

Byzantine Writers in Sixteenth-Century Editions from the Periphery of the Renaissance

Thomas Conley
University of Illinois

By the end of the sixteenth century, almost every available Greek text, whether Classical or Byzantine, had been edited, translated into Latin, and published. Much of the Byzantine material was handled by scholars in Basel and Geneva, as well as in Venice, Paris, and Ingolstadt. The enormous achievements of the Basel/Geneva group have yet to be adequately chronicled, and I am not about to try to do that here. Rather, I want to deal with a more limited area, namely the publication of Byzantine writers in regions at the periphery of the European Renaissance, in such places as Alcalá de Henares, Kraków,

Antwerp, and Leiden. Considering the political conditions that prevailed in those cities, it is surprising that such a variety of texts was printed. The significance of these texts for a Western “reception” of Byzantine literature must not be overestimated.

I became interested in this particular body of literature partly because of research I did some years ago into the reception of Byzantine culture in Renaissance and Baroque Poland, which in turn led to research into its reception more broadly in areas commonly perceived to lie on the periphery of the Renaissance. Accordingly, let us start with Poland. There are, in the Biblioteka Narodowa, several editions of Byzantine writers that were part of the personal library assembled at the order of Sigismund Augustus in 1547. None of them were printed in Poland, however, and my inspection of them — for example, of the commentary on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* by Eustratios or the Lexicon of *Suidas* — failed to turn up any evidence of scholarly use. Most were published in Venice (in Aldine editions), Basel, or Paris. In 1509, however, Jan Haller of Kraków published a Latin translation of the letters of Theophylaktos Simokatta (fl. c. 660 CE), based on the 1499 Aldine edition of the Greek text edited by Markos Musouros (c. 1470-1517). The Haller edition was dedicated to Lukas Watzenrode, bishop of Warmia, the uncle of the translator, who has been hailed as Poland’s first Hellenist — namely, Nicolas Copernicus. (This appears to be the earliest Latin version.) Otherwise, I find only an edition of Gennadios Scholarios’ (c. 1405-1475) *De sinceritate Christianae fidei dialogus* (Kraków, 1530) and a 1605 Latin version by Stanislaw Witkowski of the *Apodemus philia* (“Friendship in Exile”) by the twelfth-century poet Theodore Prodromos. Hoffmann’s *Lexicon Bibliographicum* reports a 1581 Wilno edition of Scholarios’ *De*

primatu papae, but I have been unable to locate a copy. As for Bohemia, I have seen references to an edition of the *Arithmetica, musica, et geometria* of Michael Psellos (1018-1096) by a Jesuit teacher at the academy in Trnava founded by Miklos Oláh in 1557, as well as to a 1594 Prague edition of Psellos' *Peri lithôn dynamôn, Nomenclator gemmarum*, edited by C. Acantherus. I have not managed to find either text.

For Spain, we have, first of all, the collection of Greek grammar texts edited by Demetrios Doukas (c. 1480-1527) and published in Alcalá de Henares in 1514. This was undoubtedly linked to the work on the famous Complutensian Polyglot Bible directed by Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros. If it seems strange that Doukas, professor of Greek at the Academia Complutense, who came to Spain from Crete, via Venice, would have been welcomed in Catholic Spain, we should note that Doukas was a Uniate Orthodox Catholic. Also noted are several editions of Johannes Climacus (seventh century CE) between 1568 and 1596, an edition of the *Geoponica* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos (905-959) (ed. Andres de Laguna, 1541), and a 1560 version of the *De officiis regis* of Agapetos (fl. c. 560 CE) by Gracián de Alderete. But the last two were published *sine loco*, so it is hard to credit Spain with these two books.

This brings us to the Low Countries, since it is likely that the last two books noted before were printed there, probably in Antwerp. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Byzantine texts from our peripheral region were published — one way or another, as we shall see — by presses in Louvain, Antwerp, and, later in the century, Leiden. Louvain, of course, was the home of the Collegium Trilingue and of active publishing by such figures as Rutger Rescius. Antwerp was the largest and most active

port in Western Europe with, it might be added, large Portuguese and Spanish communities. Leiden was a latecomer, but quickly achieved distinction later in the sixteenth century after Spanish domination ceased to be an important factor and while Reform was taking hold in The Netherlands.

