

A SET OF SIXTEENTH CENTURY WOODCUTS
IN GREEK POPULAR TEXTS

(ΠΙΝ. 11)

The importance of the Venetian chapbooks («φουλλάδες») as vehicles of popular Greek culture from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century is today generally acknowledged¹. The purpose of the present article is to trace the history of a set of woodcuts through the various chapbook editions of popular texts which they were used to illustrate². The woodcuts in question — clear, bold illustrations in the Venetian Renaissance style — are associated with the Greek publications of the da Sabbio family of printers until the mid-sixteenth century, and after that with the printing-houses of Rampazerto, Zanetti and Pinelli.

The series makes its first appearance in the year 1526, in the *editio princeps* of the translation of the Iliad by Nikolaos Loukanis³. There are 133 different woodcuts⁴ depicting various scenes from the epic; five of them are repeated, so that the edition in fact contains 138 illustrations⁵. The artist of these woodcuts appears to have been a certain

1. The fullest study of the chapbooks is that of J. IRMSCHER, *Bemerkungen zu den Venezianer Volksbüchern*, in: *Probleme der neugriechischen Literatur III*, Berlin 1960, pp. 144-179, where a full bibliography may be found.

2. Pioneering work in this neglected field has been done by E. FOLLIERI; see her excellent article: *Su alcuni libri greci stampati a Venezia nella prima metà del cinquecento*, in: *Contributi alla storia del libro italiano (Miscellanea in onore di Lamberto Donati)*, Florence 1969, pp. 119-164. The present article is an extension of the information given there, with particular reference to the woodcuts.

3. E. LEGRAND, *BH 15./16. s., 1*, pp. 188-192, No. 75. The text is edited by Legrand in *Collection de monuments pour servir à l'étude de la langue néo-hellénique 5*, Athens 1870.

4. In one of the four copies of the *editio princeps* possessed by the Bodleian Library, Oxford (that numbered Holkham e. 60), one of the woodcuts, no. 114, is replaced by another, no. 127. As it does not appear in the second edition of the Iliad, nor in any other work which employed the same series, the obvious inference is that no. 114 was damaged or lost in the course of printing.

5. FOLLIERI, *op. cit.* p. 120, counts only 137 illustrations in all—130 for the Iliad itself and 7 for the Sack of Troy, which Loukanis added to supplement the Homeric

Carnesecca; in all probability they were commissioned and planned by M. Damiano di Santa Maria, who also provided the financial backing for the publication ¹.

If the first edition of the Iliad of Loukanis was a comparatively lavish affair, the same certainly cannot be said of the second, nor of the various other works for which woodcuts of the Iliad series were appropriated. The second edition of the Iliad did not appear until 1603 ², and it is considerably poorer in illustration, as well as in the general quality of its printing and production. If the illustrations of the first edition are numbered for the sake of convenience from 1 to 133³, in the order of their first appearance, the following 32 are absent from the edition of 1603: nos. 3, 6, 7, 9, 14, 25, 26, 33, 35, 45, 48, 50, 53, 54, 55, 63, 68, 72, 84, 85, 92, 113, 114, 116, 117, 122, 123, 126, 127, 130, 131 and 132. On the other hand, as "compensation", a number of other woodcuts are repeated, with little or no regard for their appropriateness to the context into which they are introduced: nos. 11, 15, 27, 29, 30, 39, 56, 64, 67, 71, 97, 100, 102, 104, and 124 are found repeated, though they occur only once in the first edition, and no. 41 is used three times in the 1603 edition (twice in the first edition). As will appear later, the reason for the absence of many of the original illustrations in the second edition is probably connected with their use in other publications, which may have resulted in loss or irreparable damage.

The first work to employ any of this series to illustrate scenes other than those for which they were originally intended seems to have been the modern Greek version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, entitled "Birth, exploits and death of Alexander the Macedonian in verse",

story. The probable explanation for this discrepancy is that the copy consulted by Follieri lacked the frontispiece, depicting Homer as a blind bard.

1. FOLLIERI, *op. cit.* pp. 124-6.

2. BH 17. s., 5, p. 6, No. 11. There was a further edition in 1640 which also had woodcuts in the text (BH 17. s., 1, p. 408, No. 290), but it has not proved possible to consult it for the purpose of this article.

