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ANONYMOUS, *Aristeas ad Philocratem Epistula* [Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates], Latin translation by Matthias Palmerius Pisanus; PLATO, *Crito*, Latin translation by Rinucius Aretinus; PSEUDO-PLATO, *Axiochus*, Latin translation by Rinucius Aretinus
In Latin, manuscript on paper
[Southern Italy, Rome?, c. 1465-1470]

88 folios, complete, mostly in gatherings of 8 (i^r [8-1, lacking first leaf of quire, likely blank], ii-xi^s), on paper (watermark close to Briquet type "Tour crénelée," no. 15911, Rome. 1467-1471), modern foliation in pencil upper right corners, written in light brown ink on 21 long lines in a single rounded humanistic script (justification 140 x 93 mm.), horizontal catchwords, guide letters left for introductory initials, never completed, some marginal notes, rubrics in pale red ink, abbreviated names of interlocutors in dialogues indicated in pale red ink, some capitals stroked in pale red ink, some fading and browning of paper. Modern imitation half-binding (rebinding?) of wood boards, spine in leather on three thongs, leather title-piece [blank] on front cover, fittings for clasps, clasps missing, paper title and shelf marks on the spine, "2211" and "MSS / SEC XV" (Generally in sound condition, some internal water-staining causing ink to fade on a few folios not affecting legibility). Dimensions 214 x 145 mm.

Humanist manuscript that associates three translations from Greek to Latin made by scholars in the Renaissance, the first, a translation by Matteo Palmieri of the so-called Letter of Aristeas, a pseudo-epigraphical work of pseudo-history, and the second and third translations by Rinucius Aretino of Plato's *Crito* and Pseudo-Plato's *Axiochus*. There is no modern critical edition of Palmieri's translation of Aristeas or a study of the manuscript tradition (12 manuscripts including the present copy) and its relation with the incunables published in Rome. Rinucius Aretino's translations of the Platonic dialogues are also rare (8 manuscripts of the *Crito* and 16 of *Axiochus*). The association of the three translations is unknown in any other extant manuscript or early printed edition.

PROVENANCE

1. Probably made in southern Italy in the mid-fifteenth century based on the watermarks and script, likely Rome. There is a possibility the manuscript could have served to establish the Rome 1471 edition of the Latin translation of the Letter of Aristeas, since it offers word for word the same explicit, or the earlier edition of circa 1467 (published in [Rome] by Sisto Riessinger). Or, alternatively, this could be a copy of the 1471 published translation (see below).
2. Private Collection, Italy.

TEXT

ff. 1-2, *Aristeas ad Philocratem Epistula* [Tractatulus de lxxii interpretibus], Proemium, rubric with dedication to Pope Paul II [Pietro Barbo], *Paulo II summo pontifici*; incipit, "[C]um et antea semper Beatissime pontifex intellexerim ..."; explicit proemium, "Exorneturque ac in veterem ritum veluti ab exilio revocatus summa omnium gratulatione reducitur. Vale S. tua sui Mathie memor"; rubric, *Finis probemi. Finis probemi*;

ff. 2-56v, *Aristeas ad Philocratem Epistula* [Tractatulus de lxxii interpretibus], rubric, *Incipit Aristeas ad philocratem fratrem*; incipit, "[C]um per magni semper feceris Philocrates..."; explicit, "... Vale. Finis Aristeae ad Philocratem fratrem de interpretatione .lxxii. interpretum per Mathiam Palmerium Pisanum e Greco in latinum versi" (published in 1471, see HC 3051*; M. Pellechet, *Cat. général des incunables...*, 1897, no. 2282; published again in Hody, *De Bibliorum textibus originalibus*, Oxford, 1705; there is no modern critical edition of this Latin translation; see Stegmüller, 1981, no. 121, 6);

Considered a venerable Hellenistic forgery, the *Epistula Aristeae*, or the Letter of Aristeas to his brother Philocrates, narrates the account, now considered fictional, of the translation of the Pentateuch from Hebrew into Greek, or the Septuagint, that takes place in Alexandria at the court of King Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.). Written in Greek perhaps in the second century B.C., the letter tells how the king, advised by his librarian to have the laws of the Jews translated to enrich his already-vast library, selected Aristeas to approach the high priest Eleazer in Jerusalem and ask him to send a body of scholars capable of translating the sacred Scriptures into Greek. Eleazer chooses six scholars from each of the twelve tribes of Israel who are installed on the island of Pharos, where they complete their translation in 72 days. Read before the Jewish population of Alexandria, the "Bible of Seventy" (named for the 70 scholars) is declared accurate, and any person who tampers with it is threatened with a curse.

