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## A Missionary Poetics of Translation: Tommaso Stanislao Velasti as a Jesuit Cultural Broker in the Levant

Author: Mara Psalti, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

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# A Missionary Poetics of Translation: Tommaso Stanislao Velasti as a Jesuit Cultural Broker in the Levant

MARA PSALTI

## Introduction

Despite the renewed interest in his work by a few Greek and Italian scholars during the late 1980s and throughout the '90s,<sup>1</sup> Tommaso Stanislao Velasti (Chios, 1717–Palermo, 1773), an extraordinary Greek Jesuit man of letters, poet, and translator, remains a familiar stranger of modern Greek literature. This is not unanticipated. Extant copies of his books are extremely rare and occasionally totally absent from Greek libraries, digital copies (except for his linguistic treatises) are unavailable to scholarly readers, and, most significantly, his books have not yet been reprinted let alone edited. Therefore, Velasti can be identified as a desideratum of both future research and editorial practice in the fields of modern Greek, comparative, and Jesuit studies.

This article focuses on what could be described as Velasti's "missionary poetics of translation." It is a poetics based on source texts or models with a Roman Catholic—mostly Jesuit—theme and/or orientation, which Velasti accommodated or even domesticated for the common good of all his "fellow citizens, both children and adults, married, young men, monks and laymen, lettered and illiterate," addressing "mainly"—albeit not exclusively—the Roman Catholics of Chios.<sup>2</sup> This literary policy primarily aimed to educate the readership (or audience) through the inclusion (and hence popularization) of knowledge drawn from the Jesuit humanistic curriculum, to boost and maintain Catholic morale, to propagate the history, principles, and spirituality of the Society of Jesus, and eventually to align the Levant editorially (and thus intellectually) with the major European centers of Catholicism. Due to this poetics, Velasti stood as a significant broker of Jesuit culture in the Levant, specifically within the island of Chios.<sup>3</sup>

It is not surprising that Velasti's translation activity took place during the first period of his life as a writer and scholar (1746–51), while studying theology in Rome, when he was still under the heavy influence of his recent regency in Chios (1743–46).

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1. On the recent reception of Velasti, see Matteo Mandalà, "Tommaso Stanislao Velasti tra filellenismo partenopeo e ideologia 'albanista,'" *Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano* 25, no. 2 (2021): 164–67.

2. Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, S.J., *Anapavsis tis cardhias is to ajion thelima tu Theú [...]: Dhascalía malista sinathrismeni ec tu pateros Alfonsu Rodriquez [...]* (Rome: Ex Typographia Antonii de Rubeis, 1746), [10]. On the distinctly Jesuit notion of "common good," see John W. O'Malley, "The Distinctiveness of the Society of Jesus," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–16, here 5, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00301001> (accessed February 2, 2025): "The almost all-inclusive character of the common good suggests, moreover, the malleability and adaptability that is generally recognized as a special Jesuit trait."

3. On the concept of cultural broker, see Antje Dietze, "Cultural Brokers and Mediators," in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. Matthias Middell (Abingdon: Routledge 2019), 494–502, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429438233-62> (accessed February 2, 2025).

We could say that Velasti originally funneled his literary voice into the channels of a mediated poetics. Making use of a variety of translation techniques (from faithful translation to free adaptation of the original text<sup>4</sup>), he translated and/or adapted four books of Jesuit and broadly Catholic literature during his stay in Rome. This essay can accordingly be read as an introduction to Velasti's early work and as a minor contribution to the history of Jesuit intra-European translations, despite his being classifiable as "an amateur translator."<sup>5</sup>

At this point, two clarifications regarding the term "missionary" should be made. First, Velasti's accommodating missionary activity did not unfold in a culturally foreign milieu but within a region in Europe (albeit part of the Ottoman Empire), unified by a common Christian culture, predominantly Orthodox for the Greek-speaking population.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, this region happens to have been Velasti's homeland, connecting him closely with the people he addressed—many of whom he knew personally as former parishioners, penitents, or students of his—and reducing any linguistic unfamiliarity related to the translational work in which he was engaged.<sup>7</sup> Second, this was a remote mission (Velasti was not in Chios but in Rome when performing it), primarily print-based, and pedagogical rather than strictly doctrinal. That is why I choose to portray Velasti as a cultural rather than a confessional broker.

### A Sketch of Velasti's Life and Work

Hailing from Chios, an island nestled in the embrace of the Aegean Sea, Velasti was born on October 20, 1717. From an early age, before formally joining the Society, he was deeply immersed in its world, frequently visiting the Jesuit residence in Chios

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4. Cf. Peter Burke, "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Burke and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7–38, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511497193.002> (accessed February 2, 2025).

5. On the rather overlooked question of intra-European translations, see Peter Burke, "The Jesuits and the Art of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 24–32 (on "amateurs," see 26), <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442681552-007> (accessed February 4, 2025).

6. Cf. Antje Flüchter, "Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures: An Introduction," in *Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures: The Expansion of Catholicism in the Early Modern World*, ed. Antje Flüchter and Rouven Wirbser (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1–49, here 13–14, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004353060\\_002](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004353060_002) (accessed February 2, 2025).

7. On the vast topic of translation within "traditional" overseas Jesuit missions, see the bibliographically informed article of Karen Bennett, "Jesuit Translation: The Ciceronian Legacy," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Religion*, ed. Hephzibah Israel (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 319–33, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315443485-23> (accessed February 2, 2025).

town and gaining firsthand insight into the order's ministries.<sup>8</sup> He entered the novitiate of Palermo on January 15, 1736. After taking his first vows on January 16, 1738, he spent a year at the juniorate and then studied philosophy at the Jesuit College of Palermo (1739–42). On January 7, 1743, he returned to Chios to begin his three-and-a-half-year regency as a teacher in the Jesuit school. As a reward for his successful ministry in Chios during his regency, Velasti was invited—"a gracious host"<sup>9</sup>—to continue his studies in theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, formerly known as the Roman College (1746–50). During the last two years of his theological studies, he also taught ancient Greek at the same university. On November 14, 1749, Velasti was ordained to the priesthood. After completing his studies, he was honorably chosen by his superiors for the biennial theology review (1750–52). In 1751, "while still a student," he was appointed director of studies at the Irish College in Rome, "a high honor, seldom bestowed on a young man, let alone a foreigner."<sup>10</sup> At the end of 1752, he returned to his province, Sicily, to proceed with his tertianship. On February 2, 1753, he took his solemn vows in Palermo, and the following academic year he began to teach the rhetoric class at the Jesuit College of Messina. Nevertheless, his academic career in Sicily would be most turbulent: the development of personal initiatives of both secular (political) and religious (uni-ate, inter-/trans-confessional) orientation, his disobedience toward his superiors, a catechism of his that was condemned by other Catholic orders and the Jansenists as scandalous, along with Velasti's rather liberal relations with his students, resulted in his constant movements from one college of Sicily to another (Messina, Palermo, Trapani, Palermo again, Sciacca, Piazza Armerina, Mineo, Syracuse). In 1767, a short time before the Jesuits' expulsion from the Kingdoms of Sicily and Naples, there was a final rupture between Velasti and his superiors. Then, having secured royal protection, he was allowed to move to the Casa dei Teatini (Convent of the Theatine Fathers) in Palermo. After the expulsion, he moved for a while to Naples, before finally finding accommodation for the rest of his life in the Greek-Albanian Seminar in Palermo as a secular priest. During these last years (mostly between 1770 and 1772), he was also associated with the philhellenic circle of Naples. Throughout his life, he pursued a scholarly interest in linguistics (especially on the question of the pronunciation of ancient Greek), being also an important and prolific writer and poet

