
PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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AN ILLUSTRATED ARABIC MANUSCRIPT OF A TRANSLATION OF A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GREEK CHRONOGRAPH

The aim of the present article is to draw attention to an illustrated Arabic manuscript (call number C 358), preserved now in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. This Christian-Arabic manuscript provides an interesting illustration of one facet of seventeenth-century Syrian cultural history. The work contained in this manuscript and, as a cultural artifact, the manuscript itself present us with a fine example of the interrelation and mutual influence of Western and Eastern culture.

The manuscript, measured 19.0×29.0 cm., is written in calligraphic *naskh*, in black ink. It contains 203 folios, 25 lines per page. Surface of the text: 12.0×22.0 cm. There are also 54 blank folios adjoining to those with miniatures, which are intended to protect them from damage. The text is enclosed in double red frame; European pagination; European dense polished paper with watermarks — a trefoil with the letters G and B, as well as three crescents. The protecting blank folios also have watermark — A. BONEFI. Headings are written either in red ink or in a large *thulth*. The cardboard binding is covered with brown leather; the leather has stamping of geometrical lines and little rosettes. The inside of the cover has orange paper glued on it, with engraved gold designs. These are depictions of dancing men and women in European clothes, of playing musicians, as well as of European-styled houses. This paper is partly damaged. The manuscript was restored by some of its owners or readers.

The manuscript contains an Arabic translation from the Greek of a little-known New Greek chronicle composed by Bishop Matthew of Cyprus, better known as Matthew Kigalas, or Tsigalas (d. 1642 ?) [1].

The chronicle, entitled *Néa σύνοψις διαφόρων ιστοριῶν* and published in Venice in 1637 is a universal history of the chronograph type and consists of two parts. The first one covers the period from the creation of the world to the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (r. 337—350); the second, the history of the emperors of Byzantium from Constantine the Great to the seizure of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The work also comprises a brief history of the Ottoman sultans up through Murad IV (r. 1623—1640). The work closes with a section dealing with an ecclesiastical history of Byzantium which is brought up to 1636.

Matthew Kigalas drew up his work on the basis of a Greek chronicle attributed to Dorotheus of Monemvasia [2], from which he borrowed some factual material. However, Matthew Kigalas introduced into the first part of his book many additions, primarily of mythological character, as well as data from some other Greek chronicles. In his exposition of Byzantine history from 1391 to 1578, he included with hardly any alteration the section on "Political History" from Martino Crusio's well-known "Turcograeciae" [3].

Like the chronicle by Pseudo-Dorotheus, which went through around twenty editions between 1631 and 1818 and was translated into Russian under the Russian Tsar Aleksey Mikhaylovich (r. 1645—1676) [4] and into Arabic by Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, the chronicle of Martino Crusio gained fame in the seventeenth century and influenced Russian historiography.

As was mentioned above, the Greek chronicle by Matthew Kigalas was published in Venice in 1637, most likely in a very small edition, since only a few copies are now known. One of these copies is held in the State Library of Russia in Moscow. The full translation of Matthew Kigalas' chronicle into Russian was made at the end of the seventeenth century by the monk Euthymius, *spravshchik* (press corrector) at the Moscow press. For unknown reasons, the Russian translation was not printed, but was in circulation in a significant number of manuscript copies. Several copies of this Russian translation are now held in the Library of Armenia [5].

In 1648, on the initiative of Macarius, the Patriarch of Antioch, an Arabic translation of the second, more interesting part of Matthew Kigalas' chronicle [6], dealing with the Byzantine history from Constantine the Great to the fall of Constantinople and the Ottoman sultans through Murad IV, was made in Aleppo. The concluding section on the ecclesiastical history of Byzantium was for some reason not translated, which left the Arabic version without an ending. Hence, the text leaves readers with the impression of an unfinished work. Also translated from the Greek were four chronological tables with a list of Byzantine emperors and Ottoman sultans, the bishops and patriarchs of Constantinople up through Isaiah Agariotes and the Constantinople patriarchs under the sultans, ending with Neophyte, who took up the post in 1636.