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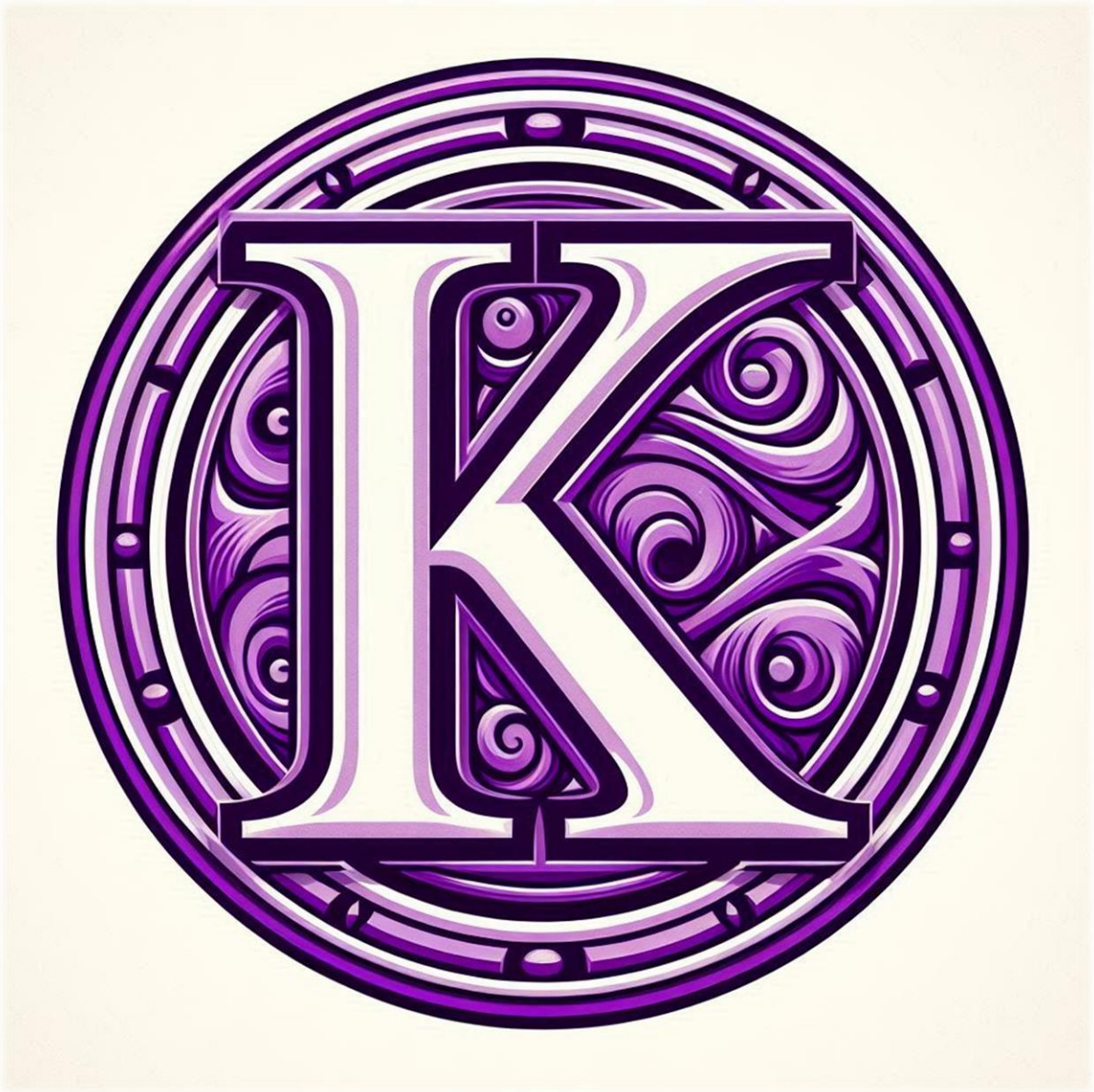

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Venti grandi nomi per venti lunghi anni

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Venti grandi nomi per venti lunghi anni
- volume I -

a cura di Lorenzo M. Ciolfi

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Porphyra: 20 anni e non sentirli

Porphyra è una rivista nata un po' per caso nel lontano 2003, a seguito di una discussione abbastanza animata tra i partecipanti del forum imperobizantino.it. Sembra preistoria, se pensiamo a quanto accade oggigiorno, ma fu una scelta molto lungimirante: allora non vi era alcuna rivista scientifica, e soprattutto online, che trattasse l'universo bizantino nella sua interezza, così come non vi era un sito che divulgasse l'epopea dei Romani di Costantinopoli. Fu un azzardo, almeno nel primo periodo. Non sapevo come gestire le complesse dinamiche che aninamo una rivista di questo tipo e non potevo conoscere l'impatto che questa avrebbe avuto tra i nostri numerosi lettori (ora si chiamerebbero followers). La copertina del primo numero fu disegnata da mio padre e ritraeva la chiesa di Santa Sofia, così come ricordava da una sua foto scattata nel 1990, quando – avevo solo tredici anni! – mi portò in Turchia per la prima volta, visitando le terre dei nostri avi, via terra da Venezia: un viaggio incredibile, più di seimila chilometri in un mese; bei momenti di gioventù.

Quando *Porphyra* uscì ebbe subito un tale successo da giungere ad un ritmo di pubblicazione semestrale. Al suo interno non trovavano spazio solamente articoli di personalità accademiche (a tal proposito, ricordo con gratitudine l'entusiastica risposta del Professor Maltese dell'Università di Torino e del Professor Ravegnani dell'Università di Venezia, che credettero subito nelle potenzialità della rivista), ma anche dei contributi di studenti desiderosi di mettersi in gioco e di far conoscere le proprie idee ad una più vasta platea. Man mano che i numeri venivano pubblicati, la rivista prese sempre più forma e si delineò come un *unicum*: una raccolta di lavori dal taglio sempre più accademico, ma disponibili a tutta l'utenza senza pagare nulla. Erano gli anni in cui Wikipedia stava muovendo i primi passi, così come i social (anche quelli a vocazione scientifica come Academia.edu). Per poter accedere ad un articolo bisognava per forza recarsi in biblioteca, mentre *Porphyra* offriva qualcosa di diverso, un accesso libero e comodamente da casa. Questa sua peculiarità, per altro copiata da molte altre riviste che videro la luce in seguito, fu la vera forza di tutto il progetto.

Grazie a questo processo di crescita, potei così finalmente registrarla e ottener così un codice ISSN, garantirne la rintracciabilità ed iniziare un lungo processo di parificazione con le riviste cartacee, all'epoca le uniche considerate a tutti gli effetti "scientifiche". In questo periodo ero riuscito anche a catalizzare attorno a me una buona squadra di professionisti: Matteo Broggini, discepolo del Professor Conca, prese così la direzione della rivista e la guidò per diverso tempo, dandole sempre più autorevolezza e scientificità. Dal 2012, subentrai io e decisi di dare un ulteriore slancio alla rivista, aprendo le collaborazioni ad un gruppo di giovani dottorandi provenienti da diversi paesi europei come la Spagna, la Grecia, la Gran Bretagna, la Francia e ovviamente l'Italia.

Fu la scelta decisiva che portò alla completa internazionalizzazione di *Porphyra* così come la costituzione di un comitato scientifico di altissimo livello composto da studiosi di chiara fama. Ora attendiamo l'accesso alla fascia A da parte del MIM, che concretizzerà questo lunghissimo percorso di crescita ed evoluzione.

Su iniziativa dell'amico e collega Lorenzo M. Ciolfi, abbiamo deciso di pubblicare un numero che rappresentasse il grande lavoro, appassionato e resiliente, compiuto in questi primi vent'anni di carriera. Un percorso irto di ostacoli, ma anche ricco di soddisfazioni. Ora *Porphyra* è davvero pronta per essere riconosciuta a livello internazionale come una rivista scientifica di studi bizantini. Sono davvero onorato, e orgoglioso, che molti dei più grandi bizantinisti al mondo abbiano voluto partecipare a questo primo tomo del numero speciale **20x20**: venti grandi nomi per venti lunghi anni! A loro, che hanno creduto nel progetto e nella rivista donandoci tempo e attenzione; a tutti i nostri lettori di ieri, di oggi e di domani la mia gratitudine e quella di tutta la redazione.

Altre sorprese sono dietro l'angolo… *stay tuned*!

Nicola Bergamo
Editor in Chief

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New directions in Byzantine Studies: A comment

John Haldon (Princeton University)

Historians of the medieval eastern Roman world – Byzantium – have long worked together with archaeologists in a shared enterprise casting light on social, economic, cultural and political history. Written sources, of which there are very many types, can often provide quite precise information about sequences of events and dates. But each category of source brings with it its own particular set of problems, both in terms of context of composition, authorship and attribution, function and linguistic register, not to mention manuscript tradition, authenticity of attribution, and process of transmission. Questions of textual interpolations and variant readings further complicate the issue as well as the interdependence and interrelationship of one text of the same type to another, and of a single version of a text to its own variant traditions. The value of a given written source, and the value of the interpretation placed upon it or its contents is thus always a potential issue for contention and debate. But non-written sources are no less the subject of debate and disagreement, and this is certainly true of archaeology. Archaeological evidence offers insights into many key aspects of medieval life: dwellings, fortifications, diet, clothing, tools, and items of daily existence, as well as providing information on the production and distribution of luxury goods. It offers information about patterns of exchange, both commercial and non-commercial, about animal husbandry, technology, and related matters. It provides data relevant to areas of medieval life about which written sources are often entirely silent. Archaeological investigation is essential to any balanced picture of Byzantine economic and social history—written sources provide only very partial information about topics such as the appearance and extent of houses, palaces, fortresses, or the structure of village communities.

In the last 20-25 years there has taken place a real revolution in both methods and approaches in many aspects of the study of Byzantium. In part, this reflects quite simply broader changes in the study of texts and advances in fields such as numismatics and sigillography, for example, as well as shifts in the focus of attention of historians of late

Roman and Byzantine art and architecture. Additionally, a growing concern with broad-brush field survey aimed at capturing the settlement profile and thus some of the demographic history of a region, as well as its landscape history, has also played an important role. This shift reflects also an enormous speeding-up in the development of technology more broadly affecting every aspect of data collection, processing and interpretation, as well as the development of new ways of working and integrating different specialisms that can be applied to historical and archaeological research.

Both historical and archaeological evidence can help us understand how societies responded to environmental and climatic stresses and challenges, but until comparatively recently it has been impossible to verify what a historical text, for example, tells us about the climate at the time of writing or at an earlier period; while archaeological evidence can usually – there are exceptions – be related only very loosely with environmental and climate changes. But as the scientific study of past environment and climate has advanced so historians and archaeologists have become increasingly interested in merging palaeoclimatic data with traditional historical sources. The result has been the introduction of palaeoscientific methods and questions into virtually every period of historical research, with increasing numbers of projects made up of specialists from different fields and disciplines working together toward analyzing a wide range of past societies.

Scientists have long been accustomed to working and publishing in teams. To a degree so have archaeologists. Historians have been less ready to adopt teamworking approaches to their research, but in recent years this has begun to change quite rapidly. Historians now work alongside both archaeologists and – for example – palaeoenvironmental scientists on different aspects of the same set of questions about a given area or settlement or problem. An obvious stimulus to collaborative work is the need to attract funding in order to finance fieldwork projects, and team-based projects provide resources for a number of specialists, each making a specific contribution to the whole so offer a successful way for an individual to support their own research goals while at the same time contributing to a broader project. But there are clear advantages to working collaboratively with colleagues who are able to assess from their own expert perspective the ways in which the individual members of a research group are using data from outside their own specialism. Just as importantly, such collaborative enterprises offer the opportunity to generate a more balanced and grounded analysis of all the

data derived from the study of a specific topic in a holistic way, in a way that properly accounts for all the different types of evidence and attempts to reconcile tensions and contradictions across the different datasets.

Not every historical question needs to be approached in this way. But it is particularly apt in the study of a historical landscape, its settlement geography, cultural, social and economic history, its built environment and the environmental and climatic conditions that have influenced the way human populations have interacted with it, can only be done collaboratively. With the advent of a number of new scientific techniques, the application of which demand highly specialist technical skills, such collaboration has become essential. While historical sources can explain and account for possible human-derived changes in palaeoecological data, palaeoecological data have the potential to inform on the spatial extent and severity of human-induced impacts and can provide information on how landscapes recover after human-induced impacts have ceased or lessened. Historical or textual sources are often discontinuous, often not contemporary with the events or developments they describe and may consist of unsupported, exaggerated, biased or secondary information. In contrast, palaeoecological data by their very nature are typically time-continuous in the absence of breaks or hiatuses in sedimentation. They can inform on antecedent and subsequent events and generally do not suffer from information decay further back in time. As has been noted, there are no ‘dark ages’ in the palaeoenvironmental record.

During the last two decades or so, historians and archaeologists have begun to focus on the relationship between climate/environment and the rise and decline of the Roman world, raising in the process a series of broader questions about the causal connections between political and social-cultural evolution and climate. Interactions between a society and its environment are far from simple, as the fact that, paradoxically, many societies evolved in locations where the environment was difficult to control suggests. Complex, settled cultures first arose in flood-prone river basins, for example, suggesting that overcoming environmental challenges contributed to their development. So collaboration between historians and natural scientists studying environmental changes in the past is essential to better understanding interactions between past societies and their environments. Historians and archaeologists can warn scientists against hasty assumptions about the relationship between societal complexity and resilience towards environmental stress, for example, while

scientists can provide more precise environmental context for societies and events that historians and archaeologists are studying. The integration of palaeoscientific evidence with the results of archaeological and historical research demands both interdisciplinary cooperation as well as the construction of relatively general models of climate/environment/society interaction. It is precisely the bringing of climate and environment into the existing models of social, economic, and political change in Byzantium that promises to expand our understanding of this historical society.

Archaeology in particular, which long ago pioneered the use of aerial photography, has benefited substantially from a number of recent technical developments, beginning some decades ago with the use of ground-penetrating radar and magnetometry, now greatly enhanced by important developments in remote sensing technology, including the use of satellite imagery, lidar, and the use of balloons and drones, which have massively increased the potential for mapping a landscape as well as patterns of human activity that may not be visible at ground level or even through regular aerial photographic techniques. At the same time, the rapid advances that have been made in the biosciences have also contributed to transforming what we think of as archaeology. The analysis of ancient DNA, for example, as well as isotope analysis of skeletal remains, permits us now to date human remains more precisely than ever, to extract information about mortality, diet, disease, origins as well as affinities to the wider population and thus to generate information about population movements and demography; scientific analysis of ceramic materials has enormously advanced our ability to understand both how and where pottery was produced; the analysis of charcoal, of pollen, of tree-rings, although well-established by the 1980s, have been enormously refined and improved in the last two decades and have massively increased the potential for understanding micro-level population changes, the evolution of landscapes and land-use as well as the dating of structures and artefacts.

In respect of climate, dendrochronology, generally associated with the dating of timbers used in various types of construction from buildings to ships, also helps in thinking about past environments, since it serves as a proxy for seasonal and annual variations in moisture. There are a number of other proxies for climate. Oxygen and carbon isotope analyses (to determine their proportion in sediment samples from lakebeds, for example) are related to rainfall amount and effective moisture respectively and tell us about seasonal shifts in rainfall;

mineralogical analysis can inform us about the proportion of calcium to strontium (Ca/Sr) or magnesium (Ca/Mg) in the sediment, again indicative of degrees of aridity or humidity; analysis of speleothems – cave stalactites and stalagmites – similarly provides data on humidity. The chronology of a stalagmite is based on Uranium-series ages across a specific period, depending on the size and age of the stalagmite in question.

But generating the data from these proxies is an immensely complex process requiring specialist technical facilities (including, for example, mass spectrometry) and dedicated expertise and the interpretation of the data it generates brings with it a number of methodological challenges. So it is essential for historians and archaeologists using such evidence to work with the scientists and consult with them about how best to make use of their results (just as historians should consult with archaeologists about the interpretation of field reports and, as already intimated, for scientists to consult with historians when approaching historical issues). As a case in point we may take the study of fossilized pollen, which provides the potential to reconstruct vegetation and environmental sequences through time as well as to provide evidence for the farming environment and the ways in which the landscape was adapted to human requirements and demands. But there is a substantial difference between the way archaeologists can exploit pollen data and the methods and aims of palynological research. The former aim to identify pollen preserved on excavated sites found in the context of settlements, such as within buildings or in middens, in order to throw light on the use of different plants by the residents of the settlement and to provide information about local ecological conditions. In the latter case, and along with spores and various micro and macrofossils, pollen is recovered from sediments from lake basins and other waterlogged depressions. Where this can be dated, it permits comparisons to be made with archaeological and settlement survey data for investigating human-environment interactions and long-term landscape dynamics and provides information about the ecological structure of a region. The problem here, however, is that the accuracy and therefore the reliability of palaeo-environmental or palaeoecological chronologies is problematic, because many sequences, particularly those established before the 1980s (when radiocarbon – ^{14}C – dating was expensive) are often based on a limited number of radiocarbon ages, with interpolation between adjacent ^{14}C ages, which often implies or assumes a constant sediment accumulation rate. For example, where a phase of landscape disturbance is highlighted in a

palaeoecological dataset, sediment accumulation rates may have varied considerably, and this significantly affects the duration of the recorded phases. In addition, the upper stratum of the core is often assumed to date to the present day, which may not be the case and which introduces further chronological uncertainty. The accuracy and precision of the ^{14}C ages themselves can also be a problem; chronologies based on age-depth modeling may have a precision that is several times better than standard or bulk ^{14}C radiometric ages, but once calibrated to calendar ages the resulting age range may still be unsuitable for direct comparison with historical and textual data sources at sub-centennial resolution. This in turn can produce problems with the elucidation of possible cause and effect relationships. The problem can be ameliorated to a degree if there are tephra layers originating from volcanic eruptions present in the sediment core or archaeological context. Where accurately attributed to a particular dated eruption, these produce well-dated chronological horizons and therefore have the potential to significantly increase the temporal precision of palaeoecological and archaeological data. Nevertheless, palaeoenvironmental data retrieved from records with seasonal increments (such as ice cores, tree-rings, speleothems, corals and annually-laminated sediments) can generate considerable chronological precision, and may often be as good as that extracted from historical and textual sources and dateable archaeological material. When this is the case it is possible to compare palaeoecological and historical/archaeological data directly.

There is enormous potential in collaboration between historians and palaeo-scientists. Today this is not news, indeed the collaboration between archaeology, history and the palaeo-environmental and other palaeosciences is increasingly part of day-to-day practice within the study of Byzantium and many other pre-modern societies. One of the key results of such collaborative work has been to underline just how regionally varied the eastern Roman world was, even down to the evidence for micro-climates within individual provinces, for example – while it is important to be able to make generalisations, we cannot ignore the high levels of regional and subregional variation in micro-climates, environment, settlement-patterns, societal structure and responses to challenge that characterize the Roman state, and indeed other Mediterranean states and socio-economic systems. There are many other aspects worthy of further discussion: advances in modeling the processes of construction of buildings, in the use of Geographical Information Systems to help understand connections and associations

between and within settlements and to understand and model roads and communications. We can also begin to appreciate and to reconstruct the visual world of pre-modern people, whether Byzantines or others – how sites and settlements were connected by line of sight or other means, for example, through the study of viewsheds and the application of interpretative models such as least-cost path analyses.

All these changes have meant that Byzantine Studies has become more clearly than ever before just one element in a broader tapestry of historical research that combines traditional scholarship and skills alongside the most cutting-edge science, a development that can only be wholeheartedly welcomed. It is perhaps an interesting reflection of these changes that the foundation of *Porphyra* in 2013 coincided with the foundation of Princeton University's *Climate Change and History Research Initiative*, dedicated to the better and continuing integration of history, archaeology and the palaeosciences and with its original focus on the medieval East Roman world.

Further readings

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W.R. CARAHER – K. KOURELIS – D.B. HEDSTROM (eds.), *Beyond Icons. Theories and Methods in Byzantine Archaeology*, London (forthcoming 2025)

J. CROW, *Archaeology*, in E. JEFFREYS – J. HALDON – R. CORMACK (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford 2008, pp. 47-58

J. HALDON et al., *History Meets Palaeoscience. Consilience and Collaboration in the 21st Century*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, 115/2018, www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1716912115

J. HALDON et al., *The Climate and Environment of Byzantine Anatolia: Integrating Science, History, and Archaeology*, Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 45.2/2014, https://10.1162/JINH_a_00682

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M. MCCORMICK et al., *Climate Change during and after the Roman Empire: Reconstructing the Past from Scientific and Historical Evidence*, Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 43.2/2012, pp. 169-220 https://10.1162/JINH_a_00379

A.M. POLLARD, *Measuring the Passage of Time: Achievements and Challenges in Archaeological Dating*, in CUNLIFFE – C. GOSDEN – R.A. JOYCE (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology*, Oxford 2009), pp. 145-168 https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199271016.013.0006

S. TURNER – J. CROW, *Unlocking Historic Landscapes in the Eastern Mediterranean. Two Pilot Studies using Historic Landscape Characterization*, Antiquity 84/2010, pp. 216-229 https://doi.org.10.1017/S0003598X00099889

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El hallazgo de un copista cretense, Konstantinos Skordylios, en el marco del proyecto de digitalización de los manuscritos griegos de El Escorial[1]

Inmaculada Pérez Martín (Instituto de Lenguas y Culturas del CSIC, Madrid)

La amable invitación de los editores de «Porphyra» a participar en este volumen que celebra el XX aniversario de la publicación me va a permitir dar a conocer un proyecto de investigación que se está llevando a cabo en el Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial y cuyo objetivo es digitalizar y poner en línea los manuscritos griegos de la colección laurentina[2]. En el siglo XX, la investigación paleográfica sobre los libros y documentos escritos a mano que constituyen un patrimonio de carácter único, cambió progresiva y cualitativamente gracias a que fue cada vez más fácil obtener reproducciones fotográficas de ellos. En lo que llevamos de siglo XXI, la información que daban las reproducciones impresas ha dado paso a imágenes digitales de manuscritos o documentos cada vez mejores y más completas, acompañadas en ocasiones de descripciones nuevas, sólo accesibles en línea. En especial, en el caso de los manuscritos griegos, el enorme esfuerzo emprendido por el Institut d'Histoire des Textes (CNRS), con la colaboración reciente de una red de voluntarios, ha generado un instrumento de estudio poderoso que ha sido puesto a disposición del mundo académico. Aún no conocemos realmente todo el potencial de Pinakes, pero sin duda va a transformar el modo de investigar sobre los manuscritos griegos: en realidad, ya lo ha transformado.

Podríamos decir que las imágenes de los manuscritos son la materia prima de que se nutre un modo nuevo de hacer paleografía, que ahora puede plantear hacer un viraje hacia el reconocimiento de caracteres (OCR) de la minúscula griega manuscrita o la distinción de escrituras con herramientas digitales. Por el momento, hemos dejado atrás la necesidad de apoyarnos en intermediarios, en publicaciones a veces contradictorias entre sí o cuyos datos

[1] TED2021-130178B-I00: «Digitalización, descripción y puesta en línea de la colección de manuscritos griegos de El Escorial (DIGITESC)».

[2] Las reflexiones que expondré aquí complementan otras publicadas recientemente sobre los límites de la Paleografía como disciplina; véase PÉREZ MARTÍN 2022a y 2022b.

están tomados no directamente del manuscrito sino de trabajos previos; esta mediación ha sido superada gracias a que las imágenes digitales accesibles en línea nos permiten comprobar con nuestros propios ojos la veracidad de lo que leemos en la bibliografía. La capacidad de verificar la información que proporcionan las imágenes se une a la ventaja de haber dejado atrás el estrés de las escasas horas que teníamos para estudiar un manuscrito en su biblioteca. Aunque no hace falta decir que estudiar con reproducciones digitales no puede competir con la inspección directa del códice y con los datos codicológicos que proporciona, acceder en todo momento a una reproducción completa y de buena calidad de un manuscrito, que incluya la encuadernación, las hojas sin escritura, etc. permite una reflexión serena sobre sus copistas y lectores que sólo era posible si uno vivía en la ciudad donde se encontraba el manuscrito. Más de una vez en la inspección directa de un códice mis ojos no han captado lo que después sí han visto en el estudio del objeto digital, y atribuyo esto no sólo a la posibilidad de agrandar en pantalla lo que en el original puede resultar pequeño e indescifrable, sino también a la tranquilidad de poder volver una y otra vez sobre el manuscrito.

Cuando escribo estas palabras, en noviembre de 2023, el proyecto DIGITESC que dirijo ha dado sus primeros pasos y ha llevado a cabo la reproducción de la mayor parte de los fondos manuscritos griegos de la Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, gestionada por los Padres Agustinos y con Patrimonio Nacional como organismo público responsable. Esas imágenes todavía no son accesibles en línea, pero esperamos que lo estén a lo largo de 2024, gracias a la infraestructura ya existente en Patrimonio Nacional, la Real Biblioteca Digital (RBD, https://rbdigital.realbiblioteca.es), donde se puede ya disfrutar de una de las joyas de la colección, el códice del Himno Akathistos (R-I-19). Como ha sucedido y está sucediendo en otras muchas bibliotecas históricas, también los manuscritos griegos de El Escorial estarán accesibles para su estudio, cumpliendo así el objetivo principal del proyecto. Para nosotros, esto ha sido la parte fácil. A partir de ahora no sólo queda muchísimo por hacer, sino que es necesaria una reflexión sobre cómo y en qué dirección hacerlo.

Seguir trabajando de un modo tradicional, sustituyendo la inspección directa del códice por sus imágenes digitales, puede ser suficiente en algunos casos, pero sin duda es prioritario acompañar el objeto digital de una descripción codicológica detallada que intente suplir la

falta de acceso al manuscrito en sí. Esto no se puede conseguir en un plazo breve, pero sin duda es la labor más importante a realizar. Por el contrario, gracias a las imágenes, el catalogador no tiene por qué describir detalladamente los textos, señalar los *marginalia* y las correcciones, comparar la copia con el texto editado; esa labor puede hacerla el futuro editor o estudioso gracias al acceso permanente a su reproducción de calidad. Por ello, la labor de descripción de los códices no necesita ser tan detallada como antaño y la digitalización y accesibilidad de las imágenes pueden dejar en manos de especialistas la elaboración de información muy costosa en términos de tiempo.

En efecto, la digitalización permite acceder rápidamente y sin intermediarios al documento escrito, con más facilidad y más fiabilidad, verificando los datos, lo que permitirá llegar más lejos con menos esfuerzo. Ejemplos de esto aparecen ya reflejados en las entradas de nuestro blog, que prueban la procedencia escorialense de algunos folios que ahora se encuentran en la Biblioteca Nacional de Copenhague o muestran cómo pudo adquirir algunos códices escorialenses (ahora upsalienses) Johann Gabriel Sparwenfeldt en 1689-1690. En ambos casos, la digitalización ha permitido cotejar las escrituras de materiales muy dispersos y reconstruir la historia de éstos; se trata de muestras pequeñas que afectan a la historia del fondo escorialense, pero el acceso a las imágenes permite plantear cuestiones muy ambiciosas sobre talleres de copia o estilos de escritura porque pone al alcance de la mano su resolución.

El descubrimiento que quiero presentar aquí es modesto y se ha producido en la fase de verificación de la identidad de copistas. En 1848, Emmanuel Miller reproducía así en su catálogo de manuscritos del Escorial[3] la nota que se lee en el margen superior del f. 1r del San Lorenzo de El Escorial, RBME Φ-II-20 (gr. 217, Diktyon 15171), un códice datado hacia 1570-1571 por las filigranas de su papel: «Χειρ Κωνσταντίνου αυσδιλίου (sic!) τοῦ Κρητός». La apostilla “sic!” exoneraba al catalogador de lo absurdo del nombre, con falta de ortografía incluida. En su catálogo de 1965[4], Gregorio de Andrés identificaba la escritura de Andrés Darmario en la nota y proponía con interrogante leer el apellido del copista Δυρδιλίου. Tampoco esta lectura daba mucho sentido: la terminación en -δυλιος era griega, pero el

[3] MILLER 1848, p. 162.

[4] ANDRÉS 1965, pp. 47-48.

apellido resultaba un poco peculiar. En realidad, la nota de Darmario debe ser leída así (**Lámina 1**): «Χειρ Κωνσταντίνου Σκορδιλίου τοῦ Κρητός».

