

Two Modern Notes Attached to Earl Rivers's English Translation of *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* ^{*1)}

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1. Preliminary remarks

Despite the existence of numerous studies on Earl Rivers's English translation of *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* (hereafter *Dictes*), there is still much to be explored. In this short paper, which is essentially a progress report of our project, we will describe the aim of our research and transcribe two modern notes attached to the following versions of the *Dictes*: one of the John Rylands copies and MS Additional 22718, British Library. The *Dictes* was first published in 1477 by William Caxton, and printed two additional times by him in the fifteenth century²⁾. Besides these editions, there are some manuscripts, of which MS Additional 22718, British Library and MS 265, Lambeth Palace Library, are complete and of particular importance (see Louis 1993)³⁾. All these are mentioned in the following discussion. The structure of the present paper is as follows: Section 2 will make a concise survey of previous research into the *Dictes*, followed by the aim of our research project; Sections 3 and 4 will provide our transcription of the relevant notes; and Section 5 will conclude the discussion.

2. Previous studies and the aim of our research

The textual tradition of the *Dictes* is far from being simple. First of all, the first edition (designated as I in previous studies) comes in three different forms (Ia, Ib, and Ic in Bühler 1940), although both STC and Duff & Hellinga (2009) allocate it only two numbers (STC 6826, 6827; Duff-Hellinga 123, 123a). Ib is the major version, to which Ia (one of the John Rylands copies) adds an extra colophon. Ic (the copy in Trinity College, Cambridge and one of the copies in the Pierpont Morgan Library) shows a variant setting on one of the sheets, according to Bühler (1940: 284-286). Thanks to

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2) Early printings of the *Dictes* include the 1528 edition published by Wynkyn de Worde, although it is less frequently discussed in previous studies. This is outside the purview of discussion, at least as far as this paper is concerned.

3) These manuscripts are copies based upon printed texts. See Bühler (1960), Backhouse (1999: 270), and Boffey (2014: 13-26), who discuss, especially in the context of the *Dictes*, how it was common for manuscripts to be copied from printed texts for some time after the introduction of printing. Another famous manuscript, MS F. 36 Ry 20, Newberry Library, which is unfortunately incomplete, is also considered to have been copied from one of Caxton's printed editions (cf. Bühler 1956).

numerous existing studies devoted to the issue of the *Dictes*'s textual tradition, it has been established to date that MS Additional 22718 was copied from the second printed edition (designated as II in previous studies), whereas MS 265, Lambeth Palace Library was copied from the first edition (see Boffey 2014: 20-21 among many others).

The second complication of the *Dictes* is concerned with various dates being assigned to different versions. An additional colophon appears in one of the John Rylands copies (Ia), which includes the date 18 November 1477, whereas the other extant copies of the first edition are without it. The second edition inherits it and repeats the date 18 November 1477, although it was certainly published in 1480 (see below, and Hellinga 1982: 77). MS Additional 22718, which is based upon the second edition, has inherited the colophon, but surprisingly, it gives the altered date 28 November 1477. Moreover, MS 265, Lambeth Palace Library, which is based upon the first edition, bears a colophon which is essentially the same but gives the altered date of 24 December 1477. Bühler spent an extensive amount of time trying to disentangle the odd dates—some are clearly erroneous—unfortunately without much success. Contrary to Bühler's (1934, 1940) earlier contention that the so-called second edition was in fact the first edition⁴, it is now certain that the first, the second, and the third editions were printed in this order. As Hellinga (1982: 77-79) clarifies, the added colophon with the date 18 November 1477 in one of the John Rylands copies (Ia) was printed later than the printing of the book itself, and this implies that the first edition was perhaps out at an earlier date in 1477 than 18 November. Supposing that this assumption is correct, there would have been sufficient time between the printing of the first edition and December 1477, when MS 265, Lambeth Palace Library, was produced, and this would sort out the question of whether one could finalize the work of copying an entire book like the *Dictes* within the short period between 18 November 1477 and Christmas of the same year⁵.