Rescius (1497?-1545), professor of Greek at the University of Louvain, published numerous texts and translations of Church Fathers such as Basil and John Chrysostom. But he also saw to the publication of Euthymios Zigabenos' *In quatuor evangelia enarrationes* in 1544. What is noteworthy about this is that Zigabenos (fl. C. 1100) was a confidant of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos and a prominent Orthodox apologist — a veritable schismatic. In 1531, Merten de Keyser ("Martinus Caesaris") had published in Antwerp Oecolampadius' 1525 version of the *In IV evangelia enarrationes* of Theophylaktos, Orthodox Archbishop of Ohrid (1088-1126), and in 1545, Jan Steels ("Steelsius") published an edition of Arethas of Caesareia (c. 850-944), *Enarrationes in Acta Apostolorum et in omnes Pauli epistulas* at his press in Antwerp.

This could never have happened in Spain — one recalls that Doukas and the other Greeks published there, including Theodore Gaza and Manuel Chrysolaras, who were Uniate Catholics, but also Arethas, Zigabenos and Theophylaktos, who were certainly not — especially at a time when *qui graecizabant, lutheranizabant* was a common slogan. How did it come about that they were published in the Low Countries, given that they were dominated by Spain at the time? The answer may be that the regent of that part of the Habsburg empire was Maria of Austria, sister of Charles V and widow of

the Hungarian king Louis II Jagiellon, who perished in 1526 in the Battle of Mohác. In the course of her regency (1531-1555), Maria maintained around her in the seat of government in Brussels a circle of humanists — indeed, she once tried to entice Erasmus himself to return to his “homeland” and occupy a place at her court. The fact that she supported such activity, and the fact that Erasmus had long referred to such Orthodox commentators as Theophylaktos of Ohrid (for example, in his 1516 *Novum instrumentum*), may explain how Orthodox writers came to be published in a “Catholic” milieu. And Maria, in any event, was long rumored to have had Lutheran sympathies.

Maria was no longer in power, however, when Steelsius brought out, in Antwerp in 1564, three editions of commentaries by Theophylaktos — a new edition of *In IV evangelia* and, bound together in a single volume, his *Compendiaria in Habacuc, Ionam, Nahum, et Osee prophetas* and *In omnes Divi Pauli Apostoli epistulas enarrationes*. There are several factors that might explain why, at a time when Spain was still (desperately) trying to retain possession of the Low Countries, Steelsius was able to publish what he did. For one thing, the Reform was beginning to assert its presence in Belgium and Holland, in spite of Habsburg policies; and for another, Antwerp was, at the time, a city that boasted almost unprecedented diversity, not to mention material wealth, due to its importance in the spice trade and in international shipping more broadly.

In fact, the Antwerp book trade was among the most vibrant in Europe outside of Venice, Rome, Paris, and Geneva. Printers in Antwerp and later, in Leiden, published several other Byzantine writers, many of them theologically oriented.

After 1576, the year that saw the sack of the city by the Spanish, Netherlandish publishing was concentrated in Leiden, the site of a new university that would become famous all over Europe. Leiden also came to be the home of one of the most renowned presses in Europe, that of Christophe Plantin (1514-1589), who had moved his operations there from Antwerp, along with his son-in-law, François Raphelengius.

In 1564, Plantin put out an edition in Antwerp of the gospel commentaries of Theophylaktos of Ohrid. In 1575, he published two orations composed by the strict Orthodox philosopher, George Gemistios Plethon (d. 1452), *De rebus peloponnensibus orationes duae*, which the remarkable Willem Canter (1542-1575) included in his edition of the *Eklogai* of Stobaeus. On the literary side, we find a 1556 Antwerp edition of Heliodoros' *Aethiopica* — not a Byzantine writer, but widely read and imitated by Byzantine writers — with translation and notes by Stanislaw Warszewicki. In 1568, an edition of Maximos Planudes' Greek version of the *Disticha catonis* came out in Antwerp, and in 1588, Plantin published in Leiden Vulcanius' edition of the *De thematibus* of Constantine VII Porphrogenitus. (The *Opera omnia* of Constantine would be published by the Elzevir press in Leiden in 1617.) In Geneva, Vulcanius had already published with Henri Estienne an edition of Arrian's *De expeditione Alexandri Magni* in 1575. He later went on to publish in Leiden a selection of minor works and letters by Theophylaktos Simokatta in 1596 and an expanded version of the same in the following year.

Plantin's press in Leiden produced several noteworthy editions — a number of them *princeps* — most of them after his death. The 1592 edition of Agapetos was part of Plantin's

Leiden program, but Agapetos (fl. c. 560) was hardly unknown. Not only did Joachim Axonius publish a version in 1561 and again in 1578, but *De officiis* (under various titles) was also well known in translation all over Europe. But the Plantin editions of the *De thematibus* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, of Agathias' (c. 530-582) *De imperio et rebus gestis Iustiniani* (1593), and of Nilus Cabasilas' (fl. 1385) *De primatu papae Romani* (1595), all of which edited by Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538-1614), were all first editions, as was Vulcanius' edition of the Greek texts of Theophylaktos Simokatta's *Quaestiones physicae* and the *Quaestiones medicae* of Cassius Felix (Leiden [Plantin-Raphelengius], 1597).

