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BIODIVERSITY IN BYZANTIUM: BETWEEN PATRONS, MANUSCRIPTS, AND BOTANICAL TRAVELS

I. Preliminary remarks on Byzantine biodiversity and its study

Not much has been written so far about biodiversity in Byzantium *per se*. There is, however, a very interesting essay on botany recently written by Alain Touwaide and included in the *Companion to Byzantine Science*.¹ The essay addresses the concept of biodiversity related to the variety of plants recorded in Byzantine (scientific) written sources and opens by mentioning the illustrated manuscripts of Dioscorides' *De materia medica* (especially the well-known Viennese version)² as

an initial reference point for research. The main sources for the study of botanical biodiversity in Byzantium are, in addition to Dioscorides, obviously also the *Hippocratic Corpus*, Aristotle and Theophrastus, Galen and Greek translations of Arabic treatises.

Since the studies carried out so far have been purely based on Dioscorides and on a concept of botanical biodiversity based on a division of plants according to geographical area and phyto-physiological properties, Touwaide proposes to extend the manuscript research from the catalogue of medical codices compiled by Diels at the beginning of the twentieth century (*Die*

Handschriften der antiken Ärzte) to the entire deposit of Byzantine manuscripts, which are now made more traceable and accessible by the paleographic databases and digital resources like the online TLG.³ This would make it possible to examine both hitherto unknown sources and sources not yet considered from a botanical point of view. According to Touwaide, and rightly so, recent developments in archaeobotany and palaeoclimatology are decisive. Adam Izdebski, an expert in environmental history at the Max Planck Institute and co-editor together with Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Vienna) of *the Companion to the Environmental History of Byzantium*, has for years been studying pollen deposited on lake bottoms in former Byzantine territories as evidence of changes in biodiversity, climate change, and from them even migrations and changes in the socio-economic structure of those regions.⁴ Touwaide also stresses the need not to underestimate the possible contribution that texts such as monastic *typika* and legal documents can make to the issue of botanical biodiversity.⁵ The scholar, however, argues that it does not appear that “Byzantine scholars developed a scientific concept of Mediterranean botanical unity or regional diversity.”⁶ It is clear, nonetheless, that the Mediterranean is a rich biodiversity hotspot and Touwaide’s essay provides us with some bibliography on this, though not yet specifically on the Byzantine millennium.⁷

Touwaide also notes the coincidence of the recurrent provenance of several medical specialists from Tarsus in Cilicia, not far from Anazarbo, the birthplace of Dioscorides,⁸ arguing that it cannot be a coincidence that Cilicia is also the region of the Mediterranean basin with the highest presence of botanical biodiversity. Even though in ancient and Byzantine authors, there is no clear trace of any explicit awareness of this richness, it seems that climate change (and this is where Izdebski’s work could come in) and deforestation in the Byzantine era probably affected biodiversity.⁹ Another rather interesting aspect is that the presence in the Byzantine area of exotic botanical varieties from Persian and Arab territories as early as the

thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could serve as a further key to understanding how Byzantium’s role as a cultural melting pot and bridge between East and West also contributed to the growth and development of its botanical biodiversity. The type of knowledge produced by the Byzantines’ botanical observations is perhaps also worth noting. Their approach shows three different tendencies: speculative (focusing on the genesis and ontology of plants), analytical (taxonomy and classification), and utilitarian (plants in relation to agriculture, food, medicine, body hygiene, etc.).¹⁰ While the first two trends are more scientific and theoretical, the third rather relates to the practice of everyday life.

Since the topic of biodiversity constitutes a *Knotenpunkt* of philology, codicology, literature, history of science, environmental studies, palaeoclimatology and archaeobotany, the interdisciplinary aspect is fundamental. It is exactly this aspect that encourages the versatility and multitasking attitude which is typical of Byzantine civilization scholars, fascinated by a subject that is in some ways very topical and, in some cases, closely dependent on modern scientific research technologies.