8. On Velasti's life and work, see mainly Markos Roussos-Mēlidōnēs, *Ἑλληνες Ιησουίτες (1560–1773)* (Athens: Kentro Ekdēlōseōn–Omiliōn, 1993), 195–214, and Mandalà, "Tommaso Stanislao Velasti," 167–224. Significant information can also be drawn from archival sources: Giambattista Lascaris Guarini, *Dell'espulsione dei Gesuiti dalla Sicilia (Quito et Mexico)*, 1767, Sic. 180, AC, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Rome, 366–79 (henceforth cited as Guarini, *Dell'espulsione*); *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus an. 1767* [n.d.; post-1767], FG 686-8, ARSI, Rome, p. 286 (henceforth *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*); MS 32.VI.G. [n.d.; post-1767], Archivio dell'Eparchia di Piana degli Albanesi, Palermo, fol. 227 (henceforth MS 32.VI.G.)—I am grateful to Prof. Mandalà for sharing his digital copy with me (for its description, see Mandalà, "Tommaso Stanislao Velasti," 162n25). A fresh and comprehensive biography of Velasti, focusing particularly on his role as a Jesuit figure within the context of eighteenth-century Italy and drawing extensively on archival sources, is included in my PhD dissertation titled "Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, *Περὶ θυμοῦ* (On anger) (Rome, 1747): A Critical Edition with Introduction, Notes, and a Glossary" (in Greek), being supervised by Prof. Kostas Yiavis at the University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

9. MS 32.VI.G., fol. 47v. Throughout this paper, English translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

10. *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*, 11.

across diverse genres, both secular and religious, including didactic and lyrical poetry, devotional literature, sermons, and a catechism. He died in Palermo in 1773, having published nine books, a pamphlet, and a section of nineteen poems in a collected volume, composed in four languages (Latin, Italian, and learned and vernacular Greek).<sup>11</sup>

Over the course of his life and work, Velasti advocated for union between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, based on what he firmly believed to be their “mutual love of true faith,” and committed himself to that end.<sup>12</sup> Despite his capacity as a Jesuit (whether scholastic or professed), he did not regard the Orthodox Church as “schismatic” or its members as “heretics”;<sup>13</sup> on the contrary, he identified the differences between the two confessions primarily as matters of ritual stemming from their distinct historical developments and cultural contexts.<sup>14</sup> Not only did he attend Orthodox church services and other sacraments—there is a touching testimony of his about his self-imposed restraint from chanting in the Orthodox churches “whether in Chios or the Peloponnese” out of fear of ridicule because of his Italian-accented pronunciation of Greek<sup>15</sup>—but he also pragmatically supported the validity and equivalence of baptism and Eucharist in both confessions within his catechism.<sup>16</sup> During his regency in Chios, Velasti allegedly “sought to negotiate the reunification of the schismatic Greek Church with the Roman See,” leading to an exchange of letters between him and Paisius II of Constantinople, at a time when a renewed debate on the necessity of rebaptism for Catholics and Armenians converting to Orthodoxy was about to emerge.<sup>17</sup> Addition-

11. On his bibliography, see the entry “Velasti, Stanislas Thomas,” in *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus: Nouvelle édition*, ed. Carlos Sommervogel (Brussels: Oscar Schepens, 1898), 8:cols. 546–47. The following works should be added: Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, S.J., *I imera apò ton christianòn aghiasmeni dhià tis prosevchis ke meletis: Sinthemeni apò ena patera tis Sindrofias tu lisù, ke aferomeni to evjenestato, ke evlavestato Theodhoro Vegettio* (Rome: Typis Angeli Rotilii et Philippi Bacchelli, 1751) (see below in the main text); [Velasti], *Dottrina cristiana da dirsi dalli discepoli de' Gesuiti in Scio: Orazione mattutina ed altre diverse devozioni* (Messina: n.p., 1754); [Velasti], “Scherzi poetici [...] colle note di D. Niccolò Timoni,” in *Componimenti poetici di varj autori in lode di Caterina II [...]* (Naples: Beniamino Rinaldi, n.d. [1771]), 63–104.

12. I quote from Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, S.J., *Psichofelis loji is tes Eortes ke Kiriakes tu chronu: [...] Eximinia proti* (Messina: Francesco Gaipa, 1753), 100. On the vast topic of the Union of the Churches, see Marie-Hélène Blanchet and Frédéric Gabriel, eds., *Réduire le schisme? Ecclésiologies et politiques de l'union entre Orient et Occident (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: ACHCByz, 2013).

13. For an in-depth look at the challenging relationship between the Jesuits and Orthodox Christianity, refer to Paul Shore, “Jesuits in the Orthodox World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 318–48, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190639631.013.13> (accessed February 2, 2025).

14. On this matter, see mainly Velasti, *Psichofelis loji*, 128–66.

15. Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, S.J., *Dissertatio de litterarum græcarum pronuntiatione* (Rome: Typis Angeli Rotilii et Philippi Bacchelli, 1751), 106.

16. [Velasti], *Dottrina cristiana*, 40–41, 42; [Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, S.J.], *Didascalia christianiki na lejete apò ta Jesuitomathitopula is ti Chio: Prosevchi tachini ke ale tines evlavie* (Messina: n.p., 1754), 26, 28. On the complicated question of “communicatio in sacris” within the Levant, see Cesare Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie: Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero ottomano, XVII–XVIII secolo)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2019), <http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/225521> (accessed February 2, 2025). According to Santus, during the eighteenth century, there was “a mutual doctrinal rigidification, evident on the Roman side precisely with the general prohibition of *communicatio in sacris* starting from 1729” (11).

17. Guarini, *Dell'espulsione*, 369. On “the Baptism Controversy,” see Timothy [Kallistos] Ware, *Eustratios Argenti: A Study of the Greek Church under Turkish Rule*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 65–107, mainly 70–77.

ally, during his professorship in Messina, “many prominent Greek [i.e., Orthodox] hierarchs wished young Velasti could act as a mediator with His Holiness Benedict XIV, so that he could understand and acknowledge their Catholic sentiments,” a task Velasti successfully undertook.<sup>18</sup> A regrettably lost poetic work of his, titled *Isidōris*, inspired by the life of Saint Isidore—the patron saint of Chios—“demonstrates,” according to his Chiot friend and later bishop of Chios, Niccolò Timoni (1744–1812), “that all points of contention between Orthodox and Roman Catholics are merely verbal disputes or sparks that ignite tempers.”<sup>19</sup>

### Chiot Catholics in Dire Straits: Velasti’s Early “Missionary” Practices

Over two decades had passed since the Venetian period, the six-month interval of Venetian rule over Chios (September 1694–February 1695), when Velasti was born. Nevertheless, the Catholic community, particularly its Jesuit faction, perceived by the Orthodox as responsible for the Venetian occupation of the island, remained under *de facto* and *de jure* persecution by the Ottomans. Catholic temples and monasteries (both in Chios town and in the countryside) were converted into Muslim mosques or shifted ownership to the Orthodox, while some had simply been destroyed or abandoned. The diminished community—sixty Catholic families sought refuge in the Peloponnese or Italy after the events, while others embraced the Greek Orthodox denomination—was compelled to conduct its religious duties in the chapels of the French and Dutch consulates, while all marriages and baptisms were enforced to take place in private residences.<sup>20</sup> This is how Velasti describes the period of persecution, evidently echoing accounts from the members of his family:

Our churches were all in ruin, so when Father Bertrand Martin of our Society [the priest of the French consulate in Chios] arrived and expressed his intention to conduct a service, there was not a single woman, even the most skittish, who didn’t run to attend it, even though she could see the cane [of the Ottomans] above her. And as everyone beheld the signs of our sacred rites again, the air trembled with reverent sighs, and the floor of that spacious yet uncomfortable for so many people dwelling was moistened by sweet tears.<sup>21</sup>

The alleviation of this distress began in 1718 with the signing of the Treaty of Passarowitz, which marked the conclusion of hostilities between Venice and the Ottoman Empire. At that time, the dilapidated church of Saint Nicholas di Bari in Frangoparikia (the Catholic neighborhood in Chios town) was restored to the Catholics for their

18. *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*, 11.

