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The Study of Ancient Greek Texts in Early Ottoman Constantinople
THE STUDY OF ANCIENT GREEK TEXTS IN EARLY OTTOMAN CONSTANTINOPLE*

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that most of the work on ancient Greek texts was transferred to Italy in the period from the conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204 –when the migration of Byzantine scholars to Western Europe began– to the late 15th century1. However, not all Greek-speaking scholars left Constantinople in the last two centuries of the Byzantine Empire or after its fall to the Ottomans in 1453. Some distinguished Greek learned men remained and continued their intellectual work, including the study of ancient Greek texts.

There are several articles which deal with the interest of the Ottoman court in ancient Greek philosophy and art2. They are mainly based on the evidence of Greek manuscripts that were produced in Mehmed’s Greek

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ScripTorium (hereafter ‘the Scriptorium’). From at least 16 manuscripts that were produced in the Scriptorium, 14 still survive in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library, while one is now in Paris (National Library of France) and another one in the Vatican Library. Approximately half of these manuscripts deal with ancient Greek language and literature. Apart from the manuscripts that were actually written in the Scriptorium, the Topkapi Palace Museum Library also contains other manuscripts in ancient Greek that were produced in earlier or later centuries (from the twelfth to the sixteenth century)³.

It has been suggested that the bulk of these manuscripts was collected by the Sultan himself, thus underlining his humanist leanings. Several authors have tried to answer the question as to why specific ancient Greek texts were copied or otherwise acquired for the purposes of the Ottoman court⁴. Julian Raby assumes that, “some were probably intended for the training of Mehmed’s Greek chancellery staff, for Greek continued as a language of diplomatic exchange into the first decades of the sixteenth century. Others, on the other hand, bear directly in the Sultan’s interest”⁵. Among the last-mentioned Raby lists Arrian’s *Anabasis* (Ἀλεξάνδρου Ἀνάβασις), the standard Greek biography of Alexander the Great, Homer’s *Iliad* (Ἰλιάς), Ptolemy’s *Geography* (Γεωγραφικὴ Ὑφήγησις) and Pletho’s *Book of Laws* (Νόμων συγγραφή). Maria Mavroudi, however, has concluded that the production of these manuscripts “was motivated by a desire to address political, social, and intellectual problems that were important for Ottoman Muslims”⁶. While discussing George Gemistos Pletho’s reception in the Islamic world in her article ‘Pletho as subversive’, Mavroudi suggests that the existence of almost one third of those manuscripts that were produced

5. Raby, Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts, 6.
in the Scriptorium (i.e. texts on demonology, prophecy and divination) can be explained by interest in various specific aspects of Neoplatonist thought pursued at the court of Mehmed the Conqueror. Among the manuscripts is one containing Hesiod's *Theogony* (Θεογονία) in ancient Greek with commentary. Mavroudi believes that this might have helped Ottoman intellectuals to understand better Pletho's *Book of Laws* (or, more precisely, what remained of it\(^7\) that was translated into Arabic\(^8\)) and the use of Greek mythology as a tool of philosophical thought\(^9\).

In addition to the manuscripts containing ancient Greek texts that were written in the Scriptorium, numerous others were produced in Constantinople in the second half of the fifteenth century. These manuscripts attributed to such Greek learned men as Matthew Kamariotes (fl. mid-fifteenth century), George Scholarios, later known as Gennadios II (ca. 1400 – ca. 1472), John Dokeianos (fl. mid-fifteenth century), and Michael Kritoboulos (fl. mid-fifteenth century) now survive in several European libraries awaiting further research into their origin, purpose and ownership. There is much about ancient Greek text transmission in early Ottoman Constantinople that still remains largely unknown.

As we have seen above, the manuscripts that have survived reflect the interests of the Ottoman court and those studying ancient Greek texts

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7. Pletho’s *Book of Laws*, where he explicates his paganism, was publicly burnt at the order of the patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios, a major opponent of Pletho. See, J. Monfasani, Pletho’s Date of Death and the Burning of His Laws, *BZ* 98 (2005), 459-463. An anthology of excerpts from Pletho’s works were translated from Greek into Arabic, most probably during the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror. For the context of Pletho’s Arabic translation, see M. Mavroudi, Pletho as Subversive and His Reception in the Islamic World, in: *Power and Subversion in Byzantium*, ed. D. Angelov and M. Saxby, London – New York (2013), 177-203.

8. In the Ottoman lands of the 15th century, the international *lingua franca* used in science communication by educated Muslims was Arabic. As a result, a number of Greek texts were translated into Arabic at the court of Mehmed the Conqueror. For detailed information on these translations, see M. Mavroudi, Translations from Greek into Arabic at the court of Mehmed the Conqueror, in: *The Byzantine Court: Source of Power and Culture*, Papers From, The Second International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, ed. A. Odekan – N. Necipoğlu – E. Akyurek, Istanbul 2013, 195-207: only a handful of such translations are currently known.

in Constantinople in the second half of the fifteenth century. However, the wider circumstances of the study of ancient Greek texts in the period that has been described as the worst and most obscure in the history of Greek learning in the East have not been adequately looked into. The following paper will try to fill this gap in the literature on the history of ancient Greek scholarship by examining the work of contemporary Greek-speaking intellectuals.

**George Amiroutzes’ Studies of Ancient Greek Philosophical Texts**

One of the most learned men of his day was George Amiroutzes (ca. 1400 – ca. 1469). In his native Trebizond, Amiroutzes held high government offices: he was μέγας λογοθέτης and πρωτοβεστιάριος. Amiroutzes was also active as a scholar, and his contemporaries simply referred to him as ‘the Philosopher’, a title he also used of himself. Two or three years after the fall of the Empire of Trebizond to the Ottomans (in August 1461), Amiroutzes was invited to the court of Mehmed the Conqueror. His contemporary, the


