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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 On the basis of his hitherto unpublished letter collection, the article portrays Neamonites as a resident of Constantinople, writing pleas to imperial and ecclesiastical officials; father to Ioannes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.)\(^1\) 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 Sienna. 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.\(^2\) 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’ Pizziccoli (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.\(^3\) Although heavily crossed out, his name is readable on the very last folio of the codex (f. 176\(^{v}\)).\(^4\) An earlier owner was a certain Jerome of Modicia (nowadays Monza), as he himself wrote on the upper part of f. 1\(^r\) where a Latin note reads *Iste liber est mei Ieronimi de Modoeicia.* On the same folio just above Jeronimo’s, 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,\(^5\) a monastery well-known for its scriptorium which produced high

\(^1\) 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.

\(^2\) Cf. FRANCHI DE’ CAVALIERI, Codices Graeci Chisiani vii–viii.


\(^4\) His name is written twice “Kuriacus Anconitan(us)”; cf. FRANCHI DE’ CAVALIERI, Codices Graeci Chisiani 21.

\(^5\) The text reads *Iste liber est monasterii sancta Marie de Angelis de Florentia.*
quality manuscripts.6 Chis. speaks further back in time of a fourteenth-century owner, Ioannes Kritopoulos (fl. 1320–1330).7 The guard leaf VIr 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 *epistolae* (hereafter ep. or epp.) preserved on the last quaternion (ff. 166v–172v) of this Vatican manuscript8 under Maximos Neamonites’ name.9 Only six letters have headings mentioning their addressees: the

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7 Cf. PLP 13815; Pérez Martín, El patriarca Gregorio 332, n. 44. F. D’Aiuto, Un manoscritto inlognografico del secolo XIV: il Vaticano Palatino Greco 138. RSBN (1991) 149–171, identified the hand of the main scribe and coordinator of Vat. Palat. gr. 138 as a certain Gabriel, monk and oikovómos of the Constantinopolitan monastery of St Georgios of Mangana (PLP 3426). This Vatican codex transmits on ff. IIIv–IVr 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 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 *epistolae* 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. A. 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, Palatini 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 XIVe et au XVe siècle: quelques exemples, de la ‘collection philosophique’ aux folios palimpsestes du Parisinus gr. 1220, in: Libri palimpsestici 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. 5r 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. VIr (monogram and monokondylion); Laur. Plut. 57.45, f. 2r (monogram); Marcianus gr. 613, f. F (monokondylion) and f. 2r (monogram); Monacensis gr. 564, f. 1r (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» sugéré 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. Garcia – I. Pérez Martín (Bibliologia 31). Turnhout 2010, 473–482.

8 The Pinakes database of Greek manuscripts lists two Vatican codices transmitting letters written by Neamonites, Chis. (14 epp.) and Vat. gr. 1020, ff. 1r–9r (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 of the Constantinopolitan monastery of St Georgios of Mangana (PLP 3426). This Vatican codex transmits on ff. IIIv–IVr 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 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 *epistolae* 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. A. 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, Palatini 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 XIVe et au XVe siècle: quelques exemples, de la ‘collection philosophique’ aux folios palimpsestes du Parisinus gr. 1220, in: Libri palimpsestici 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. 5r 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. VIr (monogram and monokondylion); Laur. Plut. 57.45, f. 2r (monogram); Marcianus gr. 613, f. F (monokondylion) and f. 2r (monogram); Monacensis gr. 564, f. 1r (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» sugéré 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. Garcia – I. Pérez Martín (Bibliologia 31). Turnhout 2010, 473–482.

9 Maximos Neamonites’ name is written with red ink on the upper left corner of f. 166r, reading μαξιμον(ε)τος (μονον)τος (ού) το(οű) νασμποτρ(ου>). The word (μονον)τος (ού) is crossed out in the same red ink. Neamonites’ name is written once again
Mihail Mitrea

Maximos Neamonites has received little scholarly attention. PLP includes an entry (92630) 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 Oinaiotes. Finally, the entry mentions his fourteenth 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). 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 ep. 2, 10, and 14 he proposes as addressee a certain σεβαστός Atzynes, whose name is mentioned in ep. 14, and whom Kourouses equates with the σεβαστός Michael Atzynes, the δομέτικος τῶν ἀνατολικῶν θεμάτων (1311–1315/19). Although clear evidence is lacking, it may be that the sebastoi in ep. 2 and 14 are the same.

I. PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Maximos Neamonites 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 Oinaiotes. Finally, the entry mentions his fourteenth epp. and an epigram he composed for a codex of Libanios.

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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.16 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. 1323.17 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 unmoving, rather to say, the fickle [things]”18 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 1321–1322.19 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 Κλειδᾷ καὶ κριτῇ and τῷ αὐτῷ, he proposes 1329 as a terminus ante quem, the year when Gregorios Kleidas became καθολικὸς κριτῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων.20 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. Moreover, she briefly points out some of the addressees of the epp. (Gregorios of Bulgaria, Theodorus Metochites, Gregorios Kleidas, and Ioannes Kalampakes) and offers a diplomatic transcription of Neamonites’ epigram transmitted on f. 173v 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) written by Maximos Neamonites, a private schoolmaster, active in Constantinople in the early fourteenth century.22

16 Chis., f. 167v II. 6–7, 19: τῷ πρῶτῳ … ἀρχεῖ σὺ τὴν προεδρίαν ταύτῃ δόντι ἄθλον τῆς σής ἀρετῆς … παρ’ ὅ και σφικής θρόνος καὶ λόγος ἐστί. On Ioannes XIII Glykys, see PLP 4271.
17 KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίῳ 535–536.
20 Cf. PLP 11781.
21 PÉREZ MARTÍN, El patriarca Gregorio de Chipre 332–352.
22 S. MERGIALI, L’enseignement et les lettrés pendant l’époque des Paléologues (1261–1453) (Κέντρον Έρευνής Βυζαντίου 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 θεατρόν, N. GAUL, Dancing with the Muses of Power and
II. LIFE IN CONSTANTINOPLE
II.1. INTERACTION WITH IMPERIAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICIALS

Although letter-writing was a prominent type of writing in Byzantium, only a minor fraction of Byzantine letters has survived (approximately 15,500). For instance, of the 280 letter-writers included in Grünbart’s *Epistularum Byzantinarum 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*.” Before voicing his plea, Neamonites first praises Metochites for his virtues. He flatters him on his “good character firmly disposed towards the good” 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.” Given Metochites’ intellectual pursuits in astronomy, Neamonites may have specifically chosen this
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 πρωτοκυνηγός.” It seems that the parents of the πρωτοκυνηγός had given this place to Neamonites’ parents as a gift which was subsequently passed on to him as inheritance. However, at the time he writes this ep., the πρωτοκυνηγός 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 πρωτοκυνηγός, following in the footsteps of his parents, allotted to me this honor, as they [i.e., the parents of the πρωτοκυνηγός] 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 πρωτοκυνηγός as far as regards this place.31

Since “time has brought its proper change and unsettling, and moved the unmoving, rather to say, the fickle <things>,”32 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.33 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’, we are subjected to this unusual rent.”35

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

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29 Chis., f. 169v II. 22–24: ἐμοὶ γὰρ νῦν τὰ ἐκεῖνα τὸν ἐπιρήμασαι βίον ποθέσαι εὐρῆθη τις καὶ τόπος οὗκ ἀσύμφωνος μου τὸ τρόπον, τοῦ νῦν πρωτοκυνηγοῦ ἢ ἡ αὐλή.

