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The Quest for Text. Greek Manuscripts and Medieval Latin Translators

Abstract

Medieval translators from Greek had to face an important challenge in getting hold of high quality model texts on which their works could rely. Documentary evidence on the subject is limited: it suggests that the acquisition of Greek manuscripts was often realised as the marginal effect of diplomatic activity. However, the reports of exchanges between monarchs and their envoys likely represent only a fraction of the transfer process of Greek texts and books to the Latin world. The article surveys the available evidence regarding Latin translations of philosophical, theological, and scientific texts from Greek sources from the twelfth through the fourteenth century. Although our knowledge is often tentative and incomplete, the study of the translators' models is rewarding for the insight that they give into the availability of exceptional Greek manuscripts and rare texts in that period.[1]

Keywords

Translations, Greek manuscripts, Philosophy, Medicine, Astronomy.

Introduction

In the second half of the thirteenth century, readers of Latin poetry could rejoice in the unexpected appearance of an unknown work under the title of *De vetula* by the ancient poet Ovid. Any potential surprise that this piece by the famous author had remained hidden until then was conveniently countered in the introductory verses: the book had only recently been recovered from the poet's grave where it had been buried with his mortal remains (Klopsch 193).[2]

De vetula would have been an astonishing discovery, had the work not been a clever forgery. The text in three books of hexameters not only deals with the love life of the complaining old biddy from the title: chance reckoning, mathematics, philosophy, and astronomy are also among its topics. The work was clearly written by a scholar from

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2. "… inque suo secum iussit condire sepulchro…;" for the story of the book in the grave and others with a similar narrative, see Klopsch 22–34.

the time of its supposed discovery: recently it was suggested that Roger Bacon is probably to be identified as that author (Haynes).

Many questions can be asked about the motivation to forge the attribution of the hexametric poem to Ovid. Some strains of a justification are supplied by the backstory outlined in the prefatory lines: medieval scholars were eager to retrieve information lost since Antiquity and the hypothetical possibility to incorporate a supposedly lost work by Ovid into the Christian intellectual framework of their own time was too good a chance to be missed.

The narrative describing the origin of *De vetula i*s not a unique piece: earlier in the same century, British scholar Alexander Nequam had provided an analogous explanation in similar words for the impossibility to access many of Aristotle's works in the Latin world. According to Nequam, Aristotle had arranged that his most important writings were put with him into his tomb in order to prevent that his successors had access to them (Wright 337).[3] As a further precautionary measure toward that goal, Aristotle acquired the ground that surrounded the grave so that, either by legal provision or due to magical intervention, no one could approach the burial site. Nequam's disbelief regarding these alleged and disproportionate arrangements led him to conclude his report of the matter with the obvious question: why did Aristotle write the works at all if he did not want others to read and use them?

Although these stories obviously were mere fabrications, they at least show that thirteenth-century scholars considered it an acceptable line of thought that ancient authors were jealous enough of future generations to defend their own writings with their lives … and even with their deaths!

In this article, I will discuss the process of text acquisition in a particular field and in view of a specific purpose. I will attempt to survey some of the circumstances that assisted or obstructed the availability of Greek philosophical, theological, and scientific treatises to medieval scholars who translated into Latin. Within the short space of this article, it is impossible to provide a full overview of all aspects that could influence the transfer process. Some recurring framing elements suggest that they at least facilitated the access to coveted Greek texts, yet in many other instances the exact circumstances under which the models in the source languages arrived on the translators' desks remain shrouded in uncertainty. Even in those cases, or maybe even more emphatically in those particular cases, many Latin translations preserve valuable evidence for the medieval circulation of ancient Greek texts and the manuscripts that contained them.

3. "… philosophus subtilissima scripta sua jussit in sepulcro suo secum recondi, ne utilitati posteritatis suae deservirent … ;" the correspondences in word choice between Nequam and pseudo-Ovid seem to have remained unnoticed in earlier scholarly publications.

