

A NOTE TO VLADIMIR BENEŠEVIČ (1874–1938)
PENNED BY ULRICH VON
WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (1848–1931)

A short undated handwritten note, possibly a postcard, with the overleaf blank, extant among the correspondence of Vladimir Beneševič as part of an extensive body of his MSS. in St Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences under shelfmark call number 192.2.43.1r,¹ is yet another testimony to the far-reaching renown and acclaim of the scholar whose singular efforts for the cause of Byzantine studies in this country and impressive scholarly address book, which constituted the very essence of academic existence, were turned against him and foiled by the regime he would fall victim to.

The full text of the German original with a translation, some textual criticism which Wilamowitz' hand almost always requires, and an attempt at a commentary, largely through citing additional unpublished documents, are offered here.

Hochgeehrter Herr College,
dem Briefe und den Bitten meines verehrten Collegen Norden möchte
auch ich noch mein ganz persönliches Interesse an der Sache besonders bekräftigen: es liegt so sehr in der Richtung, die ich der Verwendung dieser Gelder geben möchte, daß möglichst viele Nationen auch bei dem wissenschaftlichen Werke Hand anlegen; ich denke, das wird auf Widerhall allgemein stossen, und so hoffen wir für die Sinaihandschriften² bei Ihnen keine Fehlbitte zu tun, da Sie allein den Zutritt haben.
In ausgezeichnete Hochachtung
ganz ergebenst
U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff³

¹ Conventionally in this country, here and after, SPbF ARAN. Fond 192, opis' 2, delo 43, list 1.

² Beneševič [*Описание греческих рукописей монастыря святой Екатерины на Синае*. Изд. Имп. Акад. наук, исполн. на завещ. ей еп. Порфирием средства, под ред. и с доп. В. Н. Бенешевича] 1911–1917. A catalogue of a part of these is to be found at 192.1.26.1–108; 192.3.51–54, 112–115, 182. The second volume, reserved for hagiographical MSS., was never published.

³ The transcription reproduced here belongs to Alexander Gavrillov who kindly prompted the author to put his two-decade-old work to good use; having examined

Dear colleague,
 alongside the letter of my honourable colleague Norden, I would also like herewith to especially affirm my profound personal involvement in this matter: it lies very much in the way in which I would like to see this amount of money spent, so that as many nations as possible could have a share in the scholarly work; I believe it will be met with general sympathy, so that we hope not to have entertained false hopes in asking you for Sinai manuscripts, since you alone have access.
 With utmost respect
 sincerely yours,
 U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff

Unmentioned in an overview of the correspondence of Benešević offered by Igor Medvedev,⁴ this uprooted note can and should be put in context, or else, on the face of things, “Sinaihandschriften” would have Wilamowitz and Norden asking for anything from collations or an augmented edition of the catalogue of Sinai MSS., to, in the light of Wilamowitz Stiftung mentioned, a critical text. It is by pure chance, with the absence of any other piece of correspondence directly pertaining to this episode, that the very letter of Eduard Norden mentioned (an easy clue as it is) survives among the papers of Benešević under shelfmark call number 192.2.133.1^r–3^r. The mechanical character of the request it contains might come as a disappointment, but should not be seen as belittling Benešević.

Norden seems to have written to Benešević before; the first letter dating to late 1910 reached his St Petersburg colleague only by word of mouth (possibly through Th. Zielinski, Benešević’ father-in-law) and prompted Benešević to initiate correspondence and offer assistance, hence the opening lines of gratitude:

Ihr Brief war mir eine große Freude. Ich weiß aber ganz genau, daß ich Ihnen damals schrieb: Ihr liebenswürdiges Anerbieten nehmen wir mit Dank an. Jener Brief muß also nie in Ihre Hände gelangt sein. Um so vervollter war es mir nun natürlich, daß ich nun doch noch in die Lage gekommen bin, Sie zu erreichen.⁵

The sparse collection of Norden and Wilamowitz correspondence, with Norden’s letters virtually all missing, offers a firmer dating for the entering into a correspondence, alongside a rather blunt assessment of

the MS. independently, the author reads *Zutritt* in the last line, against *Vortritt* of the transcription; an attempt at a defence is undertaken in the commentary.

⁴ Medvedev 1995 [И. П. Медведев (ed.), *Архивы русских византистов в Санкт-Петербурге*], 363–371.

