

THE BOOK OF MICHAEL OF RHODES
A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY MARITIME MANUSCRIPT

EDITED BY PAMELA O. LONG, DAVID MCGEE, AND ALAN M. STAHL

Volume 2: Transcription and Translation
edited by Alan M. Stahl

transcription by Franco Rossi
translation by Alan M. Stahl

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PREFACE TO VOLUME 2

The manuscript published here is in private hands and has never before been available for consultation by scholars or the general public. For that reason, we have sought in this edition to convey the exact contents of the manuscript while making the material in it accessible to as wide a variety of specialists and interested readers as possible. In the cause of preserving the literal contents of the manuscript, we are greatly aided by volume 1 of this publication, which contains a high-quality, color facsimile of the entire manuscript. The studies in volume 3 present an introduction to the subjects treated in the manuscript that should aid its interpretation.

We have structured volume 2 with a transcription of the manuscript on the left-hand pages facing the corresponding translation into English on the right, to facilitate comparison even for readers without prior experience with the medieval Venetian language. Notes to the transcription, chiefly of a technical nature, are found at the foot of the left-hand page referenced by letter, while those to the translation, sometimes more general in nature, are referenced by number and begin immediately after them to keep the pages in tandem without wasted space. Folio numbers in the outside margins indicate the manuscript folio that begins at that point; where the folio break occurs within a line of text, the end of each manuscript folio is indicated by a vertical line [|] inserted into the transcription at the exact point of break. (The corresponding point of the translation, likewise indicated, is necessarily more approximate.) We have followed the original numeration of the manuscript pages, which assign the same folio number to left and right pages of each opening; we have assigned the letters a and b to the left and right pages respectively. We have omitted the word “Jesus” that appears at the top of most pages from both the transcription and the translation.

In his introduction to the manuscript below, Franco Rossi sets forth the principles for the transcription in detail. Of note is the fact that all words are spelled exactly as in the manuscript, with inconsistencies and even errors maintained (though abbreviations are spelled out). On the other hand, in the interest of comprehensibility (and with the expectation that the reader can always consult the facsimile), capitalization and punctuation have been standardized to modern Italian usage. In a similar way, the translation has adopted the capitalization and punctuation norms of modern English. In a very few cases, differences in punctuation of corresponding passages in the transcription and translation go beyond those between modern Italian and English and reflect differences of interpretation between Franco Rossi and me.

The table of contents at the beginning of the manuscript gives titles for most of its sections; the actual text lacks such titles. We have taken these titles from the table of contents and inserted them at the appropriate places in the text, using square brackets in the transcription to indicate that they are interpolated.

In the translation, Venetian personal names have been rendered following the convention of using the equivalent modern Italian forename and a standardized, usually early modern form of the Venetian family name. Names of saints and historical individuals appear in the translation in their common English forms. Common geographical names are given in their English form (e.g., Venice, Constantinople), and others are given in the language of the country in which they now are contained.

Some parts of this manuscript have never been published before and many have never been translated into a modern language. Almost none have ever been translated into a non-Romance language. This translation is then, of necessity, a rough first attempt to make at least the basic meaning of the text intelligible to the reader of English. In cases where there was a choice between presenting what the text actually says and what I interpret it to mean, I have chosen to use the former in the translation, saving interpretations for the notes. I have maintained the tenses used in the original text, which are especially inconsistent in the mathematical sections at the beginning of the manuscript.

This translation is, to a very great extent, the result of a collaborative process. David McGee, coeditor of this publication, set up a private website for use by the Michael of Rhodes team, which comprised the contributors of the studies published in volume 3. Each page of the manuscript was represented by a file that included a scan of the page, Franco Rossi's preliminary transcription, and my preliminary translation. Team members posted comments to these pages, offering suggestions and raising questions for group discussion. The website was eventually opened up to the additional scholars invited to participate in the December 2005 public conference at the Dibner Institute, who also added comments to the pages.

The manuscript's technical vocabulary and concepts have presented the greatest challenges for translation, especially those related to shipbuilding. Some terms, such as *paraschuxula*, have been the subject of debate for over a century and a half; others, like *poselexe del choltro*, appear never to have been explicated; while words such as *sesto* had many discrete meanings in the Venetian maritime vocabulary, with corresponding possibilities of translation. At a certain point arbitrary decisions have been made, such as whether to translate the Venetian name for a specific rope with an approximately equivalent one from English sailing vocabulary (in itself archaic and obscure) or to leave it untranslated; in most such cases the Venetian name appears in the translation with an explanation of its significance in a note. Following specialized sessions at the 2005 Dibner conference, an email discussion group was constituted specifically to discuss the translation of this technical maritime terminology, comprising Mauro Bondioli, Claire Calcagno, Filipe Vieira de Castro, John Dotson, Jeff Gedney, Matthew Harpster, Alan H. Hartley, Brad Loewen, Alex Medico, and John Pryor as well as the coeditors. I am grateful to all of them for their contributions to the discussions and hence to this translation.

When the time came for producing continuous transcriptions and translations of the manuscript pages, Pamela O. Long, coeditor of this publication, compared each page of the transcription on the website with the facsimile of that page and each page of the translation with the corresponding transcription and facsimile, thereby aiding Franco and me immeasurably in assembling our revised drafts. Members of the study team read and critiqued sections of the manuscript relating to their own specialty; Piero Falchetta's contribution of a full listing of the modern names of all places referred to in the portolans was especially valuable. For assistance in interpreting the Greek prayers that appear in the manuscript in transliterated form and reconstructing their original text, I am very

grateful to the following scholars: Eleni Kalkani-Passali, a specialist in the medieval Rhodian dialect; Anna-Maria Kasdagli of the fourth Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities in Rhodes; and Diana Wright, a specialist in Byzantine Greek. Alan H. Hartley, the specialist in maritime terminology for the *Oxford English Dictionary*, has provided invaluable help by constructing working glossaries for the shipbuilding and rigging terminology and then reading and emending drafts of each of the relevant sections; it is no exaggeration to say that a meaningful translation of these passages would not have been possible without his unstinting assistance. Also of tremendous importance for the translation has been the assistance of Linda L. Carroll, a scholar of the Venetian language, who read the entire draft of the translation and offered countless suggestions for improving its accuracy and tone. Perhaps no individual associated with this publication has gotten more deeply into the thinking and writing of Michael of Rhodes than our intrepid copyeditor, Matthew Abbate of the MIT Press, who reworked all of the mathematical calculations and established the current names of all the locations while keeping a keen lookout for inconsistencies on the part of the medieval and modern participants in this collaboration. Chryseis Fox mastered many layers of complexity to make a beautifully legible design.

Just as the text of Michael's manuscript represents the compilation of a large number of individual contributions, so this edition is the result of the work of many scholars. It is our hope that we do justice in conveying Michael's writings to a modern audience.

Alan M. Stahl
Princeton, New Jersey
June 9, 2008