Alexios of Byzantium and the *Apocalypse of Daniel*: A Tale of Kings, Wars, and Translators

"Alexios of Byzantium" is a shadowy figure of the mid-13th century A. D. We know him only as he introduces himself in the preface to his single known work, a translation into Greek from Arabic of a short book of celestial omens called the *Apocalypse of Daniel.*[1] This obscure translator tells us his name (Alexios), his ethnicity (Byzantine) and the peculiar circumstance of his encounter with the Arabic text of the work he translated--he obtained the book in A. D. 1245 while he was enslaved as a prisoner to the "Kings of the Arabs" (βασιλεῦσι Ἀράβων line 24). Alexios also tells us that he knew both the language and the writing system of Greek and of Arabic. His self-introduction contains only those few items; he devotes most of his preface to discussing information that he considers more important for readers of his translation to know. The topics that Alexios includes in his preface as well as his literary style, his attitude to the original work he translated, and some historical and cultural context for his few personal statements form the subject of this paper, which includes the text and an English translation of Alexios' preface to his Greek version of the *Apocalypse of Daniel*.

Among Greek translators of texts originating among the eastern neighbors of Byzantium, it is unusual to know even the translator's name, much less his personal circumstances and his attitude towards his original text. Although the translation of Arabic and Persian texts into Byzantine Greek can be detected as early as the 9th century A. D., Maria Mavroudi cites the names of only five such translators known before A. D. 1300: Michael Synkellos (9th century), Symeon Seth (11th century), Michael Andreopoulos (12th century), the monk Arsenios (13th century), and Alexios of

[1] The text translated by Alexios of Byzantium must be distinguished from another better known work also referred to as the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, which was composed in Greek in the early ninth century and which contained prophecies of events leading to the end of the world after the coronation of Charlemagne. For a discussion and translation of the latter work, see Zervos 1983, 755-770.

Byzantium (13th century). Of these five, only Alexios produced his translation on his own initiative, without a specific commission from a prominent patron[2].

Given the nature of a successful translator's task, it is not surprising that a translated work may become known under the name of its original author while the name of the translator is forgotten. A successful translation becomes in effect a part of the cultural inventory of those who speak the language into which a work has been translated; the name of the original author may lend additional prestige to the work or even introduce that author in the "receptor" culture, but for the reader the translator disappears. Readers prefer to forget that a translator has mediated the original work that they find useful or enjoyable in their own language, with the result that the survival of a translator's name and even more the preservation of a translator's preface is a rare and remarkable event. The survival of Alexios' preface is especially useful because it enables us to assess the character of a "free-lance" translator who worked entirely for his own reasons, without the support and encouragement of a patron.

At this point, let us examine the text and English translation of Alexios' preface to his Greek version of the *Apocalypse of Daniel*.

Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Φιλάδελφος ὁ βασιλεὺς Αἰγύπτου ὑπῆρχε *(4)*
βασιλεύσας ἔτη λη′· ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ βασιλείᾳ οὗτος Ἑβραίους καταδου- *(5)*
λωσάμενος εἰς τὴν ἑλληνίδα μεταβαλεῖν ἀναγκάζει φωνὴν ἐκ τῆς ἑβραΐ-
τιδος πάσας τὰς θείας γραφὰς καὶ ποιοῦνται τὴν ἑρμηνείαν ἄνδρες ο′
ἐν σοφίᾳ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑβραίοις ἐπαιρόμενοι. ἐν τούτοις ἅπασιν ἦν καὶ ἡ
βίβλος ἥδε Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου, ὀπτασίαν ὑπάρχουσα βίβλος
θαυμαστὴ καὶ ἔγκριτος, τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἀναγγέλλουσα μέχρι τῆς *(10)*
συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου κατὰ τύχην τῶν συμβαινόντων αἰθερίων
τεράτων.

Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις Κῶνστα βασιλέως Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ἐγγό-
νου δὲ Ἡρακλείου, Μοαβίας ὁ τῶν Ἀράβων ἀρχηγὸς μετὰ δυνάμεως
πλείστης ἐξελθὼν κατῆλθε μέχρι καὶ τῆς Ῥόδου τὴν γῆν τῶν Ῥωμαίων *(15)*
(172.) λῃΐζων, ὡς καὶ ταύτην κατέστρεψε καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν παραλίαν ταύτης
ἐλεηλάτησε. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ταῦτα ἀκούσας καὶ λαὸν συναθροίσας

[2] Mavroudi 2002, 395. 420

ἦλθεν εἰς Φοίνικα, ὡς τούτῳ τῷ Μοαβίᾳ ἀντιπαρατάξασθαι καὶ πόλεμον συνάψαι. ἡττῶνται Ῥωμαῖοι, ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς Κώνστας μόλις διασωθεὶς ὑπέστρεψεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μετ᾽ αἰσχύνης. ὁ δὲ Μοαβίας ἐπαρθεὶς τῇ νίκῃ *(5)* ἐπόρθησεν κατεδαφήσας τὴν περίχωρον μέχρι καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ὡς καὶ τὴν βίβλον ταύτην ἐντυχὼν καὶ τὰ γεγραμμένα θαυμάσας, δοὺς τοῖς Ἄραψιν μετέφρασεν τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ, μείνασαν ἐν τούτοις μέχρι καὶ τὴν σήμερον.

Ἐν δὲ τῷ ,ϛψνγ′ ἔτει ἐντυχὼν τήνδε Ἀλέξιός τις ἀπὸ Βυζάντιον *(10)* δοῦλος αἰχμάλωτος ὑπάρχων βασιλεῦσι Ἀράβων τὰς γραφὰς καὶ τὴν διάλεκτον ἄμφων γινώσκων καὶ τὴν διήγησιν ἀναγνοὺς ἐπόθησε τοῦ μεταφράσαι ταύτην Ῥωμαίοις καθὼς ὑπόκειται συμμαρτυροῦσαν καὶ συμφωνοῦσαν ἄγχων τὴν τῶν Ἀράβων πεζικὴν γλῶτταν, ὃς καὶ εὔχεται τοῦ δωρηθῆναι αὐτῷ παρὰ θεοῦ προθυμίαν τοῦ εἰς τέλος *(15)* ταύτην ἐξάξειν· ἀμήν[3].

“Ptolemy Philadelphos, king of Egypt, began ruling in the [Seleucid] year 38 [= 275 BC]. During his reign, after enslaving the Hebrews, he compels the translation of all their holy texts from the Hebrew language into Greek, and seventy men distinguished in wisdom among the Hebrews make the translation. Among all these [texts] was also this book of the prophet Daniel, a marvelous and well accepted book that contains a vision and proclaims future [events] until the end of the world according to fate [as revealed in] the celestial portents that occur.

In the days of Constans, emperor of Constantinople [and] descendant of Heraclius, Moabias [Mu‘awiya], the leader of the Arabs, advancing with a huge military force, went as far as Rhodes, plundering the territory of the Byzantines with the result that he subjugated it and laid waste its entire seacoast. After hearing these things and mustering his troops, the Emperor went to Phoenicia in order to deploy his army against this Moabias and join battle. The Byzantines are defeated, and Constans himself, rescued with difficulty, returned to the city [of Constantinople] in disgrace. Elated by his victory, Moabias ravaged and despoiled the surrounding territory even up to Constantinople itself, with the result that he chanced upon this book and marveled

[3] Boudreaux 1912, 178f.

at its contents, gave [it] to the Arabs and had [it] translated into their own language, as it remained up to this day.

Chancing upon this [book] in the year 6753 [= AD 1245], a certain Alexius of Byzantium, being enslaved as a prisoner to the kings of the Arabs, knowing the writing system and the language of both [the Arabs and the Byzantines] and having read the narrative, longed to translate this [narrative] for the Byzantines exactly as [the narrative] is; [it] bears witness in support of [the translator] and agrees with [him], while he chokes off the vulgar language of the Arabs.[4] He prays that [his] desire to bring this [project] to conclusion be granted him by God. Amen[5]."

