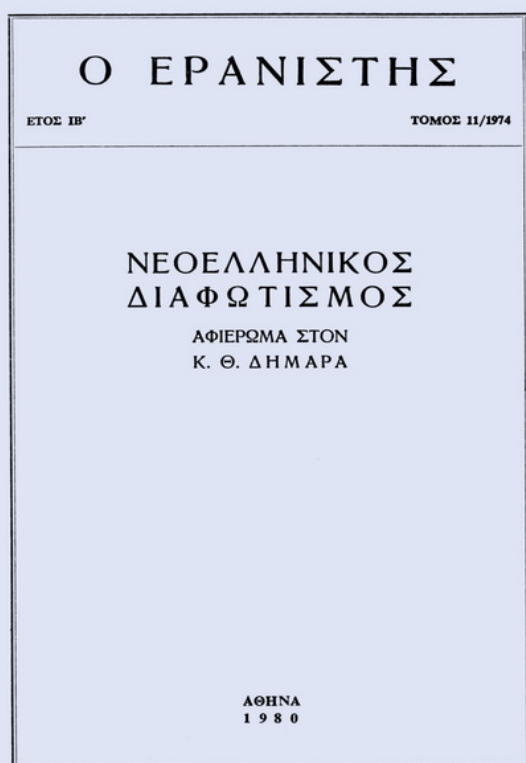


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### The Library of the Levant Company's factory in Smyrna (1805)

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## THE LIBRARY OF THE LEVANT COMPANY'S FACTORY IN SMYRNA (1805)

In recent years our understanding of the Greek Enlightenment has increased enormously, and none has contributed more to this understanding than C. Th. Dimaras, to whom it is both a privilege and a pleasure to dedicate this short article as a token of affection and respect. Undoubtedly, however, many gaps remain in our knowledge. This note represents an attempt to add to our understanding of one of the aspects of the Greek Enlightenment that remains problematical, namely the extent to which books of non-Greek provenance, and more particularly, books in English, circulated within the Greek world in the critical decades before independence. English influences on the Greek Enlightenment were relatively few<sup>1</sup>. This may have been partly due to linguistic obstacles, for a knowledge of English was not nearly so common among the Greek intelligentsia as French, German or Italian. Few Greeks are known to have studied in England<sup>2</sup> during the period of the Greek Enlightenment, in contrast to the large numbers that studied at Italian, German and French universities. It would also seem that few works in the original English were available in

1. Cf. e.g. C. Th. Dimaras, *Ἐπαφές τῆς νεώτερης ἐλληνικῆς λογοτεχνίας μετὰ τὴν ἀγγλικὴν (1780 - 1821)*, α' Ἀγγλοελληνικὴ Ἐπιθεώρηση», III (1947) reprinted in *Φροντίσματα*, I (Athens, 1962) 39 - 66 and Alkis Anghelou *Πῶς ἡ Νεοελληνικὴ σκέψη ἐγνώρισε τὸ «Δοξίμιον» τοῦ John Locke*, α' Ἀγγλοελληνικὴ Ἐπιθεώρηση» VII (1954) reprinted (in French) in «L'Hellénisme Contemporain» IX (1955) 230 - 249.

2. One of the most interesting imponderables of the Greek Enlightenment is the direction that Ada-

mantios Korais' great talents might have taken, had the efforts of his French mentor D'Ansse de Vilvoison to secure him an academic position in England in 1787 proved successful, J.S. Harford, *The Life of Thomas Burgess*, D.D... (London, 1840) 159 - 60. Korais' English connections are discussed in my *The Correspondence of Adhamantios Korais with Thomas Burgess, 1789 - 1792*, «Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften», 106 Jahrgang (1969) 40 - 72.

the Greek world. For this reason any information we can glean about the circulation of books in English in the Ottoman Empire is obviously of importance.

One of the most important centres of the Greek Enlightenment was Smyrna, with its large and flourishing Greek community and its important Frankish merchant colony. There was much contact, and indeed intermarriage, between Greeks and Franks, who shared much of the same cultural and social milieu, even if visiting travellers frowned on the frivolous ways of the Frankish merchants<sup>3</sup>. The influence of the Dutch protestant pastor, Bernhard Keun<sup>4</sup>, on the young Adamantios Korais does not require to be stressed and there are numerous other instances of intellectual cross fertilisation between the two communities<sup>5</sup>.

