CHARTOPHYLAX: THE LIBRARIAN IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE[1]

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Abstract: Chartophylax is originated in Byzantium and named a person in the service of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The primary responsability of the chartophylax was the patriarchal archive. In time this position was not assigned to one individual, usually a monk, in the service of the patriarch in Constantinople, who was in charge with the office archive and official documents, but also was assigned to a monk or a nun who used to be responsible with the protection and preservation of the books in the monastery library, as well as with the record of the books lended to the monks in the monastery.

Keywords: Chartophylax, Librarian, Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, Public library

Chartofilax (short presentation)

The term *hartofilax, chartofilax* or *chartophylax* is originated in Byzantium and named a person in the service of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

From Father Professor Ioan N. Floca, we learn that „*Patriarchs organized the groups of collaborators or the courts of high officials or dignitaries, taking into consideration two aspects, as follows: first, the traditional rules from the Saint Apostles and from the first centuries of the Christian era, and then, the rules for the high officials at the imperial court*"[2].

As regarding the structure of the groups of collaborators, according to the the Saint Apostles rules and from the first centuries of the Christian era, patriarchs took over the symbolic number 7, and they used to have 7 deacons[3], then the same number of presbiters[4], treasurers, bishops, as well as other church servants.

Patriarchs took over the organization structure of the imperial court, as follows:

1. Settlement of a limited group of officials[5], similar to that around the emperor, and including the closest and useful councillors. This limited council of ministers of the emperor usually included 5 high officials of the Byzantine Empire, where from they had their names of *pentade*[6].

[1] The Romanian version of this article was published in: NEDELCU, Silviu – Constantin. Chartofilaxul: bibliotecarul în Imperiul Bizantin. În: DAMIAN, Theodor (ed.). *ROMANIAN Thraco-Dacian and Byzantine Romanity of Eastern Europe and Asia Minor MEDIEVALIA*. Vol. XI. New York: The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, 2012, pp. 143-151. Volumul conferinţei este menţionat online la adresa http://www.romanian-institute-ny.org/romanianmedievalia.html (site accesat pe 9 august 2016).

[2] FLOCA, Ioan N. *Drept canonic ortodox. Legislaţie şi administraţie bisericească*, [online]. Vol. 1. Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1990, p. 340. [cited June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.scribd.com/doc/72932269/Drept-canonic-FLOCA.

[3] They were in charge with the social assistance in the Church.

[4] Priests.

[5] In the East, they were called *archons*, and in West, they were called cardinals cf. *Ibidem*, p. 340.

[6] Greek term formed of *penta* = 5 and *tados* = group, meaning a goup of five people.

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2. Increased number of pentade, similarly to the imperail court. At the beginning, there was only a pentade, then various pentades were settled, bearing the name of first pentade, second pentade, third pentade, and reaching finally 9 pentades[7]. The first pentade was called protipentade[8], „*word used in our language in the past for the highest class of land owners*"[9].

3. Adopt some names for church ranks.

Beginning with emperor Justinian the Great time (527-565), the Patriarch court in Constantinople was organized following the imperial court pattern. The Patriarch of Constantinople assigned the important number of people around him, according to their positions into: the internal and external courts.

The internal court included monks, patriarch's close councillors; the patriarch had as main task to take care and watch the entire patriarchy[10]. As the monks lived in a cell close to the patriarch cell, they were called *sinceli*[11], and the first of them was called *protosincel*[12].

The internal court included two groups named *choirs*, one in the right and the other in the left of the patriarch. Each choir was formed of 9 pentades, or groups of high officials. The choir in the right, which was the most important as they adviced the patriarch, included 3 pentades The first pentade include the following church officials, later on named archons: 1. *treasurer;* 2. *sachelar* (*church rank)*; 3. *schevofilax*; 4. *chartophylax*[13]; 5. *sacheliu (church rank).*

Taking into consideration the subject of the present paper, I'm not going to explain the other church ranks, as well and I refer only to the *chartophylax.*

Father Professor Ioan N. Floca stated that „*Chartophylax was in charge with the preservation of the official papers, meaning the documents, correspondence and the archive of a church centre. He was also responsible for the office in the ierachical church centres or he used to be chaencellor. His name comes from the Greek χαρτοφύλαξ meaning watch, guard or papers guard, meaning taking care of them as documents, the main task for a hartofilax. He was helped, as the other archons, by a group of people with special training*"[14].

This position of *chartophylax*, attested beginning with the 6th century, most probably under emperor Justinian's rule, was assigned, usually, to a *deacon*[15]. Beside archivist and responsible with the official documents in the office, hartofilax was able to replace the patriarch, at the synode[16].

