaiotēs asks his addressee to read his work with great care, and exhibit his "impartial judgement," disregarding the fact that it was written by his friend. Oinaiotēs calls again for Neamonites' son's highly valued feedback in ep. 45.<sup>86</sup> This letter seems to have been accompanied by one of his *λόγοι*, of which he writes that "this *λόγος* partaking in clearness was prepared with excessive care." Nevertheless, Oinaiotēs would be fortunate to have his work read by his addressee, whom he flatters by referring to his innate diligence and expertise.

Oinaiotēs' epp. suggest that Neamonites' son was a bookman. The latter seems to have owned a manuscript transmitting the epp. of Theophylaktos Simokattes. In addition to works of history, Simokattes composed eighty-five fictitious epp. on a range of ethical subjects between different historical and mythical characters.<sup>87</sup> These epp. have an impressive manuscript tradition, several codices dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>88</sup> Having at some point read one of Simokattes' epp., "which he once wrote about fame," Oinaiotēs was "seized by an infinite pleasure." As there is nothing "more resonant to the ear than that letter," Oinaiotēs tries to persuade his friend to lend him that ep. of Simokattes, writing in ep. 54<sup>89</sup> that: "knowing you as the best of friends ... I ask to receive it from you." The references to "fame" (*δόξα*) and "little fame" (*δοξάριον*) may indicate that

<sup>83</sup> In the codex Laurentianus S. Marco 356, the epp. bear the title τῶ υἱῷ τοῦ νεαμονίτου.

<sup>84</sup> On *θέατρα* in the Palaiologan period, cf. GAUL, Thomas Magistros 17–53; IDEM, Dancing with the Muses.

<sup>85</sup> Laurentianus S. Marco 356, ff. 61<sup>r</sup>–61<sup>v</sup> ll. 1–2: δίκαιον ἡγησάμενος κα<i> </i> τοὺς γραφεῖς ἐκείνους σοι νεογνὸν τόνδε πέπομφα λόγον· δι' οὗ, ἀπαιδευτῶν τινων κακηγορίας, κατ' οὐδὲν ἐκείνων ἀνομοίας ὅποσα προσάλληλα τὰ γραΐδια κοινολογοῦνται ὅποτε διανυκτερεύοιεν, ἐς προῦπτον, οὐδὲν αὐτὸ τοῦθ' ὅπερ ἦσαν, ἀπέδειξα· ὅπως οὖν μὴ παρέργως μὴ δ' ὡς οὐ φίλον διέληθης· ὡς ἂν τῷ μετὰ πλείονος ἐπιμελείας διελθεῖν, ἄμφω δόξης εἰργασμένοι τότε τὴν σὴν κρίσιν ἀδέκαστον ἀποδείξαι, καὶ ἡμᾶς δ' ὡς εἰθισταί σοι δι' ἐπαίνους ποιῆσαι.

<sup>86</sup> Laurentianus S. Marco 356, f. 68<sup>v</sup> ll. 2–15: ὁ λόγος σαφηνείας μετέχων μεθ' ὑπερβαλλούσης ὑπερβολῆς ἐξεργασμένος· σὰς ἔρχεται πληρώσων ἀκοάς· ἀλλὰ σὸν εἰδέναί τοῦτο γ' εὐμοιροῦμεν· καὶ εἰ μὴ ἄλλοῦ του τῶν γῶν, τούτου γοῦν πολλακίς πεῖραν οὐκ ἀγνοίας μέτεστιν ἡμῖν ὡς ἐλάβομεν, ὡς οὐδὲ μικρὸν τι τῆς γιγνομένης ἐπιμελείας ὑποχαλᾶν εἰθισμένος ἦσθα· ἀναγνώσεις γοῦν, εὖ οἶδα, οὐδενὶ οἰηθῆναι παρασχησόμενος, ὡς οὐ <...> πολλοῦ τοῦ κρείττονος ἢ δέον ἀνέγνωσαν.

<sup>87</sup> Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Epistulae*, ed. I. ZANETTO. Leipzig 1985.

<sup>88</sup> See, for instance, Zanetto's preface to his edition of Simokattes' letters (cf. *supra* n. 87), v–xxviii, at v–xxiv. See also A. MOFFATT, The After-Life of the Letters of Theophylaktos Simokatta, in: Maistor. Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning, ed. Eadem (*Byzantina Australiensia* 5). Canberra 1984, 345–358.

<sup>89</sup> Laurentianus S. Marco 356, ff. 88<sup>r</sup>–89<sup>v</sup> ll. 1–5: ἐπιστολὴν τινα Σιμοκάτου ἣν ἐκεῖνος περὶ δόξης οἶμαι ἔφθη γεγραφῶς διελθεῖν ἄσχετὸς μέ τις ἔρωσ κατέσχεν· ἐρῶν τοιγαροῦν καὶ ᾧ πιστεύσας εἰκότως δόξω τὸν ἔρωτα πάντα κάλων κινῶν ζητῶν, σὲ τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἄριστον εἰδῶς, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο σοι τὸν ἔρωτα ἀνακαλύπτω, αὐτῷ λαβεῖν παρὰ σοῦ· τῆς οὖν ἐπιστολῆς ἐκείνης οὐδὲν τι πλέον τῆς ἀκοῆς ἐνηγεῖν ὁ χρόνος ἀφήκεν ἢ ὅτι δοξάριον ὑποκορίζων τὴν δόξαν φασὶ δόξης ἂν τοιγαροῦν οὐκ ἔξω τοῦ δέοντος πεπραχῶς εἶγε δυοῖν θάτερον δόξεις ἐργασάμενος· ἦτοι ἐπιστολῶν Σιμοκάτου βιβλίον μοι πεπομφέναι, ὁ γάρ τοι ἔρωσ ἀπὸ σπινθηρος πολλακίς εἰς πυρσὸν ἀνάπτεται, ἢ τό γε δεῦτερον μετεγγράψαι ταύτην καὶ νῦν διὰ τοῦ παρόντος ἀποστήλαι· εἰ μὲν οὖν πέμψεις, χαρίτων οὐ μικρῶν με ὀφειλέτην ποιήσεις· εἰ δ' οὐ πέμψεις ἀνιάσης μὲν <ἐπιστο>λῆν, ἀλλὰ καὶ χάριτας ἴσθι ληψόμενος ἐκ τοῦ οἴεσθαι ἡμᾶς σε ἡμῶν οὐχ ἦττον σοῦγε κήδεσθαι.

the letter Oinaiotes desires is either ep. 76 addressed by Diogenes to Sotion<sup>90</sup> or ep. 79 addressed by Isokrates to Dionysios,<sup>91</sup> as in both of these Simokattes speaks of δοξάριον.<sup>92</sup>

Oinaiotes proposes two options to Neamonites' son. The first is to send the larger collection (i.e., the book) of Simokattes' epp., artfully pointing out that "the desire is often kindled from a spark to a fire." The second option is to send a copy of the ep.: "copy [literally, 'rewrite'] this and send it to me through the one who is present with you." At the end of his plea, Oinaiotes stresses that receiving the desired ep. would make him a "debtor of no small thanks." Moreover, he would be grateful to his addressee even if this does not happen, for "we know that you care for us no less than for yourself."

#### II.4. MAXIMOS – MONK AT NEA MONE

As already discussed, Neamonites had at least one son, Ioannes Kalampakes. At the end of ep. 13 Neamonites mentions Kalampakes' mother and certain nuns who are awaiting the latter's return. This could point to the fact that Neamonites was in a monastery at the time of writing the ep. If one assumes that Ioannes Kalampakes was his biological son and the woman mentioned in the ep. was Kalampakes' natural mother, one could propose the following scenario.

At some point in his life the schoolmaster decided to enter a monastery and assumed the name Maximos at the time of monastic tonsure. In the Palaiologan period, the tradition of μετονομασία was the norm, albeit by no means an absolute requirement, and entailed that a monk/nun take a new monastic name beginning with the same letter or syllable as his/her baptismal name.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, provided that this principle was observed, Neamonites' worldly name could have started with the letter M. However, as this pattern was not always followed, the schoolmaster may have also either retained his baptismal name – Maximos – or chosen a monastic name not beginning with the same initials. Despite the monastic ideal of renunciation of family ties, Maximos' wife and son, Ioannes Kalampakes, could have joined him in assuming monastic garments. This practice was not unusual in fourteenth-century Byzantium. As Talbot points out, members of the same family often entered the same monastery.<sup>94</sup> One case in point is the family of Gregorios Palamas (ca. 1294/6–1357/9). After the death of his father, Gregorios and his two brothers went to Mount Athos, while his mother and two sisters entered a convent in Constantinople.<sup>95</sup>

Judging from the sobriquet Neamonites, it seems that he entered a monastery called Nea Mone ("new monastery"). There were several monasteries with this name,<sup>96</sup> for instance on Chios,<sup>97</sup> in

<sup>90</sup> Theophylaktos Simokattes, ep. 76 (40–41 ZANETTO): τὸ μικρὸν τοῦτο δοξάριον ὕπαρ ἐνύπνιον τοῖς εἰς φρονοῦσιν εἶναι δοκεῖ, καὶ τῶν πεπλασμένων μύθων τερατωδέστερόν ἐστι καὶ φαυλότερον, ἄστατον, κουφοποιόν, παίγνιον ἤχων καὶ πνευμάτων φαντασιωδέστερον.

<sup>91</sup> Theophylaktos Simokattes, ep. 79 (41–42 ZANETTO): τί δῆτα τὸ κενὸν τοῦτο καὶ κοῦφον δοξάριον ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον τὸν πῆλινον ἀσκὸν διεφύσησε; μεγάλης ἀνοίας ἐνεφορήθης, ᾧ δύστηνε, καὶ τῆς φύσεως τὴν γνῶσιν ἀφήρησαι.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. REIN, *Die Florentiner Briefsammlung* 134.

<sup>93</sup> For the practice of μετονομασία in Byzantium, see A.-M. TALBOT – S. McGRATH, *Monastic Onomastics*, in: *Monastères, images, pouvoirs et société à Byzance*, ed. M. Kaplan (*Byzantina Sorbonensia* 23). Paris 2006, 89–118, especially 96–97 and Appendices II and III.

