"I am a Grammatical Textbook" (DBBE Type 5248)

Towards a Critical Edition of a Deceivingly Simple Book Epigram

From the very beginning, Marc De Groote has been closely connected to the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams (DBBE), which collects both textual and contextual data of – what's in a name? – book epigrams found in medieval Greek manuscripts. Given our own strong affinity with DBBE, we considered the critical edition of such an epigram the perfect vehicle to honour our former professor and esteemed colleague.

The epigram we selected (DBBE Type 5248) ties in perfectly with the linguistic and palaeographic subjects Marc De Groote taught for many years at Ghent University and with his research in the field of textual criticism. Moreover, had he been a Byzantine rather than a Byzantinist, it surely would have preceded his *Syntaxis van het Oudgrieks,* which his students affectionately refer to as 'the grammatical Bible'. The epigram is connected with a grammatical treatise, which in this introductory poem addresses the reader directly. It boasts about being concise and easy to understand. What more is there to like?

So far, we have found six witnesses preserved in five different manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. Further information on each of these witnesses, including, whenever possible, a detailed transcription (following guidelines that Marc De Groote helped draw up) as well as bibliographic references, can be found in DBBE.

> L1   Leidensis Voss. gr. Q° 20, f. 247r
> (DBBE Occurrence 29383, consulted 31/07/2019)
> 13th century
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> L2   Leidensis Voss. gr. Q° 20, f. 246v
> (DBBE Occurrence 19746, consulted 31/07/2019)
> a later addition to the manuscript, probably dating to the 16th century
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> V   Vaticanus gr. 1332, f. 53r
> (DBBE Occurrence 25338, consulted 31/07/2019)
> 13th-14th century

> A   Atheniensis 1077, f. 1r
> (DBBE Occurrence 22057, consulted 31/07/2019)
> a composite codex, the first part of which dates to 1460
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> P   Parisinus suppl. gr. 1192, f. 22v
> (DBBE Occurrence 21505, consulted 31/07/2019)
> 15th century
>
> W   Vindobonensis phil. gr. 79, f. 1r
> (DBBE Occurrence 29518, consulted 31/07/2019)
> 16th century

The Greek text, with our own translation and apparatus, reads as follows:

1	Τῆς γραμματικῆς εἰμὶ τέχνης πυξίον·	*I am a grammatical textbook.*
2	εὔληπτον, εὐσύνοπτον, ἐστενωμένον,	*easy to comprehend, easy to take in, focused,*
3	σαφές, καθαρόν, εὐκρινῶς γεγραμμένον,	*plain, clear, written in good order,*
4	πρὸς πεῦσιν ἰθύνον τε τὰς ἀποκρίσεις.	*guiding the answers to the question.*
5	Ὁ γὰρ τρόπος φέριστος εἰς τὸ συνέχειν	*For this is the best way to ensure that the*
6	ἅπαν λόγου μάθημα τοὺς λογεμπόρους.	*word traders keep together the entire lesson of language.*

> vv. 1-3: P VA L^{1}L^{2}W
> vv. 4-6: P VA L^{1}W

> 1 Τῆς] om. P, coni. Miller, ῆς V | εἰμὶ τέχνης] inv. A | πυξίον] πυκτίον P, πιξίον A | 2 εὐσύνοπτον] legi non potest V, ευσύνηπτον A, εὐσύνοπτων L^1, om. L^2 | ἐστενωμένον] legi non potest V, ἐστενομένον A, ἐστενόμινον L^1, εστενόμενον L^2 | 3 εὐκρινῶς] εὐκρινὲς A L^{1}L^{2}W | γεγραμμένον] γεγραμένον A | 4 ἰθύνον] legi non potest V, ἰθύνων A, ἰθύνουσα L^1, ἰθύνουσαν W | τε τὰς] τε καὶ A, εἰς V L^{1}W | 5 συνέχειν] συμφέρειν A | 6 ἅπαν] τε add. P, ἅπαντα Miller, ἄγαν A | λόγου] λόγον P A | μάθημα] μαθητῶν P, μαθ... V, μάχημα L^{1}W | τοὺς λογεμπόρους] φάος πέλω P et Miller, τῶν λογ' ἐμπόρων A, τοῖς λογεμπόροις W

From the rather hefty apparatus – which we chose to include because there is unfortunately no room for it in DBBE, but also because Marc De Groote would himself be grossly disappointed if we did not – one can tell that P counts quite a few peculiarities, most of which we considered secondary readings.