Much debate surrounds the letter, not only the question of its accuracy (or degree of historicity) but also its intent. Most scholars agree, though with different emphases, that its anonymous author was certainly an Alexandrine Jew who intended to defend the Torah in Greek against claims for the sufficiency of the Hebrew version. For Christians, the letter assumed a vast importance, for it came to sanction the authority of the Greek translation, even considered in time to be the product of divine inspiration of the translators.

Manuscripts of the Greek version (20 are extant), dating from the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries, have been thoroughly studied and edited (Wendland, 1900). The present manuscript contains the Latin translation ascribed to Matthias Palmerius da Pisa (1423-1483) or Matteo Palmieri. There is a first version of Palmieri's translation dedicated to Bartolomeo Maripiero, Bishop of Brescia (1457-1464) (see Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica, Fondo Ottoboniano lat. 1863). The second and present version dedicated to Pope Paul II (1464-1471) must have been translated after 1464. The Latin version was rapidly printed and incorporated in the edition of a *Biblia Latina* under the title *Aristeas ad Philocratem de lxx interpretibus* (tr. Matthias Palmerius), Rome, Conradus Sweynheym and Arnoldus Pannartz, [not before 15 March] 1471. This is the first Latin Bible to be published in Rome. There is also an earlier edition of the Palmieri translation with the same dedication, printed without date or location, but in all likelihood in Rome, c. 1467 by Sisto Riessinger before the printer moved to Naples (Vacari, 1952, p. 8; and M. Fava and G. Bresciano,

La stampa a Napoli nel XV secolo, 1911-1912, vol. 2, p. 167.) Riessinger published his second edition of *Aristeas* in Naples c. 1473-1474 (Vaccari, 1952, p. 9). Palmieri's translation was printed again by the Eponymous Printer of *Aristeas* in Erfurt in 1483 (Goff A-957). It is possible that the present manuscript is either a copy of the 1471 Rome edition or a preparatory manuscript for the edition, since the manuscript presents the same explicit as the edition.

Vaccari records only 11 manuscripts of this Latin translation (Vaccari, 1952, pp. 6-7), and the present copy was unknown to him. The only copy cited in the Schoenberg Database sold on June 11, 1883 in Paris in one of the Firmin-Didot sales (lot 23), and its present location is unknown (ID Number 45711). Copies both of the manuscripts and the early Latin editions thus appear to be quite rare. There is no modern critical edition.

ff. 57-58, Plato, *Crito*, Latin translation from the Greek by Rinuccio Aretinus, dedicatory preface to Gabriele Condulmer, rubric, *Reverendissimo in Christo patri et domino suo singularissimo domino a miseratione divina tituli sancti Clementis presbitero Cardinali Senensi Rynucius felicitatem*; incipit dedicatory preface, "[E]tsi laudes tuas enarrare atque describere velim reverendissime pater..."; explicit dedicatory epistle, "... solet tibi grata esse atque iocunda" (Dedicatory preface published in Hankins, 1990, II, Text 26; on the dedicatee, Gabriele Condulmer, see Hankins, 1990, I, pp. 86-87);

ff. 58-72v, Plato, *Crito*, Latin translation from the Greek by Rinuccio Aretinus, incipit, "Quid ad huc venisti o Crito nondum lucescit dies..."; explicit, "[...] So[crates]. Desinas igitur iam Crito atque aequo animo feramus hec cum adeo sic perducamur. Finis. Amen" (published in Berti and Carosini, 1983, pp. 133-148; see incipit recorded in Hankins, 1990, II, p. 813, no. 191).

This is Rinucius Aretino's earliest translation of Plato, completed when he was still in Constantinople and originally dedicated to John VIII Paleologus (died 1425), then rededicated to his new patron Gabriele Condulmer after Rinucius returned to the Italian peninsula in 1423 (see Lockwood, 1913, p. 52 see Hankins, 1990, vol. II, Texts 25A and 25B). Rinuccio Aretino or da Castiglione (c. 1395-1450) was an Italian humanist born in Arezzo (on Rinuccio Aretino as a translator of Greek texts, see Lockwood, 1913, and 1938; and Hankins, 1990, I, pp. 85-89). Of the 8 recorded manuscripts recorded of his translation by Hankin, all but two include the first dedicatory epistle to John VIII Paleologus: Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica, Patetta 339, and the present manuscript, both of which are dedicated to Gabriele Condulmer. Rinucius's translation is actually a reworking of that of Leonardo Bruni of the same dialogue, based on corrections from a Greek manuscript unknown to Bruni (see Berti, 1983, chs. 3 and 4; Hankins, 1990, I, pp. 86-87; and II, p. 821).