<sup>94</sup> For the "family functions" of the monastery, and family ties within the monastery, see TALBOT, *The Byzantine Family* (cf. *supra* n. 69); see also D. KRAUSMÜLLER, *Byzantine Monastic Communities: Alternative Families?* In: *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, ed. L. Brubaker – S. Tougher (*Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies* 14). Farnham-Burlington 2013, 345–358.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Philotheos Kokkinos, *Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἐν ἀγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης* 14 (ed. D. G. TSAMES, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα*, Α΄· Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἄγιοι. Thessalonike 1985, 441, ll. 1–13).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. R. JANIN, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins: Bithynie, Hellespont, Latros, Galèsios, Trébizonde*, Athènes, Thessalonique. Paris 1975, 239–240, 398–399.

<sup>97</sup> The monastery was founded shortly after 1042, during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042–1055) by the local hermits Niketas and John.

Thessalonike,<sup>98</sup> and on Mount Latros.<sup>99</sup> Another Nea Mone was located on the holy mountain of Ganos in Thrace.<sup>100</sup> It was on this mountain (today Işıklar Dağı), situated on the western shore of the Sea of Marmara, about 15 km southwest of Rhaidestos (Tekirdağ), that Athanasios I (ca. 1235–ca. 1315), the future patriarch of Constantinople (1289–1293; 1303–1309), founded in ca. 1278 a “new monastery.”<sup>101</sup> Georgios Pachymeres (1242–ca. 1310) probably refers to this monastery when reporting the death of Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259–1282). Pachymeres writes that the emperor’s corpse was lying for a while in a nearby monastery called Nea Mone, and was subsequently moved to the monastery of Christ the Saviour in Selymbria.<sup>102</sup> On the basis of a passage from Theoktistos’ *vita* of Patriarch Athanasios I,<sup>103</sup> scholars have argued that this Nea Mone was a double monastery (διπλοῦν μοναστήριον), i.e., a legal and spatial unit which housed two spatially separate but adjacent communities of men and women under the authority of a common abbot.<sup>104</sup> However, Rigo argues that the passage may not refer to the Nea Mone on Ganos, but to a Constantinopolitan double monastery.<sup>105</sup> The schoolmaster M(aximos) could have entered the alleged double monastery of Nea Mone on Mount Ganos which may have also accommodated his wife.<sup>106</sup> For instance, Nikephoros Choumnos and his wife took monastic vows and resided in the double monastery of Christ Philanthropos, which their daughter, Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina, renovated and presided as abbess.<sup>107</sup> Nonetheless, in the absence of more evidence this is at best a hypothesis.

<sup>98</sup> This monastery – dedicated to the Theotokos – was established between 1360 and 1368/70 by Makarios Choumnos (ca. 1360–ca. 1380).

<sup>99</sup> A Nea Mone seems likely to have functioned on Mount Latros, north-east of the ancient city of Milet. Cf. JANIN, *Les églises et les monastères* 239–240.

<sup>100</sup> On Mount Ganos, see A. KÜLZER, *Ostthrakien (Eurōpē) (TIB 12)*. Vienna 2008, 374–376. See also IDEM, *Das Ganos-Gebirge in Ostthrakien (Işıklar Dağı)*, in: *Heilige Berge und Wüsten. Byzanz und sein Umfeld*, ed. P. Soustal (*Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* 16). Vienna 2009, 41–52. Cf. also A.-M. TALBOT, *Les saintes montagnes à Byzance*, in: *Le sacré et son inscription dans l’espace à Byzance et en Occident. Études comparées*, ed. Michel Kaplan (*Byzantina Sorbonensia* 18). Paris 2001, 263–275, at 267–268; A. RIGO, *Il monte Ganos e i suoi monasteri*. *OCF* 61 (1995) 235–248.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Theoktistos Studites, *Vita Athanasii* cap. 16 (ed. A. PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, *Žitija dvuch’ vselenskich patriarchov XIV v. Sv. Afanasija I i Isidora I. Zapiski Istoriko-filologičeskago Fakulteta imperatorskago St. Peterburgskago Universiteta* 76 [1905] 1–51, at 21, 22–25): μετὰ γὰρ τὸ μεταναστεῦσαι τοῦ Γάνου καὶ τῆς ὀνομαζομένης Νέας Μονῆς οὐ πολὺν ἐν τῷ μονυδρίῳ τοῦ ἁγίου Διομήδους χρόνον πεποίηκε καὶ μετῴκηθη πρὸς τὸν τόπον, ὅπου νῦν τὰ εὐαγγῆ αὐτοῦ σεμνεῖα καὶ μοναστήρια ἴδρυται.

<sup>102</sup> Georgios Pachymeres, *Syngraphikai historiai* VI 36 (II 667, 4–6 FAILLER – LAURENT). See also the short version of Pachymeres’ *Syngraphikai historiai* VI 36 (I 190, 37–40 FAILLER).

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Theoktistos Studites, *Vita Athanasii*, cap. 11 (17, 4–16 PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS).

<sup>104</sup> On double monasteries in Byzantium, see *ODB* 1392; E. MITSIOU, *Das Doppelkloster des Patriarchen Athanasios I. in Konstantinopel: Historisch-prosopographische und wirtschaftliche Beobachtungen*. *JÖB* 58 (2008) 87–106; A.-M. TALBOT, *A Comparison of the Monastic Experience of Byzantine Men and Women*. *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 30 (1985) 1–20, at 5–7. See also D. F. STRAMARA, *Double Monasticism in the Greek East: Eighth through Fifteenth Centuries*. *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43 (1998) 185–202; J. PARGOIRE, *Les monastères doubles chez les Byzantins*. *EO* 9 (1906) 21–25.

<sup>105</sup> RIGO, *Il monte Ganos* 241: “In verità, leggendo attentamente le righe di Teoctisto ci si accorge che egli qui traccia un veloce *excursus* sull’insegnamento ascetico di Atanasio. Il riferimento alle donne va perciò visto come un’anticipazione del periodo costantinopolitano e un rimando, semmai, al monastero “doppio” della capitale.”

<sup>106</sup> Female monasticism was primarily considered an urban phenomenon. Moreover, A.-M. TALBOT, *Women’s Space in Byzantine Monasteries*. *DOP* 52 (1998) 113–127, at 118, underlines that holy mountains had a predominant “masculine character.” Therefore, due to its location it was less likely that the Nea Mone on Ganos could have also accommodated nuns. However, in a more recent article, S. GERSTEL – A.-M. TALBOT, *Nuns in the Byzantine Countryside*. *DChAE* 27 (2006) 481–490, bring new evidence of female monasticism in rural and provincial areas.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. R. H. TRONE, *A Constantinopolitan Double Monastery of the Fourteenth Century: The Philanthropic Saviour*. *Études Byzantines* 10 (1983) 81–87. See also E. MITSIOU, *Frauen als Gründerinnen von Doppelklöstern im byzantinischen Reich*, in: *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. L. Theis – M. Mullett – M. Grünbart (*Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 60/61). Vienna 2014, 333–343. Cf. TALBOT, *The Byzantine Family* 123. See also A. STOLFI, *La biografia di Irene-Eulogia Cumnena Paleologhina (1291–1355): un riesame*. *Cristianesimo nella storia* 20 (1999) 1–40.

Another Nea Mone was located in Constantinople, close to the imperial palace.<sup>108</sup> This was given as residence by the emperor Andronikos II to Ioannes, metropolitan of Herakleia of Pontus (1295–1328). The metropolitan’s nephew, the polymath Nikephoros Gregoras (1290/1–ca. 1359), mentions this monastery in the *vita* he composed for his uncle (*BHG* 2188).<sup>109</sup> Thus, another possibility could be that the schoolmaster M(aximos) entered this Nea Mone, while his wife chose one of the Constantinopolitan convents.

### III. MAXIMOS NEAMONITES AS ΠΕΠΑΙΔΕΥΜΕΝΟΣ

#### III.1. MAXIMOS NEAMONITES AS SCHOOLMASTER

The acquisition of παιδεία as cultural capital enhanced one’s chances of social advancement into the upper echelons of the imperial or patriarchal courts. To this end, the sons of aspiring families or, on rare occasions, those of low social background, underwent years of training in grammar and rhetoric, initially in the house of a schoolmaster – such as Maximos Neamonites or Theodoros Hyrtakenos – and possibly later on in the circle of a “gentleman scholar”<sup>110</sup> – such as Maximos Planoudes (ca. 1250/5–ca. 1305) in Constantinople or Thomas Magistros (ca. 1280–ca. 1347/8) in Thessalonike.<sup>111</sup> Even though present scholarship is not always sufficiently careful to distinguish between these two interconnected groups, there clearly existed a sliding scale from “gentlemen scholars” to schoolmasters. The former were members of the urban elite and were not dependent on teaching activities for their livelihood, whereas schoolmasters seem to have been less well-off and relied on the fees paid by their pupils.

Most of his epp. depict Maximos Neamonites as a schoolmaster active in Constantinople. He seems to have an impecunious financial situation and is seen in a quest to gain new students, retain them and secure a salary from their parents. Moreover, he displays his qualities as a teacher and, on several occasions, makes a plea for the value of education. On the competitive “market”<sup>112</sup> of παιδεία Neamonites uses every opportunity to promote himself as a skilled schoolmaster (μυσταγωγός) in order to gain more students. For instance, he displays himself as a trainer (ἀλείπττης) “not inferior to those [trainers] who were held in esteem back in the Olympic Games” (ep. 2).<sup>113</sup> Moreover, he puts forward the image of a strict teacher. Writing to the aforementioned (arch)bishop (ep. 1), Maximos offers details from his teaching room regarding the misconduct of a young man. The student appears to have been in the wrong in front of his master “losing not a small cause because of a delay,” most probably referring to a time when the student was late or missed a class. By describing the student’s behaviour as detrimental not only to himself, but also to his fellow students, Neamonites displays his strictness and tactfulness in the classroom. The schoolmaster depicts himself as one who usually takes a hard stance on his students’ disobedience. Moreover, he stresses that the student’s action caused him “fear and grief.” In Maximos’ words: “he [i.e., the student] caused not only a great loss

<sup>108</sup> Cf. R. JANIN, *Géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire Byzantine. I. Siècle de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique. III. Les églises et les monastères.* Paris 1969, 365, 332.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. V. LAURENT, *La vie de Jean, métropolitite d’Héraclée du Pont.* *ArchPont* 6 (1934) 3–67, at 51: τὴν Νέαν Μονὴν τὴν παρὰ τὰ βόρεια τῶν βασιλείων κειμένην πλευρὰν ... λέγω δὴ ταυτί, ἅπερ τῷ θαλαττίῳ τεῖχει τῆς βυζαντιδος τῷ πρὸς ἀνίσχοντα ἥλιον παραπέπηγεν.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. R. BROWNING, *Teachers*, in: *The Byzantines*, ed. G. Cavallo. Chicago 1997, 95–116, at 105. See also N. GAUL, *The Twitching Shroud: Collective Construction of Paideia in the Circle of Thomas Magistros.* *Segno e Testo* 5 (2007) 263–340.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. GAUL, *Dancing with the Muses* (cf. *supra* n. 22). On Hyrtakenos, Planoudes and Magistros cf. *PLP* 29507, 23308 and 16045 respectively.