An additional complication is the fact that the third edition (designated as III in previous studies) is based upon I rather than II. This in fact led Bühler to the inference that II was probably printed earlier than I. However, as Hellinga (1982: 77) remarks, confirming previous studies, the second edition (II) uses “the second state of Type 2, used not earlier than late 1478 or 1479”. She also refers to the paper evidence and concludes that II was printed in 1480. Caxton may have used I rather than II for the production of III because he was more content with the former, which includes his own alterations of Earl Rivers's text, although this is no more than mere conjecture. Hellinga takes the view that the second edition (II) of the *Dictes* includes the corrections of Earl Rivers, who was dissatisfied with Caxton's alterations in the first edition (I). The evidence she adduces is that Caxton's own envoy attached to Earl Rivers's translation of *Moral Proverbs*, published in the following year of the *Dictes*, includes a line stating how closely he followed the original text delivered to him. Apparently, Earl Rivers's complaints about Caxton's alterations in the *Dictes* caused Caxton to change his principle and to stick to Rivers's original. Hence the declaration of his new policy appears in *Moral Proverbs*. See Hellinga (2010: 67-68) for further details.

As the above survey demonstrates, the *Dictes* has been explored extensively to date. Most previous studies are, however, bibliographical, whereas our research takes a slightly different direction. First of all, our research is mainly concerned with linguistic features of various versions of the *Dictes*,

4) Bühler corrects this conjecture of his in his later publications (see Bühler 1948, 1953).

5) As Hellinga (1982: 78-79) mentions, the year 1477 is valid, since it is mentioned in the long epilogue located prior to the additional colophon. See also Blake (1991: 114, 288).

even including French ones in the context of discussing language contact. Secondly, emphasis in previous research tends to have been placed upon materials in London, especially upon MS 265, Lambeth Palace Library, in relation to the first printed edition, whereas we intend to pay equal attention to other versions of the *Dictes*, including those located outside London and those that are fragmentary. Finally, considering the existence of numerous previous studies from the eighteenth century onwards, it is also worthwhile, at least in our view, to trace the history of bibliographical studies on the *Dictes* themselves. In line with this aim, we have decided to confirm factual details one by one. The present paper, which is essentially a progress report of our project, transcribes, as a first step towards the aim, two modern notes attached to original texts: one of the John Rylands copies and MS Additional 22718, British Library.

3. Modern note in one of the John Rylands copies of the *Dictes*

The first is the modern note attached to one of the John Rylands copies. John Rylands Library in Manchester possesses three copies of the *Dictes*: a copy of the first edition without the additional colophon (STC 6826, Duff-Hellinga 123), the copy of the first edition with the additional colophon (STC 6827, Duff-Hellinga 123a), and a copy of the third edition (STC 6829, Duff-Hellinga 125). The first of these (STC 6826) holds the modern note at issue, the existence of which has previously been known, though not often mentioned in existing studies. Blades (1863: lix) quotes one sentence “N. B. —Caxton printed 44 books, 25 of which were with Dates, and 19 without” from this note. Legman (1948: 167) also quotes the same sentence, probably from Blades (1863)⁶. The following is the transcript of the entire text:

N. B. Caxton printed 44 Books—25 of which were with Dates, and 19 without—Ames—
This is the 1st Book of Caxton’s printing in England—and the 1st ever printed here in English—as most good judges believe—
The Game of Chess in 1474—and the Book of Jason without date, supposed to be prior to this, have in neither of them, any mention made of the place (as this has at Westmestre) where they were printed—which he wou’d hardly have omitted, in his 1st Book printed in England—A bad copy of this rare Book, was sold by auction at Mr Wests Sale in 1773—for £21-0-0 and purchased for his Majesty—

The Mr West mentioned in this note is James West, who was the President of the Royal Society and who was well-known for his collection of manuscripts and early printed books. The sale of his library is known to have started on the 29th March 1773 and continued for the twenty-three following days (Dibdin 1811: 376). On this occasion, “nearly the whole of the Caxtonian volumes” (Urban 1834: 18) was purchased for George III and it later formed part of the British Library King’s Library collection⁷. Blades (1863: 78) identifies the copy of the *Dictes* acquired at this sale as the second printed edition located in the King’s Library (C.10.b.2) and describes it as “a poor impression with

6) Legman considers that it is attached to the first edition with the additional colophon, whereas it is in fact attached to the first edition without.

7) See “King’s Library in the British Museum” (Urban 1834: 16-22).

scribblings”⁸⁾.

As for the authorship of this note, Blades (1863: lix) comments that it was probably written by Bagford, meaning John Bagford. However, “the Antiquary”, according to Blades himself (1863: 264), died in 1716. This fact makes the attribution of this note to Bagford highly improbable, as it refers to Ames (whose *Typographical Antiquities* was first published in 1749) and the sales of James West’s Library in 1773.

