

included. Two of them, Christopher, Jeronimus and John (501, 503-4), are tentatively tagged as being linked or related to Andronikos and Alexios Effomatos, two well-attested Byzantine émigrés who are known to have lived in London between 1441 and 1483. It is hard to discern what the author feels the link is. He suggests that John de Grace may have been the John Effomatos who is documented in London in 1467 (490-1) but the basis for the identification is not entirely clear.

The inclusion of these individuals is not as eccentric as it may appear at first sight. C. is grappling with a real problem here. The names that are recorded in contemporary archival records are often hopelessly garbled. They would have been completely unfamiliar to the clerks who compiled the documents and who generally either wrote an approximation of what they heard or contented themselves with 'John of Greece' or 'George the Greek'. C. has apparently concluded that 'Grace' is a variant of 'Grec', 'Grèce' or 'Greke' (102) and it is on that basis that the identification is made. Not everyone will concur with him on that, especially when all these Graces are specifically marked down in the documentation as being from the Low Countries or Italy.

At the end of the day though, C.'s decisions as to who to include in no way detract from the value of the book. Alongside the analytical text, there are three very helpful documentary appendices. The first is devoted to the Bissipat family of Hannaches (Oise), the descendants of Byzantine émigré George Palaiologos Dishypatos (401-9). The second discusses the 1399-1402 visit of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos to the west (411-17). The third provides a table of names of Greeks living in London based on various classes of document from the National Archives such as the Alien Subsidy returns and the Patent Rolls (419-29). Perhaps most helpful of all is the prosopographical register of names attested in England, the Burgundian lands and France during the period (433-590). This both synthesizes and consolidates information scattered through previous publications and adds in the author's own research findings. The book will therefore act as a useful resource for others in the field of *Byzance après Byzance*.

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It is strange to discover that it is more than a century since an anthology of English translations of Greek folk songs has been published. In the interim there have been many studies of Greek folk music that have included lyrics in English, but no single volume of song-texts from all over Greece. In the introduction to his *Greek Folk Songs*, B. says that his intention was not to make his translations of the Greek originals

sound like English folk songs. ‘Nonetheless’, he continues, ‘I have always tried to imagine that the English words could be sung.’ The strength of these versions of Greek folk songs is just this. They are sufficiently rhythmical and musical that they invite a song, and yet they are neither archaic nor stilted.

This is no mean achievement. The folk poetry of Greece, most of which is in the fifteen-syllable metre known as the *politikos stichos*, does not, as B. points out in his introduction, lend itself to a natural English modern idiom, although it has curious affinities with the border ballads. The fifteen-syllable line is broken into two units of eight and seven syllables, and corresponds remarkably closely with the metre of a traditional ballad like *Barbara Allen*:

In Scarlet Town where I was born/ there was a fair maid dwellin’,  
Made all the lads cry well-a-day, /her name was Barbry’ Allen.

It is hard to imagine how such a precise correspondence came about between a ballad that Samuel Pepys recalls singing on New Year’s Eve 1665, and the fifteen-syllable verse of Greek folk songs. Several theories have been put forward,<sup>1</sup> but it remains a mystery. Attempts to imitate the metre in modern English tend to sound stilted and archaizing. It is to B.’s credit that his translations read well as modern English verse while maintaining a rhythmical relationship to the original. Still, there are some things in Greek that are impossible to capture in English and which give Greek verse its remarkable flexibility. One is the common practice of coining polysyllabic words that can be used to fill half a line of verse, like the wonderful seven-syllable *perdikokynigontas*, meaning partridge-hunting, in the song ‘A Pair of Roses.’ B. achieves a satisfactory pair of opening lines in his translation:

There was a girl out picking flowers, picking the choicest roses;  
the prince, out partridge hunting, happened to pass by.

But he loses the charm (and rhythm) of the original, where the second half of line 2 is gobbled up by this delicious word. Other solutions he arrives at are as felicitous and surprising in English as in Greek. In the song ‘Charos and the Young Man,’ for example, he renders the Greek word *ploumismeni*, meaning ornamented or embroidered, and here applied to a partridge, as ‘spangled.’ It is one of many virtues of this collection of Greek folksongs that such comparisons of translation and original text are facilitated not only by the facing Greek texts, but by the fact that B. has retained a line-by-line correspondence with the original.

To make an anthology of Greek folk songs means choosing not only among thousands of songs from every Greek-speaking region but deciding on a particular *parallagi*, or version of a song. When the first collections of folk song texts were made by Greek folklorists, there was a tendency to search for an urtext version of each song.

1    One theory is that before the Pillars of Hercules were closed, Bronze Age traders sailed to Cornwall to purchase tin, and musical exchanges took place between sailors.

The late Sotiris Chianis, an American-Greek musicologist who once worked with a senior Greek folklorist, was shocked that he often told his subjects that their version of a song was ‘wrong’ or that it wasn’t ‘the original’ and urged them to sing the version he considered ‘correct.’ Versions of songs published by early folklorists like N.G. Politis or Spyridon Zambelios tended to become the standard against which other variations were measured. These days a translator must either accept that the version of a song s/he is rendering into another language is one among many, or publish several variations to indicate the fluidity of the texts.

Another issue for translators of folk songs is the question of category. B. has arranged his songs in traditional sections following N.G. Politis and others, beginning with ‘Songs of History and Brigands’. For early researchers, anxious to establish a typology of songs, there was a satisfying orderliness to beginning a collection of folk songs with ones that referred to a historical event like the fall of Constantinople or the War of Independence and could easily be dated. This had nothing to do with chronology and a lot to do with national sentiment. Laments, as many folklorists have recognized, are probably much older than the historical songs and ballads, but they did not occupy a prominent place in early anthologies, perhaps because, like lullabies, they were sung by women. They were also, despite certain conventions of form and content, largely improvised, which meant that it was difficult to choose a representative text. B.’s collection follows convention in being arranged by subject. What is lost, in such an arrangement, is the close relationship of folk songs to place. All Greek folk songs are intimately connected to the place where they are or were performed. Local variants of the songs often introduce toponyms that tie them to a particular island or region, even to a village. Those of us who have worked in the field are accustomed to a musician introducing a song by saying ‘This is the way we sing it in...’ Given that, a classification of songs by region might be a more logical choice than by type. Greek folk song is still a living tradition and, in some regions, a vibrant one. It may not be as accessible as it once was, but there are large numbers of excellent recordings of folk songs available and it would have been a good idea to provide links to some of them.

Having said that, it is a pleasure to see a new anthology of Greek folk song lyrics, and however limited Barley’s selection, I agree with A.E. Stallings, who has written a foreword to the volume, that such an anthology was long overdue, and that B. has done the English reader a valuable service. Whether you are interested in the relationship of the song lyrics to classical mythology, or in the originality and beauty of their imagery, Greek folk songs are rich and rewarding to read as poetry and deserve as many good modern translations as there are poets and Hellenists willing to render them.

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