

ACADEMY OF BESSARION (**Accademia Bessarionea**) — an intellectual center founded by Bessarion which was a focus for Roman humanists.

It was not an academy in the strict sense, but rather a salon of creative work in Bessarion's house where those who shared an enthusiasm for science and art gathered. Those who attended differed in their personalities, mentalities and convictions. They included Latins and Greeks, lay people and clergy who exchanged their thoughts and opinions (PG 161, XCVII-XCVIII).

The Academy began with Bessarion's first visit to Rome (1443–1450), and it blossomed during the pontificate of Pope Nicholas V. During the last years of Bessarion's life (d. 1472) it was a place of animated activity and it took on more of an institutional character. Those who most frequently gathered around Bessarion were Theodore Gaza, George Trebizond (Georgius Trapezuntius), Poggio Bracciolini and Lorenzo Valla. His circle also included both Greek and Latin humanists: Demetrios Chalcondylas, John Lascaris, Michael Apostolios, Flavio Biondo, Andronicus Callistus, Giacomo Ammanati, Bartholemew Platina, Domizio Calderini, John Gatti, Valerius de Viterbu, Nicholas Secundinus, Nicholas Perotti, Gasparro Zacchi, Jacob Parleone (the last three were Bessarion's secretaries), Jacob Sceva (A Greek from Cyprus and rector of the University of Padua beginning in 1434), and Campanus (he established the first printing press in Italy). Not all of the above-mentioned persons took part in discussions and meetings at the Academy of Bessarion, but most of them stayed in close contact, either in person or by correspondence, and they followed closely the scientific investigations carried out in the Academy of Bessarion. We know that in the so-called second period of the Roman Academy of Bessarion, the participants would even meet on a daily basis and their meetings would follow an established program. Bessarion himself would lead the meetings, or someone from his circle, e.g., Theodore Gaza — the *princeps Bessarioniae Accademiae*. Among those who deepened their knowledge at the Academy was the Greek astronomer John Müller. Müller continued the work of his master George Peurbacj, the *Epitomae in Claudii Ptolemaei magnam compositionem*. Gulielmo Graim (plenipotentiary of the King of England) and Francesco di Savona de La Rovère (later Pope Sixtus IV) also learned at the Academy.

The names mentioned of persons associated with the Academy of Bessarion indicates the great variety of interests and views in that circle. They shared the idea of rescuing ancient literature and passing it on to future generations. They represented different philosophical positions and different world-views. There were Platonists, Aristotelians, Epicureans, Scotists and Thomists. The scholastic style of philosophy encountered the new humanistic style. Along with humanistic questions, they considered problems in Biblical studies (especially the translation and interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures). They considered problems of theology, astronomy and mathematics. Two different ways of translating literary and philosophical texts competed with each other. Under these conditions a tendency to reconcile different positions and to seek unity in a diversity of views became standard. Bessarion and many in his circle supported this tendency.

The confrontation of Latin and Byzantine thought bore fruit in broader and deeper knowledge, an acquaintance with literature, authentic translations, a new historical-philological method for the critical development of codices, the gathering, copying, development and identification of codices and the translation of these codices. The circle also developed a new *modus corrigendi* of old manuscripts. They would try to gather a few

of the oldest possible copies of a work and then correct copies on the basis of the oldest possible manuscripts. The first copy would be arranged so that there was much space between verses for any eventual corrections and supplements. A copy would wander through the hands of the cardinal and his correctors who would write in corrections. A so-called *codex correctus* would arise and this would be copied onto parchment, which was called the *codex pulcherrimus*. This in turn would be verified by a corrector. This method of critical work on codices was modeled after the method employed in Byzantium. Maximus Planudes had used this method in his edition of Plutarch's writings. The texts of Bessarion's collection of books were developed in this way and sent to Venice where they marked the beginning of one of the first public libraries in Europe. Greek and Latin students, as well as professors of the University of Padua, made use of this library. The collections of the library were the basis for the famous editions of Aldo Manuzio (Aldus Manutius and the Aldine Press). Manuzio in a certain sense carried on the traditions of the Academy of Bessarion, and this accelerated the development of humanism in Latin Europe.

L. Labowsky, DBI IX 686–696; M. Ciszewski, *Formacja intelektualna kardynała Bessariona i jej ekumeniczne-ireniczne elementy* [The intellectual formation of Cardinal Bessarion and its ecumenical-irenic elements], *Seminare* 2 (1977), 273–299 (bibliogr.); idem, *Kardynała Bessariona interpretacja filozofii Platona i Arystotelesa* [Cardinal Bessarions interpretation of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle], Lb 1990.

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