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

31 Chis., f. 169v II. 24–29: ὡς τοῖς γονεῖσι αὐτοῦ κατ’ ἐναντίον βιῶν, ἀπένειμε μοι τιμήν, ὡς κακίστως τοῖς ἐμοῖς καὶ ἐκείνῳ δι᾽ ὑπερβάλλουσαν ἁρετὴν ἐγὼ τῇ αἰδέσθαι, ἐμοὶ δὲ δι᾽ ἐκείνους ὡς κλάρους τις κατηχῆ καὶ σοτε παρ’ ἐκείνους ἀπήτησε τις γὰρ ἡμῖν ἢ λήμμα τι προσλαμβάνον; καγὼ δὴ πολλὸν δέω τῷ πρωτοκυνηγῷ δοῦναι τῷ τοῦτον ἔνεκεν.

32 Chis., f. 169v II. 29–30: ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐγὼ χρόνος καὶ νῦν τὴν ὁικεῖαν τροπὴν καὶ ἄνευστάσιν συνέφερε καὶ κινεῖ τὰ ἄκινητα, μᾶλλον δὲ εἶπεν τὰ εὐρίσκες.

33 Chis., f. 169v I. 32 – f. 170v II. 1–5: νῦν γὰρ ἔχων τῇ ἡρωτήτικῇ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑγίᾳ … τοῦτο τὸ κρίτιριον ἄροα· τῶν διατηρῶν ἔχει καὶ περὶ τοῦτο τοῦ ἐμοῦ λέγω ὁλίγαμος ὁδήγησιν καὶ ὃς φθονεῖ ἐνεκές μή καὶ ἐνεκές μὴ πολιαίναι διασώσασθαι καὶ προῖκα γενέσθαι εὐεργετικοὶ καὶ ψυχατόμοι.

34 The expression πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους δεινοὺς may be a tacit reference to Lucian, De mercedcis conductis 17. 7.

35 Chis., f. 170v II. 5–11: τοὺς ἐνέχει καὶ ἄνευστας ὅσαν ἔχεις ὡς καὶ ἐκείνους ἀρετὴν εὐπραπέστατον ἐπεὶ εἰς φόρος τούς κατορθοῦντά κυρίον προτερόποροι φύσεως δι᾽ ὃ τοις παραχώρεσθαι τῷ πρωτοκυνηγῷ τῆς ἀρετῆς ὑπέμνησα· σον ὧν ἐστι καὶ ἡμᾶς τιτροφομένους ὅπως χρόνῳ καὶ αὐτόν ἐντάξεις τῷ εὐεργετεῖσθαι παρὰ τῆς εὐγενείας σου ἢ καὶ παραβλέψει πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους δεινοὺς καὶ τῇ ἀποσῦνῃ ταύτη φορολογία τρέχεσθαι.
address such as “your holiness, my honorable and most-beloved head” and “wonderful soul.”

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].” 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. 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.” 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 μοσταγωγός.” Neamonites may refer to his private house of ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία. The payment requested by the protokukhνηγός, and possibly an ensuing lawsuit on this issue between the two, could have been the reason why Neamonites sent ep. 8 to Gregorios Kleidas. However, other scenarios are also likely. One may be trying to evade a penalty previously imposed on him by an earlier decision.

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38 Chis., f. 166’ Il. 17–22, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, Il. 13–16: ὡς πάσα τῆς λαχούσης σε, εἰ δέχεσθαι κατευδαμένα ὃτι δὴ κατακόστηκα πόρρω τῶν ἡμετέρων χρόνων, ἐν όστῳ μὲν ἀπηγριωμένῳ χωρίῳ δόσα γε τῆς Ἑλληνίδος γλώττης καὶ ἐθος, ἦσα δὲ ἀποκτισμένῳ τῶν δοσα γε καθ’ ὁμιρον φάνα ανίσχει χρηστῶν ἡ ροδοδάκτυλος ἡμῶς.

39 Chis., f. 166’ Il. 25–27 – f. 166’ Il. 1, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, Il. 18–21: ὡς τούτ’ ἐγενόμενα προνοίας οὐκ ἄνευ τῆς ἀεὶ προσηκόντως διοικούσης τὰ πάντα, ἤτ’ ἐξημερώσῃ τῆς ἔσπαρας τὸ ἀγρίων τῆς ἁρτῆ καὶ ζωγὸ τοῦ νόμου καθυποτάξῃ τὸ πρόσα ἀναγινάξουν καὶ ἀτακτῶν.


on him by Kleidas or another judge. Be that as it may, Neamonites’ cause of concern was important enough to describe it as a grief that endangers life. Moreover, “those who suffer the loss of what is desired do not bear this moderately, even if it were an insignificant [loss]. How much more [difficult is it then to bear the loss] for those who are for a long time satiated with the necessities [of life].”

Like other schoolmasters of the period, Neamonites depicts himself as having a modest financial situation. Therefore, the loss of this cause could endanger his livelihood. Corroborating this with ep. 7 addressed to Metochites, one may argue that the cause he refers to concerns his house. Most probably the venue for his teaching activities, its loss would directly jeopardize his source of income. In order to avert such an outcome, Neamonites addresses Kleidas, praising his impartiality of judgment, a quality in which he exceeds other judges: “you are surpassing those ones in the impartiality of your judgment, by far more than the Hellanodikai,” and “my beautiful tritagonist, having your eyes in your head... you see the truth for the truth, proclaim it naturally, and restore those who were wronged, and almost make them be revived.” Therefore, Kleidas can reinstate justice to its rightful throne and invert the injustice caused by “those who ride upon the yokes of justice”, i.e., other judges who – contrary to Kleidas – are rapacious, conceal the truth, and bend the justice.

Neamonites sarcastically refers to the latter as “good judges (ὑποκριταί)”, who drove justice from her throne through their “good judgment.” Moreover, it may be that he could not reveal in an official law court (here likened to the hippodrome) the injustice he suffered, as he had an “ox upon my tongue” and can now express his criticism “outside of the turning-point of the hippodrome.” Consequently, since “it is necessary to win this contest,” i.e., the trial, Neamonites seeks justice by 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.