19. [Velasti], “Scherzi poetici,” 90n3. See also Tommaso Stanslao Velasti, S.J., *Περὶ θνυμῶν* (Rome: Typis Antonii de Rubeis, 1747), 72na. For information on Timoni and his relationship with Velasti as a critic of the latter’s works, see Mara Psalti, “Niccolò Timoni: An 18th-Century Chian *Littérateur* and His Contribution to Early Modern Greek Literary Criticism,” *Diogenes* 6 (November 2017): 13–25, <https://gemuob.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/diogenes-6-final-printme.pdf> (accessed February 2, 2025).

20. For “The Venetian Occupation and the Suppression of Chian Catholicism (1694–1720),” refer to Philip P. Argenti, *The Religious Minorities: Jews and Roman Catholics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 295–307. See also Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, 153, 228, 316–20, 381.

21. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, 217–18.



services.<sup>22</sup> However, despite the concerted efforts of Filippo Bavestrelli (1650–1754), appointed Latin bishop of Chios in 1720, disruptions by the actions of other Catholic orders seeking to reclaim their property would delay the process for at least twelve years, before the church could finally open its doors to the faithful.<sup>23</sup> The Jesuit residence would eventually resume its activities in 1732.<sup>24</sup>

This was the religious atmosphere in which Velasti spent his childhood and adolescence. In contrast to the archivally documented ecumenism, tolerance, and inter-confessionality that used to prevail in Chios up until the latter third of the seventeenth century, deep-seated hostility and suspicion had now divided the two confessional communities.<sup>25</sup> According to Velasti, the “two thousand ‘Franks’” (i.e., Roman Catholics) of Chios town, as they were derogatorily referred to, found themselves “amid eighty thousand Greeks [i.e., Orthodox], from whom they differed in church, bishop, doctrine, sacred language, ceremonies, humanistic education, upbringing, customs, mentality, and spirit.”<sup>26</sup> There seemed to be nothing for Orthodox and Catholics to share “but the air and the sun” and the dialect of Chios.<sup>27</sup>

The reopening of the Jesuit residence must have been pivotal in solidifying Velasti’s religious inclination. In a brief biography of Velasti—a form of praise for his character and ministry—contained in a handwritten folio overseen by Michelangelo Canonico Luparelli, vicar forane and commissioner of the Holy Inquisition, it is stated that “Velasti, as a young child, was regarded by the Jesuits themselves as an angel in spirit and character.”<sup>28</sup> “He had not yet turned fourteen years old,” when, at the urging of his Jesuit fathers, he undertook “the teaching of the *Spiritual Exercises*, not only to his classmates at the Jesuit school but even to noble young ladies” of Chios town.<sup>29</sup> Such was his talent and zeal as an altar boy that he had been exceptionally granted “a room of his own choice” in the Jesuit house in order that, “spending there his day and staying also overnight,” he could comfortably “translate many books of piety into his mother tongue,” that being the Greek-Chiot dialect.<sup>30</sup> Thus, as “a young secular boy of seventeen years of age,”<sup>31</sup> Velasti had already developed local yet noteworthy apostolic activity, during a rather critical period for Catholicism in Chios—an effort he would later interpret as a personal strike against the Ottomans.<sup>32</sup>

22. See Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 305–6, and Markos N. Roussos-Mēlidōnēs, *Ιησουίτες στον ελληνικό χώρο (1560–1915)* (Athens: Kentro Ekdēlōseōn–Omiliōn, 1991), 116.

23. Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 308–16.

24. Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 496; see also, Roussos-Mēlidōnēs, *Ιησουίτες στον ελληνικό χώρο*, 116.

25. Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 287–94. See also Kallistos T. Ware, “Orthodox and Catholics in the Seventeenth Century: Schism or Intercommunion?,” *Studies in Church History* 9 (1972): 259–76, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S042420840000588X> (accessed February 2, 2025), and Niki Papailiaki, “Catholiques et Orthodoxes sur l’île de Chio aux XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles,” *Transversalités: Revue de l’Institut catholique de Paris* 97 (January–March 2006): 201–8.

26. Velasti, *Dissertatio*, 111.

27. Velasti, *Dissertatio*, 4. See also Tommaso Velasti, *Dimostrazione istorico-grammatica del suono delle lettere Greche [...]* (Naples: Gennaro Giaccio, 1772), 62.

28. *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*, 9.

29. *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*, 9.

30. See *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*, 9, and MS 32.VI.G., fol. 93v.

31. MS 32.VI.G., fol. 93v.

32. Cf. MS 32.VI.G., fol. 93v.

***The Repose of the Heart: “In the midst of such hardships that have overwhelmed Chios”***

In the autumn of 1746, probably within a few days of the start of his theological studies, Velasti made his first official appearance as a writer–translator through the publication of *Anapavsis tis cardhias is to aghion thelima tu Theú* (The repose of the heart in the Holy Will of God), “the first effort, but not the last one of [his] desire to do good to all [his] fellow citizens.”<sup>33</sup> The book, printed by the distinguished press of Antonio de Rossi, recommends itself by its descriptive subtitle as a mainly translated work (“A teaching mostly compiled from Fr. Alonso Rodríguez, S.J.”). Indeed, for the most part, Velasti translated into the Chiot dialect, transcribed into Latin font, the eighth “treatise” (“De la conformidad con la voluntad de Dios” [On the conformity to the will of God]) of the first part of *Ejercicio de perfección y virtudes cristianas* (Practice of perfection and Christian virtues [Seville, 1609; 4th ed. 1615, final]) by the Spanish Jesuit Alonso Rodríguez (1526–1616). Bearing in mind that this book used to serve as a foundational manual “for the spiritual formation of [Jesuit] novices,”<sup>34</sup> we can assume that Velasti must have first read it during his novitiate in Palermo.

Rodríguez “aimed to provide readers with a practical guide for improving their daily lives and faith,” advocating for “a robust asceticism based on personal effort.”<sup>35</sup> What made this work exceptionally popular (it is one of the most translated books of Jesuit literature<sup>36</sup>) was not just its practical nature but also the literary virtues of its style. As aptly stated, “Rodríguez’s style is more that of an impassioned preacher than an analytical scholastic philosopher.”<sup>37</sup> It comes then as no surprise that Velasti chose to translate a part of this very book, most akin to his own literary sensitivity in the making, to address his fellow citizens for the first time. As *Ejercicio* had already become a pan-European bestseller, translated “into French, Italian, Latin, German, Dutch, and partly into English” within just eleven years of its final publication,<sup>38</sup> Velasti may have used a handy Italian translation as a model of his own, either bringing a copy of it from Sicily to Chios or finding it at the Jesuit residence in Chios during his regency. His own translation, being the first and only one ever produced in vernacular Greek, was widely read in the Levant and reprinted twice, in Istanbul and Izmir.<sup>39</sup>

Velasti writes in the preface of *Anapavsis tis cardhias* in a rather programmatic way:

33. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, [11].

34. John Patrick Donnelly, “Rodríguez, Alonso,” in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: Biográfico-temático*, ed. Charles E. O’Neill and Joaquín María Domínguez (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 2001), 4:3394. Cf. Donnelly, “Alonso Rodríguez’ *Ejercicio*: A Neglected Classic,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 16–24, here 18, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2540029> (accessed February 2, 2025).