> v. 1: πυξίον (VA L^{1}L^{2}W) ↔ πυκτίον (P)
> v. 6: Ø (VA L^{1}W) ↔ τε (P)
> v. 6: μάθημα (VA) / μάχημα (L^{1}W) ↔ μαθητῶν (P)
> v. 6: τοὺς λογεμπόρους (VA L^{1}W) ↔ φάος πέλω (P)

Both πυξίον (VA L^{1}L^{2}W) and πυκτίον (P) in v. 1 can refer to a wooden tablet to write on, hence a book, and are used interchangeably. As for vv. 5-6, there is no escaping the

impression that P tried to make sense of the problematic text he had lying in front of him. Firstly, in P the grammatical treatise claims to "keep together" (συνέχειν) not "the entire lesson of language" (ἅπαν λόγου μάθημα) but instead "each word" (ἅπαν τε λόγον). The neuter ἅπαν combined with the masculine λόγον led Miller in his edition of P to correct ἅπαν τε into ἅπαντα. Secondly, the λογέμποροι or "word traders" (on which, see *infra*) have disappeared. Instead, in P the treatise in question claims to be "the light of students" (μαθητῶν φάος πέλω).

At the same time, however, P did turn out to be quite useful for our reconstruction.

> v. 3: εὐκρινῶς (P V) ↔ εὐκρινές (A L¹L²WW)
> v. 4: ἰθύνο/ων (P A) ↔ ἰθύνουσα(ν) (L¹W)
> v. 4: τε τάς / καί (P A) ↔ εἰς (V L¹W)

From the apparatus, one can also tell that L and W are closely related.

> v. 6: μάθημα (A) / μάθ... (V) ↔ μάχημα (L¹W)

Unfortunately, the variants available do not allow us to go into more detail and draw up a proper *stemma codicum*. In order to do so, we would need to examine the entire manuscript tradition of the main text this epigram is connected with. Clearly, this goes beyond the scope of this short contribution.

In all five manuscripts, the epigram is found in the vicinity of a grammatical treatise. Yet, which one? In L and W, it precedes the *Erotemata Grammatica* by Manouel Moschopoulos, a Byzantine philologist and grammarian who flourished during the reign of Andronikos II (1282-1328) and who is considered one of the most important scholars in the Palaiologan Renaissance. This context explains why in v. 4 the epigram says it is "guiding the answers to the question". The *Erotemata* is an example of Byzantine question-and-answer literature. Referred to as a "grammatical catechism", it was one of the most important textbooks of Greek for Western humanists.

As the apparatus reveals, L contains this epigram twice. The main scribe, who wrote the manuscript in the thirteenth century, inserted the epigram right before the beginning of the *Erotemata* on f. 247ʳ (L¹). A later scribe, probably belonging to the sixteenth century, copied the first three verses in a slightly different version on the preceding empty folio (viz. f. 246ᵛ: L²). This phenomenon – the same epigram featuring multiple times within one manuscript – is not exceptional. Below these three verses, the first two words are repeated twice. We are dealing here with two *probationes pennae*: the upper one written by the second scribe, the lower one by yet another, third hand.

In A, the epigram precedes not Moschopoulos's *Erotemata* but his *Schedographia*, another grammatical treatise which consists of secular as well as religious texts accompanied by brief commentaries on lexicography, orthography, morphology, grammar and syntax.

P presents a somewhat more complicated situation. Our epigram is written on f. 22[r] as the first in a series of six poems, entitled "iambic verses on grammar". It follows after Moschopoulos' *Erotemata*, of which only the last few lines are preserved in this manuscript. After the sixth epigram, on f. 23[v], we read a short fragment from an unknown grammatical work. With regard to both content and form, this fragment is similar to the *Erotemata* but unfortunately we have not been able to identify it (yet). As for V, which is very hard to read, all we know thus far is that it precedes a short grammatical text. It will take another trip to the Vatican library to find out which. Given the immense popularity of Moschopoulos – according to *Pinakes*, 253 copies of the *Erotemata* have come down to us – more witnesses of this book epigram are bound to show up.

In conclusion, the question remains who the "word traders" in v. 6 are. First, we thought of later authors who might mutilate (as in: "excerpt", the opposite of συνέχειν in v. 5) the text of Moschopoulos. In many cases, the word denotes teachers, sometimes negatively, for example for sophists in its meaning of "greedy instructors" but mostly in a neutral or even positive way meaning "eloquent". In our opinion, however, it here refers to students who – some things never change – prefer concise textbooks in which everything is nicely put together. In this respect, it is interesting that P preserves another epigram on f. 24[v]-25[r], attributed to Manouel Moschopoulos himself, in which a student is addressed as "word trader" (λογέμπορε) (DBBE Occurrence 21508, consulted 31/07/2019). This is why our epigram could have been the perfect introduction to Marc De Groote's own textbook on syntax.

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