4. Blades’s note attached to MS Additional 22718, British Library

The second is one of the modern notes attached to MS Additional 22718, British Library. This is an extensive note by William Blades, dated 1859, and includes nine leaves sequentially numbered from four to thirteen:⁹⁾

[4^r] *The Dictes or Sayinges of the Philosophers.*

[4^v] [blank]

[5^r] Remarks on a manuscript copy of the “Dictes and sayings of the Philosophers in the possession of Sir Walter C. Trevelyan, Bart.

The writing of this MS. is evidently of the xvth century and not unlike the printed characters of Caxton. On examining the book it will be seen that the first folio has been cut away, leaving only 7 leaves for the first gathering, the remnant of the first folio being still visible in the back. The book as it is now appears begins with the sayings of Sedechias, the prologue of the translator being wanting. This Prologue [5^v] may have been written on the two pages of the missing folio. There is however this objection to that view—that if the Preface were written in the same manner as the first portion of the MS. it would take up more than two pages, as the printed Preface of Caxton’s edition occupies 2 pages 17 lines & by comparison we find that 2 pages 15 lines of MS. are equal to 2 pages 17 lines of Caxton. It is not however improbable (though this must always be a matter of conjecture only) that the scribe may have cast off his space so as, by smaller & [6^r] closer writing, to get the Preface into the 2 pages.

On arriving at the 10th folio, we find the pen taken up by another scribe—Saxon characters are often used—the “y” for th, which is not found previously is now often seen—and the final t’s and f’s are ornamented with a fine line, thus  — —The first scribe used signatures very close to the foot of the four first rectos in the section (as we often see in early printed books) and the second scribe began by imitating the example as is seen on Sig bj and bij, but it not being agreeable to his [6^v] usual practise, omitted them thereafter. Both writers used catchwords to shew the sequence of the sections & here also there is a marked

8) The current shelfmark for C.10.b.2. in the British Library is IB.55032. See also de Ricci (1909: 49).

9) This is the year when the manuscript was presented to the British Museum by Walter C. Trevelyan. Blades (1863: 38) finds it “interesting” that this volume had remained in the Trevelyan family since the year 1479, mentioning the content of the note by Trevelyan dated 1859 (Trevelyan & Trevelyan 1872: 1). For a transcript of Trevelyan’s note, see Trevelyan & Trevelyan (1872).

dissimilarity of manner. The first scribe was careful to rule his lines at even distances, giving 30 to each page—the second scribe is very careless, varying his number of lines from 30 to 34. The second scribe is also much less careful in copying; sometimes he repeats words, sometimes omits or mistakes them. In the sayings of Assaron he has omitted 2 1/2 lines probably misled by the recurrence of a word.

At the end of Earl Rivers's [7^v] translation is added Caxton's own Epilogue, the whole work ending with a Colophon, under which is the name of the writer "Thomas Cokke" in a latin verse.

This Colophon is here placed side by side with Caxton's printed Colophon for the sake of comparison—

MS.

Thus endith this book of the dytees & notable wise seyengges of the philisophers late translated and drawn owt of ffrenshe into our englysshe tong by my forsaid lord Skales. and bi [7^v] his cōmādment set in forme in this maner as ye may here in this book see which was ffynyssid the xxviiij day of ye moneth of Novembir And ye seventh yere of ye Reygne of kyng Edward the ffourye

Caxton

Thus endeth this book of the Dicts & notable wise sayings of the Phylosophers late translated and drawn out of frenshe into our englisse tonge by my foreseide lord Therle Ryuers and lord Skales. [7^v] and by his comandment sette in forme and em-ptynted in thys manere as ye maye here in thys booke see whiche was fynissed the xviii + day of the moneth of Novembre + and the *seuenteth*¹⁰⁾ seuenteth yere of the regne of kyng Edward the. fourth.

Only remarking that in Caxton's Colophon the compositor has omitted to use the contracted e (ē) in the word in the word "seuentēth" which would have made it read correctly "seventeenth" we pass to the consideration of the MS. Colophon.

[leaf/(leaves) missing]

[8^r] edition printed by Caxton. As Caxton's editions have never been properly distinguished, the following account may be acceptable.