12. There is still speculation on how and why Amiroutzes secured a position at the Sultan’s court. Many believe that it was not only his erudition but also his family relationship with the Grand Vizier, the Ottoman negotiator Mahmud Paşa that enabled this. For a more detailed discussion of this question, see Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes* 8, n. 20. On Amiroutzes’ religious attitude see, among others, N. B. Tomadakis, 'Ετούρκευσεν ὁ
Greek historiographer Michael Kritoboulos of Imbros (ca. 1410 – ca. 1470), who refers to him as Ἀμηρούκης, explained in his Histories how the Sultan received the learned man: ἦν δὲ καὶ τίς ἀνὴρ τῶν μετὰ βασιλέως, Γεώργιος Ἀμηρούκης τοὔνομα, φιλοσοφίαν ἄκρος, δοσὶ περὶ τὸ φυσικὸν ἔχει καὶ δογματικὸν τὸ τε μαθηματικὸν τε καὶ γεωμετρικὸν καὶ τὰς ἀναλογίας τῶν ἀριθμῶν καὶ δοσὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ Περιπάτου καὶ τῆς Στοᾶς, προσέτι δὲ καὶ πλήρης πάσης ἐγκυκλίου παιδείας, ῥητορικῆς τε φημι καὶ ποιητικῆς. περὶ τούτον μαθὼν ὁ βασιλεὺς μετακαλεῖται τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ πείραν ἱκανὴν ἐκ τῆς συντυχίας καὶ ὁμιλίας λαβὼν τῆς τε παιδείας καὶ σοφίας αὐτοῦ θαυμάζει τοῦτον διαφερόντως καὶ χώρας τῆς προσηκούσης ἀξιοῖ παρ’ αὐτῷ καὶ συχνὰς ὡς αὐτὸν εἰσόδοις καὶ ὁμιλίας τιμᾷ δόγματα τῶν παλαιῶν αὐτῷ προτιθεὶς καὶ φιλοσόφους ἀπορίας καὶ συζητήσεις καὶ λύσεις εὕτο γὰρ τῶν ἀκρῶς φιλοσόφων ὁ βασιλεὺς...
Apart from the Kritoboulos’ reference to Amiroutzes’ fame and work at Mehmed’s court, almost nothing is known of his career as a philosopher. However, the philosophical writings of Amiroutzes that have survived to this day are a significant source of information about the ancient Greek authors and works that have influenced him, although it is impossible to trace when and where he was working on his writings.15

His first tractate, I: The Philosopher’s16 [Tractate] on What the Ancients Taught Concerning Being (Ἀ΄: Τοῦ φιλοσόφου ὅπως ἐδόξαζον οἱ παλαιοὶ περὶ τῶν ὄντων), differs significantly from the other 14: rather than a philosophical treatise, it is an enumeration of the greatest ancient Greek philosophers and their main beliefs on being. In this tractate, the author tells of, in chronological order, Thales, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Leucippus, Parmenides, Melissus, Empedocles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno and Chrysippus and what they said concerning the principle or principles of being: whether there were one or several principles, for example, water or fire, or both, and so on. Amiroutzes does not mention his sources. However, in the footnotes of this treatise, the editor of the text John Monfasani carefully indicates similar passages in the writings of Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics, and especially Aristotle – like Metaphysics (Τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά), Physics (Φυσικὴ ἀκρόασις), On the Heavens (Περὶ οὐρανοῦ), On Generation and Corruption (Περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς), which Amiroutzes apparently had studied. In this tractate, the author appears as an objective narrator who rarely reveals his own opinion. Instead, he prefers to refer to Aristotle’s thoughts. For example, when narrating on Parmenides’ and Melissus’ beliefs on the principle of being, Amiroutzes indicates that Aristotle has attributed to them many absurd and impossible assertions, but he does not expand his reference explaining where Aristotle or anyone mentioning his work has stated this.17 In this tractate Amiroutzes’ presence as an author can be felt only when he mentions Socrates (διήνεγκε δὲ πλείστον ἐν τῇ διαλεκτικῇ, καὶ ἦν ἀδύνατον τούτῳ διαλεγόμενον μὴ

15. MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes [as in n.10] has recently produced an edition of 15 previously unknown philosophical tractates in a fragmentary state, in the original and in English translation.

16. I.e. Amiroutzes’. MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 23, conclusively demonstrates that Amiroutzes is the author of this (the first), third and fourth treatise.

Plato (Διήνεγκε δὲ πάντων τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ φιλοσόφων οὖν ὀλίγῳ τιν. ἦ δὲ γραφῇ αὐτοῦ ἀμήμητος ἐστὶ μετὰ τοῦ ἄριστου καὶ χαριστάτου)\(^{19}\) and Chrysippus and the school established by the Stoics (τιμῆς τε τυγχάνουσαν παρὰ πᾶσιν διὰ τὴν τῶν ἠθῶν εὐκοσμίαν. οὐδενὶ γὰρ οὕτως ὡς ἦθεσι χρηστοῖς ἀλίσκεθαι ἄνθρωπος)\(^{20}\). Conversely, his account of Aristotle can be compared with a panegyric: [...] μόνος εἰς τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον τέλος ἡλθε τῆς φιλοσοφίας. [...] ἄριστα ἀπέδειξε. [...] τελεώτατα δὲ ὑπεξῆλθε τὰ ἠθικὰ ἐν τε τοῖς Πρὸς Εὔδημον καὶ τοῖς Πρὸς Νικόμαχον τὸν υἱόν, ἐν τε τοῖς Πολιτικοῖς καὶ τοῖς Οἰκονομικοῖς\(^{21}\).

These assertions are not philosophical; rather, they are related to the personalities under discussion and their work.

Amiroutzes’ own philosophical ideas on being and its procession can be found in a number of later tractates: IV: The Philosopher’s [Tractate] Concerning the Procession of Being (Δ’: Τοῦ φιλοσόφου περὶ τῆς προόδου), V: The Same Author’s [Tractate] [on Procession from the First Principle] (Ε’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ), VI: The Same Author’s [Tractate] Concerning the Procession of Being (ζ’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς προόδου τῶν ὄντων), VIII: The Same Author’s [Tractate] Concerning the First Principle (Η’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς πρώτης ἀρχῆς), IX: The Same Author’s [Tractate] [on Motion and the First Principle] (Θ’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ)\(^{22}\) and XIV: The Same Author’s [Tractate]

\(^{18}\) George Amiroutzes, I, 18.2: He excelled most of all in dialectics. It was impossible not to be refuted when debating him. (Translation by MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 69).

\(^{19}\) George Amiroutzes, I, 19.19: He diverges from all prior philosophers in no small degree. His writing style is inimitable because of its supreme excellence and grace. (Translation by MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 73).

\(^{20}\) George Amiroutzes, I, 24. 2-3: It was comparable to the most distinguished of the schools and esteemed by all because of Chrysippus’ own high ethical behaviour. For nowhere is a man proven as in his good deeds. (Translation by MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 79).