If we then consider biodiversity as it appears in literary texts, observing both the cognitive perception of the different (botanical) species and their literary rendering opens up truly stimulating analytical horizons. On the one hand, literary biodiversity can result into fascinating encyclopaedic works such as the eleventh book of the *Geoponika*. Here, the mythological origin of different flowers and trees harmoniously entangles with technical advice about the best season for their planting and harvest, deriving from deep-rooted rural practices.¹¹ On the other hand, the widespread presence of floral and arboreal elements in fictional and poetic texts reveals a complex and fascinating metaphorical apparatus, consisting in the shimmering entanglement of the natural world and human perception. In the Byzantine hymnographical production, for example, plants or fruits often represent the female appearance of Mary, Mother of God, and convey the imagery of the garden, which in turn

identifies with the terrestrial paradise.¹² As we can see, botany, religion, and human virtues, such as purity and innocence, blend here into a multifaceted conceptual structure. In this case, the application of literary theories is accompanied by philosophical and theological analysis of the text, but also by the use of cognitive science, e.g. with Lakoff and Johnson's fundamental theory of conceptual metaphor.¹³ An 'ecocritical' approach could also be adopted in the literary analysis of biodiversity, i.e. focusing on the active role of different plant species in the textual context.¹⁴ This is possible on the assumption that literary agency can be ascribed to all elements, both human and non-human, present in a narrative or epigrams, and that the faculty of action (in a text) is not exclusive to humankind, as argued by the more traditional approach.¹⁵

Biodiversity in Byzantium is therefore a theme that lends itself to a scientific, historical and literary analysis that is, to say the least, multifaceted, even with the possibility of potentially very fruitful contemporary references, such as the encounter between East and West, a particularly hot topic in recent times, and the focus on nature, environment and climate change in relation to human intervention, as well as on the concept of diversity, all key words that are particularly appealing these days - unfortunately or fortunately - when it comes to applying for funds of any nature and entity.

(L. B.)

II. Byzantine biodiversity and botanical knowledge: the example of the Viennese Dioscorides

Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq

Just as a mosaic, history is made by the entirety of all the pebbles put together, and like a domino every tiny piece could set off a process hardly mutable and rather unpredictable. It might be argued, with a pinch of salt, that some personalities may have played a larger role in some dynamics. The Habsburg ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq should be considered one of them. He, whom Emperor Ferdinand had named ambassador to the Ottoman court in the years 1554-1562, went to Constantinople in two separate occasions: the first journey lasted less than a year, while the second one almost seven, during which he defines himself as "a virtual prisoner in his own mansion."¹⁶

His personality has not attracted much attention from scholars, and his value in making history is on the one hand broadly acknowledged,¹⁷ yet, on the other hand, some information has not been properly explored nor uncovered.¹⁸ This is, however, not the place to discuss such elements, and we shall instead focus our attention on how he contributed to our understanding of not only Medieval but also Renaissance biodiversity, in particular of the flora of what once was the Ottoman Empire, and before the Byzantine Empire, and of all the bordering countries he had to pass through on his way to Constantinople. To do this, we gather information from his collection of four letters, the so-called Turkish letters, in which he discusses Turkish costumes, in terms of dress-codes, rituals, relationship with their allies and enemies, but also about the structure and architecture of the city, and the flora and fauna.¹⁹

Plants and flowers seem to have had various uses, such as medical or ritual, already in the ancient Greek world, though "tentacles of Byzantine medicine extended into areas that we would now consider nonmedical."²⁰ According to

Busbecq, “Turks were fond of flowers” and used them also in ceremonial rituals.²¹ Such a fondness of flowers came unexpected to Busbecq, who, as a fan and sort of expert himself, did not think that the Turks, who were “otherwise anything but extravagant,” would have joined him in such an obvious simple pleasure.²²