<sup>112</sup> For the Bourdieusian concept of marché, see P. BOURDIEU, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique (Points Essais 461).* Paris 2001.

<sup>113</sup> *Chis.*, f. 166<sup>v</sup> ll. 26–28: ἡμᾶς ἀλείπτας ἕξεις ἐς παῖδα τὸν σόν· εἰ καὶ φορτικὸν εἶπεν οὐκ ἐλάττους, οἶμαι, τῶν ἐν Ὀλυμπίοις πάλαι ποτ’ εὐδοκισάντων, εἴπερ ἀκήκοας.



to himself and those striving for the same course, but also fear and grief to me, who am habitually very strict whenever something like that happens.”<sup>114</sup>

Maximos uses his portfolio of students as a warrant for his mastery in teaching. For instance, he writes to an intermediary (ep. 14), asking him to support his attempt to become teacher to the sons of the σεβαστός (Michael) Atzymes: “do become my patron by speaking to the σεβαστός.” The addressee seems to be a friend of the σεβαστός, and presumably has his own sons under Neamonites’ guidance. This might be one of the reasons why Maximos is asking him for credentials. Therefore, he urges the latter to listen and “appreciate” his request, arguing that any father who cares for his son would value the request of a teacher. Moreover, the recipient of the ep. appears to know one of Atzymes’ servants, a certain “son of Bolas,”<sup>115</sup> who previously studied grammar under Neamonites. As an additional testimony of his teaching skills, the schoolmaster alludes to the level of education of this former student which was most probably noticed by the σεβαστός.<sup>116</sup>

Neamonites’ efforts to gain new students are doubled by the efforts of retaining the current ones. For instance, in ep. 2 he addresses a σεβαστός who seems to have decided to withdraw his son from Neamonites’ supervision. Assuming that Neamonites’ request in ep. 14 proved successful, the σεβαστός may have been the aforementioned (Michael) Atzymes. As befitting a parent who wishes to see his offspring’s progress, the court official is urged to be unwavering in his previous decision to support the education of his son and not yield to malevolent advice that would encourage otherwise:

It does not befit you to be wayward, oh, best among sebastoi, or to be unsteady and to be tossed back and forth with the tides of Euripos,<sup>117</sup> as if you had acquired this habit in the combats of the baleful Ares, and thus to leap from one place to another as regards your son. Nor is it right to bend your ears to opinions and advice of many – if they are indeed to be called advice, rather than slavish thoughts.<sup>118</sup>

The schoolmaster tries to persuade his addressee that changing his mind would be detrimental for the education of his son, since “we have discovered in him an inherent natural capacity.” Moreover, this is unbecoming of a father whose duty is to pursue his son’s best interest: “this kind of action belongs to fathers who are not longing to see their beloved sons come into possession of something good or of fathers who are envious of their sons.” Therefore, Neamonites uses a strong image for illustrating the proper commitment of a father towards the education of his son: “you should be unmoved, and almost like a statue, regarding to what you agreed concerning the education of your child.”<sup>119</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Chis., f. 166<sup>r</sup> ll. 5–9, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, ll. 4–7: ταῦτα δίκας οὐ μικρὰς ὀφλισκάνοντα ὑπερημερίας εἶνεκα, ἐν ἧ μὲν αὐτῷ καὶ τοῖς τὸν αὐτὸν ἀμιλλωμένοις δρόμον ζημίαν οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν, ὄκνον δ’ ἐμοὶ καὶ λύπην προὔξενησε πάνυ χαλεπῶς ἐξ ἔθους διακεκμημένῳ εἶποτέ γε τοιοῦτο συμβαίη.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *PLP* 3283.

<sup>116</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 4–7, 11–16: ὑπὲρ οὗ τὴν αἴτησιν ταύτην τίθεμαι οὐκ ἔτι διαφεύγει τὴν σὴν ἀγγίνοιαν τυγχάνειν γὰρ εἰδὼς εὖ οἶδ’ ὅτι τὸν τοῦ βῶλα ὄντα μοι τῶν πάλαι μὲν ὀμιλητῶν ὅτε καὶ τὰ ἐς γραμματικὴν αὐτῷ ἐσπουδάζετο· νυνὶ δὲ τὴν σπουδὴν μεταθεὶς ἐκείνην ὤφθη μάλα σπουδαίως ὑπηρετήσας Ἀτζύμη τῷ σεβαστῷ ... γενοῦ μοι λέγων πρὸς τὸν χρηστὸν μὲν καὶ πασῶν γέμοντα χαρίτων, οὐχ ἦτον δ’ ἐπικαμπτόμενον ἰκετείας τῶν φίλων, πρόξενος σεβαστόν· σοὶ γὰρ μᾶλλον ταυτηνὴ τὴν χάριν δοῖν ἂν ἦ γε τῷ τῶν γένει προσηκόντων, κἂν προβαλλομένῳ ἐξείη πάντας ἅμα συνδραμεῖν ἐς μεσιτείαν προσήκοντα· ἐπειδὴ πατέρες διδασκάλων αἴτησιν τῶν παιδῶν κηδόμενοι περιπλείστου τίθενται.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *Corpus paroemiographorum* II 291: Apostoles III 18.

<sup>118</sup> Chis., f. 166<sup>r</sup>, ll. 12–18: οὐδέηπου σε χρὴ παλίμβολον εἶναι σεβαστῶν ἄριστε ἢ ἀστατεῖν καὶ μεταβολαῖς ταῖς Εὐρίπου συμμεταρριπίζεσθαι ἀντικρὺς ὥσπερ εἰ τὴν ἔξιν ταῖς τοῦ Ἄρεος διαμάχαις κτησάμενος τοῦ βροτολογίου, οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὰ πρὸς τὸν παῖδα μεταπηδᾷ· οὐδὲ τὰς σὰς ἀνεῖναι δίκαιον ἀκοῆς ταῖς πολλῶν δόξαις καὶ παραινέσεσιν, εἰ παραινέσεις χρὴ φᾶναι, ἀλλὰ μὴ γνώμας οὐκ ἐλευθέρως.

<sup>119</sup> Chis., f. 166<sup>r</sup>, ll. 19–22: τοῦτο γὰρ πατέρων οὐκ ἐφιμεμένων μᾶλλον φίλους παῖδας ἰδεῖν καλοῦ τινος ἐν κατασχεσί γενέσθαι ἢ φθονούτων· τούναντίον δ’ ἐχρῆν ἀκίνητον εἶναι καὶ μονοῦ ἀνδριάντα οἷς συνέθου πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παιδὸς μάθησιν.

Writing to a court official (ep. 10), Neamonites pleads again for the importance of παιδεία, with a view to retaining another of his students. The addressee appears to have cancelled Maximos' teaching contract and requested that his son be sent back home. Although he does send the student home, Neamonites tries to persuade his addressee to immediately return the child to his studies, so as not to waste the knowledge he already gained. To achieve this purpose the schoolmaster employs arguments that play upon the traditional role of the father in the household: "Look, I have sent you your son (...) Well then, receive him so that he might become a pleasant sight for his mother; and if also for you I do not know. For you are a father, and to long for this does not befit you." As Neamonites argues, it is unbecoming of a father to deprive his son of the fortune of education, leaving him "empty of παιδεία." Moreover, as the head of the family, he should not yield to the pleas of his wife: "but I think that the mother who cares little, if anything for this [education], and who is besieged by the law of nature, has convinced you to change your mind."<sup>120</sup> Therefore, Neamonites urges his recipient to resist his wife's pleas and make a rational decision concerning the future of his child, warning that by discontinuing his studies, the latter will lose his grasp on the knowledge that the schoolmaster "sowed with great effort."<sup>121</sup>

If in ep. 10 Neamonites touches only briefly on the challenges of teaching, he makes this topic the focal point of ep. 6. In this letter he tries to persuade a court official – possibly again the σεβαστός (Michael) Atzymes – to grant him a higher teaching allowance for training his son. Maximos highly praises the education and wisdom of his addressee, who seems to be his friend: "you are a disciple of Hermes and my friend ... who has a capacity to make judgements from your [own] experience and education."<sup>122</sup> As these qualities are so highly cultivated in the father, the schoolmaster stresses that the son should also acquire an education that would befit such a parent. In order to persuade his addressee of the need for a higher tuition fee, Maximos likens the hardship of his teaching activities to that of turning a thorny land into an arable one. Similar to a labourer, a teacher would only be willing to undertake such a challenging project if the material rewards were commensurate:

What would you do if you chose to turn a small piece of land full of stones and thorns into farmable land? If I had in my possession a spade and the knowledge to erase them [i.e., stones and thorns], what would I do? Would I do this for only a very little compensation and water, bearing the labor of the work through to the end, or would I not do this and that land of yours would by necessity remain unclean, since you do not spend a lavish allowance and bestow, as it were, many gifts on the one who can do the cleaning? Consider this also with regard to your son, oh, the best of friends, because he is in need of much cleaning and even more investment [literally, "expenditure"].<sup>123</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>v</sup>, ll. 25–32: ἰδοῦ σοι πέπομφα τὸν υἱόν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν ἀντειπεῖν κελεύοντος καίτοιγ' ἐχρῆν τοῖς πρώην μᾶλλον ἐπεσταλμένοις ἢ προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν· ἐπεὶ δ' ἐστὶν ὅτε ὅποια καὶ τοῖς τῶν διαθηκῶν γραμματεῖσι συμβαίνει τῶν πρώτων ἐπικρατέστερα τὰ ὕστερα γίνεσθαι δεῖν ἐγνωμεν τοῖς δευτέροις συνθέσθαι. δέχου τοίνυν αὐτὸν φίλην ὄψιν τῆ μητρὶ γενησόμενον, εἰ δὲ καὶ σοι οὐκ οἶδα· πατήρ γάρ εἶ καὶ ζητεῖν οὐ τοῦτο προσήκει, ἀλλ' ὅτι προτιμᾶν οὐκ οἶδας θέαν οὕτω παιδὸς χρήματος ἀκηράτου κενὸν ὄψεσθαι τῆς παιδείας, οὐ δὴ μικρὰ ἢ οὐδὲν φροντίζουσα μήτηρ φύσεως πολιορκουμένη νόμῳ μεταβουλεύσθαι σε, οἴομαι, πέπεικεν.