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42 Chis., f. 170’ II. 12–15: πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ὡς καλῶς ποιοῦσαν τὴν ἀγνώστητα σου πόλιας θήρρους τὸ καθόλου ἀκίνητο, ἐφ’ ὃι καὶ πάσης ἐνεργείας ἐστερημένος ἀναπέστησης μοι καὶ προσίες τάσης εἰσόδου καλλίστης μὴ διαμαρτύντοι, καὶ αὐτῆς δεσπότης ἁνδρόνικον ἐπηβόλως τῇ πρώτῃ, δίκιν χρονίαν ὠσίες καὶ αὐτὴν.


44 Chis., f. 170’ II. 15–18: εἴδος γὰρ σε πολλά καὶ μᾶλλον ἐλλανόδικον τὸ ἀδεκάστο τῆς κρίσεως ἐκείνους ἐπερακοντάσθαι, ὡς ἐπιβόλος τῷ πορεύοντα τῶν ὑπερφώνεσθαι τῆς ἀληθείας. Cf. Ecclesiastes 2. 14: τοῦ συρρό ὦσιν ὃς ἐρθαμίζουσιν αὐτοῦ ἐν κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁ ἄφων ἐν σκότει περιεῖται. ὥστε δὲ τοῖς ὑπερθερμανεῖται τοῖς σὺν προξενεῖται, ὥς ἐπερακοντάσθαι τῆς ἀδεκάστος τῆς ἀδεκάστος κρίσεως ἄφωνον ἀνακτάς καὶ ἀνακαινίζεται ποιεῖ... ἄλλα δὲ τὸν ὄν, ὡς ἀν ὄρθις, καὶ εὐφυῶς ἀποφαίνει καὶ ἀνακτάς τοὺς ἀδυνκυμονους καὶ μικρον ἀνακαινίζεται ποιεῖ.

45 Chis., f. 170’ II. 27–28, 31–32: τὸ δὲ τοῖς ὑπερθερμανεῖται τοῖς ὑπερθερμανεῖται τοῖς ἀδυνκυμονους ἓπετοτὰς, ὥς ἐπερακοντάσθαι... ἄλλα δὲ τὸν ὄν, ὡς ἀν ὄρθις, καὶ εὐφυῶς ἀποφαίνει καὶ ἀνακτάς τοὺς ἀδυνκυμονους καὶ μικρον ἀνακαινίζεται ποιεῖ... ἄλλα δὲ τὸν ὄν, ὡς ἀν ὄρθις, καὶ εὐφυῶς ἀποφαίνει καὶ ἀνακτάς τοὺς ἀδυνκυμονους καὶ μικρον ἀνακαινίζεται ποιεῖ...
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.” He ends the same ep. reminding his addressee that he is “worn out by time and illness.” The theme of sickness – widely encountered in Byzantine epp. 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.”

In ep. 5, sent to an unknown addressee, 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 something of delight behind, which is to his utmost sorrow:” 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 (prophorikos) or the immanent (endiatethetos) reason (logos), such as to delight my friends in the future, and from which to derive some seed of a friendly disposition.
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.” 61 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.62

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.63

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,64 it could indicate that Ioannes was born or resided at some point in the region of Kalampaka (Stagoi), in northwestern Thessaly.65 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 (χορήσιμός).66 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 by not sending any news.67 Maximos further exhorts Kalampakes to write a letter through which “you would strengthen afresh us who are half-dead

61 Chis., f. 168r ll. 10–13: ό δὲ κοιλοφών, ἥ λύπη λέγω, τοῦ φαλάτου ύοι, ὡς μὴ ὄφελεν ἐκείνοις ἐπιγενομένη, <ἀδύνατον> τὸ ἐμοὶ καταθύμιον οὖκ ἐπήγεγκεν, ἀλλὰ ταντάλειον τιμωρίαν ἐπηνεγκότοι.
62 Chis., f. 168r ll. 13–20: χρῆν γὰρ σφοδροτάτην ταύτην ἁπασίαν γενομένην μοι συμφορὰς καὶ ζωῆς παύλαν τέος τῆς ἐν ἐμοὶ ποιήσα εἰσὶν τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἐγένετο· περίειμι δὲ ἐς τοῦ τούτον οὐδ’ ἄλλο τι οὐ τοῦ τίνειν μὲ δίκαια τοῦ ταλαπώτωρ βίου εἰσοδολοποιοῦντος αἰαί τὸν ἐκείνον θάνατον, ἵνα τὸ περιπλαγμένου τῷ πάθει τοῦ σώματος πεμπλῆς μέρος ἀφαίρεσις διατίθεται· τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐμὰ ὁδὸν ποὺ ἔχει.
63 Chis., f. 168r ll. 9–10: οὐκ ἦν μὲν ἐπιστήμην ταῖς πολλάς καὶ συναγχισεὶς νοσήματος τοῦ σώματος.
64 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 Makedonia (93687). Kalampakes might have also been a family name.
67 Chis., f. 171v ll. 1–3–8: τὰ σὰ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν τοιούτων ἄδηλα ὅσον οὐδὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲς ἐν ἐςον εἶναι σε διδήλῳ ... ἡμῶν. ἡμᾶς ἢ ἀπαλλαγής τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς μικρῶν τῇ δόξῃ τῇ ταὐτῇ περιπτοπεύκομεν ... τοῦτον οὖν ἐν τούτοις ἡμῖν τὸ πρότερον καὶ γραφὴν ἐν ἄδηλοις ἔμειναι τοιοί οὐκ ἦν. προσκεκλημένος δὲ μόνον ἐμένου ὁμιλεῖ ἄφαρμα παρὰ σοῦ τῷ γράφειν ἵνα μὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν ἀσημάντοις βάλλοντες ὁμιλοῦμεν.
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from longing after you.”68 Finally, Neamonites entreats his son to return home and be his consolation and staff of senescence.69 His beautiful appearance, i.e., physical presence, would then be regarded not as profit, but as complete happiness.70 Neamonites ends the ep. with a collective greeting coming most probably from the whole family: “All of us are doing well and greet you.”71

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.72

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 barrenness and coldness.”73 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.74 As will be further discussed, Neamonites’ entire family might have assumed monastic habit.75 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.”76

And Neamonites continues:

68 Chis., f. 171r II. 30–31: ἡμᾶς ἡμιθνῆται δόντας πόθῳ τῷ σῷ ἀναρρόςῃς τῇ σῇ γραφῇ.
70 Chis., f. 171r II. 25–27: εἰ θεασόμεν<θν> σε τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς εἰ τὸν φύλασεν ἡμῶν ἀλλήν ψυχός περιλάβουμεν, εἰ τοῦ καλοῦ σου εἴδους ἐμφορηθῶμεν οὐ κέρδος λέγω, ἄλλ᾿ εὐδαιμονίαν πάσαιν τοῦθ’ ἡγησόμεθα.
71 Chis., f. 171r I. 31: οἱ ἡμέτεροι ὑγιαίνουσι καὶ προσαγορεύσουσι σε.
72 Chis., f. 171r I. 32 – f. 172v II. 1–3: μάθοις ὅπως μὲν μανῶσθεν παρὰ τοῦ φέροντος σοι τὰτα ἡμῶν τὰς ὑποστῆσαι σὲ τῇ ἀλλήν ἰχθύνσει καὶ τῇ ἐμπιπράτου ὑποστῆσαι καὶ τῇ νυχτὶ.
75 Cf. infra the section II.4. Maximos – Monk at Nea Mone.
76 Chis., f. 172v II. 16–21: ἄλλ᾿ εἰ μὲν ἀλλήλη διετέινετο πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὡς τοῖς ὑποστῆσαις τὸν ἀθρόῳς μεθ’ ὑμῶν ψυχῆς ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦ ἀλλήλην μήνα ἀνθρώπους τοῦ τοῦτον ὑποστῆσαις τὸν ἀθρόῳς μεθ’ ὑμῶν ψυχῆς μὲν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν οὗτος ψυχῆς ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ἀλλήλην τοῦτον ὑμῖν.
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.77