In the first letter, Busbecq describes his meeting with the Janissaries, who, as customary, greeted him “with a bunch of hyacinths or narcissi.”²³ The origin and meaning of this tradition is not explained by Busbecq, who later mentions that he found hyacinths and narcissus “pretty much everywhere” in Adrianople: an abundant flowering which caught him by surprise as “winter is not a favorable season” for flowering.²⁴ About the hyacinth and narcissus he also adds that a large quantity of them “causes a headache in those who are not accustomed to them.”²⁵ This apparently does not hold true for tulips, also found in Adrianople, which though praised for their “beauty and the variety of colors,” have little or no scent.²⁶ We may find a sense of surprise in these lines, which might indicate that these species were not common in the West. Lavender is also mentioned in the following pages as a ‘fragrant’ plant found through some fields after leaving the city of Scutari.²⁷ He also talks about medicinal plants, such as, for example, the *scordium*, an hoppiaceous used against plagues or insomnia, which emanates “an odour of garlic” and that was previously “unfamiliar” to him.²⁸

In the concluding pages of the letters, he describes what he found worthy of being brought back to the emperor, and among such things, he said he “hardly brought back any plants or herbs but some botanical drawings which he was keeping for Mattioli.”²⁹ Mattioli was a famous Italian physician, who worked for Archduke Ferdinand and Emperor Maximilian II, and generally remembered for his herbal, firstly published in 1554, which seems to have been inspired by the writings of Pedanius Dioscorides.³⁰ This botanical interest of Busbecq, coupled with a strong passion for manuscripts, results evident in his desire of buying and

bringing back the oldest copy known to us of the Dioscorides’ *Materia Medica*, a fundamental treatise to Byzantine pharmacology written in the first century AC, now to be found in the Austrian National Library as Cod. Med. gr. 1. This manuscript preserves and bears 383 botanical pictures of plants, accompanied by descriptions and analysis. The manuscript is unique in its own, and has attracted scholarly attention for centuries, with its relevance testified by the copious reproductions even in the twentieth century³¹ and by its nomination as part of the UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register. He describes the codex as follows:

The only one I left at Constantinople was a copy of Dioscorides, evidently a very ancient manuscript, written throughout in uncial characters and containing drawings of the plants, in which, if I am not mistaken, there are also some fragments of Cratevas and a treatise on birds. It belongs to a Jew, the son of Hamon who was Solyman’s physician, and I wanted to buy it, but was deterred by the price. For he demanded 100 ducats, a sum suiting the imperial purse, but not mine. I shall not leave off pressing the Emperor till I induce him to ransom so famous an author from such foul slavery. The manuscript is in very bad condition from the injuries of age, being so worm-eaten on the outside that hardly anyone, if he found it on the road, would take the trouble of picking it up.³²

Due to the high price of the manuscript, Busbecq was at the beginning unable to buy it. However, as promised in the letter (“I shall not leave off pressing the Emperor till I induce him to ransom so famous an author from such foul slavery”), he managed at the very end - many years later, when the son of that stingy enough emperor raised to the throne, whom Busbecq himself was tutor to - to acquire the precious manuscript, together with another copy of it of much less value nonetheless.³³

To conclude, it would not be surprising if, once home, Busbecq confirmed his perceptions of such plants by looking at the Dioscorides' descriptions.

The manuscript and its dedicatee

It would now be interesting to look at the origin of this manuscript. We shall present the dedicatee of the book and give some information on her personality. The exemplar is clearly rather prestigious, as it can be seen by its size - 38 × 33 cm, it weighs 14 pounds - structure and internal content. Brubacker points out that it was possibly made for imperial use³⁴ and describes it as “a self-consciously deluxe reference book presented as a learned text with encyclopedic pretensions.”³⁵ This assumption of hers is justified by the dedicatee of the book: the aristocrat Anicia Juliana (ca 462–ca 528). Born to one of the wealthiest family in Byzantium, she is known for her endless commitment to artistic and architectural patronage. She is mostly remembered for the foundation of the Constantinopolitan churches of Saint Polyuktos and of Hagia Euphemia.³⁶ What is rather striking about this personality is not just the dedication and commitment to art sponsorship, but rather the fact that, unlike other more famous Byzantine patronesses, she was not directly related nor tied to the somewhat *parvenue* family of future emperor Justinian I. She was the great-granddaughter of the celebrated Byzantine emperor Theodosius II, and her other forbears were all of the highest rank, such as, for example, her grandfather Emperor Theodosius II and the sainted empress Aelia Eudocia. Although her father Olybrius was one of the last Western emperors, and her husband Areobindus briefly occupied the throne, to shortly later flee it, and although her son Olybrius jr was almost crowned, Anicia Juliana's economic, artistic, and political power mostly relied on her own familiar lineage, which seems to go back to through seven centuries of roman statesmen.

