

VIII.—The Greek Version of Caesar's *Gallic War*

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The Greek translation of Caesar's *Gallic War* first published in 1606 is frequently attributed to Maximus Planudes, even in modern handbooks. It has long since been demonstrated that this attribution is impossible. It is suggested that the author is Piero Strozzi (1500?–1558).

Literary ghosts have a way of refusing to be laid. I speak with feeling on the subject, having myself been deluded by such a phantom to the extent of wasting some time and effort on it. Some of the embarrassment, however, of having been the victim of such an imposition is removed by the knowledge that one has been deceived in good company.

There is a Greek translation of Caesar's *Gallic War* which has never attracted a great deal of attention. That is not especially surprising since it is obviously a very late work of no literary merit and of little possible interest except for its position in the manuscript tradition of Caesar. Gottfried Jungermann was the first, in his edition of Caesar printed at Frankfurt in 1606, to publish this version. On the first page addressed to the reader Jungermann explains that the manuscript of this version was brought to him by Jaques Bongars from the library of Paul Petau. He had no further information to offer as to the provenience or authorship of the text, but on the third page he quotes an opinion given at his solicitation by Joseph Scaliger, hedged around with many reservations, to the effect that in his opinion the translation was made by Planudes or by someone who was imitating Planudes. This suggestion was a natural one since Planudes' translations of Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and of Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses* were well known. Partly because of a lack of interest in the problem and partly because of the common unwillingness to allow any work to remain anonymous this attribution won general acceptance.

The translation was repeatedly reprinted by the editors of Caesar, and its readings were treated by them as having independent manuscript value since it would presumably, if made by Planudes, have been made on the basis of a manuscript of the thirteenth century or earlier. Some more or less desultory efforts were made

to improve the Greek text in those editions, but no one seems to have consulted the manuscript after Jungermann.

Theodore of Gaza was also suggested, apparently by Huet, as a possible claimant of the translation, but Achaintre and Lemaire, in their Paris edition of 1819, discarded him with the assurance that the manuscript was written about two hundred years before he was born. I have found no further mention of the manuscript, which these editors say might be seen *apud regiam Parisiorum bibliothecam* (p. xviii), and I am not particularly impressed by their estimate of its age. They can hardly have consulted it since they did not even remove from the text all the blemishes indicated by Jungermann in his notes as *corrigenda*. In any case, there is not at present any such manuscript in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.¹

Planudes came then to be generally accepted as a probable candidate for author of the translation, and the last edition of the work appeared under his name.² With this edition in hand, in spite of Schneider's warning that the text resembled 16th century printed editions³ and Baumstark's observation that it agrees in many places with the Latin of Stephanus' Paris edition of 1544,⁴ I undertook by collation to discover whether it represented the α or β tradition of the manuscripts of Caesar. I had progressed far enough to know that it was a conflation of both, and to begin to harbor some doubts as to the *bona fide* character of the work generally. I had also discovered quite by accident that there was some record of an apparently unpublished Greek version of the *Gallic War* by a known author, when I found the ghost of this so-called Planudean version thoroughly exorcized in an article by H. I. Heller, dated 1857.⁵ Here Heller brilliantly demonstrated that the translation could have been made on the basis of no text other than that of Stephanus' 1544 edition of Caesar mentioned above. His collation displays a combination of readings shared neither by any known manuscript nor by any other edition.

¹ As I am informed by M. Concasty of the Cabinet des Manuscrits in a letter dated 17 Sept. 1946. H. Omont, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1886-98), lists no such manuscript.

² Caii Iulii Caesaris Commentariorum de Bello Gallico Interpretatio Graeca Maximi quae fertur Planudis. Ed. Anton Baumstark (Freiburg, 1834).

³ C. E. C. Schneider, *Commentarii de Bellis C. Iulii Caesaris*, 1 (Halle, 1840) xlix.

⁴ *Op. cit.* (see note 2) vi f.

⁵ "De Graeco Metaphraste Commentariorum Caesaris," *Philologus* 12 (1857) 107-149.

Heller's warning to editors that this version must no longer be assigned any independent manuscript value in the editing of Caesar and his demonstration that it could not possibly have been made by Planudes seem to have sufficed for the editors at least. It has, however, escaped the notice of a good many less wary persons. Krumbacher, Sandys, Hosius, and Dain are among those who have innocently perpetuated the myth of a Planudean translation of the *Gallic War*.⁶ Now if an acceptable author can be found, perhaps that will help finally to expunge Planudes' name from the record.