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.78

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 nuns are paralysed and barely breathing in his absence, but are taking heart at the expectation of his return.82

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.”80 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.”81 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.82

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 Oinaiates’ epp. 36, 45 and 54 offer further information on the education and intellectual pursuits of Oinaiates' epp.
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. 83

It seems that Oinaiotes 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. 84 From ep. 36 85 one gathers that Oinaiotes sent to Neamonites’ son a “newly produced λόγος” by which he set to expose the slander “of some uneducated persons.” Thus, Oinaiotes 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. Oinaiotes calls again for Neamonites’ son’s highly valued feedback in ep. 45. 86 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, Oinaiotes would be fortunate to have his work read by his addressee, whom he flatters by referring to his innate diligence and expertise.

Oinaiotes’ 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. 87 These epp., “which he once wrote about fame,” Oinaiotes was “seized by an infinite judgement,” disregarding the fact that it was written by his friend. Oinaiotes calls again for Neamonites’ son’s highly valued feedback in ep. 13. 88 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, Oinaiotes would be fortunate to have his work read by his addressee, whom he flatters by referring to his innate diligence and expertise.

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83 In the codex Laurentianus S. Marco 356, the epp. bear the title τὸ υἱὸ τοῦ νεαμονίτου.
84 On θέατρα in the Palaiologan period, cf. GAUL, Thomas Magistros 17–53; IDEM, Dancing with the Muses.
85 Laurentianus S. Marco 356, ff. 61v–61r II. 1–2: δίκουν ἤγησάμενος καὶ<ν> τοὺς γραφεῖς ἔκεινος συν νεογόνων τόνδε πέπομφα λόγον· δι’ οὗ, ἀπαδευτόν τινον κακηγορίας, κατ’ οὖν ἔκεινον ἀνομίας ὑπόσα προσάλληκτα τὰ γραίδα κοινολογοῦνται όποτε διανυκτερεύοιες, εἰς προστον, οὖν αὐτό τοῦδ’ ὑπερ ἦσαν, ἀπεδέξας ὅπως τὸν μή με παρέγκις μὴ δ’ ὡς οἱ φίλοι διέλθης· ὡς ἀν τὸ μετα πλείονος ἐπιμελείας διέλθην, ἀμφοτέρας εἰργασμενοί τότε τὴν σὴν κρίσιν ἀδέκαστον ἄποδεξαί, καὶ ημᾶς δ’ ὡς εἴθησατι σοι δι’ ἐπάνως ποιήσαι.
86 Laurentianus S. Marco 356, f. 68v II. 2–15: ὁ λόγος σφιγναίας μετέχον μεθ’ ἐπιβατικοῦ· ὑπερβολοῦσας ἐξεργασσισθεῖσας· τἀς ἐργάζεται πληρόσον ἁκοᾶς· ἀλλὰ σον εἰςδεν τὸ τοῦ γ’ εὐμοιριῶμεν· καὶ εἰ μὴ ἄλλου τοῦ τῶν γων, τοῦτο γον πολλὰς πέραν οὐκ ἀγνοίας μέστησθην ἡμῶν ὡς ἐλάβομεν, ὡς ὁδε διεκαθίστην τῆς γνωσμοῦ ἐπιμελείας ὑποῦλαν εἰθεμένους ἂναγνώσεοι γον, εἰ δίδα, οὐδεὶς οὐθεν εἰσχθηται παρασχετοῦσος, ὡς οὐ <…> πολύν τοῦ κρείττονος ἦ δέον ανέγγυσαι.
89 Laurentianus S. Marco 356, ff. 88v–89r II. 1–5: ἐπιστολὴ τῆν Σιμοκάτου ἢν ἐκένος περὶ δόξης ὁμιᾶς ἐρήθη γεγραφαὶ διελθεῖσα ἀγχότης μὲ τὰς ἐρωτας κατέσχεί ἐρωτας καὶ ὁ παίσισσος εἰκώτας δέος τὸν ἑρωτα πάντα κάλων καίνων ἤκοι, σὲ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ἅφησεν εἰδος, σὲ διὰ τοῦτο σοι τὸν ἑρωτα ἀνακλάσεσθιν, αὐτὸ λαβεῖν μὲρας σοῦ· τῆς ὑπὸ ἐπιστολὴς ἑκέινης οὖν ἐδέξατο τὸ πλεῖον τῆς ἄκοις ἔνεις ὁ χρόνος ἀφῆκεν ἢ ὅτι δοξάριον λυπηκόριον τὴν δόξαν γετοι δόξης ἄν τοις γοινικοῖς ὁκ ἐξε τοῦ δικοῦ περιπεραίς εἰς δυοῦν ἴσαν δέος ἀπειρημαίνοις· ήτοι ἐπιστολὴ Σιμοκάτου μοι μεποιήσω πάντως ὁ γὰρ τοῦ ἐρωτας ἀπὸ σπινθῆρος πολλὰς εἰς ποιρον ἀνάπασεν, ἢ τὸ γε δεύτερον μετεγγράφα ταῦτα καὶ νῦν διὰ τοῦ παρὸντος ἀποστῆλαι· εἰ μὲν ὑπὸν μέμως, χαρίστον ὁκ μερίδιον μὲ ὀφειλέτρυν ποιήσατε· εἰ δ’ οὖν πέμψῃς ἀνάσις μὲν <ἐπιστο>λήν, ἀλλὰ καὶ χάριτας ὑπῆρξεν ὑπὸ τοῦ ῥεβίον ἡμᾶς σε ἡμῶν οὐκ ἤτον σοδε κηδέσθαι.
Sotion or ep. 79 addressed by Isokrates to Dionysios, as in both of these Simokattes speaks of δοξάριον.92

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.93 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.94 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.95

Judging from the sobriquet Neamonites, it seems that he entered a monastery called Nea Mone (“new monastery”). There were several monasteries with this name, for instance on Chios.96

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90 Theophylaktos Simokattes, ep. 76 (40–41 ZANETTO): τὸ μικρὸν τοῦτο δοξάριον ὑπὸ ἐνύπνιον τοῦς ἐο ὕφεραν ἐνὶ δοξάριον καὶ τῶν πεπλασμένων μόθους τερατωδέστερον ἐστὶ καὶ φαυλότερον, ἀστατον, κουφοποιόν, παίγνιον ἤχων καὶ πνευμάτων φαντασιωδέστερον.