The importance of her ancestry is well-stressed also by an epigram of the Greek Anthology,

in which Anicia Juliana is implicitly compared to her great-grandmother, the Empress Eudocia. Such a poem is relatively surprising, as one would expect that in the comparison, the empress would always come out as the best out of the two:

Eudokia *the empress*, eager to honour God, first built here a temple of Polyeuctus the servant of God. But she did not make it as great and as beautiful as it is, not *from any economy or lack of possessions* — what doth a Queen lack? — but because her prophetic soul told her that she should leave a family *well knowing how better* to adorn it. Whence Juliana, *the glory of her blessed parents*, inheriting *their royal blood in the fourth generation*, did not defeat the hopes of the *Queen, the mother of a noble race*, but raised this from a small temple to its present size and beauty, increasing *the glory of her many-sceptered ancestors*

This poem is beautifully constructed, thoroughly permeated by a slight irony nor difficult to grasp, neither alien to Byzantine's literature, and does the opposite of what commissioning and praising texts are supposed to do. If one looks closely at it, something stands out: Eudocia's imperial title is there mentioned not to praise her, but it is instead used to make the other shine, adopting the well-known *escamotage* of *synkrisis*, proper of classical and biblical literature. Eudocia is an empress, does not lack economical means, but she is implicitly considered not worthy enough to deal with “God's possessions” so that she needs to leave it to “a family *well knowing how better* to adorn it.” A female succession of course, culminated in her grand-grandaughter Anicia Juliana.

Conclusions

To conclude we could argue that in a sort of ring composition the manuscript traveled from one empire to another, first from the Greeks to the Turks, and then back from the East to the West, that is, from the Ottoman empire, successor of the perished empire of the Second Rome, to the Sacrum Romanum Imperium of the Habsburg emperors. It survived the cruel and inescapable flux of time, the fall of a city, a likely daily use by physicians, to finally end up in the Austrian National Library. This manuscript and all the people revolving around it, that is to say the patroness Anicia Juliana, the ambassador Busbecq, the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, are all pawns in the broader world's chessboard, and it is their actions and interactions that to some extent contributed to the development of global history.

(G. M. P.)

III. *Hortus conclusus, soror mea, sponsa* (A garden enclosed my sister, spouse)³⁷

Julia Augusta and Julia Anicia. Two women very much alike in every aspect, even in the name they went by in past scholarship and by which they were widely known; although the former was born as Livia Drusilla, and gained the name Julia Augusta from her marriage with Octavianus, and the latter's name was actually Anicia Juliana.

Both of them were linked to imperial figures. Livia first married a member of the Gens Claudia, and then the very founder of the *principatus*. Anicia Juliana was not just a wife but also a daughter, niece, and grand-daughter of emperors. Both of them were connected to the ruling class and the roman *intelligencija* through a privileged network of family ties.

By marrying her cousin Tiberius Claudius Nero, the sixteen-year-old Livia not only entered the highest Roman patrician class, but also the fervid

environment of the anti-cesarean conspirators, led by Brutus and Cassius, and it was for this valuable pedigree that Augustus, the ambitious nephew and self-proclaimed heir of Caesar, married her. As for Anicia, countless 'Proustian kinships' linked her to the empire of the First Rome and the new aristocracy of the Second Rome, Byzantium. We may mention here, beside the many figures of statesmen, that of the philosopher Boethius.