En la nota de Darmario, la ómicron del apellido era un pequeño engrosamiento al final de la letra anterior y la ligadura σκ, que no suele dar problemas de lectura si la sigma se prolonga hasta alcanzar el primer trazo vertical de la kappa, aquí resulta poco legible, al haber adoptado el aspecto de la ligadura αν.

Skordyles, Skordylios, Skordilios… es un apellido cretense de mucha solera. En el siglo XIII, los Skordylios (en español, Escordiles) eran una familia de arcontes terratenientes en la isla[5]; en el siglo XVI, Constantino no es el único Skordilios que ejerce de escriba de libros: Zacarías Skordylios, llamado Marafarás (Μαραφαρᾶς), que ya había muerto en 1588, es un contemporáneo de nuestro Constantino y como él copista de libros griegos (en 1562-1572), pero también teólogo, editor de textos en Venecia y redactor del inventario de los códices griegos de Jean Hurault de Boistaillé (ms. Berna, 360, Diktyon 9558)[6]. Las relaciones con otros cretenses activos en Italia como Emanuel Provataris o Nicolás Turriano (de la Torre) están bien documentadas[7]. Aunque el lazo que le unía con Constantino está aún por determinar, el testimonio del Escorial Φ-II-20 refuerza ese círculo cretense con el que también el monemvasiota Darmario tenía vinculación[8].

El manuscrito resulta de la reunión de dos copias independientes de comentarios a diálogos de Platón. La primera unidad codicológica (ff. 1-139) contiene los comentarios de Olimpiodoro y Damascio al *Fedón* y el de Damascio al *Filebo,* si bien todos presentan a Olimpiodoro como autor[9]. La segunda (ff. 140-265) contiene el comentario de Olimpiodoro al *Gorgias*. En ella se observa la foliación que continúa la primera parte y otra que se inicia con el f. 1, lo que implica una copia y concepción o transmisión inicial independiente del

[5] MALTEZOU 1991, p. 21.

[6] *RGK* II 157. Zacarías editó el comentario de Nicetas David a Gregorio de Nacianzo: *Νικήτα φιλοσόφου τοῦ καὶ Δαβὶδ ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὰ τετράστιχα τοῦ μεγάλου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου τοῦ Ναζιανζηνοῦ*, Venezia 1563.

[7] CATALDI PALAU 2003.

[8] Merece la pena señalar como prueba de esta colaboración que en la primera parte del Vind. Theol. gr. 72 (diktyon 71739), ff. 1r-151v, suscrito por Zacarías Escordiles en Venecia en 1563, Darmario ha indicado en las hojas de guarda el título y adscripción de la obra (Anastasio Sinaíta, *In Hexaemeron anagogicarum contemplationum libros duodecim*); cf. HUNGER 1976, pp. 131-132.

[9] Westerink ha establecido la autoría de Damascio de todos los textos excepto el comentario a *Fedón* de los ff. 1r-34r; cf. WESTERINK 1959, y 1976, pp. 39-181.

Comentario al Gorgias, copiado por Manuel Glinzunio (**Lámina 2**)[10]. El papel de la segunda parte es distinto del de la primera[11], pero la distribución del texto es la misma: ocupa 220 x 120 mm., en 28 líneas.

En cuanto a la primera parte, contiene en ff. 1r-139r una copia de comentarios a *Fedón* y a *Filebo*[12], que el manuscrito, como indicábamos, atribuye a Olimpiodoro siguiendo al códice del que depende toda la transmisión, Marc. gr. Z. 196 (siglum M; coll. 746, Diktyon 69667), un *vetus* de la "Colección filosófica". Los editores no han prestado demasiada atención al Escorial Φ-II-20 o a otras copias darmarianas, pero Gerd van Riel, en su edición del *Comentario al Filebo*, ha establecido que el Φ-II-20 tiene un apógrafo en el Escorial Φ-II-2 (gr. 199, Diktyon 15153)[13]. El copista del Φ-II-2 es Sofiano Meliseno, un conocido y prolífico colaborador de Darmario que también participó en la copia del Φ-II-20, en concreto en los ff. 1r-v, 10r-v, 31r-79v, 82r-82av, 113r-114bisv, 115r-139r (139v vac.). El cambio de ductus, tinta y distribución del texto de Meliseno en ff. 78-79v y 115r-133v, llevó a que éstos fueran atribuidos a la mano de otro copista, pero Fernández Pomar acertadamente los recondujo a la autoría de Meliseno[14]. Por su parte, Constantino Skordylios ha copiado los ff. 2r-9v, 11r-30v, 80r-81v, 83r-112v, con una escritura regular pero áspera y en ocasiones tan esquemática que cuesta leerla (**Lámina 3**). En una versión más torpe, pertenece a un tipo de escrituras utilizado por copistas cretenses como su propio familiar Zacarías Skordylios, Nicolás de la Torre o Antonio Calosinás, y no es raro en plumas anónimas del círculo de Darmario.

[10] OLYMPIODORI, p. XII, sobre este manuscrito y pp. XII-XIV sobre las copias salidas del taller de Darmario, algunas datadas en 1573, 1580 y 1585. Sobre la identificación de Glinzunio, FERNÁNDEZ POMAR 1986, p. 8; BRAVO GARCÍA 1990, p. 318 n. 25; PAPADAKI 2020, p. 138.

[11] El códice está copiado en papel, plegado in folio, 277/9 x 200/5 mm, ff. II.265.II (+ 71a. 82a. 113bis. 114bis. 115bis). Sosower 2004, p. 523, propone una datación hacia 1570-1571; presenta las siguientes filigranas; ff. 1-20, 78-83: «cercle 9», «échelle 5»; ff. 21-30, 84-112: «échelle 5», sim. «échelle 32» Ha., del Monac. gr. 133, copiado en Padua en 1566; ff. 31-77, 134-139: «ancre 90», del Escorial Σ-II-3, copiado por Manuel Glinzunio ca. 1570; var. id. Σ-I-18; ff. 113-119: «cercle 9»; ff. 120-133: «pèlerin 10»; ff. 140-170: «ancre 114»; ff. 171-264: «ancre 122».

[12] El comentario a este segundo diálogo pasó desapercibido a Nicolás de la Torre cuando inventarió el libro en El Escorial y escribió en el f. IIr: «Ὀλυμπιοδώρου φιλοσόφου σχόλια εἰς τὸν Πλάτωνος Φαίδωνα, ἢ περὶ ψυχῆς, ἀκέφ(αλα). Τοῦ αὐτοῦ σχόλια εἰς τὸν Γοργίαν, ἢ περὶ ῥητορικῆς. 140». Debajo, el título latino que consideramos asimismo de mano de este copista cretense: «*Olympiodori Philosophi in Phaedonem et Gorgiam*»; quizá otra mano ha añadido a continuación *et (caeter)a.*

[13] VAN RIEL 2008, p. CCX.

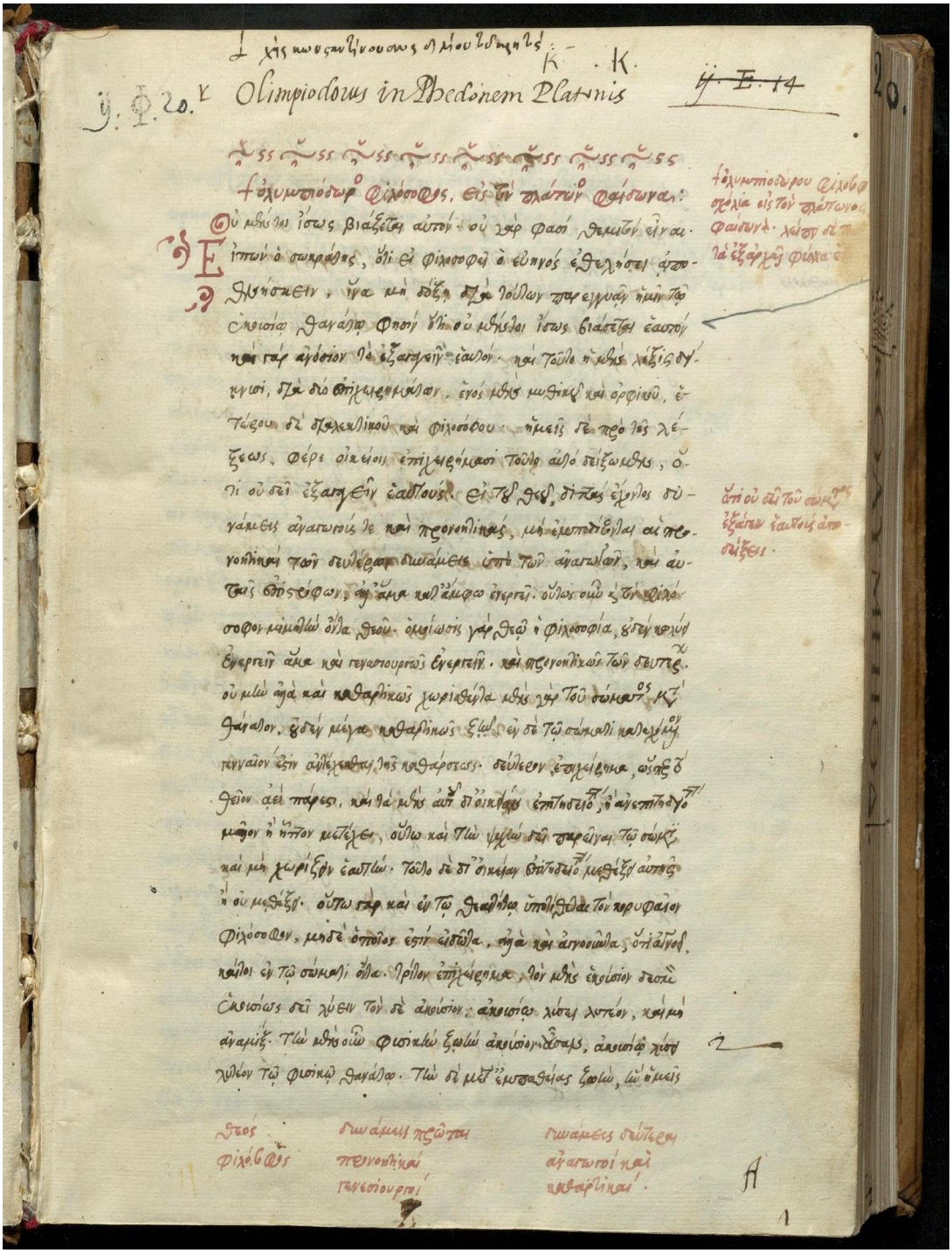
[14] FERNÁNDEZ POMAR 1986, p. 8, para la identificación de la mano de Meliseno en ambos manuscritos.

En la transmisión del *Comentario al Gorgias,* el Escorial Φ-II-20 es gemelo del Escorial T-II-17 (gr. 156, Diktyon 15428), que perteneció a Antonio Agustín y contiene, en este orden, el *Comentario al Gorgias* de Olimpiodoro, suscrito por Darmario en 1570, probablemente en Lérida (ff. 1r-151v) y los distintos comentarios de Olimpiodoro y Damascio al *Fedón* (ff. 152r-284v), copiados por Meliseno en un papel de filigrana diferente, en fecha aproximadamente contemporánea[15].

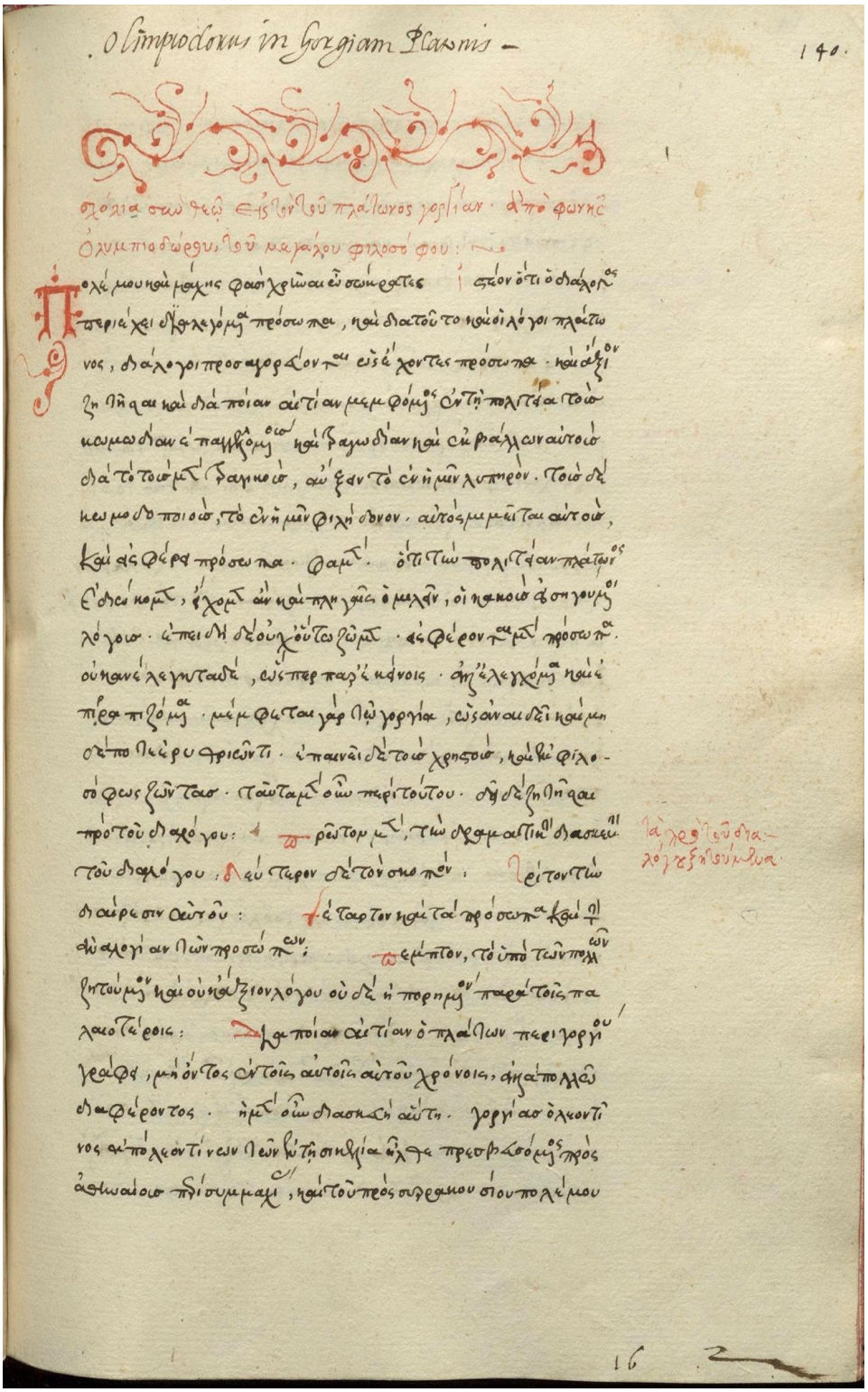
No es raro que el famoso mercader de libros añadiera alguna nota similar a los manuscritos que vendió a los helenistas españoles o de otra nacionalidad, por ejemplo, en el Escorial Φ-I-4 (gr. 182, Diktyon 15136) cuando indica que el libro procede de la biblioteca de Arsenio de Monembasia. ¿Por qué escribió en el Φ-II-20 que era «de mano de Constantino Skordilios de Creta»? Quizá Constantino era conocido por alguna razón que se nos escapa, quizá simplemente el apellido del copista tenía tanto lustre como para que mereciera la pena indicarlo. Pero resulta curioso que el auténtico copista de esa página fuera Sofiano Meliseno y que su trabajo fuera, al menos estéticamente, superior al de Constantino. También llama la atención que se tratara de una colaboración puntual del cretense en el taller de Darmario, aunque no está descartado que su mano aparezca entre los innumerables manuscritos darmarianos. Sea como fuere, la nota de Darmario nos ofrece la identidad de un copista cuyo nombre real se nos había escapado hasta ahora.

[15] Papel con filigrana «pèlerin 21» utilizado por Darmario en los ff. 1-151 del Escorial T-II-17 reaparece en una copia acabada en Lérida el 14 de junio de 1570 para Diego de Covarrubias (Salm. 2720, Diktyon 56504). Cf. SOSOWER 2004, pp. 159, 405, 425, 468, 511 y 514. La misma filigrana aparece en el Taur. B.III.18, cf. ELIA 2014, p. 70.

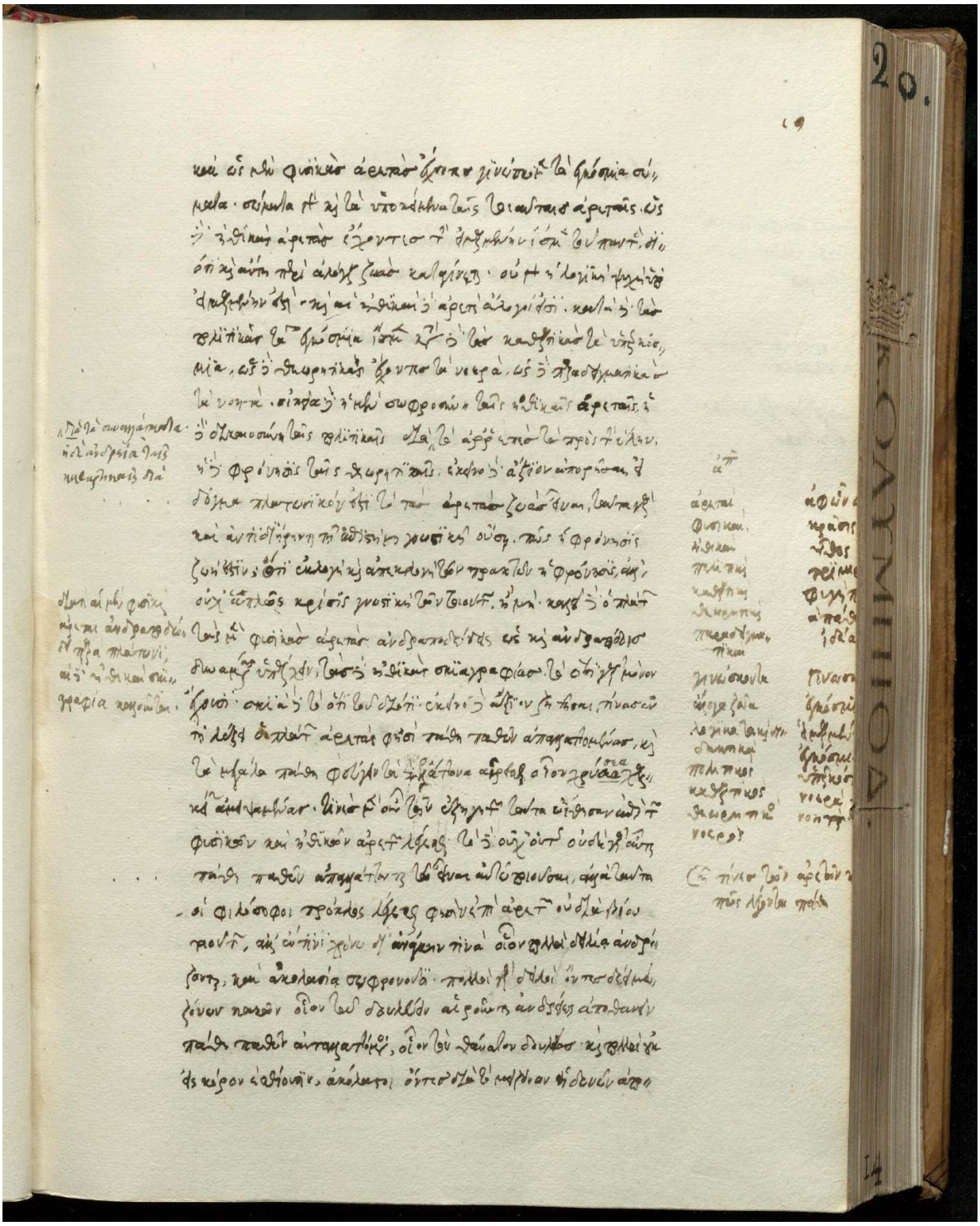
Láminas



1. San Lorenzo de El Escorial, RBME Φ-II-20, f. 1r: copista Sofiano Meliseno; en el margen superior, nota de Andrés Darmario



2. San Lorenzo de El Escorial, RBME Φ-II-20, f. 140r: copista Manuel Glinzunio



3. San Lorenzo de El Escorial, RBME Φ-II-20, f. 195r: copista Constantino Skordylios

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From literary spatial studies back to literary spatiality in Byzantium*

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Abstract: This essay reconsiders the idea of literary spatiality in Byzantine texts in light of recent developments in Spatial Studies, influenced primarily by cultural geography. By drawing attention to the narratological and cognitive functions of literary space, the author wishes to bring out the complementary differences in approach and theoretical perspective. Some of the conspicuous features of *Digenes Akrites* are used as examples of how spatial form functions and how two scholars are currently offering contrasting but interrelated analyses.

Keywords: space; Spatial Studies; literary spatiality; cognitive narratology; *Digenes Akrites*

Spatial Studies have recently gained ground in our field, much thanks to the determined work of Myrto Veikou. Her 2016 article offered a first introduction to and a point of departure for understanding and analysing the significance and function of textual representations of geographical space in Byzantium[1]. The recent collective volume *Spatialities of Byzantine Culture from the Human Body to the Universe* brought in a wider perspective, ranging from archaeology and cultural geography to art and inscriptions[2]. With the even more recent monograph *Spatial Paths to Holiness*, Veikou has perhaps established what may be described as literary geography as a cross-disciplinary subfield of Byzantine Studies[3]. A similar development is to be seen in other fields, where spatial literary studies have appeared as a new way of approaching texts in the wake of the so-called Spatial Turn in the humanities and social sciences. As noted by Robert Tally, «although scholars have long paid attention to the relationship between literature and space or place, the development of distinctive scholarly practices related to that work within literary studies or within such spatially

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[1] VEIKOU 2016; see also VEIKOU 2018.

[2] VEIKOU – NILSSON 2022.

[3] VEIKOU 2023.

oriented sciences as geography are relatively recent»[4]. With inspiration drawn from cultural geography and the works of, among others, Michel Foucault, Edward Soja, and Nigel Thrift, new ways of approaching spatial aspects have been developed, offering a fruitful approach to both historical and contemporary texts[5].

Against the background of these recent developments, I would like to remind us of a very different way of using the concept of space: a specifically literary and artistic approach, drawing on Joseph Frank's work on literary spatiality as a distinct part of modernist literature[6]. As I noted many years ago in my study of the twelfth-century novel *Hysmine and Hysminias*, spatial form is by no means a modernist phenomenon[7]. On the contrary, many works of ancient and medieval literature are spatial, «insofar as they replace history and narrative sequence with a sense of mythic simultaneity and disrupt the normal continuities […] with disjunctive syntactic arrangements»[8]. Since such arrangements do not adhere to our modern ideas of narrative coherence, they are sometimes seen as problematic or even as indications of the authors' incompetence[9]. Spatial form is therefore worth bringing (back) to the fore, since it may help us better to understand the construction of both learned and vernacular narratives of the Byzantine period. The critical studies of the second half of the twentieth century may be rather old, but they are by no means outdated. On the contrary, they can be re-read in relation to modern cognitive understanding of narrative and thus contribute to an updated approach to literary spatiality.

From spatial form to cognitive narratology

Joseph Frank's introduction of spatial form was based on the poetic works of High Modernism, arguing that both poetry and prose of this movement undermine the inherent consecutiveness of language and forces the reader to perceive the elements of the poem not as unrolling in time, but as juxtaposed in space. Later on, Frank revised the concept of spatiality into a

[4] TALLY 2021, p. 317.

[5] For such approaches, see also VEIKOU – NILSSON 2022 and VEIKOU 2023.

[6] Frank's ideas were originally presented in an "essay in three parts", published in *Sewanee Review* 53 (Spring, Summer, Autumn 1945), then revised and published in successive publications, the most important of which FRANK 1981 and 1991.

[7] NILSSON 2001, pp. 40-43 and 141-145; see also NILSSON 2000.

[8] MITCHELL 1980, p. 541.

[9] See KULHÁNKOVÁ 2021 on narrative coherence in *Digenes Akrites*; more on this below.

literary constant, not linked to modernist literature[10], and that is how later critics such as W.J.T. Mitchell and Ivo Vidan developed it[11]. Space as a significant aspect of narration has indeed become a fully accepted notion, confirming Mitchell's statement: «the fact is that spatial form is the perceptual basis of our notion of time, that we literally cannot 'tell time' without the mediation of space»[12]. Such an approach confirms the "intrinsic connectedness" of time and space proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin[13], but it also points in the direction of more recent ways of understanding spatial imagination in the field of cognitive narratology in terms of so-called storyworlds.

In David Herman's words, readers «use textual cues to build up representations of the worlds evoked by stories, or storyworlds»[14]. Such worlds are created in the readers' imagination, based on our real-world experiences; in the words of Marie-Laure Ryan, «story space [is] completed by the reader's imagination on the basis of cultural knowledge and real world»[15]. These experiences that readers draw on are not necessarily only "real", but also based on what they have read, heard, and seen: the storyworld of Elena Ferrante's novels may affect the way in which one reads other novels set in Naples, the television series may affect the way in which one reads the Ferrante novels, and the experience of reading the novels or watching the series may indeed affect the experience of real-world Naples[16]. Entering a storyworld requires immersion on the part of the reader, understood as «the mental state of being absorbed in a virtual world such that one experiences it – to a certain extent – as if it were the actual world»[17].

If we approach Byzantine texts from this perspective, some kinds of texts immediately stand out as particularly dependent on storyworlds and literary spatiality: above all, *ekphraseis* of various kinds (independent or integrated in other texts), but also novels and romances, travel tales, and chronicles. First, such texts often depend on the two primary ways of achieving spatial form:

[10] FRANK 1981 and 1991, pp. 109-132.

[11] See e.g. MITCHELL 1980 and 1989, as well as VIDAN 1981.

[12] MITCHELL 1980, p. 542.

[13] BAKHTIN 1981, p. 84. Cf. NILSSON 2000, pp. 40-42, and 2021, pp. 278-281 (esp. p. 279); CARACCIOLO – KUKKONEN 2021, pp. 83-84.

[14] HERMAN 2006, p. 106.

[15] RYAN 2014, p. 9.

[16] On such complex processes, see e.g. RYAN – FOOTE – AZARYAHU 2016.

[17] ALLAN – DE JONG – DE JONG 2017, p. 34.

> «either through a network of recurrent motifs expressed in discourse that delays the linear development of the story, or through a pattern of forward-and-backward movement in time that plays against the chronological development but causes an effect of contemporaneity of events, such as recapitulation or anticipation»[18].

Second, they all include cues for elaborate storyworlds, often based on the Greco-Roman literary tradition, but often also relating to historical and socio-political real-world circumstances. For example, the *Description of the catching of siskins and chaffinches* by Constantine Manasses builds on a bucolic storyworld known from ancient authors like Theocritus and Longus, but it also reflects twelfth-century practices of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy[19].

The intertwinement of the two aspects of narrative space should not be seen as a mere combination of literary topoi with the "real world" within one and the same text, but rather as the complex entanglement that is representative of spatial form. A topos drawn from a long literary tradition is never "empty" – it represents an imaginary place for the reader to revisit, along the lines followed by Cicero in his discussion of Simonides of Keos as the inventor of the art of memory[20]. As recently argued by Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen, a commonplace is accordingly also a so-called situation model. Situated and embodied experiences have left cognitive traces in the readers' long-term memory and offer ways to categorize the situation they face, be it in life or in a narrative[21]. The textual cues (in the words of Herman, cited above) thus trigger a process that not only helps the reader to imagine and enter a storyworld, but also to access the literary, or rather textual spatiality that is a crucial aspect of creating such worlds (description, recurring motifs, repetition with variation, and so on).

Embodied spatiality in *Digenes Akrites*

A perfect example of how the concepts of spatial form and storyworlds may help us better to understand a Byzantine narrative is offered by one of the most famous tales of the Greek tradition:

[18] NILSSON 2001, pp. 40-41, with reference to VIDAN 1981, p. 155.

[19] New edition, translation and introduction in MESSIS – NILSSON 2022; on the use of a bucolic storyworld, see esp. p. 11.

[20] CARACCIOLO – KUKKONEN 2021, p. 178.

[21] CARACCIOLO – KUKKONEN 2021, esp. pp. 177-178. Cf. VEIKOU 2023, p. 33, for a geographical reading of Aristotle's notion of topos.