As a conscientious translator committed to his task, Alexios first directs the attention of his readers to the pedigree of the work he has translated. He begins with Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the Hellenistic Greek ruler of Egypt (ca. 285-246 B. C.) who was responsible for the translation into Greek of "all [the Hebrews'] holy texts" (πάσας τὰς θείας γραφὰς line 7). The most famous among these sacred works translated for Ptolemy was the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible. Alexios apparently expects his readers to accept his unverifiable claim that the *Apocalypse of Daniel* owed its existence in Greek to this Hellenistic translation project because he mentions the legend of the seventy wise Hebrew translators recorded in the *Letter of Aristeas*. This enigmatic Greek work, attributed to a Jew of the late 2nd century B.C., claims that Ptolemy II Philadelphus travelled to Jerusalem and commissioned seventy-two Hebrew sages to translate the Torah into Greek, a task they miraculously completed in seventy-two days[6]. We may note, however, that Alexios gives a very different version of this legendary process of translating the Hebrew holy books. In Alexios' preface, seventy Hebrew translators were compelled rather than commissioned to provide translations after Ptolemy captured their country. Alexios thus associates the *Apocalypse of Daniel* with a victorious Greek ruler in the minds of his readers from the very beginning and

[4] I am grateful to Denis Sullivan, Manoulis Patedakis, and Stratis Papaioannou for their help with the translation of this vexing passage.

[5] Unless otherwise specified, translations from Greek are my own.

[6] ODJR (1997) 414f. s.v. Letter of Aristeas (G. Bohak)

connects the translation with a successful military campaign. He also asserts the credibility and high reputation of the work, calling it "a book that is marvelous and generally accepted" (βίβλος θαυμαστὴ καὶ ἔγκριτος lines 6-7) and classifying it as a revelation of "celestial portents" (αἰθερίων τεράτων lines 9-10).

Alexios then shifts his attention and that of his readers to a second victorious ruler, "Moabias [Mu'awiya], the leader of the Arabs" (Μοαβίας ὁ τῶν Ἀράβων ἀρχηγὸς line 11), who was the governor of Syria and Palestine and founder of the Umayyid dynasty. Noted for his military prowess, Mu'awiya directed annual raids into Byzantine territories in western Anatolia and captured Cyprus (A.D. 649). Then, as Alexios notes, (171.14-172.5) "Moabias" captured Rhodes and defeated the Byzantine emperor Constans II (A.D. 641-668) at Phoenix (modern Finike) in A.D. 655. As Caliph (A.D. 661-680) Mu'awiya besieged Constantinople between A.D. 674 and 678[7]. Alexios claims that "Moabias" obtained the Greek text of the *Apocalypse of Daniel* while his armies were in the vicinity of Constantinople and, as Alexios says, "marveled at its contents, gave [it] to the Arabs and had [it] translated into their own language" (τὰ γεγραμμένα θαυμάσας, δοὺς τοῖς Ἄραψιν μετέφρασεν τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ lines 7-9). Alexios' account of the activities of Mu'awiya in the 650s and 670s is correct in its broad historical outline; details of his narrative, however, might be refined. For example, Alexios fails to mention the nineteen-year interval that separated Mu'awiya's defeat of Constans and his assault on Constantinople by passing over other events that occurred during this period. Mu'awiya's activities, however, were hardly without significance for Byzantium. After defeating his rival Ali for the Caliphate of Damascus, Mu'awiya captured Kyzikos in 670 and Smyrna in 672 in the course of his drive to conquer Constantinople. Alexios says nothing of this in his preface, either because these events did not relate directly to Mu'awiya's encounter with the *Apocalypse of Daniel* or because his source, whether written or oral, did not mention them. In Alexios' defense, it is necessary to concede that the historical context he provides for his translation creates a compelling story by focusing firmly only upon events that were relevant for the preservation and transmission of the text. Whether Alexios' remarks are accurate in every respect is another question. As Mavroudi observes, the general accuracy of

[7] ODB II (1991) 1421 s.v. Mu'awiya (P. A. Hollingsworth)

Alexios' historical account does not necessarily validate his claim that Moabias/ Mu'awiya caused the *Apocalypse of Daniel* to be translated into Arabic as a document of importance[8]. The tale is effective, however, in establishing to readers of Alexios' preface that this book of celestial omens was so highly respected by the two victorious generals Ptolemy and "Moabias" that each caused it to be translated into his own language.

