An unpublished letter of Korais

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AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF KORAIS

I N SEARCH OF RELEVANT material for an exhibition of letters and documents related to the Balkans and Greece one particular item attracted my attention. In the catalogue of the Diederichs collection in the University Library of Amsterdam I came upon a letter attributed to one K. M. Koimas. Being shown the original I was surprised to notice that the letter proved to be an autograph of Adamantios Korais. I came to this conclusion by comparing the handwriting with other letters and because Koimas stated categorically that the letter was an "idiograph" of Korais. Meanwhile it had become clear to me that and why the collector and librarians had wrongly attributed the letter to Koimas. They had mistaken the epsilon for an iota. The unknown Koimas was in fact the well-known scholar Koumas.

On February 22nd, 1823 the letter was forwarded by Korais to the "Frères Ralli, negocians Grecs" in Vienna. From Korais using the singular in his letter I conclude he was probably addressing Theodoros Rallis. This unpublished letter is all about the subscription of Korais planned editions of Plutarch's "Ethics" and "Politics".

1. H. M. Diederichs was a 19th century liberal newspaper owner and a passionate collector. After his death his son donated the collection to the Municipality of Amsterdam in 1878. Later it was transferred to the library of Amsterdam University.

2. Under nr. 136 Al at the Handschriftenafdeling van de Zaal Kostbare Werken in the Library of the University of Amsterdam.

3. It is unknown when and how Koumas got possession of the Korais letter.

4. As far as I know from the published correspondence Korais wrote his first letter to Th. Rallis on December 9th, 1820 and his second on February 20th, 1821. See Αλληλογραφία, ed. Ο.Μ.Ε.Δ., v. 4, 1817-1822, Athens 1982, nr. 883 και 890.

5. Korais separated from the "Ethics" five chapters which were purely political.
He urged Rallis and the other members of the Greek community in Vienna to put their names on the subscription list. He pointed out that two Russian officials in Paris had already ordered 40 and 20 copies respectively. Furthermore he requested Rallis to make 200 or 300 reprints of the announcement of this forthcoming publications and "sow them all over Germany". If the printing could not be done in Vienna, the Leipzig printers would do as an alternative.

In the letter under discussion he also stated that he had recently sent the same announcement to Pantoleon Vlastos, also in Vienna and Pantaleimon Maurogordatos in Triest. At the very same day he wrote a reminder about the same subject to Jacobus Rotas. From both letters we may deduce that he felt miserable, mentally and physically, because of the events in Greece, particularly those at Chios and by the stupendous amount of work related to his publications.

6. The Russian officials were Prince Labadoff and Count Orloff. See "Αλληλογραφία, v. 5, 1823-1826, Athens 1983, nr. 968.

7. Korais wrote many letters to members of the Vlastos family, who originated from Chios like himself. In this case it was certainly Pantoleon Vlastos.

8. I deduced this surname and Christian name from other letters in the "Αλληλογραφία. In the published correspondence letters to Maurogordatos are absent.

9. The learned merchant with whom Korais corresponded frequently. See "Αλληλογραφία, ... nr. 968.

10. The phrase Πολλών λόγων ἐγγαστρωμένος είμαι, refers most probably to the dialogue Περί τῶν ἐλληνικῶν συμφερόντων printed as a preface in the publication of Plutarchs "Politics".
Τεργέστην προς τὸν Π. Μανρογ(οροατον). Τώρα τὴν κοινοποιώ εἰς ὅλους σας, διὰ να φροντίσετε πρῶτον να πέμψετε προς τὸν τυπογράφον τὰ ὀνόματα σας καθὲς κἂν τοῦ Ηθικῶν καὶ ἐν τῶν Πολιτικῶν. Ἐπειδὴ μέλλοντες να τυπωθῶσι τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν συνδρομητῶν, ἀπὸτον εἶναι νὰ μὴ φανοί τὰ ἱδαία σας. Ἐδώ συνάγονται καθήμερα ὑπογραφαί. Λα ἐτὼ τὸν Πολιτικήν νὰ τὴν κοινοποιήη τοῖσι καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀλλαγενεῖς φίλους σας. Τοῦτο διὰ νὰ γενὴ γρήγορα, δεῦρετε νὰ τυπώσετε ὑπολάματα ἐπεκτείνοντα 200 ἢ 300 παρόμοια,11 νὰ τὰ σπείρετε εἰς δοχὲ τὴν Γερμανίαν. Ἐπειδὴ τὸν δεν συνεχοῖται ὁ τύπος, εἴκοσι εἶναι νὰ βαθθῇ τὸν χρόνο τῆς Λειψίας, ὃ καὶ νὰ τυποί14 ὅλας αὐτὰς τήν Λειψίαν.

Facsimile of Korais's letter.
Πολλών λόγων εγγαστρομένος είμαι, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἀδυναμία μου δὲν μὲ ανηχοφορεῖ νὰ τοὺς γεννήσω. Τὸ ἔλαιον τοῦ λέγου τῆς ζωῆς, μον ἐφύρασε καὶ ἄλλο νέον νὰ χύσω εἰς αὐτὸν δὲν ἔχω. Ἐὰν ἴη τῆς ζωῆς σου νὰ ἴημαι καὶ μακρα καὶ εὐτυχῆς! Ἐξ ἡς ἡς ἡς ἡς! Εἰς τὰς πρ(οσταγὰς). ὁ Κ.

9 In front of ἐνε δελτο ὁ. || 10 In front of 300 deleted 2.

In the handwriting of K. M. Koumas: ίδιόγραφο τοῦ Κοραῆ, Κ. Μ. Κούμας.
In other handwriting: Κ. M. Koisas and Koimas.
On the fronts of the address: “Messieurs, Messieurs Frères Ralli, négo-
ciens Grecs, à Vienne en Autriche”, different calculations and different stamps of the French postal service.

D. KOSTER