\(^{21}\) George Amiroutzes, I, 21. 2-9: = [...] he arrived at the possible highest point of philosophy. [...] No one spoke better about physics either before or after him. [...] He brilliantly proved, [...], the axiom of contradiction. [...] He published the most perfect ethical principles in his Ethics addressed to Eudemus and in his Ethics addressed to Nichomachus, his son, and in his Politics and Economics. (Translation by MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 75).

\(^{22}\) MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 143, n. 88 indicates that this tractate is a fragment, probably of a draft of the same discussion found in tractate XIII.
Concerning the First Principle (ΙΔ': Τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς πρώτης ἀρχῆς). In these treatises, the author discusses what philosophers have said on the First Principle (the One, a God), identifying the philosopher from time to time as Aristotle\(^23\), Plato and the Platonists, Melissus, Parmenides or Anaxagoras, and further explaining what they have said on the production of being: whether it arises from the First Principle or not. Amiroutzes indicates that οἱ γὰρ πρότερον περὶ τούτον σκεψάμενοι οὔτε ἀλλήλοις φαίνονται ταῦτα δοξάζοντες οὔτε ταῖς υποκειμέναις ἀρχαῖς συνῳδά\(^24\). Amiroutzes tries to correct their assertions with the help of philosophical logic. All the tractates are notable for their complexity and each sheds light on some separate aspect of the issue, but they fail to give us a clear picture of the author’s own philosophical views.

Aristotle’s influence on Amiroutzes as a philosopher is most obvious in the following three tractates: II: The Same Author’s [Tractate] Concerning the Ideas (Β’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὰς ἰδέας), III: The Philosopher’s [Tractate] Concerning the Soul (Γ’: Τοῦ φιλοσόφου περὶ ψυχῆς), and especially in X: The Same Author’s [Tractate] Concerning the Substance and Essence of Happiness (Ι’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς οὐσίας καὶ τοῦ τί ἐστι τῆς εὐδαιμονίας). The last tractate differs from the others in that the author speaks in the person of Aristotle. Amiroutzes does not refer to his sources\(^25\), i.e. the writings of Aristotle, except The Posterior Analytics (Ἀναλυτικὰ Ὕστερα): [...] ὡς ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῆς Ἀποδεικτικῆς ἀπεδείξαμεν, [...]\(^26\). Monfasani points out that this tractate, especially in the first half, is an extended paraphrase with frequent quotations of Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics (Ἡθικὰ Νικομάχεια), I.1095a28–1098a20\(^27\).

\(^{23}\) Amiroutzes refers to Aristotle’s Metaphysics in tractate IV, 1.8, and also quotes it in tractate VI, 13. 3-4, see Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 108 and 130.

\(^{24}\) George Amiroutzes, VI, 1.1: For those who studied the issue before us do not seem to hold doctrines that are in agreement with each other or are even in accord with basic principles. (Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 143, n. 88, 117).

\(^{25}\) According to the editor, Amiroutzes’ sources in this treatise are Aristotle’s The Posterior Analytics, The Nicomachean Ethics and Metaphysics, see Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 145-165, nn. 91-120; 122-130 and 132.

\(^{26}\) George Amiroutzes, X, 1.6: [...] as we have shown in Book 1 of the Apodeictic [...]. (Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 145).

\(^{27}\) See Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 145, n. 91. In the Greek text, Monfasani puts
In tractate II: *The Same Author’s Tractate Concerning the Ideas* (Β’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὰς ἰδέας), Amiroutzes deals with the beliefs of Aristotle and Plotinus on the nature of the First Principle; in this work too, the author’s thoughts can be observed throughout the text. Often Amiroutzes expresses his own opinion in the first person singular or plural and with the help of a rhetorical question. In this treatise, Amiroutzes refers to three works of Aristotle: *Physics*, *Metaphysics* and *On the Heavens*, and one work of Plotinus: *The Enneads* (Ἐννεάδες).

In tractate III: *The Philosopher’s Tractate: Concerning the Soul* (Γ’: Τοῦ φιλοσόφου περὶ ψυχῆς), which is perhaps the most interesting and original of all in terms of thought, Amiroutzes aims to prove Aristotle’s belief that τὴν λογικὴν [ψυχὴν] μόνον ἀθάνατον καὶ χωριστὴν διὰ τὸν νοῦν, τὰς δὲ λοιπὰς οὐδαμῶς. Especially in this tractate, he appears as a harsh opponent of Plato and his followers and later elaborators as Plotinus and the other Neoplatonists, who have stated that all souls, irrational or rational, are immortal and share the same form. When completely refuting Plato’s thesis, Amiroutzes does not shrink from using such epithets as ἀτοπώτατον (‘most absurd’) or προδήλως ἄτοπα (‘blatantly absurd’). However, to oppose the Platonist theories the author uses mainly his own conclusions rather than Aristotle’s, for example: ἄνθρωπος δὲ φύσει ἐλεύθερος. σημεῖον δὲ ὅτι οὐδὲις αἱρεῖται δουλεύειν ἐξὸν εὖ ζῆν ἄνευ δουλείας. τὰ δὲ ζώα ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ὥρισται εἰς δουλείαν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, τὰ δὲ φυτὰ πάσι τοῖς ζώοις εἰς χρῆσιν. ἐπεὶ τοῖς τῶν ζῴων συναίστησιν υπολήψεσιν ἡ ὑπόθεσις μάχεται, οὐ δυνατὸν ἀληθῆ εἶναι. ούκ ἂρα ὁμοειδεῖς αἱ ψυχαὶ πᾶσαι.

into italics words and phrases taken directly from Aristotle, which together constitute a significant part of the text.

28. George Amiroutzes, III, 1.3 [...] only the rational soul is immortal and separable because it is a mind; all other souls are in no way immortal. (MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 91).


30. George Amiroutzes, III, 2. 8-10: Men are, however, by nature free. A sign of this is that no one chooses to be a slave if he can live well without being a slave. By nature, on the other hand, animals have been destined to be the slaves of men and plants to be exploited by all animals. Since, then, [Plato’s] view is at odds with common conceptions, it cannot be true. Therefore, not all souls share the same form. (MONFASANI, George Amiroutzes, 93).
More than once, he indicates that Plato’s view is not even in harmony with other principles posited by him and his followers: for example, the theory of Ideas. Amiroutzes avoids directly referring to Plato or Plotinus, but says rather *νομίζουσι* ‘they think’ when discussing their beliefs, and he does not mention the relevant works.