3. This numbering does not quite coincide with the reference numbers which seem to have been used by the printers themselves: where the Theseid has woodcut no. 36 of the Iliad set, the printers' manuscript indicates that no. 37 was to be used (see E. FOLLIERI, *La versione in greco volgare del Teseida di Boccaccio*, SBN 7, 1953, p. 70). This would suggest that the printers' system of numeration allotted a separate number to repetitions of the same figure (no. 26 is immediately repeated on the following leaf).

first published in 1529¹. Thirteen woodcuts of this set are used, which, in the context of the Alexander Romance, are supposed to depict: King Nectanebus (no. 44 of the Iliad set), Nectanebus' general reporting to him the news of enemy invasion (no. 51), Philip's dream (no. 12), the horse-race of Nikolaos and Alexander (no. 117), Philip's death (no. 126), the first battle with Darius (no. 25), a battle scene (no. 33), Alexander at Darius' banquet (no. 53), the Macedonian army on the march (no. 49), the Persians being drowned in the River Strangas (no. 103), battle scene (no. 60), another battle scene (no. 62), and the duel of Porus and Alexander (no. 6)². There is one other woodcut illustration to the Alexander poem, which depicts Alexander riding Bucephalus. This derives from the 1521 edition of the Italian poem "Alexandreida in Rima"³. It seems likely that it was borrowed by the da Sabbio press for the printing of the Alexander poem and, presumably, later returned to its owner Bernadino de Viano di Lissona⁴, for in later editions of the Greek Alexander poem it is replaced by another woodcut.

The second edition of the Alexander poem (1553)⁵ used nearly all of these woodcuts: nos. 6, 12, 49, 51, 53, 60, 62, 103, 117 and 126. The "Bucephalus" picture of the 1529 edition (which is not from the Iliad set) is replaced by no. 16 of the Iliad illustrations. Probably the remaining illustrations — the frontispiece (=Iliad no. 44) and nos. 25 and 33— were also used, but it was not possible to confirm this because the only copy of the 1553 edition which was available for consultation when this study was being prepared (a photocopy of the copy in the Library of the École des langues orientales vivantes, Paris) lacks the relevant pages. The two following editions of the Alexander poem used only a few of these illustrations: the 1600 edition has nos. 12, 33, 51, 53, 117 (twice) and 126 and adds nos. 13 and 54, which are not in the earlier editions of the

1. BH 15./16. s., 1, p. 205, No. 83. A critical edition of this work, which is of considerable interest for the study of both the tradition of the Alexander Romance and the popular language of the sixteenth century, has been prepared by the present writer and will be published shortly.

2. Cf. K. MITSAKIS, 'The Tradition of the Alexander Romance in Modern Greek Literature, in: *Ἀρχαία Μακεδονία, Ἀ' Διεθνὲς Συμπόσιον*, Thessaloniki 1970, p. 385.

3. See PRINCE D'ESSLING, *Les livres à figures vénitiens de la fin du XVe siècle et du commencement du XVIe*, Florence-Paris 1907-1914, Seconde partie, I, pp. 244-5.

4. It appears again in the *Alexandreida* of 1535, which was printed by Giovanni Andrea de Vavassore; see D'ESSLING, *op. cit.*, Seconde partie, I, p. 244.

5. BH 15./16. s., 1, pp. 286-9, No. 129.

Alexander poem; the 1603 edition has nos. 12 and 51 only of the original (1529) selection, to which are added nos. 13, 91, 97, 124, and 128 (twice) of the Iliad illustrations.

Later in the same year as the first edition of the Alexander poem the Greek translation of the "Fiore di Virtù" was first published, under the title «Ἀνθός τῶν Χερσίτων»¹. It contained only one illustration, depicting Homer as a blind bard playing a stringed instrument and dictating to two scribes — no. 1 of the Iliad series. Later editions of the Ἀνθός — in 1537² and 1546³ — also used the same woodcut.

Another work in popular Greek which was published for the first time in 1529 is the translation of Boccaccio's "Teseida", entitled «Θησείος καὶ γάμοι τῆς Ἡμῆλιας»⁴. It is illustrated by eleven woodcuts, of which ten derive from the Iliad set (nos. 7, 33, 34, 36, 48, 60, 63, 64, 65 and 127) and one appears to have been specially executed for the Greek Theseid and is by a different artist⁵. In this case some attempt has been made to render the Iliad illustrations as appropriate as possible by the crude expedient of chiselling away parts of the woodcut which were not apt to the context of the Theseid. Thus in no. 65, in which is depicted an eagle killing a dragon in the sight of the Trojan defenders, both the eagle and the dragon have been removed; and in no. 127 one of the six figures gazing out over the city's battlements (Priam) has been eliminated. When the first of these blocks was reused in the 1603 edition of Loukanis' Iliad, the modification necessitated by its use in the Theseid was, of course, still present.