At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries one of the most intellectually interesting and influential figures in the Frankish merchant community, which was not exactly noted for its dedication to education and learning, was the Revd. John F. Usko, chaplain to the Levant Company's Factory in the city. Born in Prussia he studied at the University of Königsberg and in 1782 was elected by the town of Danzig to be Lutheran pastor to

3. One English visitor to Smyrna reported that 'some of the higher Greek families join in the society of the Franks, and conversation especially among the ladies is carried on in the Greek language. It is impossible not to speak with disapproval of their mode of passing the Sunday, the morning being spent at the billiard table, the evening at the dance. When at Smyrna during the winter, they attend the English service, although they frequently assign the unpopularity of the chaplain as sufficient reason for absenting themselves', *Journal of a Tour in the Near East by the Rev. Robert Mosley Master; 1818 - 1819*, British Museum, Add. Ms. 51313, p. 270.

4. Cf. e.g. D.D. Hesseling, *Ko-*

*rais et ses amis Hollandais*, «Εἰς μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου» (Athens, 1935) 1 - 6.

5. There were Greek members of the Smyrna Bible Society founded in 1818 by a chaplain to the Levant Company, the Revd. Charles Williamson, see my *The Foundation of the Smyrna Bible Society (1818)* («Μικρασιατικά Χρονικά» XIV (1970) 40 - 1. Williamson achieved the considerable feat of arranging for a number of protestant tracts to be printed at the press of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, see my *Some Protestant Tracts printed at the Press of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople: 1818 - 1820*, «Eastern Churches Review», II (1968) 152 - 164.

the German community in Smyrna. Seven years later, in 1789, Usko was appointed by the Levant Company chaplain to the English community and in 1792 he was made «Professor Oriental Languages for the King of Prussia». By his own account he was a very considerable linguist. He preached in Italian, French, English and German and wrote that among the languages «which I have learnt *grammatically*, are the German, Polish, Latin, Greek (ancient and modern), Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldaic, Turkish, Persian, English, Italian, French, Spanish, and Dutch». In 1800 Usko had married a Greek native of Smyrna, whom, he wrote, «I had educated myself» and, as a result of his family ties, he appears to have had much contact with the Greek community of the city<sup>6</sup>. It was Usko who, in 1808, brought Adamantios Korais to the notice of the British and Foreign Bible Society as an adviser on the Society's projected translation of the New Testament into Modern Greek<sup>7</sup>.

One of Usko's concerns was to recreate the Factory's library which had been almost completely destroyed in the fire consequent on the janissary riot of March 1797 known as the Smyrna 'rebellion'<sup>8</sup>. In a letter of 2 May 1805 he wrote to the «Right Honourable the Governor and the Right Worshipful the Company of Merchants trading to the Levant Seas» that :

«In regard to those books, the choice of which was left to my

6. *A brief Narrative of the Travels and Literary Life of the Reverend John F. Usko, Chaplain to the Factory at Smyrna; but driven recently from thence with the whole English Factory, by apprehension of danger from the Turkish Government; and now residing in London. Written by himself January 1808*, 30.

7. See my *The Correspondence of Adhamantios Korais with the British and Foreign Bible Society*, «Greek Orthodox Theological Review», XIV (1969) 70ff.

8. The most valuable single account of the Smyrna 'rebellion' is the report of Francis Werry,

the Levant Company's consul in Smyrna, dated 2 April 1797, Public Record Office, State Papers 105 vol. 126. Other useful accounts are those of N.K.X. Κωστῆς, *Σμυρναϊκὰ Ἀνάλεκτα. Τὸ ἐν Σμύρῳι ρεμπελλιὸν τοῦ 1797 κατὰ νέας ἀνεκδότους πηγὰς*, «Δελτίον τῆς Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος», VI (1901 - 5) 358 - 73 and Nikos Veis, *Τὸ Μεγάλο Ρεμπελιὸ τῆς Σμύρῳις*, «Μικρασιατικὰ Χρονικά», IV (1948) 411 - 22. The Factory Library had also been destroyed in 1689 following an earthquake and fire.

discretion by Your Worships' Generosity, I take the humble Liberty to observe, that they cannot be purchased in this country, as it is well known to Your Worships, but must be procured from England. As we have lost in the dreadful fire of 15th March 1797 (except the Polyglott bible<sup>9</sup>) our whole Library of valuable books consisting chiefly in the antient Greek and Latin authors, and in some Fathers of the Church, we are now at a loss to replace them, we are even wanting the most necessary modern Authors in English. I beg therefore most respectfully Your Leave, to submit to Your Worships kind consideration, a note of those books that are desired, but leave the choice of them to Your own wisdom and decision, receiving for my use as well as that of the Factory, every gift of Your generous Beneficence with a heartfelt gratitude. Books on Divinity, Morality, Sermons, History, Travels, Geography, Natural History and Poetry etc. are the most acceptable, and they are of a general use, especially in a country, where the resources for society and instruction are so much limited, as it is the case here.