Amiroutzes concludes that the Soul is not an Idea and repeatedly professes to prove that souls do not share the same form and that only the rational ones are immortal. Although heavily influenced by Aristotle, in this tractate Amiroutzes shows himself to be an original thinker. He continues in the same vein in the remaining five tractates, which cover different topics.

In tractate VII: *The Same Author’s [Tractate] [on Time According to Plotinus] (Ζ’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ)*, Amiroutzes reveals and discusses Plotinus’ multiple views regarding the nature of time: the life of the soul, activity, or the length and interval of life. He disagrees with Plotinus and opposes all his statements with the help of logic. The author’s own views on time can be found scattered throughout the treatise.

In the remaining tractates: XI: *The Same Author’s [Tractate]. That within man the same soul possesses sensation and thought and the other facilities of a living creature (ΙΑ’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ. Ὄτι ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ ψυχῆς τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ τ’ ἄλλα τὰ τοῦ ζῴωντος ἔργα), XII: The Same Author’s [Tractate] [Concerning Man] (ΙΒ’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ), XIII: The Same Author’s [Tractate] [Concerning Matter and Form] (ΙΓ’: Τοῦ αὐτοῦ), XV: *The Same Author’s [Tractate]]. Whether there are bodies that are indivisible and without parts (ΙΕ’: Εἰ ἔστι σώματα ἄτομα καὶ ἀμερῆ)*, Amiroutzes expresses mainly his own thoughts on the issues reflected in the titles, giving very few references to other philosophers. In tractate XI, there are two references to the assertions of Plato and Aristotle. Monfasani indicates that this treatise reflects, to some degree, the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas, though Amiroutzes does not refer to him. In treatise

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31. In tractate III, 7.2 and 9.4 (Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 94 and 96). Fortunately, the editor of the text has indicated possible works where to look for Plato and the Neoplatonists’ beliefs discussed by Amiroutzes; Plato’s dialogues *Phaedo* (Φαίδων), *Phaedrus* (Φαῖδρος), *Republic* (Πολιτεία) and *Laws* (Νόμοι), and Plotinus’ *Enneads*. See Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 95 and 97, nn. 62-63.

32. In tractate XI, 2.2, in Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 166.

33. See Monfasani, George Amiroutzes, 165, n. 131.

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 30 (2020), 283-306
XII, Amiroutzes refers once to the Platonists to express his opposition to them. Tractate XIII includes one reference to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* that confirms Amiroutzes’ belief on matter. At the very end of the last tractate, XV, the author, confirming his own statement, refers to Zeno; however, in the notes on this treatise, Monfasani indicates several ancient Greek sources that contain similar ideas or sources that might have inspired Amiroutzes. These include Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and *Physics*, also *On Indivisible Lines* (*Περὶ ἀτόμων γραμμῶν*) and Euclid’s *The Elements* (*Στοιχεῖα*).

Amiroutzes’ tractates come across as chaotic – «they are drafts of Amiroutzes’ thoughts», states Monfasani. He considers that these texts might have formed the material for lessons aimed at younger students, because of the simplified and incomplete information provided in several tractates. Indeed, to a certain extent, the form of Amiroutzes’ philosophical tractates resembles Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* (*Ῥητορική*), which is commonly believed to have been used by Aristotle as a set of lecture notes. Amiroutzes’ tractates are even more fragmentary; the thoughts expressed are quite often obscure, they are frequently repeated and they are sometimes at variance with one another. Just like *On Rhetoric*, these texts were never published by the author.

Whatever the level of Amiroutzes’ teaching as reflected in his tractates, they clearly show that he studied the philosophical works of the greatest ancient Greek learned men. His tractates, though short and fragmentary, reveal erudition in ancient Greek philosophical thought and prove that he had access to works by or on Aristotle, Plato, the Stoics, Plotinus and others. In his treatises, Amiroutzes appears as an Aristotelian philosopher. They are full of references to Aristotle’s thoughts, beliefs and sometimes even include quotations, albeit often without any reference. As Aristotle’s teachings were considered fundamental in Byzantium and every Greek intellectual knew his works well, scrupulous references to them would have been superfluous. These treatises were probably written with a Greek readership in mind, but it is nevertheless believed that Amiroutzes’ knowledge of ancient Greek

34. In tractate XII, 3.4, in Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes*, 170.
philosophical thought inspired his Ottoman peers to study and interpret Aristotle, Plato and others.38

The Dispute Between Platonists and Aristotelians in the Ottoman Court?

The philosophical works of the late Pletho and his major opponent Scholarios, an ardent Aristotelian, may also have contributed significantly to the study of the greatest authors of the ancient Greek past at the Ottoman court. Several of Scholarios’ works from the last decade before 1453 were written to oppose Pletho, whose works were attempts to demonstrate Plato’s superiority to Aristotle as a philosopher and show that Plato’s philosophy was more compatible with Christian revelation. For example, the voluminous Scholarios’ work Against the Ignorance of Pletho on Aristotle (Contra Plethonis ignorationem de Aristotele) originated as a response to Pletho’s On the Differences between Aristotle and Plato (De differentiis Aristotelis et Platonis). To this work, Pletho reacted once again in Against the Objections of Scholarios Concerning Aristotle (Contra Scholarii pro Aristotele obiectiones)39. Pletho and Scholarios’ exchange of treatises resulted in a controversy that continued in Italy between Platonists and Aristotelians for decades.40 However, the lack of textual evidence does not allow us to assume

38. RABY, Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron, 6, believes that Mehmed the Conqueror studied peripatetic philosophy with Amiroutzes in 1465. The same belief has also been expressed by M. BALIVET, Aristote au service du Sultan! Ouverture aux Turcs et Aristotelisme chez quelques penseurs Byzantins du quinzième siècle, Byzantins et Ottomans: Relations, interaction, succession, Istanbul 1999, 149, who shows that the spiritual relationship between Amiroutzes and the Sultan was similar to Aristotle and Alexander the Great. In two poems attributed to Amiroutzes, Mehmed is associated with Alexander the Great. In one of these poems, Amiroutzes speaks in the person of Aristotle. For the relevant Amiroutzes’ poems, see S. P. LAMBROS, Ποιήματα Γεωργίου τοῦ Αμιρούτζη, ΔΙΕΕ 2 (1885), 279-280 and JANSENS – VAN DEUN, George Amiroutzes, 314-315.

39. For more on their dispute, see N. SINIOSSOGLOU, Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopian in Gemistos Plethon, Cambridge 2011, 125-160.

that this debate would also have taken place, at least at the same level, in early Ottoman Constantinople.