91 Theophylaktos Simokattes, ep. 79 (41–42 ZANETTO): τί δῆτα τὸ κενὸν τοῦτο καὶ κοῦφον δοξάριον ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον τὸν πήλινον ἀσκὸν διεφύσησε; μεγάλης ἀνοίας ἐνεφορήθη, ὦ δύστηνε, καὶ τῆς φύσεως τὴν γνῶσιν ἀφῄρησαι.

92 Cf. REIN, Die Florentiner Briefsammlung 134.


94 For the “family functions” of the monastery, and family ties within the monastery, see A.-M. 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.


in Thessalonike,98 and on Mount Latros.99 Another Nea Mone was located on the holy mountain of Ganos in Thrace.100 It was on this mountain (today Işkılar 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.”101 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.102 On the basis of a passage from Theoktistos’ vita of Patriarch Athanasios I,103 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.104 However, Rigo argues that the passage may not refer to the Nea Mone on Ganos, but to a Constantinopolitan double monastery.105 The schoolmaster M(axios) could have entered the alleged double monastery of Nea Mone on Mount Ganos which may have also accommodated his wife.106 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.107 Nonetheless, in the absence of more evidence this is at best a hypothesis.

97 The monastery was founded shortly after 1042, during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042–1055) by the local hermits Niketas and John.
98 This monastery – dedicated to the Theotokos – was established between 1360 and 1368/70 by Makarios Choumnos (ca. 1360–ca. 1380).
99 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.
102 Georgios Pachymeres, Syngraphikhia historiai VI 36 (II 667, 4–6 Faillier – Laurent). See also the short version of Pachymeres’ Syngraphikhia historiai VI 36 (I 190, 37–40 Faillier).
103 Cf. Theoktistos Studites, Vita Athanasii, cap. 11 (17, 4–16 Faillier-Kerouas).
105 Rigo, Il monte Ganos 241: “In verità, leggendo attentamente le righe di Teoctistio 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.”
106 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.
Another Nea Mone was located in Constantinople, close to the imperial palace. 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). 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” – such as Maximos Planoudes (ca. 1250/5–ca. 1305) in Constantinople or Thomas Magistros (ca. 1280–ca. 1347/8) in Thessalonike. 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” 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 (ἀλείπτης) “not inferior to those [trainers] who were held in esteem back in the Olympic Games” (ep. 2). 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 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.”

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,” who previously studied under Neamonites’ supervision. This might be one of the reasons why Maximos is asking him for a strong image for illustrating the proper commitment of a father to the education of his son: “you should be good or of fathers who are not long ing to see their beloved sons come into possession of something 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,... 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.

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 unbefitting of a father whose duty is to pursue his son’s best interest: “this kind of action requires the education of his son, since “we have discovered in him an inherent natural capacity.” Moreover, he stresses that the student’s action caused him “fear and grief.” In Maximos’ words: “he...

114 Chis., f. 166v II. 5–9, KOUROUSES, Γρηγορίου 531, II. 4–7: ταῦτα δίκαια οὐ μικρὰς ὀφθαλμών ἐνέκεια, ἐν ᾗ μὲν αὐτῷ καὶ τοῖς τῶν αὐτῶν ὀμολογούμενοι δρόμον ζημίαν οὐ τὴν τυχόντα, διόν κβ έμοι καὶ λύπην προούξησης πάνω γαλαξίας εξ ἐδούς διακειμένοι εἴποτε γε τοιοῦτο συμβαίη.

115 Cf. PLP 3283.

116 Chis., f. 172v II. 4–7, 11–16: ὑπὲρ ὃν τὴν ἀνέπαυσεν ταύτην τίθεμαι οὐκ ἐκεῖνο διεσφορή τὴν σιγὴν ἄρχοντας τυχόντας γὰρ εἴδος ἐδ οῦ ὃτι τὸν τῶν βαδα διότα τῶν πάλαι μὲν ὀμηλῶν διότα καὶ τὰ ἐς γραμματοδικά ἀποτελείται οὐκ ἐπεξερεύνητο νυνί δὲ τὴν σπουδὴν μεταθεσίας ἐκείνην ὡθή μέλαν διασποράς ὑπηρετήσῃς Ατζύμῃ τὸ σεβαστό... γενοῦ μοι λέγων πρὸς τῶν ἱκετείων διά τοῦ προβαλλομένῃ ἔτι οὐκ ἀρκεῖ ἧτον δ’ ἐπικαμπτόμενης ἀνείη προβαλλομένῃ τῆς κτήσεως... αὐτῷ ἄρκει προβαλλομένῃ τὴν τίθεμαι τῶν πάλαισιν ἀνείη προβαλλομένῃ παραινήσεως αὕτην ὑπὲρ ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἄρκει.


118 Chis., f. 166v, II. 12–18: οὐδέποτε σε χρή σωλήμβολον εἶναι σεβαστῶν ἄριστον διά τῆς γραμματικῆς διαμάχης καὶ ἐπιτυχεῖν της ἐκείνης ἀντικροτικῆς ὑπερημερίας ἐπικαμπτόμενης ἀντικροτικῆς ὑπερημερίας τῆς κτήσεως τῆς ἀριστοκρατίας τῆς ἐκείνης ἀντικροτικῆς ὑπερημερίας τῆς κτήσεως τῆς ἀριστοκρατίας τῆς ἐκείνης ἀντικροτικῆς ὑπερημερίας τῆς κτήσεως τῆς ἀριστοκρατίας... οὐκ ἀρκεῖ πρὸς τὸν παῖδα μετατρέπειν οὐδέ τὰς σάς ἀνέπιπτο σεβαστῶν χρή σωλήμβολον εἶναι σεβαστῶν χρή σωλήμβολον εἶναι σεβαστῶν χρή σωλήμβολον εἶναι σεβαστῶν...
unmoved, and almost like a statue, regarding to what you agreed concerning the education of your child.”\textsuperscript{119} 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.”\textsuperscript{120} 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.”\textsuperscript{121} 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.”\textsuperscript{122} 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 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.”\textsuperscript{120} 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.”\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{119} Chis., f. 166v, ll. 19–22: τούτῳ γὰρ πατέρων οὐκ ἐφρημοῦν μᾶλλον φίλους παιδᾶς ἰδεῖν καλοῦ τινος ἐν κατασχέσει γενέσθαι ἢ φθονοῦντων· τοιναντίον δ’ ἐξήρην ἀκίνητον εἶναι καὶ μονονοῦ ἀνδριάντα οἷς συνέδου πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παιδὸς μάθησιν.