In discussing the circumstances that brought the *Apocalypse of Daniel* from its original Hebrew language into Greek and finally into Arabic, Alexios establishes that the text existed for some 900 years in its Greek version but for only about 600 years in Arabic before he, Alexios, encountered it. In short, according to Alexios the Greek version had claims of priority and of longevity greater than the Arabic version. Thus a sense of literary justice and national pride as well as recognition of the text's military significance may underlie Alexios of Byzantium's fervent desire to translate this work. In his concluding paragraph Alexios says that he "having read the narrative, longed to translate this [narrative] for the Byzantines exactly as [the narrative] is" (τὴν διήγησιν ἀναγνοὺς ἐπόθησε τοῦ μεταφράσαι ταύτην Ῥωμαίοις καθὼς ὑπόκειται 172.12-13). A Byzantine reader would readily understand the military significance of a guide to interpreting celestial omens. Books like the *Apocalypse of Daniel* that contain interpretations of dreams, omens, and portents were necessary equipment for a field commander, as the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos advised his son Romanos in the treatise entitled *What Should Be Observed when the Great and High Emperor of the Romans Goes on Campaign.* I quote from Constantine's recommendations, excerpted from the translation by John Haldon: "Books: the liturgy of the Church, military manuals, book on mechanics . . . historical books . . . an oneirocritical book [that is, a book of dream interpretations]; a book of chances and occurrences; a book dealing with good and bad weather and storms, rain and lightning and thunder and the vehemence of the winds; and in addition to these a treatise on thunder and a treatise on earthquakes, and other books such as those to which sailors are wont to refer[9]." Haldon remarks that

[8] Mavroudi 2002, 410 n. 69

[9] Haldon 1990, 107

among the books recommended to military commanders by Porphyrogenitos are some that reflect traditions and popular beliefs shared at all levels of Byzantine society[10]. Byzantine confidence in the practical value of predictions derived from the interpretation of dreams and of omens that were based on celestial and other natural events motivated a great influx into Byzantium of Arabic and Persian scientific literature as early as the ninth century. Some works, like the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, were translated from oriental languages into Greek, while others were composed in Greek by authors who drew on works in Persian and Arabic[11]. At the forefront was Theophilos of Edessa (ca. 695-785) who wrote the *Works on Military Initiatives, Campaigning and Sovreignty* (Πόνοι περὶ καταρχῶν πολεμικῶν καὶ ἐπιστρατείας καὶ τυραννίδος), an innovative treatise in Greek that specifically applied astrology to military matters. A Syrian Christian in the service of the Caliph of Baghdad, Theophilos notes that astrological treatises of the past did not typically address applications to warfare, but remarks to his son in the preface to the *Works on Initiatives*, "I thought it necessary to take a new direction and to draw from the systems pertaining to personal horoscopes and initiatives some military initiatives that are plausible and at the same time true, since indeed on many [occasions] I had attempted these and was constrained as you know to engage in making them by those ruling at the time when we made the expedition with them into the eastern regions ... [12]."

Alexios of Byzantium continues the tradition of mediating for Greek readers oriental lore on omens and astrology that had military applications. Like Theophilos, Alexios seems to have been a Christian in Arab lands. His Christian faith is clear from the concluding paragraph of his preface, where he prays that God will favor his project of translation and, we may infer, in this way provide to Byzantine military commanders a valuable field resource for combatting the enemies of the Empire. Alexios regards the enemies of Byzantium who have captured him with some scorn, describing himself as a

[10] Haldon 1990, 211 note to C 200-202

[11] Mavroudi 2002, 396-400. 404-407

[12] Text in Cumont 1904, 234 lines 2-6; Pingree 2001, 15 identifies the Abbasid expedition against Khurasan (A.D. 758-759).

translator choking off "the vulgar language of the Arabs" (172.14).

The level of Greek style adopted by Alexios in his preface is appropriate for an audience concerned with gaining practical information rather than literary pleasure. Alexios' style is simple and direct. It is very different from the self-conscious and rhetorical prose favored by those who wrote in the "high" style of Greek that educated persons cultivated and admired in the learned circles of Byzantium.