⁵ 192.2.133.1^r.

the connection established and the expenses to be incurred (a letter of Wilamowitz of 28 December 1910):

Es ist ja sehr hübsch, wenn wir gleich noch an den Sinai kommen, und der erste Schritt: Excerpte der Katalogaufnahmen für Greg. Nyss. und von Basil. nicht mehr als was für diesen nötig ist (sonst würden schon die Mönchsregeln ersticken) wird sich ja für nicht viel Geld (Russe immer am liebsten honorirt) erreichen lassen. Dann wird Taxe nötig sein. Slawische Brüder (Zielinski eingeschlossen) sind immer mit grosser Höflichkeit und gleich als waren sie gentlemen zu behandeln; aber man darf nie vergessen, daß sie slawische Brüder sind.⁶

The “Russe” is, beyond all doubt, Benešević.

Norden’s letter we possess bears the date 15 July 1911, thus both setting a *terminus post quem* for the note of Wilamowitz and shedding more welcome light on the way in which Benešević was involved, albeit with the outcome undocumented. The first volume of the Catalogue of MSS. housed in the monastery of St Catherine on Mt Sinai was edited, augmented, and published by Benešević earlier in the same year⁷ and was already current in Germany, allowing Norden to have it skimmed for his purposes („Ich habe ihn in diesen Tagen durchsehen lassen“), which were the following: the editors (presumably Pasquali and Jäger, as it transpires from the letter of Wilamowitz to Norden of 10 March 1912)⁸ needed photographs of certain MSS. of Gregory of Nyssa, Eunomius and Basil the Great from Sinai, a notoriously inaccessible holder. Norden puts it in his letter to Benešević this way:

Für unsere Zwecke kommt daraus nur in Betracht: Nr. 513 (383): Τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου... ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Μελέτιον etc. Ἡῤῥησεν ἡμῖν τὸν ἀριθμὸν etc. Denn sowohl nr. 517 (2089) als nr. 516 sind zu jung, als daß sich lohnte, sie zu photographieren. Für Basilios (ἡξαήμερος κατ’ Εὐνομίου) sowie Eunomios (ἀπολογητικός) hat sich in den genannten Teile Ihres Katalogs nichts gefunden. Ich möchte noch bemerken, daß so junge Hss. wie die beiden genannten für uns überhaupt nicht in Betracht kommen.⁹

⁶ Calder III – Huss 1997, 75.

⁷ Benešević 1911.

⁸ Calder III – Huss 1997, 84–86.

⁹ 192.2.133.1^v–2^r. Similar sentiment in Wilamowitz’ letter of 10 March 1912: “die Rechnung ist bitter, aber wenn der Auftrag lautete, photographire was du findest, so kann man den Mann nicht schelten. Da wird wohl Pasquali oder vielmehr die moderne Torheit, jeden Pferdeapfel zu beriechen ob er nicht am Ende doch ein Borsdorfer ist die Schuld tragen. Das nennen die Modernen Akribie” (Calder III – Huss 1997, 86).

Wilamowitz' *Erinnerungen* (summing up the outcome) allow but a glimpse into the whole enterprise running alongside the sweeping Th. Mommsen's Kirchenväterkommission:

Daher bestimmte ich die Summe Geldes, die mir zum 60. Geburtstag geschenkt war,¹⁰ für Gregor von Nyssa, und mein Kollege und Freund Norden übernahm die Leitung. Es waren so viele Forschungen in den Bibliotheken und damals noch teure Photographien nötig, daß das Geld nur für den Druck von ganz wenigen Bänden gereicht hat. Zu meiner besonderen Freude ist einer von einem italienischen Gelehrten bearbeitet, denn die Spende kam auch aus dem Auslande.¹¹

Benešević, an avid and experienced photographer,¹² was to undertake his third expedition to Mt Sinai in the summer of 1911 (prior to that, in 1907 and 1908), also planning (prompted by his German colleagues?) to visit Cairo and the isle of Patmos (thwarted by his illness and an outbreak of cholera). The report he offered at the sitting of the Academy of Sciences on 19th October 1911 makes it quite clear that the obstacles on the way of any lay reader of the Monastery Library were indeed great: to quote from a leaflet reproduced, residence within the monastery was forbidden, with prospective readers having to provide food and bedding (usually a tent) for themselves, the Library was open for four hours a day only (divided between the morning and the afternoon, with the exact hours at discretion of the Council), it was forbidden to make any photographs or catalogues of MSS., no more than two books could be taken out at any one time, no visitor could study for longer than a month. Benešević, however, enjoyed what was in itself a valuable asset: hospitality in the walls of the Monastery, unlimited access to holdings and unspecified working hours, the ban on photography lifted (he reported having made around 3000 photographs on that outing alone).¹³ In the light of the request, it is all but certain that the immediate reason for Wilamowitz' and Norden's interest in the work of Benešević was the *access* he had to the most secluded MSS. collections, thus the reading "da Sie allein den Zutritt haben", which is supported by the instances of the shape of letters V (always having the shape of a printed letter) and Z (invariably going below the line) as they appear in the body of Wilamowitz' handwritten letters, as well as in this note itself, is more feasible palaeographically and aptly expresses the long and short of it.