Digenes Akrites. In the following, I will underline some of its conspicuous features in relation to what has been noted above on spatiality and current research on *Digenes*.

First, the tendency to «replace history and narrative sequence with a sense of mythic simultaneity and disrupt the normal continuities […] with disjunctive syntactic arrangements», as Mitchell phrased it[22]. *Digenes* has often been criticized for a lack of narrative coherence and scholars have compared the different versions in order to determine which is more coherent, which has been taken to mean "better". The question is what makes a literary text coherent: is there any general and constant way of defining what it means? In a recent article, Markéta Kulhánková argues that narrative coherence was perceived differently in medieval times and that *Digenes* and other medieval stories thus should be analysed by other coherence principles than modern novels. Rather than looking for consistency of plot, Kulhánková (focusing on the G version) applies a model drawn from historical narratology and shows how semantic logic and structural devices such as repetition are more relevant for *Digenes* than plot congruity[23].

Seen from this angle, the allegedly problematic repetitions of motifs and plot elements – such as the abductions of girls (in two generations) or the experiences of the mothers (on two sides) – are not signs of incompetence or amnesia on part of the author, but a way of creating coherence and meaning through paradigmatic relations within the story. Such relations can be created between various kinds of narratological components – scenes, motifs, characters – and results in both narrative and symbolic meaning. Highly useful in such narrations is the spatial form *par excellence*, the *ekphrasis*. Descriptive discourse creates a narrative pause that can be filled with spatial and symbolic significance, sometimes offering an internal perspective of emotions or even a stream-of-consciousness representation of a character's experience. A character that may seem flat from a modern perspective can in this way gain weight and meaning through embedded focalization, offering a glimpse of their inner reasoning. In some cases, the use of present tense is employed as a way of underlining the direct and emotional situation[24].

This way of spatializing characters brings us to another aspect of *Digenes*, noted by Kulhánková in her forthcoming narratological commentary, but above all the focus of a recent

[22] See above, note 8.

[23] KULHÁNKOVÁ 2021.

[24] I owe these observations to Zuzana Dzurillová, analysing such strategies in the Palaiologan romances as part of an ongoing doctoral thesis at Masaryk University, Brno. Markéta Kulhánková notes the same feature in her narratological commentary to *Digenes Akrites*, forthcoming with Brill *Narratological Commentaries on Ancient Texts*.

article by John Kee, and also an ongoing project by Veikou: the use and function of landscape and liminality in *Digenes*[25]. Inspired by recent developments in narratology and landscape studies, Kee analyses spatial markers of the poem and argues that *Digenis* is «built out of landscape, in both deep structure and line-by-line incident»[26]. Although there are many similarities between the observations of Kee, Kulhánková, and Veikou, in the sense that all three underline the liminal space in which the action takes place, Veikou – as expected – comes to the text from a different angle: that of cultural geography and landscape biography. Rather than seeing the liminal landscape in which the narrative of *Digenes* is set as a literary construction, she understands landscapes as personal and social – they absorb people's lives, but they also have their own lives, transcending human life cycles and generating their own temporalities. This becomes particularly fascinating in the case of border zones, since recent studies «set forth liminality as intrinsically spatial in terms of the discursive landscapes within which discussions on liminality are situated»[27]. As Veikou notes, «the liminality of a place is subjective and closely related to social practices and perceptions»[28]. Within the frame of a fictional narrative such as *Digenes*, the representation of a border landscape in and against which the action is set accordingly carries a particular meaning.

Veikou's analysis adds significantly to the understanding of *Digenes* not only as a "Greek" narrative of significance to both contemporary and later audiences[29], but also to our overall understanding of liminal narration as spatialized. The landscape memory that narratives such as *Digenes* carries is an indication of the situated and embodied character of any storyworld. And Digenes is indeed the ultimate embodiment of that liminal world: he is of double descent, a personification of that liminal space[30]. The repetition of motifs and events too becomes an expression of that intrinsically spatial aspect of liminality, when the girls on either side are abducted by the Other, when the Greek and the Arabic mother experience the same emotions on either side of the border, when the men travel through that same liminal space but in either direction. Abductions and laments are not merely classical topoi, in *Digenes* inexpertly used by an unskilled narrator; on

[25] KEE 2022; VEIKOU (forthcoming), along with a monograph in preparation entitled *Retracing Connections Among Cross-Border Warriors in Medieval Songs*. For Kulhánková's commentary, see above, note 24. Note also GOLDWYN 2018, pp. 39-84, where landscape is taken into account from an ecocritical perspective.

[26] KEE 2002, p. 9.

[27] VEIKOU (forthcoming).

[28] VEIKOU (forthcoming).

[29] VEIKOU (forthcoming).

[30] Cf. e.g. KEE 2022, esp. p. 9.

the contrary, they are potentially immersive and embodied, offering access to lived spaces and emotional situations alike.

Ekphrastic and embodied: spatial form as Byzantine storytelling

When I wrote my study of *Hysmine and Hysminias*, I thought that spatial form was a special trait of that work and perhaps twelfth-century literature in particular. To some extent my subsequent work on Constantine Manasses has pointed in a similar direction: a sophisticated use of spatializing devices is characteristic of much Komnenian literature. But literary and immersive spatiality is a constant in the Greco-Roman tradition, starting with the careful handling of narrative space and spatial telling in the Homeric epics[31]. It therefore seems likely that the twelfth-century predilection for such devices is related to the overall interest in and rewriting of ancient literature, but it is clear that literary spatiality is employed throughout the Byzantine period, in both learned and vernacular texts. It might have different origins and functions (from oral fairy tales to classical rhetoric), but it is always there, as a narrative function and an aesthetic effect.

What has been largely overlooked so far, also by myself, are the cognitive aspects of both literary rewriting and literary spatiality: if we accept that literature is embodied and storyworlds are immersive, Byzantine readers and writers too would have been part in such a process. An indication of such processes is offered in a recent article by Paloma Cortez, examining Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles* from the perspective of cognitive frames and arguing that the hero recognizes himself as part of the novelistic plot – an effect ultimately aimed at the skilled reader familiar with the novelistic storyworld[32]. Narratives, in the words of Herman, «do not merely convey semantic content but furthermore encode in their very structure a way of experiencing the world»[33].

I hope to have shown here that spatiality is a crucial part of such structuring and experiencing the worlds of Byzantine literature.

[31] See e.g. DE JONG 2012 and ALLAN 2019; note also LJUNGBERG 2017, p. 98 on Homer and ancient literature.

[32] CORTEZ 2023

[33] HERMAN 2010, p. 156, cited in CORTEZ 2023, p. 176.

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Il viaggio di Ipazia

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Nella primavera di sedici secoli fa, ad Alessandria d'Egitto, una donna fu assassinata. Fu aggredita per strada, spogliata nuda, trascinata nella chiesa «che prendeva il nome dal cesare imperatore», il Cesareo, come riferisce una delle fonti contemporanee ai fatti, lo storico ecclesiastico costantinopolitano Socrate Scolastico. Qui fu dilaniata con cocci aguzzi. Mentre ancora respirava le furono cavati gli occhi. Poi i resti del suo corpo smembrato vennero dati alle fiamme. A massacrarla furono fanatici cristiani, i cosiddetti *parabalani*, monaci-barellieri venuti dal deserto di Nitria, di fatto miliziani al servizio di Cirillo, allora potente e bellicoso vescovo della megalopoli d'Egitto fertile di grano e di intelletti, di matematica e poesia, musica, gnosi e filosofia.

Il nome di quella donna era Ipazia e quel nome in greco evocava un'idea di eminenza. Ma chi lei fosse nei lati più segreti della sua eminente personalità, e cosa avesse fatto per attirare su di sé la sadica violenza collettiva maschile che la uccise, non lo sappiamo quasi più. Sappiamo meglio chi non era, e di cosa certamente era incolpevole. Conosciamo le maschere che la propaganda o la fantasia o semplicemente l'incoercibile tendenza umana alla manipolazione e alla bugia hanno sovrapposto alla sua sembianza di filosofa platonica. La storiografia l'ha strumentalizzata, la letteratura l'ha trasfigurata e tradita: scienziata punita per le sue scoperte, eroina protofemminista, martire della libertà di pensiero, illuminista e romantica, libera pensatrice e socialista, protestante, massone, agnostica, vestale neopagana e perfino santa cristiana. Ma Ipazia non era nulla di tutto questo.

Nell'Alessandria del V secolo, Ipazia apparteneva all'aristocrazia intellettuale della scuola di Plotino e Porfirio e dalla tradizione familiare aveva ereditato la successione (*diadoche*) del suo insegnamento. Una cattedra pubblica, in cui insegnava «a chiunque volesse ascoltarla il pensiero di Platone e di Aristotele e di altri filosofi», come narrano le fonti antiche. In questo senso era anche una scienziata: la sapienza impartita nelle scuole platoniche includeva la scienza dei numeri e lo studio degli astri. Era dunque anche una matematica e un'astronoma, ma nel senso antico e prescientifico. Non fece alcuna scoperta, non anticipò nessuna rivoluzione copernicana, non fu un Galileo donna. Tutto quello che sappiamo è che costituì devotamente il testo critico del terzo libro

dell'*Almagesto* di Tolomeo, perché suo padre Teone potesse svolgerne il commento, e compose di persona commentari didattici a quelli che erano i libri di testo dell'epoca: le *Coniche* di Apollonio di Perga e l'*Algebra* di Diofanto. Non certo per questo fu assassinata.

Oltre che una filosofa platonica Ipazia era una "gran maestra" dal carisma quasi sacerdotale. C'era, nelle accademie platoniche, un risvolto esoterico, che implicava la trasmissione di conoscenze "segrete" – nel senso di non accessibili ai principianti, ma solo a una cerchia ristretta di iniziati – che riguardavano il divino. Oltre all'insegnamento pubblico (*demosia*), che teneva presso il Museo o altrove nel centro della città, sappiamo di riunioni "private" (*idia*), che teneva nella sua dimora, in un quartiere residenziale fuori mano, verde di giardini. Fu nel tragitto in carrozza tra l'uno e l'altra che venne aggredita e uccisa. La furia dell'arcivescovo Cirillo, che secondo la testimonianza pressoché unanime delle fonti coeve fu il mandante del suo assassinio, venne scatenata proprio dalla scoperta di queste riunioni.

Perché queste riunioni portavano Ipazia al centro della vita non solo culturale ma anche istituzionale di Alessandria. Perché stringevano in un sodalizio non solo intellettuale ma anche politico le élite pagane della città, convertite al cristianesimo per necessità, dopo che i decreti teodosiani lo avevano proclamato unica religione di stato, ma unite dalla volontà di conservare le proprie tradizioni e convinzioni: quell'"educazione ellenica" che si chiamava ancora *paideia,* quel "modo di vita greco" che il discepolo prediletto di Ipazia, Sinesio, definiva «il metodo più fertile ed efficace per coltivare la mente».

Alle riunioni di questa "eterìa" (*hetaireia*) o "fratellanza" (*phratria*) in cui la classe dirigente alessandrina, pagana, cristiana e forse anche ebraica si stringeva per fare fronte al cambiamento e tutelare i propri interessi nel trapasso dall'una all'altra egemonia di culto e pensiero, partecipavano anche i membri della classe dirigente inviati dal governo centrale di Costantinopoli.

> I capi politici venuti ad amministrare la polis erano i primi ad andare ad ascoltarla a casa sua. Perché, anche se il paganesimo era finito, il nome della filosofia sembrava ancora grande e venerabile a quanti avevano le massime cariche della polis.

Anche il prefetto augustale Oreste apparteneva a quella cerchia più riservata, se non segreta, in cui Ipazia prodigava insegnamenti che le valevano gli appellativi sacerdotali di «madre, sorella,

maestra, patrona», «supremo giudice», «signora beata dall'anima divinissima» che leggiamo riferiti a lei nell'epistolario di Sinesio. A quella cerchia Ipazia impartiva, insieme agli altri tipici delle accademie platoniche, un insegnamento sommesso particolarmente utile in quei tempi di transizione. Non era necessario tradire la propria fede o buona fede per convertirsi. L'Uno di Plotino e il Dio dei cristiani potevano identificarsi. Le religioni non dovevano lottare tra loro perché non differivano l'una dall'altra se non in dettagli fiabeschi destinati ai più semplici. I miti degli dèi dell'olimpo pagano come i *dogmata* o credenze "vulgate" dell'insegnamento cristiano, tra cui quella sulla resurrezione della carne, erano destinati a chi non era "filosofo". «Riguardo alla resurrezione di cui tanto si parla sono ben lontano dal conformarmi alle opinioni del volgo», scrive in una delle sue lettere Sinesio, allievo di Ipazia ma anche vescovo cristiano di Tolemaide.

Ipazia non era solo maestra e direttrice di coscienza dei quadri politici. Era una politica lei stessa. Le fonti la descrivono «eloquente e persuasiva (*dialektike*) nel parlare, ponderata e politica (*politike*) nell'agire, così che tutta la città aveva per lei un'autentica venerazione e le rendeva omaggio». Lo stile dei suoi discorsi era così franco da essere secondo alcuni elegantemente insolente. Era spesso la sola donna in riunioni riservate agli uomini, ma la compagnia maschile non la metteva in imbarazzo né la rendeva meno impassibile e lucida nella sua dialettica. Ipazia, riferiscono sempre le fonti,

> non aveva remore ad apparire alle riunioni degli uomini. Anzi, per la sua straordinaria saggezza tutti i maschi le erano deferenti e la guardavano, se mai, con stupore e timore reverenziale. […] Dall'educazione ellenica, le derivavano un autocontrollo e una libertà di parola (*parrhesia*) che le permettevano di affrontare faccia a faccia, con la stessa imperturbabilità, anche i più potenti.

Ipazia interveniva in senso pacificatore negli affari della città e principalmente nelle lotte religiose che la insanguinavano. Difendeva, influenzando direttamente in questo il prefetto augustale Oreste, i diversi gruppi dai tentativi delle fasce fondamentaliste di ciascuno di sopraffare gli altri. In particolare, poco prima di venire assassinata, aveva difeso l'antica comunità ebraica di Alessandria dal devastante pogrom ordinato da Cirillo, la cui azione politica aveva due linee ben precise: la lotta economica contro gli ebrei, che dominavano il trasporto del grano da Alessandria a

Costantinopoli, e la tendenza a «erodere e condizionare il potere dello stato oltre ogni limite mai concesso alla sfera sacerdotale», come riportano le fonti.

Solo questo la tolleranza filosofica di Ipazia non tollerava, e su questo l'Ipazia politica era inflessibile quanto era flessibile l'Ipazia filosofa: l'ingerenza di qualunque chiesa sul potere laico dello stato. Bastò questo, con ogni probabilità, a motivare il suo assassinio, che fu a tutti gli effetti un assassinio politico. Nulla a che fare con la scienza o con gli altri vari feticci in cui la storia del pensiero o della letteratura o della poesia, sempre guidata dal demone dell'attualizzazione e dal fantasma dell'ideologia, ha via via trasformato in sedici secoli il suo volto, irrigidendolo in tratti tanto schematici quanto lontani dalla verità, sovrapponendo un intrico di definizioni a quell'unica ancorché non universalmente accessibile parola che gli antichi riferivano a lei: *philosophia*.

Il rogo di Ipazia è stato da alcuni considerato il primo esempio di caccia alle streghe dell'inquisizione cristiana. In effetti il proselitismo armato di Cirillo contraddiceva in pieno la pur astratta idea di tolleranza propugnata cento anni prima dall'editto di Costantino del 313, così come la tendenza conciliatoria del cristianesimo con il paganesimo d'élite che il primo imperatore cristiano aveva appoggiato politicamente e sancito giuridicamente. Cirillo, rivendicando l'accesso della chiesa alla conduzione della politica, aspirava a un vero e proprio potere temporale, più vicino al modello promiscuo del papato romano che alla rigorosa separazione dei poteri sancita dallo stato bizantino.

Anche per questo, forse, la posizione ufficiale della chiesa di Roma, malgrado la gravità e la natura quasi terroristica dell'antico assassinio di Ipazia, non ha mai voluto mettere in discussione Cirillo, la sua santità, la sua probità. Ancora a fine Ottocento Leone XIII lo ha proclamato dottore della chiesa (*Doctor Incarnationis*). Nella celebrazione che ne ha fatto nel 2007, Benedetto XVI ha elogiato «la grande energia» del suo governo ecclesiastico. Più recentemente, una chiesa di San Cirillo Alessandrino è stata edificata a Roma nel quartiere di Tor Sapienza. Oggi nelle vicinanze di quella chiesa si trova il Giardino Ipazia. L'Ufficio Toponomastico del Comune di Roma lo ha inaugurato l'8 marzo 2017, accogliendo una petizione che non solo chiedeva di intitolarle uno spazio pubblico, ma di individuarlo proprio in quell'area. Perché la tolleranza laica non impedisce certo di continuare ad annoverare tra i santi del calendario un integralista condannato come assassino dal tribunale della storia. Ma i fedeli cristiani hanno il diritto di ricordare la sua antica vittima e la spirale di conseguenze dell'intolleranza religiosa.

Per chi si occupa di Ipazia da quasi trent'anni, gli ultimi dieci sono stati in effetti sorprendenti. Mai come nel breve arco di tempo che separa la prima e la seconda versione, aggiornata e ampliata, della monografia che chi scrive le ha dedicato, si è assistito a una fioritura o diciamo a un'efflorescenza così vasta di pubblicazioni: libri e articoli scientifici, opere di fantasia, contributi ibridi, in bilico tra gli uni e le altre. E poi convegni, eventi, conferenze, performance, monologhi teatrali; e un gran traffico in rete di testimonianze, opinioni, sunti storici, medaglioni biografici, spesso moltiplicati dai reciproci riverberi come in un'immensa sala di specchi.

A far germogliare questa messe è stato in parte il film di Alejandro Amenabár, uscito, così come la prima versione del libro, nel 2010. Ma la nuova fortuna mediatica di Ipazia è effetto più generale dello spirito del tempo. Se Ipazia da icona che era è diventata un simbolo, è perché in lei si sono identificate tante e diverse categorie di individui. Non si tratta più del transfert degli intellettuali illuministi, che nella sua figura vedevano l'effigie della tolleranza e della libertà di pensiero; o dei letterati romantici, che di lei acclamavano la purezza eroica e la fedeltà agli antichi ideali ellenici; o dei sostenitori del laicismo anticlericale o del razionalismo scientifico contrapposto ai dogmi della religione e della fede; o dei cultori dell'esoterismo neopagano, di cui il carisma sacerdotale di Ipazia si faceva emblema, custode di una tradizione sacra che era l'altra faccia del sapere matematico e astronomico da lei coltivato; o infine delle teoriche del femminismo o del postfemminismo, che vedevano in lei un esempio di emancipazione e una vittima del bellicoso potere maschile. Tutto questo fa parte della fortuna di Ipazia lungo i secoli che vanno dall'età dei lumi al ventesimo, un oltrevita di cui questo libro ampiamente si occupa, ma che appartiene a un passato in cui a riconoscersi nel suo personaggio, nella sua tolleranza, indipendenza, inappartenenza, nel suo martirio laico erano sostanzialmente le élites intellettuali.

Oggi il simbolo Ipazia non è più di élite ma di massa. In questa donna assassinata da un potere tanto fanatico e brutale quanto nei secoli impunito sembrano riconoscersi tutti coloro che hanno subito un torto: non solo il genere femminile, e non necessariamente femminista, tuttora vittima di ingiustizia, discriminazione, violenza fisica, ma chiunque, di qualunque sesso, sia stato perseguitato per fedeltà a un ideale; o sia caduto vittima del fanatismo e delle intolleranze riemerse nel terzo millennio, delle discriminazioni religiose, ideologiche, razziali, o ne sia semplicemente turbato; o chiunque e comunque abbia perduto, qualunque fosse, il suo status, nel mutare violento e veloce delle società cui la nostra epoca assiste e che somiglia, agli occhi di un sempre maggiore numero di individui, a quell'epoca di decadenza e caduta dell'impero romano d'occidente che fu il quinto secolo, in cui Ipazia visse e morì.

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Perché Ipazia, per citare l'epigramma di Pallada che le è dedicato nell'*Antologia Palatina,* è un astro che i secoli non solo non hanno sbiadito, ma hanno al contrario reso più vivido, più visibile, più condivisibile, più universale, man mano che l'istruzione, la lettura, la cultura, la conoscenza del passato si sono estese dalle élites alle masse. La storia di Ipazia parla a queste ultime perché è disegnata da una costellazione di simboli impressa nell'esperienza dei più. La sconfitta, la discriminazione, la violenta, l'ingiustizia apparentemente senza appello, senza riscatto nel mondo contemporaneo, ma che riceve la sua retribuzione da una sempre più folta assemblea di posteri, costruiscono uno dei miti più universali della condizione umana. Perché il viaggio dell'eroe in molti casi non è quello del vincitore, ma quello dello sconfitto: è la storia di un torto subito che solo nell'essere narrato e rinarrato, tramandato di bocca in bocca, di generazione in generazione, trova la sua redenzione.

Una rassegna bibliografica completa delle fonti, degli studi scientifici e dei testi letterari dedicati alla storia di Ipazia nel corso dei secoli e fino ad oggi può trovarsi nella nuova edizione ampliata e aggiornata della monografia dell'autrice di questo contributo: S. RONCHEY, *Ipazia. La vera storia*, Milano 2023.

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Curopalates (the Palace Curator) in Mediaeval Bulgaria: An Enigmatic Institution and the Research on its Character

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The institutional system of mediaeval Christian Bulgaria followed the model of Byzantium, but the influence of Constantinople became especially robust during the époque of the Second Bulgarian Empire. Because of the lack of relevant sources, we have poor information about its administration and honorary titles. Sometimes, we do not dispose but only of the appellation of the institution and have to study it through its homonymous parallels in Byzantium or elsewhere. This article will be dedicated to such a case: the institution of *curopalates*. It is to state from the beginning that its very existence in Bulgaria could be easily put in doubt. Its appellation arrived to us through one unique text, but in two forms: the original Greek term transliterated and as a translation. This is in the title of a prayer for the promotion of a person to one of the highest dignities: «Мλтва на поставленіе кесаρа се же и на поставленіе хранителѣ полатѣ, иже глет кγροполатись»[1]. The text is a translation of a Greek prayer meant for the same occasion with some differences in the title: «Εὐχὴ ἐπὶ προχειρίσει Καίσαρος, Νωβελισσίμου. Κουροπαλάτου»[2]. Our aim is to clarify these data about the mentioned dignity of the palace of Byzantine emperors and its eventual presence in Bulgaria.

The ruler's palace and the ruler's court were institutions of special importance in all premodern states and societies. The sovereign has not only the supreme power, mightiness and authority, moral one included, but also identity formatting vigour and all of them based and argued on the ground of religion. Thus, the court and the palace formed the institutional and social milieu as well as the space, in which happened the power. In Byzantium, the palace had its particular importance, because of the very character of the universal power of the *basileis* and the need their magnitude to be imposed by the ritual. The sacred position of the *basileus* as God's lieutenant defined the importance as well as the structure and practices in the Constantinopolitan court. Such a

[1] Biliarsky 1993, p. 106 n. 215; Божилов – Тотоманова – Билярски 2012, p. 195.

[2] *Eucologium*, p. 730; Arranz 1990, pp. 103 ff.

consecrated figure required special attitude and meticulous rites in order to approach him. The ritual required its actors. Thus, the exercise of power was accompanied by a real cult to the ruler that had almost religious character. Practically the services of the palace were the main and permanent actors and every personal attendance to the emperor was strongly ritualised. That situation produced the high importance of the dignities related to the court and palace and their high position in the hierarchy. The *curopalates* was one of them. The Byzantine dignity is well studied but our interest will be focused on the situation in Bulgaria.

The office of the *curopalates* was certainly of Roman origin[3]. We should look for its roots in Late Antiquity, in the institutional system of the Later Roman Empire. The word κουροπαλάτης comes from Latin and consists of parts derived from *cura*, *curare* and *palatium*. This linguistic analysis leads us to conclude the word refers to care for the palace and the court. As for the earlier period, the problem is whether the office was distinct from or identical with the institution of *cura palatii*. The differences between them were indeed significant: *cura palatii* is an official who looks after the maintenance of the buildings, the construction of new ones, and their decoration. He has the rank of *spectabilis*, while the *curopalates* was one of the highest-ranking functionaries of the Empire, chief of the court guard, often the second in rank after the emperor himself, and a relative of the latter[4].

Initially the *curopalates* performed certain duties in the central administration, something similar to a major-domo. In time, the *curopalates* gradually lost the actual performance of his functions and the title became a purely honorary one[5]. In the treatise of Philotheus this title was placed among those bestowed through insignia (ἀξίαι διὰ βραβείων), so among the "pure titles"[6]. Pseudo Kodinos also asserted categorically that the *curopalates* had once some duties in the court, by then forgotten, but no longer performed any functions at all[7]. He became a "pure title" by around the eighth century and remained such until the end of the Empire. The decline of the title began as early as the ninth century, when it was given to some foreign ruling princes, mainly from the Caucasus. According to Philotheus, the *curopalates* was in the top position of the hierarchy, but in

[3] BURY 1911, pp. 33-34; MARTROYE 1924, pp. 79 ff.

[4] MARTROYE 1924, pp. 80-81; GUILLAND 1970, pp. 187-189 and 197-205 concerning prosopography.

[5] GUILLAND 1970, pp. 187-190.

[6] OIKONOMIDÈS 1972, p. 97.

[7] VERPEAUX 1966, p. 175.20-22.

the Treatise of Pseudo Kodinos, the *curopalates* was 17th in rank, and in the fifteenth century, the title does not seem to have been bestowed any longer.

It was already mentioned that we dispose of no data about the dignity of *curopalates* in Bulgaria but merely of its appellation in the title of a prayer. We have no information about the character of the institution[8]. We do not know if it was a part of administration or was just an honorary title. We do not know anything about its service if such existed. We do not know any holder of the dignity: neither a name, nor just a figure. As I already stated, the very appellation of the institution could be put in doubt because of its double designation in the source: хранитєль полатъ (*palace curator*) and куропалатись (*curopalates*)[9]. Both of them are quite different: the first one is translation-explication but the second is a direct transliteration, done in a strange way, because it keeps the Nominative suffix of the Greek term. Sure, this is not usual way of transliteration of Greek words. I am inclined to believe that the translated appellation was the one functioning in Bulgaria, inasmuch as the form of the other one remains highly untypical.

It is to stress also the differences regarding the title of the original Greek ecclesiastical ordo for promotion of highest titles: «Εὐχὴ ἐπὶ προχειρίσει Καίσαρος, Νωβελισσίμου. Κουροπαλάτου»[10]. We see that the title of *nobelissimus* is absent from the Slavic title. It does not appear in any of the copies known to us. This might mean that the translator strove to adapt the purpose of the ecclesiastic ordo to the Bulgarian realities. This too may be the reason why the *curopalates* was presented in a specific way: first a Slavic translation of the name of the institution was given – хранитєль полатъ, set in explicative manner, followed by the Greek term (borrowed from a Latin term) in the nominative, together with the suffix: куропалатись. This strange approach is in contradiction with the established practice for loanwords from the Greek.

The title of *curopalates* was one of those whose existence in mediaeval Bulgaria is problematic. As I said, it is mentioned only once in the sources, in the title of a prayer for promotion of the highest dignitaries. The prayer is included in the manuscript of the Synodicon and obviously had some official character. In my opinion, this ordo could be accepted as a historical source. Its

[8] Biliarsky 1993, pp. 134-135; Билярски 1998, pp. 148-156. Regarding *curopalates* in the Empire, see Oikonomidès 1972, pp. 97 and 293, as well as Verpeaux 1966, pp. 137 l. 11 and 175 ll. 20-22.

[9] Попруженко 1898, p. 80; Biliarsky 1993, p. 106 n. 215

[10] *Eucologium*, p. 730; Arranz 1990, pp. 103 ff.

presence in the ritual practice during the Second Bulgarian Empire provides us with valuable information regarding the titular system. So, I would dare to assume that the *curopalates* probably did exist in mediaeval Bulgaria, however the appellation may have been not the borrowed Greek word but the translation of that word figuring in the mentioned prayer's title. In other words, the Bulgarian title was perhaps not *curopalates*, but the Slavic appellation хранитєль полатъ (i.e. "palace curator"), where the other forms are present only by way of clarification.

