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Contents

Articles

Review essays

Editorial

The *Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* has proven its value as an international journal in the field of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies. From the very beginning, in 2015, it has been available online with open access to the scholarly and general public.

The current and 6th volume of *SJBMGS* includes five studies. Ewan Short examines in his article the connections between Maria Skleraina, emperor Constantine IX Monomachos and the Mangana monastery. Valeria Flavia Lovato offers a new edition and translation of Isaac Komnenos' poem to the Virgin, adding an interpretation of its meaning and function. In the third study, Pantelis Papageorgiou examines the attitude of the 'eastern' Byzantine literati towards their 'Rhomaic people' in the former western provinces of the Empire during the late Byzantine period. The Manuscripts of the Meteora monasteries and the conditions under which they ended up in libraries and collections abroad is the theme of the fourth study by Dimitrios Agoritsas. Finally, Anastassiya Andrianova deals with the reception of Constantine Cavafy and his poetry in Russia and Ukraine.

In this volume we also introduce a new section of so-called review essays. Our aim is to open up for longer discussions of recent publications, creating a space for critical and fruitful debate in the fields of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies. In the first review article, Milan Vukasinović discusses recent studies on ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and race in Byzantium; in the second, Ingela Nilsson underlines the need for wider perspectives and cross-cultural studies with examples from medieval Anatolia. The books under discussion were published in 2019–20.

The *SJBMGS* is open for unpublished articles and book reviews related to Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies in the fields of philology, linguistics, history and literature.

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Maria, Monomachos and the Mangana: Imperial Legitimacy (1042-1046)

Ewan Short

Maria Skleraina was recognised as a figure of political significance in Byzantine society during the fourth and fifth decades of the eleventh century.[1] Her entrance into the imperial family through a *ménage à trois* with the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos and his legitimate wife Zoe was still remembered at the turn of the twelfth century. The notoriety of Skleraina's relationship with Monomachos is often mentioned in modern scholarship, but publications by Nicolas Oikonomides and Maria Dora Spadaro remain the only focused studies of her unusual history.[2]

Oikonomides noticed that Skleraina was closely associated with the Mangana area, on the east slope of the first hill of Constantinople, after she returned to the city with Monomachos in 1042 (fig. 1). He thought this connection was established for mainly economic reasons, with rev-

[1] Research on this article was conducted with the support of the South West and Wales Doctoral Training Program and the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul between January and April 2020. I am also especially grateful to Ingela Nilsson, Olof Heilo, David Hendrix and Shaun Tougher for their advice, and to my partner Emma Huig for her photographs. All mistakes are my own. Unfortunately, the photograph of the sea-view of the Mangana published here is obscured, but we were not able to return because of the outbreak of Covid-19.

[2] In 1980/81 Oikonomides demonstrated Skleraina's possession of DO seal BZS.1958.106.39. He argued the seal is pre-Komnenian, and also cannot have belonged to the unnamed Alan mistress taken by Monomachos in c. 1050, the only woman other than Maria attested as *sebastē* in this period: Oikonomides, 1980/81, 239-246. Spadaro published a critical edition of the long poem attributed to Psellos titled 'Verses at the tomb of the *sebastē*. Here she suggested that Skleraina developed her own political strategies to establish herself within the Byzantine ruling class: Spadaro 1984, and Westerink 1992, 239-252.

enue from the Mangana giving Skleraina the financial independence to enact patronage and gift giving. This understanding of Skleraina's connection with the Mangana has subsequently been widely accepted by modern scholars. Skleraina seems however to have already been substantially wealthy before 1042, suggesting that her connections to the Mangana may have been established for other reasons. In this article I aim to reassess Skleraina's links to the Mangana by highlighting written, material, and topographic evidence that her involvement with the site extended beyond a purely economic arrangement. I aim to show that Skleraina's connections to the site were designed to substantiate her contested imperial status and legitimise her relationship with Monomachos. I argue these links involved her management of the charitable activities at the Mangana, as well as her direction of the building work. The significance of the site as a symbol for Monomachos' reign was recognised by his contemporaries and has been highlighted in modern studies.[3] Here I will also suggest that between 1042 and 1046 the built and landscaped environment at the Mangana symbolised Skleraina's status and her relationship with Monomachos.

Skleraina and Monomachos' connection with this site is an important case study shedding light on how specific foundations could be used for the public presentation of imperial persons. Previous studies have emphasised that imperial Byzantine women and men used patronage to pattern their lives on the models of earlier rulers.[4] It has been suggested that the prestige acquired through monumental construction was particularly important for women, because they had access to fewer visible roles in Byzantine state and society.[5] However, in this article I

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[3] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 524-526, Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.11-20, and Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 476.9-14, all describe Monomachos as the founder of the site and discuss it as a significant aspect of his reign. For the links between the Monomachoi and St George: Nesbitt & Oikonomides 1996, 59; Cheynet 2002. For the Mangana as a symbol of Monomachos' rule: Lemerle 1977, 275-276; Spingou 2015, 61-65. For the poetry written to celebrate Monomachos' connections with the Mangana: Bernard 2018, 219-220.