<sup>121</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>v</sup> l. 32 – f. 171<sup>r</sup> ll. 1–4: εἰ δὲ γε χρῆ μῆτε τοῦ περὶ παιδὸς σκοποῦ διαπεσεῖν ἡμᾶς τε πληρωτὰς φανῆναι τῶν ὑπεσημένων ἐπὶ πολὺ τὸν νέον τὴν ἐν οἴκῳ ποιεῖσθαι διατριβὴν οὐ προσήκει, ἀλλὰ τῆς πάλιν ἄπτεσθαι τάχιον, ἵνα τῶν ἀρχῶν ἅς πολλῶ τῷ πόνῳ κατεβαλλόμεθα ἐπιλήσῃμ<v> μὴ γένηται.

<sup>122</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> ll. 16–17, 21–22: σὲ τάληθὲς Ἐρμοῦ μαθητὴν ὄντα καὶ φίλον ἐμόν ... δυνάμιν τε κριτικὴν ἔχοντα ἕκ τε πείρας καὶ ἀγωγῆς.

<sup>123</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> l. 32 – f. 169<sup>v</sup> ll. 1–8: πῶς ἂν οἴῃ γήδιον ἔχων πλήρες πετρῶν τε καὶ ἀκανθῶν ἡρημένος ποιῆσαι εὐγείον; ἐγὼ δὲ εἰ ἡμῖν σκαπάνη χαίρων καὶ ταύτας ἐξελεῖν ἐπιστήμην εἶχον πότερον τοῦτ' ἐνήργουν ὀλιγομισθία μάλα μόνη καὶ ὕδατι τὸ βαρὺ τοῦ πόνου διαφέρων ἢ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἂν ἐποίουν σοὶ τ' ἀνάγκη τὸν χῶρον ἔχειν ἀκαθαρτὸν μὴ προσδαμιλευόμενος τῆ χορηγίᾳ καὶ οἰονεῖ νύττων συχναῖς τῶν δωρεῶν τὸν δυνάμενον ἐκκαθάραι; τοῦτ' οὖν καὶ περὶ τοῦ σοῦ παιδὸς οἴου, φίλων ἄριστε, ἐπεὶ πολλῆς μὲν δεῖται καθάρσεως, πλείονος δὲ δαπάνης.

As seen in ep. 6, Neamonites employs his persuasion skills not only to retain his students, but also to secure payments from their parents. For instance, when advocating before the *σεβαστός* for the importance of having an educated son (ep. 2), Neamonites proffers in fact a *pro domo* plea, endeavoring to secure a source of income for his livelihood. Moreover, should his recipient decide to withdraw his son from supervision, Neamonites warns him that he will not receive back the money he paid most probably as tuition fee:

You should not even conceive that the money will return to your reverence, for neither Hades nor the fire ever return what has been seized before and has been appropriated as allotment. So much more with regard to the schoolmasters, who in abundant numbers surpass many in poverty.<sup>124</sup>

However, Neamonites' modest financial situation should be taken with a grain of salt. The "rhetoric of poverty" was often employed by Byzantine *πεπαιδευμένοι* in order to attract and secure the benefaction of the well-to-do and powerful people.<sup>125</sup> For instance, in most of his epp. Theodoros Hyrtakenos depicts himself as an impoverished schoolmaster incessantly preoccupied with his own gastrointestinal hardships, always in a quest to fill his stomach. Moreover, he often expresses his discontent with regards to his teaching profession which proved to be little lucrative and brought him material privations.<sup>126</sup> Writing to Andronikos II Palaiologos (ep. 1), Hyrtakenos paints with broad strokes his life trajectory as a teacher who spent a lifetime trying to make a living, yet ended up in poverty:

I myself having been entrusted from childhood to exercise the prosodies of the Muses ... I expected revenues and profit ... But at this moment, having reached this age, and having become a bread-eating old man, on the one hand I forgot the art of composing verses, and on the other I am afflicted by famine.<sup>127</sup>

Karpozilos argues that Hyrtakenos' claims of leading a life on the fringes of poverty are "more apparent than real" and that the image of poverty emerging throughout his correspondence must be taken *cum grano salis*.<sup>128</sup>

Similarly, Neamonites employs "the art [of rhetoric] toward making a living" (ep. 6)<sup>129</sup> and at times expresses disaffection with his profession. Rejoicing at the news of the arrival from the western see of his "beloved" friend the (arch)bishop, Neamonites can only send him at the time an embrace

<sup>124</sup> Chis., f. 166<sup>v</sup> ll. 28–29 – f. 167<sup>r</sup> ll. 1–3: ἄλλως δέ τ' ἀργύριον παλιννοστήσειν πρὸς τὴν σὴν σεβαστότητα μὴδ' εἰς νοῦν βάλει· οὔτε γὰρ ἄδης, οὔτε πῦρ ἀνεμοῦσι ποτε τὰ προκατειλημμένα καὶ ὡς κληρὸς οἰκειωθέντα· πολλῶ γε δήπου γραμματιστάς οἱ πολλῶ τῶ περιόντι τῆ ἐνδείᾳ τοὺς πολλοὺς ὑπερβάλλουσιν.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. I. ŠEVČENKO, Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century, in: Actes du XIV<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des études byzantines, ed. M. Berza – E. Stănescu. Bucharest 1974, 69–92, at 71, 74–76 (reprinted in IDEM, Society and Intellectual Life in Late Byzantium. London 1981, I).

<sup>126</sup> For example, Hyrtakenos expresses his wish to abandon teaching altogether due to insufficient financial rewards; see, e.g., ep. 93 (ed. F. J. G. LA PORTE-DU THEIL, Notice et extraits d'un volume de la Bibliothèque nationale, coté MCCIX parmi les Manuscrits Grecs, et contenant les Opuscules et les Lettres anecdotes de Théodôre l'Hyrtacénien [Notices et extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale 6]. Paris 1800, 47–48). See also ep. 63 where Theodoros curses his profession (26, ll. 14–15 LA PORTE-DU THEIL): εἰ δ' οὖν, Ἐρμῆς αὐτοῖς νέοις ἐς Κέρβερον· σχολή, χολή δὲ μᾶλλον, ἐς κόρακας. Cf. A. KARPOZILOS, The Correspondance of Theodoros Hyrtakenos. *JÖB* 40 (1990) 275–294, at 289 and 291.

<sup>127</sup> Theodore Hyrtakenos, ep. 1 (ed. LA PORTE-DU THEIL, Notice et extraits [Notices et extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale 5]. Paris 1798, 723, ll. 2–4, 12–14): ἐγὼ παιδόμενος ἐκδεδομένος μουσεῖοις ἐγγυμνάζεσθαι προσφῶδιαις ... ὦμην δὲ προσόδους καὶ κέρδη ... νυνὶ δ' εἰς τοῦθ' ἡλικίας ἐληλακῶς, καὶ γέρον γεγωνῶς σιτοφάγος, ἐπιλέλησμαι μὲν προσφῶδιῶν, συνίσχημαι δὲ σιτοδεῖα.

<sup>128</sup> KARPOZILOS, The Correspondance of Theodoros Hyrtakenos 293.

<sup>129</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> ll. 19–20: τῆ τέχνῃ χρῶμαι πρὸς πορισμόν.

in the form of a letter (ep. 1). As he bitterly reveals, he cannot have the joy of welcoming his friend in person due to his demanding teaching activities. Consequently, he imprecates his profession using Aristophanes' words: "Therefore we embrace you, wonderful soul, through this letter, because my service, may it badly perish (*Ecclesiazusae* 1052), does not permit me to immediately enjoy a face-to-face conversation."<sup>130</sup>

The expenses and other necessities Neamonites incurs as a schoolmaster cause grief to himself and troubles to the fathers of his students. His wish to escape this condition is captured in a playful dialogue with Zeus included in ep. 6: "If the mythical Zeus of the Greeks existed and were honoured now ... then I would easily come to beg [him] to change and refashion my nature."<sup>131</sup> If the god did not grant him the wish of escaping his condition ("if the will of Zeus responded that 'it is impossible for you to be otherwise' and additionally ordered me to be a teacher"<sup>132</sup>), Neamonites would ask to be transformed into a statue and retain only the faculty of speech, i.e., an animate statue.<sup>133</sup> In this condition, he would be relieved of the financial burden to support his livelihood and could practice the "art of rhetoric" free of material worries. Moreover, he would also free the fathers of his students from the onus of supporting his livelihood by compensating his teaching efforts. In Neamonites' own words:

As the next best way I would have begged to be transformed into a statue, except for [my] soul and its [the soul's] vocal organs [i.e., a statue which could speak], through which the teaching activity will be well performed by me and will happen to be beyond incurring expenses and other [kinds of] necessities. In this way I will neither give myself to grief nor will I give troubles to the fathers of my students [literally, "sons"].<sup>134</sup>

However, as Maximos admits that indulging in such thoughts is a part of the "illusion, nonsense, deceit and mad way of thinking" of the people that believed in Zeus,<sup>135</sup> he quickly reverts to reality: "our nature cannot be changed from the formation it received originally." He therefore cannot employ "the art of rhetoric" only to his pleasure, but is compelled to employ it toward a living. As much as he would like to forego the need for material sustenance, his current nature compels him to request it from the parents of his students. Therefore, he puts forward this plea in front of his addressee, whom he considers "no small piece of luck, among others whose children I happen to have."<sup>136</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Chis., f. 166<sup>v</sup> ll. 8–11, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, ll. 26–28: δι' ἃ τοι καὶ περιπτυσσόμεθά σε τὴν θαυμασίαν ψυχὴν ταυτηὶ τῇ γραφῇ, ἐπειδὴ γ' ἐκ τοῦ παραντικά τῆς κατ' ὄψιν ὀμιλίας ἀπολαῦσαι ἢ κάκιστ' ἀπολουμένη λειτουργία μοι οὐκ ἀνήκεν.

