An unpublished letter of Korais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AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF KORAIS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 ypsilon 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 This unpublished letter is all about the subscription of Korais planned editions of Plutarch's "Ethics" and "Politics".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. Ralli 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 publication 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 Panteleimon 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 Panteleemon 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 έγγαστρωμένος είμαι, refers most probably to the dialogue Περί των ελληνικών συμφερόντων printed as a preface in the publication of Plutarchs "Politics".

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Πατρίδος, τής ὲποιάς αἱ ἀπωφοδόκητοι συμφοραὶ δραμάκειναν τὰς τελευταίας ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς μου. Εἰδώ κλεισμένην ἐμπνεύσαν, τὴν ὰποιαν ἐπενόησαν οἱ δύο μου φίλοι, ὁ μεταφραστὴς καὶ ὁ τυπογράφος, ἐπιστόμησαν ἀν ἀνθρώπων παραιτημένος ἐπέδρας ή σκληρὰ τύχη ὃς μόνον τὴν πατρίδα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ πρὸς ζωῆν ἀναγκαίαν.

Πρὸ ὰρο ὑμερῶν ἐστείλα καὶ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν Βλαστόν καὶ εἰς...
Τεργέστην προς τὸν Π. Μανρογ(οροάτον). Τώρα τὴν κοινοποιοῖ τις ὁ­
λος σας, διὰ7 νὰ φροντίσατε πρός τὸν τυπογράφον τὰ ὁ­
νόματά σας καθ' ἀυτὸ ἐάν ἐν σῶμα τῶν Ἡθικῶν καὶ ἐν τῶν Πολι­
τικῶν. Ἐπειδή μέλεις8 νὰ τυπωθώσι τὰ ὁνόματα τῶν συνδρομητῶν,
ἀποτελεῖ νὰ μὴν φανοῦ τὰ ἴδια σας. Ἐδώ συνάγονται καθημερινά ὑπογραφαί. Διὰ 40 σώ||ματα ἐπιλήφθης ἕνας ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐπισήμους ἐδώ εὐφυκομένους Ὁρώνων, καὶ ἄλλος διὰ 20. Λευτερωὸς νὰ τὴν κοινοποι­
ή||10ετε καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀλλογενεῖς φίλους σας. Τοῦτο διὰ νὰ γενὴ γρή­
γορα, ἐδύμησε νὰ τυπώσετε ἐκατοκόλλεικα 200 ἢ 300 παρόμοια,11 νὰ τὰ
σπείρετε εἰς δὴ ἡμερίαν τὴν Γερμανίαν. Ἀν αὐτὸς δὲν συνεχοῖται ὁ τύπος,
εἰςκολοὶ εἰναὶ νὰ βαθθῇ τὸνμα τῆς Λευκίας, ὑ καὶ να τυποῖ||14θώσαι εἰς
αὐτὴν τὴν Λευκίαν.

22 Φεβρ. 1835

Facsimile of Korais's letter.
Πολλών λόγων ἐγγαστρομένος εἰμαι, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἀδυναμία μου δὲν μὲ συγχωρεῖ νὰ τοὺς γεννήσω. Τὸ ἔλαιον τοῦ λέγχου τῆς ζωῆς μου ἐφύρασε καὶ ἄλλο νέον νὰ χύσω εἰς αὐτὸν δὲν ἔχω. Ἐάν ἴη ζωή σοι νὰ ἴη αὐτῇ καὶ μακρὰ καὶ εὔπνηχῆς! Ἐλις τὰς πρ(οσταγάς). ὁ Κ.

9 In front of ἐνδιαφέροντος deleted ο. || 10 In front of 300 deleted 2.

In the handwriting of K. M. Koumas: ἰδιόγραφον τοῦ Κοραή, K. M. Koúmas.
In other handwriting: K. M. Koimas and Koimas.
On the frontsise the addressees: “Messieurs, Messieurs Frères Ralli, négo-
cians Grecs, à Vienne en Autriche”, different calculations and different
stamps of the French postal service.

D. KOSTER