Both of them were the heirs of a *lignée* of women, which had made women power a family tradition. Livia's mother, Alphidia, coming from a dynasty of high-ranking magistrates, was a powerful figure, widely known as such even to our contemporary literature and mass culture. Political activism and artistic patronage were already a prerogative of the long line of matrons and patronesses which Anicia Juliana came from.

It is to this feminine tradition that we cannot not pinpoint the most evident feature the two had in common: their botanical interests and their commission of a *hortus*. A botanical garden mirrored in a stone garden, in the case of Livia: the first century frescos of her Villa at Prima Porta, that can still be admired today, in their original form, at the National Roman Museum, re-enact with a sublime pictorial technique the scenes of real plant life. A parchment garden, in the case of the codex of Anicia, a book-garden: almost 500 sheets and 435 (today 383) full-page plates compose that equally illusionistic herbarium that is the Dioscorides of Vienna, illuminated at the beginning of the sixth century.

These powerful women's relationship with nature, or rather the making of nature the very source of their power, is clearly stressed by the primary sources. Plinius, in his *Naturalis Historia*, recounts the famous tale according to which, once the wedding with Augustus was arranged, an eagle dropped on Livia's lap a perfectly intact (*inlaesam*) white hen, which was carrying in her beak a laurel branch. Livia bred the offspring of that *gallina alba*, and from that *lauerum ramum*, that Livia planted, was born a sacred wood (*mira sylva*), from which the future emperors would have picked out the laurel

of their crowns and the one they held in their hands in their triumphs.

Even the emperors' male power, therefore, drew its legitimacy from the female contiguity with the animal and vegetable world, with its ancestral strength, with its mysterious messages. It is no coincidence that among the multiple iconographies of Livia Julia Augusta, the most famous statue, now in the Louvre, depicts her in the guise of Ceres, goddess of fertility, her veiled head surmounted by a laurel wreath, the *cornucopia* supported by the left hand, the ears of corn clutched in the right.

Among the representations of Anicia, the most significant one is found in one of the initial *folios* of the Dioscorides of Vienna, in which she appears at the center of a miniature, enclosed among the rope knots of an esoteric mandala formed by an eight-pointed star bounded by a circle. On the outer edges of the star, a little people of *puttos* in the guise of masons and carpenters climb up, painted in grisaille. The matron/ patron is in the middle of the star, seated on a throne in a sacred and ceremonial posture, in the act of giving alms. She is flanked by two equally hieratic female figures, personifications of Magnanimity (*megalopsychia*, as can be read in the inscription above the figure seated to the left) and Prudence (*phronesis*, again written above the personification seated to the right). At the feet of Anicia kneels the 'Gratitude of the arts,' personified in a *putto*, who hands the manuscript to the benefactress. Above the latter's figure stands out the attribute of *sophia*, 'wisdom.' Anicia is thus presented as the personification of that same sacred Sophia from which the grandiose Constantinopolitan basilica of Hagia Sophia takes its name, which would shortly thereafter be re-erected by Justinian on the remains of the Theodosian basilica, due to Anicia's great-grandfather, Theodosius II, and destroyed during the Nika revolt of 532, almost twenty years after the creation of Dioscorides' manuscript. A Wisdom, in the case of Anicia, explicitly and eminently feminine.

According to a theory that has been famously put forward by Robert Graves in his book, *The White Goddess*, which in turn was based on that

masterpiece of the history of religions that is Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, all religions of Indo-European peoples have originated from the common cult of a female deity, known under different names, inspired and represented by the phases of the moon and linked to the cultivation of the earth, lady of the harvest and the underworld, and therefore of love, death, and rebirth.

Regardless of the theories on matriarchy put forward by the historians of the nineteenth century and refuted by the anthropologists of the twentieth, in that archaic world the supremacy of women was based on the channeling of voices and vibrations of an *anima mundi*: of that 'soul of the world' that includes everyone and everything and thus first of all the language of non-human life, the speech of animals and plants: a feminine capacity for perception and inclusion that marked the muse, the Pythia, the Sibyl, the Platonic priestess, as well as the medieval witch, which were considered psychic mediators between the natural and human worlds.