The works of Scholarios show that after the fall of Constantinople his intellectual activities were more related to theological matters, especially the promotion of the Christian faith among the Ottomans, than to the study of ancient Greek texts. However, Amiroutzes’ tractates prove that this debate still occupied his mind, and apparently the minds of his students too. Some of the ancient Greek manuscripts found in the Scriptorium indicate that this dispute may also have continued in the Ottoman court, most likely in the form of discussions, and perhaps with Amiroutzes’ help as an expert.

Amiroutzes’ Work on Ptolemy’s Individual Regional Maps

According to Kritoboulos, Amiroutzes’ activity at the Sultan’s court was not limited to philosophical discussion of the teachings of the ancients. In the summer of 1465, the Sultan commissioned Amiroutzes to carry out a challenging task related to ancient Greek scholarship. As stated in his Histories, that summer Mehmed the Conqueror had the chance to examine a manuscript copy of the Geography (Γεωγραφικὴ Ὑφήγησις) of Klaudios Ptolemaios, better known as Ptolemy –a second-century Alexandrian scientist– and its numerous regional maps scattered in various places in the text:

ἐντυχὼν δὲ που καὶ τοῖς τοῦ Πτολεμαίου διαγράμμασιν, ἐν οἷς

41. For the works of Scholarios see: Oeuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios, ed. M. Jugié – L. Petit – X.A. Siderides, 8 vols, Paris 1936.

42. A. Papadakis, Gennadius II and Mehmed the Conqueror, Byz. 42 (1972), 88–106, calls Scholarios the last Byzantine to attempt to explain the Christian faith to the Moslems. His conversations with Mehmed the Conqueror on Christianity resulted in two treatises, written at the Sultan’s request. See also A. Ziaka, Rearticulating a Christian-Muslim Understanding: Gennadios Scholarios and George Amiroutzes on Islam, in: Christianity and Religious Plurality, edited by Ch. Methuen – A. Spicer – J. Wolfe, [Studies in Church History – 51], Suffolk – New York 2015, 150-165.

43. Mavroudi, Translations from Greek into Arabic, 196–197, points to three manuscripts that can be associated with the library of the Sultan: Seragliensis 27 (late 14th–early 15th centuries), Seragliensis 57 (1300) and Marc. gr. 516 (14th century). She assumes that Kritoboulos refers in his narrative either to Seragliensis 27 or Marc. gr. 516, as these two contain regional maps, but do not include a map of the inhabited world or the so called ‘Ptolemaic world map’, as does Seragliensis 57. However, R. Burri indicates that in Marc. gr. 516 the maps are not scattered through the text, and that its date of production has to be
The Sultan wanted Ptolemy's individual charts or maps to be combined ἐν ἑνὶ πέπλῳ καὶ πίνακι σαφεστέραν τε οὖσα οὕτω καὶ εὐληπτοτέραν συμπεριλαβεῖν τε ἅμα τῇ διανοίᾳ καὶ κατασχεῖν καὶ γνῶναι καλῶς (…). For that purpose, he called on the philosopher Amiroutzes. Kritoboulos goes on to say how Amiroutzes created a huge wall map for the Sultan that combined all the individual maps in Ptolemy's Geography: μετὰ χεῖρας τὸ βιβλίον λαβὼν καὶ τὸ θέρος ὅλον ἐνδιατρίψας τε καὶ σχολάσας αὐτῷ καὶ ἰκανῶς ἐκμελετήσας τε καὶ τὴν τούτου γνῶσιν ἀναλεξάμενος διέγραψεν ἅμα τῇ διανοίᾳ καὶ κατασχεῖν καὶ γνῶναι καλῶς (…). The map included the names of the countries, cities and places written in Arabic. According to Kritoboulos, the translation was done by the son of Amiroutzes who was reassessed, which makes it less probable that Kritoboulos refers to this codex; instead, most likely, he refers to Seragliensis 27. See R. Burri, Die Geographie des Ptolemaios im Spiegel der griechischen Handschriften, Berlin – Boston 2013, 445 and 452 (for the arrangement of the maps); 448 and 456 (for its production time). For the most recent and thorough descriptions of all these three codices, see Idem, Die Geographie des Ptolemaios, 255-270 (Seragliensis 27); 445-458 (Marc. gr. 516); 505-515 (Seragliensis 57). Seragliensis 27 and Seragliensis 57 survive in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library.

44. Critobuli Imbriotae historiae, V 10,5 (He also ran across, somewhere, the charts of Ptolemy, in which he set forth scientifically and philosophically the description and outline of the entire earth: Translation by Charles T. Ricks in Kritoboulos, History of Mehmed the Conqueror, 209).

45. Critobuli Imbriotae historiae, V 10,5 ... into one united whole as a single picture or representation, and thus made clearer or more comprehensible, so as to be more easily understood by the mind, and grasped and well apprehended. (In Kritoboulos, History of Mehmed the Conqueror, 209).

46. Critobuli Imbriotae historiae, V 10,6: He took the book in hand with joy, and read it and studied it all summer. By considerable investigation and by analysing its wisdom, he wrote out most satisfactorily and skilfully the whole story of the inhabited earth in one representation as a connected whole – of the land and sea, the rivers, harbours, islands, mountains, cities and all, in plain language, giving in this the rules as to measurements of distance and all other essential things: Kritoboulos, History of Mehmed the Conqueror, 209-210).
expert in the languages of the Arabs and the Greeks. The son of George Amiroutzes referred to by Kritoboulos is likely the eldest, Basileios, later known as Mehmed Bey, who, along with his brother Alexander (İskender Bey), converted to Islam. The so called 16th-century Greek chronicle Ἔκθεσις χρονικῆ mentions that: Ὑπῆρχον γὰρ ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς ἐκείνοις νέοι εὐγενεστάτοι ἐντὸς τοῦ σαραγίου ἐκ τε Πόλεως καὶ Τραπεζοῦντας, ἐξ ὧν ἦν καὶ ὁ τοῦ Ἀμουρήτζη ὁ υἱὸς ὁ Μεχεμέτ μπέϊς, λογιώτατος καὶ ἔλληνικῶς καὶ ἀραβικῶς, δὲ καὶ ὁ ἑρμηνευτὴς τοῦ κρατοῦντος μετεγλώττισε τὰ ἡμέτερα βιβλία εἰς τὴν τῶν Ἀράβων γλώτταν γράψας αὐτὰ ἀκριβέστατα.