¹⁰ With Russian scholars among its contributors. P. Nikitin papers (shelfmark 36) held in St Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

¹¹ Wilamowitz 1929, 305.

¹² See among his papers, 192.3.114.1–499; 115.1–271.

¹³ Benešević 1911, 1097–1104.



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It is quite possible that a black-and-white photograph of Wilamowitz from the family album of Benešević, undated and bearing no dedication, set by the archivists between 1893 and 1912,¹⁴ shelfmark call number 192.3.200.13^v, 50, if received from the hands of the sitter himself, could have arrived together, or shortly after, the note (unless obtained indirectly through, for instance, Zielinski). Taken roughly at a time if not on the same occasion as the privately held photo in half profile listed by W. A. Schröder in his iconography of Wilamowitz under Nr. 18, a 55- to 60-year-old Wilamowitz,¹⁵ this earnest enface is virtually unknown.

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A short undated note to Vladimir Benešević filed under 192.2.43.1^r and housed in St Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences is a postcard written by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and dispatched at some point in the course of the correspondence around what turns out to be a request for photographs of certain Sinai MSS. Further archival documents and published letters instrumental in setting the scene are cited to the result that the key to the correct understanding of the note offered for publication here lies in the *Zutritt* to the Sinai holdings Benešević enjoyed.

¹⁴ Bottom right corner bears numbers which might be the year 1898.

¹⁵ Schröder 2007, 349–350, 366.

Короткое рукописное письмо (открытка) без даты, хранящееся в СПбФ АРАН в фонде В. Н. Бенешевича (Ф. 192, оп. 2, д. 43, л. 1), отправлено У. фон Виламовицем-Мёллендорфом Бенешевичу в ходе переписки, целью которой, как выясняет автор этой заметки, стала просьба о фотографировании некоторых рукописей из собрания монастыря Св. Екатерины на Синае. Полезным для установления примерного времени написания и цели стало письмо Э. Нордена Бенешевичу (СПбФ АРАН, Ф. 192, оп. 2, д. 133, л. 1–3), выдержки из которого приводятся без перевода. Доступ к синайскому собранию явился основной причиной обращения немецких коллег к Бенешевичу, что позволяет с уверенностью читать *Zutritt* в последнем предложении письма Виламовица.

CONSPECTUS

CARLO M. LUCARINI	
Zur Entstehung der griechischen Chorlyrik	215
MICHAEL POZDNEV	
Aias und Athen: Zur Geschichte einer Polemik	244
DMITRY CHISTOV, NATALIA PAVLICHENKO	
Lead Letter from the Excavations of Area ‘O-Western’ at the Berezan Settlement in 2017	259
BERND SEIDENSTICKER	
Sprecherbezeichnungen im <i>Kyklops</i> des Euripides	278
DAVID SEDLEY	
Etymology in Plato’s <i>Sophist</i>	290
NINA ALMAZOVA	
Recognition Based on Paralogism (Aristot. <i>Poet.</i> 1455 a 12–16)	302
EKATERINA DRUZHININA	
On the <i>Curiosity</i> of Philocrates (Ep. <i>Arist.</i> 1)	328
DENIS KEYER	
Inscription on a Roman Stylus from London	340
MARTIN FERGUSON SMITH	
A New Look at Diogenes of Oinoanda, Fr. 157 Smith	351
ELENA ZHELTOVA, ALEXANDER ZHELTOV	
“Motivated Signs”: Some Reflections on Phonosemantics and Submorpheme Theory in the Context of Democritus’ and Epicurus’ Traditions	363

Статьи сопровождаются резюме на русском и английском языке
Summary in Russian and English

ELENA ERMOLAEVA

Neo-Hellenic poetry in Russia: Antonios Palladoklis (1747–1801)
and Georgios Baldani (about 1760–1789) 375

ТАТИАНА КОСТЫЛЕВА

A Note to Vladimir Beneševič (1874–1938) Penned by
Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848–1931) 387

Keywords 394

Правила для авторов 396

Guidelines for contributors 398