The changing face of this ancestral *Mater nostra* is hidden behind the various female personifications of pagan myth, but also behind the Christian cult, if we think of the divine mother-son couple that remains and that reworks beliefs and rites of a pre-existing religious corpus. The earthly queens, already according to Graves, are hypostases of the Goddess in each of their kingdoms. It is to this ancient and never forgotten matriarchy that the imaginary that surrounds those women and *dominae* refers, in whose figures and in whose political, artistic and cultural eminence a power survives that is given by the connection with the natural world and the intimacy with the whole living nature.

(S. R.)

Notes

- ¹ Allan Touwaide, “Botany.” In Stavros Lazaris ed., *A Companion to Byzantine Science* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020), 312.
- ² The manuscript is listed as Vindobonensis med. gr. and kept at the Austrian National Library. It is a sixth century deluxe manuscript of a rather large size (38x33 cm, weight 14 pounds), which preserves the earliest illustrations of Dioscorides’ *Materia Medica*, accompanied by the pharmaceutical properties of each plant. See: Leslie Brubaker, “The Vienna Dioscorides and Anicia Juliana,” in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. Antony Robert Littlewood, Henry Maguire, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 189; Ch Christian Gastgeber, ‘Der Wiener Dioskurides-Codex med. gr. 1. Beobachtungen zu den Widmungsblättern’, *Mitteilungen zur Christlichen Archäologie* 20 (2014), 9-35. doi 10.1553/micha20.
- ³ Touwaide, “Botany,” 310. Digital resources are the *Thesauri linguae graecae* and *Pinakes, Textes et manuscrits grecs*.
- ⁴ Johannes Preiser-Kapeller and Adam Izdebski ed., *A Companion to the Environmental History of Byzantium* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 2021). [forthcoming]. For an overview about potentialities and perspectives of the environmental topic in the Late Antique and Early Middle Ages, see: Adam Izdebski, “Setting the Scene for an Environmental History of Late Antiquity,” in Adam Izdebski and Michael Mulryan ed., *Environment and Society in the Long Late Antiquity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 3-13.
- ⁵ Touwaide, “Botany,” 302-352.
- ⁶ Ivi, 319.
- ⁷ Ivi, 320.
- ⁸ Ivi, 321.
- ⁹ Ivi, 322.
- ¹⁰ Ivi, 328.
- ¹¹ Andrew Dalby, *Geoponika: Farm Work. A Modern Translation of the Roman and Byzantine Farming Handbook* (Totnes, Devon, UK: Prospect Books, 2011), 235-245.
- ¹² Helena Bodin and Ragnar Hedlund eds., *Byzantine Gardens and Beyond. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia*, 13 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2013), 128-147.
- ¹³ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- ¹⁴ A pioneering work for the ecocritical approach to the Byzantine literature is: Adam J. Goldwyn, *Byzantine Ecocriticism: Women, Nature, and Power in the Medieval Greek Romance* (London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2018). A more recent publication by Thomas Arentzen, Virginia Burrus and Glenn Peers, *Byzantine Tree Life. Christianity and the Arboreal Imagination* (London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2021), explores representations of trees in Byzantium, by drawing on broader scholarship on Plant Humanities and eco-criticism.
- ¹⁵ For a thorough investigation of the relation between agency and plants, see: Paul Cloke and Owain Jones, *Tree Cultures: The Place of Trees and Trees in Their Place* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2002).
- ¹⁶ George Sarton, “Third Preface to Volume XXXIII: Brave Busbecq (1522-1592),” *Isis* 33 (5) (1941/42): 558.
- ¹⁷ On Busbecq see: Ignace Dalle, *Un Européen chez le Turcs: Augier Ghiselin de Busbecq: 1521-1591* (Paris: Fayard, impr., 2008); Dominique Arrighi, “Le récit de voyage dans l’empire ottoman: traditions et variations dans les *Lettres turques* de Busbecq,” *Camaenae* no.1 (janvier 2007): 1-11; Dominique Arrighi, *Ecritures de l’ambassade: les “Lettres turques” d’Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq* (Paris: Honoré Champion éditeur, 2011); Hubert Le Bourdelles, “Busbecq: 1521-1591. Un humaniste et un homme d’action européen,” *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé* 2 (1991): 204-209; Christian Gastgeber, “Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq und seine griechischen Handschriften,” in André Binggeli, Matthieu Cassin, Marina Detoraki and Anna Lampadaridi eds., *Bibliothèques grecques dans l’Empire ottoman* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2020), 145-181; Silvia Ronchey, “Libri quos mari transmisi Venetias. Busbecq, Prodromos Petra e i giacimenti librari costantinopolitani al tempo di Solimano il Magnifico,” *Engramma* 174 (2020): 199-229; André Rousseau ed., *Sur les traces de Busbecq et du gothique* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1991); Zweder von Martels, “On his Majesty’s Service. Augerius Busbequius, Courtier and Diplomat of Maximilian II,” in Friedrich Edelmayr and Alfred Kohler eds., *Kaiser Maximilian II. Kultur und Politik im 16. Jahrhundert* (Wien and München: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik and R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1992), 169-181; Zweder von Martels, “A Stoic Interpretation of the Past: Augerius Busbequius’s Description of his Experiences at the Court of Süleyman the Magnificent (1554-1562),” *Journal of the Institute of Romance Studies* 2 (1993): 165-179.
- ¹⁸ It is undeniable that the position of Busbecq as ambassador at the Turkish court might have had various implications that may have gone beyond the apparent scope of the diplomatic mission. As his figure is still partially shrouded in mystery, one might for the moment only speculate on what other aims he might have wanted to accomplish during his two journeys. His position as an insider in the Greek Constantinopolitan world and his ties with the patriarchal entourage should be further investigated as well as his role in bringing such a copious number of manuscripts to the West, probably acquired from the monastery of Prodromos Petra, which is also a rather understudied topic. Busbecq’s acquisition of Greek manuscripts in the sixteenth century, more than a century after the fall of Constantinople, sheds light and speaks for the status of monastic libraries in the post-fall world, and how they managed to survive and remain active after the Turkish conquest, a fact that should not be underestimated, considering what on the other hand happened in the aftermath of the 4th crusade. The vicissitudes surrounding

