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### 'Ομωκότας in an anonymous fourteenth century verse-chronicle

#### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine an etymological enigma in the word ὀμωκότας, a form of an anomalous nature. This form appears only once in a fourteenth century anonymous poem of 759 lines which is contained in the *Codex Marcianus 408* in the Library of St. Mark (Venice). The poem reflects events of the 1204 fall and 1261 recovery of Constantinople. The metre which is used by an anonymous poet is the popular one of the period, known as the *political metre*.

The initial impression of ὀμωκότας is one of an ἀπαξ λεγόμενον but further examination reveals a linguistic idiosyncrasy other than that of merely an ἀπαξ.

The form ὀμωκότας appears in the section of the poem which deals with the entry into Constantinople (via the underground drains) by Strategopoulous (Palaiologos's general). The various sources are thoroughly examined in search of the possible usage of this form in perhaps even one of the sources. The word appears nowhere. After numerous hypotheses and etymological deductions, a conclusion is ultimately arrived at and is proved to be basically the simplest one, with an obvious explanation.

The purpose of the present paper is to analyse a linguistic anomaly pertaining to the word ὀμωκότας, on line 573 of folio 10<sup>v</sup> in die *Codex Marcianus 408*. The Codex is housed in the Library of St. Mark in Venice. Folios 1-13<sup>v</sup> (Müller, 1852:335-367) contained in the *Codex Marcianus 408* reflect an anonymous poem of 759 lines (written in 1392), which describe the 1204 fall of Constantinople to the Franks, and the 1261 recovery of this city by the Greeks. Below are three extracts (a), (b) and (c). Extract (a) is from the original manuscript, with an arrow pointing to the word ὀμωκότας; (b) is an extract from J. Müller's edition with my underscoring of the word, ὀμωκότας, and extract (c) reflects my own translation of these lines reproduced in the

original fifteen-syllabic metre. The poem is written in the form of an historical verse-chronicle, describing the entry into Constantinople through the underground water-conduits, by Caesar Strategopoulos, the high-ranking Greek officer who recaptured the city with his five-hundred conspirators (ὀμωκότας).

Extract (a)

Ὄθεν ὁ στρατὸς γὰρ πολὺς τῆς θῆς τοῖς λόγοις τούτου,  
 πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ζύναμιν ἐφῆσεν ὀπλισθῆναι.  
 εἰσήλθεν οὖν μέχρι ναοῦ Πηγῆς τῆς θεοτόκου  
 μετὰ γὰρ τοῦ στρατεύματος νυκτὸς ἐπεισελευσούσης,  
 τὸν Κουτριτζάκην ἐν χερσὶ φέρων τὸν προρρηθέντα  
 ὅς καὶ προσέταξεν εὐθύς ἄνδρας πεντακασίους  
 καθοπλισμένους εἰσελθεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑδραγωγῶν,  
 τοὺς ὀμωκότας αὖν αὐτοῖς ἔλθειν ἔσω μροστάξας·  
 οἵ τινες ἐκπηδήσαντες ὡς λέοντες αὐτίκα  
 εἰσήλθον ἔνδον πόλεως, ἀκώλυτον εὐρόντες  
 τὴν εἴσοδον, καὶ πρὸς Πηγῇ ἦλθον τὴν πύλην τάχει.

folio 10<sup>v</sup> Codex Marcianus 408<sup>v</sup>

Extract (b)

Ὄθεν ὁ Στρατηγόπουλος πεισθεὶς τοῖς λόγοις τούτου  
 πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ζύναμιν ἐφῆσεν ὀπλισθῆναι·  
 εἰσήλθεν οὖν μέχρι ναοῦ Πηγῆς τῆς θεοτόκου  
 μετὰ γὰρ τοῦ στρατεύματος νυκτὸς ἐπεισελευσούσης,  
 τὸν Κουτριτζάκην ἐν χερσὶ φέρων τὸν προρρηθέντα  
 ὅς καὶ προσέταξεν εὐθύς ἄνδρας πεντακασίους  
 καθοπλισμένους εἰσελθεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑδραγωγῶν,  
 τοὺς ὀμωκότας αὖν αὐτοῖς ἔλθειν ἔσω μροστάξας·  
 οἵ τινες ἐκπηδήσαντες ὡς λέοντες αὐτίκα  
 εἰσήλθον ἔνδον πόλεως, ἀκώλυτον εὐρόντες  
 τὴν εἴσοδον, καὶ πρὸς Πηγῇ ἦλθον τὴν πύλην τάχει.

J. Müller (1852:383)

Extract (c)

Persuaded, Strategopoulos accepted the prediction  
 and bade his soldiers arm themselves in readiness for action

1. Photocopy of the original folio 10. Folios 1–13<sup>v</sup> are placed at the beginning of the Codex

He led the way up to the Church of Theotókos' Fountain  
 with all the soldiers in his force just as the night was falling;  
 570 he had on hand the man I've named before as Koutritzákes,  
 who told his group of men, well-armed, and numbering five hundred  
 that through the water-conduits at once they were to follow  
 adding his *fellow-plotters*, too, should make the entry with him  
 Like lions bounding from their lair they passed into the city  
 575 without delay because they found the passage through unguarded,  
 and very quickly reached the gate that stood close by the 'Fountain'.