35. Donnelly, “Rodríguez,” 3394.

36. Burke, “Jesuits and the Art of Translation,” 27.

37. Donnelly, “Rodríguez,” 3394.

38. Donnelly, “Rodríguez,” 3394. See also Donnelly, “Alonso Rodríguez’ *Ejercicio*,” 17–18.

39. Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, S.J., *Anapavsis tis cardhias is to aghion thelima tu Theu* [...]. *Dhidhascalia sinathrismeni ec ton ponimaton tu patros Rodriguez* [...], 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Vivliopolion tu Aghiu Venedhictu, 1843); Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, S.J., *Anapavsis tis cardhias is to aghion thelima tu Theu* [...]: *Dhidhascalia sinathrismeni malista ek tu singhramatos tu patros Alfonsu Rodriguez* [...], 3rd ed. (Izmir: Ek tis Tipografias P. Marcopulu, 1866).



I am addressing my fellow citizens, especially the Roman Catholics, so I preferred to use the dialect of Chios transcribed into the Latin alphabet, being sure that the more I am homelike and familiar to their language the more they are going to like me. That's why I even translated any other foreign language into our own, so that every illiterate child can read it and every uneducated woman can grasp it without searching for explanations.<sup>40</sup>

The choice of the local dialect in an allographic system was directed by Velasti's missionary aspiration for addressing a mixed readership (or audience), akin to a pulpit congregation, to which he aimed to be relatable, taking under serious consideration their receptive abilities. Therefore, Velasti's translation involved extensive cultural accommodation and updates to the original text in order that it could meet the needs of his contemporary men and women in Chios. Such a strategy had an effect on the entire design of his translation: in macrostructure, he placed the emphasis on spiritual advice that could comfort the common life problems of his fellow men, and he offered a panorama of embedded stories on distinguished members of the Society of Jesus, which could stand as spiritual exempla and refuge of consolation for them; in microstructure, he widely employed similes, imagery, and realia drawn from everyday life in Chios. After all, Velasti introduced the subject of his book, mental repose ("the compendium of all virtues"), to his readers as the most appropriate topic to be discussed "in the midst of such hardships that have overwhelmed Chios."<sup>41</sup> Due to the enduring effects of the profound crisis and oppression inflicted by the Ottomans following the Venetian episode, as previously discussed, the Catholic community on the island remained unable to fully regain its former status.

This cultural contextualization of Rodríguez's work, initially identified by Giovanni Lami in a review of Velasti's book published in 1752 within the prestigious Florentine journal *Novelle letterarie*,<sup>42</sup> could be described as "chiotification": the domestication of the source text as if it had originally been written to be read by the Chiots. I quote in translation two passages that indicate Velasti's anchoring in the familiar space of everyday life:

Suffering in the hand of God is like the hammer and the file in the hands of the craftsman. With these he removes the rust, polishes and finishes. With sufferings, therefore, God first of all rustles us. What were gold if it did not enter the fire? How wild does the vine grow if it is not pruned? How long does the garment stay dirty if it is not beaten the dirt out? And the grain of wheat, if it is not buried in the ground to rot, does not produce any seeds. The field is tilled if it is not hurt with the hoe. And the water, if it is not disturbed in narrow channels, does not rise from the gutter to the cistern channel, but it stagnates

40. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, [10–11].

41. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, [9].

42. [Giovanni Lami], "Roma [1746]," review of *Anapavsis tis cardhias* by Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, *Novelle letterarie* 13, no. 4 (January 28, 1752): cols. 55–57, here 55–56. For a commented analysis of the review, see Mara Psalti, "Giovanni Lami και Θωμάς Στανισλάος Βελάστης: Δύο κριτικά κείμενα," *Rivista di letteratura comparata italiana, bizantina e neoellenica* 7 (2023): 73–74, 84–87, <https://doi.org/10.19272/202313501004> (accessed February 2, 2025).

elsewhere and stinks. Woe to the place that has no winter. Woe to the soul that has no suffering. Piety really detaches us from the worldly things, but it does not prune our passions. Suffering is the only pruner of our faults.<sup>43</sup>

God wants you to make music that's sweet to his divine ears. Then if you're a flute, a gentle blow is enough; if you're a bagpipe, you need a bit of squeezing; if you're a guitar, you should be strummed by a fingernail; if a violin, you need to be rubbed with a bow; but if you're a tabl, there's no other way to make music unless you're hit hard with the drumstick.<sup>44</sup>

A most distinct personal contribution of Velasti, which also deserves to be commented upon, lies in his consistent and extensive use of metaphorical imagery related to maritime themes—a hallmark evident across his literary works. It is plausible to assert that the depictions of sea storms, beyond their profound Christian symbolism, likely reflected shared experiences of voyages to and from Chios:

Cause thou canst perceive the sea's grandeur when it mounts aloft. Methinks, it brings snow upon its crest and with its uplift seeks to surpass the mountains. That white, that azure, seem as if artfully painted; and colliding with one another, they mutter in wild murmurs. What a beauty! Yet try to take a taste of it: what bitterness!<sup>45</sup>

Someone who's never encountered turmoil upon the sea knows nothing of its dangers. These hardships are like lightning bolts in the deep night of life. Swiftly sails upon the sea's back a ship; night, darkness, black clouds, the ship being struck by the waves, swept by the winds, amid the growls of the blasts, amid the roars of the sea, behold a flash! You tremble to witness mountains of waves springing up, abysses opening like Tartarus, and the entire sea—a frothing cauldron—boiling from the depths. But that very flash precisely points thee to the reefs.<sup>46</sup>

Ostensibly, Velasti's translation comprises thirty-four chapters, precisely mirroring Rodríguez's "treatise" in terms of structure. However, in tailoring the text for a primarily secular audience, Velasti deliberately omitted or modified sections referring to "monastics" (to use a preferred term of his) and aspects associated with their Rule. Consequently, chapters 13–14 of *Ejercicio*, concerning obedience, and 25–29, discussing Jesuit prayer, find no place in *Anapavsis*. Moreover, to enhance coherence and redirect the focus, Velasti condensed the comparatively lengthy chapters of his source material, thereby minimizing repetition if not eliminating it entirely—accompanied by a distinct paragraph organization. Simultaneously, he updated the original content by introducing examples of devout men and women who lived and/or were sanctified after the publication of the final version of Rodríguez's *Ejercicio*, even including references to

43. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, 228–29.

44. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, 326.

45. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, 62.

46. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, 230–31.

the five Catholic saints canonized by Pope Benedict XIV (r.1740–58) on June 29, 1746, shortly before *Anapavsis* was printed.<sup>47</sup> Most notably, he presented to his fellow citizens a concise yet discontinuous and non-linear account of Jesuit spirituality in practice. This encompassed numerous episodes of the life of distinguished members of the Society, with a clear preference to Jesuit missionaries: St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Filippo Neri, Blessed Inácio de Azevedo, St. Stanisław Kostka, St. Jan Berchmans, Diego Laín-ez, Juan Fernández, Manuel Álvares, Francisco Suárez, Rodolfo Acquaviva, Antonio de Padilla, Jean de Brébeuf, Jean Rigoleu, Diego de Saura, João Francisco Cardoso, among others, stood as models for “the repose of the heart.” We could argue that Velasti endeavored to familiarize his audience with the fundamental principles of the Society of Jesus by employing micro-narratives that highlighted the Jesuits’ capacity to navigate external challenges while preserving their inner composure. Eventually, around half of *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, from chapter 17 onward, either introduced entirely original content (chapters 17, 26–29, 33–34) or marginally followed Rodríguez’s work. In these sections, Velasti made substantial contributions with fresh perspectives, arguments, and illustrative examples on the discussed topics (chapters 19–25, 30–32).