Although no longer extant, Amiroutzes’ map must have been impressive, since the Sultan rewarded him generously and encouraged him to prepare an Arabic translation of the Geography itself: ἡσθεὶς οὖν πάντως τῷ ἔργῳ τούτῳ ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ τὴν σοφίαν τε καὶ περίνοιαν τοῦ Πτολεμαίου θαυμάσας, ἀλλὰ δὴ τοῦ ἐκθεμένου τοῦτο καλῶς, δωρεῖται τοῦτον πολυτρόπως καὶ φιλοτίμως, κελεύει δὲ καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν βίβλον ὑπ’ αὐτῶν Ἀραβικῶς ἐκδοθῆναι μισθοὺς μεγάλους ὑπὲρ τούτου καὶ δῶρα ἐπαγγελμένουs.

At the order of the Sultan, Amiroutzes and his son, probably Mehmed Bey, prepared an Arabic translation of Ptolemy’s text. Two different fifteenth-century copies are still extant: MS Ayasofya 2596 (text without maps) and MS Ayasofya 2610 (text with maps). Both manuscripts are today preserved in the Suleymaniye Library, Istanbul.

47. Critobuli Imbriotae historiae, V 10,7.
48. Ἔκθεσις χρονικῆ Ecthesis chronica and Chronicon Athenarum. Edited with critical notes and indices by Spyridon P. Lambros, Athens 1902. 67: At that time there were some very noble young men within seraglio; they were from the City and from Trabizond. One of them was the son of Amiroutzes, Mehmed Beg, who had been educated in Greek and Arabic literature; by order of the ruler he had translated our books into Arabic in the most accurate manner. (Translation by M. Philippides in Emperors, Patriarchs, and Sultans of Constantinople, 1373–1513: An Anonymous Greek Chronicle of the Sixteenth Century, Brookline 1990, 87).
49. Critobuli Imbriotae historiae, V 10,8 ([He] admired the wisdom and ingenuity of Ptolemy, and still more that of the man who had so well exhibited this to him. He rewarded him in many ways and with many honours. He also ordered him to issue the entire book in Arabic, and promised him large pay and gifts for this work: Kritoboulos, History of Mehmed the Conqueror, 209).
50. The manuscript with maps: MS Ayasofya 2610 contains twenty-six double-page and twenty-four single-page maps, all in colour, including the Ptolemaic world map which might
The period when Amiroutzes created his world map is indicative of a general Ottoman interest in cartography, and especially in the copying, translation and adaptation of Arabic geographical works. The motivation behind this interest was, no doubt, the growing Ottoman awareness of the practical importance of maps in the continual expansion of their new empire. Nevertheless, as Ahmet T. Karamustafa points out, Mehmed the Conqueror’s personal interest in cartography should not be exaggerated. Although he was a patron of mapmakers and actively encouraged the drawing of maps for navigation purposes, this did not lead to the establishment of any substantial tradition in Ottoman cartography. The interest was, rather, a symptom of a wider cultural change that accompanied the shaping of the Ottoman Empire in the frontier areas between Christianity and Islam, a development which certainly points to the collegial roots of Ottoman cartographic practice.

George of Trebizond’s Introduction to Ptolemy’s Great Arrangement

The activity of George of Trebizond (1395–1486) – a Greek émigré in Italy – in Constantinople demonstrates that there was strong interest among the Ottomans in ancient Greek scientific writings. George of Trebizond was well-
known in Italy as a rhetorician and Latin translator from Greek. He belonged to the so-called ‘Aristotelians’, and his *A Comparison of the Philosophers Aristotle and Plato* (*Comparatio philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis*) published in 1459 was the first major Latin work in the above-mentioned Plato–Aristotle controversy. Monfasani treats George of Trebizond as one of the major intellectual figures of the mid-15th century.

In the spring of 1465, George of Trebizond went to Constantinople as an emissary of Pope Paul II to make contact with the Sultan. While staying in Constantinople and awaiting an audience with the Sultan, George of Trebizond met Amiroutzes, who was already in Mehmed the Conqueror’s service. From George of Trebizond we learn that it was Amiroutzes who advised him to translate into Greek for the Sultan the Latin introduction that George of Trebizond had once written to Ptolemy’s astronomical manual *The Mathematical Arrangement* (*Μαθηματικὴ Σύνταξις*) better known as *Almagest*, and by that to show his usefulness. John Freely indicates that this work by Ptolemy served as the basis for the further development of astronomy in the Muslim world, after its translation into Arabic. Thus, one can assume that Ptolemy’s *Almagest* was well known to Mehmed.

In the preface to the Greek introduction of the *Almagest* (*Εἰσαγωγὴ εἰς τὴν μεγάλην τοῦ Πτολεμαίου σύνταξιν*), literally ‘Introduction to Ptolemy’s

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55. For more details, see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 185.


57. In his preface and introduction, George of Trebizond refers to Ptolemy’s work as *The Great Synthesis* (*Μεγάλη Σύνταξις*).


59. At the Ottoman court in the mid-15th century, there was even instituted the office of *Munajjimbashilik* ‘chief astronomer’ that dealt with matters of astronomy and astrology as they related to the sultan and the state. For more information on astrology for the Ottomans, see S. Aydüz, *Constellations, Fixed Stars and the Zodiac in Islamic Astronomy*, Manchester 2004, 6-10. Available [cited 06.01.2018]: www.muslimheritage.com; *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, entry ‘Office of the Muwaqqit’ and the ‘Munajjimbashi’ (S. Aydüz).
great arrangement'), George of Trebizond shows himself an eager servant of the Sultan: Ἀφικόμην εἰς τὴν Κωνσταντίνου, ἄριστε βασιλεῦ βασιλέων καὶ αὐτοκράτορ αὐτοκρατόρων, δι’ οὐδὲν ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ τὸ συνελθεῖν εἰς λόγον τῷ σῷ ὑψὲ ὑψεῖνε καὶ δηλώσαι τὴν ἐμὴν προθυμίαν ἣν ἔχω πρὸς τοὺς ἐπαίνους τοῦ κράτους σου, νομίζων μηδὲν εἶναι κρεῖττον, ἐν τῷ παρόντι βίῳ τοῦ δουλεύειν βασιλεῖ σοφῷ καὶ φιλοσοφοῦντι τὰ μέγιστα.