<sup>131</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> ll. 1, 4–6: ὁ δὲ νῦν ὁ παρ' Ἑλλησι μυθευόμενος Ζεὺς ἦν τε καὶ ἐτιμᾶτο ... προσῆλθον ἂν εὖ προσλιπαρῶν φύσιν ἐμὴν μεταμεῖψαι καὶ μεταπλᾶσαι.

<sup>132</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> ll. 6–8: εἰ δὲ δὴ τὸ δῖον ἀπεφίνατο βούλημα, ὡς οὐχ οἶόν τε ἄλλως τὰ περὶ σέ, προσεκελεύε (sic!) τε εἶναί με διδάσκαλον.

<sup>133</sup> On "animate statue", see S. ΠΑΡΑΙΟΑΝΝΟΥ, *Animate Statues: Aesthetics and Movement*, in: Reading Michael Psellos, ed. D. Jenkins – Ch. Barber (*The Medieval Mediterranean. Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1500* 61). Leiden 2006, 95–116.

<sup>134</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> ll. 8–13: προσητησάμην ἂν κατὰ δεύτερον πλοῦν εἰς ἀνδριάντα μὴ μεταποιηθῆναι ἔσσεσθαι πλὴν ψυχῆς καὶ τῶν φωνητικῶν αὐτῆς ὀργάνων, οἷς ἂν ἐτελεῖτο μὲν μοι καλῶς τὰ τῆς τέχνης δαπάνης δὲ καὶ ἄλλης χρείας ἔξω που τυγχάνων οὐτ' ἐμαυτὸν ἀνία ἐδίδουν καὶ πατρᾶσι παιδῶν παρεῖχον οὐδαμῶς πράγματα.

<sup>135</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> ll. 2–3: ἢ τότε πλάνη καὶ λήρος καὶ ἐξαπάτη καὶ τὸ τῶν προσανεχόμενον αὐτοῖς παρακεκινημένον φρόνημα.

<sup>136</sup> Chis., f. 169<sup>r</sup> ll. 13–22: ἐπειδὴ δ' ἐκεῖνα λόγος ἦν ἄλλως καὶ ἡ φύσις δ' ἡμῶν ἀμετάπτωτος ἦς ἀρχῆθεν ἔτυχε διαπλάσεως· φρόνημά τε κερτημένος ὁποῖον ἂν τοιοῦτω προσήκοι γήρα φαῖν ἂν καὶ μάλιστα πρὸς σέ τάληθες Ἑρμοῦ μαθητὴν ὄντα καὶ φίλον ἐμὸν καὶ δὴ ἄκουε· μυσταγωγόν μ' ἐποίησω τοῦ σοῦ παιδὸς τῇ φιλίᾳ οὐχ ἦττον ἢ τῇ τύχῃ θαρρήσας, οὐδὲ γὰρ λέγω τῷ τρόπῳ, κάπειδὴ τῇ τέχνῃ χρῶμαι πρὸς πορισμὸν οὐ μικρὸν ἔρμαιόν σε τῶν ἄλλων ἡγησάμην ὧν τοὺς παῖδας ἔχων διατελῶ δύναμιν τε κριτικὴν ἔχοντα ἐκ τε πείρας καὶ ἀγωγῆς.

## III. 2. MAXIMOS NEAMONITES AS BIBLIOPHILE

Neamonites most likely possessed a personal library with handbooks supporting his teaching activities and codices containing rhetorical texts. As a schoolmaster, he may have owned codices of Homer and Euripides, which he often quotes throughout his epp. Moreover, Maximos seems to have had a manuscript of Libanios, a major rhetorical model of the Palaiologan period.<sup>137</sup> This is evidenced by the book epigram<sup>138</sup> he composed for a codex carrying Libanios' Orations. The epigram, transmitted on f. 173<sup>v</sup> of Chis.,<sup>139</sup> praises the content of the book, which is worth reading despite its difficulty:

Neamonites' epigram for Libanios' book of λόγοι

Neither attainable, nor unattainable, as it is right,  
I would call this [i.e., book] to the one who loves the toils.  
For, on the one hand, it [i.e., the book] brings about a flow of the greatest toils,  
On the other hand, it offers the flood-tide of the sophist.<sup>140</sup>

This codex of Libanios may have been the “desired book” that Neamonites refers to in ep. 11. This ep. was addressed to the one-time owner of Chis., Ioannes Kritopoulos, a bookman who seems to have possessed numerous codices. Following Mondrain's hypothesis, Kritopoulos may have been a relative of or perhaps could even be identified with the monk Gabriel (Kritopoulos), who bequeathed a large collection of manuscripts to the monastery St Georgios of Mangana in Constantinople.<sup>141</sup> Ioannes Kritopoulos appears to have lent Neamonites a book which was not his own possession, but was borrowed from an unidentified third party. In the Palaiologan period, both the purchase and the copying of books by professional scribes were expensive. Therefore, numerous πεπαιδευμένοι, including Neamonites, resorted to the practice of borrowing books from their owners either to read or copy them. Even though Maximos is not explicit about the content of the book he wishes to borrow, this seems to be a valuable and, as he calls it, “desired book, not only for the owner, but also for the one who will take it in his hands.”<sup>142</sup> Moreover, Maximos praises the book for the calligraphy of the scribe and the large investment made by its owner who, due to his ambition (φιλοτιμία)<sup>143</sup> for know-

<sup>137</sup> Cf. GAUL, Thomas Magistros 169–188.

<sup>138</sup> On book epigrams, see the publications of the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams project: K. BENTEIN – F. BERNARD, A Cycle of Book Epigrams in Honour of the Four Evangelists. *Script* 65 (2011) 237–249; K. BENTEIN – F. BERNARD – K. DEMOEN – M. DE GROOTE, New Testament Book Epigrams: Some New Evidence from the Eleventh Century. *BZ* 103 (2010) 13–23; EIDEM, Book Epigrams in Honour of the Church Fathers: Some Inedita from the Eleventh Century. *GRBS* 49 (2009) 281–294.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. DE' CAVALIERI, Codices Graeci Chisiani 19. See also, PÉREZ MARTÍN, El Patriarca Gregorio 334. Cf. I. VASSIS, *Initia Carminum Byzantinorum (Supplementa Byzantina* 8). Berlin 2005, 570.

<sup>140</sup> <ἐ>πίγραμμ<α> εἰς τὴν βίβλ<ον> τῶν λ<όγων> λιβανί<ου> τ<οῦ> νεαμονί<του>: οὐκ οὐκ γὰρ ληπτὴν οὐτ' ἄλλῃ ὡς θέμις, / εἴποιμι ταύτην τῷ φιλοῦντι τοὺς πόνους; / τὸ μὲν γὰρ ποιεῖ χεῦμα τῶν πλείστων πόνων, / τὸ δ' αὖ παριστᾷ τὴν σοφιστοῦ πλημύραν.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *supra* n. 7.

<sup>142</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>r</sup> ll. 5–6: ἡ πεποθημένη βίβλος ... μὴ τῷ κεκτημένῳ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ληψομένῳ ταύτην ἐς χεῖρας.

<sup>143</sup> On φιλοτιμία, see GAUL, Thomas Magistros 23–25. Nikephoros Choumnos signaled that the composition of a literary work was propelled by two main reasons: either “out of necessity” (κατὰ χρεῖαν) or “for the sake of ambition” (φιλοτιμίας ἕνεκεν). Cf. Nikephoros Choumnos, ep. 72 (ed. J. F. BOISSONADE, *Anecdota Nova*. Paris 1844, 85, 7–11): οὐ μὴν ἄλλ' ἐπειδὴ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων οὐδενός σοι μέλει πλὴν τοῦ γε τὰς ὀφρῦς ἀνεσπακῶς καθῆσθαι, λόγους δ' οὐκ ἀτιμάξεις καὶ τούτων μᾶλλον ἐν ἐπιστολαῖς χαίρεις, τί καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν πεδήσας ἔχεις, καὶ ταῦτα μὴ κατὰ χρεῖαν τὰ πλείω, φιλοτιμίας δὲ μόνης ἕνεκεν εἰωθῆσαν κινεῖσθαι. See also Choumnos, epp. 4, 35, and 78 (5, 42–43, 94–96 BOISSONADE). B. BYDÉN, The Nature and Purpose of the Semeioseis gnomikai: the Antithesis of Philosophy and Rhetoric, in: Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy. *Semeioseis gnomikai* 1–26 & 71, transl. Karin Hult (*Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 65). Gothenburg

ledge, “has spent much of his gold in order to become master of such a possession.”<sup>144</sup> Hence, it may be inferred that the codex transmitted Greek rhetorical texts which were so much “desired” – to say it with Neamonites – circulated, and highly esteemed within the circles of Palaiologan πεπαιδευμένοι.