Another feature of Velasti’s translation that deserves attention is his—unlikely for a Jesuit—grounding in “the aesthetic, theology, and moral universe of Orthodox Christianity”<sup>48</sup> through his abundant citations, as Lami originally remarked:

He cites the Scripture according to the Septuagint, not because the Vulgate is not exclusively understood by the Latins of Chios, but to give some additional food for thought to those who prefer that version, which is commonly used among the Greeks. For the same reason, he also includes excerpts from the holy Greek fathers without translating them.<sup>49</sup>

This approach is consistent throughout Velasti’s works. Self-described as “a Catholic admirer of the piety of the Orthodox Church and the pristine beauty and mastery of its language,”<sup>50</sup> Velasti steadily opts to reference passages from the Old and New Testaments rather than from the Vulgate to support his arguments. Such a stance could plausibly be seen as an accommodating, de-latinized effort by Velasti to approach his Greek-speaking readership, either Catholic or Orthodox, by appealing to what he likely regarded as their shared cultural and linguistic heritage, despite differences in confession or origin.<sup>51</sup>

### Anger Relocated and Contextualized

During the spring of 1747, while still a freshman in theology, Velasti released a didac-

47. Velasti, *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, 323.

48. Shore, “Jesuits in the Orthodox World,” 332.

49. [Lami], “Roma [1746],” col. 56.

50. I quote from Matteo Mandalà, “Tommaso Stanislao Velasti e il Filellenismo di fine Settecento,” in *Il Risorgimento Greco e l’Italia: Forme e livelli di ricezione durante il XIX secolo*, ed. Francesco Scalora (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici “Bruno Lavagnini,” 2022), 115–47, here 143.

51. Cf. Cesare Santus, “Conflicting Views: Catholic Missionaries in Ottoman Cities between Accommodation and Latinization,” in *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization*, ed. Nadine Amsler et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 96–109, <http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/228729> (accessed February 2, 2025).

tic poem spanning 2,500 fifteen-syllable rhymed verses in the dialect of Chios under the title *Περὶ θυμοῦ* (On anger), in collaboration once more with de Rossi's printing press.<sup>52</sup> This poem appears retrospectively to function as a complement of *Anapavsis tis cardhias*, focusing on a passion that predominantly disturbs both the mental and sentimental repose of individuals.

In a review for the journal *Novelle letterarie*, Lami was the first to suggest the poem *De ira libri tres* (On anger: Three books [Antwerp, 1694]), authored by the Flemish Jesuit theologian Lieven de Meyer (1655–1730), as a primary model for Velasti's work.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Velasti appears to treat de Meyer's poem as a pattern for his own composition. De Meyer commences his work with a "Præfatio ad lectorem" (Preface to the reader) in prose, succeeded by a prelude and "three books" ("libri tres") composed in elegiac couplets. The initial book delves into the origins of anger ("Causæ iræ"), the second addresses its ruinous outcomes ("Damna iræ"), while the third articulates strategies for their resolution ("Remedium iræ"). Similarly, Velasti's composition begins with a "preface" (rendered in fifteen-syllable couplets akin to the main poem) and structurally mirrors de Meyer's division into three parts ("What Are the Causes of Anger?," "How Many Misfortunes Does Anger Provoke to Us?," "How Can We Dismiss Anger?"). While adhering to the tripartite structure of *De ira*, Velasti similarly followed closely its main narrative line, adopted its core metaphorical figures, and reproduced specific imagery from it.

However, a profound ideological divergence distinguishes the two works. Velasti contextualizes the classical locus of anger, relocating it to the island of Chios, his homeland. This key strategy of his, linguistically depicted in the use of the Chiot dialect, as already mentioned, bears a dual impact on his poem. First, it prompts Velasti to adopt a lively, didactic poetic persona that aims at robust communication. In contrast to de Meyer's austere and rather detached instructional style, Velasti's approach, shaped by his studies in rhetoric and homiletics, and his preaching background, engaged a specifically determined—in *situ et tempore*—readership/audience, treating anger as a matter of their everyday life. His recurrent appeals to the readership/audience, addressing them collectively or in segmented groups (defined by gender, age, and/or societal roles), along with the use of rhetorical devices and figures such as sermocinations, hypophoras, ecphoneses, apostrophes, supplications, and preteritions, imbue his composition with vividness, intimacy, empathy, and gravity. Consequently, acknowledging *Περὶ θυμοῦ* as an exemplar of "preaching as performance" would not be an overstatement.<sup>54</sup> Second, the contextualization of anger in Velasti's work eliminates its political connotations. While de Meyer's poem addresses anger as a matter of political concern,

52. See note 19 above.

53. [Giovanni Lami], "Roma [1747]," review of *Περὶ θυμοῦ* by Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, *Novelle letterarie* 13, no. 6 (February 11, 1752): cols. 84–88, here 84. For an analysis of the significance of this review, along with commentary, see Psalti, "Giovanni Lami και Θωμάς Στανισλάος Βελάστης," 74–75, 88–94. For a comprehensive reading of *De ira*, see Yasmin Haskell, "Early Modern Anger Management: Seneca, Ovid, and Lieven De Meyere's *De ira libri tres* (Antwerp, 1694)," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18, no. 1 (March 2011): 36–65, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41474686> (accessed February 2, 2025).

54. I adopt the term from the same titled book by Iōsēf Vivilakēs, *Το κήρυγμα ως performance: Εκκλησιαστική οητορική και θεατρική τέχνη μετά το Βυζάντιο* (Athens: Armos, 2013).

recognizing it as a catalyst for the Christian wars during the Reformation period,<sup>55</sup> *Περί θυμού* encloses anger's significance solely to a personal and social realm within a restricted community. Notably absent are any allusions to the Ottoman rulers of Chios. Although Velasti acknowledges that "anger accomplishes many deeds of virtue" (v. 2339), he confines virtue to a fervor "for the good of the soul" (v. 2351), refraining from exploring its conceptualization within the realm of politics.

Moreover, de Meyer, explicitly asserting in his "præfatio" that "undoubtedly, the role of a theologian differs from that of a poet,"<sup>56</sup> employed extensive examples sourced from Greco-Roman mythological tradition and classical antiquity. In contrast, Velasti chose to substitute the secular allusions of his model with examples drawn from the Bible, patristic literature, and hagiographies (including references to Chiot saints).<sup>57</sup> Beyond the broadening of religious allusions overall, Velasti introduced exemplary narratives on figures like the most Catholic king Philip II of Spain (r.1556–98), St. Ignatius of Loyola, and St. Stanisław Kostka, as seen in vv. 2019–42, which I provide in translation:

To Spain we go, a sense of shame to find:  
Late at night, King Philip, his writing did bind. 2020  
He finishes but can't clasp a pen with his hand,  
From weariness, he can't open his eyes, nor stand.  
His servant, sleepier than the master's yawn,  
Madly spilled ink, his mind forlorn.  
But seeing the mishap, he quivered and shook, 2025  
Like a reed in the wind, from the sternest of looks.  
The wretched mind in all the punishments it roves,  
Unaware of which it gets, it waits for all it knows.  
The king, so composed, such remarkable calmness,  
"Give me more paper," he said, in pure mildness. 2030  
Royal and cross? Oh, how can it be?  
Speak of patience, your own, tell me what do you see?  
In Rome, a heavy headache upon Ignatius weighed,  
Seeking a headband, his discomfort deep-seated.  
An aged layman, a Jesuit, comes to bind, 2035  
Despite keen glasses, the fabric eludes the mind.  
Finally, threading a blunt, worn-out needle so crude,  
Better for tilling fields, not sewing with such a mood.  
Rusty, jagged, a tool for some other chore,  
Unaware of what's to do, the headband it bore. 2040  
In agony, yet sweetly, "Child, behold," Ignatius pleads,  
"See if you've stitched my ear," concern in him it breeds.<sup>58</sup>

55. See Haskell, "Early Modern Anger Management," 52, 58.

56. Livinus de Meyer, *De ira libri tres* (Antwerp: Ex Typographia Henrici Thieullier, 1694), unpaginated: "Quippe aliud est Theologum, aliud Poëtam agere."

