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AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF KORAIIS

IN 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 collection¹ in the University Library of Amsterdam I came upon a letter attributed to one K. M. Koimas.² 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.³

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 From Korais using the singular in his letter I conclude he was probably addressing Theodoros Rallis.⁴ This unpublished letter is all about the subscription of Korais planned editions of Plutarchs “Ethics” and “Politics”.⁵

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 A1 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 *Ἀλληλογραφία*, ed. O.M.E.Δ., v. 4, 1817-1822, Athens 1982, nr. 883 and 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.⁶ 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,⁷ also in Vienna and Pantaleimon Maurogordatos⁸ in Trieste. At the very same day he wrote a reminder about the same subject to Jacobus Rotas.⁹ 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.¹⁰

[¹Θεόδωρος Πάλλης]

22 Φεβρ. 1823

²Φίλε συμπατριῶτα,

³Πατριόδος, τῆς ὁποίας αἱ ἀπροσδόκητοι συμφοραὶ ἐφαρμάκευσαν τὰς τελευταίας ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς μου. Ἐδῶ κλεισμέν[ην] βλῆ⁴πεις προκήρυσεν, τὴν ὁποίαν ἐπενόησαν οἱ δύο μου φίλοι, ὁ μεταφραστής καὶ ὁ τυπογράφος, ἐλπίζοντες ἀπ' αὐτὴν μικρὰν παρηγορί[αν]⁵ δι' ὅσους τῶν συμπατριωτῶν ἐστέρησεν ἢ σκληρὰ τύχη ὄχι μόνον τὴν πατρίδα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν ἀναγκαῖα.

⁶ Πρὸ ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν τὴν ἔστειλα καὶ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν Βλ(αστὸν) καὶ εἰς

6. The Russian officials were Prince Labadoff and Count Orloff. See *Ἀλληλογραφία*, 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 *Ἀλληλογραφία*. In the published correspondence letters to Maurogordatos are absent.

9. The learned merchant with whom Korais corresponded frequently. See *Ἀλληλογραφία*, ... nr. 968.

10. The phrase Πολλῶν λόγων ἐγγαστρομένος εἶμαι refers most probably to the dialogue *Περὶ τῶν ἑλληνικῶν συμφερόντων* printed as a preface in the publication of Plutarchs "Politics".

¹³Πολλῶν λόγων ἐγγαστρομένος εἶμαι, ἀλλ' ἡ ἀδυναμία μου δὲν μὲ συγ-
χωρεῖ νὰ τοὺς γεννήσω. Τὸ ἔλαιον τοῦ λύχνου τῆς ζωῆς¹⁴ μου ἐφύρασε καὶ
ἄλλο νέον νὰ χύσω εἰς αὐτὸν δὲν ἔχω. Εἴθε ἡ ζωὴ σου νὰ ἦναι καὶ μακρὰ
καὶ εὐτυχής! Εἰς τὰς προ(οσταγὰς). ὁ Κ.

[9 In front of ἐναις deleted ο. || 10 In front of 300 deleted 2.

In the handwriting of K. M. Koumas: *ιδιόγραφον τοῦ Κοραῖ, Κ. Μ. Κούμας.*

In other handwriting: K. M. Koimas and Koimas.

On the frontside the addressees: "Messieurs, Messieurs Frères Ralli, négoc-
ians Grecs, à Vienne en Autriche", different calculations and different
stamps of the French postal service.

D. KOSTER