Although Alexios' prose does not attain an elevated literary style, he does insert into his preface a brief allusion to an earlier Greek literary text. The phrase "Constans himself, rescued with difficulty, returned to the city [of Constantinople] in disgrace" (ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς Κώνστας μόλις διασωθεὶς ὑπέστρεψεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μετ᾽ αἰσχύνης 172.4-5) contains close verbal parallels to the account of the same events shared by Symeon the Logothete (10th century) and George Kedrenos (12th century), whose texts are nearly identical at this point in their narratives. Both state "The king, rescued with difficulty, returned in disgrace at Constantinople," and the Greek text of Kedrenos reads ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς μόλις διασωθεὶς ὑπέστρεψε μετ᾽ αἰσχύνης ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει[13]. Because Symeon the Logothete uses a tense form of the verb "returned" (ὑπεστράφη)[14] that differs from the form in Kedrenos' and Alexios' texts (ὑπέστρεψε) it seems reasonable to conclude that Alexios had before him either the text of Kedrenos or perhaps of some lost source that Kedrenos used or that used Kedrenos. Unlike Kedrenos and Symeon the Logothete, at this point in the narrative Alexios mentions the identity of the "king" defeated by Mu'awiya as the emperor Constans. Alexios' spelling of Mu'awiya's name in Greek differs however both from the form used by Symeon the Logothete (Μαυίας e.g. *Chronicon* 158.1) and from that used by Kedrenos (Μαβίας e.g. *Compendium historiarum* 755.23). A search on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* for the spelling Μοαβίας used by Alexios yields no parallels to this form and suggests that Alexios made his own transliteration or used that of a source now lost to us.

In his preface, Alexios uses vocabulary and grammatical constructions that are appropriate to his purposes and that establish a clear and correct style somewhat

[13] Bekker I 1838, 756 lines 15-16

[14] Bekker 1842, 158 line 9

simpler than that of Symeon the Logothete and Kedrenos. Unlike his two predecessors, however, Alexios does not favor forms that are typical of an archaizing literary dialect. For example, the regularized form ἄμφων ("of both," 172.12) does not occur in the works of Symeon the Logothete nor of Kedrenos, who both use only the archaic dual form of the genitive case ἀμφοῖν, regularly attested in atticizing Greek of the Byzantine period. Alexios apparently prefers a grammatical form that will be "user-friendly" to his pragmatic readers.

Although Alexios remains a shadowy figure, his preface reveals at least some aspects of his biography. His literary style characterizes him as a person of modest education; although he says nothing of his birthplace, his family, or his profession, his invocation of God at the end of his preface indicates that he was a Christian or perhaps a Jew. He tells us that he could both speak and read Arabic ("... knowing the writing system and the language of both [the Arabs and the Byzantines] ... τὰς γραφὰς καὶ τὴν διάλεκτον ἄμφων γινώσκων 172.11-12), but he is silent about how he learned the language. Equally intriguing, he reveals that he was "enslaved as a prisoner of the kings of the Arabs" (δοῦλος αἰχμάλωτος ὑπάρχων βασιλεῦσι Ἀράβων 172.11) without explaining who these rulers were. Presumably, Alexios fell into their hands in Anatolia where the Ayyubid successors of Saladin and Mongol invaders challenged the stability of the Seljuk sultanate of Rum during the mid-13th century[15]. Although either the Seljuks or the Ayyubids may have possessed the Arabic version of the *Apocalypse of Daniel* discovered by Alexios during his captivity, it is less likely that the Turkic Mongols had this text. How a prisoner and slave like Alexios gained access to the text remains mysterious, as do the circumstances that brought Alexios' Greek translation into Byzantine hands. Speculation about the adventures of Alexios and his translation, however, belong to the provenance of the historical novel rather than to a scholarly article.