Books as gifts

The protecting attitude to texts and the knowledge that they convey was not only ascribed to esteemed ancient individuals like Ovid and Aristotle. It was also spotted within whole contemporary cultural or religious communities that had preferential access to ancient sources or scientific insights. Recurring references to the same opinion are recorded in numerous late-medieval introductions written by translators of philosophical, theological, or scientific texts: in the narratives of these prefaces, the theme was identified as the 'bellic' topos (Forrai). The accusation of confrontation was usually targeted at nations with a different religious background, like Jews or Muslims.[4] Their ultimate motivation to keep texts hidden from the Christian world obviously was not to provide them with information that might turn out to be useful in potential situations of conflict. Yet also the Greeks, who were usually seen as the guardians of the venerable earliest Christian tradition, were often accused of jealousy and secretiveness. As signs of good will to counter that negative impression, both parties considered books particularly suitable diplomatic gifts, both for their value as exquisite objects of art and as evidence that Greeks were open to share their background and heritage with fellow Christians.

A striking example of the gift of a precious manuscript is preserved in the form of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Coislin 200, a lavish copy of the Greek Gospels sent by Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaeologos to king Louis IX of France in 1269. The book was handed over by a diplomatic envoy as a token that the emperor approved of the intention to re-unite the Greek and Roman Churches. It is no doubt significant that the gift arrived at a time when Michael needed all available support in his struggle against other contenders to the Byzantine throne and against Louis' own brother Charles of Anjou, who held serious claims on the Latin imperial crown of Constantinople (Lemerle).

The Greek Gospel manuscript was only one example in a long list of donations of precious manuscripts aimed at boosting diplomatic endeavours. The background information regarding the circumstances often comes to us through the prefaces that were written by translators who directly profited from the events as they got access to the newly arrived books. Since they so clearly benefitted from the content of the presents, they obviously focused on the importance and usefulness of the texts that the manuscripts contained

4. It is a matter of discussion whether the stories about requests from the Arabic world to supply learned texts for the purpose of translation into their own language are reliable (Di Branco).

rather than on their potentially exceptional material appearance. We can get a sense of the excitement that the manuscripts caused from the hyperbolic preface that an anonymous translator of Ptolemy's *Almagest* wrote around 1160. "I was studying medicine at Salerno, when I heard that one of the ambassadors sent by the king of Sicily to Constantinople, Aristippus by name, had received these books thanks to the generosity of the emperor and had conveyed them to Palermo. Fired by the hope of 'obtaining' something so long and ardently desired, I did not shudder at the thought of howling Scylla, I passed through Charybdis, I negotiated Etna flowing with lava, as I sought out the man, who, I hoped, would furnish me with the object of my desires." (Angold and Burnett 506).[5]

Two centuries later, in 1335, Nicholas of Reggio, a famous translator of medical works, documented that he was able to translate a particular text by Galen using a manuscript that the Greek emperor Andronicus had selected personally "as a special gift" for Nicholas' patron Robert of Sicily because he knew about the interest and experience of the Norman monarch in medical matters (Beullens, *Why* 532).[6]

Henry Aristippus, whom the anonymous Salernitan student mentioned in his preface, was not only a diplomat but also a distinguished translator of two Platonic dialogues, the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, and of the fourth book of Aristotle's *Meteorology* (Minio-Paluello, *Meno* and *Phaedo*; Rubino). Apparently, Aristippus' proficiency in the Greek language made it a natural decision for his patron to have the occupations of diplomat and of translator merged in his person. Being a diplomat brought him to Greek territory, where he got access to the manuscripts that served as the sources for his work as a translator.

A similar diplomatic context is documented for the two most influential translators of philosophical texts, and in particular of Aristotle's works, from the twelfth century. James of Venice and Burgundio of Pisa were listed as interpreters on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 1136, where a theological debate took place between representatives of the Latin and Greek Churches.[7] We are not informed how the two translators filled their spare time in the imperial city, if they had any: did they go on a manuscript hunt in the libraries of palaces and monasteries in the Greek capital before or after the debates? We do know, however, that Burgundio returned to Constantinople on another mission on behalf of his home town from 1168 to 1171. He describes in his own words how he used his stay to acquire a manuscript of John Chrysostom's commentary on the Gospel of

5. "Hos autem cum Salerni medicine insudassem audiens quendam ex nuntiis regis Sicilie quos ipse Constantinopolim miserat, agnomine Aristipum, largitione susceptos imperatoria Panormum transvexisse, rei diu multumque desiderate spe succensu, Scilleos latratus non exhorrui, Caribdim permeavi, ignea Ethne fluenta circuivi, eum queritans a quo mei finem sperabam desideria" (Angold and Burnett 520).