However, despite all his efforts to approach Mehmed, George of Trebizond left Constantinople without meeting him. He sent the introduction to Mehmed after he had returned to Rome in 1466. He also dispatched his A Comparison of the Philosophers Aristotle and Plato and several other writings, probably still hoping to offer his services to the Sultan in the future. His note in the preface to the Greek introduction of the Almagest proves that he knew about the Sultan’s interest in ancient Greek philosophical thought: φέρεται γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων σου βασιλικῶν ἀνδραγαθημάτων, ὡς μᾶλλον ἀριστοτελίζει τὸ κράτος σου τῶν τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ ἔργων ἐχόντων τὸ ἀριστοτελίζειν.

Although the work of George of Trebizond cannot be treated as an internal product of the Ottoman Empire, it does show at least some leanings in the study of ancient Greek texts at the Ottoman court.

MATTHEW KAMARIOTES’ TEACHINGS ON THE ANCIENT GREEK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The study of ancient Greek texts in early Ottoman Constantinople was not linked only with the court. Some writings of Matthew Kamariotes that are dated post-1453 clearly demonstrate that he was active as a teacher of

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60. Collectanea Trapezuntiana, 283 (I arrived in Constantinople, O best king of kings and autocrat of autocrats, for no other reason than to talk with Your Highness and to demonstrate the zeal I have for the praise of your power, thinking that there is nothing better in the present life than to serve a wise king and one who philosophize about the greatest matters. Translation by MONFASANI Collectanea Trapezuntiana, 281).

61. See MONFASANI, George of Trebizond, 281. See also G. Th. ZORAS, Γεώργιος ὁ Τραπεζούντιος καὶ αἱ πρὸς Ἑλληνοτουρκικὴν συνεννόησιν προσπάθεια αὐτοῦ, Athens 1954.

62. Collectanea Trapezuntiana, 283 (For in addition to your other manly virtues which befit a king, Your Mightiness is also said to study Aristotle even more than those who have a professional responsibility to study Aristotle. Translation by MONFASANI, Collectanea Trapezuntiana, 281).
grammar, rhetoric and perhaps also philosophy. From Martinus Crusius’ (German philologist, historian, 1526–1607) notes in his Turcograecia we learn that Kamariotes came to Constantinople from Thessalonica in the final years of the Palaiologan dynasty. It is also known that Kamariotes worked together with Scholarios. Judging by the fact that Scholarios dedicated his work Commentary on Thomas Aquinas “On Being and Essence” (Commentarium Thomae Aquinae “De ente et essentia”) to Kamariotes, many assume that he was pupil of Scholarios. Indeed, in the preface of the aforementioned work, Scholarios praises Kamariotes’ προθυμία (eagerness) and φιλομαθές (diligence), but this could indicate either a relationship as colleagues or a teacher-student relationship.

It has been assumed that Kamariotes was the first teacher or even a principal of the so-called ‘Patriarchal School’ (better known later on as the Patriarchal Academy or the Great School of the Nation) established soon after the fall of Constantinople by the newly appointed patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios (1454?). However, there are no contemporary sources which prove the establishment of the School, let alone the position of Kamariotes. Nevertheless, from the evidence of his manuscripts and the aforementioned

64. See the dissertations by K. Papadakis, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης. Τὸ θεολογικὸ τοῦ ἔργο, μετὰ ἐκδόσεως ἄνευδοτον ἔργον του, Thessaloniki 2000, (http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/23093), 41, and D. Chatzemichael, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης: συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου, του ἔργου και της εποχής του (doctoral thesis), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2002 (http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/20545), 70.
65. See Jugie – Petit – Siderides, Oeuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios, v. 6, 178.
66. For biographical data of Kamariotes and his writings, see A. Biedl, Matthaeus Camariotes: Specimen Prosopographiae Byzantineae, BZ 35 (1935), 337-339. K. Papadakis, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης 21-58; Chatzemichael, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 25-78.
67. Gennadios II Scholarios at the Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror’s behest was elected Ecumenical Patriarch in January 6, 1454 by an Episcopal synod assembled from Asia and Europe. On the career of Gennadios II Scholarios, see M.-H. Blanchet, Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400 – vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’Empire byzantine, Paris 2008.
references by Crusius and Scholarios it is possible that Kamariotes lived in early Ottoman Constantinople and belonged to Scholarios’ educational circle, initially probably as a student, later as a teacher. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly where he taught or who his students were.

Kamariotes’ texts that could possibly provide us with the most information about his teachings on the ancient Greek language and literature in early Ottoman Constantinople, the Introduction to Grammar (Εἰσαγωγὴ εἰς τὴν γραμματικὴν) and three short philological works on the Erythraean Sibyl, the prophetess of classical antiquity presiding over the Apollonian oracle at Erythrae, a town in Ionia, on Plato and Aristotle, and on Homer’s epic and life, are still concealed in a manuscript\(^69\). However, there are two rhetorical writings of Kamariotes from which we can learn something of the study of ancient Greek rhetoric in his circle: the Summary of Rhetorical Progymnasmata (Επιτομὴ εἰς τὰ τῆς ῥητορικῆς προγυμνάσματα), and the Summary of Hermogenes’ Rhetorical Works (Ῥητορικῆς ἐπιτομὴ ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Ἐρμογένους)\(^70\). Both epitomes are introductory texts to the so-called ‘Hermogenean Corpus’, the five-part rhetorical canon of four books that was assembled by the sixth century, at that time attributed to Hermogenes (Greek rhetorician, 161–180) – On [Legal] Issues (Περὶ στάσεων), On Invention (Περὶ εὑρέσεως), On Types of Style (Περὶ ἰδεῶν), On Method (Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος), and one work of Aphthonios (a Greek fourth-century sophist and rhetorician,), the Rhetorical Exercises (Προγυμνάσματα)\(^71\).

\(^{69}\) For further details of these manuscripts and their authorship, see Beidl, Matthaeus Camariotes, 338-339; Chatzemichael, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 83-150; Papadakis, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 149-170.