Alexios of Byzantium may have been the first to translate the *Apocalypse of Daniel* from Arabic into Greek, but he was not the last. As a postscript to this examination of the

[15] Cf. ODB III (1991) 1867 s.v. Seljuks (E. A. Zachariadou) and ODB I (1991) 240 s.v. Ayyubids (A. Kazhdan)

translator's preface by Alexios of Byzantium, I would like to offer some preliminary remarks on a retranslation of the *Apocalypse of Daniel* that is accompanied by a preface from the second translator. This second translator is a figure even more shadowy than the mysterious Alexios. Excerpts from the second translation and its preface are published in *CCAG* 12; I offer here the Greek text[16] and a preliminary English translation of the published section from the second translator's preface:

Καλὸς Ἀλέχιος … ἐπέστρεψε τήνδε βίβλον εἰς γράμματα ἑλληνικὰ ἤτοι ῥωμαικά. Διότι οὔκ ἔστιν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ βίβλῳ νόθον οὐδὲν ὅ τι ὀρθωθῇ, κἀγὼ πλεῖστα ἐμόχθησα τοῦ μαθεῖν τὰ γράμματα τῶν Ἀράβων σαφῶς, καὶ ἔστω γνωστὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ὥσπερ οὐ μὴ διέλαθεν, ὅτι ὁ πάντων πλάστης Θεὸς ὁ πλάσας τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα[17] διὰ τοῦτο ἔπλασε τὸν ἄνθρωπον θείῳ φυσήματι[18] εἰς τὸ ἐρευνᾶν τὰς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεις καὶ κρίσεις, καθώς φησιν ὁ Δαβὶδ ὁ μελῳδός· <<ἐθαυμαστώθη ἡ γνῶσίς σου ἐξ ἐμοῦ …>>[19]

"Excellent Alexios … turned this book into a Greek or rather a Byzantine text. Because in this book there was nothing spurious that could be set right[20], I labored mightily to learn exactly the writing of the Arabs, and let it be known to you all, just as it did not escape my notice, that God, the creator of all, who created things visible and invisible, created mankind by his divine breath for this reason, to search out His own powers and judgments, just as David said in song, 'The knowledge of Thee is too wonderful for

[16] Sangin 1936, 153

[17] *Coloss.* 1, 16

[18] The anonymous translator paraphrases *Gen.* 2, 7 ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς

[19] *Ps.* 138, 6a translation by Brenton 1851, 781

[20] The precise meaning of this clause is obscure. I interpret it to mean that the second translator suspected problems in Alexios' translation because some passages did not make sense to him and could not be corrected without consulting the original Arabic text.

me'...[21]"

The anonymous second translator apparently offers in his preface what amounts to a critique of Alexios' translation of the *Apocalypse of Daniel*. The 17th-century date of the single manuscript preserving this text (cod. Petropol. Bibl. Publ. gr. 575) does not indicate the date of the original text, just as the 15th-century date of the manuscript preserving Alexios' text does not indicate the date of his translation (A. D. 1245). Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some preliminary inferences from the second translator's brief and cryptic remarks[22]. He considers Alexios' translation an example of "Byzantine" rather than atticizing Greek, an observation which our examination of Alexios' style in his preface supports. He also notes "spurious" (νόθον) aspects of Alexios' translation, apparently a complaint against the sense of the Greek text that Alexios has produced. He decided that these faults could not be remedied without returning to the Arabic original. Although I cannot attempt a full comparison here, I will juxtapose the first sentences of each translation in order to assess the Greek stylistic level of each translation (if not their accuracy) and also to illustrate the contents of the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, in particular its military application.

Alexios' translation:

Ἐὰν τῷ παρόντι μηνὶ τῷ Ὀκτωβρίῳ ἐκλείψῃ ὁ Ἥλιος, ἔνδειξιν ποιεῖ ὅτι ἄρχοντες τῆς στρατείας μετὰ στρατιωτῶν κατὰ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτῶν μοῦρτον ποιήσωσι, ἀλλὰ τραπήσονται ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ χαωθήσονται· καὶ ἀκρὶς φανῆται καὶ ἀνομβρία τριμηναῖος καὶ εἰς τὰς χώρας τῶν Ἀράβων καὶ Ἰδουμαίας ἐπιδρομαὶ ἔσονται καὶ θόρυβος κοσμικὸς ἐν ταὐτῷ τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ.