Aside from these major editions of Byzantine writers, we find some rather intriguing nuggets of Byzantine — or allegedly Byzantine — material inserted into what are, by and large, non-Byzantine works. There are bits and pieces of Theophylaktos of Ohrid, for instance, in Alardus Amstelredamus (1491-1544), *Selectae aliquot similitudines sive collationes, tum ex bibliis sacris, tum ex veterum Orthodoxorum commentariorum* (s.l., 1539), and there are two prayers by Byzantine writers tacked on the end of Alard's *Dissertatio de eucharistiae* (Louvain, 1537) — one attributed to Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (fl. c. 1300) and the other to Matthew Gabalas of Philadelphia, Metropolitan of Ephesus (fl. c. 1310). Alard's main claim to fame is his edition of Rudolf Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*; but he also gained a reputation as a prominent polemicist against the Reformers. It seems reasonable to conclude that he included the Byzantine materials in an attempt to preempt Reform efforts to co-opt Byzantine writers to their cause.

Another Byzantine name shows up in an edition of the pseudo-Ovidian *De vetula*, published in Antwerp in 1534 by Michael Hillen van Hoochstraaten (probably the edition noted by the work's most recent editor (Amsterdam, 1968), D. M. Robathan, as "without indication of place or printer"), *cum argumentiis*, as the title says, *Leonis Protonotarii palatii Byzantinaei* [sic]. This curious work had been in circulation since at least the thirteenth century, and was a popular source book for fifteenth-century encyclopaedists — for example, Walter Burley's *De vita et moribus philosophorum* and an unpublished work, the *Vaticanus* by the Dutch humanist Arnold Geyloven — chiefly because of the assortment of astronomical and astrological lore collected in Book III. Some manuscripts explain that "Leo" served in the court of "Vatachius", thought by some scholars to have been John III Vatatzes, who ruled during the Nicaean exile between 1222 and 1254. The argument is only 14 lines long (see Robathan, p. 39) and is not very informative, noting only that the poem is composed in the voice of a disgruntled lover and was probably written during Ovid's exile in the Pontus. Robathan records editions of incunabula published in Cologne c. 1475 and 1479, and it would seem that one of these was used by Hillen. But the identity — indeed, the existence — of "Leo" is a mystery. An even greater mystery is the appearance of a Latin poem in the court of a Byzantine ruler who was in Nicaea because the "Latins" had, in 1204, sacked Constantinople and driven the ruling Byzantine families into bitter exile.

Also noteworthy is the appearance of three letters by the twelfth-century historian Joannes Zonaras in Vulcanius' notes to his 1605 edition of Cyril of Alexandria's *Adversus anthropomorphitas*. These do not appear in his 1573 edition of

that work, for Vulcanius did not have access to them until 1598 or 1599, when he could examine a manuscript brought back from Constantinople by George Dousa. Their appearance in the 1605 edition was of course their first in print, and the texts of the letters can be found in the Migne edition in *PG* 76. 1069-73, 1073-76, and 1121-24.

In 1534, Hillen published an edition of Aesop's *Fabulae*, in a translation by Cornelius Gerard (1460-1523), or "Goudanus", whose translation had also been published in Louvain in 1517 and 1520. Hillen's was not the first nor the last Antwerp edition of Aesop, as de Keyser put out editions in 1529 and 1530 and Plantin would produce one in 1567, and of course Aesop was enormously popular all over Europe. Of interest to us here, however, is Hillen's inclusion of a *Life* of Aesop by Maximos Planudes (c. 1255-1305). Planudes was one of the most prominent scholars of the Palaeologan Renaissance, a prolific editor and commentator on an astonishing range of authors and subjects and the translator into Greek of such Latin works as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae*. The Greek text of his *Life* of Aesop was first published in the West by Bonaccorso of Pisa in 1478 (?), along with a Latin version by Ranuccio Tetallo, and was frequently reprinted. We find editions in the Netherlands by Symon Cock in Antwerp in 1521, by Plantin, with his 1567 edition of *Aesopi Phrygis fabulae graece et latine, cum aliis quibusdam opusculis*, as well as by Hillen. The Plantin edition is particularly interesting: published in two fascicules, it contains Planudes' *Life* (filling the first 112 pages), the *Fabulae* (new pagination, p. 1-138), and Aphthonios on *mythoi* (p. 139-142) in the first. The second contains, among others, a text of the *Batrachomyomachia* (p. 26-53), the *De officiis* of Agapetos (p. 86-125), and (without attribution) the

Galeomyomachia of Theodore Prodromos (c. 1100-1170) (p. 130-142) in parallel Greek and Latin texts.