\textsuperscript{120} Chis., f. 170r, ll. 25–32: ἰδοὺ σοι πέπῳ τὸν υἱὸν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἣν ἀντεπείπεν κελεύουσας καίτοις’ ἐξήρην τοῖς πρόσεχεν μᾶλλον ἑπασταλμένοις ή διεσέχεν τὸν νοῦν· ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐστίν ὅτε ὡσαὶ καὶ τοῖς τῶν διαθήκων γραμματείας συμβαίνει τῶν πρῶτων ἐπικρατέστατερα τὰ ὑστερα γίνεσθαι δεῖν ἐγγομέν τοις δευτέρων κατείλθει· ἐγεύομεν τοῦτον αὐτὸν ψιλὸν ὑψον τῇ μητρὶ γενησόμενον, εἰ δὲ καὶ σοι οὐκ οἶδα· πατὴρ γὰρ εἰ καὶ ζητεῖν ὑπὸ τοῦτο προσῆκε, ἄλλ’ ὅτι προτιμάμεν ὦν οἰδας θέαν οὕτω παιδὸς χρήματος ἀκράτους κενὸν ὑπεσῆσα τῆς παιδείας, ὡς δὴ μικρὰ ή οὐδὲν φροντίζουσα μήπερ φύσεως πολυρικουμένη νόμῳ μεταβεβουλεύθησα σε, οὕμαυ, πέπικεν.

\textsuperscript{121} Chis., f. 170v 1. 32 – f. 171v ll. 1–4: εἰ δὲ γέ χρή μητε τοῦ περὶ παιδὸς σκοπου διαπεσεῖν ἡμᾶς τε πληρωτές φανήναι τῶν ὑπενεχμένων ἐπὶ πολὺ τὸν νέον τὴν ἐν οἷοι ποεσθήσεται διατριβὴν οὐ προσῆκε, ἀλλὰ τῆς πάλιν ἄστεσθαι τάχος, ἵνα τὸν ἄρχον ἃς πολλὰ τὸ πόσον κατεβαλλόμεθα ἐπιλήψεως· μὴ γένηται.

\textsuperscript{122} Chis., f. 169v ll. 16–17, 21–22: σὲ τάλαθῆς Ἕρμου μαθητὴν ὄντα καὶ φίλου ἐμὸν … δύναι τε κριτικὴν ἔχοντα ἐκ τε πείρας καὶ ἀγογῆς.
regard to your son, oh, the best of friends, because he is in need of much cleaning and even more investment [literally, “expenditure”].

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.

However, Neamonites’ modest financial situation should be taken with a grain of salt. The “rhetoric of poverty” was often employed by Byzantine παπανθομένοι in order to attract and secure the benefaction of the well-to-do and powerful people. 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.

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.

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123 Chis., f. 169r l. 1–8: πῶς ἂν οὖ ἡ γῆδιον ἔχων πλῆρες πετρῶν τε καὶ ἁκανθῶν ἥρμηνεος ποίησαι εὐχείων; ἐγὼ δὲ ἐὰν ἠμὴ σκατάνη χαίρων καὶ ταῦτα ἐξελέν ἐπιστήμην εἶχων πότερ τοῦτ’ ἐνήργους ἀλγομοιχθαί μάλα μόνη καὶ ὕδατο τὸ βαρὸ ποῦν διαφέρον ἠ τοῦτό μὲν οὐκ ἂν ἐποίουσιν σοί τ’ ἀνάγκῃ τοῦ λόγου ἔχων ἀκαθαρτῶν μή προσδαψιλεύομεν τῇ χορηγίᾳ καὶ οἰονεὶ νῦσσων συνχαί τοῦ δορίον τοῦ δυνάμενον εἰκαθάραι; τοῦτ’ οὖν καὶ περὶ τοῦ σοῦ παιδός οὖν, φίλων ἀριστε, ἐτει πολλῆς μὲν δεῖτα καθάρσεως, πλείονος δὲ δαπάνης.

124 Chis., f. 166v ll. 28–29 – f. 167v ll. 1–3: ἀλλὰς δὲ τ’ ἀργύριον παλιννοστήσειν πρὸς τὴν σήμερον σεβαστότητα μηδ’ εἰς νόν βάλε· οὐτε γὰρ δόξας, οὔτε πόρον ἀνεμοῦσι ποτε τὰ προκατελημένα καὶ ὡς κλήρος οἰκειωθέντα πολλῷ γε ἀλλου γραμματισταίς οἱ πολλά τῷ περι淝τν τῇ ἐνδείᾳ τούς πολλάς ὑπερβάλλουσιν.


Karpozilos argues that Hyrtaikenos’ 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*.128 Similarly, Neamonites employs “the art [of rhetoric] toward making a living” (ep. 6)129 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 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.”130

The expenses and other neccessities 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.”131 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”132), Neamonites fathers of his students from the onus of supporting his livelihood by compensating his teaching and could practice the “art of rhetoric” free of material worries. Moreover, he would also free the immediately enjoy a face-to-face conversation.”130

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,135 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 students:

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”].134

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,135 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
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 Libanius, a major rhetorical model of the Palaiologan period. \(^{137}\) This is evidenced by the book epigram\(^ {138}\) he composed for a codex carrying Libanius’ Orations. The epigram, transmitted on f. 173° of Chis.,\(^ {139}\) praises the content of the book, which is worth reading despite its difficulty:

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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.\(^ {140}\)
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This codex of Libanius 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.\(^ {141}\) 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 \(\text{πεπαιδευμένοι}\), 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.”\(^ {142}\) Moreover, Maximos praises the book for the calligraphy of the scribe and the large investment made by its owner who, due to his

\(^{136}\) Chis., f. 169° II. 13–22: ἐπειδὴ δ᾿ ἐκεῖνα λόγος ἦν ἄλλος καὶ ή φύσις δ᾿ ἡμῶν ἀμετάπτωτος ἦς ἀργήθην ἐπειδὴ δὲ πρὸς τὰ λεγόμενα ἡμᾶς ἀπειθήσεις, καὶ ἡμέρᾳ τὴν βίβλον ἔγειραν τοὺς πάθοις ἐκ τῆς τέχνης ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὡς ἦν ἅγιον καὶ λέγω τῷ τρόπῳ, καὶ μάλιστα πρὸς σὲ τὰ παλαιότερα. Μαθητὴν ὃποίῳ ἦ τὸ στοματίων Φίλομα καὶ καὶ ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητὴν ὅποιον ἦ τὸ στοματίων ἀργήθην, ἢττον ἢ τῇ τέχνῃ ἔρμοι μαθητή
ambition (ῥήγωμα)\textsuperscript{143} for knowledge, “has spent much of his gold in order to become master of such a possession.”\textsuperscript{144} Hence, it may be inferred that the codex transmitted Greek rhetorical texts which were so much “desired” – to say it with Neammites – circulated, and highly esteemed within the circles of Palaiologan πεπαιδευμένων.