57. See also [Lami], "Roma [1747]," 85.

58. Velasti, *Περί θυμού*, 73–74.

61. Velasti, *Περὶ θυμοῦ*, 24n(a).



You say my right is “clear as the sun,” a quasi-proverbial expression), by employing the concept of refraction:

Before from Dawn’s rosy embrace, the emerald Sun does rise,  
 Its golden head crowns the sky, bright, in radiant guise.  
 Printed upon the misty veil, in the atmospheric dome, 1235  
 Yet believed to sit on the horizon, our eye makes it home.  
 But alas, the eye is misled!<sup>62</sup>

The authorial footnote reads as follows:

Tycho Brahe, followed by modern astronomers, first observed that the Sun (as well as other celestial phenomena), before its proper rising, appears in the atmosphere through refraction thirty-two minutes earlier than its actual being on the Horizon; that refraction decreases during the planet’s ascent, hence, no refraction occurs during its culmination, nor any parallax; and that it increases proportionally during its departure from culmination, as it had diminished during the ascent. Refer to de la Hire’s “Table of Refractions.”<sup>63</sup>

While Velasti’s interest in astronomy is evident in the imagery of both poetic extracts, it is his Latin footnotes that reveal his bibliographical awareness of the field, at least with regard to his capacity as a Jesuit scholastic. Indeed, he respectfully cites the Jesuits Christopher Clavius, Giovanni Battista Riccioli, and Claude François Milliet Dechales, as well as Jesuit-approved Tycho Brahe and Philippe de la Hire, in a likely attempt to both praise his collegiate knowledge on astronomic concepts and to introduce these scientists to his learned readers.

### ***Embriologia sacra*: A Lost (or Censored) Translation**

It is reported that at the end of 1747, Velasti undertook the translation of *Sacred Embryology* by the Palermitan clergyman Emanuele Francesco Cangiamila (1702–63), then director of studies at the archiepiscopal seminary of Palermo.<sup>64</sup> The book, originally printed in Palermo in 1745,<sup>65</sup> wielded significant influence at a jurisprudential level and stood as “a bestseller with wide support from the Church.”<sup>66</sup> It was translated into several European languages (“Latin, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and German”) and widely reprinted in Italy until the late eighteenth century, “remain[ing] relevant well into the nineteenth century.”<sup>67</sup> Directed at “a varied audience of clergy, laymen, jurists, and medical practitioners,” the work was inspired by Cangiamila’s belief that

62. Velasti, *Περί θνυμοῦ*, 46–47.

63. Velasti, *Περί θνυμοῦ*, 46–47n(d).

64. *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*, 21: “Non fu verso andò per fin Monsignor Cangiamila, Inquisitore, a vederlo, che già il conosceva per fama, e teneramente l’amava in fin dall’ 1747, quando egli giovane li tradusse in Greco la sua eruditissima *Embriologia Sacra*.”

65. Francesco Emanuello Cangiamila, *L’embriologia sacra, ovvero Dell’uffizio de’ sacerdoti, medici e superiori, circa l’eterna salute de’ bambini racchiusi nell’utero* [...] (Palermo: Nella Stamperia di Francesco Valenza, 1745).

66. Jennifer Kosmin, “When the Fetus Becomes a Child: Some Reflections from the Long Eighteenth Century,” in *Rethinking Medical Humanities: Perspectives from the Arts and the Social Sciences*, ed. Rinaldo F. Canalis, Massimo Ciavolella, and Valeria Finucci (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 51–70, here 57, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110788501-004> (accessed February 4, 2025).

67. Kosmin, “When the Fetus Becomes a Child,” 57.

“the ensoulment [of the fetus] followed closely if not immediately after conception.”<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the main purpose of the book was “the diffusion of the practice of cesarean section primarily aimed to ensure the eternal salvation of the unborn child,” both in cases of the mother’s death and in instances of difficult or perilous childbirths.<sup>69</sup> After all, due to cesarian section the possibility of performing baptism would be enhanced. Therefore, *Embriologia sacra* innovatively contributed to a broader theological discourse on unbaptized infants and engaged in a political discussion about the “unborn citizen.”<sup>70</sup>

The reasons why Velasti’s translation was not printed in Rome are unknown. Nevertheless, it is quite striking that he allegedly decided to undertake the translation of such an influential-to-be and cutting-edge work just two years after its first publication. One could reasonably assume that stillborn births would have also concerned the local society of Chios at the time, so he might have been seeking to contribute with a medically informed yet religiously approved proposal. After all, Cangiamila is believed to have “argued for a partnership between Catholic theology and modern science.”<sup>71</sup> More than fifteen years later, in 1763/64, during his second Sicilian period, Velasti attempted to print his translation (a revised one?) in Venice.<sup>72</sup> His work must have been censored by the Venetian Riformatori, and therefore the publication was aborted. Although no excerpts of his text have been preserved, according to contemporary testimonies he had translated *Embriologia sacra* into the dialect of Chios.<sup>73</sup> A rendering of Cangiamila’s specialized (and often coined) medical terminology into a form that would make sense to Velasti’s fellow citizens in Chios would have been of exceptional interest.

### A Modern Greek “Christian Day”

In 1751, a manual for prayer and meditation composed in the Chiot dialect and printed in Latin characters was released anonymously (or, to be more precise, in cryptic onymity<sup>74</sup>) by the press house of Angelo Rotili and Filippo Bacchelli in Rome. Its title was *I imera apò ton christianòn aghiasmeni dhià tis prosevchìs ke meletis* (The day sanctified by the Christian through prayer and meditation), and the authorship was attributed on

68. Kosmin, “When the Fetus Becomes a Child,” 57.

69. Mario Condorelli, “Cangiamila, Francesco Emanuele,” in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 18 (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1975), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-emanuele-cangiamila\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-emanuele-cangiamila_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed February 2, 2025).

70. Kosmin, “When the Fetus Becomes a Child,” 56–60; Carmen Trimarchi, “Pietà e cultura religiosa nella Sicilia del Settecento: *L’embriologia sacra* di Francesco Emanuele Cangiamila,” *Acta hystriæ* 17, nos. 1–2 (2009): 287–306, <https://zdpj.si/en/acta-hystriæ-17-2009-1-2/attachment/trimarchi/> (accessed February 2, 2025).

71. Kosmin, “When the Fetus Becomes a Child,” 57.

72. See Domenico Schiavo, “Ragionamento recitato nella Sala Senatoria di Palermo per la erezione della Pubblica Libreria,” *Opuscoli di autori Siciliani* 8 (1764): 109–22, here 122na, and Isidoro Carini, “Indice delle opere stampate, e MS. di Gio. Battista Caruso, comunicatoci la notizia dal Sig. Ab. Domenico Schiavo da Palermo,” *Archivio storico siciliano* 23 (1898): 219–31, here 229.

73. See Guarini, *Dell’espulsione*, 378: “Procurò d’ingannare Mons. Cangiamila uomo dotto, ed amantissimo della Compagnia, Inquisitor Fiscale, cercando da lui esser protetto con certa traduzione fatta da se in lingua volgare di Scio dell’opera, che quel degnissimo soggetto avea stesa sopra *l’Embriologia*.”