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[7] Their number is symbolic, meaning the nine groups of angels, as they were presented by Dionysus the Areopagite in his work *About heaven ierachies*.

[8] Greek term formed of *protos* = the first and *pentade*, meaning the first pentade.

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 340.

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 342

[11] It means together living in cells.

[12] Greek term formed of *protos* = the first and *sincel*, meaning the first *sincel*

[13] LAURENT, Joseph. Communication: Sur la valeur des inscriptions grecques postérieures à 1453. In: *Bulletin de correspondence hellénique*, [online]. Volume 22. 1898. p. 570, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/bch_0007-4217_1898_num_22_1_3504.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 343

[15] Inferior position of the *priest*.

[16] MACRIDES, R. J. Chartophylax. În: KAZHDAN, Alexander P. (chief editor), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, [online]. Vol. 1. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 415-416, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.docfoc.com/133247015-alexander-p-kazhdan-the-oxford-dictionary-of-byzantium-volume-1-1-1991-pdf.

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It was interesting that some monasteries used to have a man or a woman *chartophyilax*[17], a monk or a nun in charge with the protection and preservation of the monastery register [18]; they also were in charge with the record of the lended documents (books)[19].

Thus, this position was not assigned to one individual, usually a monk, in the service of the the patriarch in Constantinople, who was in charge with the office archive and official documents, but also was assigned to a monk or a nun who used to be responsible with the protection and preservation of the books in the monastery library, as well as with the record of the books lended to the monks in the monastery.

The Library in Constantinople

According to the Latin istoriography, the city of Rome, which was the heart of the Roman Empire was founded on April 21st 753, by Romulus, descendant of the Trojan hero Eneas[20].

Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire until the emperor Constantine the Great (306-337), who moved the capital from the Italian peninsula to Minor Asia. He came in power in 306, and in 324, he ordered the new capital to be built, on the Bosphorus shore, on the place of the former city of Byzantion. Constantine the Great's motivations were those connected with the watch of the oriental border of the Empire in the confrontation with the Persians and the observation of the south –Danube limes. Thus, on May 11, 330[21] it was inaugurated the new capital which beared the emperor's name for 11 centuries, until 1453, when the sultan Mahomed 2nd conquered the Empire, by conquering the city, whose name was changed from din Constantinople into Istanbul[22].

The well-known specialist in Byzantine lore, Steven Runciman, stated that „*after the foundation of Constantinople, the first official documents issued by the Emperors were those about building a public library (imperial library, n. n.) in one of the porticoes*[23] *of the (imperial) Palace*"[24]. It seems that mostly the emperors were interested in learning and libraries; that was the ground for setlling, 100 hundred years later, the University in Constantinople, when the emperor Theodosius 2nd legitimated the foundation of the new university on February 25, 425. The University used to have 10 professors of Greek grammar, 10 professors of Latin grammar, 5 Greek rhetors, 3 Latin rhetors, a department of Philosophy and two departments of laws[25] and all professors were paid accordingly by the state, with the commitment to dedicate their time to teaching.

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[17] Fetched translation, adapted by me in Romanian for feminine gender, from the original Greek *chartophylakissa*.
[18] For the books in the library.
[19] MACRIDES, R. J. *Op. cit.*, p. 416.
[20] *Istoria lumii în date*, elaborated by Horia C. Matei, Florin Constantiniu, Marcel D. Popa, Nicolae C. Nicolescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, under the care of Acad. Prof. Andrei Oţetea. Bucureşti: Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1972, p. 35.
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 47.
[22] The present name of the former capital of the Byzantine Empire, *Istanbul*, is based on two Greek words: *istin* and *polin*, which meant „to go to the City/Capital", as in that time Constantinople was considered to be a wonder of the ancient world and determined the messengers to Constantinople of the Russian knez Vladimir to state in 988, that they did not know if they were in Heaven or on the Earth.
[23] The portic is an exterior gallery whose edge is a colonnade, sometimes with arches, which is a shelter of a walking place, around a square, a building, etc.; it can be also a monumental entrance in an edifice cf. *DEX*.
[24] RUNCIMAN, Steven. The Ancient Christian Libraries of the East. In: *Bulletin of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries*, [online], March 1978, New series, No. 11, p. 6. [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/abtapl/01-11.pdf.
[25] BĂBUŞ, Emanoil. *Bizanţul, istorie şi spiritualitate*. Bucureşti: Editura Sofia, 2003, p. 88.