It would be interesting to present comparisons with other Balkan countries. Stojan Novaković proposed the view that the court managers (which were registered under different names in mediaeval Serbia) and the Moldavian *dvornics* were identical with the Byzantine *curopalates*[11]. In a Bosnian charter of 1454, there is reference to a "court's prince": «нашега дворскога кнеза радичь копиевика»[12]. This was undoubtedly a high dignitary, one of the closest to the ruler, and who probably was entrusted with care of court life and management. In the Serbian state, a term that draws our attention is дворoдрьжица ("court holder")[13]. This appellation occurs several times in the sources, but the connection here with the Byzantine *curopalates* is too remote and hypothetical.

The data on *dvornics / vornics* (from *dvor* = "court") in Walachia and Moldavia are considerably ampler. The name used for them in the southern principality was дворникъ or, in the seventeenth century, occasionally "great judge of the court"; in the Latin documents it was «iudex et palatinus curie nostre, palatinus, dvornic […] sive iudice, provisor curie, iudex curie, iudex generalis»[14]. In Moldavia, the title occurs as дворникь and, rarely, ворникь, while in the Latin-language charters it is «marscalcus, magnus provisor, supremus provisor, provisor curie, supremus iudex curie»[15]. The institution appeared in both principalities as early as the fourteenth century: we first encounter it in Walachia on September 4, 1389; in Moldavia, in a Polish text dated 1387, and an internal text dated November 18, 1398.

[11] Новаковић 1908, pp. 264-265.

[12] Новаковић 1908, p. 252.

[13] Новаковић 1912, pp. 520 and 751, and 1908, pp. 265-266.

[14] Stoicescu 1968, p. 186.

[15] Grigoraş 1971, p. 255; Stoicescu 1968, p. 193.

The competencies of the office of the Romanian *dvornic* are well known[16]. Undoubtedly, the name of the office comes from the Slavic word "dvor" and is connected with the need to administrate life in the palace, the palace revenues, and the domains of the prince. However, the foremost obligation of the *dvornik* was to administer justice. This dignitary appears as the chief judge at central state level, whose jurisdiction covered civil lawsuits (even those involving large inheritance among the aristocracy), financial, and penal cases. The *dvornik's* competencies for administration of justice were very clearly indicated in the name of his office in the above-mentioned Latin-language documents. In the northern principality, this dignitary had military functions as well, especially in the initial period.

These remarks give no reason to make direct comparisons between the Byzantine institution and that in Walachia and Moldavia. This is the general opinion of contemporary Romanian historiography as well. In this sense, the Romanian *dvornics*, though with a Slavic name for their office, seem to have been more similar to the Hungarian *palatinus*, than to the Byzantine *curopalates*.

What can we safely claim about this institution in Bulgaria? The single extant domestic source affords no possibility for generalisation, but we could indicate a few things. Above all, we should consider the appellation itself. The problem is that we know the office only from the text in the Synodicon, i.e. the heading of the ordo, where there are two designations for it. I should say at once that, in my opinion, the more acceptable one appears to be хранитєль полатъ ("palace curator"). It is included in full in the title of the ordo, while the other appellation, коуропалатись, is placed only for clarification and is given in its Greek nominative case form, as mentioned above. It is to stress two points: first, this dignitary was included in the translation of the Byzantine prayer that refers to the *caesar*, *nobelissimus*, and *curopalates*; second, that the Bulgarian translator and copyist of the text deemed it necessary to clarify explicitly the position of the Bulgarian dignitary in terms of the Byzantine *curopalates*. This fact certainly implies that the two institutions matched.

Therefore, the view that the archetype of the Bulgarian "palace curator" is to be found in the Byzantine *curopalates* is proven by the source itself. In addition, it should be stressed that the name itself, хранитєль полатъ, is a calque of the Latin term through the Greek loanword κουροπαλάτης. In

[16] DUZINCHEVICI 1929; BALAN 1931; STOICESCU 1968, pp. 185-204; GRIGORAŞ 1971, pp. 255-263; SACHELARIE 1988, pp. 511-512.

making comparisons, however, I should recall something said earlier in the discussion: the Byzantine *curopalates* early on in time lost his real functions, and this became a "pure" title. In Philotheus' treatise the term is included among the titles bestowed through *insignia*, so among the "pure titles". In this case, the question arises whether the Bulgarian dignity was also purely titular in value. Assuming the thesis that it was directly borrowed from Constantinople, we should conclude that the "palace curator" was holder of a title not connected with any administrative duties. Now, we should remember that the only instance of a so-called "pure" title in the Byzantine hierarchical system to occur in Bulgaria was not called by its original Greek (transliterated into Cyrillic) name, but by a calque, i.e. by a literal translation of the term.

In all other cases, those of despot, sebastocrator, protosebastos, sebastos, etc., the original sound of the name was preserved. On the contrary, the terms indicating various offices are usually calques. In order to designate a capacity of a person, i.e. his title, it is not necessary to understand the semantic content of a term. The incomprehensible Greek word even lends an additional loftiness, typical for titled persons. In that case, why was the appellation of the *curopalates* translated, and ultimately from Latin at that? This could be explained by the fact that this was a court institution, whose bearer really did have certain court duties. These obligations might necessitate expressing the office in Slavic; thereby its contents would be made comprehensible.

Therefore, the only sure source of information remains the text itself. We may judge of the nature of the institution mainly by its name: хранитєль полатъ (= "palace curator"). It undoubtedly indicates care for the court, its protection, and, probably, its general management. I already pointed out that there were actually exercised duties involved. I would not want, however, to put thereby in doubt the titular character of the institution. On the contrary, it must certainly have been part of the hierarchy, as confirmed by the prayer, which envisages a particular order for appointment of the dignitary. I should specially stress that this was one of the highest titles in the Bulgarian empire. This is the conclusion we must draw in considering the nature of his duties as supervisor of the court or through comparison with the position of the Byzantine *curopalates*, but also by the history of the prayer, which refers to the three highest titles in the Byzantine Empire.

Maybe my conclusion about the existence and character of Bulgarian palace curators seems too categorical with a positive decision about their presence in the state system of Bulgaria. Nevertheless, I am incline to continue to call the institution "enigmatic" because this unique way to study it will retain the question of its existence as in many cases of mediaeval Bulgarian history.

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Pilgrimage in the thirteenth century Balkans. Some archaeological and historical observations

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There is little evidence of pilgrimage inside the Balkan territories of the Byzantine Empire before AD 1000[1]. The earliest evidence in that respect concerns visits to living holy men, whose fame attracted people from the immediate surroundings. In such cases, pilgrims traveled to draw inspiration from the ascetic practices of the holy men, and occasionally to witness their formidable powers. In other words, there is no healing involved in such early pilgrimage practices. For example, in a place in the Peloponnese, «which the local inhabitants are accustomed to call Moros», St. Nikon the Metanoiete (who died shortly before or after the year 1000) withdrew to a cave and asked the local priests and monks to be given the monastic habit, as «was worn out by disease and suffering ill in his body»[2]. Shortly after that, «a multitude of people gathered desiring to obtain his blessing (*eulogia*)». As they were all thirsty and «in that place there was no water nor any flow of a spring», Nikon immediately showed his miraculous powers «before the eyes of all» by striking the earth with his cross-bearing staff to bring water to the surface[3].

[1] Meagre is also the evidence of pilgrims from the Balkans going to Jerusalem. Around 1000 AD, on his way to the Holy Land, a goldsmith from Athens stopped on the island of Tinos and signed his name on the wall of a cave at Gastria (MALAMUT 1988, pp. 213, 467 and 547). A fragment of a two-sided lead medallion found in the environs of Silistra (Bulgaria) and dated to the late tenth or eleventh century may be interpreted as evidence of pilgrimage to Constantinople (DONCHEVA 2020). An eleventh-century bronze disc with the images of the Resurrection and the entry into Jerusalem, now in the National Museum of History in Sofia, may have also been obtained by a pilgrim to the Holy Land (MARKOV 2004). A fragment of a mussel (believed to be from the shrine of St. James in Santiago de Compostela) was found together with another ampulla in Cherson (Crimea) in a grave dated to the tenth or eleventh century (IASHAEVA 2010, pp. 484 and 483 fig. 8.3; IASHAEVA et al. 2011, pp. 476 and 188 fig. 102). Another mussel badge found in Rudine near Braničevo (Serbia) may also indicate a pilgrim returning from Santiago de Compostela, but it is of a much later date, after 1100 or even 1150 (ŠPEHAR 2022, pp. 103-104 and 104 fig. 23). For an eulogion-icon with the portraits of Sts. Peter and Paul, found in Cherson and dated between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, and indicating a pilgrim returning from Rome, see IASHAEVA – REIDA – SELEZNEV 2013.

[2] SULLIVAN 1987, p. 32.

[3] He later repeated the water miracle in front of a group of people traveling with him from Corinth to Sparta. Not only were they «astounded at the wonder of the miracle», but on the site of the spring produced by Nikon's

The therapeutic aspect becomes prominent in the cult of saints of Byzantine Greece only after 1000. All fifteen posthumous miracles reported at the end of the *Life of St. Luke the Younger* are about the healing of a wide variety of afflictions, from demonic possession to cancer and blindness. St. Luke's favorite remedy for any kind of disease was olive oil from the lamp hanging above his tomb[4]. Cure might often come about through a dream, especially when the suppliant was allowed to sleep near the tomb of the saint. A boy and a man, both possessed by demons, were visited and healed by St. Theodora of Thessaloniki, while they were asleep[5].

People from as far as Thermopylae and the island of Evvoia came to St. Luke the Younger's tomb near Steiris (on the northern coast of the Gulf of Corinth)[6]. The tomb of St. Nikon in Sparta was visited by local judges, but also by people from «the environs of Corinth» as well as «the coastal area of Kalamata»[7]. A large building was found in 2008 next to a church erected in the tenth century at the site *Kokkonas hani*, not far from the modern pilgrimage site at the Holy Shrine of St. Paraskevi in Tempi (Thessaly). This building, coin-dated to the early tenth century has been interpreted as an inn for pilgrims, but there is no indication of any long-distance contacts[8].

Suppliants from far-away places were exceptional and are mentioned precisely because of that. For example, Leo Phokas, the *domestikos* of the West and brother of Emperor Nicephorus II (963-969) came to Mount Athos as a pilgrim to express his gratitude to God for having secured his victory against the "Scythians"[9]. Monks «from various mountains», including perhaps Mount Athos, came to Thessaloniki to appeal to St. Theodora, and the

miracle-working staff a house of prayer dedicated to him was built «by one of the local inhabitants» (SULLIVAN 1987, p. 42).

[4] CONNOR – CONNOR 1994, pp. 71-73, 75, 80, 81 and 84. For olive oil in the *Life of St. Peter of Argos*, see ANAGNOSTAKIS 1996, p. 127. St. Luke died in 953, half a century before St. Nikon. A healing miracle involving olive oil from the lamp is also reported for St. Nikon (SULLIVAN 1987, p. 65). However, that may simply be the influence of the *Life of St. Luke the Younger*, a text from which the author of the *Life of St. Nikon* drew for a number of elements in his own work (ROSENQVIST 1996, pp. 95-96).

[5] TALBOT 1996, pp. 50-51. For incubation, see also CONNOR – CONNOR 1994, p. 76.

[6] CONNOR – CONNOR 1994, pp. 81-82. Women are prominent among suppliants at St. Luke's tomb, both old and young, some appealing for themselves, others for their children (CONNOR – CONNOR 1994, pp. 69-72).

[7] SULLIVAN 1987, pp. 52 and 56.

[8] ANDROUDIS 2018.

[9] NORET 1982, p. 27.

same did the wife of a *strategos* of Hellas[10]. Emperor Michael IV (1034-1041) stayed for a while in that same city and «frequented the tomb of the wondrously victorious martyr Demetrios in the sincere hope of finding relief from his illness»[11]. The healing agent that he was seeking probably consisted of the *myron* gushing forth from the saint's tomb[12]. This was the same *myron* that, according to John Skylitzes, the citizens of Thessaloniki rubbed onto their bodies before going into battle against the Bulgarian rebels under Alusian, who besieged the city in 1040[13]. *Myron* is also mentioned as flowing from the tomb of St. Nikon. The judge of Peloponnesos, Basil Apokaukos came to Sparta specifically to obtain some *myron* in a vessel, in order to bring it home with him «for the sanctification and relief from misfortunes and remedy for diseases»[14]. In the 10th century, fragrant healing ointment miraculously exuded not just from the sarcophagus containing the remains of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki, but also from her icon[15]. However, the earliest evidence for pilgrims coming to Thessaloniki to obtain *myron* from the tomb of St. Demetrius cannot be dated before 1100.

The evidence in question consists of lentoid, leaden flasks bearing the image of St. Demetrius on one side, which have been found in significant numbers across the Balkans, and beyond (**Fig. 1**). The southernmost specimen was found in the ruins of the Church of St. John in Kalyvia (near Athens, Greece), but a second, different flask is known from an unknown location in Attica[16]. Leaden flasks with the image of St. Demetrius have also been found in the central Balkans, as far to the west as Stalać in Serbia and the Agios Achilleios Island in the Small Prespa Lake[17]. The easternmost specimen is from the environs of Balchik, on the

[10] TALBOT 1996, pp. 56 and 59.

[11] WORTLEY 2010, p. 383.

[12] *Myron* was perfumed oil miraculously produced by the saint's tomb (CASEAU 2005, p. 149).

[13] WORTLEY 2010, p. 388; see also MACRIDES 1990, p. 194.

[14] SULLIVAN 1987, p. 50.

[15] TALBOT 1996, pp. 54 and 61.

[16] PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI 2002, p. 185; TOTEV 2011, p. 64 fig. 124. A third specimen of unknown provenance is in the Benaki Museum of Athens (BAKIRTZIS 1990, p. 51; TOTEV 2011, p. 59 fig. 106). It is possible that another specimen is the fragment of a leaden flask found in Corinth (DAVIDSON 1952, pp. 75 and 76 fig. 4). However, the image of the saint is too damaged to allow for recognition.

[17] TOŠIĆ – RAŠKOVIĆ 2009, pp. 189, 190 and 190 fig. 9.1; ŠPEHAR 2022, pp. 101 and 102 fig. 22.2; MOUTSOPOULOS 1971-1972, pl. 77. Three other specimens of unknown (but probably local) provenance are in the museums of Kruševac, Jagodina and Ioannina, respectively (TOTEV 2011, pp. 60 figs. 110 and 112, as well as 62 fig. 116).

Black Sea coast[18]. The northernmost find is also an outlier, as it is from Novgorod, in northwestern Russia. Excavations in two manors (*Д* and *И*) to the northwest and southwest of the intersection of the Velikaia and Koz'modemianskaia Streets have brought to light the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century properties of the Mishinichi and Onciforovichi boyars, otherwise known from a number of birchbark letters found in one of the two manors. Within that building, which was dendro-dated between 1161 and 1197, archaeologists have found a leaden flask with the image of St. Demetrius[19].

The Novgorod flask is the only member of the group for which a date before 1200 may be firmly established. Judging from the stratigraphical observations, the flask found in 2006 in a refuse pit near the apse of the Palace basilica in Preslav (Bulgaria) *may* be dated to the twelfth century, and if so, to its later decades[20]. A late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century date may also be advanced for the flask from Prespa, which was found inside the basilica of St. Achilleus[21]. Two flasks from the overfill of a small chapel excavated in Gratini (near Komotini, Greece) were found together with a coin hoard dated to the first half of the thirteenth century[22]. A general date within the thirteenth century may be admitted for the flask from the Carevec hill in Veliko Tărnovo (Bulgaria), even though the context of its finding is far from clear in that respect[23]. The dwelling inside the stronghold in Khrastovo, where another flask was found recently, has been dated even later (thirteenth to fourteenth century)[24]. Two other specimens were found in fourteenth-century contexts. One of them was

[18] TOTEV 2011, p. 147. Another specimen from the regional museum in Varna is without known provenance (TOTEV 2011, p. 138). A fragment of a leaden flask was found in Izvoarele, on the right bank of the Danube, not far from Silistra (DIACONU 1984, pp. 158-159). However, it is impossible to tell whether or not it had on it the image of St. Demetrius (or any image at all).

[19] SEDOVA 1994, pp. 93 and 92 fig. 2.1-2. Another specimen now in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg is of unknown provenance (ZALESSKAIA 1980; TOTEV 2011, p. 58 fig. 105).

[20] SHTEREVA 2009, p. 247, who suggests that the flask has initially been deposited in a grave.

[21] BAKIRTZIS 1990, p. 145.

[22] BAKIRTZIS 1982, pp. 526 and 529 figs. β and γ; PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI 2002, p. 184.

[23] PISAREV 1976. A second flask was found in 2008 on the Trapezica hill in the same city, and another two specimens are known from its environs (TOTEV 2011, pp. 137 and 148-149). GERASIMOVA-TOMOVA 1997, p. 142, has advanced a late thirteenth-century date for the flask from the Carevec hill in Veliko Tărnovo, as well as for those found in Perperikon (TOTEV 2011, p. 135), Madara (TOTEV 2011, pp. 135-136), and Plovdiv (TOTEV 2011, p. 136, according to whom the specimen originates from the Stara Zagora region). Her reason for doing so is the great resemblance between the portrait of St. Demetrius on the leaden flasks and that on the coins struck in Thessaloniki for Michael VIII Palaiologos.

[24] RABOVIANOV – KAMAREV 2024.

attached to a wooden frame for a mosaic icon of St. Demetrius, now in the *Museo Civico* de Sassoferrato (Italy), the other was inside the timber reliquary of St. Stephen Dečanski, now in the Dečani Monastery (Serbia)[25]. In both cases, the flasks were clearly recycled, and must therefore have been of an earlier date. At any rate, there is no basis for dating the leaden flasks with images of St. Demetrius earlier than 1160 (the earliest date possible for manor *И* in the Nerevskii district of Novgorod). In fact, most specimens with archaeological context may be dated after 1200[26].

Some of the leaden flasks show St. Demetrius as a martyr, holding a cross, either in military garb or in consular dress. Others have him as a warrior[27]. On the basis of such distinctions, Konstantin Totev has proposed a relative chronology, in which the earliest specimens are those with the image of St. Demetrius on one side, and St. Theodora of Thessaloniki on the other, both accompanied by inscriptions in Greek[28]. He dated those flasks to the twelfth century. According to him, flasks with the image of St. Demetrius as warrior appeared only after 1200 and combined that image with a portrait of the Mother of God, as in the case of the two specimens from Asenovgrad, one of those from Krasen, one of those from Perperikon, and the flasks from Balchik, Gratini, Karasura, Levski, and Preslav[29]. Finally, flasks with the image of St. Demetrius on horseback are the latest, most likely after 1300[30].

[25] BAKIRTZIS 1990, p. 142. Stephen Dečanski died in 1331.

[26] BAKIRTZIS 1989, p. 48, agreed with a thirteenth-century date for the specimens found in Gratini, and BAKIRTZIS 1990, p. 145, explicitly denied that any flask could be dated before the twelfth century. Nonetheless, BAKIRTZIS 2002, p. 183, pushed the earliest date into the eleventh century, no doubt under the influence of the written sources (specifically, of the account of John Skylitzes). Most recently, ANTONARAS 2016, p. 51 (see also ANTONARAS 2017, pp. 120-121) began with the tenth century, probably in order to "accommodate" the earliest mention of *myron* at the tomb of St. Demetrius (John Kaminiates). BAKIRTZIS 2002, p. 192 believed that the *myron* is first attested in the cult of St. Demetrius in the mid-XI century and, because of that, embraced the ideas of KAZHDAN 1978 about the inauthenticity of Kaminiates' account, while conveniently ignoring FRENDO 1997 and FRENDO – FOTIOU 2000.

[27] BAKIRTZIS 1990, pp. 142-143, who lists the flasks from Peritheorion (for which, see BAKIRTZIS 1982, p. 529 fig. α), Kastro Rogon, and Giannitsa (for which see PAPAEVANGELOS 1972, p. 17 fig. 1) with St. Demetrius as a soldier.

[28] TOTEV 2011, p. 76.

[29] TOTEV 2011, pp. 143-147. Totev distinguishes between the image of the Mother of God praying and the Virgin Mary the Sign. The latter he dated to the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

[30] Such images appear also on lead medallions (most likely *eulogiai*) found in Preslav, the environs of Kazanlăk, Novgorod, and from a private collection in New York. They all show a child behind St. Demetrius on horseback and a "blooming cross" on the reverse (TOTEV 2010). However, no flask is known with the image of St. Demetrius on horseback. Moreover, the relative chronology in TOTEV 2011 left out a significant number of

Charalambos Bakirtzis noted that some flasks have a long, others a short funnel-like opening, but the detail does not seem to be chronologically relevant. For example, specimens with the image of St. Theodora, such as that from the *Benaki Museum* in Athens, have short funnels, much like the flask from Giannitsa, with the image of St. Demetrius as warrior, while flasks with the image of the Virgin Mary the Sign, such as found in 1989 inside the stronghold in Krasen (Bulgaria) have tall funnels, just like the specimen with an image of St. Theodora from Stalać[31]. Nor is there any consistent correlation between length and decoration. Late specimens, such as the flask with the image of the Virgin Mary the Sign found in 2004 in the environs of Balchik is almost as long (6.1 cm) as the specimen found four years later on the Trapezica hill in Veliko Tărnovo (6 cm), which bears the image of St. Theodora[32]. Conversely, some the smallest flasks are those of Perperikon and two unknown locations in Bulgaria, each one of them no more than 5 cm long, but decorated with a different image – St. Theodora, St. Nestor, and Virgin Mary the Sign, respectively[33].

Each flask was made of two halves cast in lead and soldered in the middle. The casting technique seems to have been quite simple, requiring clay moulds shaped by imprinting an already existing flask[34]. No production center or workshop has so far been found, but scholars assume that all flasks were made in Thessaloniki, because the majority bear images of St. Demetrius and St. Theodora[35]. Some have noted that the side decorated with the portrait of St. Theodora is often more worn than that with the portrait of St. Demetrius, which implies that the former was worn against the body[36]. The image of St. Demetrius must have been considered therefore more important, perhaps even attributed apotropaic powers. At any rate,

specimens with the portrait of St. Nestor (often identified by an inscription), such as those from a child burial in Krasen, as well as the flasks from Arta (PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI 2002, pp. 184-185), a private collection in Thessaloniki (TOTEV 2011, p. 141), the *Louvre* and *British Museums* (TOTEV 2011, pp. 61 fig. 115, and 62 fig. 117), and the regional museum in Shumen (DONCHEVA 2006; TOTEV 2009). Another such flask is published by KĂNEV 2001, pp. 31-32 and 32 fig. 5.

[31] TOTEV 2011, p. 59 fig. 106; BAKIRTZIS 1990, pl. 52; GERASIMOVA-TOMOVA, pp. 146 and 152 fig. 8; ŠPEHAR 2022, pp. 101 and 102 fig. 22.2.

[32] TOTEV 2011, pp. 147 and 148-149.

[33] GERASIMOVA-TOMOVA 1987, pp. 137-139, and 136 figs. 3-6; TOTEV 2011, pp. 142 and 145.

[34] As indicated by mirror-like inscriptions and images on pairs of flasks (TOTEV 2011, p. 58).

[35] If flasks were produced in Thessaloniki, it is remarkable that so far only two are known from that city and its environs (TOTEV 2011, pp. 59 fig. 107, and 141).

[36] GERASIMOVA-TOMOVA 1997, p. 142.

the concomitant presence of the portraits of St. Demetrius and St. Theodora implies that the flasks were made for pilgrims to carry the *myron* from the shrines of those two saints[37]. Some have noted that so far no stopper has been found with any flask. It may well have been that the funnel of each flask was blocked with cloth or some other material that could easily be soaked in *myron*, in order to exude fragrance to the nose of the person wearing the flask attached by two handles with a string around the neck[38]. Vera Gerasimova-Tomova believed that flasks with (most likely intentionally) broken funnels were typically deposited in graves, probably after the *myron* was poured somewhere else[39]. True, the specimen found in a grave in Peritheorion has one side broken, specifically that that was probably decorated with the image of St. Theodora[40]. However, its neck is intact. Most specimens with broken necks are stray finds, and there is no way to find out the moment at which the damage was done[41]. Moreover, the specimen found in a child grave in Krasen is intact, even though the images of the saints on both sides are barely recognizable[42]. That flask was found on the left collarbone of the skeleton, which suggests that it had been placed around the deceased child's neck[43]. This raises interesting questions about the symbolism of the flask. Even if, as Gerasimova-Tomova believes, there was no *myron* inside the flask when deposited in the grave, the artifact was sufficiently important in itself to be attached to the child's body, probably because of its apotropaic properties. Most other specimens with known archaeological

[37] Flasks are interpreted in terms of pilgrimage, which is believed to have increased considerably during the thirteenth century, when the majority of the flasks are dated. For a clear example of such a circular argument, see ANTONARAS 2017, p. 120.

[38] MARKOV 2017.

[39] GERASIMOVA-TOMOVA 1997, p. 140.

[40] BAKIRTZIS 1982, p. 529 fig. α; BAKIRTZIS 1990, p. 145.

[41] Broken necks may be observed on the flasks from Kavala (TOTEV 2011, p. 64 fig. 123), the Bozhurec Peak near Sliven (RADEVA 2009) and from the region of Veliko Tărnovo (TOTEV 2011, p. 137). The same is true for the specimens with unknown provenance from the *Louvre Museum* (TOTEV 2011, p. 61 fig. 115), the *British Museum* (TOTEV 2011, pp. 62 and 117), the *Benaki Museum* in Athens (TOTEV 2011, p. 59 fig. 106), and the region museum in Shumen (TOTEV 2011, p. 141). Both the sides and the neck of the specimen from Madara are broken, while a large chunk of the hull and the neck of the flask from Karasura are missing, a damage strangely similar to that of the specimen from Khotalich (TOTEV 2011, pp. 135, 138 and 143).

[42] TOTEV 2011, p. 142.

[43] GRIGOROV 2010, pp. 45-46, 153, 252 fig. 57 and 255 fig. 60.I-368. In that respect, the archaeological context of grave 16 in Krasen is directly comparable to that in grave 20 of the northern area next to the basilica of 1932 in Cherson, where a small amphora-like *eulogia* was hanging from a necklace of lignite beads (IASHAEVA et al. 2011, p. 477).

context suggest a non-funerary use, probably stored in the house or otherwise with domestic functions. Most of them come from strongholds, which suggests that pilgrims to the shrine of St. Demetrius in Thessaloniki were from among their inhabitants, possibly of noble status[44]. That so many flasks with the image of St. Demetrius are from Bulgaria speaks volumes about the sudden interest in that saint in the early years of the Second Bulgarian Empire[45].

The dating of the flasks to the thirteenth century nicely dovetails with the information from the written sources concerning the interest that Bulgarian rulers had in Thessaloniki throughout that century. Johannitsa Kaloyan died in 1207 at the siege of the city, while his successor Boril attempted to conquer the city four years later[46]. After 1230, Johannitsa's son, John Asen II minted gold coins imitating the hyperpera struck in Thessaloniki, and after his death in 1241, his dowager queen left for that city, where she remained for a few years[47]. Much more important, however, are the implications of the dating for the history of pilgrimage to Thessaloniki. If the date indicated by the archaeological context of the flask found in Novgorod is to be trusted, the beginning of the production of leaden flasks must be placed chronologically within a decade or so before the year 1200[48]. It is quite tempting to see that production prompted by the Norman sack of Thessaloniki (1185), especially given the testimony of Niketas Choniates, according to whom the conquerors sacrilegiously attempted to fry fish in the *myron*, smeared it on their boots, and «used it for all the purposes which olive oil now serves»[49]. This is not contradicted by what we know about the production of leaden flasks in general.

The production of leaden flasks in Jerusalem may have been spurred by the First Crusade, but ceased in 1187, when the city was taken by Saladin. After that, the production moved to Acre, for pilgrims en route to Jerusalem or to Galillee[50]. During the first decades of

[44] Asenovgrad (TOTEV 2011, p. 144), Krasen (*ibidem*), Lovech (TOTEV 2011, pp. 140-141), Perperikon (TOTEV 2011, pp. 146 and 148), Razhdavica (TOTEV 2011, p. 140), Redina (ANTONARAS 2016, p. 52 fig. 31), Rusokastro (TOTEV 2011, p. 140). For the domestic use of *eulogiai* in the Byzantine world, see RITTER 2020, p. 257.

[45] OVCHAROV 1987. TOTEV 2011, p. 54, counts 32 specimens found in Bulgaria alone.