[...]

Your most humble, most obedient and most devoted Servant

J.F. Usko ch.

P.S. I do not presume to decide which books are to be chosen among those, that are submitted to Your Worships view; I humbly think only, that those, which are underlined are the most necessary and more requested for the present than the rest. With respect to the others, it depends on Your Worships' munificence, to give to the execution of this desirable plan to such an extent as Your Worships will think proper *either* to put other more use-

9. This was probably the Polyglott Bible compiled by Brian Walton, Bishop of Chester, *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*... 6 vols. London 1655-7, two copies of which are known to have been sent out from London for the Factory library in Smyrna, J. Pearson, *A biographical sketch of the Chaplains to the Levant Company maintained at Con-*

*stantinople, Aleppo, and Smyrna 1611-1706.* (Cambridge, 1883) 65. A copy of the first volume of Walton's Polyglott is recorded as being in the library of the Academy of Kydonies in 1818, see my *Two Accounts of the Academy of Ayvalik (Kydonies) in 1818 - 1819*, «Revue des Études sud - est européennes», X(1972) 646 - 7.

ful books and better editions in their place, *or* to procure *occasionally* and *in time* those already mentioned in the list : I mean occasionally, as second-hand books in Auctions; and in time, viz. it is not required to have them all at once, but by degrees, so that the Library once begun and founded by Your Worships Liberality, may be increased afterwards by private contributions and gifts of the Gentlemen of this Factory, specially for the purchase of the modern English and French Authors, Latin and especially Greek Authors, or at least some Classics, are, in my humble Opinion, necessary and very useful for a Clergyman, and some instructed traveller, who comes in this country, which was once the seat of sciences, and to read them as it were on their native ground, increases the interest and importance of what they contain. My means are too limited for the purchase of them. Thus for the Factory, the best Translations in English and French would be of great advantage and of useful instruction in some leisure hours, or during the plague, being shut up in town or in the country.

Our Chapel is the fittest place to put in the Library, as it would be there free from fire and in a dry situation. There is a part of it destined for another purpose, (an Organ), which is large enough to contain a Library»<sup>10</sup>.

It is not known how many of the books on Usko's list, which is appended, were actually despatched to Smyrna for the library. But it is reasonable to assume that a substantial proportion of them were. If this was the case then the literati of Smyrna, whether Frank or Greek, had at their disposal in the library of Levant Company's Factory a substantial collection, containing besides works of theology and editions of the Greek and Latin classics<sup>11</sup>, a useful collection of historical books, together with a number of representative works of English literature and indeed some scientific works. The role of Greek merchants as channels for We-

10. Public Record Office, State Papers 105, vol. 130. Extracts from documents in the Public Record Office are published by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

11. In his Autobiography Ko-

rais had complained of the scarcity in Smyrna in his youth of European editions of the Greek and Latin classics; see *Ο Κοραΐς και η Έποχή του*, ed., C. Th. Dimaras (Athens, 1953) 243.

stern cultural influences in the Greek world has long been appreciated. The role of members of the Frankish merchant community in the Ottoman Empire as disseminators of Western cultural and indeed political ideas has not yet been adequately studied.

*Books for a Library to be formed for the English Factory at Smyrna*

*Universal History both ancient and modern*, 60 Vol. with a number of maps etc.

*The Chronology and History of the World, from the Creation to the Year 1795*, 56 Tables. By Revd. J. Blair. Fol.

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Davis's Examination of Gibbon's Rome.

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#### *Autores Graeci et Latini*

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 Ethica a Wilkinson Oxon. 1716.  
*Platonis Opera,* Gr. et Lat. Ficini, fol. Lugd. (or) Francof. 1602.  
 Plato de Republica Gr. et Lat. 8vo. Vol. 2 Cant. 1713.  
 Plato Dialogi Gr. et Lat. Foster. Oxon. 1745.

- Plato de Rebus Divinis.*  
 Enchiridion Epicteti, et Cebetis a Gronow. 1723.  
*Herodotus and Thucydides* Gr. et Lat. a Foulis, 17 Vol. Glasg. 1759 - 61.  
 Sophoclis Tragediae Gr. et Lat. a Foulis, 2 Vol. (or) Glasg. 4to 1745.  
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*Marci Antonini Imperatoris.* Gr. et Lat. Glasg. 1744.  
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*Richard Clogg*

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