Perhaps the most remarkable appearance of a Byzantine writer in the Low Countries in the sixteenth century was made in a slim volume published by Hillen in 1537, which features the treatise *De pudore* by Antonio Ludovico, to which are appended various selections from Greek authors the pertinence of which is not altogether clear. Ludovico, born in Lisbon, studied medicine in Salamanca and went on to publish extensively on Galen and Hippocrates. That leads us to believe that the *De pudore* he composed may have been (like several others, I am told) intended to reconstruct the contents of a treatise by Galen on shame that is not, and was not in Ludovico's time, extant.

Appended to it are some selections from Aristotle and Plato, fragments of the third-century BCE cynic philosopher Teles on wealth and poverty, iambs by Sotades (also third-century BCE), and three "allegories" by the noted Byzantine historian and philosopher, Michael Psellos, "On Tantalos", "On the Sphinx", and "On Circe". These curious *opuscula* — none of which has anything to do with *pudor* — appear in several manuscripts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and are attested as authentic by Allatius in the seventeenth (see PG 122.498C-499A, from his *Diatriba de Psellis*). None of the manuscripts in question would likely have been available to Ludovico; but texts of the allegories could have been, and likely were, found by him in the Γέρας . . . σπάνιον των σπουδαιων ("A Precious Gift for Scholars"), an anthology put together by Arsenios of Monemvasia and published in Rome about 1519.

Why Ludovico — or was it Hillen himself? — should have decided to include Psellos is not altogether clear. The volume is dedicated to Juan de Barros (1496-1570), the official historian of Portuguese colonial exploration and the feats of Portuguese navigators (the first volume of his history was published in Lisbon in 1540), and it may be that Ludovico wished to pass on that part of Arsenios' "Precious Gift" to de Barros as a token of appreciation — or, indeed, as an attempt at ingratiation.

Finally, we note the appearance of the *Life* of Saint Thecla by Symeon Metaphrastes in the tenth century in the edition (*princeps*) of Basil of Seleucia's panegyric in her honor in Pierre Pantin's *Basilii Seleuciae in Isauria Episcopi de Vita ac Miraculis D. Theclae Virginis Martyris Iconiensis libri duo. Simeonis Metaphrastae Logothetae de eadem Martyre tractatus singularis* (Antwerp [J. Moretus], 1608). The publication date carries us outside of the sixteenth century, but Pantin (c. 1556-1611), a Jesuit associate of Andreas Schott, probably prepared these texts while residing in Spain, where he had access to a rich trove of Greek manuscripts. His edition and Latin version of Symeon's *Life*, along with Pantin's dedication to Philip III of Spain, can be found in *PG* 115. 821-846. (Tradition has it that Thecla was a student of Saint Paul who fled from Tarsus to Malula, in present-day Syria, where she was martyred.) Undoubtedly, Pantin added the *Life* by Metaphrastes to explain who it was that Basil praised, as Pantin was probably the only one in Western Europe who knew who Thecla was.

This survey is undoubtedly not complete and it includes only a tiny portion of the vast body of Byzantine literature that reached the West by 1600. But I think it exhibits the same intersections between politics and publishing — though in

some cases more pronounced or surprising — that we find elsewhere in the European Renaissance. For instance, both Agapetos and Planudes' *Life* of Aesop were widely known and often printed, mainly in the Latin but sometimes with the Greek as well, so there was ample commercial justification for putting out editions in Spain and the Low Countries. Some of the Antwerp publications we saw earlier seem to include material intended to slip past the Inquisition — or were permitted to slip past by permission of the Regency. Somewhat later in the sixteenth century, especially when Leiden became an important center of learning, we see examples of publications intended as tools of cultural diplomacy, sometimes the result of personal contacts (George Dousa and Vulcanius, for instance), and sometimes the outcome of decisions made by “central commands” in the Low Countries that accorded with their counterparts in Augsburg or Geneva to counter the Counter-Reformation—particularly on the matter of papal primacy. We should remember that the prestigious university in Leiden was originally conceived as a seminary for Dutch Protestants. And, of course, we see examples of publication as an instrument of social bonding and/or upward social mobility, as in the cases of Copernicus and Ludovico. And some publications were examples of all of the above at once.