[4] Klein 2014, 85; Brubaker 2004, 52-75; James 2001, 12, 14, 148-151; Harries 1994, 34-44; Whitby 1994, 83-94.

[5] Demirtiken 2019, 175; James 2014, 65.

would like to focus more on the significance of Skleraina and Monomachos' roles as joint patrons of the Mangana, whilst also acknowledging that the developments at the site presented Skleraina as pious and charitable.[6]

This article is influenced by Diliana Angelova's study of the presentation of imperial power through depictions of women and men as partners between the first and sixth centuries in the Roman and Byzantine Empires.[7] Angelova has proposed that evidence for such collaboration can be found by prioritising material evidence and recognising the potential distortions of texts. She argues this method is appropriate because women's contributions to imperial partnerships are frequently overlooked in literary sources, where the narratives are often focalised upon the emperor.[8] Recently, Elif Demirtiken has also suggested that a 'Komnenian turn' rendered imperial women in the 'theatre-state' of twelfth-century Byzantium increasingly visible as joint patrons.[9] Skleraina and Monomachos' links to the Mangana, which emerge through a range of source material, show that also in the eleventh century joint patronage could enhance the reputation of both partners, placing them together within established imperial tradition.

Maria Skleraina, Constantine IX Monomachos and the Mangana

Maria Skleraina was from the Skleros family, who seem to have originated in the Byzantine province of Lesser Armenia.[10] Her history is

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[6] For the possibility that acts of foundation in middle-Byzantine Constantinople could communicate multiple symbolic meanings: Stanković 2011, 47-71.

[7] Angelova 2015.

[8] Angelova 2015, 167-168, pointing out that Procopius obscures Theodora's role as a joint patron with Justinian, which is visible in material evidence. For focalisation upon the emperor in eleventh-century histories: Neville 2019, 88.

[9] Demirtiken 2019, 182-191.

[10] For a prosopographical study of Skleraina: Seibt 1976, 71-76. See also: *PBW* 2016, "Maria" no. 64 <https://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/107734/>. Her first name is attested by Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 70 and Gregory the Cellarer, *Life of St Lazaros* (tr. Greenfield), 347 (§ 245).

described in several written sources and the information they give on her life is summarised below. The names of Skleraina's parents are unattested, but she was the niece of Basileios Skleros, the brother-in-law of the emperor Romanos III Argyros (r. 1028-1034). She was also the great-granddaughter of Bardas Skleros who had launched two wide-scale rebellions against Basil II (r. 967-1025) in 979 and 986.[11] Skleraina was married to a *protospathorios* but was widowed before 1035.[12] Around this time, she embarked upon an open love affair with Constantine Monomachos, who had been previously married to Skleraina's cousin. Psellos' *Chronographia* implies that she resided in Constantinople in these years.[13] In 1035, Monomachos was exiled to Lesbos by the emperor Michael IV (r. 1034-1041), and Skleraina stayed with him on the island until he was recalled to Constantinople to marry the empress Zoe (b.c. 980 - d. 1050) on 11 June 1042.[14] At some point before 1043, Skleraina also enacted a forceable takeover of the *charistikion* of the monastery of St Mamas (near Constantinople), in lieu of an outstanding debt.[15]

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[11] For the history of these rebellions: Kaldellis 2017, 83-102. The sister of Bardas Skleros was married to John I Tzimiskes before he became ruler: Leo the Deacon, *History* (tr. Mary Talbot & Sullivan), 157-158; Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 288.23-24.

[12] See below, n. 14.

[13] Psellos' use of the participle μετακαλέσοντες to describe the party sent to bring Skleraina from Lesbos to the capital in c. 1042 implies that she was being recalled: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 366.18.

[14] Following, Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch) 326, 364-366. See also: Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 618-619. For the date of the marriage: Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 423.

[15] The case is recorded in Eustathios Rhomaios' compendium of eleventh-century legal disputes. The dispute must have taken place before Skleraina's acclamation as *Sebaste* in c. 1043, because Skleraina is described as a *protospatharissa*: Rhomaios, *Peira* (ed. Zepos), vol. 4, 54.18-24. Seibt thought that this dispute must have taken place during Skleraina's husband's lifetime before 1035: Seibt 1976, 71. However, Byzantine women often continued to use the equivalent of their husband's titles as widows. For the location of St Mamas, possibly in modern-day Besiktas: Janin 1969, 314-319. For the *charistikion* system, whereby lay people held administrative responsibility for monastic estates: Bartusis 1991. Skleraina's date of birth is not known, but she was probably at least 25 by 1042-1043. This was the minimum age that Byzantine women could administer property and conclude contracts independently: Prinzing 2009, 33-34.