Translation: C. Matzukis<sup>2</sup>

The primary question which arises here is whether the anomalous form, ὀμωκότας, falls into the category of the ἄπαξ λεγόμενον or whether it is in fact, idiosyncratic to the author in his anonymity. As the anonymous author of the verse-chronicle draws his history from sources such as Niketas Choniates, Georgios Pachymeres, Georgios Akropolites and Nikephoros Gregoras, the relevant areas in these sources (around which the author may have drawn his facts) need to be examined to enable us to see whether the word ὀμωκότας had possibly been used by any of these sources. At a glance, ὀμωκότας resembles ὀμωμοκότας, the accusative plural of the perfect participle of ὀαμνυμι and may be translated as “those who had taken an oath” or “who had plotted” to participate in the underground invasion of Constantinople in order to recapture the city from the Franks.

Although Choniates does not write on the 1261 recovery of Constantinople by Strategopoulos, it must be noted that our anonymous author made use of Choniates as a source not only for the earlier part of the history preceding the fall of Constantinople but also for the reign of Mourtzouphlos after the fall of the city. The author himself (line 281) of the present poem, writes: Ὑδε τὴν βίβλον ἀκριβῶς Νικητᾶ Χωνιάτου (*Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, Van Dieten, 1975:574; Longnon, 1949:226–227).

Even though the form ὀμωκότας does not exist in Choniates's history, it must be noted that he (Choniates) omits the temporal augment in the pluperfect tense, for instance he uses ὀμωμόκεσαν (for ὀμωμόκεσαν): for example ὀμωμόκεσαν οἱ τοπάρχαι καὶ μεγιστᾶνες παρελεύσεσθαι τὸν ῥήγα (*Nicetae Choniatae Historia*:411).

On further examination of the sources we notice that the form ὀμωκότας is not even found in the relevant contexts of either Pachymeres, Akropolites or even Nikephoros Gregoras, all of whom write on the history of the recapture of Constantinople by the Caesar Strategopoulos who, together with a small band of soldiers, swore to enter the city on the night selected

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*Marcianus 408* which contains 155 folios reflecting anonymous works written in both prose and poetry. There are 22 anonymous items contained in the Codex. For a description of the Codex see A. Gonzato (1963:239–260). See further, Matzukis (1989:58–87).

2. For further extracts of my fifteen-syllabic translations of folios 1–13<sup>v</sup> ('The Fall of Constantinople'), see further, Matzukis (1986/87:5–17).

(Greenakoplos,1959:109). The following lines (drawn from the relevant story concerning Stategopoulos's entry into the city) in Pachymeres, Akropolites and Gregoras respectively, indicate that instead of ὀμωκότας, the words (a) στρατιώτας, (b) ἄνδρες and (c) ὀπλίτας are used respectively by the abovementioned sources as shown below:

- Pachymeres (De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis 2.2.27) refers to στρατιώτας: τῷ δὲ καίσαρι τοὺς στρατιώτας . . . πύλη εἰσέρχεσθαι and to θεληματαρίων e.g. τις τῶν θεληματαρίων (De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis 2.2.26).
- Akropolites (I.85.8) talks about πεντεκαίδεκα ἄνδρες . . . εἰσῆλθον . . .
- Gregoras (Patrologia Graeca 148 col.216) writes: πεντήκοντα εἰσιόντας ὀπλίτας.

As the form ὀμωκότας does not exist in any of the 155 folios of the *Codex Marcianus 408* either, which I have examined thoroughly, it is now necessary to go into the etymology of the word, basing my conjecture on the possibility of an ἄπαξ λεγόμενον.

Because of the evolving state of the language, an ἄπαξ λεγόμενον would not have been unusual in anonymity. The form ὀμωκότας which is not found in lexica, is absurd and the prefix could only stem from ὀμνυμι,(= to swear), hardly from ὀμος (= joint).

The second section of ὀμωκότας: would speak for itself: κοτῶ = dare, derived from κοτῶ (= κυβεύω) < κόττος (= κύβος dice, a chance). Paradoxically either of the prefixes ὀμος or that of ὀμνυμι would be applicable to the general meaning of the word which I have taken to mean *fellow-plotters*. See my translation, *Extract* (c), which I have produced in the same metre as that used in the poem. However, this analysis does not suffice as an explanation for the form of ὀμωκότας. A discussion on the metre would therefore be necessary.

Of special interest is the fact that the anonymous author wrote his verse-chronicle in the political metre which was commonly used by authors in the fourteenth century (Jeffreys,1974:143–195). The fact that he used this metre leads us onto another train of thought in the analysis of the word ὀμωκότας. In order to meet the demands of the metre, poets took liberties at random with words, and this brings us onto the final and probably most plausible deduction in our investigation into the form ὀμωκότας: namely that of loss of reduplication in the perfect tense (Browning,1977:312). Ὀμωκότας is an unreduplicated form of ὀμωμοκότας, the accusative plural of the perfect participle of ὀμνυμι, and was used by the anonymous author simply to meet the demands of the fifteen-syllabic metre known as the *political metre* (Jeffreys,1974:143–195).<sup>3</sup> Unreduplicated forms were not uncommon in

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3. The metre of fifteen syllables (based on stress not quantity) comprises two hemistichs – one hemistich of eight syllables and another of seven. The metre often (not always) reads like a

Greek during the fourteenth century.

Despite my etymological speculation based on the possibility of an ἄπαξ λενόμενον, my conclusion from the foregoing is the most basic and probably the most plausible: namely that ὀμωκότας is an unreduplicated form of the accusative plural of the perfect participle of ὀμνυμι, and that the anonymous author used this shortened form simply to accommodate his metre.

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iambic line as follows:// with a permanently stressed penultimate syllable in the second hemistich. For metrical formulas and linguistic idiosyncracies in the *Codex Marcianus 498*, see Matzukis (1987:16–26).