6. "…pro quodam speciali munere…" (Beullens 538).

7. For a report of the mission and the content of the debate, see *PL* 188, 1139B–1248B. Whether James of Venice was an Italian resident of the imperial city, a possibility that was first put forward by Minio-Paluello ("Iacobus Veneticus" 269), remains an undecided question. Recent and as yet unpublished PhD research by Tilke Nelis and by Justin Winzenrieth seems to confirm with circumstantial evidence that he must have acquired his Greek models from Constantinopolitan sources.

John. Due to his diplomatic duties, Burgundio was not able to translate the work on the spot, but he arranged to have a copy prepared that he could take home with him: "… having received two exemplars that I could borrow from two monasteries, I handed the book to be transcribed by two copyists, one starting from the beginning, the other from the middle, and having it thus soon in my hands I faithfully emended it, as I listened to it being read, day and night, whenever the opportunity arose" (Burnett 493).[8] Burgundio eventually translated the Greek text on his journey back to Italy and continued the work after his return on Pisan soil.

Obviously, a diplomatic status was not the exclusive option to acquire interesting Greek manuscripts. When Pope Eugene III asked Burgundio of Pisa to make a complete translation of Chrysostom's commentary on Matthew's Gospel, which the Holy Father had come to know through the intermediary of defective Latin versions, the request to supply a complete copy went out to the patriarch of Antioch, the very city where the saint had held those sermons at the end of the 4th century (Flecchia 121). Although important translation activity can be traced back to the city, the choice was somewhat unexpected. It may find an explanation in the fact that the Pisans had a strong commercial foothold in Antioch and accordingly could use their business contacts there: economic relations trumped diplomacy as a means to obtain Greek texts in this particular case.

The manuscript that Burgundio got from Antioch is no longer extant. Yet codicological and palaeographical evidence proves that he had a remarkable collection of preserved Greek manuscripts at his disposal for his translations of philosophical and medical texts. They date from the twelfth century, which means from Burgundio's own time, although they were probably not produced at his personal request. The quality of the texts that they contain is excellent, the result of scholarly efforts based on older copies (Degni). Interestingly, the manuscripts preserve traces of preparatory work for Burgundio's translations in the form corrections and annotations, written in the translator's own hand and possibly in that of at least one anonymous collaborator. These notes demonstrate that the codices were Burgundio's source texts for his translations of philosophical works by Aristotle and medical treatises by Galen (Vuillemin-Diem and Rashed; Fortuna and Urso).[9] The literary writings in the same collection, however, like Attic tragedy or Homeric epic, hardly bear any traces of interest from Burgundio or his team: in contrast with the humanists from a few centuries later, Burgundio and his contempo-

8. "… duobus exemplariis a duobus monasteriis in commodatum acceptis, duobus scriptoribus, uno a capite altero a medietate incipiente, librum tradidi transcribendum, et eum brevi ita adeptus nocte ac die cum vacabat diligenter auscultans fideliter emendavi" (Angold and Burnett 510).

9. For his Aristotle translations, Burgundio had Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, 81.18 and 87.7 at his disposal; for Galen, he used Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, 74.5, 74.18, 74.22, 74.25, 74.30, and 75.5.

raries were only interested in the transfer of hard knowledge from Greek antiquity, not in the joys of sophisticated literature.

The parallel tracks that combine diplomatic occupations with translation work can help us tentatively fill in the gaps in the biographies of other translators. In the thirteenth century, William of Moerbeke was the absolute giant among his peers: he produced Latin versions of virtually all works considered genuinely written by Aristotle and of numerous Aristotelian commentaries from late Antiquity (Beullens, *The Friar*). Unfortunately, William's biography contains many blanks and hard information about his life and work is often limited to the colophons of his translations that explicitly mention date and place of their completion. The oldest reference to his activity is found at the beginning of his Latin version of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on Aristotle's *Meteorology*. William finished the work on 24 April 1260 in Nicaea. If Nicaea is to be equated with the city in Asia Minor – although Gauthier (93*–94*) went to great lengths to deny the identification, but his reasoning is rather farfetched –, William's presence there makes it possible to build a hypothesis about his underlying objectives for being there.