Upon arrival in Constantinople, Monomachos asked Zoe that Skleraina be allowed to follow him to the city. The empress assented and, according to Zonaras, Skleraina subsequently moved into a house in the Kynegion area of Constantinople.[16] This place was likely located close to the northern section of the Marmara Sea Walls, near the Acropolis on the first hill of Constantinople, in an area now known also as the Sarayburnu promontory.[17] The Mangana itself also occupied the area now between the Sea Walls and the Topkapi Palace, which now stands on the former Acropolis. The original site of the Mangana was likely to the south of the Kynegion (fig. 2). Around the time of Skleraina's arrival, building works in the Mangana, which had been an imperial house since the ninth century, were initiated.[18] It is likely that these building works subsumed the Kynegion area as the site of the Mangana was expanded. The building program was one of several begun during the reign of Monomachos.[19] At the Mangana, the pre-existing church of St George and a palace were rebuilt. Additional buildings were also constructed, including a monas-

[16] Zonaras, *Epitome*, (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 647.1-4; Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 364-366. Both imply that it was soon after Monomachos' wedding to Zoe, which was in June 1042.

[17] The Kynegion area was erected by Severus as an amphitheatre. It was located nearby the ancient temple of Artemis on the Acropolis: Malalas, *Chronographia* (ed. Thurn), 221.75-222.78; *Chronicon Paschale* (ed. Dindorf), 495. The *Codex Theodosianus* (ed. Mommsen & Meyer), 2, 784 (§ 14.6.5), describes an area of furnaces running along the Sea Walls, extended by an amphitheatre, likely the Kynegion. The area of the Sea Walls nearest the Acropolis is towards the north of the Sarayburnu promontory and thus this is the probable location of the Kynegion. Van Millingen 1899, 251, identified as the Kynegion a hollow behind the Değirmen Kapısı sea gate (fig. 1), but did not cite his sources. See also, Mango 1985, 19 n.36, Cameron et. al. 1984, 201, Janin 1964, 14; Martiny 1938. For the link between the Acropolis and the Topkapi: Dark & Harris 2008, 58.

[18] Although, Constantine VII, *Life of Basil* (ed. Ševčenko), 298-300, identifies Basil I as the founder of the imperial house at the Mangana, Lemerle 1977, 273, showed the house belonged to the patriarch Ignatios and his father Michael I (r. 811-813). Kaplan 2006, 176-177, argued it was an imperial house by 815 at the latest, and retained this status during Ignatios' tenure. The house of the Mangana is attested in the possession of the convent of St Olympias in 532: Magdalino 2007, 49, n.184.

[19] For Monomachos' rebuilding of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: Ousterhout 1989. For Nea Moni on Chios: Mouriki 1985.

tery, a house for the poor, a hostel, a poor house, a hospital and a law-school. Extensive landscaped features were also added to the site.[20] It is likely that Monomachos bestowed estates upon the Mangana at this time, adding to an endowment which was probably already sizeable.[21]

The Mangana area is still a significant feature of the Sarayburnu promontory (figs. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7). The site has been excavated once, by the French military in 1922-23. Their findings were published by Demangel and Mamboury in 1939.[22] It is around 800m long and divided into two terraces by a high wall that runs the length of the site. The higher terrace is narrow, but still spacious enough to accommodate designed landscape features. The lower terrace is wide and levelled, featuring the substructures which Demangel and Mamboury identified as the monastery and church of St George, and the palace.[23] These substructures and the terraced walls all feature incidences of recessed brickwork, a technique which was often used in Byzantine construction between the late-tenth and mid-thirteenth centuries.[24] The brickwork is a further indicator that these buildings were developed during Monomachos' reign, in the mid-eleventh century. Near the site of the palace, the Marmara Sea Walls feature a tripartite set of arches, which Mavis Zulueta argued functioned as a sea entrance to the site (fig. 7).[25]

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[20] Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 477.61-63; Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.11-20. The law school is attested in a foundation document drafted by Mauropous: Zepos & Zepos 1931, I, 620. The landscaped features are described most extensively by Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 524-530. For the monastery: Janin 1969, 70-76. For evidence that from the late-eighth through to the eleventh centuries philanthropy was increasingly enacted through imperial foundations: Kaplan 2006, 178-183.

[21] The Mangana possessed a wheat mill, a bakery and land in Constantinople and in the provinces, possibly including a vineyard in the region of Thebes: Oikonomides 1980/81, 241-242. The only acquisition firmly dated to Monomachos' reign is land in Euchaïta: Kaplan 2006, 180.

[22] Demangel & Mamboury 1939.

[23] Here I follow the observations of Henry Maguire, who was able to access the site: Maguire 2000, 259-262.

[24] Maguire 2000, 261. For recessed brickwork see Krautheimer & Ćurčić 1986, 354, 504-505 n.3.

[25] Zulueta 2000, 253-267.