Neamonites could hold this book only for a short period of time before Kritopoulos asked for it to be returned, possibly in order to give it back to its owner. Therefore, the schoolmaster sends the book back to its addressee mentioning that he did not damage it, thus fending Kritopoulos from any reproach or distress from the part of the owner. However, due to the scantiness of time, Maximos was neither able to make a copy of the book, nor in fact benefit from it “any more than to see the book at that time.” Unlike him, Kritopoulos seems to have been entrusted with the book long enough to gain a benefit (ὠφέλεια)<sup>145</sup> out of it by making a copy, as well as “perusing it completely.” As a bookman, Kritopoulos is indebted and should be grateful for such a profit to the “one who has brought it forth and to the present owner: to the former because he compiled it in such a way to get praise from everybody, to the latter because he entrusted you to keep the book for a long time.”<sup>146</sup> Having acquired such a “catalogue of enjoyment,” Kritopoulos is asked to share the rewards he gathered from the book and send Neamonites his personal copy, so that he might also partake in its “delight.” Should Kritopoulos agree to share his copy, Maximos assures him of his gratitude.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, he vows to make a copy that is truthful to the original and to share its benefits to those who want to copy its artful beauty or to delight in its content.<sup>148</sup> Neamonites’ ep. 11 finds corroboration from the letter collections of the time, which are a testimony to the “*mentalità libresca*” of the Byzantine society,<sup>149</sup> proffering considerable evidence of book production, ownership, and circulation in Palaiologan Byzantium, of which ep. 11 provides but one *tessera*.<sup>150</sup>

In addition to books, the Byzantine *literati* often exchanged literary compositions for peer review and feedback. For instance, as already seen, Georgios Oinaïotes asked Ioannes Kalampakes to read

2002, 245–288, at 262–263, considers this dichotomy false and deems that “no doubt there were works in the fourteenth century, as today, which did more for the needs of the readers than they did for the reputation of the author – and vice versa. But then as now, authors were fully capable of simultaneously being helpful to others and pursuing their personal interests, without becoming schizophrenic.” A. RIEHLE, *Funktionen der byzantinischen Epistolographie. Studien zu den Briefen und Briefsammlungen des Nikephoros Choumnos* (ca. 1260–1327). (PhD Dissertation) Munich 2011, 205, n. 731, points out that Bydén formulates his assumption on the basis of a false reading of Choumnos’ letter (κατὰ χρῆσιν instead of κατὰ χρείαν).

<sup>144</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>r</sup> Il. 10–13: βίβλον εὖ ἔχουσάν τῷ καλῷ χαρακτήρῳ τοῦ γράψαντος καὶ τῷ πρώτῳ κτησαμένῳ τῆς φιλοτιμίας χάριν εἰδέναι οὕτως ἡ μάλα συγχρῶν τῶν χρυσοῦν κατακενώσαντι τοῦ γενέσθαι τοιοῦτου κύριον κτήματος.

<sup>145</sup> Ὁν ὠφέλεια, see G. CAVALLO, *Lire à Byzance*, transl. P. Odorico – A. Segonds (*Séminaires byzantins* 1). Paris 2006. Cf. also E. V. MALTESE, *Tra lettori e letture: l’utile e il dilettevole*. *Humanitas* 58 (2003) 140–164.

<sup>146</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>r</sup> Il. 13–18: σύ δ’ ὡς οἶμαι πλέον ἡμῶν τῷ τε προγεγονότῳ καὶ τῷ νῦν ὀφείλεις ἀποτίσαι πολλὰς τῶν χαρίτων τῷ μὲν ὡς συντεταχότῳ τοιαύτην οἶαν παρὰ πάντων ἴσχειν ἔπαινον, τῷ δ’ ὡς ἐμπιστεύσαντί σοι ἐς πολὺ τοῦ χρόνου κατασχεθῆναι καὶ ὡς εἰκὸς ἰκανὴν ὠφέλειαν ἔραρισσάμενῳ· τοῦτο μὲν ἐκ τῆς μεταγραφῆς τῶν ἐγκειμένων οὐκ ὀλίγην δὲ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ διέναι ταύτην ἀδεῶς ἐς κόρον.

<sup>147</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>r</sup> Il. 18–22: ἀλλ’ εἰ μεταδοίης οὖν μοι ὧν αὐτὸς ἐδρέψω τῆς βίβλου χάριτος καὶ μὴ τὴν ποτιμωτάτην μόνον δεῖξας ἔχεις πίδακα ἢ καὶ πίνακα τῆς δ’ ἀπολαύσεως οὐδαμῶς ἀπείργους, τάχ’ ἂν τῷ γε προτέρῳ τῷ τε μετ’ αὐτὸν εἰ δὲ βούλει καὶ σοὶ τρίτῳ χάριν εἴσομεν οὐ μικρὰν.

<sup>148</sup> Chis., f. 171<sup>r</sup> Il. 22–27: διενηνοχέαι μὴδὲν οἰησόμεθα τῆς προδιδειλημμένης εἰκόνας ἢ παραδείγματος, ὧν ἡ χάρις οὐκ εἰς τὰ σύνεγγυς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς διίσταμένους μετοχετεύεται· ἢ μὲν ἐκ τῆς προφανοῦς καὶ συνεχοῦς ἀτενίσεως σπουδάζοντος ἀπομάξασθαι τὸ καλὸν τῆς τέχνης, ἢ δ’ ἀφ’ ὧν τὸ πότιμον αὐτῆς καὶ διειδὲς εἰς κόρον πειν παρεχομένη τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσιν.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. CAVALLO, *Lire à Byzance*. See also M. GRÜNBAERT, *Byzantium – a Bibliophile Society? Basilissa. Byzantium, Belfast and Beyond* 1 (2004) 113–121.

<sup>150</sup> For instance, A. KARPOZIOS, *Books and Bookmen in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The Epistolographical Evidence*. *JÖB* 41 (1991) 255–276, found evidence for book circulation by analyzing three major letter collections (Theodore Hyrtakenos, Nikephoros Choumnos, and Michael Gabras). Cf. J. WARING, *Literacies of Lists: Reading Byzantine Monastic Inventories*, in: *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. C. Holmes – J. Waring (*The Medieval Mediterranean* 42). Leiden 2002, 165–186, where the author analyses the list of books lent by the library of the Monastery of St John on Patmos.

and assess some of his λόγοι. He also requested Neamonites' opinion on one λόγος (ep. 13). By that time Maximos was most likely a monk, as suggested by Oinaiotes' way of addressing him as "holy head."<sup>151</sup> Oinaiotes did not send the oration to his former schoolfellows, suspecting that they would not give their honest opinion on it, as they "make instead the journey of the crab."<sup>152</sup> Unlike them, Neamonites does not indulge in favour and does not turn friendship into a justification for faulty review. Calling him the "cause" of his writings (their "grandfather" as it were)<sup>153</sup> – Neamonites might have been Oinaiotes' teacher –, Oinaiotes praises his judgment as "the most capable in these matters."<sup>154</sup> If the oration gains Maximos' endorsement, this would give Oinaiotes a cause for great joy and silence his detractors.<sup>155</sup>

Neamonites asks from one of his unknown recipients (ep. 3) for the same high standards of morality that he is praised for by Oinaiotes. Thus, he admonishes his addressee up-front for his lack of moral uprightness and seemingly unsound judgments: "you seem to me to pronounce your judgment over matters rather unsoundly and are horrible in judging the character, not to mention the virtue of a man."<sup>156</sup> The addressee most likely gave Neamonites undue praise on purpose: "you also do not engage cleverly in your judgments about me, thus displaying your own knowledge." Therefore, unless his recipient's senses are damaged, Neamonites categorizes his behavior as that of one indulging in flattery: "it remains that either you are blind with respect to your own affairs, according to the saying of the wise (Plato, *Laws* 731e 5–6), or you will seem to partake in the manner of the flatterer."<sup>157</sup> The schoolmaster takes a hard stance on this issue, painting accordingly such a person as one who "confuses intentionally everything and turns everything upside down so as not to fail his goal," is self-interested and is more than willing to forego the truth in order to reach his ends through dishonest means. Conversely, it pertains to a sensible man to be honest and "disclose the things exactly as they are without any addition, be they good or otherwise." Finally, Neamonites concludes: "Therefore, either you should not attach such praise to those who do not possess anything of what you say, or you should not be angry at the fact of being a flatterer and being called a flatterer by those who come to understand your character."<sup>158</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Compare, for an earlier period, GRÜNBART, *Formen der Anrede* 84–85.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *Corpus paroemiographorum* I, Appendix, Centuria III. 45, 426: καρκίνου πορεία: ἡ ἀργὴ καὶ δυσδιόρθωτος. See also Aristophanes, Pax 1083.

<sup>153</sup> The author of a composition is often called its father and the author's teacher its grandfather. See, e.g., Manuel II Palaiologos, ep. 9. 5–6, 15–16; ep. 15. 23; ep. 45. 45–48 (ed. and transl. G. T. DENNIS, *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus: Text, Translation, and Notes* [CFHB 8]. Washington, D.C. 1977, 25, 41, 125).

<sup>154</sup> Laurentianus S. Marco 356, f. 36<sup>v</sup> ll. 2–12: ἔγωγε τῶν σῶν πρὸς Θεὸν συναραμένων εὐχῶν, τόνδε τὸν λόγον γεγραφὼς πέπομφά σοι, θεία μοι κεφαλή· εἰ μὲν οὖν ἤδειν, καὶ τοὺς πάλαι ποθ' ἡμετέρους ξυμφοιτητὰς τοῖς ἐμοῖς κεκρημένους λόγοις ὡς ἂν τὸ τῆς φιλίας ἀκριβὲς θεμιστεῦη, τὸ τ' ἂν εἰκότως καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐπέστελλον· ἐπεὶ δ' ἐκεῖνοι πολλοὺ τινος ἐδέησαν τὴν καρκίνου πορείαν μεταποιῆσαι, σοὶ τῶ τῶν ἡμετέρων πονημάτων αἰτίω – αἴτιος ὡσπερ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ἐγγόνων ὅτι γεγέν<v>ηκε – <πε>πομφῶς καὶ τὴν σὴν κρίσιν αἰτῶ δυναμένην ἐν τούτοις τὰ μάλιστα.

<sup>155</sup> Laurentianus S. Marco 356, f. 36<sup>v</sup> ll. 12–16 – f. 37<sup>r</sup> ll. 1–5: δυεῖν ἔνεκα ἐνὸς μὲν ὅτι κὰν πάντες ἄλλοι τόνδε χειροτονήσαντες ὡς εἰποῖ τις ἐπαινέσωσι πάντες εὖ οἶδα τῇ φιλίᾳ χαριζόμενοι λέξουσιν ἅττα δὴ λέξουσιν. εἰ δὲ σοὶ καθ' ἡδονὴν θεασαμένω καὶ τῆς σῆς εὐχῆς ἀπολαύσειεν, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἡ μεγίστη εἴη ἂν δημιουργουμένη εὐθυμία, ἐμφραγείη δ' ἂν καὶ τὸ στόμα τῶν μὴ ἡμέτερον κηρυττόντων τὸν λόγον.

