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# Table of Contents

## VOLUME ONE

Introduction .....	vii
List of Contributors .....	xi
Table of Contents Ordered by Thematic Category .....	xv
Transcription, Abbreviations, Bibliography .....	xxi
List of Illustrations .....	xxiii
Articles A–F .....	1

## VOLUME TWO

Transcription, Abbreviations, Bibliography .....	vii
Articles G–O .....	1

## VOLUME THREE

Transcription, Abbreviations, Bibliography .....	vii
Articles P–Z .....	1
Index .....	547

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## Translation of Greek Texts in Late Antiquity

### 1. GENERAL REMARKS

The variety of languages into which Greek texts were translated during Late Antiquity has dictated the structure of most scholarship on the subject. Recurring aspects of translation activity in Late Antiquity have not been widely considered, due to the multiplicity of languages and traditions involved. The present contribution does not aim to propose a different approach, but rather emphasizes the reappearance of similar issues in different traditions, and argues that there is room for comprehensive approaches.

A crucial aspect of translation practice is the degree of faithfulness to the original text. At the extremes of the spectrum one finds, on the one hand, translations that are configured as paraphrases and, on the other hand, translations that compromise the structure of the target language in favor of a meticulous rendering of the original text. The degree of faithfulness to the originals has been explained either through the nature of the original texts or through the development of particular translation techniques. Scholarship on the Syriac tradition has proposed a conciliation of the degree of faithfulness to the originals with the chronological development of the translation technique, while scholarship on the Armenian tradition has shown particular interest in the linguistic impact of faithful translations on the target language.

A key concern of cultural-historical scholarship has been to identify translation features that characterize the specific historical and cultural milieu in which the translations were composed. Translations can betray a particular understanding and interpretation of the original texts and the choice of particular philosophical or theological terminology, as well as the use of loanwords, → calques, or idiomatic translations, can reveal dependence on, or independence from, a philosophical, theological or exegetical

tradition. The recurrence of common linguistic and textual features has been used to support the assignment of translations to the same historical milieu or intellectual school. Furthermore, the selection of the texts to translate and the omissions, additions and changes carried out on the texts, such as the Christianization of non-Christian material, can reveal the implementation of a particular cultural agenda. Also, there are anonymous works that have been disguised as translations from Greek.

### 2. LATIN

Between the 2nd and the 4th centuries CE, Biblical books (known as *Vetus Latina*) and *apocrypha*, such as the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Acts of Peter*, were translated from Greek into Latin (→ Greek and Latin; → Roman Translation of Greek Texts).

Also translated into Latin were Greek hagiographic texts (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Acts of Pionius*), exegetical works, and homilies (Melito of Sardis), which contributed to the birth of Latin homiletic literature. These translations are generally free and, especially in the case of hagiographic literature, they are often arranged as adaptations. On some occasions, the Greek and Latin editions of the same text, perhaps originating from a bilingual milieu, should be regarded as twins rather than as original and translation (e.g. *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*; *Passion of the Scillitan Martyrs*) – similarly, Tertullian himself produced the Greek edition of some of his works.

Marius Victorinus (d. ca 365), who held the official chair of rhetoric in Rome, composed an *Ars Grammatica*, possibly drawing from Aelius Aphthonius, and is credited by Cassiodorus (*Inst.* 2.3.18) with the translation of Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories* (lost) and *De interpretatione* (lost). Vettius Praetextatus (d. 384), who was also based in Rome, translated Themistius' paraphrases of Aristotle's *Analytica Priora* and *Posteriora* (both lost). Virius Nichomachus Flavianus (d. 394), a member of the pagan circle of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, prepared a translation of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (lost). It was, however, in the new capital Milan, where Augustine could read Marius Victorinus' translations (*Aug. Conf.* 8.2.3), that the archdeacon Calcidius translated and commented on Plato's *Timaeus*.

In the second half of the 4th c., monastic literature appeared among Latin translations, and Athanasius of Alexandria's *Life of Anthony* was translated only a decade after its composition. An instance of adaptation is the translation of Josephus' *De Bello Judaico* (late 4th c.) – variously attributed to Hegesippus or to Ambrose – which is in fact a new work, composed by an individual with historical ambitions as well as an openly anti-Judaic agenda. A number of Basil of Caesarea's and John Chrysostom's homilies, Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*, the *Physiologus* and the *Alexander Romance* possibly date back to the late 4th or early 5th c.