Sometime after returning to Constantinople, Skleraina moved again and took up residence in the Great Palace. This possibly took place in 1043.[26] She now received the title *sebastē* (Σεβαστή, a Greek translation of *augusta*). Her position was ratified in a ceremony involving herself, Monomachos and Zoe, and witnessed by the imperial court. Skleraina then participated in ceremonial alongside both Zoe and her sister, the empress Theodora. According to Psellos, Skleraina was now addressed as *despoina* and *basilis*.[27] It is very likely these titles and Skleraina's appearance in ceremonial were intended to emphasise that she was a member of the imperial family, alongside Monomachos, Zoe and Theodora. Dumbarton Oaks seal BZS.1958.106.39, first published by Oikonomides, shows that around this time Skleraina gained possession of a new administrative unit at the Mangana titled 'St George the Great-Martyr and Trophy-Bearer'.[28] Her presence in the palace was controversial, provoking a disturbance amongst the Constantinopolitan populace in March 1044, where, according to John Skylitzes, a crowd accused her of threatening the lives of Zoe and Theodora.[29] Skleraina died from an asthmatic disease before May 1046.[30] Monomachos built a tomb in St

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[26] This date is based upon the description provided by Skylitzes of a protest about Skleraina's presence in the Great Palace on 11 March 1044 (n.28).

[27] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 370-374.

[28] For a full transcript and translation, and an image of the seal: Oikonomides 1980/81, 239, 247. The inscription reads: Σφραγὶς τοῦ σεκρέτου τοῦ ἁγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου τοῦ Τροπαιοφόρου καὶ οἴκου τῆς ὑπερπεριλάμπρου καὶ εὐτυχεστάτης σεβαστῆς. Oikonomides did not mention an unnamed *sebastē* who is described in a letter written by Psellos during Isaac's reign: Psellos, *Letters* (ed. Papaioannou), vol. 1, 95.42 (no. 40). It is possible that this *sebastē* is Maria Komnene, the daughter of Isaac I Komnenos, who could therefore be the *sebastē* who possessed the seal. Yet, both Skylitzes and Zonaras describe how Isaac gained control of the property titles to the Mangana in the last months of his reign, with no reference to Komnene: Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakis), 106.3-22 (tr. McGeer – Nesbitt, 1.4, 42-46); Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 670-671. Therefore, we should follow Oikonomides' identification of Skleraina as the owner of the seal.

[29] Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 434, who says that it was on the feast day of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia (11 March 1044).

[30] Her death is described by Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 382-384. This date is based upon a chrysobull from May 1046 referring to the *sekreton* of St George that makes no reference to Skleraina: Oikonomides 1980/81, 240, 243.

George to commemorate her.[31] The rebuilt church of St George was inaugurated around April 1047, and it is possible that Skleraina's remains were transferred to the church around this time.[32] She was the subject of a long encomiastic poem written by Psellos, titled *Verses of Psellos at the Tomb of the Sebaste*, which was likely to have been performed in St George.[33] Monomachos himself died in 1055, when he was buried alongside Skleraina.[34]

Skleraina's possession of the *oikos* of the *sekreton* of St George

Although, as we have noted, Skleraina's uncle had been the brother-in-law of Romanos III Argyros, her claim to imperial status seems to have been founded mainly upon her relationship with Monomachos. This is suggested by Psellos' account of the ceremony before the imperial court, enacted by Skleraina, Monomachos and Zoe. Skleraina's claim was therefore tenuous because the relationship lay outside the boundaries of Christian teaching on monogamy and marriage. Monomachos' legitimate wife, the empress Zoe, seems to have been popular amongst her subjects. For these reasons, Skleraina appears to have been perceived negatively by portions of the Constantinopolitan population and perhaps further afield in the Byzantine provinces. Her unpopularity was especially dangerous because the previous emperor Michael V had been overthrown by an uprising in 1041.[35] The protest against Monomachos

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[31] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 384, describes Constantine's construction of a tomb for Skleraina. Choniates, *History* (ed. Van Dieten), 614, describes how in 1205 Hugh Count of St Pol was buried in Skleraina's tomb in the Mangana.

[32] Lefort 1976, suggested the church was inaugurated on 21 April 1047, based upon his reading of John Mauropous' speeches 181 and 182, but it is not certain either speech marks the day the church was inaugurated.

[33] See below.

[34] For Monomachos' burial at the Mangana: Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.5. Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 478.92-93, Glykas, *Annals* (ed. Bekker), 599.9-10.

[35] Zoe's widespread popularity is presented as a driving force behind the uprising against Michael V in 1041 by Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 274-276 Her popularity seems connected to her status (alongside her sister, Theodora) as heir to Basil II and Constantine VIII: Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 418-419; Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 11. An interpolation to several manuscripts of Skylitzes' *Synopsis* describes

and Skleraina described by Skylitzes shows that they too were vulnerable, as the political situation remained volatile.

The attachment of the Monomachoi to St George is well known. Monomachos' redevelopment of the church of St George was likely intended as a statement of this family's supremacy.[36] It also functioned alongside the other building projects which this emperor sponsored, to develop his image as a benevolent and munificent ruler. Despite clear evidence for her links to the Mangana, the possibility that an association with the site also influenced Skleraina's reputation has received less attention in modern studies. Below I argue that Skleraina's connection with the Mangana substantiated her imperial status by enabling her to enact model imperial behaviour, framing her controversial relationship with Monomachos as akin to imperial marriages from previous generations. I suggest this process worked through two main avenues. These were Skleraina's involvement with the *sekreton* of St George the Great Martry and Trophy-bearer, which I examine first, and her direction of the building works at the site.