Convicted of corrupting the youth (e.g., encouraging them to challenge the government), Socrates was sentenced to death. Although he had several opportunities to escape, he refused. In the *Crito*, Plato creates a dialogue between Socrates and a friend, Crito, who visits Socrates in prison and encourages him to leave before his death sentence can be carried out. The ensuing dialogue explores the sources and nature of political obligation.

Hankins, 1990, II, p. 821, records 8 manuscripts for this translation, of which 5 are paired with Rinuccio Aretino's translation of Axiochus. These are Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. lat. qu. 558;

Durham (NC), Duke University Library, MS lat. 21-25; Florence, Bibl. Riccardiana, 162; Udine, Biblioteca Capitolare, Bini 21, fasc. 4; Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica, Patetta 339).

ff. 73-74v, Pseudo-Plato, *Axiochus*, Latin translation from the Greek by Rinuccio Aretinus, Dedicatory preface to Angelotto Fosco, Bishop of Cava (died in 1444), incipit proemium, “[H]erodotus Alicarnasseus suo historiarum opera grece conscripsit fabulam super Arione ...”; explicit proemium, “[...] Sed hec iam satis aliquando socratem cum Axiochus de morte disserentem audiamus” (Dedicatory preface published by Lockwood, 1913, pp. 103-104);

ff. 75-87, Pseudo-Plato, *Axiochus*, Latin translation from the Greek by Rinuccio Aretinus, incipit, “[Q]uom in rinosarges [sic] venissem abiremque ...”; explicit, “[...] Ego in rinosarges [sic] redeam unde ad nos huc sum profectus. Finis axiochus platonis” (incipit recorded in Hankins, 1990, II, p. 809, no. 42);

ff. 87v-88v, blank.

In the opening section of the *Axiochus* (364a-365a), Socrates meets Clinias, son of Axiochus, who pleads with Socrates to reassure his terminally-ill father and ease his fear of death. Socrates starts by reproaching Axiochus for behaving in an unmanly and childish fashion by fearing death, and he proceeds to offer various arguments against the fear of death. A mixture of Platonic, Epicurean, and Cynic arguments against the fear of death, the dialogue has recently been rehabilitated by O’Keefe, who newly classified it as belonging to the “consolation genre.” According to O’Keefe, the *Axiochus* dramatizes an argumentative practice in which, in order to calm his patient, Socrates is willing to advance invalid and inconsistent arguments, to tailor these arguments to the psychological foibles of his audience, to appeal to his audience’s emotions, and to engage in evasive maneuvers when needed in order to keep on the therapeutic course.

Pseudo-Plato’s *Axiochus* was translated a number of times in the Quattrocento (by up to 14 different translators, see Hankins, 1990, II, p. 817). The present translation dedicated to Angelotto Fosco, bishop of Cava (died 1444), by Rinucius Aretino was completed before 1444 (see Lockwood, 1913, p. 54). Hankins records 16 manuscripts of this translation (1990, II, p. 821), of which 5 include the *Crito* (both the *Crito* and *Axiochus* comment on the inevitability of death, which is not to be feared).

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Letter of Aristeas in English translation (R. H. Charles version, 1913)

<http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/aristeas.htm>

On the manuscript tradition of the Letter of Aristeas (ccel.org)

<http://72.14.221.104/search?q=cache:CuDf52xvmuQJ:www.ccel.org/ccel/swete/greekot.vii.i.html+aristea+philocrates+printed&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2>

Latin edition of Marcilio Ficino, *Axiochus*

http://72.14.221.104/search?q=cache:ibBZ3v6_Z_YJ:www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS/axio.html+Plato+AXIOCHUS&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=5

Plato's Dialogues

<http://72.14.221.104/search?q=cache:PTUt0bBEBowJ:www.crystalinks.com/plato2.html+Plato+AXIOCHUS&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=19>

Plato's Crito (English translation by B. Jowett)
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/crito.html>