<sup>156</sup> Chis., f. 167<sup>r</sup> ll. 4–6: πάνυ μοι δοκεῖς τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων κρίσεις ἐκφέρειν οὐχ ὑγιῶς, οὐδὲ γε δεινὸν εἶναι σε ἦθος μήτιογε εἰπεῖν ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν διαγνῶναι.

<sup>157</sup> Chis., f. 167<sup>r</sup> ll. 9–16: ὃς πρὸς τῶ μὴ καὶ ἄλλοις ἐπιβάλλειν ἐπικαίρως οὐδ' εὐφυῶς παρέχων σαυτὸν καὶ ταῖς κατ' ἐμὲ τὴν σαυτοῦ γνῶσιν παριστὰς ἐπικρίσειεν· εἰ δὲ γε νοῦν ἔχειν σε πάντες συμφήσουσιν οἱ τὰ σὰ μὴ ἀγνοοῦντες ὡς κἀγὼ ἀναμφιλόγως πρὸς τοῦτ' ἔχω· αὐτὸς δ' ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων τὰ μὰ θειάζεις καίτιογε παντάπασιν ὄντα καὶ ἀμφοτέρων ἄμοιρα λείπεται, ἦτοι κατὰ τὸν τοῦ σοφοῦ λόγον τυφλώττειν περὶ τὰ οἰκεία ἢ μετέχειν δόξεις τρόπου τοῦ κόλακος.

<sup>158</sup> Chis., f. 167<sup>r</sup> ll. 16–23: ὃς <τὰ> πάντα συγγεῖ καὶ τὰ ἀνωκάτω ποιεῖ μὴ διαπεσεῖν τοῦ σκοποῦ· ἀνδρὸς δὲ νοῦν ἔχοντος καὶ τρόπου πόρρω μὴ διόντος τάληθοῦς προσθήκης ἄνευ αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτὰ παραγυμνοῦν τὰ ὄντα εὖ τε καὶ ἐτέρως ἔχοντα· ἢ τοῖνυν τοὺς τοιοῦτό τι μηδὲν ὄν φῆς κεκτημένους τοῦ λοιποῦ μὴ φέρων περιᾶπτε ἢ τὸ κόλαξ εἶναι καὶ ἀκούεσθαι παρὰ τῶν εἰς πείραν ἡκόντων τρόπου τοῦ σοῦ μὴ χαλέπαινε.

III.3. MAXIMOS NEAMONITES AS BROKER<sup>159</sup>

Neamonites occasionally lifted his pen to interfere for other people, lending emphasis to their requests through his education, rhetorical abilities, and perhaps his special connection to the addressees. Whether he received extra income for writing letters on behalf of others is not certain, but seems likely. For instance, he wrote to an archbishop (or perhaps the patriarch) on behalf of an impoverished widow and soon-to-be nun who asked for financial help for marrying one of her daughters (ep. 4). Neamonites constructed a plausible ἥθος for his “client” and wrote from the perspective, ἐκ προσώπου, as it were, of a woman, by adjusting and gendering his language and quotations. The ep. could also be read as a variation of the preliminary rhetorical school exercise (προγυμνάσμα) of ἡθοποιΐα, i.e., character sketch, which Neamonites as schoolmaster may have constructed as a model for his own students. This ep. is analyzed at length elsewhere.<sup>160</sup>

Maximos intervened in another case of marriage in ep. 9, by far the shortest among his epp., in which he intercedes before Gregorios Kleidas for the parents of a girl who seems to have lived in a troubled marriage. As in the other letter addressed to Kleidas (ep. 8), Maximos puts forward his cause by praising his addressee’s impartiality of judgement. If in ep. 8 Neamonites does this throughout the letter, in ep. 9 he praises Kleidas by means of a short poem of six dodecasyllabic verses. The extolment echoes tones similar to those in ep. 8:

The audacity from your pure friendship – which holds forte the streams of justice, entirely silvery and without any filth that would make muddy the rays of truth – persuaded my faint motivation towards words to speak with a bold tongue.<sup>161</sup>

The parents most likely appeared before the judge carrying the ep. in which Neamonites voices their request for justice in a matter related to their son-in-law: “You, most divine lord, receive these people [i.e., the parents] and deem them trustworthy when they are describing the misfortunes concerning their little daughter, for more have befallen them than they have narrated.”<sup>162</sup> Albeit laconic, the ep. abounds in intertextual references which testify to Kleidas’ παιδεία. As one can infer, the son-in-law is the cause of the “misfortunes concerning the little daughter” and is described as “heavier than the burden in Homer” (Iliad 12. 452, 18. 104, 20. 247; Odyssey 1. 379). Moreover, he is similar to Proteus and Empusa – a *simile* for fickleness and unpredictability – in the “disorder and deviation of his mind.”<sup>163</sup> Having briefly exposed what causes the parents’ concern for their daughter, Neamonites concludes by asking Kleidas to find the remedy to this problem: “As the most esteemed among the doctors, you shall either administer the most efficient medicine to his slackened mindset, or ... shall refrain altogether from the treatment.”<sup>164</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Cf. J. BOISSEVAIN, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators, and Coalitions*. Oxford 1974, 148. See also N. GAUL, *All the Emperor’s Men (and his Nephews). Paideia and Networking Strategies at the Court of Andronikos II Palaiologos, 1290–1320*. *DOP* (forthcoming).

<sup>160</sup> M. MITREA, *Progymnasma and Gendered Ventriloquism in a Letter of Maximus Neamonites* (forthcoming).

<sup>161</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>v</sup> ll. 14–16: τοιαῦτα θάρρος σῆς καθαρᾶς φιλίας/ ἐμὴν ἀμυδρὰν κίνησιν ἐς τοὺς λόγους/ ἔπεισεν εἰπεῖν ἐς λαμυρὰν λαλίδα./ ἥτις προΐσχει ρεύματα τῆς δίκης/ ἀργυροειδῆ πάνυ καὶ δίχα ῥύπου/ τοῦ συνθολοῦντος ἀκτίνας ἀληθείας.

<sup>162</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>v</sup> ll. 17–18: δέξαι τουτουοῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, θεϊότατε δέσποτα, καὶ διηγουμένους συμφορὰς τὰς περὶ τὸ θυγάτριον ἀληθεῖς νόμισον πλείω γὰρ πεπόνθησιν ὧν διηγῆσαντο.

<sup>163</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>v</sup> ll. 19–21: ὁ γὰρ κηδεστής αὐτῶν βαρύτερος πέφυκε τοῦ παρ’ Ὀμήρου ἄχθους εἰς δὲ γνώμης ἀνάχυσιν καὶ παρατροπὴν παῖδα τὸν ἄδόμενον ἐκεῖνον Πρωτέα καὶ τὴν Ἑμψουσαν ἀναπέφηνε.

<sup>164</sup> Chis., f. 170<sup>v</sup> ll. 21–24: καὶ γοῦν ἢ τῶν φαρμάκων τὰ γε δραστικώτερα, ὡς τῶν ἰατρῶν οἱ δοκιμώτατοι, τῇ παρειμένῃ οἱ γνώμη πάνυ πρόσφερε ἢ καὶ τὸ ἀνίατον παντάπασιν ἀπογνοῦς τῆς ἰατρείας ἀπόστηθι.



## III.4. MAXIMOS NEAMONITES AS LETTER-WRITER. LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Neamonites' epp. might be characterized by what Dennis called "Byzantine clarity."<sup>165</sup> Written in Atticizing Greek, a constructed sociolect divorced from the "lackluster speech of everyday life,"<sup>166</sup> his letters are not straightforward and easy to unravel. The grammatical constructions, not all of which abide by ancient standard grammar (in spite of his indubitable education), and the intricacies of the syntax pose serious challenges for the reader.

Neamonites employs a couple of ἄπαξ λεγόμενα throughout his epp. Introducing the proverb of the swan song (ep. 5), Maximos writes that "the remembrances of its [i.e., the swan] song and singing would remain for those still living."<sup>167</sup> Here he uses two feminine nouns in genitive singular, μούσης and μέλπεως; the second one, constructed on the root of the verbal form μέλπειν, "to celebrate with dance and song," does not feature in *LSJ*, Lampe or *LBG*. *TLG* indicates a single occurrence of this noun used in genitive plural (μέλπεων) in a scholion to Euripides' *Hecuba* 916, transmitted by the fifteenth-century codex Florence, Plut. 31.17, f. 34<sup>r</sup>.<sup>168</sup> This manuscript carries Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Orestes* with Moschopulean *scholia*.<sup>169</sup> The second word unique to Neamonites occurs in ep. 6 where he alludes to the fact that he receives too little money for teaching a student. He employs the feminine dative singular ὀλιγομισθία ("little recompensation"), a noun that he apparently derives from the adjective ὀλιγόμισθος, ον ("receiving small wages").

Neamonites' epp. are a rewarding place for analyzing intertextuality and literary μίμησις in Palaiologan epistolography.<sup>170</sup> They seem to comply with the guidelines adopted by Joseph Rhakendytes (ca. 1280–ca. 1330) from the twelfth-century manual ascribed to Pseudo-Gregorios Korinthios:

In letters most useful [is the inclusion of] maxims of the wise [men], and the so-called apophthegmata [i.e., aphorisms] and proverbial sayings, frequently the more mythic, more pleasant, and simpler ones. Sometimes also mashups are useful, as for instance when you take a Homeric verse or you attach a bit of a verse.<sup>171</sup>

Throughout his epp., Maximos resorts to a plethora of quotations and references to classical authors, especially Homer,<sup>172</sup> Euripides,<sup>173</sup> which he is very likely to have taught, but also Aristophanes and

<sup>165</sup> G. T. DENNIS, *The Byzantines as Revealed in their Letters*, in: *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink* at 75, ed. J. Duffy – J. Peradotto. Buffalo, N.Y. 1988, 155–165, at 157.

<sup>166</sup> E. C. BOURBOUHAKIS, *Rhetoric and Performance*, in: *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson. London 2010, 175–187, at 176.