Seal BZS.1958.106.39 shows that the *sekreton* of St George was Skleraina's *oikos*. Her possession of this *oikos* shows that the *sekreton* was established before the dedication of the church of St George in 1047, after Skleraina had died. Skleraina is named *hyperperilampros* and *eutychestatē sebastē* on the seal, so the *sekreton* probably became her *oikos* around 1043, after she moved into the Great Palace and received the title. The Mangana area is described in a chrysobull issued by Monomachos as a εὐαγὴς οἶκος (a pious institution created to assist the needy). The *sekreton* is also linked with a confraternity (known as a diaconate) in an epigram produced by John Mauropous for a book likely donated to the church of St George which mentions the 'diaconate of

Skleraina as unpopular amongst the wider population and the Byzantine court. The interpolator was possibly Bulgarian: Thurn 1973, xxxiv.

[36] Several tenth and eleventh-century seals belonging to the Monomachoi feature a bust of St George. An epigram in *Marc. gr.* 524 also mentions that Constantine IX Monomachos kept a fragment of St George's sword in his *encolpion*: Nesbitt & Oikonomides 1996, 59; Spingou 2015, 62 n.70.

the Trophy-bearer'.[37] Oikonomides thus suggested that the *sekreton* was founded ostensibly to administer revenue from the Mangana's estates which funded charitable activities at the site.[38] However, he proposed, the *sekreton* was in practice founded by Monomachos to provide funds to Skleraina, because she was allowed to siphon off revenue from the institution to enact patronage and gift giving.[39] This suggestion has been followed by several scholars of eleventh-century Byzantium.[40] Two written sources however problematise Oikonomides' proposal. In the *Chronographia*, Psellos writes that Skleraina supported Monomachos when he was in exile by providing him with her possessions.[41] As we have seen, Eustathios Rhomaios' *Peira* shows that she was in the possession of the *charistikion* of the monastery of St Mamas before she became *sebastē*. Both texts indicate that Skleraina was already substantially wealthy before 1042 and so may not have been economically dependent on the *sekreton*.

I suggest that the *sekreton* was indeed founded for Skleraina, but that her links with the institution were established primarily for propaganda, to substantiate her imperial status. Here it is worth noting the appearance of the epithet *eutychestatēs* on her seal. This word is elsewhere only associated with the rank of *kaisar*, the highest position after the emperor himself.[42] It translates as 'most happy' and communicates a sense

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[37] The epigram is titled: Εἰς τὸ βιβλίον τῆς διακονίας τοῦ τροπαιοφόρου: Mauropous, *Poem* 71, the latest editors of the text Bernard and Livanos link it the church of St George. For the diaconate: Magdalino 2007, 35.

[38] The chrysobull was issued for the Nea Moni foundation on Chios, possibly in 1054: Zepos & Zepos 1931, 629-631. See, Morris 1995, 49 n. 49. Byzantine law distinguished between εὐαγεῖς οἶκοι and imperial estates: Kazhdan & Cappel 2005.

[39] Oikonomides identified the *oikos* of the *sekreton* with a passage in Psellos' *Chronographia*, which describes how Monomachos assigned Skleraina with an *oikos* to fund gift-giving: Oikonomides 1980/81, 241-242; Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 372-74.

[40] Bartusis 2013, 117; Cheynet (tr. Wortley), 2010, 444 n.199; Agapitos 2008, 560; Garland 1999, 149.

[41] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 364; Psellos, *Verses* (ed. Spadaro), 86.392-397, also describe Skleraina as a support for Monomachos.

[42] See for example, Constantine VII, *Book of Ceremonies* (ed. Reiske), 225, 227, 443, 457. See also the use of εὐτυχέστατος on the twelfth-century seals of Nikephoros Me-

that the subject has been blessed. It therefore implies that Skleraina is a member of the imperial family and that she will do good works in return for the blessings she has received. Piety and a concern for social justice are together presented as an imperial virtue in an abundance of Byzantine texts.[43] Early Byzantine empresses expressed piety and munificence by caring for the poor and building churches.[44] In the middle-Byzantine period, some eleventh- and twelfth-century documents and letters express the sentiment that it was appropriate for imperial women to act generously in recompense to God for their elevated social position.[45] The language on Skleraina's seal seems therefore to imply that through the *sekreton*, she will enact model imperial behaviour.

Alongside her seal, it is likely that an eleventh-century bronze tesserae fragment also describes Skleraina. It is inscribed 'nourishment for the poor from the *sebastē* Maria'. Although he did not develop the point further, Oikonomides suggested that these distributions were channelled through the *ptōchotropheion* of the *sekreton* of St George and that Skleraina used them for personal propaganda.[46] The use of *sebastē* on the fragment here indicates that these charitable distributions were intended to substantiate the imperial status of her title. We also have written evidence that as *sebastē*, Skleraina donated money to fund a religious foundation. The *Life of St Lazaros of Galesion* records that she donated 720 *nomismata* to fund most of the building work at a foundation named the Pausolype, along with imperial furnishings to adorn the site.[47] This was one of several monasteries within the compass of the community which flourished under the pillar-saint Lazaros around Mount Galesion

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lissenos and Anna Komnene, who was probably his daughter: Zacos & Veglery 1972, nos. 2699, 2722.