[46] MADGEARU 2017, pp. 169 and 186.

[47] MADGEARU 2017, pp. 215-216 and 228.

[48] Not in the mid-twelfth century, as TOTEV 2011, p. 53, maintains.

[49] MAGOULIAS 1984, p. 169.

[50] SYON 1994-1999; IMPERIALE 2015, pp. 221 and 224.

the thirteenth century, leaden flasks imitating the style of the Acre containers began to be produced in many places in Western Europe. A flask produced in Acre in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century was found in Corinth[51]. A fragment of a mould for the production of such flasks strongly suggests that after the Fourth Crusade, and under Frankish occupation, Corinth turned into a production center[52]. Leaden flasks produced in the Holy Land are known from the Balkans as well. One of them was accidentally found in Carev Brod, near Shumen (Bulgaria), another is known from Mačvanska Mitrovica, near Sremska Mitrovica (Serbia)[53]. The northernmost specimen of this group was found in 1968 in Iași (Romania)[54]. Its decoration on one side reminds one of the flask from Mačvanska Mitrovica, while on the other the hashed bands are remarkably similar to the border decoration of the flasks with images of St. Demetrius. Such analogies suggest that the beginnings of the production of flasks with the portrait of St. Demetrius were linked to the first impact of the first containers of oil from the Holy Land that were brought by pilgrims from the Balkans in the late twelfth century. By the end of that century, the idea was adopted for the shrine of St. Demetrius as well, and containers for the *myron* from that shrine began to be produced for what was an increased traffic of pilgrims. It may very well be that this initiative came in order to enlarge the catchment area of the shrine of St. Demetrius beyond the city of Thessaloniki, precisely at a moment when the shrine needed an economic boost after the Norman sack of that city in 1185. Moreover, in the early thirteenth century, specifically during the Frankish rule over the city, leaden *eulogiai* were also produced in Thessaloniki in the form of medallions with the image of St. Demetrius on horseback[55].

Although *myron* at the tomb of St. Demetrius is attested already in the tenth century, it was almost three centuries later that pilgrimage to Thessaloniki grew sufficiently large to

[51] DAVIDSON 1952, p. 75 and pl. 53.573.

[52] DAVIDSON 1952, pp. 75-76 and pl. 53.576. No such flasks have been found in Greece or anywhere else in the Balkans.

[53] MARKOV 2010; ŠPEHAR 2022, pp. 101 and 102 fig. 22.1.

[54] MACARIE 1981; TEODOR 1991, pp. 93-94, 171-172, and 136 fig. 18.7, who wrongly dated it to the tenth or eleventh century.

[55] TOTEV 2010.

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create the necessary conditions for an «economy of eulogia containers»[56]. The explosion of the cult of St. Demetrius in the thirteenth century is a direct consequence of that economy.

[56] RITTER 2020, p. 272.

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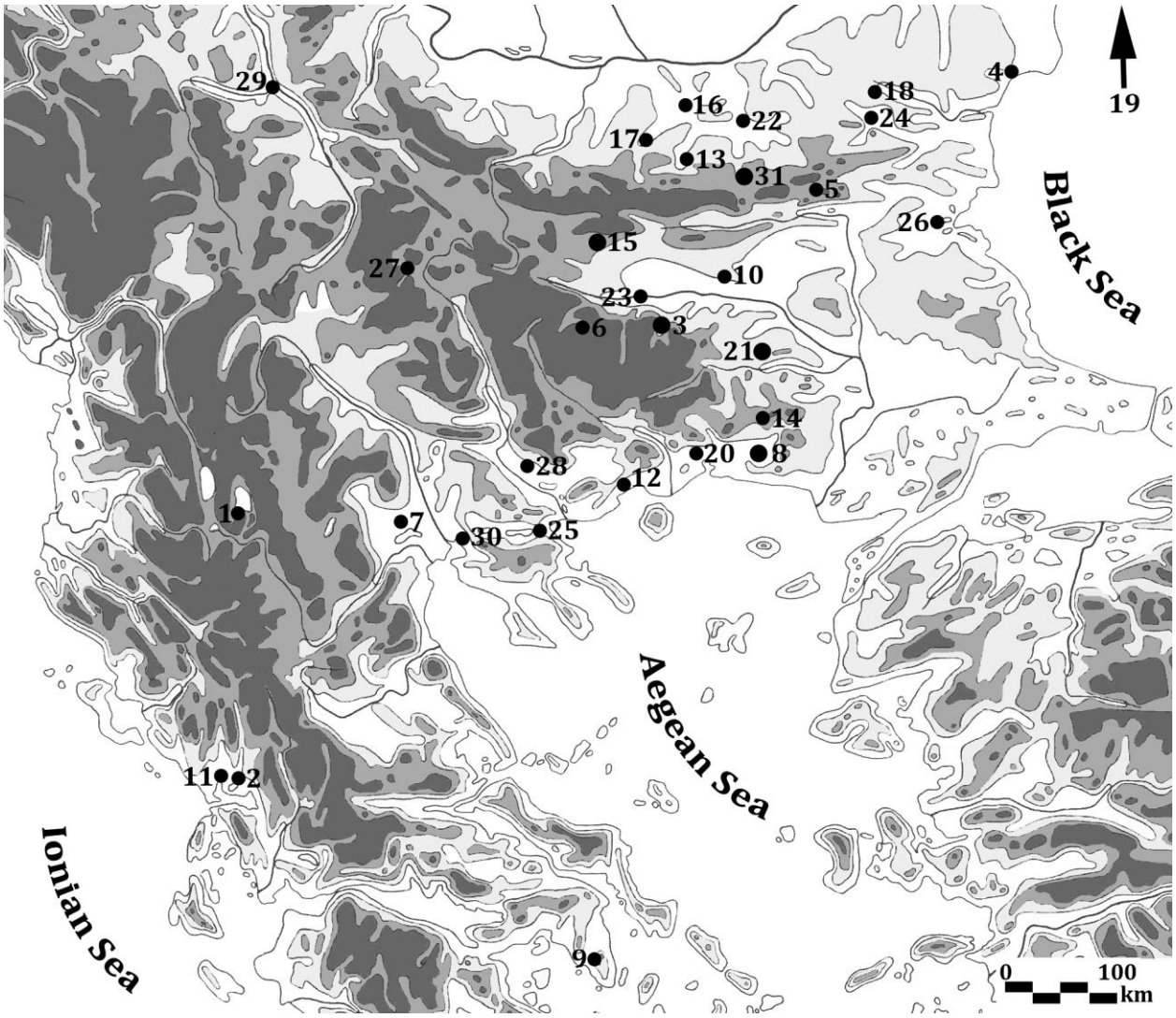
Illustrations



Distribution of the main sites with lead flasks with the image of St. Demetrius: 1. Agios Achilleios; 2. Arta; 3. Asenovgrad; 4. Balchik; 5. Bozhurec Peak; 6. Cepina; 7. Giannitsa; 8. Gratini; 9. Kalyvia; 10. Karasura; 11. Kastro Rogon; 12. Kavala; 13. Khotalich; 14. Khrastovo; 15. Krasen; 16. Levski; 17. Lovech; 18. Madara; 19. Novgorod; 20. Peritheorion; 21. Perperikon; 22. Petko Karavelovo; 23. Plovdiv; 24. Preslav; 25. Redina; 26. Rusokastro; 27. Razhdavica; 28. Serres; 29. Stalać; 30. Thessaloniki; 31. Veliko Tărnovo.

Small circles indicate one specimen each, larger ones two specimens.

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Byzantine Studies, past, present, and in the future: some considerations

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Byzantine Studies is a typical small subject: on the one hand, it plays only a very limited role in public perception and its influence on society and politics is small. On the other hand, it deals with the entire culture of a state that has existed for over a thousand years and is therefore broadly diversified in numerous sub-disciplines such as history, archaeology and art history, linguistics, literary and music history, as well as church history and religious studies.

As a result, Byzantine Studies naturally has to struggle with all the problems that characterise such a small subject: at universities and academies, its existence is always at risk mainly due to the small number of students who, however, could not be employed in any way in the subject if there would be more. On the other hand, Byzantine studies has developped very dynamically in the last few decades, as we were all able to observe at the congress in Venice in 2022, and has now finally arrived in the present also in terms of methodology. However, one consequence of this development is that communication between the various sub-disciplines has become increasingly difficult, so that we are now faced with the question of how Byzantine studies as a whole can still be held together.

I myself have been teaching Byzantine Studies at the *University of Munich* for more than twenty years, in constant exchange with my colleagues in the neighbouring subjects of Modern Greek Studies and Byzantine Art History, and with many others. For most of this time, I was also the editor of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, a long-established journal that publishes articles across the entire broad field of Byzantine Studies and issues a scholarly bibliography twice a year.

This bibliography is perhaps a good indicator of the development of the subject, and also provides us with a practical tool when trying to understand how differently Byzantine Studies is practised in different countries with different research traditions. Even if the

bibliographic data are sometimes only of limited significance due to the fluctuations in the number of incoming entries, they do show a clear development in the four most important areas, which alone account for around two thirds of the entries. The number of entries on political and cultural history has fallen significantly by around 40% in the last ten years, while the number of entries on literature has risen by around 10% and those on church and theology, especially religious literature, by around 80%. I find it difficult to understand the exact reasons for this development, also because this change is not clearly linked to the different research traditions in the individual countries that often go back a long way and can be explained by the very different approaches to the subject.

The following remarks are intended to show what the origin of these research traditions is, how they have developped, and how we should finally overcome them in order to make Byzantine Studies fit for the future.

When enthusiasm for Greek antiquity revived during the Renaissance, first in Italy and then throughout Western Europe, the first teachers of the language were Greek emigrants who also brought with them older Christian texts from Late Antiquity as well as their own literary production of the past centuries. Later, when these emigrants no longer played a role, classical philology emerged in the modern sense, which excluded the entire literature of the Byzantine period from its canon and oriented itself ever more strictly towards an almost absurdely idealised antiquity.

At the same time, however, a more positive reception of Byzantine culture took place in the religious sphere. On the one hand, the Catholic Church attempted to appropriate the traditions of the East; on the other hand, when the Western Church split into a Catholic and a Protestant denomination, these traditions were exploited by both sides. In Greece and Orthodox Eastern Europe the reception of Byzantine culture was seen as a part of the own religious tradition, but nevertheless became a part of academical research.

All of these currents converged in modern Byzantine Studies, which emerged more or less simultaneously in several European countries in the late nineteenth century. But major differences still remained, which in turn had completely different reasons. The fact that the Byzantine Empire had completely disappeared in the mid-fifteenth century and had no successor state in the sense of modern nationalism also played a major role in the reception of Byzantine cultures in the last two hundred years. Today the old heartland of the Byzantine

Empire includes Turkey and Greece as well as the neighbouring Balkan states and southern Italy, and in all of these areas this reception is very different.

In Turkey, apart from a few outbursts of political propaganda, this reception took place almost exclusively in the field of archaeology and art history for a long time, while history was only perceived in the form of the conflict between Byzantines and Turks in the late period of the Empire. Fortunately, this situation has changed in recent years with a thematic opening to the entire breadth of the discipline, and is now also reflected in the bibliography of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.

Although modern Greece is an Orthodox Christian country, it has sought to build on the great period of antiquity as a nation-state, but has nevertheless developed a wide spectrum of research in all areas of Byzantine Studies over the last hundred years or so.

The contrast between Byzantine Studies in Bulgaria and Romania is particularly striking: the Bulgarians were missionised already in the ninth century, but their state was in conflict with Byzantium for centuries and was even completely reconquered for a long time in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In contrast, the predecessor states of today's Romania only emerged shortly before the fall of Byzantium, they were largely outside its former territory and rather under the influence of the Byzantine church than of the declining Byzantine state. As a result, Bulgarian scholarly publications still focus mostly on political history and to some extent also on archaeology, while in Romania Byzantium is perceived as an almost purely religious phenomenon.

In Italy, however, the focus has traditionally been on philology and, due to the great treasures of Byzantine manuscripts in the Vatican, Venice and elswhere, on palaeography and codicology.

A similar analysis could also be carried out for all other countries where Byzantine studies exist today – but that would go too far at this point. The result in all cases is that centuries-old ideas about the Byzantine state and its culture, as well as traditions of research, continue to have a greater influence on modern research today than one would have expected.

Another problem that arises in this context is the question of the local and temporal boundaries of Byzantine studies. In the case of Italy, the question is how long the areas around the cities of Venice and Naples can still be considered Byzantine, which had become

practically independent in the course of the early Middle Ages, but for a long time retained a kind of special status as a former state territory in their relations with the Byzantine Empire. To what extent can their Latin culture and art be considered Byzantine at all?

Where Byzantium is seen as the origin of an orthodox Christian national culture that still exists today, its existence as a state fades into the background and with it also the end with the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453. Byzantium then lives on in our hearts (or in the Internet): it is no longer a historical era, but a way of life – and this means that things are also perceived as Byzantine that, according to our historical definition, are not Byzantine at all. This problem is most evident in the field of sacred music, where many developments actually occurred after the Byzantine period, including possible influences from oriental and Islamic traditions.

Only now, in a time of increasing international integration of the academic community especially in Europe and North America, in which humanities scholars are collaborating with colleagues from other countries and carrying out joint projects much more often than before, have we reached the point where the old, often unconscious orientation towards national traditions is gradually beginning to disappear.

In connection with the slow disappearance of the traditional devaluation of the Byzantine state, there is in recent years also the debate about its correct name. As is well known, the word “Byzantine” in the Byzantine period refers only to the city and its inhabitants, never to the entire state, which is still – and historically rightly so – viewed as a continuation of the Roman Empire. We first find the use of the word “Byzantine” for the entire state in the *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae* published in 1557 by the German humanist Hieronymus Wolf (1516–1580), and it quickly became popular by the desire to emphasize the discontinuity between the “Byzantine” and the ancient Roman period. The present debate as to whether one should stick with the term “Byzantine” or rather speak, more correctly, of the Eastern Roman Empire is taking place less in scholarship itself than on its popular fringes, where it is often associated with a somewhat strange ideological connotation. The Facebook group *Rome NOT Byzantium. The new history of the Roman Empire BCE 27 – CE 1453* is a typical example of this. A few years ago, I was reprimanded by the moderator in another, similar group for accidentally using the word “Byzantine”. But I still maintain that it is almost irrelevant for understanding a culture whether you call it by the name it used itself or

by the name others give it – as a German, I am confronted with this phenomenon almost everywhere in the world and I cannot say that I suffer much from it.

In Byzantine literature, the standard ancient Greek language remained in common use until the end of the state, and that the distance from the spoken language continued to grow over the thousand years of its existence. Almost all of the literature of the Byzantine period was written in an archaising language that was, at least in the later period, only accessible to a small part of the population. Literature in a language that could be described as early Modern Greek begins only in the twelfth century and does not go far beyond entertainment literature until the end of the Empire.

This fact made it easier for classical philologists to access Byzantine literature. However, the Byzantine standard language did not slavishly imitate the ancient language, but went through its own development within the given framework, something which from the perspective of classical philology was often perceived as a deviation from the norm and thus as evidence of cultural decline. The problem still exists today that some editors perceive the language of Byzantine texts to be incorrect and “improve” it, and thus distort it because they ignore or are not interested in the development of the language in the Middle Ages.

Ancient literature has come down to us practically only through manuscripts from the Byzantine age. Many of them date from the late Byzantine period, and production continued after the fall of the Empire, now mainly in Italy and other Western European countries. The transmission of ancient literature therefore took place over a long long period in an environment in which there was hardly any cultural break when the Byzantine state collapsed, and in which the connection to the living culture of the Greek East could easily be disregarded. And again, its historical dimension is ignored in such a context: Byzantium is no longer perceived as a state with a multi-layered culture that has existed for a thousand years, but only as a kind of research institute for the history of ancient texts without any literary achievements of its own.

As I have already said, the Byzantine Empire has perished forever and no state claims to be its successor. The result is that it has often become a projection screen for one’s own political and religious ideas, usually as an idealised, thoroughly Christian state, the study of which can also be a spiritual help to conservative people of today in mastering their lives in a completely different world and culture. However, on closer inspection and taking into

account all facets of its culture, Byzantium is by no means suitable for this, and you may be seriously disappointed if you place such expectations in it. Even Hans-Georg Beck (1910-1999), undoubtedly one of the leading Byzantinists of his time, obviously faced this problem in his late years and published a small essay called *Abschied von Byzanz* (Farewell to Byzantium), in which he looked back on his own work «intimidated and with an increasingly guilty conscience».

It is important not to fall into this trap, but to research Byzantium according to today's scholarly standards and from a certain loving distance. So let us accept Byzantium for what it was: a fascinating, long-lived civilisation that may have fallen, but which created immense cultural values of its own worth and continues to influence the culture of modern Europe to this day.

Much remains to be researched, and it is our task to do so and to preserve the memory of this great time.

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Did the Patriarch Germanos II (1223-1240) visit Epiros in 1238?

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This is a cautionary tale about the dangers of being misled by academic reputation and circumstantial evidence, as I was, when I claimed that in 1238 the Patriarch Germanos II made an improbable journey to Epiros[1]. I might have thought no more about it, given that we all make mistakes, were it not that in her recent and valuable study of *Art, Power, and Patronage in the Principality of Epirus 1204-1318* Leonela Fundić has been happy to accept that in 1238 the Patriarch Germanos II visited Arta[2]. It brought home the possibility that an unlikely event was gaining acceptance among a younger generation of scholars without ever being subjected to proper scrutiny. I note that most scholars have been more cautious and have carefully avoided giving an opinion, which itself needs to be explained. Their caution is commendable because a journey to Epiros by a patriarch of Constantinople – even one in exile at Nicaea – is inherently unlikely. The logistics are against it, while finding a feasible route is not easy. A journey by sea around the Peloponnese can be ruled out. But there were regular voyages between the ports of Thessaly and Asia Minor. From Thessaly Arta was accessible via Larissa and the passes across the Pindos mountains. Alternatively, it was possible to travel to Galaxidion on the Gulf of Corinth, where awaiting you there might be a boat to take you to Naupaktos, which was in regular contact with Arta. Reading between the lines, this was the route taken by Niketas Choniates, the nephew of the historian, when appointed to the see of Naupaktos in 1232. But it was not without its dangers. Niketas had the misfortune to fall into the hands of pirates, who made travel in the Gulf of Corinth hazardous[3]. Taking either of these routes the round trip from Nicaea to Arta would have required in the best of circumstances six months hard travelling and was not to be undertaken lightly. It goes

[1] ANGOLD 1995, pp. 532 and 553.

[2] FUNDIĆ 2022, pp. 31, 77 and 86.

[3] MIKLOSICH – MÜLLER 1860, III pp. 61-63; GASTGEBER 2016, p. 92. See NICOL 1957, pp. 118-119.

without saying that for an elderly patriarch, who was not in the best of health[4], to embark on such an arduous journey there would have to be some compelling reason, which was likely to leave some trace in the sources. I would suggest, by way of example, officiating at a dynastic wedding[5], given that during the period of exile there were at least two occasions, on which such a task obliged the patriarch to travel far from Nicaea.

The longest journey that the Patriarch Germanos II is ever known to have made was to Lampsakos on the Hellespont in 1235 in order to officiate at the marriage of the Nicaean heir-apparent Theodore II Laskaris to the daughter of the Bulgarian tsar John Asen II[6]. Equally, the longest journey that one of his immediate successors Patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos (1254-1260 and 1261-1265) undertook was in 1256 to Thessaloniki, where he officiated at another marriage: this time of the Epirot heir-apparent Nikephoros Doukas Komnenos to a daughter of Theodore II Laskaris[7]. It comes as no surprise that on both occasions the reigning emperor was present, because in those rare instances that a patriarch of Constantinople travelled any distance outside the capital it was either in the company of the emperor or with his express permission[8]. Supposing that Germanos II had visited Epiros in 1238, there was absolutely no chance that it would have been in the company of the emperor and, as we shall see, very little chance that it would have had the latter's approval. With that said, what is the evidence for a visit by Germanos II to Epiros, and why have so many scholars skirted round the whole question?

[4] Already by the end of 1225 Germanos II was displaying the classic symptoms of malaria: «καὶ τριταίῳ ψύχει κακούμεθα καὶ τῷ ἑπομένῳ συγκαιόμεθα καύσωνι» (LAGOPATES 1913, p. 296 ll. 37-38; ANGOLD 2024, pp. 217-218 and note 543.

[5] As it happens, there was an important dynastic wedding around the time of Germanos II's supposed visit to Epiros: that between Michael II of Epiros and Theodora Petraliphina, who would have been Germanos II's hosts, had he ever visited Arta. But so shrouded is it in mystery - its date cannot be established with any certainty nor can Theodora's identity – that it is scarcely worth considering: see MACRIDES 2007, p. 176 for the difficulties of the evidence.

[6] *ACROPOLITES* I.33 (pp. 50-52) and MACRIDES 2007, p. 194. See ANGELOV 2013, pp. 274-282.

[7] *ACROPOLITES* p. 294 and MACRIDES 2007, p. 314.

[8] E.g. the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos (1425-1448) and the Patriarch Joseph II (1416-1439) both attended the council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439), while the Patriarch Joseph I needed the permission of Michael VIII Palaiologos to visit Asia Minor in 1268 in order to win the support of monastic leaders, notably Nikephoros Blemmydes, in his struggle with the supporters of the Patriarch Arsenios: *PACHYMERES* V.2 (pp. 437-441); FAILLER 1981, pp. 205-207.

The answer to these questions lies with Père Vitalien Laurent, who was one of the twentieth-century's greatest Byzantinists. He was not given to speculation and was rarely wrong when it came to matters of fact[9]. Scarcely ever was he challenged, which helps to explain scholarly diffidence about Germanos II's visit to Epiros. In 1954 he published a stray document copied into a thirteenth-century *Nomokanon*[10], which must have originally formed part of a survey of Epirot monasteries commissioned by Germanos II[11]. It was dated to February 1238 and recorded the grant by that patriarch of stauropegial status to a monastic chapel in a region controlled by the ruler of Epiros, Michael II Doukas Komnenos (Angelos)[12]. Such a grant placed the chapel under direct patriarchal jurisdiction. So far, so good. The ceremony itself consisted of implanting a cross (σταυροπηγία/*stauropegia*) in the foundations of the building, whence the name of the grant: σταυροπήγιον/*stauropegion*. A late Byzantine protocol establishes the procedure for the establishment of a patriarchal *stauropegion*. The patriarch first had a wooden cross inscribed with the words «having been blessed (ἁγιασθὲν) by the most holy and ecumenical patriarch». This was then forwarded with a patriarchal permit either to the patriarchal exarch or to the local administrator of patriarchal rights or to a local bishop, who became responsible for carrying out the dedication of the monastery in the patriarch's name[13]. We can infer that this protocol was current under Germanos II, because by the late twelfth century *stauropegion* was a sufficiently serious problem to attract the attention of the canonist Theodore Balsamon and to become the object of legislation by the Patriarch George Xiphilinos (1191-1198), which suggests that by the turn of the twelfth century the procedures for creating a patriarchal *stauropegion* had been or were being established by the patriarchal chancery[14].

[9] DARROUZÈS 1974.

[10] MOMPHERATOS 1892, p. 310.

[11] KURTZ 1907, pp. 137-139.

[12] LAURENT 1954, pp. 108-109. The chapel was dedicated to St. Michael and was situated in the village of Pteri in the theme of Nikopolis and was registered by the hegoumenos of the monastery of the Eremitai, Bartholomaios Sanianos. A possible identification for the village of Pteri is the modern village of the same name to the north of Arta in the district of Tzoumerka, which was once included within the theme of Nikopolis.

[13] See *EUCHOLOGION*, p. 487.

[14] See "Stauropegion" in *ODB*, *s.v.*; ANGOLD 1995, pp. 149-150. The most detailed study of stauropegial monasteries in continental Greece (*Sterea Ellas*) is DELOUIS – ROUSSET 2012.

The protocol assumed that the patriarch almost never participated in the ceremony establishing a patriarchal *stauropegion*. This receives support from a case, which has been the subject of a special study by Günter Prinzing[15]. It revolves around the foundation of a monastery in an Epirot village, for which the local *archon* obtained a patriarchal *stauropegion*. On the strength of this grant the latter proceeded to deprive the local bishop of the various fees he was accustomed to extract from the villagers. The bishop took the case to court at some point between 1220 and 1229, which means that there is a good chance that the grant was made in the name of Germanos II. Nothing is said about how the *archon* obtained it, whether by fair means or foul, but what is quite sure is that on this occasion the patriarch did not have to make a special trip to Epiros so that he could be present at the ceremony establishing his *stauropegion*.

To make his case that Germanos II was indeed present in Epiros at such a ceremony in 1238 Laurent had to rely on circumstantial evidence. He provides a brilliant, if impressionistic, sketch of the situation at the time of the Orthodox Church in Epiros, in such a way as to suggest that it required the patriarch's personal attention[16]. There is much more that he might have added to strengthen his case. It was not only that the condition of the Orthodox Church in Epiros and in particular the abuse of the patriarchal *stauropegion* were such that they required the presence of the patriarch, or failing that, an accredited representative, but that Germanos II had also shown a particular interest in the church in Epiros, in part because of the concerns he had about the administration of the diocese of Naupaktos[17] and in part because of the state of the monasteries in Epiros[18]. In 1231 he made a start with tackling the problem by appointing Christopher, bishop of Ankyra, as patriarchal exarch to the western territories (τὰ δυτικὰ μέρη)[19], which is how the European provinces of the patriarchate of Constantinople were termed. The exarch had instructions, on the one hand, to remove John Apokaukos from his see of Naupaktos and to replace him with the already mentioned Niketas

[15] PRINZING 2009.

[16] LAURENT 1954, pp. 109-113.

[17] LAURENT 1971, n. 1283.

[18] LAURENT 1971, nn. 1259 and 1265.

[19] GASTGEBER 2016, pp. 94-97.

Choniates and, on the other, to carry out a survey into the condition of the monasteries in Epiros[20].

The exarch carried out both these tasks. While Christopher of Ankyra was in office, there was no obvious need for the presence of the patriarch in the European territories, but Christopher is not attested as exarch after 1234. He was replaced in this capacity by Joseph, the new archbishop of Thessaloniki, but he too soon disappears from the scene[21]. Complicating matters was the death in 1236 of the Archbishop of Ohrid, Demetrios Chomatenos, who had been a commanding figure among the Orthodox prelates in the western territories. His court acted as a court of appeal for the Orthodox churches of the western territories[22]. Thenceforward, they would have to turn to the patriarchal synod at Nicaea, which will help to explain why Germanos II was content to leave the see of Ohrid empty. It had still not been filled in 1241, when it was offered to the Nicaean scholar, Nikephoros Blemmydes, who turned it down[23]. Still more unsettling was the release in 1237 from detention of the former emperor Theodore Doukas[24], who had ruled at Thessaloniki until his capture in 1230 by the Bulgarian tsar John II Asen. Having been blinded by his captor Theodore was no longer eligible to hold imperial office, but having seized control of Thessaloniki he expelled his brother Manuel, who sought refuge at the Nicaean court. In his place he made his own son John emperor[25]. This threatened to restore the state of schism, which had previously existed between the patriarch at Nicaea and the bishops of the western territories when Theodore Doukas was emperor at Thessaloniki. Its liquidation was Germanos II's single most important achievement, but it was now in danger of unravelling. To counter this possibility in 1237 or 1238 John III Vatatzes despatched an expeditionary force of six galleys to restore Manuel Doukas to his throne at Thessaloniki. It was a complete

[20] KURTZ 1907, pp. 137-139; LAURENT 1971, n. 1268.

[21] HORNA 1905, where two epigrams are published celebrating the dispatch by Germanos II of the insignia of the office of patriarchal exarch to the archbishop of Thessalonica. For the dating see LAURENT 1971, n. 1281; LAURENT 1963, pp. 293-295.

[22] See PRINZING 2004.

[23] *AUTOBIOGRAPHIA* I.64 (p. 33 ll. 9-11); MUNITIZ 1988, p. 80.

[24] *ACROPOLITES* I.38 (p. 60 ll. 19-22); MACRIDES 2007, pp. 206-207.

[25] *ACROPOLITES* I.38 (p. 61 ll. 9-11); MACRIDES 2007, p. 207.

failure, because the moment Manuel reached Thessaly, he came to terms with his brother Theodore and his nephew Michael II Angelos, the ruler of Epiros[26].