The general patterns, in short, are pretty familiar. What remains surprising, however, is the occasional appearance of some rare and truly unusual selections from an immense body of literature newly arrived — or deposited — on the thresholds of European Humanism.

Appendix: Select List of Sixteenth-Century Editions of Byzantine Writers

Poland

PRODOMOS, Theodore. 1605, *Apodemos philia*, Trans. S. Witkowski, Kraków.

SCHOLARIOS, Gennadios. 1581, *De primatu papae*, Wilno.

—. 1530, *De sinceritate Christianae fidei dialogus*, Kraków.

SIMOKATTA, Theophylaktos. 1509, *Epistulae*, Trans. N. Copernicus, Kraków.

Spain

AGAPETOS. 1560, *De officiis regis*, Trans. Gracián de Alderete.

CONSTANTINE VII PORPHYROGENITOS. 1541, *Geoponica*, Ed. Andres de Laguna.

DOUKAS, Demetrios. 1514, *Grammatica*, Alcalá de Henares [Contains Manuel Chrysolaras, *Erotemata*; Demetrios Chalkondyles, *Perischematismôn*; selections from the grammar by Theodore Gaza].

Netherlands

AMSTELREDAMUS, Alardus, ed. 1539, *Selectae aliquot similitudines sive collations, tum ex Bibliis sacris, tum ex veterum Orthodoxorum commentariis* [Contains several fragments from Theophylaktos, archbishop of Ohrid (1088-1126)].

ARETHAS of Caesareia. 1564 [1545], *Enarrationes in Acta Apostolorum et in omnes Pauli epistolas*, Antwerp, Steelsius.

THEOPHYLAKTOS of Ohrid. 1564, *Compendiaria in Habacuc, Ionam, Nahum, et Osee prophetas*, Antwerp, Steelsius.

—. 1564, *In omnes Divi Pauli epistulas enarrationes*, Antwerp, Steelsius.

ZIGABENOS, Euthymios. *In quatuor evangelia enarrationes*, Antwerp, M. de Keyser, 1531; Louvain, R. Rescius, 1544.

This list does not include patristic texts:

AGAPETOS. *De officiis regis*, Antwerp, Steelsius, 1547, 1548; J. Axonius, 1561, 1578; Leiden, Plantin-Raphelengius, 1592.

AGATHIAS. 1593, *De imperio et rebus gestis Iustiniani*, ed. B. Vulcanius, Leiden, Plantin-Raphelengius.

CABASILAS, Nilus. 1595, *De primatu papae Romni*, ed. B. Vulcanius, Leiden, Plantin-Raphelengius.

CONSTANTINE VII PORPHYROGENITUS. 1588, *De thematibus*, ed. B. Vulcanius, Leiden, Plantin-Raphelengius.

PLANUDES, Maximos. *Vita Aesopi*, trans. by R. Tetallo, in *Aesopi Fabulae*, trans. C. Gerard, Antwerp, Cock, 1521; Hillen, 1534; Leiden, Plantin, 1564.

PLETHON, George Gemistios. 1575, *De rebus peloponnensibus orationes duae*, ed. W. Canter, in Stobaios, *Eklogai*, ed. W. Canter, Leiden.

PSELLOS, Michael. 1537, *Allegoriae tres*, in A. Ludovico, *De pudore*, Antwerp, Hillen.

SIMOKATTA, Theophylaktos. 1597, *Quaestiones physicae et Cassii iatrosophistae*.

Quaestiones medicae, ed. B. Vulcanius, Leiden, Plantin-Raphelengius.

Abstract

By the end of the sixteenth century, almost every available Greek text, whether Classical or Byzantine, had been edited, translated into Latin, and published. Much of the Byzantine material was handled by scholars in Basel and Geneva, as well as in Venice, Paris, and Ingolstadt. However/yet, the publication of Byzantine writers in regions at the periphery of the European Renaissance, in such places as Alcalá de Henares, Kraków, Antwerp, and Leiden illustrates/demonstrates another significant aspect of the “reception” of Byzantine literature.

Résumé

Avant la fin du XVI^e siècle, presque tous les textes grecs connus, classiques ou byzantins, avaient été édités, traduits en latin et publiés par les soins des humanistes. La plupart des textes byzantins avaient été étudiés et établis par les hellénistes résidant à Bâle ou à Genève ainsi qu'à Venise, Paris et Ingolstadt. Cependant, cette réception « occidentale » des textes byzantins ne doit pas faire oublier les travaux d'humanistes des périphéries de cette Europe renaissante : Alcalá de Henares, Cracovie, Anvers et Leyde sont les capitales de cette autre philologie byzantine.