"If in the current month of October the sun is eclipsed, it makes a sign that the commanders of the army with the soldiers might make mutiny against the rule of the king over them, but they will be defeated by him and thrown into chaos; a plague of

[21] I am grateful to Denis Sullivan and the members of Alice-Mary Talbot's Greek Reading Group at Dumbarton Oaks for their thoughtful discussion of this difficult passage.

[22] I plan to examine in greater detail the second translator's preface and translation in a subsequent study devoted to this intriguing text.

locusts might occur and a three-month drought and into the lands of the Arabs and the Idumaeans[23] there will be invasions and universal confusion in the same time."

Anonymous translation:

Ἐὰν ἐν τῷ παρόντι μηνὶ ἀμαυρώσῃ καὶ κρατηθῇ ὁ Ἥλιος, ἔχε κανόνα τῆς ἀποδείξεως, ὅτι τριστάτες μετὰ στρατιωτῶν σύνδεσμον ποιήσουσιν κατὰ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς στρέψει αὐτοὺς καὶ ὑποτάξει· φανήσεται δὲ καὶ ἀκρὶς πολλή, καὶ τριμηναῖος ὑετὸς οὐ φανήσεται, καὶ εἰς τὰς χώρας τῶν μερόπων ἐπιδρομὴ ἀλλοφύλων, φόβος καὶ στενοχωρία ἔσται.

"If in the current month the sun becomes dim and is overpowered, take as general rule from the sign that close advisors of the king will make a pact with the soldiers against the rule of the king, and the king himself will defeat and subdue them; a great plague of locusts will also occur and rain will not occur during three months, and into the lands of mankind there will be an invasion of foreigners, fear and distress."

The variation in the content of these two versions indicates that the two translators of the *Apocalypse of Daniel* did indeed interpret the Arabic text before them differently. Alexios' version predicts an army rebellion followed by a plague of locusts, three months of drought, and invasions into Arab territories, while the second translation predicts a coup of palace advisors in collusion with the army followed by the same plague and drought but then by general invasions into unspecified inhabited lands. The disagreement between the two versions about the nature of the rebellion (army mutiny vs. palace and army coup) seems to result from a different translation of the Arabic text; the question of whether invasions would occur into Arab territories or "into the lands of mankind" seems to reflect two different views of the role of a translator. One of these two translators rendered the original text literally, while the other altered it. What might have motivated the change? Alexios, who "chokes off the vulgar language of the Arabs," may have translated the Arabic text accurately, or he may have changed an originally generic prophecy to refer specifically to the Arabs he scorned. It is also possible that the second translator corrected a "spurious" aspect of

[23] John Chrysostom notes that "Idumaea" is the ancient term for "Arabia" (Chrys. *Fr. in Jer.*, PG LXIV 1029 line 112)

Alexios' version by translating an original generic prophecy literally, or he may have adjusted a prediction specific to Arab lands into a more generic prediction applicable to his anticipated Greek readership.

The two translations also display different levels of Greek style. The second translator elevates the tone of his version by using an obscure classicizing Greek word for "humankind" (τῶν μερόπων) and also avoids overtly popular Byzantine expressions such as those Alexios uses. Alexios chooses the medieval Greek word μοῦρτον ("mutiny") which otherwise occurs only in the vernacular *Chronica byzantina breviora* and, in the form μούρτη, in the Escorial version of *Digenes Akritas* (line 140). The anonymous second translator avoids any such medieval forms and puts his version into a properly classicizing and "Attic" style. His choice of style indicates his opinion of the importance and gravity of the text he has so laboriously retranslated while he corrects the "spurious" features of Alexios' version[24].

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Abstract
In A.D. 1245 Alexios of Byzantium, a prisoner of the Arabs, translated from Arabic into Greek the so-called *Apocalypse of Daniel*, a book of celestial omens and portents. This information come from Alexios' brief preface to his translation, which also includes traditions about the history of the original text that Alexios wanted readers of his translation to know. An analysis of the preface and its contents follows presentation of the Greek text and an English translation. The preface suggests Alexios' motives for translating this text and indicates his attitude toward the Arabic language.
After Alexios' version appeared, a second anonymous translator encountered it and retranslated the Arabic text into Greek; the published portions of the second translator's preface as well as the opening section of the two Greek versions are presented in the original Greek and translated into English, then briefly analyzed.
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