It was exactly at this time that, if he ever visited Epiros, Germanos II would have set out. It was scarcely a propitious moment. What makes such an undertaking slightly more plausible is that on several occasions the patriarch declared his willingness to travel far from Nicaea to carry out the duties of his office. That it was not rhetoric pure and simple is borne out by his visit to Lampsakos on the Hellespont, where, as we know, he officiated at the marriage of Theodore II Laskaris. More pertinently, in the early years of his patriarchate, he made at least three extensive tours round the churches of western Asia Minor[27]. Shortly before he died in 1240 he wrote to the *catholicos* of the Armenian church that he was «prepared to wander far from the embrace of Constantinople and exile himself from the Great Church, which had fallen to his lot […] if only his brethren might be saved»[28].

This was pure rhetoric, though his successor, as patriarch, Manuel II interpreted it to mean that he was willing to meet the *catholicos* in person and remembered him as a man, who had travelled the length and breadth of his patriarchate[29]. If he never expressed a direct wish to visit Epiros, he did write to Manuel Doukas, emperor in Thessaloniki (1230-1237), proposing that they meet in person, so that he might hear his sweet voice. When Manuel Doukas pointed out the difficulties of travel to Greece from Asia Minor, as recently experienced by Niketas Choniates (the younger), the newly appointed bishop of Naupaktos, the patriarch shrugged these off as of little consequence[30]. Adding to the plausibility of a visit to Epiros is that for the period from March 1236 to 4 May 1239 we have unusually no documents that would establish the patriarch's presence in Nicaea[31]. It would have been in

[26] *ACROPOLITES* I.38 (pp. 61-62); MACRIDES 2007, p. 207.

[27] ANGOLD 2024, pp. 30, 174, 178, 179, 206 and 252-254. Nikephoros Blemmydes corroborates Germanos II's pastoral visitations, one of which was directed against Bogomil heretics: *AUTOBIOGRAPHIA* I.20.3-5 (p. 12); MUNITIZ 1988, pp. 54 and 58.

[28] LAGOPATES 1913, p. 356 l. 38 – p. 357 l. 5.

[29] LAURENT 1971, n. 1309; DEVREESSE 1939, pp. 149-151.

[30] MIKLOSICH – MÜLLER 1860, III pp. 61-63; GASTGEBER 2016, p. 92.

[31] There is one undated document that might help to fill this gap. It is embedded in a much later document that reviews the state of the Bulgarian church. In it, Germanos II defines the authority vested in the Bulgarian patriarch as autocephalous rather than strictly patriarchal. But as a concession to the Bulgarian patriarch he hands over to him judgement on an infringement of canon law committed by the Bulgarian tsar John Asen II: MIKLOSICH – MÜLLER, I pp. 438-439; KODER et al. 2001, p. 568 ll. 72-84; LAURENT 1971, n. 1285. What this

character for Germanos II to be away from Nicaea on pastoral business, but a tour of Epiros was an entirely different proposition from those visitations of the dioceses of western Asia Minor, which he is known to have undertaken. Unless there is good corroborative evidence, we shall have to treat the desires he expressed to cross seas and journey to other lands as largely rhetorical and in line with the image that he sought to project of himself, as one who, «though small in all respects, not just physically […] but also spiritually, was not small in zeal»[32].

There is no doubt that Germanos II would have seen Epiros as his pastoral responsibility but where is the corroborating evidence that Germanos II ever made good his expressed wish to visit the western territories? Such a spectacularly unlikely event would surely have left some trace in the sources, not least because it would have been the occasion of important local ecclesiastical assemblies, of which some record was likely to survive. It is not as though there is a complete absence of sources for the history of Epiros at this juncture.

Germanos II's *protégé* Nikephoros Blemmydes was travelling in the area a year or two after the patriarch's supposed visit to Epiros, but neither in his autobiographies[33] nor in his letter of thanks for the help with his journey that he had received from Michael II Angelos, the ruler of Epiros (1236-1269), and his consort Theodora Petraliphina is there even a hint that the patriarch might have been with them a year or two earlier[34]. Theodora's reputation for pious works was such that after her death she would be venerated as a saint. Her life was written in the early fourteenth century by the monk Job Iasites Melias, who suffered exile

was is not specified, but given that the document must date to 1235-1240 it is likely to concern the tsar's proposed marriage to Eirene, daughter of Theodore Doukas Komnenos, the former ruler of Thessaloniki, which took place either late in 1237 or early in 1238, even though, as George Akropolites noted, it was within the prohibited degrees: *ACROPOLITES* I.38 (p. 60 ll. 13-15); MACRIDES 2007, pp. 206 and 207-208. Because Theodore's brother Manuel had married a daughter of John Asen II, it was a matter of an uncle and a niece marrying a daughter and a father, which was not permitted. It is of course only a presumption that this placed the patriarch in Nicaea at the time of his posited visit to Epiros. In any case, because the document contains warm words for the Bulgarian tsar, it is likely to date to 1237 before John Asen II reneged on his marriage alliance with the Nicaean Empire, which had been guaranteed by Germanos II: *ACROPOLITES* I.34 (pp. 52-53); MACRIDES 2007, pp. 197-198.

[32] LAGOPATES 1913, p. 261 ll. 14-15; ANGOLD 2024, p. 170.

[33] *AUTOBIOGRAPHIA* I.63-64 (pp. 32-33) and MUNITIZ 1988, pp. 79-80 cover Blemmydes's journey through northern Greece and the southern Balkans.

[34] *THEODORUS II*, pp. 320-324.

under Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282) for his anti-unionist stance[35]. Given that Germanos II was remembered as an opponent of union[36], it is strange, had it happened, that Theodora's hagiographer passed over in silence a visit by the patriarch to Arta, where he would surely have been entertained by Michael II Angelos and his consort. Arguments *ex silentio* are never satisfactory, but there is no disguising the deathly hush that hangs over a visit by Germanos II to Epiros.

But we have left to last the one piece of evidence that has been accepted as providing corroboration for Laurent's contention that Germanos II visited Epiros in 1238. It comes in the form an inscription on the north and south gables of the transept of the monastery of Our Lady of Bryoni – outside Arta – which had been restored by the distinguished architectural historian Anastasios Orlandos. It reads as follows: «Στα[υ]ροπίγιον πατριαρχικὸν/τὸ ἁγι[α]σθὲν παρὰ Γερμανοῦ καὶ οἰκ[ουμενικοῦ πατριάρχου]»[37]. The wording is nearly identical with that of the entry copied into a *Nomokanon* that attracted Vitalien Laurent's attention. This crucially was proof enough for Donald Nicol[38], who accepted it as evidence of Germanos II's visit to Arta in 1238[39]. Though at the time only at the outset of his career he went on to become the doyen of the historians of medieval Epiros, which meant that a weighty name – with, moreover, a reputation as a stickler for factual accuracy – was added to the list of those supporting the historicity of Germanos II's visit to Epiros in 1238. However, not only is the inscription preserved on the gable ends of the monastery of our Lady of Bryoni undated, but in the same way as the entry edited by Laurent, it does no more than bear out the patriarch's well-attested interest in the problem of stauropegial foundations[40], rather than necessarily being evidence of his presence in Arta. Its wording, like that preserved in the entry from a survey of Epirot monasteries, is identical with that contained in a formula for the establishment of a patriarchal *stauropegion*[41]. In other words, to substantiate Germanos II's presence in Epiros both Laurent and Nicol were relying on a form of words, which merely

[35] TALBOT 1996, pp. 323-33; PATLAGEAN 1995; "Job" in *ODB*, *s.v.*

[36] ANGOLD 2024, p. 15.

[37] ORLANDOS 1936, pp. 51-56.

[38] BEATON et al. 2015.

[39] NICOL 1957, pp. 198-199.

[40] LAURENT 1971, n. 1259.

[41] See *EUCHOLOGION*, p. 487.

reproduces a formulaic phrase used by the patriarchal chancery. Their evidence is therefore much too weak to sustain the inherently unlikely case that Germanos II made the journey from Nicaea to Arta.

Does it matter that Germanos II never went to Arta? I think it does. A visit to Arta creates the impression of Germanos II bringing his patriarchate to a triumphal conclusion. Among other things, it would have strengthened his hold over the church in the western territories, which once again seemed to be slipping from the grasp of the ecumenical patriarchate now established at Nicaea. As it was, there was to be no recurrence of the schism that had divided the eastern and western parts of the Orthodox patriarchate of Constantinople at the beginning of Germanos's reign, but this was mostly a matter of luck.

It had precious little to do with Germanos II. It had more to do with the radical reordering of Nicaean foreign policy, which had been taking place in the last years of the patriarch's life. To 1237 diplomatic initiatives were very much in the patriarch's hands, whether it was interfering in the affairs of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, conducting negotiations with papal representatives, bringing back the church in the western parts under patriarchal authority, or granting quasi-patriarchal status to the Bulgarian church[42]. There was little else that John Vatatzes could do at this time but adopt a foreign policy guided by ecclesiastical concerns, because the fiasco of the Nicaean occupation and eventual evacuation of Adrianople in 1228[43] deprived him of any avenue of expansion into Europe. Nor was he any more successful in the Aegean, where naval expeditions against Crete in 1230 and Rhodes in 1233 failed miserably[44]. It meant that in 1230 John Vatatzes was in no position to take advantage of his rival Theodore Doukas's downfall. He was therefore content to leave diplomatic initiatives to his patriarch. It allowed the latter to reach an understanding with Theodore's brother Manuel, who had succeeded him as ruler of Thessaloniki. This culminated in the ending of the schism between the patriarchal church in Nicaea and the bishops of the western territories, which constituted Germanos II's major achievement. This

[42] ANGOLD 2024, pp. 41-62.

[43] *ACROPOLITES* I.24 (pp. 38-41); MACRIDES 2007, pp. 171-173. See ANGOLD 2022, pp. 144-145.

[44] See THIRIET, pp. 97-100. The Byzantine sources are completely silent about the failure in Crete but do mention the failed expedition to Rhodes: *ACROPOLITES* I.28 (pp. 45-46); MACRIDES, p. 187; *AUTOBIOGRAPHIA* II.21-23 (pp. 55-56); MUNITIZ 1988, pp. 104-106.

was, however, jeopardised in 1237, when Theodore Doukas was released by John Asen II[45], which exposed the limitations of a foreign policy shaped by ecclesiastical concerns. But this was not all. At the same time, the Bulgarian tsar broke off his alliance with John Vatazes, which had been sealed by the marriage in 1235 of the latter's son and heir Theodore II Laskaris to the former's daughter Helena. The Bulgarian tsar demanded that the Nicaean emperor return his daughter[46]. This was a deliberate snub to Germanos II, who had officiated at the wedding between Asen's daughter and Vatatzes's son and heir, Theodore II Laskaris[47].

To this point Germanos II had a prominent role in Nicaean foreign policy but thereafter he was side-lined, as Vatatzes fashioned a new foreign policy, which centred on the creation of an alliance with the western emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen (1212-1250) as a means of countering the threat of a new crusade to restore the faltering Latin Empire of Constantinople[48]. The initiative was now in the emperor's hands but John Vatatzes did Germanos II the courtesy of visiting him as he lay on his deathbed in 1240 and consulted him about a possible successor, even if he pointedly ignored his suggestion of Nikephoros Blemmydes[49]. It was a sign of the patriarch's declining influence. By the time of his death, he had few unqualified successes to his name, but his persistence had paid off. Building on the work of his predecessor Manuel I he helped to restore the equilibrium, which the ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople had lost in 1204. He did this by renewing the links with other Orthodox churches and by obtaining their recognition of his ultimate authority as ecumenical patriarch.

This was done by the heads of the various Orthodox churches coming to Nicaea to receive appointment, promotion, or counsel, not by the patriarch travelling to meet them[50]. Not only does the idea of a visit to Epiros in 1238 leave an erroneous impression of the nature of Germanos II's achievement, but it also fails to make proper allowance for the patriarch's loss of influence in his final years over the emperor in matters of foreign policy. Any diplomatic initiative on the part of the patriarch was always done in conjunction with or at

[45] *ACROPOLITES* I.38 (p. 60 ll. 19-21); MACRIDES 2007, p. 206.

[46] *ACROPOLITES* I.34 (pp. 52-53); MACRIDES 2007, pp. 197-198.

[47] *ACROPOLITES* I.33 (p. 50 ll. 24-25); MACRIDES 2007, p. 194.

[48] KEISEWETTER 1999; ANGELOV 2019, pp. 90-91 and 331-333.

[49] *AUTOBIOGRAPHIA* I.59 (p. 35 ll. 1-11); MUNITIZ 1988, pp. 82-83.

[50] ANGOLD 2024, pp. 60-62.

least with the tacit consent of the emperor. I conclude in a thoroughly unhistorical way, appropriately enough for a paper that seeks to establish what did not happen rather than what happened. It is just conceivable that at the height of his influence Germanos II might have persuaded John Vatatzes of the utility of a visit to Epiros, but by 1238 this was quite out of the question.

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A comment on my most recent studies

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Over the past three years, I have been working on the subject of the cult and the representation of royal bodies in Serbian medieval art and culture as one of its axial determinants. My work has been centered on reexamining the dynastic imagery of the Nemanides and reevaluating the means by the employ of which the cults of dynastic royal bodies were constructed, primarily on the role that pertaining visual culture played in that process[1].

Three royal mausolea that had once or, indeed, still do house the bodies of Serbian kings were at the center of my research. One is the church of St. Stephen the Protomartyr in the monastery of Banjska near Kosovska Mitrovica and the other the church of the Holy Archangels in the monastery of the same name near Prizren, both in the south Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. Both have recently received monograph studies published, so far, in Serbian with summaries in English[2]. The monastery of Banjska is the royal mausoleum of Stefan Uroš II Milutin, the Holy King Milutin as he was already known in medieval sources and liturgical texts soon after his death. The monastery of the Holy Archangels is the imperial mausoleum of Stefan Dušan, emperor of the Serbs and the Romans. The third church, which is intrinsically also the subject of both texts, the church of Christ Pantokrator in the monastery of Dečani, likewise in Kosovo and Metohija, is the funerary church of king Stefan Uroš III Dečanski – Saint Stefan Dečanski.

It was raised as the result of ktetorship of both Dečanski and his son, king and emperor Dušan. All three churches belong to the fourteenth century, more precisely to its first half – the period which set off with the era of king Milutin and the realization of the political idea of the Serbian king as a political figure and royal body in unity with the imperial house of the Christian Roman Emperor, achieved in the year 1299 by his marriage in Thessaloniki to the

[1] ERDELJAN 2023.

[2] СТАНКОВИЋ – ЕРДЕЉАН 2021 and (forthcoming).

imperial porphyrogenita princess Simonis, daughter of emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, and reched its apogee with the coronation in Skopje in the year 1346 of his grandson, Dušan, as emperor of the Greeks (i.e. Romans) and the Serbs.

Therefore, it is prerequisite for any analysis of the activities of king Milutin which lead him to the raising of Saint Stephen at Banjska in 1313-1314 to take into consideration and to understand the state and circumstances of the Byzantine world of the thirteenth century, a world that was undergoing sudden and unusually rapid changes from the point of view of a politically traditional Byzantine-Orthodox Roman Empire. Under the new circumstances, in the thirteenth century, political circumstances and concepts could assume an entirely different nature and meaning not only from decade to decade but year after year. At times insufficiently fathomable even to their contemporaries, the great tremors that shook the Byzantine world in the Balkans of the thirteenth century remained insufficiently studied and perceived in the academic world, itself much too accustomed to broad views and generalizations in which the value of each individual historical moment, contextualized within the broader historical setting of events and phenomena, is often entirely lost, thus leading to distorted views of the very essence of political and social processes and changes, as well as of the activities of individuals in times which, as always, called for great political prowess and an excellent understanding of the contemporary circumstances in order for those activities to be successful and the intentions behind them met, at least to a certain measure.

This is particularly true of and applicable to academic views regarding the visual identity of the mentioned endowments of king Milutin, and especially of the monastery of Banjska and its church dedicated to Saint Stephen, the designated mausoleum of this Serbian king. The visual turn, i.e. the change in the idiom of the visual language of expressing Romanness and the programmatic predilection for the contemporary, dominant idiom of visual Romanness that is apparent in Serbian art of the age of king Milutin, especially following his marriage with the Byzantine porphyrogennita Simonis in 1299, is a change not in the sense of relinquishing “Western” and adopting “Byzantine” models, but rather in the sense of it being a more direct and purposefully obvious visual confirmation of the unity of the Serbian king with the ruling Byzantine imperial family. In that context, there are two exceptions in the corpus of Milutin’s endowments, both built and decorated with frescoes around the year 1313-1314. One is the church of SS. Joachim and Anne, the so-called King’s

Church (*Kraljeva crkva*) in the monastery of Studenica and the other the king's mausoleum, the church of St. Stephen in Banjska.

Both are a visual statement of *renovatio* of an at once both historical and meta-historical visual idiom of Constantinople i.e. Romanness while being, at the same time, two examples of mimesis of the church of the Virgin Evergetis in Studenica, itself a prime example of all things Constantinopolitan. This historical revival of both Justinianic and the Komnenian art resounded completely with the leading trends of *Renovatio Imperii* in Constantinople in the days of the Palaiologoi, and in particular in the ktetorial activities of king Milutin's father-in-law, Byzantine emperor Andronikos II. Thus, in both cases, king Milutin made a clear visual statement of leaning both on the tradition of the founder of the holy Nemanide family tree, Stefan Nemanja – Saint Symeon, and the Byzantine imperial family with whom he had been united through his marriage with Simonis. Raised through the efforts of the Serbian king and the support in this endeavor he found in the future Serbian archbishop Danilo II, every aspect of the resplendent church of St. Stephen resounds with the idea of Romanness.

All aspects of its hierotopy act in synergy in conveying the historical and eschatological ideas that guided the path of its ktetor. The spatial articulation, the program of decoration, the gold background of the frescoes, the fine marble carving and the multi-colored marble facades of the church of St. Stephen in Banjska, are made in sophisticated conceptual and visual mimesis of major Constantinopolitan churches, including the monastery of the Pantokrator, the monastery *tou Libou* and the Great Church itself. It is also a supreme example and visualization of *translatio Hierosolymi* and confirmation of Jerusalem as the center of king Milutin's world, not only theologically and ideologically, but in the sphere of actual geography and personal ancestry. Not only was king Milutin the ktetor of the monastery of the Holy Archangels in the Holy City, thus perpetuating the Nemanide ktetorial tradition in the Holy Land, but through the royal lineage of his mother, queen Jelena, he was a direct descendent of Baldwin II, king of Jerusalem, and his daughter, queen Melisenda, a great ktetor of holy places in the Holy Land, above all of the church of the Holy Sepulcher and the church of Saint Anne in Bethesda in Jerusalem, the place of birth of the Holy Virgin Mary.

The royal tomb of the subsequently proclaimed Holy King Milutin was originally planned to stand at the central, focal point of the sacred space of his mausoleum church of Saint Stephen in Banjska. Thus, the entire hierotopy focused and, in a manner of speaking, revolved around the holy royal body of the Serbian king. The most important funeral performed in Banjska, the one which is the reason for its construction and which gives meaning to the entire building, is the funeral of its founder, King Milutin. The Church of St. Stephen was, as we know from written sources, designated by its founder, King Stefan Uroš II Milutin, as the place of his eternal rest. King Milutin died suddenly in his court in Nerodimlja on October 29, 1321. The coffin with the king's body was then transferred to his endowment, and due to the unrest that gripped the country, he was, it seems, without a solemn burial and hastily laid in a pre-prepared grave. That grave, from which the king's incorporeal remains were raised three years later, is located on the south side of the western aisle of the St. Stephen's Church in Banjska, in the place that was customary for the burial of his ancestors, rulers from the holy Nemanjić line. Among the explored graves, those that, due to their location in the church space, deviate to a certain extent, or completely, from the hitherto known practice of burial in Nemanjići ruler's mausoleums are particularly interesting. In the work that most comprehensively and precisely deals with medieval burials in the Banjska monastery church, Marko Popović presents the following data and conclusions based on the latest archaeological research. In tomb number 5, which is located in the center of the western aisle, the construction of which on the eastern side almost goes under the place where the soleia slab stood in the original church floor, directly under the dome, there were no skeletal remains or dislocated bones, which reliably indicates that the burial was never done there. It is possible that this tomb, most representatively constructed and extremely centrally placed in the area of St. Stephen's Church, was originally conceived and built at the time of the construction of the church – as the burial place of the founder, King Milutin, and that due to known historical circumstances related to his sudden death and transfer body from Nerodimlje to Banjska, such an idea was abandoned, and that the founder was buried in a tomb that was dug after his death along the southern wall of the western trave of the nave, in the traditional place where, starting with Saint Simeon Nemanja, the Milutins were buried within their mausoleums ancestors, rulers from the Nemanjić dynasty.

The first analogy is certainly related to the Church of the Holy Apostles, primarily as the final resting place of the first Christian emperor, Saint Emperor Constantine (originally buried in the center of this monumental building, at the intersection where the four cruciform basilicas meet), ideologically at the foundation of the concept of Milutin as the New Constantine, but also as a burial place that became very relevant at the time of the restoration of Byzantine rule in the capital on the Bosphorus, as an integral part of the general concept of renovatio and potentially, the planned burial place of Michael VIII Palaiologos as the emperor who in 1261 restored Rome's rule in Constantinople.

The other royal body and tomb, along with its theological-ideological and visual concept, that has been the focus of my investigation over the past three years is that of tsar Stefan Dušan, grandson of the Holy King Milutin, The main issue under scrutiny and re-examination was the type of funerary monument, unique in the context of Serbian medieval royal funerary practice, of the emperor of the Greeks (i.e. Romans) and Serbs that stood above his tomb in the southwest corner of the church of the Holy Archangels – the katholikon of the monastery of the same dedication which Dušan raised between 1343 and 1352 in the vicinity of the city of Prizren, deep inside the gorge of the river Bistrica.

In the space surrounding the imperial tomb, based on elements, i.e. preserved fragments of architectural sculpture and sculptural interior decorations of the naos of the Holy Archangels church, proposed reconstructions feature a series of arcades on the southern wall as well as a sculptural standing figure of the emperor placed on the western wall of the church, a component of the funerary ensemble. From this figure, fragments of the head, hands, and feet have been preserved, which constituted a representation of the benefactor with a scepter in the right hand and a donation decree in the left hand. In the actual tomb, filled with fragmented building materials and fragments of architectural sculpture, a marble slab was found, excavated from the northern wall of the burial chamber, beneath which were parts of the deceased's skeleton. Near the tomb, a broken lid with an iron handle used for lifting was found. Above this lid, which was flush with the church floor, was another lid made of white marble with a sculptural representation of a reclining figure carved in high relief. From this figure, only three fragments were found in 1927: the lower part of the right arm and chest to the waist, the right foot, and the right hand lying on the chest. Only one of these fragments – the right hand resting on the chest – has been preserved to this day. Alongside these two

sculptural representations of Emperor Dušan, in the decoration program of the Church of the Holy Archangels, according to the information provided by Radoslav Grujić's report, there was another relief representation of the benefactor, which was part of the decoration program of the lunette above the main portal of the church, the imperial doors leading from the narthex to the naos.

In existing historiography, ever since Grujić's 1927 excavation of the site and the pertaining report, the identification of the type of tomb monument of Emperor Dušan has invariably been associated with the western, gisant type, and, more specifically, with Venetian fourteenth century examples highlighted as possible direct prototypes. However, regardless of the indisputed and well known connections between the Serbian emperor and the Venetian state, the representation of the royal body on the tomb monument, and specifically the representation of Dušan's imperial body, can and must have other frameworks of understanding and interpretation, broader as well as specifically determined with time, regarding the contexts of function and reception.

First, the problem – in the most general sense – is that despite numerous well-known published material evidence, historiography largely continues to deny Byzantine or Christian Roman art the form of sculpture as a characteristic means, a mode of expression, especially in the late Byzantine period. In connection with this, there is in fact a completely contradictory denial of the visual culture of the Christian Roman Empire in precisely what constitutes the very basis of the anthropology of the image or the anthropology of art, a paradigm established in the Hellenistic-Roman world already in antiquity, which, with adaptations into a Christian anthropology of the image/art based on the dogma of incarnation, has persisted throughout subsequent centuries as the foundation of the visuality of the Christian Roman Empire.

Such an anthropology of art was based on the understanding attributed to the human body in antiquity that it could make visible, that through the body or by means of the body, that which belongs to the sphere of the divine could be manifested. The body, thus, was a medium of expressing status in the hierarchy of society as an expression of status in relation to the divine. All of this was based on the understanding that the body was chosen as the medium of manifesting the divine in the earthly sphere. This state could be achieved if the divine spirit inhabited the body or if the soul ascended to divine spheres through the performance of ritual acts or a life filled with virtues. The final form of expression in the

Roman Empire of this idea is achieved through the Christian doctrine of incarnation, where God became Man, where the *Logos* was incarnated and took on human flesh.

In the Serbian milieu of emperor Dušan's time concepts of the perfection of the human body as an expression of spiritual, aesthetic-ethical principles deriving from the divine sphere and making it close to the divine, based on the ideas expressed in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Celestial Hierarchy*, are found in the works of Isaija, a Sinaite Athonite monk and confessor to Emperor Dušan. Indeed, the colossal figure of Emperor Dušan that stands on the north wall of the narthex in Lesnovo, another important church of his era dedicated to the Holy Archangels, raised by the highly ranked Serbian despot Jovan Oliver in the fifth decade of the fourteenth century, seems to be a direct pictorial reflection, an imprint of these ideas. The at once both Christ and Constantine-like figure of the emperor, with eyes directed toward the higher spheres truly has the power to look upward, demonstrating in pictorial language the Areopagitic idea that eyes show their purest perception of divine light and, again, a right, peaceful, and unimpeded, but quick, pure, and dispassionate spread in receiving the godly radiance. It is, thus, my proposal that he reclining figure of the emperor atop sculpted atop his sarcophagus-like funerary monument in Prizren must be regarded within the above stated circle of ideas and interpretations of the true essence of the king’s (two) bodies.

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A history of sighing from Greek antiquity to Byzantium

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When the Greeks sighed, it was a momentous event. It was brought on by pain and struggle: a sigh was effectively a groan, heaved by the same reflex as produces gasping or moaning. From the archaic to the Hellenistic period, there is little evidence of a sigh as we know it today: a long breath that is unusually deep but which is essentially unvoiced. If we think of a sigh as an exaggerated respiratory faltering that does not involve the larynx, it is attested nowhere in Greek literature and possibly never existed.

The Greek sigh – if you can call it that – is summed up in the Hellenistic sculptural group, the *Laocoön and his sons*, where a seer is entangled with serpents who will crush him together with his two boys[1]. In this formidable masterpiece, Laocoön is seen in his death agonies. The hero is strong, but resisting the two constrictors is futile. If you could imagine the sounds that Laocoön's open mouth suggests, they would perhaps be a mixture of groaning and crying in desperation as the serpents squeeze the life out of him and his children.

For the history of emotion in Hellenic antiquity, it would be superfluous to define more precisely what we mean by a sigh today: it suffices to observe that the Greeks did not sigh, if by a sigh we mean an occasional long or deep unvoiced breath, which is the literal origin of the Latin conception of sigh as an under-breath (*subspirium*), a nether-breath, softer than a gasp, which survives in Romance languages and is also suggested in other linguistic traditions like Slavic (вздох). You hear the sigh because the breath is pressurized and escapes from the throat with a slight rushing noise, but not repeated, as of panting or puffing, which is also unvoiced but reflects a struggle to inhale enough air. The emotional undertow in the preposition (*sub*) is evocative in itself. The sigh is apparently involuntary, existing beneath the level of consciousness and escaping from the gullet in a breach of silence: a unique breath that should be inaudible suddenly rises to anyone's awareness within earshot, almost as if a

[1] Vatican, Graeco-Roman statue deriving from Hellenistic period.

kind of internal complaint has been sublimed in the body and released in the same moment of inadvertence.

The ancient Greeks, on the other hand, did not entertain such a subtle conception. If ever they sighed in the way that we do, it escaped their notice, in the same way that the breath escapes from the body. Their sighs, if we should use that word, were voiced. The word to describe what we might sometimes translate as a sigh (στόνος) really means something like a moan or a groan. The meaning accords with the roots, which are all about making noise rather than releasing an irregular and involuntary breath.