[43] A pious concern for social justice is often described with the words φιλανθρωπία and εὐεργέτης in Byzantine written sources: Constantelos 1968, 43-61.

[44] Angelova 2004, 5; McClanan 1996, 50-57.

[45] See for example: Eirene Doukaina, *Typikon* for Theorokos Kecharitomene (ed. Thomas & Constantinides Hero), Prologue; Psellos, *Letter*s (ed. Papaioannou), vol. 1, 1.1-3 (no.1).

[46] Oikonomides 1980/81, 242-243. The Greek inscription τροφὴ πενήτων τῆς σεβαστῆς Μαρίας is provided on these pages.

[47] Gregory the Cellarer, *Life of St Lazaros* (tr. Greenfield), 347 (§ 245).

(near Ephesos) between c. 1019 and 1053. The *Vita* was written around 1057, but the precision of its account of Skleraina's donation suggests that the information was recorded at the Pausolype during her lifetime, perhaps in an epigram at the site.[48]

The location of the Pausolype is not attested in the *Vita*, but it is twice mentioned in the same passages as the monastery of Bessai, which was close to Galesion. The Pausolype was probably also near to Galesion and Richard Greenfield has suggested it might be identified with the convent of Eupraxia, which was built at the base of the mountain.[49] The identification of the Pausolype with this convent is tempting because the passage of the *Vita* describing Skleraina's donation also mentions that Monomachos granted land for Lazaros to found the male monastery of Bessai.[50] Monomachos' donation was made on condition the monks there prayed for the remembrance of himself and Skleraina. Whether or not the Pausolype is to be identified with the convent of Eupraxia, the evidence from the *Vita* suggests that Skleraina and Monomachos' actions were presented as a joint donation, and that it was understood as such by members of St Lazaros' community. The impression that Skleraina and Monomachos' actions complemented one another would have been reinforced if Skleraina funded the women's community at Eupraxia, whilst Monomachos donated to the men's community at Bessai. It is likely that Skleraina's donation was intended to present her as a joint benefactor of the Galesion community, alongside Monomachos. The inclusion of imperial furnishings in the donation seems also have been intended as an affirmation that Skleraina's philanthropic behaviour was imperial.

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[48] For the chronology of Lazaros' life and career, and the establishment of a monastic community at Galesion, and the date of the *Vita*: Greenfield 2000.

[49] Greenfield 2000, 35.

[50] There has been scholarly discussion on whether the Bessai of the *Vita* is the same as the Bessai which is mentioned in Monomachos' chrysobull to Nea Moni. The Bessai of the chrysobull is probably a different place because it lay near the village of Ataia, which was likely far from Galesion: Greenfield 2000, 33 n.185, Malamut 1985, 248-251. Oikonomides 1980/81, 241 n.24, states that land donated to Lazaros was from the Mangana's estates, but this is not firmly attested.

The *Vita* shows that Galesion was a hub for pilgrims from different social and geographical backgrounds across the Byzantine Empire, with visitors peaking in the 1040s.[51] The Pausolype may well have acted as a waypoint for pilgrims to Lazaros' pillar. Skleraina and Monomachos' donations were therefore presented before an Empire-wide audience. The *sekreton* of St George is not mentioned in the *Vita*, but it would make sense if the *nomismata* sent to Galesion were drawn from the institution.[52] The establishment of a connection with the Mangana through the *sekreton* would clearly have enhanced the propaganda value of Skleraina's donation. The Mangana's status as an imperial house would have stressed the imperial nature of Skleraina's charity. The quantity of written evidence linking Monomachos to the Mangana shows that his involvement with the site was well known and so a connection here would have emphasised to pilgrims that Skleraina's donation to the Pausolype paralleled the emperor's patronage.

Skylitzes and Zonaras both give a brief description of the responsibilities of Skleraina's Constantine Leichoudes, who Oikonomides identified as Skleraina's successor. They say that between the reign of Monomachos and the last year of Isaac I Komnenos' reign in 1059 he had a role as guardian of the Mangana's property titles, which involved an administrative function.[53] Yet, no scholar has suggested that Skleraina also performed an administrative role connected to the Mangana's function as a εὐαγὴς οἶκος, even though she was Leichoudes' predecessor. The possibility that Skleraina's charitable activity was funded by money channelled through the *sekreton* of St George however suggests

[51] This is argued by, Greenfield 2002, 213-241, who provides a summary of the passages in the *Vita* which show the variety of pilgrims who visited Galesion, ranging from the destitute to provincial and Constantinopolitan elites. According to the *Vita*, Skleraina's brother Romanos visited the shrine in this period: Gregory the Cellarer, *Life of St Lazaros* (tr. Greenfield), 177-178 (§ 87).

[52] As suggested by Oikonomides 1980/81, 242 n.39.