The prolific translation activity of Jerome (ca 347–420) and Rufinus of Aquileia (ca 345–410) dates to the same period. The former had worked on translations of the Psalms and of the Gospels in Rome before moving on to Eusebius' *Onomasticon* (with additions), and, in 390–92, he translated Didymus the Blind's *De Spiritu Sancto* and a number of Origen's homilies on the Old Testament. Jerome's enthusiasm for Origen, however, subsided with the beginning of the Origenist controversy in 393.

After composing a shorter edition of Basil of Caesarea's *Asceticon* on the occasion of his permanence in the monastery of *Pinetum* outside Rome (397), Rufinus translated homilies by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. He also intended to continue the work, begun by Jerome, of translating Origen into Latin, and he claimed to have purged the texts of the errors of heretical interpolators (*De principiis* and homilies on the Old Testament). His translation of the dialogue *De recta fide*, attributed to Adamantius, was perhaps modified in order to support a dubious attribution to Origen. Rufinus' translation of Pamphilus of Caesarea's *Apology* in defence of Origen was part of the same apologetic enterprise.

Jerome responded with a further translation of Origen's *De principiis* (lost), which aimed at emphasizing the heretical statements contained in the work. Based at his monastic community in Bethlehem, he also translated a collection of monastic works attributed to Pachomius and concluded the revision of the Old Testament, claiming a stricter fidelity to the Hebrew text (405). In the same years, Rufinus, based in Aquileia, translated Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, to which he added two books to cover the period until 395, as well as the *Historia monachorum in*

*Aegypto*, the *Sentences of Sextus*, Evagrius Ponticus' *Sententiae ad Monachos* and *Ad Virginem*, and the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*.

5th-c. translations include Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* and *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*, and Evagrius Ponticus (lost) and Timothy Aelurus by Gennadius of Massalia. It is not clear whether Sidonius Apollinaris translated Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 8.3.1).

At the beginning of the 6th c., Boethius set out to translate and comment on all the available works of Plato and Aristotle. The young scholar, an aristocrat belonging to Theodoric's entourage, wished to emphasize the basic agreement among the doctrines of the two philosophers. Boethius fell into disgrace at court before completing the project, and only Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categoriae*, *De interpretatione*, *Analitica Priora*, *Topica* and *Sophistici Elenchi* had been translated at the time of his death (526).

Similarly ambitious were the cultural efforts of Cassiodorus (d. ca 585), who also began his career at Theodoric's court. Under Cassiodorus' supervision, Epiphanius Scholasticus compiled the *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Tripartitae Epitome*, based on the works of Sozomen, Socrates and Theodoret, and he translated Biblical commentaries by Didymus the Blind and Epiphanius of Salamis. Cassiodorus promoted the translation of Flavius Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* and *Contra Apionem* (Cassiod. *Inst.* 1.17), and he recommended that monks read Hippocrates and Galen in translation: the works were available at the monastery of Vivarium (Cassiod. *Inst.* 1.31). A friend of Cassiodorus, Dionysius Exiguus, translated ecclesiastical canons, Gregory of Nyssa's *De opificio hominis*, and the *Life of Pachomius*.

Authors and translators of medical literature lived in Africa during the 4th and 5th c.: Avianus Vindicianus composed a medical treatise drawing from Galen; Cassius Felix widely drew from Galen in his *De medicina*; and Caelius Aurelianus translated works by the physician Soranus of Ephesus. Furthermore, a number of translations of medical texts were carried out in Rome during the 6th c.

### 3. SYRIAC

Among the earliest translations from Greek are the Old Syriac gospels and the apocrypha, possibly preceded by the *Diatessaron* (3rd c.).

A manuscript from Edessa dated to 411 contains the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*, Titus of Bostra's *Against the Manicheans* and Eusebius' *Theophania* and *Palestinian Martyrs*. Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the sixth book of Josephus' *De Bello Iudaico* date back to the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th c., at the time of the first revision of the New Testament.

In the 5th c., translations appeared of the works of Basil of Caesarea (*De Spiritu Sancto* and homilies), Cyril of Alexandria (attributed to Rabbula of Edessa) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (attributed to Ibas of Edessa). Late 5th- and early 6th-c. translations include: the *Syro-Roman Law Book*; Aristides' *Apology*; monastic literature (*Life of Anthony*, Evagrius, Nilus of Sinai, Palladius); patristics (Epiphanius of Salamis, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria); and the Christianized translations of Plutarch's *De cohibenda ira* and *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, the *De exercitatione* attributed to Plutarch (lost in Greek), Themistius' *De Virtute* (lost in Greek) and *De Amicitia*, Lucian's *De Calumnia* and Pseudo-Isocrates' *Ad Demonium*.