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Resuming the imperial library in Constantinople, Steven Runciman said that when it was founded, it included about „*7,000 books, and that was a great number, taking into consideration that most of them were manuscripts, rolls or codex*"[26]. Runciman also stated that „*around 477, there were 100, 000 books in this library; unfortunately, it was fired during the uprise which took place in that year and many books were destroyed. The library was restored shortly, there were brought books and it continued to function until 1204, in spite of many earth quakes or fires in that place […] The University in Constantinople used the public (imperial, n. n.) Library*"[27].

We cannot speak about the settlement of an university, in the absence of the future students access to a library. Taking into consideration that Constantinople was at that time the largest city[28], we are not able to imagine there was not a library there.

Beside the imperial library in Constantinople, there were also other private libraries, as the the patriarch library, as well as the monastery libraries in the capital and in the whole empire.

In the capital of the Byzantine Empire, there were many monasteries in the quiet districts and they were surounded by huge gardens. Historian Ovidiu Drîmba stated that: „*each monastery used to have actually a complex of buildings:Father Superior's house, monks' bedrooms, dinning rooms, cellars and larders for food, workshops, houses for pilgrims, a hospital, an asylum, a library and a school for apprentices*"[29].

One of the famous libraries in the Byzantine Empire was that owned by the Patriarch Photius the Great (858-867, 877-886). He used to be officer in the palace guard, imperial high official and then professor at the University. As it used to be a passionate bibliophile, he wrote a work called *Myriobiblion* (known under the name of *Fotie's Library*), an encyclopaedic work where there were presented 300 papers issued by Greek ancient writers, with „*annotations and biographical data about their authors and sometimes critical opinios*"[30].

Steven Runciman stated that „*when a scholar or a collector died, his successors could sell his library*"[31].

After 1204, when the 4th Crusade took place and the French conquered Constantinople installing the Latin East Empire, the public and private libraries were burnt together with their buildings, excepting few books saved by Venetians[32].

Beginning with 1261, when Constantinople was reconquered, the Byzantine emperors did their best to restore the Public Library[33].

In 1453, when the Turks conquered Constantinople, the Byzantine libraries ended their activity. Many of them were destroyed and others were taken over by the sultan, who added them to his library[34].

Chartophylax: the librarian in the Byzantine Empire

Professor Mircea Regneală, in his book named *Noi studii de biblioteconomie*, stated that „*in the Roman Empire, the person in charge with the libraries used to be the libraries*

[26] RUNCIMAN, Steven. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.
[27] *Ibidem*, p. 6-7.
[28] It was said to have about 1 million inhabitants.
[29] DRÎMBA, Ovidiu. *Istoria culturii şi civilizaţiei*. Ediţie definitivă. Vol. 1. Bucureşti: Editura Saeculum I.O., Editura Vestala, 1999, p. 266.
[30] *Ibidem*, pp. 294-295.
[31] RUNCIMAN, Steven. *Op. cit.*, p. 7.
[32] *Ibidem*, p. 7.
[33] *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 8.

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procurator, a kind of general director. He was also in charge with the copysts workshops which provided new titles for the libraries[35].

In the Eastern Roman Empire, which was called later on the Byzantine Empire, the librarian was called *chartophylax* or *hartofilax*. Most of the historians agree and state that *chartophylax* is presented in the Byzantine documents as being the individual, usually a monk, who was also an archivist[36], in charge with the letters and other official documents[37]. This definition was taken over and can be found on some Internet sites[38].

Thus, in Byzantium, librarians were naturally associated with the monks in the patriarch service; the monks were usually in charge with the patriarchy archive and implicitly with the patriarchy library. Beside the archivist activity, chartophylax was cosidered to be the patriarch's „*right hand*"[39] .

The term *chartophylax* was mentioned for the first time in the Byzantine emperor Justinian the Great (527-565) legislation[40].

The first historical mention of the *chartophylax* tasks was during the 6th Ecumenical Synod which took place in Constantinople, in 680. The participants asked that „*the authenticity of an important number of documents should be checked. In order to achieve this goal, they checked the patriarch archive and library*"[41], and they requested many time to be helped by the chartophylax.

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[35] REGNEALĂ, Mircea. *Noi studii de biblioteconomie*. Bucureşti: Asociaţia Bibliotecarilor din România, 2009, p. 26. (colecţia Biblioteca ABR).

[36] FREUND., GUILL. *Grand dictionnaire de la langue latine sur un nouveau plan*, [online], tome premier, Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot et C^ie^, 1929, p. 475, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k58464809.r=chartophylax.langFR; FRANKLIN, Alfred. *Dictionnaire des noms, surnoms et pseudonymes latins de l'histoire littéraire du Moyen Age [1100 - 1530]*, [online], Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot et C^ie^, 1875, col. 404, 565, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k2014722.r=chartophylax.langFR.