1st Edit. Printed in 1477, and has no Colophon but has the above date in the Epilogue. The lines are very unevenly spaced—a sure sign of early work

2nd Edit—A reprint line for line of the above; only the lines are much more evenly spaced & there is the addition of the Colophon, as already given. Date probably 1480-83.

[8^v] 3rd Edit. A close reprint as regards orthography but in a different type which was not used by Caxton before 1488.

Caxton's large Device is on the first leaf. Date probably about 1490. The copy of this edition in the Public Library Cambridge often quoted as perfect wants the two first leaves.

10) The deleted word here reads *seueteth* with the *n* added later.

The only other manuscript copy of the Earl's translation which has come under my notice is that at Lambeth Palace. This, like the present, was [9^v] another instance of carelessness in the scribe.

When these errors are corrected the Colophon of the MS. and the Colophon to Caxton's printed edition agree; and it may be worth noticing how—if the scribe copied his MS. from Caxton—the existing discrepancies may be accounted for.

The omission of the Earl's title was probably owing to the word "lord" occurring twice in the same line—thus misleading the eye of the writer who skipped from one to the other.

[9^v] The error in the year too was easily made if Caxton's date of "seventeth year of Ed IV" was before the scribe as it looks as much like seventh as seventeenth. On the whole I incline to believe from the very nature of the discrepancies—from the use of signatures at the beginning—from the close similarity in the spelling—from the arrangement of certain parts of the MS—and from the addition of Caxton's Epilogue, that this MS. is a careless copy from the 2nd [10^r] edition printed by Caxton. As Caxton's editions have never been properly distinguished the following account may be acceptable.

1st edit. Printed in 1477—has no Colophon but has the above date in the Epilogue the lines are very unevenly spaced—a sure sign of early work.

2nd edit—a reprint line for line of the above; only the lines are much more evenly spaced & there is the addition of the colophon as already given. Date probably 1480-83.

[10^v] 3rd edit—a close reprint as regards orthography but in a very different type and which was not used by Caxton before 1488. This has Caxton's large Device at on the first leaf. Date probably about 1490. The copy of this edition in the Public Library Cambridge is an imperfect one wanting the two first leaves.

The only other manuscript copy of the Earl's translation which has come under my notice is that of Lambeth Palace. This, like also, was [11^r] written after the appearance of Caxton's and like all the printed editions, has the Earl's Prologue prefixed.

From it we learn that in March 1473 the Earl started on a pilgrimage to St. James in Spain. During the sea voyage a gentleman on board gave him a french book entitled "Les dits moraulx des philosophes" with reading which he was greatly delighted. On his return from his pilgrimage, to England Edward IV appointed him governor in temporal affairs to the young prince of Wales.

[11^v] This appointment is still extant in the archives at Lambeth Palace and bears date 28th Sept 1473 (see also Birch MSS No. 4109) The Earl then having more leisure, translated this book into English for the future use of the young prince. The exact date of the translation is uncertain but must have been after Sept 1473 and before Sept 1477. At the end of the Lambeth & before¹¹⁾ manuscript before the Epilogue by Caxton appears the following "And suffise you with the translation of the Sayings of these philosophers. And one William Caxton [12^r] at desire of my lord Rivers emprinted many books after the tenour & form of this book which William said as followeth (Epilogue sequitur) The date at the end of the whole is xxvijth day of Decemb̄ the xvijth yere of King Edward the fourth.

Among the Harleian MSS. (No. 2266) is an English translation of this work made &

11) In this part of deletion, the word *before* seems to be preceded by a letter, which is illegible but is probably &.

written by “Stevyn Scrope Squyer sonne in law to John Ffostalf knyght

It is dated 1450: I have compared this with the Earl’s translation and in many places there is a resemblance or rather identity in the language used sufficient to make one question [12^v] whether the Earl had not this translation before him while performing his own. For example the Sayings of Homer are thus given—

Scrope, 1450

Oomer was an anncyent vercifyer of grece
& of the greetest estate among the grekys
And he was after Moyses v c yere & lx the
which did many good thinggis and all the
vercifiers of grece folowid his teching

Earl Rivers, 1474-6

Omer was an annccient vercifier in Grece
and of the gretest estate there / he was after
moyses v. c. lv. yere / he made many
goode thingys and alle the vercifiers of
grece folowed his discipline.

[13^r] Unfortunately this MS. is in very bad condition and wants the few first leaves. Of course there is no Epilogue like Caxtons and the Sayings of Socrates included omitted by the Earl are included here.