6th-c. translations are characterized by an increasing degree of adherence to the originals, a tendency embodied in the revisions of earlier translations (the New Testament by Philoxenus of Mabbug as well as patristic literature), in Paul of Callinicus' translation of Severus of Antioch (lost in Greek), and, to a lesser extent, in the translations by the priest and physician Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536), which include works by Galen, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Pseudo-Aristotle's *De mundo* and Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On Aristotelian Cosmology*.

The 6th c. also marks the beginning of philosophy in Syriac, as attested by the composition of philosophical *prolegomena* as well as by the translations of Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categoriae*, *De Interpretatione* and *Analytica Priora*. Other 6th-c. translations include Zacharias' *Life of Severus*, Nestorius' *Bazaar of Heracleides*, the *Alexander Romance* (perhaps from Middle Persian), perhaps Pseudo-Aristotle's *De virtutibus et vitiis*, and a version of Dionysius Thrax' *Tékhne Grammatiké* heavily adapted to the Syriac language.

7th-c. translations are characterized by a higher degree of adherence to the Greek, sometimes to such an extent that the structure of the Syriac sentence is compromised. Revisions

of earlier translations of the → New Testament (the *Harklean*), of patristics (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus) and philosophical works (Dionysius the Areopagite, Porphyry and Aristotle) were carried out at the time when the monastery at Qenneshre assumed the role of a primary centre of Syriac learning and translation. Abbasid rule brought about a new flourishing of translations into Syriac, as they were often used as intermediaries for Arabic translations (→ Greek and Syriac).

#### 4. ARMENIAN

The earliest Biblical translations, including apocrypha, date back to the early 5th c., in conjunction with the introduction of the Armenian alphabet by Mashtots. Both early Biblical translations (some of which may have been carried out from Syriac) and their early revision, which was based on Greek and completed in the 430s, emphasize polemic against pagan, and especially Iranian cults.

5th-c. translators also addressed hagiography, church canons, early apologetic literature, liturgy and patristics, on some occasions through Syriac intermediaries. Translations include homilies by John Chrysostom, Epiphanius of Salamis and Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea's *Asketikon*, Aristides' *Apology*, Methodius' *De Autexusio*, the *Sentences of Sextus* and the *Sentences of Pythagoras*, and, through Syriac, Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Translations of Eusebius of Emesa, Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* and discourses by Gregory of Nazianzus have been dated to the second half of the 5th c.

Since most translations composed between the late fifth and the 8th c. demonstrate a coherent selection of texts and a characteristic translation style, scholars have argued for a 'Hellenizing School' of translation. The texts are characterized by remarkable faithfulness to the originals, as is evidenced by changes in the structure of the Armenian language in order to follow the Greek more closely, as well as by lexical precision and by etymological translations. The selection of the texts to translate, such as Dionysius Thrax' *Tékhne Grammatiké*, which strives to adapt the Armenian language to the grammatical categories of the Greek language, Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata*, which includes some chapters lost in Greek, and the *Book of the*

*Chreiai*, in fact a Christianized adaptation of Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, betrays an interest in the Greek tradition of rhetorical and philosophical studies.

Among the philosophical works attributed to the 'Hellenizing School', mention should be made of the commentaries by David the Invincible. His works gained considerable popularity among Armenian writers and he was associated with Mashtots and with the Cappadocian fathers. Surviving translations include David's *On Porphyry's Isagoge* (with omissions), *On Aristotle's Categoriae* (the authorship of the original work is debated), *On Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (lost in Greek), and David's *Prolegomena Philosophiae* (with omissions of obscure passages). The translations of Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categoriae* and *De Interpretatione* were carried out by a different translator.

Other translations attributed to the 'Hellenizing School' include Pseudo-Aristotle's *De mundo* (attributed to David the Invincible in translation) and *De virtutibus et vitiis*, a section from the *Hermetic Corpus*, a treatise *De Natura* attributed to Zeno, the *Alexander Romance*, the Pseudo-Nonnus' *Mythological scholia* and Philo of Alexandria, whose works had a conspicuous *fortuna* in Armenian. Religious authors include Irenaeus and Timothy Aeluros.