The absence of sighing in the epic

Until now, we have been content to remain vague and muddled about the nouns and verbs that approach the motif of sighing. In *LSJ*, the verb that we will consider most closely (στένω) is translated as "to moan, sigh, groan". These English words are slightly incongruous and accommodate a wide range of expression. At the risk of challenging such a strong authority as *LSJ*, I do not think that this latitude is warranted. The meaning of the Greek verb (στένω) is always to moan or groan and never really equates with sighing. However, the case for translating such words with our modern conceptions of sighing (*soupir*, *sospiro*, *Seufzen*, вздох) remains tempting, because our conceptions that arose with the epidemic of sighing during the *Dolce stil novo* around 1300 are poetically seductive[2].

Support for translating the Greek word with "sigh" arises already with the Homeric corpus, where sighing (στένω, στενάζω) is used poetically and metaphorically. When Eurymachos attempts to string the bow of Odysseus, he fails, despite efforts to warm it up on a fire: «even so, he could not stretch it enough and his noble heart mightily groaned»[3]. You would be tempted to translate the verb here (ἔστενε) with "sighed" because whatever kind of emotion is manifest, it occurs in the heart or is produced by the noble heart (κυδάλιμον κῆρ) and of course Eurymachos is disappointed. Physiologically speaking, the heart is silent and only makes the slightest noise if we put an ear to the chest; so the metaphoric character of this

[2] See the eloquent study by KLEIN 1983. The extent of sighing from Cavalcanti – in whose *Rime* it appears 27 times – to the baroque is hard to overestimate. In Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, it appears 121 times, which is roughly the same number that can be found in Marino's *Rime amorose* from the seventeenth century.

[3] *Od.* 21.246-247.

expression might favour a sigh, an unvoiced expiry from within that could accord with exhaustion and therefore matches Eurymachos's feeling of failure to reach a weighty objective. Would that not indicate a sigh more than a groan?

There are two reasons that disincline me from this suggestion. First, the bard specifies that the groan is huge. Eurymachos groaned mightily (μέγα δ' ἔστενε). You cannot sigh mightily. Physiologically, there is no such thing, because a sigh expresses impotence – a recognition of limits to your potential – and it would contradict the powerlessness inherent in this slightly drawn-out breath to give it force. A sigh by its very nature is a small thing. It may last longer than an ordinary breath and draws more profoundly upon the capacity of the lung, but it can never be massive, in the same way that it cannot be intentional without also being theatrical. It is a deep breath that passes audibly but involuntarily from a person who is not trying to make a manifestation according to its magnitude, as if the louder it is, the more it calls attention to the anguish, as you might experience, for example, with a scream. A sigh is the opposite kind of phenomenon. It is not rung out for the sake of communication but only reveals in its escape from the body a sense of the stresses within the psyche. So when the poet says "big" or "hugely", the condition of sighing is almost disqualified. There is a figure of speech in English where we say «I heaved a sigh of relief», which might be considered to imply a massive dimension: if the sigh is really big, the relief is accordingly notable. Even if so – and I am not sure – this is a special case, which again errs to metaphor. When I found out that a magistrate accepted my excuses for our greyhound killing a cat, I heaved a sigh of relief. I would say that I heave a sigh of relief whether I breathed differently or not. The expression is figurative and does not relate to the phenomenology of sighing. What we mean by a physical sigh, as opposed to the metaphor, is a long but still rather faint breath; and this contrasts greatly with our instance from archaic Greek, where the Homeric usage seems to accord with the strain of Eurymachos holding his breath as he braces his body to string the bow – a bit like Laocoön holding the coil of the serpent – and gasping or groaning at the moment of giving up.

Second, the expression in the *Odyssey* is formulaic, occurring in variants three times in the *Iliad*, like analogous metrical modules such as the stout heart (ἄλκιμον ἦτορ), which occurs six times in the *Iliad*. The other instances all suggest actions that are far from sighing. When Agamemnon, for instance, beheld the field around Troy in the dead of night while all

his forces were asleep, he is smitten with anxiety: he «tore out many handfuls of hair from his head, lifted them on high to Zeus, and his noble heart groaned mightily»[4]. Agamemnon performs his stress with extreme signs of anxiety. His noble heart sighs mightily but he has already caused himself much pain by uprooting his loose-flowing hair. One cannot imagine him releasing a sigh in this distressed circumstance. Far from a reflective moment that we might associate with sighing, the tense situation prompts the king's self-harm, an extreme gesture that demonstrates his greatness of soul but hardly his introspection.

There are many paradoxes that already emerge in this earliest document of Greek language. First, the action that we might translate as a sigh (στένω, στενάζω) is excessively loud and demonstrative to equate with what we mean by a sigh; and second, it is handled metaphorically in a way that also does not quite accord with a sigh. Only a few lines earlier in our chosen example, Agamemnon «groaned densely in his heart, from deep within his chest, and his mind trembled within him»[5]. In this instance, the verb has a preposition (ἀνα-, ἀναστενάζω ≈ ἀναστένω), which could be taken vaguely to parallel the Latin "sub" embedded in *suspirium*; though subsequent usage suggests that the Greek words, with or without the preposition, are interchangeable.

I could sympathize with any translator who rendered the verb with "sighing", because it is performed in the density of the breast (ὣς πυκίν' ἐν στήθεσσιν) and the bottom of the heart (νειόθεν ἐκ κραδίης); and indeed *LSJ* suggest exactly that interpretation: «he heaved a sigh from the bottom of his heart». The Homeric vocabulary is poetically elastic and even with my suggested translations of "breast" and "heart", the terms could arguably be flipped. We distinguish between a heart and a chest (or breast) – which contains both the lungs and the heart – but this distinction is not so clear in Homeric Greek and both pulsate, as it were, with the same mixture of breath and blood. And so, given that the groan is submerged in this breathing pumping locus, could it not legitimately be a sigh? Of course the case can be made, but it is weak. Agamemnon in the very same line shakes with emotion: «his mind trembled within him»[6], and although this pathology is not as extreme as tearing out hair by the roots, it signals a kind of agonized disturbance that does not match what we think of as a sigh, which

[4] *Il.* 10.15-16: «πολλὰς ἐκ κεφαλῆς προθελύμνους ἔλκετο χαίτας».

[5] *Il.* 10.9-10.

[6] I.e. «τρομέοντο δέ οἱ φρένες ἐντός».

belongs to the deflated rather than the feverish. Even if this groaning or sighing is confined to the breast as a kind of metaphor, it is not what we mean by a sigh unless it has a sound. What would be the sound of Agamemnon's heaving in the breast? In this nocturnal hour on the windy plains of Troy, the king is not feeling defeated and therefore does not let out a sigh as if expressing hopelessness. He is thinking of imminent battle. The sound would be vocalized, almost as a growl, that is part frustration and part impatience in anticipation of battles where he depends upon everyone's brave resolution, even if the gods decide upon who prevails. With all the stress, there is still no motif of melancholy or regret. I cannot imagine that Agamemnon, gripped by the tension of these tantalizing but threatening prospects, would not have vocalized his heroic restlessness.

Lungs and heart are both organs that palpably respond to emotions; and so do the eyes. On hearing of Patroklos' death, Achilles is distraught and his face is disfigured; at the same time Antilochos, who holds his hands, pours tears while lamenting from the other side, and Achilles groans in his noble heart[7]. Lamentation does not exactly disqualify sighing but it belongs to a somewhat different emotional economy, especially in antiquity, where tears and wailing overwrite the experience with a demonstrative energy that does not match the introspection of the sigh. It is almost as far from a sigh as the groan that arises amid froth around the teeth in the thick of battle, where spittle flows from both sides of the mouth, and within his breast the hero groans (στένει) in his courageous heart[8].

The sigh in fifth-century Greek

Classical Greek is also without sighs in the contemporary sense. Often the same words when used by the V-century dramatists seem to match a sigh even less than they did in the epic. For example, the sea is said to boom, surely not to sigh, in its violence. In Aeschylus, the ocean roars as the waves crash together (βοᾷ δὲ πόντιος κλύδων ξυμπίτνων) as it moans, I would say, from its depths (στένει βυθός) in the same way that rivers groan with a woeful

[7] *Il.* 18.32-33: «Ἀντίλοχος δ᾽ ἑτέρωθεν ὀδύρετο δάκρυα λείβων / χεῖρας ἔχων Ἀχιλῆος: ὃ δ᾽ ἔστενε κυδάλιμον κῆρ».

[8] *Il.* 20.168-171: «περί τ᾽ ἀφρὸς ὀδόντας / γίγνεται, ἐν δέ τέ οἱ κραδίῃ στένει ἄλκιμον ἦτορ, /οὐρῇ δὲ πλευράς τε καὶ ἰσχία ἀμφοτέρωθεν / μαστίεται». Cf. also Pindar, *Nemean odes* 8.24: «ἦτορ ἄλκιμον».

pain (στένουσιν ἄλγος οἰκτρόν)[9]. At times, I feel that the words are applied for dramatic colour to engender a shiver in the audience. Thus, Sophocles says that «the blast of dreadful winds allows the groaning sea to rest». In his translation of Ajax, Richard Jebb neatens the oddness of the line (ἐκοίμισε στένοντα πόντον) by eliminating the sigh: «would the sea not rather go to sleep when the winds have eased?»[10]. Technically, however, it is a "roaring sea" that goes to sleep.

In classical literature, however, most instances describe persons groaning aloud in grief. Often, I would be inclined to translate our word neither with groaning nor sighing but mourning or lamenting, as in Aeschylus: «alas, how I mourn, remembering the Athenians»[11] or «they lament a man who falls well in battle»[12]. For women, it is better to lament at home[13], where handmaids are also set to the task. It often occurs that the word is coupled with crying (κλαίω, στένομαι)[14]. A whole city may be mourning (στενομένα πόλις), which I think is hard to match with a sigh. Of course a person in mourning may also sigh, but the two conditions designate fundamentally different domains of experience. Mourning is an attempt to reconcile oneself to grief, either publicly or privately. Sighing, on the other hand, is not confined to handling mortality; more often than not it is aligned with a kind of exhaustion or stress or frustrated passion where outcomes still appear to lie in the balance and one is both impatient and fearful of the result.

Lamentation distinguishes itself from simply grieving by its demonstrative energy. It is essentially vocalized, also expressed in English with the verb "bewail". Tears in themselves are silent; and in English we distinguish between "weeping" (which could involve tears but no sound) and crying, which could involve extreme vocalization. Up to a point, these reactions are within our control and are not entirely spontaneous. You might wonder, for instance, if one should lament or not[15], or should I lament now or later?[16] Or possibly

[9] Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 431-435.

[10] JEBB 1893.

[11] *Persians* 285: «τῶν Ἀθηνῶν ὡς στένω μεμνημένος».

[12] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 445 and 451: «στένουσι δ᾽ εὖ λέγοντες ἄνδρα […] τὸν δ᾽ ἐν φοναῖς καλῶς πεσόντ᾽».

[13] Sophocles, *Antigone* 1249: «δωμαῖς προθήσειν πένθος […] στένειν».

[14] Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 873.

[15] Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* 462: «οὐδὲ στένειν τὸν ὄρθρον ἔτι πρᾶγμ᾽ ἆρά μοι;» (*should I not lament the dawn any longer? Is my situation not worthy of mourning?*).

lamentation has an expiry date: a brilliant adage in Euripides tells us that «one should not lament old things with new tears» (παλαιὰ καινοῖς δακρύοις οὐ χρὴ στένειν)[17], where the verb cannot be translated as "sigh" because one does not sigh with tears but rather laments or cries with tears.

Just as various forms of grieving are vocalized, so they are conceived as having a point of departure and a destination. Grieving may be entirely internal but it can also be socialized and done on behalf of someone or something. And so in Sophocles, we read that «your pain comes on each of you for himself alone, and for no other, but my soul is in pain at once for the city, for myself and for you»[18]. This form of lamentation is a claim for magnanimity. You could imagine that it could become competitive because others could make counter-claims that they lament on behalf of yet more souls. Even if it is entirely sympathetic, it has little to do with sighing.

It is perhaps no accident that this emotional word (στένω, στενάζω) is used so much in tragedy, because it has drama at its core. The fact that one so frequently uses groaning in sympathy with someone else means that it represents a mechanism of solidarity: it is an almost transactional expression of sentimental union. «Ah, ah, how I mourn for your sorrows, Oedipus!»[19] Close to this instance, the lexicographers of *LSJ* themselves suggest that the word could translate as pity: «I pity thee for thy ill fortune» (στένω σε τᾶς οὐλομένας τύχας), where tears are a generous condiment to the emotion[20]. There are many such cases, as when Agave says that «I grieve for you, father», and Kadmos replies: «And I for you, child, and I weep for your sisters»[21]. These acts appear to be communal, even if they are conducted in private, because they are spoken about as statements of solidarity and togetherness in feeling. It is also possible to moan or sigh for something more institutional, like Greece itself[22]; and

[16] *Philoctetes* 338: «whether I should first inquire into the wrong done you or mourn the dead».

[17] Euripides, *fr.* 43

[18] Sophocles, *Oedipus the king* 64

[19] Euripides, *Phoenician women* 1425: «κακῶν σῶν, Οἰδίπου, ς᾽ ὅσον στένω». Here I have used the English by E.P. Coleridge in OATES – O'NEILL 1938.

[20] One could translate the lines (Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 399-402) also as «I mourn for your wretched fortune, Prometheus: tears flowing easily from my eyes, I wet my face with a stream falling from my moist cheeks».

[21] Euripides, *Bacchae* 1371-1373.

[22] Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 370.

this lamentation for the collective is directed toward others with the power of consolation. The dynamic is instrumental and has little in common with sighing.

Does it help to examine the etymology?

So far, I have considered only examples from *LSJ* – and by no means all of them – because the lexicographers are thorough in covering the spread of usages. From the places cited, I cannot detect what we would call a sigh. The phenomenon described never matches the unvocalized breath that we mean in modern languages. Although the lexicographers allow the interpretation of "sigh", they give no examples where sighing would be indicated as opposed to groaning, moaning, wailing or lamenting, all of which are voiced, with or without words. As suggested above, this pattern is largely supported by the origin of the Greek word (στενάζω etc.). The normally conservative *LSJ* proffer an etymology, where they suggest a comparison with the Sanskrit for thunder or roar (*stánati*) and Lithuanian "groan" (*stenēti*). Equally discouraging is the similar-sounding noun for sigh or groan (στόνος) which also appears to be derived from Proto-Indo-European conceptions of moaning and groaning; and indeed it has been suggested that the verbal form (στοναχέω) is the same as the word already considered (στένω, as well as στενάχω or στενάζω) in sharing an origin in roaring or groaning. Again *LSJ* provide the definition as "sighing or groaning". But given that sighing and groaning are so very different, the lexicon would leave the unsuspecting reader with a rather unsatisfactory labour of guesswork in interpreting any classical text.

On the basis of their examples, however, I think that we can conclude that there is no such thing as Classical Greek sighing or, if there is, it is weak. Beginning with Homeric usage, the noun (στόνος) has so little to do with sighing that it rather indicates uproar, as when the personification of Strife, coming in the midst of the crowd, incites the uproar of men[23]. It also goes with the blood and guts of battle: «where my companions weep (μύρονται) I am only minded for murder and blood and the grievous groans of men

[23] *Il.* 4.444-445: «καθ᾽ ὅμιλον ὀφέλλουσα στόνον ἀνδρῶν».

(ἀργαλέος στόνος ἀνδρῶν)»[24] and elsewhere «I heard the groans of those being killed (στόνον […] ἄκουσα κτεινομένων)»,[25] or «the groans of the enemy army» in Aeschylus[26].

This public dimension of collective groaning is spectacular. The epic was a performative genre, chanted in public; and the privacy of a hero's thought was never as pressing as the common feeling among many heroes that thrills the audience on a similar scale. The drama from the fifth century that follows the epic is a spectacle; and when there are groans, they must be part of the spectacle. And so in Aeschylus, «throughout the city a groaning (διήκει […] πόλιν στόνος) resounds; towers groan (στένουσι πύργοι), the field that is loving to humans moans (στένει πέδον φίλανδρον); […] strife and the end of death came»[27]. If a person wails just for himself or herself, it is questioned. Neoptolemus asks Philoctetes: «What new thing has got into you so suddenly that you wail for yourself with these loud shrieks?»[28] This idea that you might make wailings for yourself (στόνον σαυτοῦ ποῇ) is not immediately heroic, especially if it is sudden (ἐξαίφνης) and new or drastic (νεοχμόν). The sentiment is dramatized and the moan or groan is coupled with howling, shrieking (ἰυγμός), as of men in pain.

Because drama and violence are integral to the genres of epic and tragedy, there was perhaps never a strong inclination to explore the softer unvocalized emissions of breath; and meanwhile, the only likely lexical candidates to express such things (στένος, στόνος) were emphasized more in their dramatic qualities, as with the roaring in groans (στόνῳ βρέμουσιν) of the sea by the storm-beaten headlands[29]. And even outside these genres, a historian like Thucydides enjoys the word for its dramatic appeal, as when he describes the disarray of infantry, «upon a single impulse (ἀπὸ μιᾶς ὁρμῆς) distressed or greatly vexed by both wailing and groans (οἰμωγῇ τε καὶ στόνῳ πάντες)»[30].

[24] *Il.* 19.212-214.

[25] *Il.* 23.40; cf. also 10.483 or *Od.* 22.308-309.

[26] *Seven against Thebes* 146

[27] Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 900-906.

[28] Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 751-752.

[29] Sophocles, *Antigone* 587-592.

[30] Thucydides 7.71.

If this is so, one should not be encouraged to go looking for sighs in any epoch of classical Greek literature. Etymologically speaking, the Greek conception differs radically from the Latin counterpart (*suspirium*) which is inherently linked to breath; and this essential aspect of a sigh – effectively passing a deep breath – is present in other linguistic traditions, such as Slavic, where the Russian word for sighing (вздыхать) has breath in its derivation (вздох) with similar spiritual connotations as in Latin (*spiritus* ≈ дух). We do not know precisely the etymology of our "sigh" and German equivalent (*Seufzen*) but it is conceivable that they have an imitative phonological formation around the sound of the unvoiced but audible breath, especially if you can imagine a guttural in "sigh", the pronunciation of which in contemporary English retains an unusually long syllable, which I feel Shakespeare captures when he invokes sound by comparing the sigh to an oven: «sighing like furnace»[31]. It is unclear, however, that any semantic conclusions can be drawn from etymology. Although the Latin conception (*suspiro*) suggests sighing because it has breath built into its structure, Latin usage has the same confusing spread as Greek. In the *Vulgate*, for instance, the verb is coupled with moaning or roaring[32] and there is no necessary connexion between the root and the meaning. Instead, we notice an increase of intimacy in both Latin and Greek throughout the middle ages, where both traditions parallel one another thanks to new spiritual needs, in spite of their different etymologies[33].

The legacy of groans from common Greek to Byzantium

If there are no sighs in ancient Greek, were there sighs in Byzantine Greek? If there is any logic in the pattern where the meaning follows the origins of the word, then surely the same words in later Greek would also mean something loud and disruptive, like a groan or moan or roar, and therefore that there are no sighs in the sense of our modern languages.

Byzantine Greek is, of course, also ancient Greek; and for much of patristic literature, hymnography, hagiography and chronicle-writing, the same vocabulary is used with its

[31] William Shakespeare, *As you like it* 2.7

[32] *Job* 3.24: «antequam comedam, suspiro et tamquam inundantes aquæ, sic rugitus meus»; *Ecclesiastes* 25.25: «ingemuit vir ejus, et audiens suspiravit modicum»; *Lamentations of Jeremiah* prologue: «et amaro animo suspirans et ejulans».

[33] This article concentrates on Greek sources but it is worth noting that Latin authors use the term *suspirium* very often. The *Patrologia latina* database discovers 857 instances.

meanings substantially unchanged since the fifth century BC. It is no surprise, therefore, that we find Byzantine authors using our words that potentially mean sigh (στένος, στόνος) in the same way that earlier authors had used, where the context is dramatic and demonstrative, and it seems to make more sense to translate the terms with groan or moan or wail. There are countless instances that refer to pain or a show of grief that we would tend to disqualify as a sigh for the same reasons that we have rejected the possibility of a sigh in classical times. There is apparently no date at which the ancient meanings cease, as the ancient meanings turn up throughout the later periods which, in any case, are often characterized by a classical revival, as with Constantine Manassos: «everywhere there was confusion (φύρσις), the uproar of lamentations (στόνος οἰμωγμάτων), crying and moaning (ὀλοφυρμοὶ καὶ στεναγμοί), mourning and beating of breasts (θρῆνοι, στερνοκτυπίαι)»[34].

The Christian epoch begins with the *koine* of Jesus, where translators have been tempted to use the word "sigh". Thus for example, in the scrupulous King James Version, the Pharisees approach Jesus with trick questions, «seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign?"»[35]. Because it is specified that Jesus made this noise in his spirit (ἀναστενάξας τῷ πνεύματι) it is an internal emotional expression; and so it is understandable that the verb would be translated as sigh. But it is really a groan. If you are about to say something out of exasperation, you do not sigh but groan, as other translations have it. Jesus is effectively saying with the utterance: «O you shortsighted pedants, let me set you straight». The evangelist Mark may have been influenced by uses of such verbs in the *Septuagint* that are also very far from sighing. Even where the King James Version has "sigh" in Ezekiel, perhaps also following the *Septuagint*, it cannot be a sigh:

> sigh (καταστέναξον) therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh (στενάξεις) before their eyes. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou (στενάζεις)? That thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt,

[34] *Compendium chronicum* 3323. For Byzantine sources, I have used the referencing system from *Thesaurus linguae graecae* (*TLG*) which I have also used to locate the several instances. In most cases, *TLG* uses the standard reference of *Patrologia graeca* (*PG*).

[35] *Mark* 8.11-12.

> and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water[36].

The description of sudden infirmity overtaking the limbs is astonishingly evocative and it is to that degree congruent with a sigh that always expresses a degree of helplessness. But actually who would sigh in that circumstance? If someone is going to break my loins, I would scream. And even understood metaphorically, it means that I will not have children. I do not think that I would sigh with the news (ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγγελίᾳ) but groan with horror; and hence the words for groaning in the *Vulgate* (*ingemisce*, *gemis*).

In one further instance, Jesus also gives the cue to one of the more common motifs throughout literature from the Byzantine epoch where a person heaves a sigh – if that is what it is – before speaking. Again, our King James Version says of Jesus: «looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!"»[37]. What was the noise that Jesus made when he audibly breathed (ἐστέναξεν)? The context is a touching narrative where Jesus came to the coast of Decapolis and a deaf person with a speech impediment is brought to the Saviour for healing[38]. Valuing privacy, Jesus «took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears […] and touched his tongue»; then we have the line already quoted where Jesus looks up (ἀναβλέψας) and makes whatever noise it is (ἐστέναξεν) toward heaven (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) but then says to the deaf man himself (λέγει αὐτῷ) «Ephphatha or open up». The man is immediately cured. The only other significant detail is that Jesus asks the bystanders to respect the privacy of the event, discouraging them from making the news public, though the more he encourages confidentiality, the more they broadcast the details. So while the text says that Jesus made a noise before speaking, we could also say that he made a noise before performing a miracle. The centrepiece of the scene is not what Christ says but what he does: he cures a disability with a combination of touch and command. I imagine him sucking in his breath in anticipation of effecting the cure. I cannot see how it can be a sigh. There is no motif of regret or indisposition or struggle to cope; nor is there a dimension of unrequited love or despair or anxiety. It is a breath drawn before committing something

[36] *Ezekiel* 21.6-7.

[37] *Mark* 7.34.

[38] IDEM 7.31-36.

momentous that must require supernatural power: it is a symbolic inhalation of spirit for the performance of thaumaturgy. The non-verbal sound that you could expect Jesus to make might be little different to a speaker or a recorder-player taking a deep breath before discharging a lungful of air on a deliberate sequence of meaningful sounds that are intended to have a powerful effect.

Before saying something, especially something momentous, people often audibly inhale. In a circle of folk in conversation, a pause might often end by someone taking a breath, which simultaneously prepares the person for speaking and signals to others that he or she is about to speak and they should look and listen accordingly. It belongs to the etiquette of polite society to harken to such breaths, though we are not taught to do it, and such social reflexes possibly arise unconsciously. The breath literally fills the lungs of the speaker so that the delivery is unimpeded by having to take a breath in the first moments of speaking. An experienced recorder-player knows how to suppress this sound, because while the breath is necessary, it does not belong to the music and can be distracting for the audience. The skillful woodwind musician knows how to inhale purposefully but near-silently before launching into the gavotte. On no account does the musician want a kind of "stop signal" with every batch of bars. In the social context of spontaneous speech, however, the sound of breath under pressure is a powerful signal to prepare to listen, while the loud breather prepares to speak. So as well as having a practical function in giving the speaker sustain for a necessary duration, the short noise serves as an announcement. This is not a time to interrupt. Some people in addition to drawing a deeper breath will make a grumbling sound while clearing their throat in order to project the voice. Again, it is both functional and diplomatic. And that is to say: it is not a sigh.

It is unnecessary to comb through the hundreds of references in Byzantine literature that mention a groan or an audible breath before speaking. None that I have encountered conforms to what I think of as a sigh, as emotional as they are. «He groaned when he heard this (ἐστέναξεν…ἀκούσας), and being filled with tears, he covered his face and said, "Alas"…»[39]. It is a trope from ancient times that persists to the fall of Constantinople. Equally, it is not unusual to find our words equated with a roar in an emotional outpouring, as when Gregory Nazianzen laments (πενθῶ) the people in catastrophe: «I, roaring like a lion

[39] Symeon Metaphrastes, *Vita et conversatio sancti Xenophontis et filiorum ejus Joannis et Arcadii*, 1028.41.

(ὡς λέων βρυχώμενος), groan deeply (μακρὰ στενάζω)»[40]. Often, it is natural that different emotions and their expressions overlap. Frustration induces confusion. It appears in Athanasius: «I would suddenly let out a loud cry (κραυγὴν […] μεγάλην) and immediately prayed, sighing with tears (στενάζων μετὰ δακρύων), that I might find your ears favourably disposed»[41]. The reactions are multiple and not necessarily separated in their suddenness (ἐξαπιναίως) where the prayer is direct (εὐθύς) in the same way that the sigh or groan is spontaneous.

The call to sighing in Byzantium

But that is not to say that the Byzantine Greeks did not sigh. Against however many of these conservative instances – where a potential word for sighing in fact means groaning or moaning – there are strong reasons to believe that the Byzantine Greeks did actually sigh in the way that we mean it today. In a sense, the Christian religion almost demands that they sighed. The faith is based on the teachings of Jesus who recommended an austere program of repentance. Throughout the Byzantine period, as Andrew Mellas has explained, one cultivates the emotion of compunction[42]. The believer does not leave it to chance that compunction will fall upon the conscience but rather the conscience must actively solicit the condition of compunction, to recognize an internal inadequacy of a sinful nature and to sigh, essentially, from the experience of reckoning with it. We do it, John Chrysostom suggests, «in order to sigh (ἵνα στενάζωμεν) so that through this sigh (ἐκ τοῦ στεναγμοῦ) we may inherit the kingdom»[43]. It is a religion of regrets, where one cannot expect to entertain divinity without first enduring the purgation of the soul by means of repentance.

Normally, you could imagine, the sigh is spontaneous. You can produce a sigh at any time; but here is the paradox, because if it is willed into being, it does not have the same meaning as a sigh produced involuntarily. The unsolicited sigh would appear to be an expression directly from the soul (as if prefiguring the unconscious) without conscious mediation. And hence its prestige as an immediate reflex that truthfully testifies to a

[40] *Carmina de se ipso* 1023.13 – 1024.1.

[41] *Apologia ad Constantium imperatorem* 6.12.

[42] Cf. MELLAS 2020.