Neammites could publish 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 (ἐμφάνεια)\textsuperscript{145} 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.”\textsuperscript{146} Having acquired such a “catalogue of enjoyment,” Kritopoulos is asked to share the rewards he gathered from the book and send Neammites 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.\textsuperscript{147} 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.\textsuperscript{148} Neammites’ ep. 11 finds corroboration from the letter collections of the time, which are a testimony to the “mentalità libresca” of the Byzantine society,\textsuperscript{149} proffering considerable evidence of book


\textsuperscript{145} On ὀφέλεια, see G. Cavallo, Lire à Byzance, transl. P. Odorico – A. Segonds (Séminaires byzantins 1). Paris 2006.

\textsuperscript{146} Chis., f. 171’’ 10–13: Βίβλον εδ ἐγκατήρισε τό καλὸν χαρακτῆρι τοῦ γράφαντος καὶ τῷ πρῶτον κτησαμένῳ τῆς φιλοτιμίας χάριν εἴδέναι οὔτωσι μάλα συνήχους τοῦ χρυσοῦ κατακενθάσαι τοῦ γενέσθαι τοῦτον κύριον κτήματος.

\textsuperscript{147} Chis., f. 171’’ 13–18: σοὶ δ’ ὡς οἷα πλέον θημὸν τὸ τε προγεγονότι καὶ τὸν νόμον ὑποτάσσει πολλὰς τῶν χαρίτων τοῦ μὲν ὡς συντεταχήσει τοτοῦ ὠνάν πάντων ἵσαν ἐπαίνον, τὸ δ’ ὡς ἐμπιστεύσαι σοι ἐς πολὺ τοῦ χρόνου κατασχῆναι καὶ ὡς εἰκὸς ἰκανήν ὑπέρακοισμένων τοῦτον μὲν ἐκ τῆς μεταγραφῆς τῶν ἐγκαταστάσεως ὧν ὧν ἐμπιστεύει τοῦ κτήσασθαι ταύτα τῆς κυρίας ἐς κύριον.

\textsuperscript{148} Chis., f. 171’’ 18–22: ἂν εἰ μεταδοθῇ οὐν καί ἄνον αὐτοῦ ἐφικάμενον τῆς βιβλίου χάριτος καὶ μή τὴν ποιητικὴν μονὸν δεῖξεις ἐξεῖς πίθακα ἒ καί πινάκα τῆς δ’ ἀπολαύσεως οὐδαμῶς ἀπείροις, τάς ἕν τοῦ γε προτέρῳ τοῦ τε μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἐϊ δὲ βούλη καὶ σοὶ τριτὸ χάριν ἐσομαις οὐ μικράν.

\textsuperscript{149} Chis., f. 171’’ 22–27: διεξηγήσεται μηδὲν ὑπάρχαμα τῆς προδιειλημμένης ἕκονος ἢ παραδείγματος, ἢν ἡ χάρις οὐκ εἰς τὰ σύνεχας μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἐς ἐξευθέντους μετατείχεται· ἢ μέν ἐκ τῆς προφανοῦς καὶ συνεχοῦς ἐστειλάτος σπουδαζούσος ἀπομάξασθαι τὸ καλὸν τῆς τέχνης, ἢ δ’ ἀρ’ ὅν τὸ πότιμον αὐτῆς καὶ διεῖδες εἰς κύριον πείνα παρεχομένης τοῖς ἐντυγχανόσαν.
In addition to books, the Byzantine literati often exchanged literary compositions for peer review and feedback. For instance, as already seen, Georgios Oinaiotes asked Ioannes Kalampakes to read 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.”151 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.”152 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)153– Neamonites might have been Oinaiotes’ teacher —, Oinaiotes praises his judgment as “the most capable in these matters.”154 If the oration gains Maximos’ endorsement, this would give Oinaiotes a cause for great joy and silence his detractors.155

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.”156 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.”157 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


151 Compare, for an earlier period, GRÜNBERT, Formen der Anrede 84–85.

152 Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum I, Appendix, Centuria III. 45, 426: καρκίνου πορεία: ἡ ἀρρή καὶ δυσδόρθιοτος. See also Aristophanes, Pax 1083.


155 Laurentianus S. Marco 356, f. 36v II. 12–16 – f. 37v II. 1–5: δικαίων ἔνεκα ἐνός μὲν δὴ καὶ πάντως ἄλλων τόνδε χειροτοπίσαντες ὡς εἰποὶ τὰς ἐπανέπαυσις πάντες εἰς οἶδα τὴν φιλία χαριζομένων λέγουσιν ἢτα δὲ λέγουσιν. εἰ δὲ σοι καθ’ ἱδρύλην θεασώμενο καὶ τῆς σῆς εὐχῆς ἀπολαύσειεν, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἡ μεγίστη εἰ ἢν ὁ νομιμογομένη εὐθυμίαι, ἑμφαγετῇ δ’ ἀνα ς ἐμοῖς καὶ τὸ σῶμά των μὴ ἡμετέρων κυριοτότον τὸν λόγον.

156 Chis., f. 16v II. 4–6: πάνω μοι δοκεῖς τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων κρίσεις ἐκφέρειν οὐχ ὑγέας, οὐδέ γε δεινῶν ἐνεώι σε ἃ Ἰδέως μὴ τούτως εἴπαν ἀνόδρος ἀρετὴν διαγινών.

157 Chis., f. 16v II. 9–16: ὡς πρὸς τὴν μὴ καὶ ἄλλος ἐπιβάλλειν ἐπισκόπως οὕτω εὐφροσύνη παρέχω ταῖς καὶ ταῖς κατ᾽ ἐμὺ τὴν σαυτῶν γνώσιν παριστάς ἐπικρίσθησαν: εἰ δὲ γε νυν ἔχεις σε πάντες συμφησίσεις οἱ τὰ σὰ μὴ ἀγνοούντες ως κάθως ἀναμφιλόγον πρὸς τοῦτο ἔρχοντος, διὰ τῶν ἄλλων τὰ μα ἡθεώς καὶ ἀμφοτέρων ἀμοιρά λειτεῖται, ἤτοι κατὰ τὸν τοῦ σοφοῦ λόγον τυφλώτειν περί τὰ οἰκεία ἢ τετέχειν δόξεις τρόπον τοῦ κολάκος.
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, Neamontes 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.”\(^{158}\)

### III.3. MAXIMOS NEAMONTES AS BROKER\(^{159}\)

Neamontes 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). Neamontes 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 ἥθοποιΐα, i.e., character sketch, which Neamontes as schoolmaster may have constructed as a model for his own students. This ep. is analyzed at length elsewhere.\(^{160}\)

Maximos intervened in another case of marriage in ep. 9, by far the shortest among his ep., 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 Neamontes 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.\(^{161}\)

The parents most likely appeared before the judge carrying the ep. in which Neamontes 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.”\(^{162}\) 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

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158 Chis., f. 167\' ll. 16–23: ὃς <τὰ> πάντα συγχεῖ καὶ τὰ ἀνοικάτω ποιεῖ μὴ διαπεσεῖν τοῦ σκοποῦ ἄνδρός δὲ νοῦν ἐξόντας καὶ τρόπον πόρρω μὴ διούσιν τάληθος προσθήκης ἀνευ αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ παραγμονοῦν τὰ ἄντα εὗ τε καὶ ἐτέρως ἐξόντα· ἢ τοῦν τοιοῦτο τι μηδὲν ὄν ψής κεκτημένους τοῦ λοιποῦ μὴ φέρων περίπατε ἢ τὸ κόλαξ εἶναι καὶ ἀκούεσθαι παρὰ τῶν ἡκόνων τρόπον τοῦ σοῦ μὴ χαλέπαινε.