<sup>167</sup> *Chis.*, f. 168<sup>r</sup> ll. 2–3: τῆς αὐτοῦ μνημεῖα μούσης καὶ μέλπεως περιεῖη τοῖς ἐτι ζῶσι.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. W. DINDORF, *Scholia Graeca in Euripides Tragoedias I*. Oxford 1863, 446. For a digital reproduction of Plut. 31.17, f. 34<sup>r</sup>, see <http://teca.bmlonline.it/ImageViewer/servlet/ImageViewer?idr=TECA0000362014&keywords=plut.31.17#page/79/mode/lup>, last accessed July 16, 2014.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. H.-CH. GÜNTHER, *The Manuscripts and the Transmission of the Paleologan Scholia on the Euripidean Triad (Hermes Einzelschriften 68)*. Stuttgart 1995, 83, 220 sqq. See also <http://euripidesscholia.org/>, last accessed July 16, 2014.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. H. HUNGER, *On the Imitation (Μίμησις) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature*. *DOP* 23/24 (1969–1970) 15–38 (reprinted in: *Greek Literature in the Byzantine Period*, ed. G. Nagy [*Greek Literature* 9]. New York 2001, 80–101).

<sup>171</sup> Cf. W. HÖRANDNER, *Pseudo-Gregorios Korinthios, Über die vier Teile der perfekten Rede*. *MEG* 12 (2012) 87–131, at 106, ll. 111–115: ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς χρησιμώτατα τὰ γνωματεύματα τῶν σοφῶν καὶ τὰ οὕτω καλούμενα ἀποφθέγματα καὶ τὰ παροιμιώδη, πολλάκις καὶ τὰ μυθικώτερα καὶ γλυκύτερα καὶ τὰ ἀφελέστερα. χρήσιμοι ποτὲ καὶ αἱ κολλήσεις, οἷον ἐὰν ἔπος ὀμηρικὸν ἀπολαβῶν ἢ ἔπους τεμμάχιον προσάψῃς. See also Joseph Rhakendytes, *Σύνοψις ῥητορικῆς* 14 (ed. CH. WALZ, *Rhetores Graeci III*. Stuttgart 1834, 558–559).

<sup>172</sup> Cf. R. BROWNING, *Homer in Byzantium*. *Viator* 6 (1975) 15–33.

<sup>173</sup> On Euripides' popularity among late Byzantine πεπαιδευμένοι, see B. BALDWIN, *Euripides in Byzantium*, in: *The Play of Texts and Fragments: Essays in Honour of Martin Cropp*, ed. J. C. Cousland – J. R. Hume (*Mnemosyne. Supplements* 314). Leiden 2009, 433–444. See also A. TURYN, *The Byzantine Manuscript Tradition of the Tragedies of Euripides (Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* 43). Urbana 1957; cf. also *supra* n. 169.

Plato. Thus, he alludes to “the rose-fingered Morning” (Odyssey 2. 1) (ep. 1), “the burden” (ἄχθος) in Homer (Iliad 12. 452; Odyssey 1. 379) (ep. 9), the “angry one” from Euripides (Hecuba 229) (ep. 1), “I do not say otherwise” (Hecuba 302; Electra 1035) (ep. 1), and the supplication brought by Hecuba to Agamemnon “in arms, hands, and hair” (Hecuba 836–840) (ep. 14).<sup>174</sup> Moreover, he curses together with Aristophanes “may it badly perish” (Ecclesiastus 1052) (ep. 1) and does not refrain from quoting Plato when admonishing, as already seen, one of his addressees (ep. 3): “you are blind with respect to your own affairs” (Laws 731 e5–6). Furthermore, he tacitly alludes to Plato’s Phaedo (99d1) when he speaks in ep. 6 about “the next best way” (δεύτερος πλοῦς).<sup>175</sup>

Neamonites often refers to mythological and classical figures, adjusting his references to the recipients’ level of παιδεία. For example, he mentions the “baleful Ares” (Iliad V. 31, 455, 518) (ep. 2), Zeus (ep. 6), Hermes (ep. 6), Pluto (ep. 13) Tantalus (ep. 5), Radamanthys (ep. 6),<sup>176</sup> Proteus and Empusa (ep. 9).<sup>177</sup> Other figures from Maximos’ epp. are Abaris (the Hyperborean) (ep. 12),<sup>178</sup> Lynkeus, one of the Argonauts (ep. 12), the trainers or the anointers (ἀλείπτται) of the Olympic Games (ep. 2) – a *simile* employed by Neamonites for displaying himself as schoolmaster –,<sup>179</sup> and the Hellanodikai, the chief judges at the games held in honor of Zeus at Olympia (ep. 8).<sup>180</sup> Moreover, Maximos uses well-known toponyms to create powerful images such as Euripos (ep. 2), Tainaros and Acheron (ep. 13).

If the “secular Bible” (i.e., Homer) is quite often referred to, biblical references are very scarce. For example, Neamonites praises Gregorios Kleidas’ wisdom (ep. 8) by quoting Ecclesiastes (2. 14); he alludes to the biblical episode of the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11) in ep. 13; and builds ep. 4 almost entirely around the scriptural passage of the miraculous healing of the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8. 42–48).

Maximos wove proverbs (παροιμῖαι) and verses into his epp. For instance, as seen above, ep. 5 opens with the swan song adage,<sup>181</sup> where Neamonites also informs his addressee about his Tantalian suffering.<sup>182</sup> In ep. 6 he writes that “the rivers are flowing upstream” (ἄνω χωροῦσι ποταμῶν αἰ πηγαί)<sup>183</sup> and in ep. 7 that the time “has moved the unmovable” (κινεῖ τὰ ἀκίνητα).<sup>184</sup> The addressee of ep. 4 read a similar παροιμία, namely that it is time’s habit “to turn things upside down” (τὰ ἄνω κάτω ποιεῖν).<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, in ep. 8 Neamonites speaks of “the ox [standing] on the tongue” (ὁ ἐπὶ γλώσσης βοῦς)<sup>186</sup> and in ep. 12 he exhorts that “you shall say the dream” (εἰπέ σὺ τὸ ἐνύπνιον).<sup>187</sup> As if complying with Rhakendytes’ guidelines, Neamonites attached, as seen above, “a bit of a verse” to ep. 9 addressed to Kleidas. The six dodecasyllable verses of the poem employ a chiasmic structure.

<sup>174</sup> Chis., f. 172<sup>v</sup> ll. 29–30: κατ’ Εὐριπίδην εἰπεῖν γένηται τίς φθόγγος – τέχνη τινὸς τοῦ τὴν ἰκεσίαν προσάγοντος – ἐν τε βραχίσι χειρὶ τε καὶ κόμασιν.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. also Corpus paroemiographorum II 24: Diogenianus II 45.

<sup>176</sup> Cf., e.g., Corpus paroemiographorum I 372: Gregorios of Cyprus III. 59: Ῥαδαμάνθου κρίσις: ἡ δικαιοσύνη.

<sup>177</sup> Neamonites may have been acquainted with Lucian of Samosata’s De saltatione (19. 11–19) where the satirist brings forward Proteus and Empusa as a *simile* for fickleness and unpredictability.

<sup>178</sup> Neamonites likens his son Ioannes Kalampakes to Abaris (the Hyperborean), who, according to Herodotus, traveled around the world carrying an arrow. Cf. Herodotus, Historiae 4. 36.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum II 554: Apostoles XII 53: οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι, καθάπερ οἱ ἐκ τῆς παλαιστρας.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Pindar, Olympia 3. 12.

<sup>181</sup> See *supra* n. 58. Cf. Aeschylus, Agamemnon 1444–1447; Plato, Phaedo 84e–85b; Corpus paroemiographorum I 258: Diogenianus V. 37. See also W. G. ARNOTT, Swan Songs. *Greece & Rome* 24 (1977) 149–153.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum II, 772–773: Mantissae Proverbiorum II 94.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum I 47: Zenobius II. 56.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum I 197: Diogenianus II. 6.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum II 61: Gregorios of Cyprus I. 61.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum I 223: Diogenianus III. 48.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum II 563: Apostoles XII. 78b: ὄνειράτά μοι λέγεις: ἐπὶ τῶν ἄπιστα καὶ ἀδύνατα διηγουμένων ὄθεν καὶ ἡ κοινὴ καὶ δημῶδης παροιμία: τοῦτο κατ’ ὄναρ εἶδες.

## CONCLUSION

Based on unpublished material extant in manuscript format, this article has shed light on Maximos Neamonites' life and activity and portrayed him as schoolmaster, bibliophile, broker, and letter-writer. A hitherto little-known schoolmaster of early fourteenth-century Byzantium, Neamonites seems to have resided in Constantinople, where he possessed a house inherited from his parents. He corresponded with and addressed various pleas on his behalf and that of others to imperial and ecclesiastical officials, such as the μέγας λογοθέτης Theodoros Metochites, the σεβαστός (Michael) Atzymes or the judge Gregorios Kleidas. Maximos made repeated usage of the rhetoric of sickness throughout his letters, allegedly having a poor health condition and suffering from various afflictions towards the end of his life. He may have been married and had at least one son, Ioannes Kalampakes, who seems to have been away from his parents and was, like his father, educated. At some point in his life, perhaps toward old age, Maximos Neamonites assumed the monastic habit and entered a monastery called Nea Mone, possibly the one located in Constantinople.

As a schoolmaster, Maximos Neamonites seems to have eked out an income on the basis of his teaching activities. He was in a constant quest to gain new students, retain them and secure a salary from the fees paid by their fathers. To this end, he advocated the value of παιδεία and used every occasion to promote himself as a skilled teacher. Occasionally, he also portrayed himself as struggling with the financial shortcomings of living off a meagre income, which however needs to be taken *cum grano salis*. He most likely possessed a personal library with handbooks supporting his teaching activities and presumably codices containing rhetorical texts. He owned a manuscript of Libanios and borrowed books from other bibliophiles such as Ioannes Kritopoulos in order to read and copy them. Moreover, he offered his critique on matters of literary compositions to fellow πεπαιδευμένοι, such as Georgios Oinaïotes. Although a rewarding place for intertextual μίμησις, Neamonites' epp. do not take one into the "garden of the Muses." Instead, they offer valuable insights into the realities of fourteenth-century Byzantium, bringing to the fore glimpses of the daily struggles of their author, a Constantinopolitan resident, schoolmaster, bookman, broker, father and monk, Maximos Neamonites.

