

**George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. An unknown biography in Greek.**

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Book Description

Although several biographies have been written on George Kastriot, known as Skanderbeg, his first biography in Greek appeared late, despite the fact that the beliefs concerning his Greek origin and his feats against the Ottoman army naturally appealed to Greek-speaking audiences. His earliest biography written in Greek was published in 1812 in Moscow. This was not an original work, but a translation of a text by the French Jesuit R.P. Duponcet, *Histoire de Scanderbeg, Roy d'Albanie*, published in Paris in 1709.

In a manuscript of the middle of the 18th century I discovered a hitherto unknown biography of Skanderbeg in Greek among forty other texts about Ottoman history. The text was written by the manuscript's creator and owner, the Constantinopolitan Nikolaos Karatzas, a scholar, bibliophile, and manuscript scribe, who lived in 1705-1787. The manuscript is now preserved in the Library of the University of Ioannina, where it was donated by the metropolitan of Korytsa (Korçë) Eulogios Kourilas.

The text of the biography is written on 140 pages (70 folia of the ms) and has the title *Περί τῶν ἀξίων και ἐνδόξων κατορθωμάτων Γεωργίου τοῦ Κρόγια, ἐλληνικὰ Καστριώτου, τοῦ ἐπιλεγομένου Σκενδέρμπεη, αὐθέντου και ἡγεμόνος Ἀλβανίας τε και Ἡπείρου* (*Concerning the worthy and glorious achievements of George of Kroia, in Greek Kastriotis, known as Skanderbeg, master and ruler of Albania and Epirus*). Neither the author's name or that of the translator, or the date of the composition or translation are mentioned anywhere.

Based on comparison with other biographies known until then, I reached the conclusion that the anonymous Greek translated the work of Demetrio Franco *Commentario de le cose de Turchi, et del S. Georgio Scanderbeg, principe di Epyrro. Con la sua vita et le vittorie per lui fatte...*, first published in Venice in 1540. However, internal evidence led me to the conclusion that the Greek translator was using the work's edition by Giovanni Bonardo in 1584 which included some interventions to the original publication and with the variant title: *Gli illustri e gloriosi gesti et vittoriose imprese fatte contra Turchi, dal Sign. D. Giorgio Castriotto*.

It is worth noting that the Greek text is not a word by word translation, but a creative adaptation. The omission of words or phrases and the conspicuous silence of phrases that praise Venice lead to the conclusion that this Greek biography must be related either to the anti-Turkic wrath that was expressed by Jeremias Kakavelas (ci.1643-ci.1698) in his translation of the work *Ιστορικόν του πολέμου των Τούρκων υπο κάτω εις το κάστρον της Βιέννας και της ἡπτης αυτών* written in Italian and preserved in the same manuscript, or with the policy of Russia from the beginning of the 18th century to revolutionize the peoples of the Balkans against Turks, politics which resulted in the failed uprising of 1770 in Greece.

The book which has just been published, includes the Greek biography of George Kastriot with an extensive Introduction and Commentary.

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