[37] This opinion is also expressed by: BEURLIER, Abbé E. Le Chartophylax de La Grande Église de Constantinople. In: *Compte rendu du troisième congrès scientifique international des chatoliques tenu a Bruxelles du 3 au 8 septembre 1894*, [online], Bruxelles: Société Belge de Librairie, 1895, pp. 252, (cinquième section, sciences historiques), [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://it.scribd.com/doc/41607806/Chartophylax; MACRIDES, R. J. Chartophylax. În: KAZHDAN, Alexander P. (chief editor), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, [online]. Vol. 1. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 415-416, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.docfoc.com/133247015-alexander-p-kazhdan-the-oxford-dictionary-of-byzantium-volume-1-1-1991-pdf; ROSSER, John H. *Historical dictionary of Byzantium*, [online], (s.l.): Lanham, Md. : Scarecrow Press, 2001, p. 75, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.scribd.com/doc/105053873/Historical-Dictionary-of-Byzantium; WEHMEYER, Jeffrey M. The chartophylax: archivist and librarian to the patriarch in Constantinople. În *Libraries & Culture*, [online], Winter 1997, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 107-112, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~lcr/archive/fulltext/LandC_32_1_Wehmeyer.pdf.

[38] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartophylax (Site accessed on June 22 2016); http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/chartophylax (Site accessed on June 22 2016); http://orthodoxwiki.org/Chartophylax (Site accessed on June 22 2016)

[39] CAHIER, P. Ch. *Nouveaux mélanges d'archéologie d'histoire et de littérature sur le moyen age. Bibliothèques*, [online]. Tome premier. Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot et C^ie^, 1877, p. 74, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54406998.r=chartophylax.langFR.

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[41] BEURLIER, Abbé E. *Op. cit.*, p. 253.

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At the beginning, chartophylax was also in charge with the patriarch archive[42], and this position referred to the archivist. In the 7th century, at the 6th Ecumenical Synode, we have the evidence that chartophylax used to be also the Patriarchy librarian.

Some monasteries used to have also a *chartophylax*, a monk or a nun in charge with the protection and preservation of the lended books[43]. These are librarian functions, in that time. Thus, this position did not mention only an individual, usually a monk, in the Constantinople patriarch's service and who was in charge with the office archive and official documents, but also a monk or a nun who was in charge to protect and preserve the books in the monastery library and to record the books lended to the monks in the monastery.

It seems that in monasteries, libraries were oragnized on certain categories and they used to have an inventory with the following documents: papers issued by emperors (in chronological order), as well as other documents.

Chartophylax or the monk -librarian, used to have an important responsibility, meaning that to preserve well the original manuscripts owned by the library[44].

Some patriarchs in Constantinople occupied also the position of chartophylax, before being in power, and they used to take care of the archive – library of the Church Saint Sophia in the capital. That was the case of the Patriarch John Bekkos, as well as other Byzantine theologues who occupied this position.

Chartophylax was the similar to the librarian in Rome[45], position occupied by a cardinal-bishop.

Conclusions

The term chartophylax named in the Byzantine Empire not only the monk who was an archivist and Constantinople Patriarch's secretary, but also the librarian.

In his dictionary, Dumbarton Oaks presents librarians' functions at that time. We considered interesting that every monastery used to have a librarian in charge with reading for all monks and he also had the responsibility to restore and preserve books.

In the same time, it was interesting the fact that when Constantinople was founded, the Byzantine emperors founded a public library which they especially cared for. We also mention that the University in Constantinople borrowed books from that library, according to the historian Steven Runciman.

The subject is vast, however, I described shortly librarians importance, as well as their tasks, as I had to limit the article. My intention to write on this subject, in future, a larger study.

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[42] DARROUZÈS, Jean, Vie de Théodore de Sykéon. I. Texte grec. II. Traduction, commentaire et appendice par André-Jean Festugière. In: *Revue des études byzantines*, [online]. Année 1972, Volume 30, Numéro 1, p. 346, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/rebyz_07665598_1972_num_30_1_1459_t1_345_0000_2.

[43] MACRIDES, R. J. *Op. cit.*, p. 416.

[44] LEFORT, M. Jacques. Histoire des institutions de l'Empire byzantin. In: *École pratique des hautes études*, [online] 4e section, sciences historiques et philologiques. Livret 12. 1996-1997. 1998. p. 131, [cited: June 22 2016], Available online: http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/ephe_0000-0001_1996_num_12_1_10182.

[45] WEHMEYER, Jeffrey M. *Op. cit.*, pp. 107-112.

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