We have 1544 as a *terminus post quem*, and I think that the authorship of this orphan translation can be established with reasonable certainty. Heller found good reason, in obvious Gallicisms, to believe that the work had been done by a Frenchman.⁷ I believe, on the other hand, that it was not a Frenchman, but a French-speaking Italian, Piero Strozzi. This Piero Strozzi, *Maréchal de France*, was a native Florentine, but a bitter enemy of the Medicis, and he spent his whole career as a soldier in the armies of France seeking vengeance against this hated family.⁸ Montaigne was a great admirer of Strozzi as well as of Caesar and on the fly-leaf of his Plantin edition of Caesar he wrote in 1578:

"C'est le livre qu'un general darmee devoit continuellement avoir devant les yeux pour Patron comme faisoit le marechal Strozzi qui le savoit quasi par coeur *et l'a traduit*."⁹

This is the key to the situation. Montaigne does not say into what language Strozzi made his translation, and one might suppose that it would have been either Italian or French, but Brantôme, a friend of Strozzi's son Filippo, had seen the manuscript and not only mentions the fact that it was in Greek, but also gives some

⁶ Karl Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur* (Munich, 1897) 545. J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, 1³ (Cambridge, 1921) 428: "Among the many Latin works which he introduced to his countrymen by translating them into Greek, were Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*. . . ." Schanz-Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, 1⁴ (Munich, 1927) 346: "Im Mittelalter wurde der Autor nicht beiseite geschoben; der um 1310 gestorbene Maximus Planudes vermittelte das *Bellum Gallicum* durch eine griechische Übersetzung dem Osten." A. Dain, *REL* 17 (1939) 231: "On sait que Planude a traduit en grec le Songe de Scipion, la Guerre des Gaules. . . ."

⁷ *Op. cit.* (see note 5) 147.

⁸ Ernest Grégoire, *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, 44 (Paris, 1865) 559-560. Cf. Roberto Palmarocchi, *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 32 (Rome, 1936) 864.

⁹ Pierre Villey, *Les sources et l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne* (Paris, 1908) 91.

valuable additional details about it.¹⁰ He gives the opinion that he had heard expressed by Daurat and Ronsard to the effect that the Greek was excellent, admitting that he himself knew no more of Greek than he did of High German. He says further that he does not know what became of the translation, but that the library of Pierro Strozzi was eventually acquired by Catherine de' Medici, and that so far as he knew it was still at Chenonceau.¹¹ That is the sum of our information on Strozzi's translation.

What are the justifications for the suggested identification of Strozzi's version with that printed by Jungermann? Stephanus' edition appeared in 1544 and Strozzi would have had ample time to make his translation before his death at the siege of Thionville in 1558. The circumstance of his nationality does not, of course, conflict with the Gallicisms observed by Heller. The manuscript could easily have come into the hands of Petau, who was an avid collector. From Brantôme's statement, it was apparently still in the hands of Strozzi's son for some time after the Maréchal's death. If it ever actually came into the possession of Catherine, who died in 1589, it must have disappeared before her death, for the catalogue of her library¹² contains no mention of it. Giulio Negri¹³ says that some of Strozzi's papers were acquired by Antonio Magliabecchi whose collections later became part of the *Biblioteca Nazionale* of Florence, but that library does not contain a manuscript of our work and there is no indication that Magliabecchi ever had one.¹⁴ Thus there is a period of at least fifteen years (1589–1605) during which it is impossible to account for the whereabouts of the manuscript. Brantôme does refer to the fact that the manuscript of Strozzi also contained "Latin comments, additions and instructions for military men," but Jungermann may have disregarded such an appendix or it may have been separated from the text before it

¹⁰ *Oeuvres complètes de Pierre de Bourdeille Seigneur de Brantôme*, 2 (Paris, 1866) 241: "les *Commentaires* de Caesar qu'il avoit tournées de latin en grec, et luy-meme escrites de sa main, avec des commentz latins, additions et instructions pour gens de guerre. . . ."

¹¹ As to the fate of Strozzi's library, cf. Leopold Delisle, *Le Cabinet des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, 1 (Paris, 1868) 209.

¹² *Anc. fonds Bouhier* 21, now *ms. latin* 17.917. For this information I am also indebted to M. Concasty.

¹³ *Istoria degli scrittori fiorentini*, etc. (Ferrara, 1722) 470.

¹⁴ It is not listed by G. Vitelli, *Indice di codici greci magliabecchiani con suppl. di A. Olivieri* (Florence, 1894). For this and the above information I am indebted to Dotta. Anita Mondolfo of the R. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.

came into his hands. At any rate, I know of no one else having made such a translation. Strozzi's manuscript disappears after his death and seems not to have been seen again. On the other hand a manuscript is brought from France to Jungermann in 1605. These are, to be sure, inconclusive arguments but it seems to me that it would be a remarkable coincidence if a second Greek translation of the *Gallic War*, which would also fit the known facts so neatly, was made in France between 1544 and 1606. It may be said without danger of contradiction, and with all modesty, that this attribution has more to approve it than any other that has been made. At least let us hope that, in this connection, the name of Planudes will no longer be taken in vain.