Homo Byzantinus and Homo Italicus in Late Thirteenth-Century Constantinople


Michael Psellos on Symeon the Metaphrast and on the Miracle at Blacherna: Annotated Translations with Introductions (Online Monograph, Center for Hellenic Studies, 2014)


Michael Psellos on the ‘Usual’ Miracle at Blacherna: the Law, and Neoplatonism


Psellos’ *Oration on the Miracle that Occurred at the Church of the Blacherna* (Blachernai) is frequently cited in discussion of a famous icon now lost. Psellos’ description of the icon and of the ritual surrounding its weekly display occupies only a small portion of the text however, which focuses upon a protracted legal case evidently notorious in its time. After numerous suits and counter suits, the Constantinopolitan monastery Tou Kalliou and the general Leo Mandalos agreed to settle their property dispute by designating the Virgin through her miraculous icon a “special judge” in a “special court.” Claiming encouragement from Michael VII Doukas, Psellos cites Scriptural and Neoplatonic sources as well as relevant passages from the *Basilics* to compile a text he terms a *hypomnema* or official court memorandum, thus demonstrating his philosophical and legal justification for an innovative process that Psellos hopes will serve as a paradigm for resolving disputes deadlocked under ordinary legal procedures.

Arabs, Latins and Persians Bearing Gifts: Greek Translations of Astrolabe Treatises ca. 1300


Although translation of foreign literature was rare in Byzantium, ca. 1300 three Greek translations of treatises on using the astrolabe appeared, two from Latin and one from Persian or
Arabic. All three are assessed in terms of Greek style and significance for Byzantine culture; the
Islamic treatise translated by Shams al-Din al-Bukhari includes a translator’s preface, edited in
full and translated into English here for the first time. In the preface, Shams describes a deluxe
astrolabe sent to Andronikos II with the treatise in hopes, it is argued, of some personal benefit in
return.

Manuel Holobolos and the Role of Bilinguals in Relations Between the West and
Byzantium

*Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Miscellanea Mediaevalia, ed. Andreas Speer, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 36
(New York and Berlin: de Gruyter 2012) 210-22

A member of the Latin translation section of the Byzantine imperial chancery under Michael
VIII Palaiologos (1259-82), Manuel Holobolos translated from Latin into Greek two rhetorical
works of Boethius and the ps.-Aristotelian text *De plantis*. It is argued here that in his
translator’s preface to *De plantis* Holobolos contrasts literal vs. free translation strategies in
terms resembling the famous remarks of Boethius in the Second Preface to his commentary on
the *Isagoge* of Porphyry (Greek and Latin texts and translations provided here). When
Holobolos translated into Greek Boethius’ *De topicis differentiis* and *De hypotheticis syllogismis*,
he put into practice the fully annotated literal translation style recommended by Boethius.

Ovid’s Metempsychosis: The Greek East

*Ovid in the Middle Ages*, ed. Frank Coulson, James Clark and Kathryn McKinley (New York:
Cambridge University Press 2011) 26-47

Ovidian influence on Greek poetry in late antiquity is a hotly contested subject. In the early
Byzantine period however John the Lydian (C6) and the chronicler John of Antioch (early C7)
clearly knew Ovid’s *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*. The *Metamorphoses*, *Heroïdes*, and amatory
poems became a part of Greek literature in the 13th century through the elegant prose translations
of the scholarly monk Maximos Planoudes.

Alexios of Byzantium and the Apocalypse of Daniel: A Tale of Kings, Wars and
Translators

**Bizans ve Çevre Kültürlər / Byzantium and the Surrounding Cultures** (Festschrift in honor of
S.Yıldız Ötüken) ed. Sema Doğan and Mine Kadiroğlu (Istanbul 2010) 177-85

Alexios of Byzantium returned from Arab captivity in the mid-13th century with a text purporting
to forecast politically significant events from natural phenomena; Alexios translated this text
from Arabic into Greek and provided a translator’s preface (Greek text and translation provided
here) discussing the complex history of the text as evidence of its importance for Byzantine
military success and explaining that “Moabias” (Mu’awiya, Muawiyah) obtained it in 7th-century raids near Constantinople and had it translated into Arabic.