A stylistically uniform group of translations of the early 8th c. includes Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Nemesius' *De natura hominis*, George of Pisidia's *Hexaemeron* and Socrates' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Other translations include the *Life of Secundus* and Ulpianus' *Fables*, as well as translations of medical works. There is some debate about the origin of the Armenian translations of Plato's *Apology*, *Eutyphron*, *Timaeus* (with expansions), *Laws* and *Minos*, and they have been attributed either to the Hellenizing School or to the 11th c. (→ Greek and Armenian).

## 5. GEORGIAN

The translation of Biblical books, possibly from Greek, was carried out between the 5th and 6th c., and was then revised in the 7th. Apocrypha reached Georgian literature through Greek as well as through Armenian and Syriac intermediaries. Translations carried out between the 5th and 7th c. include homiletic literature (Melito of Sardis, Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysos-

tom), Epiphanius' *De mensuris et ponderibus*, the *Martyrium of Procopius* drawn from Eusebius' *De martyribus Palaestinae*, Pseudo-Hippolytos of Rome's *De fide* and, through an Armenian intermediary, Cyril of Alexandria's *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali trinitate*. Hippolytos of Rome's *Chronicon*, the *Physiologus* (from Armenian and attributed to Basil of Caesarea) and John Moscus' *Pratum spirituale* (from Arabic) date back to the 8th c.

## 6. COPTIC

A considerable portion of Coptic literature consists of translations, whose composition has been related to the development of the Coptic Church and the institutionalization of monasticism. Biblical books, together with apocrypha, homiletic literature (Melito of Sardis), and works by apostolic fathers, were translated from Greek between the 3rd and 4th c.

Coptic was the language of the Gnostic community that produced, in the same period, the Nag Hammadi texts, most of which have been considered translations from lost Greek originals. The collection contains a translation of a passage from Plato's *Laws*, whose Greek original has been skilfully changed and rewritten as a religious text compatible with other works contained in the same codex. A quote from the *Odyssey* in the Nag Hammadi *Exegesis de anima* underwent a similar process of adaptation.

Between the late 4th and early 6th c., the choice of exegetical and theological texts became more consistent. Translated texts include the first seven books of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* (partially reworked and continued in Coptic), ecclesiastical canons, and ascetic and hagiographic literature (*Life of Pachomius*, *Life of Anthony*, *Anthony's letters*, *Life of Simeon Stylite* and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*), which had an impact on the development of a Coptic hagiographic literature.

The selection of patristic texts to be translated reflects ascetic interests. They include a number of Basil of Caesarea's moral homilies and ascetic works, Gregory of Nazianzus' *Encomium* for Athanasius and various homilies, Epiphanius' *Anchoratus* and *De gemmis*, and two exegetical works by Cyril of Alexandria. Translations of Gregory of Nyssa's *De anima et resurrectione* and the *Commentary to the Ecclesiastes* – perhaps the work of a school independent of the

patriarchate – and of a number of John Chrysostom's monastic treatises and homilies, where the choice of the latter may betray an interest in the polemic format against the Constantinopolitan see, are especially remarkable.

Among the environments where the translations were composed, the community at the White Monastery founded by Shenoute (who quoted two passages from Aristophanes' *Birds* in his works) must have played a primary role in the first half of the 5th c. Monasteries seem to have been the place of origin of two papyri and an *ostrakon* (5th to 7th c.) that contain *Sentences of Menander* in both Greek and Coptic, which may have been employed within bilingual instruction. The Christianized Coptic versions of the *Alexander Romance* (ca 6th c.), which is characterized by the addition of a verse from the Bible at the opening of each chapter and by the inclusion of hagiographic narratives, presents an Alexander who foreshadows the figure of Christ. Coptic literature includes a number of original works that are disguised as translations of works by Greek Church fathers (→ Greek and Egyptian, and Coptic).

## 7. ETHIOPIA

The translation of Biblical books was carried out from Greek, possibly between the 4th and 5th c. The translations of apocrypha date back to the same period, and their popularity long after their banishment in the Greek and Latin world makes Ethiopic literature a sometimes unique source for such material.