[53] Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakis), 106-107; Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 670-671. Oikonomides proposed that an inscription on the 'Malyj Sion' in Novgorod describes Leichoudes as the *oikonomenous* of the Tropaiophoros, suggesting that he was Skleraina's successor to the *sekreton* after her death. See further: Lemerle 1977, 280-283.

this. Skleraina's possession of the *charistikion* of St Mamas also suggests that she would have been capable of administering the *sekreton* of St George.[54] It is plausible that Skleraina's possession of the *oikos* of the *sekreton* of St George involved oversight of the redistribution of revenue from the Mangana's estates to charitable ventures.[55] Here, Skleraina's visible involvement with the charitable ventures at the Mangana would have underlined that her behaviour was imperial, and framed her as a partner of the emperor.

Skleraina and Monomachos as joint-refounders of the Mangana

Written sources for Skleraina's arrival in Constantinople (soon after June 1042) indicate that she moved close to the Mangana area before she became *Sebaste* and gained possession of the *oikos* of the *sekreton* of St George. Her place of residence seems likely to have associated her with the rebuilding of the area. In the *Chronographia*, Psellos provides the lengthiest account of Skleraina's arrival in the city, but it lacks clear topographical details. Furthermore, aspects of the account connect to other parts of book six of the *Chronographia*, probably written around 1059-1063, which seem designed to diminish Constantine Monomachos' image by depicting him as an indolent and irresponsible ruler.[56]

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[54] For evidence of women in administrative roles see the late eleventh-century *Cadaster of Thebes*, which shows that women regularly assumed headship of a household if their husband died. The text is published at: Svoronos 1959, 11-19. For women administrators see also: Mokhov & Kapsalykova 2017. Anna Dalassene also possessed a *sekreton* attached to the Myrelaion complex: Oikonomides 1980/81, 245 n.58; Janin 1969, 352. She was also responsible for the administration of the Empire during Alexios I's war with Robert Guiscard, attested in a chrysobull recorded by Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* (ed. Reinsch – Kambylis), 101-103 (3.6.5-8).

[55] As Kaplan 2006, 180, notes, we lack precise information on the management of the Mangana. Dalassene had 'a representative' (ὁ ἐκπροσωπῶν) who managed the administration of her *sekreton* at the Myrelaion: Oikonomides 1980/81, 245 n. 58. However, we should not, like, Garland 2007, assume that Dalassene exercised no general oversight of the functioning of the *sekreton*.

[56] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 366-370. Elsewhere in book 6, Psellos resolves to describe the negative aspects of Monomachos' reign even though this emperor had

Psellos' account in the *Chronographia* is therefore problematic, and it is likely the text distorts aspects of Skleraina's history, to develop a narrative focalised upon the emperor.

Some details in the *Chronographia* do however make sense when compared with a passage in Zonaras' history, and wider evidence for the history of the topography of Constantinople. Together, the evidence from these two texts suggests that Skleraina was closely linked to the Mangana from very early in Monomachos' reign. These texts also hint these connections were designed to substantiate comparisons between Skleraina and Monomachos and other imperial couples. This suggests the message communicated by Skleraina's possession of the *oikos* of the *sekreton* of St George from c1043 built upon a broader association with the Mangana area, established from the outset of Monomachos' reign.

In the *Chronographia*, Psellos writes that Skleraina first moved into a modest place of residence in Constantinople (εὐτελεστέρας). According to Psellos, Monomachos then initiated building work around this place and would cite the need to inspect the progress of the work as an excuse to visit. Next, Psellos claims the couple abandoned secrecy and Skleraina and Monomachos accompanied each other around her residence 'out in the open air' (ὕπαιθρον). Two separate passages within Zonaras' history also describe Skleraina's arrival. The first follows Psellos' account closely. In the second, Zonaras repeats Psellos' story that Monomachos began work at the Mangana to visit Skleraina, but he adds that Skleraina settled at the Kynegion. Zonaras uses the word λέγεται at the beginning of this passage.[57] It is possible that Zonaras uses this word as a source marker to assure his audience that this deviation from the account in the *Chronographia* is connected to an established tradition

been his patron, because as a historian he is compelled to write truthfully: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 328-340. Kaldellis has noticed these sections work to add weight to the moments in the text when Psellos describes Constantine as a bad ruler, possibly serving as revenge for this emperor's failure to protect Psellos in 1054: Kaldellis 2017, 181, 213. See also: Spadaro 1984, 34-36. The date of the first seven books of the *Chronographia* was established by, Sykutris 1929/30, 63; Hussey 1935, 82-83.

[57] The two passages are, Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 619-620 & 646.18-647. 4.

concerning Skleraina and the Mangana.[58] I suggest that Zonaras may have learnt about Skleraina's residence at the Kynegion through an oral tradition current in twelfth-century Constantinople.[59] The existence of this oral tradition may also explain the scarcity of topographical details in the *Chronographia*. It is possible that when Psellos wrote the text between 1059-61, Skleraina's connections to the Mangana were well-known enough that he could omit specific details, to develop his account stylistically.