Preprint version (please cite from the published version): alexios.pdf

Monks, Monasteries and the Latin Language in Constantinople

*Change in the Byzantine World in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, edd. Ayla Ödekan, Engin Akyürek, and Nevra Necipoğlu (Vehbi Koç Foundation 2010), 390-95

The presence of western traders in Constantinople from the 10th century required Latin churches in the city and attracted monastic houses; during the Latin occupation these western institutions proliferated. Franciscan and Dominican houses and their libraries remained under Palaiologan rule, attracting Greeks who learned Latin: the Franciscan John Parastron, the Dominican Simon of Constantinople, and the Greek monks Sophonias, Manuel Holobolos, and Maximos Planoudes.

Planoudes’ *De trinitate*, the Art of Translation, and the Beholder’s Share


Maximos Planoudes’ translation of Augustine’s *De trinitate* served the Unionist agenda of Michael VIII Palaiologos and probably dates from ca. 1280. Although the imperial ambassador John Parastron, the Dominican Simon of Constantinople, the court rhetor Manuel Holobolos, and Ogerius Boccanera, Protonotarius of the imperial chancery, were all qualified for the task of translating *De trinitate* into Greek, the young chancery scholar Manuel Planoudes received the delicate assignment and implemented contemporary chancery practices in his translation, eventually coming to regret his involvement in theological controversy. His Greek *De trinitate* was influential in 14th- and 15th-century Byzantium, however. Gregory Palamas, John Cantacuzene, and Prochoros Kydones used it, and Demetrios Kydones, Cardinal Bessarion, Gennadios II Scholarios, and an anonymous 14th-century Dominican of Pera critically evaluated the translation and Planoudes as a translator (Greek and Latin texts and translations provided here).

Manuel Holobolos, Alfred of Sareshal, and the ‘Anonymous’ Greek Translator of ps.-Aristotle’s *De Plantis*

*Classica et Mediaevalia* 57 (2006) 189-211.

This paper supports the suggestion that Manuel Holobolos is the anonymous scholar who retro-translated into Greek the Latin text of ps.-Aristotle’s *De plantis*, a work lost in Greek during antiquity. Holobolos’ scholarly career, his stated practices as a translator from Latin to Greek,
his associations with western scholars in 13th-century Constantinople, and his unabashed chauvinism towards western culture correspond to the translator’s profile that emerges from the preface to the Greek De plantis. The preface is analyzed here (both English translation and Greek text provided), including a vivid sketch of an unexpected encounter between Greek translator and the anonymous western benefactor who gave him the Latin text of De plantis. The translator had exceptional information about the transmission of Aristotle’s original text from Greek into Arabic and about the career of its Latin translator Alfred of Sareshal.

Planoudes’ Technique and Competence as a Translator of Ovid’s Metamorphoses


Vat. Regin. Gr. 132 is the master copy of the Greek translation of Ovid’s Metamorphoses by Maximos Planoudes, who not only supervised the compilation of the manuscript but also corrected it throughout and copied nearly 100 folia himself. This autograph portion of the text includes a passage (Met. I. 700-713) that defeated the translator’s initial efforts despite his attempts to correct his mistakes. Planoudes later returned to this problematic section and inserted a new, corrected version in the lower margin of the folium. Analysis of a similar and successful portion of the translation (Met. I. 543-57) establishes the characteristics of Planoudes’ translation style; evaluation of his errors in translating Met. I. 700-713 reveals the aspects of Latin grammar and syntax that initially defeated him and illustrates the strategy that he devised to correct his own errors.

Planoudes, Holobolos, and the Motivation for Translation

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 43 (2002/3) 77–104

Manuel Holobolos’ preface to his translation of Boethius’ short rhetorical treatises De topicis differentiis and De hypotheticis syllogismis (here translated into English) illuminates the differing efforts of Holobolos and Maximos Planoudes in translating Latin literary materials into Greek and reveals the wider cultural agenda of Planoudes, Holobolos’ junior colleague in the early Palaeologan chancery at Constantinople. Planoudes left no prefaces to his translations but selected literary works appealing to his rhetorically sophisticated contemporaries. Holobolos in contrast provided translations of practical rhetorical works in a spirit of cultural chauvinism.

PDF here:

http://grbs.library.duke.edu/article/view/1811/3011