74. On the term “onymity,” see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 39–42.

the cover to “a father of the Society of Jesus.”<sup>75</sup> The author felt able to partly disclose his identity in his typically Jesuit “preface on prayer,” signing it with the initials of his name and title as follows:

I hope that this little book will be of use, not only to the uneducated and the women, who in their prayers do not know what to say and are often mistaken, but also to those who wish to gather themselves together [in prayer]. Accept, then, pious reader, this little effort of mine, and pray on my behalf.

T. S. V. S.J.<sup>76</sup>

T. S. V., S.J., that is, Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, Societatis Jesu.

The book, however, is ascribed to the Jesuit Giovanni Antonio d’Andria, also a man of Chios. That is because d’Andria put his full name on the cover of the next two editions of *Imera*, released by different printing houses in Rome in 1758 and 1783, respectively, thus declaring his identity as the editor/author of the book.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, back in 1751, his role was limited to composing the dedicatory epistle to the Chiot Jesuit coadjutor brother Teodoro Vegetti, signing it with the initials of his name and title.<sup>78</sup> The dedication—stylistically different from the rest of the book, and not reproduced in its second and third edition (the elderly Vegetti might have died in the meantime)—hinted that d’Andria likely funded the first edition’s printing.<sup>79</sup> When he eventually assumed full responsibility of the book from the second, revised edition of 1758, describing his role as that of a “compiler,”<sup>80</sup> Velasti, then professor of metaphysics at the Jesuit college in Trapani, Sicily, would have been too far away (or too unwilling) to claim authorship. After all, the quasi-communal quality of the text could blur the “authorial” boundaries.

*Imera aghiasmeni* was actually a translation of an extremely popular French prayer handbook, which became known mainly under the title *La journée du chrétien sanctifiée par la prière et la méditation* (The Christian’s day sanctified by prayer and meditation). It is considered a prime example of the “Christian days,” a sub-genre of devotional literature. The original text, composed by the Jesuit Jean-Claude de Ville (1675–1720), was published under the title *Les saints exercices de la journée chrétienne* (The holy exercises of the Christian day) in Nancy, France, most probably in the early 1710s—the date of the first edition is not bibliographically known. Subsequently, it was widely reprinted for the most part anonymously, often with an indication of the author’s capacity as a Jesuit (e.g., “par un Père de la Compagnie de Jésus”).<sup>81</sup> Therefore, there might have

75. See note 11 above.

76. [Velasti], *Imera aghiasmeni*, 8.

77. Thōmas I. Papadopoulos, *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία* (ci. 1466–1800) (Athens: Akadēmia Athēnōn, 1986), 2:232–34.

78. [Velasti], *Imera aghiasmeni*, 3–5.

79. [Velasti], *Imera aghiasmeni*, 5: “Let others offer famous and sophisticated books to the savants. I [will offer] this little devotional book to Don Theodore. [...] The gift is small. But everyone—I am sure—will admire my poor generosity.”

80. The subtitle of both subsequent editions of the Greek “Christian Day” reads as follows: “A much wholesome book for every Christian, compiled by F. Giovanni Antonio d’Andria.” See Papadopoulos, *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία*, 2:242, 304.

81. My description is informed by Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque*, 8:774–76 (s.v. “Ville, Jean Claude de”), and Emile Bertaud and André Rayez, “Journée Chrétienne,” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), 8:cols. 1462, 1464.

been a correspondence between the descriptive anonymity displayed on the cover of Velasti's modern Greek "Christian day" of 1751 and the title-page of his source. De Ville's *La journée du chrétien* was a European editorial success during the eighteenth century due to its translations into German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, and Dutch, which were published along with its French editions and reprints.<sup>82</sup> Eventually, its editorial history intersected, and henceforth coincided, with *Pensées chrétiennes pour tous les jours du mois* (Christian reflections for every day of the month [Paris, 1669]) by the French Jesuit, orator, and literary critic Dominique Bouhours (1628–1702), whose equally popular manual for meditation was appended into numerous editions of *La journée du chrétien*.<sup>83</sup> It should be noted that the acknowledgment of this second authorial identity was not unproblematic: Bouhours was frequently identified as the writer of *La journée* as well.<sup>84</sup>

Such an expanded edition of de Ville's original text should have served as the model for Velasti's translation. The first Italian renderings of *La journée* seem to have post-dated his "Christian day."<sup>85</sup> Thus, considering his proficiency in French,<sup>86</sup> the pursuit for his source would likely focus on the French editions of the first half of the eighteenth century. Notably, Velasti's translation constitutes the first rendering of the work into vernacular Greek, informing both structurally and linguistically the modern Greek editions of "Christian Days" thenceforth.<sup>87</sup> *Imera aghiasmeni* consisted of three sections. In the first one, a handbook for prayer, Velasti translated a small part of *La journée du chrétien*, including prayers for day and night, as well as prayers to be said and acts to be performed during Mass, penance, and Holy Communion. The doctrinal meaning of these rites and sacraments was also explained in long introductory notes.<sup>88</sup>

82. See Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque*, 8:775–76; Bertaud and Rayez, "Journée Chrétienne," 1464.

83. See Bertaud and Rayez, "Journée Chrétienne," 1464. Cf. the entry "Bouhours, Dominique," in *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus: Nouvelle édition*, ed. Carlos Sommervogel (Brussels: Oscar Schepens, 1890), 1:cols. 1888–99, 1919, and Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque*, 8:1886–87.

84. Bertaud and Rayez, "Journée Chrétienne," 1464.

85. The oldest Italian editions I have traced are the following: *La giornata del cristiano santificata con la preghiera, e con la meditazione, ed alcuni pensieri cristiani per tutti i giorni del mese: Tradotta dal francese [...]* (Venice: Giuseppe Bortoli, 1767), and *La giornata del cristiano santificata con l'orazione e con la meditazione: Tradotta ora la prima volta in Italiano dopo la trigesima terza edizione in Francese* (Padua: Stamperia del Seminario, 1768).

86. Velasti addressed "a long letter in French to F. [Mathurin Germain Le] Forestier [S.J.], provincial of Paris," in 1767 (MS 32.VI.G., fol. 67r), while a copy of a French letter of his sent to P. Antoine Desprez, S.J. in Chios is preserved in *De P. Thomae Velasti casibus*, 241–45. Ignazio Parrino detected French sonnets by Velasti in Archivio dell'Eparchia di Piana degli Albanesi, Palermo, in the mid-1960s. See Mandalà, "Tommaso Stanislao Velasti e il Filellenismo di fine Settecento," 142–43.

87. On later editions, see Papadopoulos, *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία*, 2:233–34, 242, 304–5, and Markos Fōskolos, *Τα "Φραγκοχιώτικα" βιβλία: Ένα κεφάλαιο από την ιστορία της καθολικής ενσέβειας στον ελληνικό χώρο* (Thessaloniki: Apostoliko Vikariato Thessalonikēs, 2012), 98–99, 101–2, 112, 113, 140.

88. [Velasti], *Imera aghiasmeni*, 9–62.

In the second section of the book, Velasti included the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary according to the Roman rite.<sup>89</sup> Bouhours's thirty-one meditations—one for each day of the month—constituted the third section of the book. These short texts, consisting of three numbered paragraphs each, were actually reflections on the most important concepts of Christianity (e.g., “On Faith,” “On Purpose of Man,” “On Last Judgment”). Each meditation was accompanied by an appropriate application and recommended “spiritual exercises” and sentences according to biblical, patristic, and/or theological extracts.<sup>90</sup>

Velasti appears to have adopted different translation techniques in the first and third sections of the book. Specifically, the “prayer book” is mainly rendered faithfully, in a rather verbatim translation, while Velasti's explanatory additions are relatively few and concise. Conversely, in the third section, he employs what he himself termed, regarding his translation of excerpts from the Lamentations of Jeremiah included in his *Psichofelis loji* (Wholesome sermons [1753]), “an interpretation by meaning.”<sup>91</sup> This is a translation technique that, while closely adhering to the source text, allows room for the elaboration of passages that, according to the translator, require emphasis or lend themselves to a more amplified presentation. In the case of Bouhours's meditations, Velasti enhanced the literary quality of his source text through the introduction of visual and auditory imagery, the addition of descriptive adjectives and expressive details, and the use of rhetorical devices and figures. For the sake of illustration, I provide, in a faithful English translation, the main part of Velasti's meditation “On Death” compared to its French original:<sup>92</sup>

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89. [Velasti], *Imera aghiasmeni*, 63–130.