161 Chis., f. 167\' ll. 16–23: ὃς <τὰ> πάντα συγχεῖ καὶ τὰ ἀνοικάτω ποιεῖ μὴ διαπεσεῖν τοῦ σκοποῦ ἄνδρός δὲ νοῦν ἐξόντας καὶ τρόπον πόρρω μὴ διούσιν τάληθος προσθήκης ἀνευ αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ παραγμονοῦν τὰ ἄντα εὗ τε καὶ ἐτέρως ἐξόντα· ἢ τοῦν τοιοῦτο τι μηδὲν ὄν ψής κεκτημένους τοῦ λοιποῦ μὴ φέρων περίπατε ἢ τὸ κόλαξ εἶναι καὶ ἀκούεσθαι παρὰ τῶν ἡκόνων τρόπον τοῦ σοῦ μὴ χαλέπαινε.

162 Chis., f. 170\' ll. 14–16: τοιαῦτα θάρρος σῆς καθαρᾶς φιλίας/ ἐμήν ἀμβράνην κίνησιν ἐς τοὺς λόγους/ ἐπεισεν εἰσάν ἐς λαμφρὰν λαλίδα,/ ἢτις πρὸςχεὶ μείματα τῆς δίκης/ ἀγνοουμενὴ πάνυ καὶ δίχα ῥόπου/ τοῦ συνθολοντὸς ἀκτίνας ἀλήθῃς.

163 Chis., f. 170\' ll. 17–18: δέξα τοὐτοῦ τοὺς ἀνθρώπος, θεώτατε δέσποτα, καὶ διηγομένους συμφοράς τᾶς περὶ τὸ θυγάτριον ἀληθείας νόμισμον πλεῖον γὰρ πεπότθησιν ἢν διηγήσαντο.
III.4. MAXIMOS NEAMONITES AS LETTER-WRITER. LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Neamonites’ epp. might be characterized by what Dennis called “Byzantine clarity.” Written in Atticizing Greek, a contruced sociolect divorced from the “lackluster speech of everyday life,” 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 ἀπαξ 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.” Here he uses two feminine nouns in genitive singular, μούσης and μέλψεως; 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 (μέλψεων) in a scholion to Euripides’ Hecuba 916, transmitted by the fifteenth-century codex Florence, Plut. 31.17, f. 34r. This manuscript carries Euripides’ Hecuba and Orestes with Moschopulean scholia. 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 ὀλιγομισθίᾳ (“little recompensation”), a noun that he apparently derives from the adjective ὀλιγομισθίος, ὀν (“receiving small wages”).

Neamonites’ epp. are a rewarding place for analyzing intertextuality and literary μίμησις in Palaiologan epistology. 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.171

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163 Chis., f. 170v II. 19–21: ὁ γὰρ κηδεστὴς αὐτῶν βαρότερος πέρικε τοῦ παρ’ Ὀμήρου ἄχθους εἰς δε γνώμης ἀνάχασιν καὶ μετατροπὴν παῖδα τοῦ ἀδέμων ἐκεῖνον Πρωτέα καὶ τὴν ἑμιστροφὴν ἀναπεριφέρει.
164 Chis., f. 170v II. 21–24: καὶ γούν ἂν τῶν φαρμάκων τὰ γε δραστικότερα, ὡς τῶν ἰατρῶν οἱ δεκταίται, τῇ περιείη οἱ γνώμης πάντα πρόσφερε ἢ καὶ τὸ ἀνίατον παντάπασιν ἀπογνώσις τῆς ἰατρείας ἀπέστη.
167 Chis., f. 168v II. 2–3: τῆς αὐτοῦ μνημεία μούσης καὶ μέλψεως περιείη τοῖς ἐπὶ ζώσι.
Throughout his epp., Maximos resorts to a plethora of quotations and references to classical authors, especially Homer,172 Euripides,173 which he is very likely to have taught, but also Aristophanes and Plato. Thus, he alludes to “the rose-fingered Morning” (Odyssey 2. 1) (ep. 1), “the burden” (ἀχθος) 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).174 Moreover, he curses together with Aristophanes “may it badly perish” (Ecclesiazusae 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).175

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),176 Proteus and Empusa (ep. 9).177 Other figures from Maximos’ epp. are Abaris (the Hyperborean) (ep. 12),178 Lynkeus, one of the Argonauts (ep. 12), the trainers or the anointers (ἀλεῖπται) of the Olympic Games (ep. 2) – a simile employed by Neamonites for displaying himself as schoolmaster –,179 and the Hellanodikai, the chief judges at the games held in honor of Zeus at Olympia (ep. 8).180 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 (παροιμίαι) and verses into his epp. For instance, as seen above, ep. 5 opens with the swan song adage,181 where Neamonites also informs his addressee about his Tantalian suffering.182 In ep. 6 he writes that “the rivers are flowing upstream” (ἄνω χωροῦσι ποταμῶν ἁι πηγαί)183 and in ep. 7 that the time “has moved the unmovable” (κινεῖ τὰ ἀκίνητα).184 The addressee of ep. 4 read a similar παροιμία, namely that it is time’s habit “to turn things upside down, as if Homer had received one of the Homeric verses as a gift”.185


Cf. Corpus paraemigraphorum II 772–773: Mantissae Proverbiorum II 94.

Cf. Corpus paraemigraphorum I 47: Zenobius II. 56.

down” (τὰ ἄνω κάτω ποιεῖν). Furthermore, in ep. 8 Neamonites speaks of “the ox [standing] on the tongue” (ὁ ἐπὶ γλώσσῃς βοῦς) and in ep. 12 he exhorts that “you shall say the dream” (εἰπὲ σὺ τὸ ἐνύπνιον). 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 chiastic structure.

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 Oinaiotes. 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.

[Fig. 1 Chis. gr. R. IV. 12, f. 170v: Maximos Neamonites’ epp. 8 (fragment) and 9 to Gregorios Kleidas, and 10 (fragment) to an anonymous court official] – image removed for copyright reasons

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187 Cf. Corpus paroemiographorum II 563: Apostoles XII. 78b: ὅνειρατά μοι λέγεις: ἐπὶ τῶν ἀπιστα καὶ ἀδύνατα διηγομένων· ὅθεν καὶ ἡ κοινὴ καὶ δημόδης παροιμία· τοῦτο κατ’ ὄναρ εἶδος.