his shipment of manuscripts to Venice should also deserve further studies. About this last point, see: Silvia Ronchey, "Introduzione storico-filologica," in Paolo Cesaretti and Silvia Ronchey edd., *Eustathii Thessalonicensis exegesis in canonem iambicum pentecostalem. Recensuerunt indicibusque instruxerunt. Supplementa Byzantina, Bd 10* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 187*-313*.

¹⁹ Ogier de Busbecq, *Turkish Letters*, translated by Edward Seymour Forster, introduced by Philip Mansel (London: Eland Books, 2001).

²⁰ Brubacker, "The Vienna Dioskorides and Anicia Juliana," 213.

²¹ Ogier de Busbecq, *Turkish Letters* (Eland 2001), 16.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ivi, 6.

²⁴ Ivi, 16.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ivi, 28.

²⁸ Ivi, 45.

²⁹ Ivi, 163.

³⁰ John Bidwell et al., *Mattioli's Herbal: A Short Account of Its Illustrations, with a Print from an Original Woodblock* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 2003).

³¹ Touwaide, "Botany," 302.

³² Ogier de Busbecq, *Turkish Letters*, 163.

³³ Sarton, "Third Preface to Volume XXXIII: Brave Busbecq (1522-1592)," 566.

³⁴ Brubacker, "The Vienna Dioskorides and Anicia Juliana," 206.

³⁵ Ivi, 209.

³⁶ Ivi, 212.

³⁷ *Canticum Canticorum*, 4,12.

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