90. [Velasti], *Imera aghiasmeni*, 131–204.

91. Velasti, *Psichofelis loji*, 291.

92. [Velasti], *Imera aghiasmeni*, 137–40. Given that Bouhours's text remained remarkably stable in its various editions and reprints (both autonomous and appended to de Ville's *Journée*), I quote from a copy that is typographically very similar to Velasti's “Christian Day”: *La journée du chrétien sanctifiée par la prière et la méditation* [...] (Paris: Hippolyte-Louis Guérin, 1743), 151–52.

Tommaso Stanislaw Velasti  
IV. On Death

I. You are still going to die, too. All who have been born since the beginning of the World have died. If you love the Worldly things, your death is bitter. How much regret will you experience then, realizing how many opportunities you've missed to repent and change your life? Oh, what a dreadful death for a Christian to find oneself in enmity with God! Alas, a terrible moment of death, in which the day of every indulgence and rest concludes, and the dreadful night of eternal torment begins!

II. What would you wish to have accomplished at the hour of death? Do it now. You have no time to lose. At any place and time, you may encounter death. Who has assured you that you are not going to die today? Every day you live, consider it a day subtracted from your life. God has predetermined the times, the days, and the hours you have to live. With each passing hour, my life diminishes by one. As your time increases, so does your proximity to death. Every step you take is a step toward the grave.

III. What would the Worldly things seem to you at the hour of death? It will be the last time you see the mountains, the forests, the beauty of bodies. Then, for your sake, the World will be forever lost, or rather, you will be lost to the World. The sun will continue to rise and set, the winds to blow, the trees to bloom and wither, your relatives, your friends, your fellow citizens to have their business, their concerns, their feasts; you will no longer be there. Few will remember you, and every passing day the thought of you will fade from minds, and the love toward you will diminish from hearts. If you love the Worldly things, you will be saddened when leaving them. If you leave them willingly, you will rejoice. Like a traveler reaching land after a long journey at sea, who delights in leaving behind the sea, its dangers, and the suffering endured so far. There is still time; choose. Know in advance what is good to love, what is evil to avoid, before knowing it fruitlessly in the light of the candle that will be lit on your bedside when you are breathing your last.

Dominique Bouhours  
IV. Jour. De la Mort

I. Un Chrétien a bien sujet de craindre la mort, quand il ne vit pas en Chrétien! Quel compte à rendre, après une vie mondaine & sensuelle! Quel regret d'avoir perdu toutes les occasions de son salut! Mourir ennemi de Dieu, ô la triste mort! ô le funeste moment qui finit les plaisirs du tems, & qui commence les peines de l'éternité!

II. Que voudrions-nous avoir fait à l'heure de la mort? Faisons maintenant ce que nous voudrions avoir fait alors. Il n'y a point de tems à perdre. Chaque moment peut être le dernier de notre vie. Plus nous avons vécu, plus nous sommes près de tombeau: notre mort est d'autant plus proche, qu'elle a été différée.

III. Quel jugement ferai-je des biens de la terre, quand il me les faudra quitter? Prenons à présent conseil de la Mort; elle est fidelle, elle ne nous trompera pas. Que deviendra cette beauté, cet argent, ce plaisir, cet honneur? Qu'en juge-t-on à la mort? Pendant la vie les apparences nous trompent: à la mort, on voit les choses comme elles sont. L'homme vivant estime le monde; l'homme mourant le méprise. Lequel devons-nous croire, l'homme vivant, ou l'homme mourant? Ah! que le monde nous paroitra peu de chose, à la lueur du flambeau qui nous éclairera au lit de la mort! Mais, hélas! il ne sera plus temps de se détromper.



## Conclusion

Having begun to translate books of devotional literature into his mother tongue in his early teenage years in Chios, Velasti undertook significant translation activity as a scholastic in Rome, in keeping with a well-established tradition shared by the members of the Society of Jesus. Despite the exclusively intra-European orientation of his translations (from Italian, neo-Latin, and French into the vernacular Greek regional variety of the island of Chios), I described him as a missionary translator. The purpose of his translations and adaptations could be regarded as threefold: (1) the propagation of Roman Catholicism and the spiritual principles of the Jesuit order, albeit not in a rigorous or antagonistic manner toward the Greek Orthodox Church, which Velasti, as previously outlined, highly respected; (2) the rise of the morale of his fellow citizens of Roman rite in a period where both the Ottoman authorities and the Greek Orthodox population oppressed and intimidated them; (3) the popularization of the knowledge Velasti had mainly acquired during his novitiate, juniorate, and philosophical studies at the Collegio Massimo in Palermo and soon after practiced in part during his regency in Chios. Velasti's translation activity covered both best-sellers of Jesuit and Catholic literature (such were the works by Rodríguez, Cangiamila, de Ville, and Bouhours), as well as de Meyer's rather neglected poem. He employed a variety of translation techniques: faithful, more or less verbatim, translation and "interpretation by meaning" (*I imera apò ton christianòn aghiasmeni*), culturally adaptive translation (*Anapavsis tis cardhias*), and free adaptation (*Περί θυμού*). (For a comprehensive overview of Velasti's early translational activity, refer to Table 1.) Regardless of the degree of convergence or divergence between the source text and Velasti's translations, all his productions were marked by his distinctive literary style, unfolding his talent both as a poet and a prose writer. Had he not decided to offer printed translations and adaptations of their books as a means of his missionary pedagogy for the common good of his fellow citizens in Chios, de Meyer and Rodríguez (allegedly Cangiamila as well) would not have been received in vernacular Greek, and the modern Greek reception of de Ville and Bouhours would have been significantly different. Velasti should be acknowledged as the most prolific cultural broker of Jesuit or Jesuit-approved literature in the Levant during the eighteenth century.

Table 1. Velasti's Early Translational Activity: An Overview

Reception	Original Works	Velasti's Translations	Source Language	Target Language	Graphematical System	Translation Techniques
1. Best-sellers	Alonso Rodríguez, "Tratado Octavo: De la conformidad con la voluntad de Dios," <i>Ejercicio de perfección y virtudes cristianas</i>	<i>Anapavis tis cardhias is to ajion thelima tu Theú</i> (The repose of the heart in the holy will of God)	Most probably Italian	Greek-Chiot dialect	Latin script of Italian phonetics	Culturally adaptive translation
	Francesco Emanuello Cangiamila, <i>L'embriologia sacra, ovvero Dell'uffizio de' sacerdoti, medici e superiori, circa l'eterna salute de' bambini racchiusi nell'utero</i>	Title not known	Italian		Not known	Not known
	Jean-Claude de Ville, <i>La journée du chrétien sanctifiée par la prière et la méditation</i> and Dominique Bouhours, <i>Pensées chrétiennes pour tous les jours du mois</i>	<i>I imera apò ton christianòn aghiasmeni dhià tis prosevchis ke meletis</i> (The day sanctified by the Christian through prayer and meditation)	French		Latin script of Italian phonetics	Literal translation and "Interpretation by meaning"
2. Poorly Received Books	Lieven de Meyer, <i>De ira libri tres</i>	<i>Περί θυμού</i> (On anger)	Neo-Latin		Greek script	Free adaptation