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WHAT THE WEST HAS WON BY THE FALL OF BYZANTIUM?

After the Fall of Byzantium, a large number of Greek humanists arrived in Europe. They greatly affected the study of Greek language and thought in the whole of Europe. This paper investigates three main areas of their influence: teaching, translating, and publishing.

Wittily, Paul Oskar Kristeller wrote that the Renaissance could be practically reduced to the traveling of books and people.

It is a well-known fact that more than any other phenomenon, it was the restoration of Greek that widened the horizons of Western European scholarship. This was preliminary due to the scholars who exiled, or having fled the former Byzantium, became the source of a reconsidered education. In the following, I hope to shed additional light on the direct role of those Greek refugees in the revival of classical learning.

"Latin erudition, however ample, is imperfect without Greek," wrote Erasmus who arrived in Italy during the fall of 1506. As he put it, "Italiam adivimus... Graecitatis potissimum causa." 1

Indeed, Greek refugees from Ottoman held or threatened territories, in fleeing to the west, funded centers of learning or accelerated the development and dissemination of humanist thought. Well educated, versed in languages, wherever they landed, they became engaged in teaching, or editing and copying manuscripts, i.e. in the pivotal activities of the new learning.

It was Venice, with her closest connection to Byzantium that became the primary hub of Greek refugees, causing Cardinal Bessarion to refer to the Serenissima as "almost a second Byzantium." 2 Greek humanism also became a political tool to Venice, because of her special relationship to Byzantium. 3

3 One may track down many of those scholars in P.O. Kristeller’s Iter Italicum (London, 1963–).
As it is widely considered, the beginnings of Greek studies in Italy can be traced to the Councils of Ferrara and Florence.\textsuperscript{4} However, the most lasting legacy of the Council Meetings, I propose, was their by-product, the scholarly activities they had triggered.

The first scholar to be mentioned here must be Manuel Chrysoloras (1355–1415), who should be credited with single-handed founding the discipline of Hellenic studies.\textsuperscript{5} Although Chrysoloras translated Plato’s “Republic,” his most important contribution to Hellenic studies was his grammar and his students. They included the ‘already famous,’ such as Leonardo Bruni and Palla Strozzi and dozens of newcomers to the discipline. In the memorable quote of Chancellor Bruni, it was Chrysoloras who inspired him “to learn the language no Italian had understood for the last seven hundred years.”\textsuperscript{6}

In the following I shall attempt to present at least a broad evaluation of the impact Greek scholars had on the acculturation of Hellenic humanism in the late fifteenth and the early decades of sixteenth century Italy. I am going to consider two groups, albeit they often overlap: that of the scholar/teachers and of the copyists.\textsuperscript{7}

After the Fall of Byzantium, Crete, then under Venice, became the immediate center of refugees from the entire Greek world. From there, a continuous flow of refugees labored to reached Italy. But, most importantly, there remained a living link, connecting the expatriates and those left behind. However, in the Cretan monasteries the level of education was generally low. The best place to study was an offshoot of St. Catherine’s of Sinai, but even there, just the rudiments of theology and philosophy were taught.\textsuperscript{8} Copying, however, became a truly Cretan skill during the fifteenth century. Examples of Candian calligraphy can be found in all major European manuscript collections. Whereas the most ambitious copyists, such as Michael Apostolis (1415/22–1476/88?) wanted to leave, above all, for Venice, many stayed behind and worked out Crete for Venetian patrons.

Apostolis who studied with Pletho and John Argyropoulos, was taken prisoner after the Fall of Byzantium. He was allegedly ransomed by Cardinal Bessarion, enabling him to return to Heraklion where he later died. Apostolis was a copyist but also a collector of manuscripts. He always hoped to move to Italy, and besieged Bessarion with letters to that end. He did travel twice to Italy.\textsuperscript{9} But it seems he was

\textsuperscript{4} The discussion of the purpose and achievements of the Council falls beyond the scope of this short study.

\textsuperscript{5} Invited by the statesman Pall Strozzi, Chrysoloras remained in Florence as professor of Greek from 1385/6 to 1398.

\textsuperscript{6} Giuseppe Cammelli, “Manuele Crisolora,” I dotti bizantini e le origini dell’umanismo (Florence, 1941), vol. 1.

\textsuperscript{7} For the first comprehensive treatment of the subject, see Georg Voigt, Die Wiederbelebung des klassischen Altertums. 3d. ed. (Berlin, 1893).

\textsuperscript{8} Geanakoplos, p. 46.

\textsuperscript{9} It seems he travelled via Modona and the Dalmatian coast. He stopped in Santari, known for its Greek colony, in order to visit an uncle, a bishop of that see. Bu by the time he arrived, the uncle was dead and his wealth squandered away in affairs with prostitutes.
more useful for the Cardinal in Crete, from where he provided Bessarion with manuscripts and copies.