\(^{71}\) Cf. Hock, Commentaries on Aphthonius’s “Progymnasmata”, 4. See also Papadakis, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 111-116; Chatzimichael, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 98-104.
In the first work, the *Summary of Rhetorical Progymnasmata*, which covers just six pages in Christian Walz’s edition, Kamariotes provides definitions of all those rhetorical exercises (like μύθος ‘fable’, διήγημα ‘narrative’, χρεία ‘chreia’ or γνώμη ‘maxim’ etc.) that Aphthonios has described in his *Rhetorical Exercises*. It is interesting that the author never refers to his source. Aphthonios’ work was a standard textbook for centuries and it was apparently well-known to Kamariotes’ audience. His definitions are considerably shorter and simpler than Aphthonios’ and he has omitted a large amount of additional information that Aphthonios provides, including several illustrations and examples. Ronald F. Hock has calculated that Kamariotes’ text constitutes less than fifteen percent of Aphthonios’. He also suggests that “the brevity of this epitome is so severe that it is difficult to imagine its utility in a classroom setting”.72

In the second treatise, which is considerably longer – 42 pages, Kamariotes recounts definitions and conclusions from several Hermogenean works, again without giving any references.73 Both his epitomes clearly show that the role of Hermogenean handbooks on rhetoric was still significant in the post-1453 educational curriculum. It is likely that these epitomes formed the introductory material in lessons aimed at younger students, given the simplified information provided. Unfortunately, Kamariotes’ texts tell us practically nothing about other ancient Greek authors and texts that would have been studied along with them. There are no citations of classical authors. In addition, it seems that in his works Kamariotes tried to separate rhetorical questions from those of grammar and philology. However, there is one significant remark regarding the language. In his *Summary of Rhetorical Progymnasmata*, among the virtues of one of the rhetorical exercises, the διήγημα, Kamariotes mentions the concept of ἑλληνισμὸς ὀνομάτων ‘Hellenism of words, imitation of the ancient Greek language’: Ἀρεταὶ δὲ διηγήματος σαφήνεια, συντομία, πιθανότης καὶ ὀνομάτων ἑλληνισμός.74 This remark shows that knowledge of classical Greek was

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72. Hock, Commentaries on Aphthonius’s “Progymnasmata 323-325.
73. See in general Papadakis, Ματθαῖος Καμαριώτης, 102-111; Chatzemichael, Ματθαῖος Καμαριώτης, 82-97.
74. Ματθαίου τοῦ Καμαριώτου ἐπιτομὴ εἰς τὰ τῆς ῥητορικῆς προγυμνάσματα, 122. The virtues of the narrative are clearness, conciseness, persuasiveness and Hellenism of words.
important in Kamariotes’ time. It is also a wonderful illustration of how the very basic principles of classical rhetoric still appear in post-Byzantine rhetorical education. Manuscripts copied or owned by Kamariotes reveal that Aristotle’s works constitute the biggest part of his library which allows us to conclude that Kamariotes used these works, including Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* in his teaching.

Kamariotes is also the author of a theological and philosophical work called *The [Address] Against Pletho (Contra Plethonem)*, which is dated around 1455 and echoes the aforementioned attacks of his teacher or colleague Scholarios on Pletho. Kamariotes has never met Pletho, as he himself indicates: ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐδοκὶ ἐδοκινήν ἀντίον, ἀλλ’ ἀκοὶ λαβὼν ἔχω τὰ μάθημα ἀντίον. This text suggests that Kamariotes might also have taught philosophy. However, once again, it tells us practically nothing about his education as a philosopher. On the other hand, his library shows that the philosophical works of Aristotle, Pletho, Plotinus, Epictetus might have influenced him. Unfortunately, many of Kamariotes’ writings have yet to be edited and adequately analysed.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has shown that work on ancient Greek texts was carried out in early Ottoman Constantinople. The evidence of the surviving 15th century manuscripts containing ancient Greek texts, the writings of the contemporary Greek intellectuals and the statements of their Greek peers have enabled us to learn more about what was studied, where and by whom.


76. About the vast library of Kamariotes, see CHATZEMICHAEL, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 311-5; PAPADAKIS, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 149-170.


78. La fin inédite, 255: I have not met him, but I have heard of his [works].

79. See CHATZEMICHAEL, Ματθαίος Καμαριώτης, 314.
The manuscripts show that contemporary learned men and their students were interested in a very wide range of topics – from ancient Greek language and literature to sciences and philosophy. They also indicate that the study, and moreover the transmission, of ancient Greek texts in Constantinople should not be associated only with the Ottoman court. The same process was occurring in the educational circle of Matthew Kamariotes and probably also of some other highly educated Greeks.

The philosophical writings of the scholar George Amiroutzes suggest that he and his peers, and his students, whoever they were, were especially interested in Aristotelian philosophy and the differences between Aristotle’s and Plato’s views. Kritoboulos’ statement in his Histories on Amiroutzes’ position in the court of Mehmed the Conqueror strongly indicates that it was Amiroutzes who assisted Ottoman intellectuals and the Sultan himself in the study of ancient Greek philosophical thought and its later interpretations.

From George of Trebizond’s writings and activities we learn that Mehmed the Conqueror was especially interested in Aristotelian philosophy and that the Plato-Aristotle controversy which had begun some ten years before 1453 was probably also well-known to him. Indeed, judging by the manuscripts in ancient Greek acquired for the Sultan’s Library, it seems that this debate might have inspired the Ottoman intellectuals to study not only ancient Greek philosophers and their followers, but also a number of other ancient Greek authors.

From Kritoboulos and George of Trebizond we learn that the Ottomans, as well as studying the ancient Greek philosophical writings, were also interested in at least two ancient Greek scientific texts and their practical use. Kritoboulos describes in detail the study of Ptolemy’s Geography at the Ottoman court. George of Trebizond’s work in Constantinople in 1465 suggests that the Sultan might have had an interest in another scientific work by Ptolemy – the Almagest, an astronomical manual. Undoubtedly, the personality of Mehmed the Conqueror and his obvious interest in science and the humanities contributed a great deal to the study of these works at the Ottoman court.

Some writings of Kamariotes that are dated after 1453 show that he in his educational circle, which was apparently connected to the patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios, was teaching grammar, rhetoric and perhaps also
philosophy to his Greek students. The available information about his works, as well as his two edited rhetorical texts, tell us that Kamariotes and his students might have studied such ancient Greek authors as Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Hermogenes and Aphthonios. Unfortunately, due to the lack of edited material, it is as yet impossible to discuss at length and evaluate Kamariotes’ contribution to the study of ancient Greek texts in his educational circle in early Ottoman Constantinople. Further studies of the surviving manuscripts in ancient Greek that were produced in Constantinople in the second half of the 15th century but which are now dispersed among several European libraries might well reveal more important information about the study of ancient Greek texts by the contemporary Greek and Ottoman intellectuals.