Obviously, it is conceivable that William visited the city just for its libraries and the learning that had made it famous. Yet, Dominican friars like William of Moerbeke were often charged with diplomatic missions. During the period of the Latin reign in Constantinople, Nicaea was the capital to which the Greek imperial court had withdrawn. One need not look far for a reason to explain the presence of diplomats from the Latin world at the Greek imperial court. In the previous year 1259, the feudal lord of mainland Greece, William of Villehardouin, had been made prisoner by Greek forces after the battle of Pelagonia. It took more than two years of negotiations and a considerable ransom before he was released from captivity – and not before Constantinople had fallen into Greek hands again. Is it unthinkable that William used the breaks between his diplomatic duties for scholarly work in the well-stacked libraries of the capital city? One can easily imagine that his status as a foreign envoy came with a library card for the emperor's collection.

Exceptional Greek books

Apart from their diplomatic activities, a parallel can also be drawn between Burgundio's attitude towards the ancient Greek legacy and

that of his younger fellow translator William of Moerbeke. After his business in the East, William returned to Italy to be appointed papal *penitentiarius*, an official who holds the power to grant absolution for sins that fall under the exclusive authority of the pope. As a consequence, when pope Clement IV died on 29 November 1268, William's ecclesiastical work came to a necessary standstill. It took the cardinals nearly three years to elect a papal successor under the name of Gregory X. The period of forced inactivity as *penitentiarius* gave William ample time for scholarly work. We are lucky to have exceptional evidence that illustrates his main project during that period: the translation of the works of Archimedes in combination with the commentaries written by Eutocius. From the annotations that were preserved in William's autograph version (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Ott. lat. 1850), we know that he could look at two different Greek manuscripts, which he used for comparison whenever doubt about the correct reading of the text or the interpretation of a diagram arose (Clagett). They were both in a bad material condition when they were described in the inventory of the papal library in 1311 (Acerbi and Vuillemin-Diem 165). One of them vanished without a trace shortly afterwards, the other was the model for a large number of Renaissance copies before it eventually also disappeared during the 16th century. If we disregard the famous Archimedes palimpsest, which already before Moerbeke's times had its leaves erased and covered with the writing of a prayer book (Netz, Noel, Tchernetska and Wilson 81), William was as well informed on the Greek text tradition of Archimedes as modern editors of Archimedes are. Where his precious manuscripts came from is just as unclear as where they ended up. But some Greek books that went through William's hands are preserved and can provide evidence for potential supply lines.[10]

For his Latin versions of Aristotle's natural philosophy, William mainly relied on Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, phil. gr. 100 (*J*), a manuscript that even in his days had a venerable age: it had been produced in the late ninth or early tenth century in Constantinople (Golitsis). It reached its present location, Vienna, in 1576, when it was bought in the city that had become Istanbul by Ogier de Busbecq, who – no surprise there! – acted as a diplomat for the Austrian emperor. Previously, in the thirteenth century, William had most probably acquired it in Nicaea. From there, William took it with him to Italy: other Italian owners are documented after his death. It means that the manuscript journeyed through various hands from

10. For a list of still (partially) preserved or once documented Greek manuscripts that were used by or at least passed through the hands of William of Moerbeke, see Acerbi and Vuillemin-Diem 217.

Constantinople and Nicaea to Italy between the 9th and the thirteenth century, and back again afterwards (Acerbi and Vuillemin-Diem 157).

The history of William's Aristotelian codex has a puzzling connection with another manuscript that was in South Italy in the same period, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 276 (*V*). It must have been at least temporarily in William's hands. The manuscript from the eleventh or twelfth century is a partial copy of the collected works of Hippocrates, one of the oldest copies of this author's texts that is still extant. As far as we know, William did not translate any of the medical treatises in it, but he copied a list of Hippocrates' works that it contains into the margins of an unused leaf of his own Aristotle codex *J*. The list contains more titles than the content of the Vatican codex *V*. William must have noticed the inconsistency and compared his list with the works in its source since he indicates with a cross next to the titles which texts he actually found in *V* (Vuillemin-Diem).