Apostolis was active politically, involved in the struggle against the Turks. One of his works, an oration was addressed to Frederick III, urging a crusade against the Ottomans.  

John Argyropoulos, another major figure of the Greek emigration, was born in Constantinople, taught in Florence, and later in Rome. His students included Lorenzo de' Medici, Angelo Poliziano, and Johannes Reuchlin. Although he was a follower of Aristotle, he treated Plato's ideas with great respect. His most important work was his Aristotle translation into Latin. During his 1465 visit to Italy, the poet Janus Pannonius looked him up in his home in Florence and attended one of his classes in philosophy.

As is known, renaissance translations were not executed with accuracy in mind. A new translation of Homer was to fit the Latin ideal, i.e. Virgil. Similarly, Latin translations were not influenced by the Greek Bible, but by Homeric Greek. Aristotle was retranslated into elegant Latin, which in turn led to the improvement and embellishment of renaissance Latin. The word "traducere" came in vogue, as opposed to "transferre," or "transvertere," used previously.

Comparing translations became a humanist hobby. A typical early example is Nicolaus Cusanus who compiled and annotated various Plato translations. It should be mentioned here that while Cusanus had traveled to Constantinople and participated in the Byzantine Council, his Greek remained mediocre. He used mostly Latin translations, never becoming a true "vir trilinguis."

In Central Europe, Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370–1444?) and Guarino da Verona (1370–1460) introduced the idea of and the need for Greek studies. In the court of Sigismund of Luxembourg, Vergerio translated Archianos’s Alexander biography into Latin.

Having been a student of Chrysoloras, Guarino da Verona, belonged to the first generation of Italians who had studied Greek in Byzantium. He became a professor in Florence (1402), Venice (1415), Verona (1422), and from 1436 on until his death, in Ferrara, where he established the first humanist school. Even the famous scholar, Vittorino da Feltre studied Greek with Guarino. In addition to his pedagogical work, Guarino was an outstanding editor, credited with the editions of Plautus, Livy, Pliny the Elder, and Catullus.


12 For more on him, see Walther Borschin, Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter. Von Hieronymus zu Nikolaus von Kues (Munich, 1980).

13 Ian Thomson, Humanist Pictas. The Panegyric of Janus Pannonius on Guarinus Veronensis (Bloomington, 1986) p. 9. Guarino was not the only Greek scholar in region. His eminent colleagues, Filelfo and Aurispa equaled him.
Plutarch’s ‘second career,’ is closely connected with Guarino’s school. His and Filelfo’s students’ favorite occupation was to translate passages of Plutarch’s work into Latin. Leonardo Bruni, Francesco Barbaro, and Janus Pannonius were just a few with a life-long fascination with Plutarch.

Guarino’s star student, Janus Pannonius, the most important neo-Latin poet in fifteenth-century Central Europe, had personal ties with Greek scholars. In his panegyric, honoring Guarino, one can find the roster of students sitting at the feet of the sage.14 As Bishop of Pécs and a close adviser to Matthias Corvinus, Janus participated in the mainstream of European politics. Yet, he kept working on his Plutarch translation until the end of his life. He also translated passages from Homer and Demosthenes.15 However, according to his own statement, he was the only one who read Greek at Matthias’s court.

Several English humanists came to study with Guarino, among them William Grey (d.1478), later Bishop of Ely. 150 of his manuscripts are still housed in Balliol College. Grey had a tremendous influence on English humanists. John Free (d.1465) and John Guthrope (d.1498) came to study with Guarino at Grey’s expense. As Roberto Weiss put it, “It remained for John Free to become the first Englishman whose Latin was indistinguishable from the best Italian humanists and whose Greek was certainly not inferior to theirs.”16

Regarding the Germanic lands, the Dutch Agricola (Rodolfus Huysmann (1443 –1485) learned Greek from Argyropoulos. At the completion of his studies, Reuchlin was allegedly told by his teacher: “Now Greek has flown across the Alps.”17 Reuchlin also campaigned for Hebrew, believing that a true humanist should be “trium linguarum peritus.”

Conrad Celtis (Konrad Pick, 1459–1508), supported by Emperor Maximilian founded a Greek Academy in Vienna, built on the Venetian model.