One other work which borrowed an illustration from this series was the "Apokopos" of Bergadis. The first edition appeared in 1519⁶; although no copy of it has survived, it naturally cannot have contained any of the Iliad woodcuts, which were specifically designed for the 1526 edition of Loukanis' work. Later editions of the Apokopos, however, published in 1534, 1543 and 1553⁷, have on their title-page the woodcut

1. BH 15./16. s., 3, p. 328, No. 305. A study of this work has recently appeared by E. ΚΑΚΟΥΛΙΔΙ, *Ἑλληνικά* 24 (1971) 267-311.

2. BH 15./16. s., 3, p. 371, No. 366.

3. BH 15./16. s., 4, pp. 274-6, No. 119.

4. BH 15./16. s., 4, pp. 206-7, No. 84 (December 1529).

5. FOLLIERI, *Su alcuni libri greci*, loc. cit., p. 136.

6. BH 15./16. s., 3, pp. 249-250, No. 217; it was published by Nikolaos Kalliergis.

7. BH 15./16. s., 4, p. 218, No. 90 (1534); BH 15./16. s., 4, p. 244, No. 104 (1543) — both published by the da Sabbio family; and BH 15./16. s., 4, pp. 38-9, No. 557 (1553) — published by Zanetti.

of a man sleeping in bed while a winged figure hovers above his head (no. 12 of the Iliad set). Originally this was intended to illustrate Agamemnon's dream, but it here serves to indicate the dream theme of the Apokopos. The same woodcut was used in the Alexander poem to illustrate Philip's dream in which he learned that his wife was to bear Alexander.

By 1603 — a year which saw the publication of editions of both the Iliad and the Alexander poem — signs of wear and tear are clearly visible in the woodcuts. Many of the original set had probably been lost or irreparably damaged by this time. In many cases the woodcuts which are absent from the 1603 Iliad are just those that were repeatedly used in other works, e.g. nos. 6 (used for the 1529 and 1553 editions of the Alexander poem), 7 (1529 Theseid), 25 (1529 and probably also 1553 Alexander), 33 (1529, probably 1553, and 1600 Alexander, 1529 Theseid), 48 (1529 Theseid), 53 (1529, 1553, 1600 Alexander) etc. (Curiously the much-used "dream" picture survived to be used in both these 1603 editions.)

The study of these early chapbook editions is no easy matter, for what few copies survive are dispersed throughout Europe in public and private libraries. It may well be that further research in this direction will uncover other uses of these woodcuts in other works; in the meantime the present brief survey may help to shed some further light on the working methods of the early editors and printers of popular Greek texts.

In conclusion it is fascinating to note that one of Carnesecca's woodcuts influenced the illustrator of a manuscript of the poem "Kosmogennesis" by Georgios Choumnos¹. On f. 31^r of the British Museum manuscript (Addit. 40724) of this work there is a banquet scene remarkably similar to that in Loukanis (no. 53)² which is also used in the Alexander poem for Darius' banquet. In the manuscript there are two additional figures, one of them a woman (Sarah), and the tent which forms the backdrop of the scene in the woodcuts is absent. Otherwise

1. Excerpts of the poem have been published by F.H. MARSHALL, *Old Testament Legends from a Greek poem on Genesis and Exodus by Georgios Choumnos*, Cambridge 1925. For a full discussion of the manuscripts of the work see Γ. ΜΕΡΑ, *Περὶ τῶν χειρογράφων τοῦ ποιήματος τοῦ Κρητῶς Γεωργίου Χούμνου, Λαογραφία* 25 (1967) 652-668 (= *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 15-16, 1963, 408-420).

2. See Plate 11.

the two scenes are almost identical. Particularly noteworthy are the similarities in the shape of the legs of the benches and trestles, the posture of the figure with the raised glass and the shape of his hat, the position of the leg visible beneath the table, and the standing figure handing a glass to the king. In addition it may be noted that unlike almost all the other miniatures of the Choumnos manuscript this one does not have the names of the persons represented written in. All this makes it virtually certain that this miniature was basically copied from a printed book which contained woodcut no. 53 of the Iliad set. Since the text and miniatures are by the same hand, 1526 thus constitutes a new *terminus post quem* for the copying of ms. Brit. Mus. Addit. 40724.

Thessaloniki

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