The Hippocrates manuscript can be traced back to South Italy and Sicily where it had been previously used by another famous translator of Aristotelian and medical texts, Bartholomew of Messina. The information about his life is even more scarce than what we know about William's biography: colophons in the manuscripts of some of his Latin versions state that he worked under the patronage of Manfred, king of Sicily from 1258 to 1266. Bartholomew translated several Hippocratic treatises on the basis of the Greek manuscript *V*, and at least one for which he found the Greek source text elsewhere (Fortuna, "Hippocrates' *Law*" and Fortuna, "La tradizione latina"). Was it the hypothetical twin volume that contained the other treatises from the list that the Vatican manuscript *V* preserves and William of Moerbeke copied into *J*? Their use of the same manuscript, although not simultaneously, might suggest that the two translators knew each other, but there are no sound reasons to suppose direct contact or even collaboration between William and Bartholomew, as some argue (Rashed 514, n. 7).

William certainly considered one other manuscript, Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z 258 [668], a personal belonging. He wrote his name and his title of *penitentiarius* as an ex libris in it, which he could obviously only do if it was his private property. The manuscript, which is as old and authoritative as the same translator's copy *J* of Aristotle's works, contains – among other texts – the treatise *On Fate* by the ancient philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias, which William translated into Latin. Although the editor of

William's translation claims that his Greek model must have been a lost uncial manuscript (Thillet 14–19), there are clear indications that William used his own manuscript, at least as a second source (Vuillemin-Diem 148 n. 40).

The manuscript of Alexander of Aphrodisias, like a few others to which William also had access, once belonged to a book collection of mainly Neoplatonic texts produced at the end of the 9th century in Constantinople on the basis of what were then the most reliable available models in the city. Although the manuscripts initially may well have formed a coherent collection, it had already been dispersed in William's time. William could only consult a few of these manuscripts, but the fact that they were available shows that the Latin translator had access to philosophy books of the highest quality that the Greek world could offer.

The later fortune of some of these Greek manuscripts of exceptional value leads us to the two inventories of the books in the papal library that were drawn up in 1295 and in 1311 (Acerbi and Vuillemin-Diem 132–42). The description of some bindings as being covered with tartar silk and golden embroidery arguably suggests that those books previously belonged to a Byzantine imperial library (Rashed 527–30). The telling detail about the luxurious decoration of the Greek manuscripts, which the compilers of the inventory were probably unable to read, can therefore be interpreted as further circumstantial evidence for their unique pedigree and for the outstanding importance of diplomatic relations for the propagation of Greek book wisdom in the Latin world.

Recovering lost Greek books through Latin texts

Apparently, imperial and other Byzantine book owners had no objections to giving Westerners access to superior manuscripts. They were usually even willing to part with the codices so their visitors could take them home – only Burgundio reports that he had to have a copy made since the monasteries were prepared to lend but not to sell the manuscripts of Chrysostom's sermons that they owned. Obviously, not all of these Greek manuscripts survive today, and it can therefore be anticipated that in some cases the Latin translations preserve texts that are no longer extant in their original version, and if they are, only in some partial or altered form.

An all but complete list gives an idea of the wealth of Greek sci-

entific knowledge and philosophical insight that we owe to the sagacity of the late-medieval Latin translators. In the twelfth century, Burgundio rendered sections from a treatise about wine-making, which was possibly written around 600 by Cassianus Bassus, into Latin. The original text in Greek was deficiently preserved as part of a collection of *Geoponica*, a handbook on agriculture probably compiled during the reign of emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetus in the tenth century. My preliminary study of the translation, based on the transcriptions of two fourteenth-century manuscripts (Buonamici) confirms that at the core of the transmitted text lies Burgundio's translation, while different additional sections of a more practical nature and without a link with the Greek source text created divergent branches in the manuscript tradition. A detailed study of all extant manuscripts of the treatise is needed to correctly assess the content of Burgundio's lost Greek manuscript.

Latin translators from the thirteenth century, who so far remain unidentified, have also contributed to our knowledge a late-antique Greek texts. A commentary on Hippocrates' sixth book of the Epidemics, attributed to the 7th-century medical author John of Alexandria, survives in a few Latin manuscripts (Pritchet). Substantial passages of the original Greek commentary are preserved in Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 300, a codex written in the twelfth century in South Italy or Sicily, but the Latin translation remains our only access to the complete text of the commentary (Duffy).

