Noël GOLVERS and Efthymios NICOLAIDIS (Eds), *Ferdinand Verbiest and Jesuit Science in 17th Century China. An annotated edition and translation of the Constantinople manuscript (1676),* Athens-Leuven, 2009, 382 pages

The discovery in 1991 of a long forgotten Verbiest manuscript in the Collection of the Constantinople Metochion of the Holy Sepulchre brought a most valuable and unexpected contribution to the history of the spreading of Western science in China, in Russia, and also among the Greek-speaking scholars of South-Eastern Europe. It was E. Nicolaidis who, since then, on several occasions, has made known this oldest version of the *Astronomia Europaea,* and now, with the support of a Belgian foundation – the Ferdinand Verbiest Institute –, he is publishing the two texts *Compendium historicum* and *Mechanica*: a carefully corrected transcription of the Latin original and its translation into English, with philological and historical notes.

Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688) was a Flemish Jesuit who worked in Beijing since 1660. He had been appointed head of the Imperial Astronomical Bureau and a mandarin of the second order. In 1676 he met the envoy of the Russian tsar, the Moldavian Nicholas Spathar (wrongly called Milescu), who had come to establish diplomatic and commercial relationships with China. As an interpreter from Chinese and Manchu into Latin, the Jesuit was the indispensable contact for Nicholas Spathar. He intended to use this opportunity for obtaining the tsar's favour for himself and for the other Catholic missionaries. Therefore, he sent through "Milescu" his writings that might impress on the Russian government consideration for his scientific achievements. This attempt to open to the Jesuits the Siberian route failed, because there was nobody in Moscow, except Spathar alone, to be interested in the Western updated researches in astronomy. When in 1692 Chrysanthos Notaras arrived in Moscow, sent by his uncle Dositheos, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, for founding a Greek printing house and for other schemes of their anti-Ottoman policy, he found Nicholas Spathar still active. On his advice, the visitor put to work strenuous translators in order to collect Greek versions of the three books by "Milescu" on China – the *Opisanie*, the *Spisok*, and the *Itinerary from Tobolsk to China's border*. Chrysanthos wished to have also Peter Godunov's *Description of China* and Fedor Bajkov's *Journey into China* : the authors were former travellers to China. Later, Chrysanthos will adapt Spathar's *Little Book on the Tatars* for compiling his own Κιταια δουλεουσα. Among these trophees gathered in Moscow was Verbiest's manuscript. The copy was made in Moscow in 1693. The passages which should have been received with interest by the Russian readers were certainly those concerning guns, bombards and balls. Notaras, instead, was evidently thinking above all of optics and physics. However, in Constantinople, as in Moscow, the texts carried out of China by the tsar's ambassador did not find readers.

Our colleague Zamfira Mihail, some years ago, has insisted on the importance of bilingual editions of ancient texts (see her collection of essays *Nicolas le Spathaire Milescu à travers ses manuscrits,* Bucarest, 2009, pp. 111–116). We are dealing here with a model of such a work. It is particularly relevant for the reception of modern science in the post-Byzantine world (for the reception *and for its limitations*).

Andrei Pippidi

Ilia HATZIPANAIOTIS-SANGMEISTER, Ο τεκτονισμός στην ελληνική κοινωνία και γραμματεία του 18ου αιώνα Οι γερμανόφωνες μαρτυρίες (Freemasonry in the 18th century Greek society and literature. The German sources), Periplous Editionsς, Athens 2010.

Hatzipanaiotis-Sangmeister's monograph is a timely contribution on an under-researched topic in the South-Eastern European area, i.e. freemasonry. The fact is due mainly, as far as the Greek and Romanian realities are concerned, to the difficulty of the sources which would lie in their unknown and scattered locations and to their multilingualism. This is why most of the previous contributions include a great deal of guesswork or suppositions turned into assertions.