Introduction to Part 1

Panoply I am most rightly called,
Because I am providing weapons sharper than the sword,
Capable of obtaining glorious trophies and worthy victories
For those whose impetus is against all heresies.
My father is the monk Zygadenos,
Who in simplicity explained the precise meaning of the Scriptures.
Hitherto I remained unknown in the darkness
As gold hidden deeply in the ground.
Athanasios, the Archbishop of Drystra, is printing me
At his own expense, for (spiritual) benefit.
Let, therefore, all of you pray for him that he may reach old age
And afterwards the heavenly abode.¹

The first printed edition of the Panoplia was not only the fruit of antiquarian interest but was deeply related to current affairs of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. The quoted verses come from the Tîrgoviște edition of the year 1710 as uttered by the authentic voice of the Panoplia promising to provide its readers with “weapons sharper than the sword.” With minor but nonetheless important changes in the original content, the anthology of Alexios I Komnenos was once more employed in the fight against coeval religious opponents. This was possible only in a cultural milieu permeated by the language and the values of Byzantium.

The publication was initiated by Orthodox churchmen and theologians and happened in the Principality of Wallachia, a region which from the Middle Ages belonged to and shared the tradition of the Byzantine Commonwealth. The Commonwealth consisted of a group of nations that were autonomous in political terms but had strong connections with each other. Undoubtedly, the Orthodox Church formed the strongest bond among these people and continued as a binding element long after the fall of the empire.² Given this background, the Panoplia offers the possibility of tracing the development of one of those flexible cultural nerves that made and sustained the Commonwealth.

¹ PG 130, col. 17. All translations in this study, unless otherwise indicated, were made by the author.
However, to present the anthology in a new historical setting may well be more dangerous than it appears at first sight, because it is inevitably connected with the different context in which this Byzantine text appeared again. First and foremost, after the fall of Constantinople the Great Church was in a new, subordinate position, without an emperor. In addition, the seventeenth century was a troubled time for the Orthodox Church—at the turn of the previous century, in 1596, in Ruthenia was created a Uniate Church of Orthodox who preserved their Eastern rite of service but entered into communion with the Catholics and accepted the primacy of the Pope. The period was marked by controversies over the tradition and legacy of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Cyril I Lukaris and the Calvinising Confession which in 1629 was published in Latin in Geneva with the name of the Patriarch as an author. This Confession was also soon translated and considered allegedly to be representing pristine Orthodox teachings. In the context of this period should be added the danger of Uniatism in Transylvania, and the troubled situation of the Russian Church after the reforms of Patriarch Nikon in Russia. The micro-focus on the Panoplia edition shows how these major events necessitated, and were reflected in, the Tîrgovişte edition.

In the Early Modern period the tradition of the heresiological genre to ascribe to new movements the names of older heresies had been preserved. This made it possible for the chapters of the Panoplia from the twelfth century, at this time to be read as a defense against the Calvinists, the Uniate Church of the Greek Catholics in Transylvania, the Roman Catholics, and the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. The anthology gave the authentic voice of the Greek Church Fathers in an age when the Patristic legacy was already in use and under discussion both by Catholics and Protestants.

6 Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople for the following periods: November 1620 – April 1623; September 1623 – October 1633; October 1633 –March 1635; March 1637–June 1638. Dates for the terms of office of Patriarch Lukaris, as well as other Eastern Patriarchs, are taken from Podskalsky, Η ελληνική θεολογία, 495–509.