A philosophical-astrological work by a further unknown author from the same city and period is preserved in the Latin version by an unidentified translator (Steel). The unique witness for this *Introductorius ad astrologiam* by a certain Cosmas of Alexandria is the fourteenth-century Latin manuscript Limoges, Bibliothèque municipale, 9 (28). Quotations from Greek authors and texts that have come down to us provide a *terminus post quem* for the original date of composition of Cosmas' treatise, but the Greek source text itself has not been recovered.

Not surprisingly, the highest scorer on the inventory of ancient Greek textual pearls preserved in Latin translations is William of Moerbeke. Through his Latin versions, we can still read a short treatise on the annual flooding of the Nile attributed to Aristotle. Only an indirect fragmentary witness of its Greek source is preserved on papyrus (Beullens, "*Facilius sit*"). We further owe William the survival of lost works by Ptolemy, John Philoponus, and Proclus. Moreover, his Latin versions of Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *On the*

Heavens and Proclus's commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* are more complete than what is preserved in the extant Greek manuscripts (Beullens, *The Friar* 151–57).

In all these instances, the Latin translations preserve the key to unlock our access to manuscripts of ancient Greek texts that were lost after the completion of the Latin versions. Others guide us to unsuspected witnesses that can boast an exceptional pedigree and an unconventional history. The Greek manuscripts used by Robert Grosseteste in thirteenth-century Britain, far from any direct contact point with Greek culture, form remarkable examples. Some of the models that Grosseteste used for his Latin translations still survive (Dionisotti 36–39). There is scholarly consensus that the notes from the *Suda* that he rendered into Latin were based on Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Vossianus gr. F 2, dated to the second half of the twelfth century (Dorandi). How and where Grosseteste acquired it and had it brought to Oxford, remains shrouded in mystery, yet there are no indications that Grosseteste had access to diplomatic channels to obtain his precious source material. In the case of one particular text, the *Testamentum XII patriarcharum*, a fellow British scholar, John of Basingstoke, is reported to have been instrumental in pointing out the existence of the Greek work to Grosseteste and in acquiring a manuscript as the model for his Latin translation. The Greek manuscript from the tenth or eleventh century is still extant as Cambridge, University Library, Ff.1.24 (Dionisotti 29 and 37).

Some of the other Greek manuscripts used by Grosseteste had a less propitious fate and were not preserved, like the model for his translation of Simplicius' commentary on the four books of Aristotle's *On the Heavens*. Grosseteste apparently interrupted his translation work after the first chapter of book 3 and never resumed it. To make the history of Grosseteste's translation even more problematic, book 1 is no longer extant in Latin. The rest of the translation, the whole of book 2 and a chapter of book 3, is preserved in a unique manuscript and a few newly discovered fragments (Beullens, "Robert Grosseteste's Translation"). In spite of its incomplete survival, Grosseteste's translation is arguably the witness of an important branch of the Greek text tradition – for which, obviously, our knowledge was hitherto limited to the available passages of Grosseteste's Latin.

Yet following a previously unverified suggestion (Dionisotti 30), I could establish that the late-fifteenth-century Greek manuscript of Simplicius' commentary Oxford, Christ Church College, 109, is a direct copy of the lost Greek model that Grosseteste had used. Through

the complete Greek Oxford manuscript we now have acquired another and more complete point of access to the model that lay on the translator's desk around 1250. That lost manuscript was older than any of the surviving Greek codices of this lengthy and philosophically important commentary. The evidence supplied by the incomplete Latin translation decisively demonstrates the neglected importance of the Oxford manuscript, which was formerly considered an insignificant *codex recentior* without value for the constitution of the text.

Conclusion

Diplomatic relations, and in a few cases also economic ties, are documented as important backdrops that enabled the transfer of books from the Greek to the Latin world. The availability of those books as model texts stimulated the translation process from the twelfth through the fourteenth century. Yet in many more instances, the exact source from which translators into Latin obtained their Greek books remains unclear. Numerous examples show that the Latins had access to models of superior quality, which often significantly improve our view on the original state of the Greek texts. Obviously, the translations must be considered even more valuable when they preserve Greek works that were subsequently lost in transmission. As our survey shows, the quest for a more detailed understanding of the transmission of Greek books and texts that went through the hands of Latin translators is still open …

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