*Qerellos* (ca 5th c.) is a collection of patristic translations from Greek, primarily anti-Arian and anti-Nestorian, and perhaps compiled in a South Arabian milieu that was sensible to the controversies with the Nestorian church. The title derives from the author of the opening piece in the collection, Cyril of Alexandria's *De recta fide*, while other authors include Acacius of Melitene and Epiphanius of Salamis. The *Physiologus* was translated from Greek, and the chronicle of John of Nikiu, perhaps composed in Coptic, survives only in an Ethiopic translation through an Arabic intermediary.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Biblical books regularly figure among the earliest translations of Late Antiquity from Greek into

Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Coptic and Ethiopic. Patristic literature followed, as represented by apologetics, homiletics, and hagiography. Translations of ecclesiastical historiography and monastic literature have been explained through the development of Christian churches or through the institutionalization of monasticism and, on some occasions, translations of theological and apologetic literature were prompted by theological controversies. Translations into Latin, Syriac and Armenian include philosophical works primarily belonging to the Aristotelian tradition.

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## Tropes (*trópoi*), Ancient Theories of

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tropes (Gk. nom. pl. *trópoi* 'turnings; ways/manners of doing something', a noun form related to the verb *trépein* 'to turn') are defined in ancient handbooks of grammar and rhetoric as 'modifications of words' (Lat. *immutationes uerborum*: Cic. *Brut.* 69, *Part. or.* 19) (→ Philological-Grammatical Tradition in Ancient Linguistics; → Rhetorical Tradition in Ancient Linguistics). The classification of tropes and → figures has as its basis the relationship between the original and the transformed meanings of a word (see Drux 2009:810 and Prandi 1992:13–25). In a rhetorical context, these "verbal entities with a structurally marked dynamic" (Shapiro & Shapiro 1976:2) fall into the concept of 'ornament' (*kósmos*), one of the four qualities of style (*aretai tês léxeōs*), as defined by Aristotle's successor, Theophrastus (Kennedy 1994:6) (→ Style (*léxis*), Ancient Theories of). 'Ornament' includes figures of speech and figures of thought. 'Figures of speech' concern the linguistic level and denote alterations of letters or word sequencing (→ Word Order). 'Figures of thought' deal with both emotions and concepts. 'Ornament' also includes tropes, the substitution of one term for another and alterations in the standard meaning of a word.

The number and the meaning of *tropes* constituted a matter of dispute among grammarians and rhetoricians. In their definitions, the deviation from a standard meaning of a word was stressed for both tropes and figures. The etymology from the verb *trépein* 'to turn' differentiates the trope from a figure on a semantic level (cf. Quint. *Inst.* 9,1,2; Trypho 3,191,12–14 Spengel, Ps.-Plutarch, *De Homero* 15). The distinc-

tion between *tropes* and figures of thought was never clear, however, and the terms themselves could have various meanings (Quint. *Inst.* 9,1,1–2; Douglas 1966:xxxiii; Lausberg 1998:272). In the theoreticians' works, tropes were at times classified under figures, or alternatively figures were classified under tropes, though they could also be considered separately (Lausberg 1998:272; West 1965:232).

### 2. PREHISTORY OF THE TERM

The ancient Greek word *trópos* had various connotations referring to language. In the 4th c. BCE the concept of what was later termed *trópoi* already existed, though the term itself was basically used in rhetorical discourse for individual phenomena. Plato, in his dialogue *Cratylus*, put forward a four-way classification of transforming names: a letter can be added, transposed, subtracted or rearranged (Pl. *Crat.* 394b). This scheme evolved into a standard fourfold classification – the so-called *quadripertita ratio* (Ax 2000) – in ancient grammar and rhetoric (→ Ancient Philosophers on Language). Plato applied these categories in his etymologies, an approach followed by Aristotle (Pl. *Crat.* 432a, Aristot. *Poet.* 1457b35–1458a7; cf. Ax 2000:205–206). Aristotle's main interest is the impact of tropes on poetry and oratory. His discussion of tropes is found in *Poet.* 1457b7–9, in the related genus/species definition of metaphor (→ Metaphor; → Metaphor (*metaphorá*), Ancient Theories of) as "the application of a word that belongs to another thing: either from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy" (transl. Halliwell). Aristotle has no term for tropes, but what he says for metaphor is relevant in the post-classical tradition for tropes in general: the poet and orator should pay attention to clarity, propriety and embellishment in his selection of loanwords, metaphors and other types of word (Arist. *Poet.* 1458a17, 1458b–1459a, cf. Cic. *De or.* 3,157,160; Quint. *Inst.* 8,2,12).

An anonymous treatise of the 4th c. BCE (contemporary with Aristotle), conventionally entitled the *Rhetoric to Alexander*, discussed three *trópoi onomatōn* ('turnings of names'): simple, compound and metaphorical (*Rh. Al.* 1434b33) and provided some individual cases of use of the term.