[43] *In Matthaeum* 57.70.31-32.

remorseful soul. If your faith involves plumbing those regrets to arrive at compunction, the sigh is a paragon of pious efficacy. The Byzantine prestige of the sigh in part lies with the fact that it cannot be produced mechanically. You might cultivate it, if only there were a way not to make it artificial. And so you must seek the circumstances that are favourable to the sigh but you must never pretend or fudge the outcome, because the Holy Spirit would neither be fooled nor amused. Repentance is a conscious effort but the evidence of its agency in the soul cannot be forced. So you can propitiate the sigh but you cannot compel it. The penitent must examine his or her conscience in a kind of tussle with pride and justifications; it involves a discipline of matching grievous breaths with elated breaths, where personal regrets are coupled with divine vision. You do not merely seek compunction to perform an act of repentance; rather, the self-abasement in reckoning with sin is simultaneously aspirational: «I have tasted the grace», John Chrysostom says, «and I cannot endure the delay. I have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and I am compelled toward the whole. I ascended to the third heaven; I saw that unspeakable glory, I saw the bright kingdoms. I learned what I am deprived of while dwelling here; and because of this I sigh (διὰ ταῦτα στενάζω)»[44]. He has tasted the grace (Ἐγευσάμην […] τῆς χάριτος) and this sensual proposition makes him impatient because he cannot stand the delay (οὐ στέγω τὴν ἀναβολήν); he feels impelled or compelled (ἐπείγομαι) to ascend higher but, while contemplating the heights of spirit in this lofty emotional register, he then reckons with the dim realities of earthly existence, whereupon he sighs – I think we can say that – with the disappointment. It could be a groan but even so, a groan that you only make to yourself in the recognition of your inadequacy is effectively a sigh.

A mixture of emotion is not in itself enough to make us decide that the audible breath is a sigh, because it might still be vocalized. As John Chrysostom says of parables in *Matthew*, we share intense emotion with the evangelist: «it is fitting for us to rejoice (χαίρειν) when we hear these things, to feel pain (ἀλγοῦμεν), to be downcast (κατηφεῖς ἐσμεν) and to be glum (σκυθρωπάζομεν). Am I the only one suffering (πάσχω) these things? […] A certain horror comes upon me (φρίκη τις ὑπεισέρχεται) as I hear these things, and I lament bitterly (πικρὸν ὀδύρομαι); I groan (στενάζω) from the depths of my heart (ἐκ βαθυτάτης […] καρδίας)»[45]. In

[44] *Ad populum Antiochenum* in *PG* 49.71.11-14.

[45] *In Matthaeum* in *PG* 58.69.15-20.

this case, the mixture of emotions is surely loud and voiced. But such emotions nevertheless lead somewhere, the resolution of which might yield a sigh. Elsewhere Chrysostom aspires to this condition «if we meet in the church, if we sigh over our misdemeanours (στενάζωμεν), if we confess our sins, if we show mercy, if we offer prayers, if we help the oppressed, if we forgive the sins of our enemies, if we weep for the sinners. For all these are remedies for sins»[46]. In this case, the list does not confound the emotional reactions; so if we sigh (στενάζωμεν) over wrongdoings, there is no suggestion that it equates with the way we weep (δακρύωμεν) for the sinners. They are all valorized as medicines (φάρμακα) against sin, just like assembling in church; but each is distinct. And if we sigh over our misdemeanours (τοῖς πεπλημμελημένοις) they are presumably now in the past. We would not groan over them but sigh, because we imagine a reflective condition where we reckon with our wrongdoings from some time ago. The only way to read this expression of rue is a sigh.

The concentrated breath and its physiology

Compared to various sanguine pagan cultures, Christians had a need for a different kind of emotional expression and the sigh (στένος, στόνος) would be transferred from the voice to the lung. We may notice it already with Nemesius of Emesa writing around the end of the fourth century *On human nature*. The section "On breathing" (Περὶ ἀναπνοῆς) is especially remarkable for its subtle observations of the link between the physiological and the psychological. Nemesius says that «breathing is also a function of the soul. The muscles that expand the chest, the principal organ of respiration, are indeed the ones at work. Laboured and sighing breath occurring during great sorrows reveals the soul's activity»[47]. In this excellent suite of insights Nemesius identifies a dense or close or pressured breath (ἀθρόα ἀναπνοή), which he calls sighing or «in the manner of a sigh» (στεναγματώδης). The sigh in this definition has nothing to do with a groan or moan: it is isolated from any suggestion of a voiced expression and is quintessentially a breath; and the fact that breath is a function of the soul (τῶν ψυχικῶν ἐστιν ἔργων) means that it is neither merely mechanical nor entirely directed by the conscious mind. Nemesius locates the sigh where it would remain for modern

[46] *Adversus catharos* 63.493.1-6.

[47] *De natura hominis* 27.1-7.

times: an expression of emotion that reveals the soul's activity (ψυχικὴν δείκνυσι τὴν ἐνέργειαν) for which the sole vehicle is breath.

I would not go so far as to say that Nemesius' conception of the sigh-as-breath redefined our subtle words in Greek; but it undoubtedly helped open up the ancient language to a more modern conception. It will ultimately account for later medieval intuitions from the Komnenian renaissance, as in «the breath of sighs» (τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν στεναγμάτων) in Manuel Philes that expresses the crushing of the heart (συντριβὴν τῆς καρδίας)[48]. But the Byzantine development of the sigh does not follow a physiological or scientific impulse. Rather, the impetus is spiritual. The step in the history of ideas would never have been taken had it not been for the need for a sigh and a corresponding need to recognize what the sigh could achieve. Both aspects have Jewish religious roots rather than Hellenic empirical roots: both the manifestation and its cause are to be found in the *Old Testament*, where one not only sighs but one deliberately enters a condition where sighing is a likely precondition of repentance. As Christians often acknowledged, the desire to seek repentance in Christian tradition has its origins in Jewish templates. For example, Gregory of Nyssa says that «even the great David, although he had the utmost measure of human prosperity (I mean his kingdom), when he contemplated his own life, he sighs in lamentation (στενάζων ἐν οἰμωγῇ) and mourning (θρηνῶν)» for the extension of worldly cares. David is fulsomely overcome by the bitterness of his own life (δαψιλῶς ἐπιβάλλει τῶν πικρίδων τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ζωῇ)[49]. The king might have been proud of his property but Gregory enjoys the prospect that he might approach the end of his life with regrets that he has invested in the wrong dwelling for so long. Byzantine authors love such points of reversal. Given the mixture of emotions with a person changing perceptions, it is natural that we sometimes find it hard to distinguish the sigh from a groan, because it could be either or both, consecutively or at different times. But who, actually, moans in a moment of regret? Why would you theatricalize an emotion when your audience is only yourself? The mood is reflective and rueful. There is no reason for the expression to be voiced, even though David sighed in lamentation (ἐν οἰμωγῇ). For Gregory of Nyssa, David sighed.

[48] *Carmina*, 3.134.13-14.

[49] *Orationes VIII de beatitudinibus* in *PG* 44.1229.29-34.

But then because one has a need for a sigh and the phenomenon is spiritually salutary, one can also recognize its physicality. Among the sensations that I feel when I sigh is the expulsion of moisture. All breaths cause us to transpire barely perceptible vapour, as we know when we breathe over glass and deposit a microscopic shower of condensate. But because a sigh is long I become aware of the loss of humours from my gullet that would go unnoticed when launched from a typical breath. The duration makes me feel the release of hot air inside me that is infused with maximum humidity. Insofar as we are aware of the loss of moisture, we often control it. You may feel dry in the mouth and therefore breathe through the nose instead. But you cannot sigh through your nose. The sigh is oral: it heaves moisture from within and casts it beyond the body. This insight of a sigh expelling vapour rather than voice appears already in Eusebius: «indeed, sighing deeply (πάνυ δὲ στενάζων) because of present hardships, I release such a long and constant sigh, as if, from my voice turning into crying (μετὰ ὀλολυγῆς), my bones adhere and somehow unite with my flesh, due to the complete dryness (διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ξηρασίαν), having expelled all moisture»[50]. Eusebius gives the reasons for sighing or groaning: it is through present hardships (διὰ τὰ παρόντα ἐπίπονα) and so there is a familiar sense of fatigue and anxiety that could be considered the precondition of sighing. But the sigh that he lets out is also protracted and constant or continuous (ἐπιτεταμένον καὶ συνεχῆ στεναγμόν) and, most strikingly, it is characterized by the loss of moisture: one imagines the mouth being open, forcing out the humours that reside deep inside the organism. The moisture (ὑγρότης) belongs intimately to the body; and the sigh causes you to give it up. This acknowledgement of the corporality of sighing recognizes not only the breath but loss of bodily humour, a kind of exposure, a desiccation, a hot breath that seeks from the air what is depleted from within. Eusebius' sigh is like a miniature expiry, a fragmentary death, if you like, reminiscent of Christ giving up the spirit (ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα)[51] that is rehearsed in hundreds of circumstances in the Byzantine period.

The engagement with air, as opposed to sound as a voiced intervention, might distinguish Byzantine sighing from ancient Greek groaning. We may sense it in Athanasios in his *Life of St Anthony*: «he forgot to eat and spent the rest of the day and the entire night sighing and praying (στενάζων καὶ εὐχόμενος). He marvelled, considering how many

[50] *Commentaria in Psalmos* 23.1253.33-40.

[51] *Matthew* 27.50.

struggles we face, and with how much grief a person has to pass through the air»[52]. This last phrase perhaps recalls the line in Paul that alludes to dark forces: «ye walked according […] to the prince of the power of the air»[53], which Athanasios quotes a little further on. Again, the continuous and sustained nature of the sighing is emphasized: like prayer, it goes throughout the night (δι' ὅλης τῆς νυκτὸς). But this struggle that subtracts from the sleeping hours is described through a stressed relationship with air: with how many pains (πόσων πόνων) does a person pass through the air (διαβῆναι τὸν ἀέρα)? In breathing, technically, the air passes through us; but from the point of view of the air, we pass through it. The air in its encounter with us is under pressure, not just because we squeeze it with our lungs but we involuntarily tighten the aperture and it passes through our windpipe with a kind of audible strain which is the sigh. The sigh is a fraught breath, a breath under protracted pressure, a literal expression of stress. And like compunction – literally a pricking feeling – it may have a beneficial function that you might actively cultivate. You inadvertently strain at the point of sighing, but with the suggestion that something uncomfortable within can be expelled.

Forcing the air, almost against an unwillingness to breathe, the sigh testifies to an internal struggle. It is not like a groan that reflects the pain of an unwelcome outside influence. In sighing, we labour over inertia on the inside; and the origin of this insight is Byzantine. In a notable *Psalm*, the King James version reads: «I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears»[54]. But the *Septuagint* expresses this sentiment in a way that gives an entirely different and enlarging cue to later writers: I labour in my sighing (ἐκοπίασα ἐν τῷ στεναγμῷ μου). Athanasios takes up this line in his *Exposition on the Psalms* with a sense of exigence: «I urge for your mercy to hasten. I have laboured in my sighs. Let us hear what kind of repentance the king demonstrated. He did not merely do it, but he toiled in sighing. He did not simply shed tears, but he soaked his bed every night»[55].

My reading of this passage is not simply that the speaker becomes tired through sighing but that he labours at his sigh. This shows the king's repentance (μετάνοια); and for emphasis,

[52] *Vita Antonii* 26.936.11-17.

[53] *Ephesians* 2.2.

[54] *Psalm* 6.6.

[55] 27.77.9-15; lifted by John Chrysostom, *Expositiones in Psalmos* 55.76.37.

Athanasios uses the construction «not simply this but that»: he did not simply do it (οὐχ ἁπλῶς ἔκαμεν) but he laboured sighing (ἀλλ' ἐκοπίασε στενάζων). The active verb here (κοπιάω) occurs often in the *New Testament* to mean "work hard", "labour" or "toil" as well as "grow weary"; and I do not think that Athanasios would have underlined the sentiment so deliberately if he has only intended that David becomes tired and ends up falling asleep from sighing; or even if we conceded that fatigue is a dimension of the sighing, the fact that the king pushes himself to exhaustion indicates the same thing: it is a labour pursued so hard that one cannot continue. David implicitly labours "with" the sigh or "through" the sighing. For Athanasios, this labour of sighing is constructed as a form of therapy. Admittedly, we find the same verb in a later *Psalm* where «I labour at crying out» (ἐκοπίασα κράζων in the *Septuagint*) to the point that «my throat is parched and my eyes fail, looking for my God»[56]. The discipline of repentance is not limited to sighing: you might labour at other forms of expression that exhaust your faculties. In the end, however, the purpose of these demonstrations is to discover an impotence that has the paradoxical power to hasten God's mercy, as Athanasios says (ἐπιταχύναι τὸν ἔλεον).

There is much talk in the Byzantine period of this voluntary weakness that must overcome the very bones to embrace repentance: «for my life has dwindled away in pain (ἐξέλιπεν ἐν ὀδύνῃ)», says Athanasios; «it is apparent from the intensity of my thoughts. And my years have been filled with sighs (ἐν στεναγμοῖς) […] sighing because of my woes (στενάζων ἀπὸ τῶν κακῶν). My strength weakened in poverty. Having become poor due to my sin and your lack of help, I grew feeble (ἠσθένησα). And my bones were troubled (ἐταράχθησαν)»[57]. Identifying with the psalmist, he implies that he once had strength (ἰσχύς) but it weakened (ἠσθένησεν) through poverty (ἐν πτωχείᾳ). These forces, so to speak, must be managed in order to privilege repentance in a life of sighing that seems to drain the humours from one's very bones.

[56] *Psalms* 69.3.

[57] *Expositiones in Psalmos* 27.157.26-33.

Internalization and efficacy of the sigh

With all this physiological colour, our discourse is pious and not amorous. Even in the Komnenian renaissance, there is no counterpart to the scores of sighs of Cavalcanti or Petrarch. But there must always have been some consciousness of the trials and tribulations of love, anxious expectation and disappointment, «just as a eunuch embraces a maiden and sighs», as a popular line in the apochryphal *Septuagint* has it[58]. But even here, the discourse is not amorous but woebegone, because the poetic phrase also uses our verb (στενάζων) in a way that the *Vulgate* fairly translates with moaning (*ingemiscens*)[59]. When John Chrysostom quotes this aphoristic line, he uses it to allegorize the futility of amassing wealth: «thus the rich, all of them!»[60] The intention behind Chrysostom's use of the phrase is to say that the wealthy are in the same position as a eunuch who cannot take advantage of a sexual opportunity, because just so the windfall of wealth cannot be exploited for the earnest stakes of the afterlife, and the rich might similarly sigh with the futility of such tantalizing prospects that cannot be realized. Through this allegory, we are not meant to identify the eunuch as a victim in his forlorn passion; because if he sighs over his impotence, he is spared a further hindrance to God. But if such motifs are relatively unusual, they throw into relief the structural development of the sigh in Byzantine culture: it is not structurally negative – arising from a feeling of lack or impotence – but positive, prompting or expressing repentance, being disabused of illusion, and hence an instrument of proximity to God.

The expedience of sighing is confessed in numerous passages. In his *Homily on Hebrews*, John Chrysostom tells us that «there is much defence in weeping and groaning (ἡ πολλὴ ἄμυνα τὸ κλαῦσαι καὶ στενάξαι)». «Whenever a ruler sighs (ὥστε ἐὰν στενάξῃ ὁ ἄρχων), God defends you (ἀμύνεταί σε ὁ Θεός). For if we sigh over our own sins, we draw God to ourselves»[61]. Similarly when we sigh over the neglect and contempt of others: «one must sigh (στενάζειν δεῖ) when being despised, being trampled upon, being slandered. Do not dare to say that you are not defended; because the sigh is defence against things that are worse (ὁ γὰρ στεναγμὸς πάσης ἀμύνης χείρων). For even when one does not repair anything

[58] *Sirach* 30.20: «ὥσπερ εὐνοῦχος περιλαμβάνων παρθένον, καὶ στενάζων· οὕτως οἱ πλουτοῦντες ἅπαντες».

[59] *Ecclesiastes* 30.21-22: «videns oculis et ingemiscens, sicut spado complectens virginem, et suspirans. Tristitiam non des animæ tuæ, et non affligas temetipsum in consilio tuo».

[60] *On Matthew* 58.749.18: «οὕτως οἱ πλουτοῦντες ἅπαντες».

[61] *On Hebrews* 63.232.48-62: «εἰ γὰρ ὑπὲρ τῶν οἰκείων ἁμαρτημάτων στενάζοντες».

by sighing (μηδὲν ὀνήσῃ στενάζων), one calls upon the Lord»[62]. Theoretically, one could groan when being despised or trampled upon or slandered, because the groan is a reaction to immediate pain or offence. But why would a theologian exhort you to groan over these barbs when the groan would in any case be automatic? Instead, the sigh proposes a degree of transcendence: you are offended by these insults, of course; but in sighing over them, you have already turned the other cheek. A groan would express grief or even anger, but the sigh expresses acceptance. For that reason, the sigh is a defence (ἀμύνης) because we leave our vanity behind and raise our vision to God. Hence, if we sigh over our own sins, as Chrysostom says, we draw God to ourselves (ἐπισπώμεθα τὸν Θεόν).

The sigh, then, has an astonishing promotion in the scheme of emotional reactions. It is a powerful spiritual resource that a theologian warmly commends to the faithful. In his *Exposition of the Psalms*, John Chrysostom uses startlingly explosive language to characterize the power of the sigh: «this weapon overturns households, demolishes foundations, razes cities, and drowns entire nations; I speak of the sighing of oppressed people. God respects their gratitude (αἰδεῖται τὴν εὐγνωμοσύνην αὐτῶν ὁ Θεὸς) when, suffering unfairly, they do not utter any wicked word but only sigh (στενάζωσι δὲ μόνον) and endure their own misfortunes»[63]. Chrysostom cannot have groaning or wailing in mind, because he thinks that God credits the quiet – not the disruption – of the unjustly suffering people: they do not utter a bad word (μηδὲν πονηρὸν ἐκφέρωσι ῥῆμα) but lament their own woes (ἀποδύρωνται τὰ οἰκεῖα κακά), with the implication that they internalize their grief rather than broadcasting it. We sense this because God evidently stands in awe of the considerate feeling or benignity of people who sigh; and if God is on their side, the oppressors will find their fortunes upended.

Sighing thus belongs to an economy, where the expression makes a pact with God, as if demonstrating trust in compunction. As we noted from archaic times, the sigh (which was more of a groan or moan or lament) had a social role; and its position in a group dynamic remains throughout the Byzantine period, as when Anna Comnena tells us that «the emperor mourned (ἐπένθει) individually and collectively (ἰδίᾳ καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον καὶ ὁμοῦ) for all those who had fallen. Especially for the death of his chamberlain, he sighed deeply (or

[62] *Ibidem*.

[63] *Expositiones in Psalmos* 55.147.18-24, repeated *Eclogae ex diversis homiliis* 63.672.48-52.

moaned deeply, μᾶλλον στενάζων), his tears wetting the pillows»[64]. However, the privacy of sighing is preserved in most circumstances, including when it involves communicating with God; and hence we hear about sighing and praying all night (ὅλης τῆς νυκτὸς εὐχόμενος καὶ στενάζων) from figures like George the Monk from the ninth century[65].

The metaphor of tightness, an uncanny coincidence

The fact that a sigh is a tight breath, where you experience a kind of pressure that does not apply to normal breathing, encourages us to wonder if perhaps there is a connexion between the sigh (στένος) and spatial tightness (στενοχωρία). If there is no etymological link – given that *LSJ* propose an origin in the sound of groaning or roaring or moaning – a confounding of meaning could nevertheless have arisen over many centuries, where the motif of the narrow (στενός) was induced upon the groan to produce, effectively, a sigh (στένος). They are identical words that only carry a different stress. The sense of a tight space, which might trigger claustrophobia in us, had some atmospheric appeal in Byzantine times; and in a way the motif of spatial constriction uncannily parallels the inverted affection for the sigh. As Athanasios says in a long analysis of virtues and vices and how to procure and reject them respectively: «love for excessiveness drives away virtues; but narrowness humbles passions (ἡ δὲ στενοχωρία ταπεινοῖ τὰ πάθη)»[66]. This narrowness or constriction is the opposite of excessiveness, which would encourage a sense of entitlement. If your expectation for space and luxuries is cramped, you are already cultivating a discipline of restraint that will also conquer the passions. We encounter this motif of renunciation in every corner of practice, as in Libanius: «while the other guests were eating and drinking, I remained on my own (ἐγὼ δὲ ἴδιον); I was pensive (ἐκαλινδούμην), I rubbed my head, I did not partake of the feast, I pushed away the wine-cups, and at times, sighing deeply (σφοδρότερον ἀναστένων), I rebuked my passion, so much so that I even provided laughter for my fellow drinkers who were already drunk»[67].

[64] *Alexias* 6.14.4.4.

[65] *Chronicon breve* 110.849.12.

[66] *Sermo pro iis qui saeculo renuntiarunt* 28.1413.3.

[67] *Declamationes* 30.1.25.5.

The motif of narrowness has a certain inverted charm from the time when Paul said: «who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship (στενοχωρία) or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?»[68] It was imaginative to translate this word as "hardship", because the physicality of "hard" matches that of "tight", missing only the sense of spatiality embedded in the Greek abstraction (στενοχωρία). The several afflictions that Paul lists which would never deter the first Christians from their faith do not need to have a relationship between them: they are all equally hindrances but they are individually not the same. The first two are similar in proceeding from a motif of pressure, because the term "trouble" (θλῖψις) derives from pressure and extends to oppression or affliction by metaphor. And so the tightness of space (στενοχωρία) that the King James Version renders as "hardships" is analogous in bringing pressure to bear on the individual who follows Christ. The "narrow space" of this conception could mean anything physically compromising: incarceration, transportation in steerage class on a boat, being confined to a cell or passage-way or bedding down in a cramped attic. The discomfort is borne easily in the love of Christ; and this sense of simultaneous affliction and hope matches the ambiguity of the sigh, which is both a sign of oppression and fragile expectation.

It is especially tempting to see some of the meaning of narrow space or tightness or restriction (στενοχωρία) rubbing off onto the sigh (στένος) – whatever its roots – because the image of narrowness is also used metaphorically for anything embarrassing, which is where the word ended up in modern Greek. Already Origen, in a letter to Africanus, the theologian hopes that the recipient will grant «forgiveness due to my modest circumstances and the restriction of my time (τοῦ καιροῦ στενοχωρία)», meaning haste or competing demands on his attention[69]. The indisposition is not spatial but organizational. The narrow space in this sense means not having much room in the flow of events, and has nothing to do with the distance between walls. Presumably, there are other things that require his care. So in a sense both concepts of the audible breath and narrow space converge metaphorically upon a kind of embarrassment, a shortfall of grace, a lack of leeway. In referring to his modest circumstances (τῇ […] μετριότητί μου) he indicates the meagre resources at his disposal. Nor

[68] *Romans* 8.35 quoted in many places, e.g. Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms* 23.353.7.

[69] *Epistula ad Africanum* 11.49.4.

is Origen alone. Other busy writers like John Chrysostom would use the same expression for "time restrictions" (literally the narrow space of time) in many places[70].

Paradoxically, however, the same narrowness of space that might have influenced the conception of a sigh is in itself associated with groaning and wailing. If you go to hell, there are many agonies awaiting you: «there is unbearable punishment, immortal retribution, the venomous worm, the unquenchable fire, the outer darkness, the unbreakable chains, the gnashing of teeth, affliction, constriction (στενοχωρία) and eternal judgment»[71]. This is no sighing matter. John Chrysostom is talking here about abject pain. The punishment is unbearable (κόλασις ἀφόρητος) where, among other agonies, a worm chews at you in perpetuity. For Byzantine believers, the frequent evocation of the worm in church – elsewhere the unsleeping worm (σκώληξ ἀκοίμητος)[72] – automatically produces the mental image of a person laid in the soil, which is the dense and dark medium of the worm. There is no air and no room to move when the soil is packed around your flesh and the worm begins its feast. You are held down in paralytic constriction while enduring the torture of being eaten for your eternal life. There would be no momentary sighs but only interminable groans and screaming. This extreme morbidity was a reality in the Byzantine imagination, where the crush of claustrophobia is invoked to help escape the clutches of hell.

At the same time, however, we are exhorted to confront all difficulties, in the same way that Paul suggested that we must not resile from hardships and suffering. «If we struggle with what is easier», John Chrysostom contributes, «how will we endure what is harder? But great is the constriction (στενοχωρία), great is the violence (or force, βία, against you). Know that the forceful (βιασταὶ) seize the kingdom of heaven, for the road leading to life is narrow (στενὴ) and distressed (τεθλιμμένη). Therefore, since we walk on a narrow and distressed road, we must also constrict and afflict (στενοχωρεῖν καὶ θλίβειν) ourselves so that we may be able to tread the narrow and distressed path»[73]. And so this same claustrophobic crush has a pre-emptive effect: it is functional in much the same way that the sigh might belong to the cultivation of repentance. To engage with such constrictions is prophylactic. I imagine myself

[70] For example, *De beato Philogonio* (= *Contra Anomoeos, homilia* 6) 48.754.8; *Adversus Judaeos* 48.857.24.

[71] John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 49.72.11-15.

[72] For example, Athanasios in *PG* 28.589.32.

[73] *De mutatione nominum* 51.125.41-51.

breathing in a sigh by analogy to someone trying to breathe in an extremely constricted space, let us hope not ravaged by pythons like Laocoön and his sons who will soon be unable to breathe. But if you do it to yourself as a deliberate act of self-discipline, this constriction that affects your ability to breathe is spiritually salutary.

There are times, of course, when we almost sigh for meteorological reasons, because the air is oppressive and we gasp in the humidity. It seems no accident that in English we often refer to such torrid conditions as "close" – like *l'aria chiusa* or *pesante* in Italian, *pesant* or *lourd* in French or *drückend* in German or тяжёлый in Russian – which links atmosphere to spatial compression. Always writing with a sense of allegory, John Chrysostom asks: «have you feared the sensation of heat? And in the market, where there is so much noise, constriction, and scorching heat, how are you not overwhelmed by a choking sensation (πνῖγος) and warmth (θέρμην)?» [74] This heat that is tangibly sensed (καῦμα αἰσθητόν) is experienced in a place that is itself tight and congested: the market, with its hubbub (θόρυβος) and constriction (στενοχωρία) and heatwave (καύσων). The choking sensation is somehow augmented by the commotion of the marketplace, with its density and buzz, whereupon you aim to get away to a cooler and quieter place. Given the dense urban configuration of medieval cities, it is no surprise that writers sometimes yield such evocative vignettes of the tight and narrow ways, so different to the vast automotive corridors that we experience in modernity. There was often an aspiration to avoid the congestion, to breathe easy, as it were.

Conclusion

It would be overstating the case to suggest that Byzantine culture invented the sigh in the modern sense. It remains a different expression, with different connotations and resonances. It is both less and more specific than our sigh, less exact in excluding voice and yet more pointed in its identification of grief, from compunction to lamentation. Just as the Byzantines did not primarily think of a sigh as a registration of love in the balance or pining or longing or yearning for another human's love, so they did not identify the sigh with nostalgia. I, perhaps you too, experience a sighing sensation in contemplating the ruins of

[74] *In illud: Si esurierit inimicus* (On the line "If your enemy is hungry" [i.e. *Romans* 12.20]) 51.175.51-55.

Rome or Tyre or Ephesus. These private emotional eruptions are not part of the sigh in Byzantium. But compared to the emotional expressions of pre-Christian Hellenic antiquity, the sigh nevertheless greatly expanded in its evocative scope throughout the Byzantine period, where it became integral and highly functional in a spiritualized life. It would be tempting to follow this history further through the western middle ages, where courtly erotic verse shaped the more secular development of the sigh that we have inherited today.

The Byzantine world leaves us with a sigh that was originally a groan; but it was purged, so to speak, of its vocalization thanks to religious impulses, with their many metaphors of spiritual burdens, constrictions and rue that parallel the modern meaning. Of course we have to allow for the historical textual bias, where we only witness the key conceptions laundered of their noise and fury thanks to the religious uses of repentance and compunction. Our rich texts are extensively theological, and the picture that we gain from them is inevitably skewed toward pious functions. But I think that even if we had more secular texts, they would have told a similar story. The only reason that the groan lost its vocalization to become a sigh is that it was pressed into private service, where the intimacy of an individual's psychology presumes a certain hush that is only broken by an irregular breath. In Byzantium, this intimate space always had God in it, whether for a priest or a poet like Prodromos. In the west, by contrast, that intimate space would take on the imaginative conceit of the lover who has already constructed an autonomous object of adoration that vaguely stands for God or at least the Virgin. And to the extent that this venereal tradition of minstrels is unique to Italy and the west of Europe, one could argue that the sigh in its fullest modern understanding never existed in Byzantium. Yet that pious world of the patriarchs nevertheless hatched a version of the sigh that yields most of what we mean by a sigh today; and this development contrasts markedly from the vociferous moaning of antiquity. In essence, Byzantine authors discovered an internal world that today we take for granted; but it did not exist in pagan antiquity and only emerged when writers refashioned the existing vocabulary, forging the fugitive sounds of a peculiarly emotional breath from the dramatic lexical legacy of the classical world.

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