MSS. of the original Latin are to be found in Brit. Mus. Add. No. 16906 and in Lambeth Palace No 456. Also of the french translation by Thignonville in the Br: Mus: Royal 16 F x-19 A viij and 19 B iv.

William Blades

2nd March 1859.

The text as it stands encompasses some confusion. See the table below, where only problematic parts are represented:

Table 1. Leaves 4-13 of the note by Blades, dated 1859

Leaves	
4	
5	
6	
7	... we pass to the consideration of the MS. Colophon.
[a leaf or leaves missing]	
8	edition printed by Caxton. As Caxton’s editions have never been properly distinguished, the following account may be acceptable. ... The only other manuscript copy of the Earl’s translation which has come under my notice is that at Lambeth Palace. This, like the present, was
9	another instance of carelessness in the scribe. ... that this MS. is a careless copy from the 2nd

10	edition printed by Caxton. As Caxton's editions have never been properly distinguished the following account may be acceptable. ... The only other manuscript copy of the Earl's translation which has come under my notice is that of Lambeth Palace. This, like also, was
11	written after the appearance of Caxton's and like all the printed editions, has the Earl's Prologue prefixed. ...
12	
13	

Judging from the clear discontinuity between Leaves 7 and 8, a leaf is presumably missing here. It is probable that the leaf which should have stayed in the note was removed and Leaf 8, which should have been removed, was left there. Obviously, Blades wrote the lines on Leaf 8 twice, the second time on Leaf 10, where he found a shortage of space at the end and elided the phrase “like the present”. This would explain the incongruence between Leaves 7 and 8 and between Leaves 8 and 9. Blades's lucid and consistent handwriting suggests that this note is a clear copy. Supposing that he was copying lines from his draft, it is a matter of no surprise that an error of this kind could take place. See also the accidental omission of *manuscript* after “At the end of the Lambeth” towards the end of 11^v, which was rectified by the deletion of *before* and the insertion of *manuscript*, followed by the re-introduction of *before*. This is another piece of evidence showing that he had a draft while he was writing this note.

In respect of the content, some snippets of information in this note are used in Blades (1863) with slight changes, e.g., comparison of the sayings of Homer between the Scrope's translation and the Earl Rivers's and the episodes during and after the sea voyage of Earl Rivers to St James. Noticeably different is the manner in which he discusses the different editions and copies of the *Dictes* and their relationship. In this note he states that “this MS. is a careless copy from the 2nd edition printed by Caxton”, while in Blades (1863) he is more careful, stating “from Caxton's printed edition, bearing date 28th November, 1477”, probably reflecting his knowledge of an “interesting” copy that bears “a printed colophon at the end of the epilogue, the same in substance, but differing in orthography and arrangement from the colophon appended to the 2nd edition (p.40)”.

5. Conclusion

In this short paper, we have transcribed two modern notes attached to different versions of the *Dictes*, both dealing with the textual tradition of the same text. Although most of the issues discussed in them have by now been resolved by subsequent copious bibliographical research conducted by other scholars, they are valuable *per se* as pieces of historical evidence showing that the *Dictes* was certainly a centre of research interest for many researchers in the late modern period. As mentioned in the section of our aim above, our project extends to issues of this secondary kind as well as the primary concern of investigating the linguistic features attested in different versions of the *Dictes*, and intends to provide an additional, though presumably modest, contribution to the studies of textual transmission of the *Dictes*.

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Two Modern Notes Attached to Earl Rivers's English Translation of *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*

ABSTRACT

The present paper is a progress report of our research project, the principal aim of which is to explore linguistic and textual details of Earl Rivers's translation of *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*. It was obviously a popular text in the fifteenth and perhaps in the sixteenth centuries, judging from the existence of a number of different versions printed and copied in those days: William Caxton printed the first, second, and third editions of it in the fifteenth century, while Wynkyn de Worde printed another in 1528. There are also some extant manuscript versions, including two famous ones, i.e. MS Additional 22718, British Library and MS 265, Lambeth Palace Library, both copied from printed texts. Given the existence of numerous bibliographical studies on *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* from the eighteenth century onwards, research into the same text itself forms a tradition, which is worth exploring. As a step in this direction, the present paper transcribes two notes written by modern scholars, namely the anonymous note found in one of the John Rylands copies and William Blades's note attached to MS Additional 22718.

Key Words: *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, William Caxton, William Blades