The first direct manifestations of Greek learning in Poland are connected with Callimachus Experienzi (Filippo Buonacorsi, 1437–1496) who during his brief Venetian sejourn met several outstanding Greek scholars (possibly also George of Trebizond).18

From the plethora of Greek scholars representing the second generation, Marcus Musurus (1470–1517) should be mentioned here. A Cretan by birth, he arrived in Florence (in about 1486) to visit Ficino and to study with Janus Lascaris (1445–1534). The famous publisher, Aldus Manutius (another student of Guarino), called Venice “the second Athens”, because of the presence of Musurus.19 From 1503

14 “Iani Pannonii Silva Panegyrica ad Guarinum Veronensem praeceptorem suam”, Poemata, Ed. Samuel Teleki (Traiecti ad Rhenum, 1784), I. For more on Janus, see Marianna D. Birnbaum, Janus Pannonius; Poet and Politician (Zagreb, 1981).
19 See Aldus’s epistle, inserted at the beginning of the Aldine “Rhetorum Graecorum Orationes” from 1513.
on, for six years, Musurus was professor in Padua. The same time he edited Sophocles. Later he lived in Venice and worked on his edition of Plato. Marino Sanuto called him “optimus grecus” and mentioned that he had handled 800 of Bessarion’s manuscripts. At the time of his death, Musurus’s importance was considered second only to that of Chrysoloras.

The printing of Greek texts should also be addressed here briefly: Aldus’s “Neacademia” was founded with the purpose of editing and publishing Greek authors. The Academy’s constitution was written in Greek and discussions were conducted in Greek only. Upon his visit to Venice, Erasmus joined the group.

In addition to printing activities in Venice, Zacharias Calliergis (1473?–1524?) founded the Greek Press in Medici Rome. Unlike Aldus who published in a number of languages, Calliergis, supported by wealthy Cretans, published only in Greek. His lasting devotion to Byzantium was proven by the fact that Calliergis adopted the double-headed eagle as his printer’s symbol.

A final word should be said about religious practices. It took until 1539 until San Girgio dei Greci was founded and the Greek community had a church and a cemetery of their own. This was perhaps a case of benign neglect with its own advantages. At times when faculty and students had to take loyalty oaths to satisfy the Inquisition, the Greeks scholars were largely unmolested. Still, for many in Venice, the Greek Church was considered worse than the synagogue (“pezo se fussino zudei”).

Although one cannot talk about a ‘two way stream,’ some Latin humanist texts reached Crete, thanks primarily to Maximos Margouïnos (1549–1602) the Cretan humanist bishop who bequeathed his library — collected in Venice- to the monastery of Iviron on Mt. Athos.

Finally, one question remains unanswered: all their contributions to Western-European humanism notwithstanding, what would have happened, had the Turks not conquered Constantinople? Where would those wonderful scholars have spent their lives? Could they have, would they have, introduced at home the kind of Renaissance they had helped create in Italy?

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ШТА ЈЕ ЗАПАД ДОБИО ПАДОМ ВИЗАНТИЈЕ?

Раширени интелектуални контакти између Истока и Запада постојали су и пре пада Византије. Разни покушаји уједињавања двеју цркава, који су досегли

21 Geanakoplos, p. 67.
врхунац на дуготрајним заседањима у Ферари и Фиренці, доводили су до су-средања учених представника двеју главних грана оновременог хришћанства. Упркос немогућности да се оствари споразум, сабори су покренули ново разумевање преко хуманистичких настојања, изражених превише забележено кроз снажно кретање књига и људи, као и кроз увођење и ширење грчке учености. „Колико-год била латинска ерудиција широка, она је обогађена и несавршена без грчког језика“ изјавио је Еразмо, долазећи 1506. у Италију ради учења грчког. Окупљање грчких избеглица у Италији, потпомагано од кардинала Висариона, учинило је Венецију „другом Византијом“.

Учење је постало једно од основних занимања чак и пре Отоманског осва-јања. Чувени учени људи, као што је био Хрисолор, имали су подједнако славне ученике, као што је био Леонардо Бруни (и други). Слично томе, највећи допринос Хрисолоровог водећег студента, Гварина из Вероне, било је стварање гене-рације хуманиста у његовој школи која је ширила ново учење ка Мађарској, Немачкој и Енглеској. У 16. веку су научници, попут Крићанина Димитрија Дуке, засновали грчке студије чак у Алкали (Шпанија). Друга група избеглица била је ангажована копирањем и, потом, издавањем рукописа. Маркус Мусурс, који је радио за алдинску штампарију, објављивао је двојечишне преводе и, између осталог, издавао Софокла. Неки су учени људи били активни у Италији, неки на Криту и њихови су контакти били врло живи. Један Крићанин, Михаило Апостолис, био је веома учен, студирао са Аргиропулом и веома допринео ширењу грчког језика у Венецији. Са своје стране, Аргиропул је био велики учитељ међу чијим су студентима и такви научници какав је био Ројхлин.

Мада се не може говорити о двосмерном току, латински текстови су тако-ђе налазили путеве до грчких области. Критски хуманист Маргунис, на при-мер, завештао је своју библиотеку атонском манастиру Ивирон. Најзад, треће занимање избеглица било је превођење: ново, темелније истраживање текстова довело је до одличних, коментарисаних превода класика, унапређујући језик и уметност.