If we follow the information given by Zonaras, it is worth considering why Skleraina would have moved to the Kynegion, rather than another area of Constantinople.[60] We should approach with caution the explanation provided by Psellos (followed by Zonaras) that the arrangement was designed so Monomachos could conduct secret visits. In the first place, Psellos' depiction of Skleraina's secretive presence in Constantinople is contradicted by a description in the proceeding passage of the *Chronographia* that she returned to the city with a sizeable imperial escort.[61] This story is also problematised by a passage in Skylitzes' history, which suggests that Skleraina's brother Romanos received the titles *magistros* and *prōtostratōr* before September 1042, very soon after Monomachos became emperor.[62] These passages indicate that Monomachos made no attempt to disguise his links with the Skleroi in the first months of his reign. They suggest that Psellos' description of Monoma-

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[58] For the use of λέγεται as a source marker by Plutarch, who was historical source and stylistic exemplar for Zonaras: Cook 2001.

[59] For the culture of orality in the spaces where twelfth-century histories were performed, suggesting a possible context where Zonaras might have encountered this tradition: Neville 2012, 29-38.

[60] We have seen that by 1042 Skleraina possessed the *charistikion* of the monastery of St Mamas, in the suburbs of Constantinople. It is likely that the Skleroi possessed households in Constantinople. Presumably, Skleraina could have taken up residence in one of these places.

[61] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 366.

[62] Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 427-428, writes that Romanos Skleros received the titles of *magistros* and *prōtostratōr* before Maniakes began his rebellion. The *Annales Barenses* (ed. Pertz), 56.33, attest that Maniakes rebelled September 1043. However, the text begins each yearly entry in September, so this date should be adjusted to 1042: Loud 2019, 1.

chos' and Skleraina's secretive behaviour may be disingenuous and possibly designed to tarnish Monomachos' reputation.[63]

On the other hand, considering the evidence that Monomachos touted his connections with the Skleroi from the outset of his reign, Psellos' reference to Skleraina and Monomachos' public appearances seem plausible. Evidence from the topography of the Sarayburnu promontory also supports a hypothesis on these appearances. The Mangana area now extends north, ending near the Column of the Goths and the northern part of the Gülhane Park. As we have noted, the incidences of recessed brickwork in the long-terraced wall, which extends close to the northern tip of the Sarayburnu, suggest that it was built during Monomachos' reign. If so, then it is probable that the perimeter of the site was expanded in the 1040s. The Kynegion area, which was likely located in an area of the sea walls close to the Acropolis and north of the church of St George and the palace, was in all probability subsumed by the Mangana in this period (fig. 2, fig. 6). This explains Psellos' description of building work around Skleraina's residence. Elsewhere in the *Chronographi*a Psellos includes an ekphrasis of the Mangana which describes several auxiliary edifices dotted around the outside of the site.[64] Skleraina's residence may have been one of these buildings, which, having been originally located in the Kynegion, was surrounded by construction work as it was incorporated into the Mangana.

Given the proximity of Skleraina's residence to the building works, it is possible that Monomachos used it as a base to conduct inspections of the development of the site. He may well have arrived at the Mangana by ship at a sea gate near to this place.[65] This raises the possibility that Skleraina appeared publicly alongside Monomachos on these occasions, and thus was presented as performing a role in the development of the site. Therefore, the appearances described by Psellos may well be connected to occasions which did take place.

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[63] As noted by Lemerle 1977, 274-275 n.56, who also highlighted the contradiction between Psellos' description of Monomachos and Skleraina's secretive behaviour and the account of their public appearances.

[64] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 526-528.

[65] Possibly the Değirmen Kapısı sea gate as suggested by Van Millingen 1899, 251.

Overall, the possibility that Skleraina lived amidst the building work of the Mangana, where she also made public appearances, suggests that her move to the Kynegion was intended to frame her as leader of the redevelopment of the area. Psellos' suggestion that Monomachos and Skleraina appeared in public because they had tired of secrecy may then be a disingenuous reference to formal occasions which visualised Skleraina and Monomachos' connections to the development of the Mangana. It is in fact possible that the oral tradition perhaps used by Zonaras, associating Skleraina with the building of the Mangana, sprang from this initiative of imperial propaganda.

Here it is worth noting that Psellos also describes a gift sent by Monomachos to Skleraina, sometime before she entered the Great Palace. This was a container (πίθον χαλκὸν) filled with money, which also featured figures carved in relief. Psellos writes that Monomachos found it in the Great Palace and that it was one of the many gifts which were conveyed to Skleraina (ἐπ' ἄλλοις τῇ ἐρωμένῃ ἀπεκομίζοντο). The attention which Psellos gives to this object suggests that it was well-known in mid-eleventh century Constantinople, when he wrote the *Chronographia*. It is possible that it was prominently displayed in the church of St George, or one of the other buildings at the Mangana.[66] There is a hint here that Skleraina and Monomachos cooperated to adorn St George. The *Chronographia* may in fact put a negative spin on an arrangement where Monomachos sent spolia to Skleraina, who was then involved with the redistribution of the materials at the Mangana. This arrangement would have reinforced the impression created by Skleraina and Monomachos' public appearances, by further presenting them as re-founders of the site. The possibility that Skleraina and Monomachos co-operated to convey luxury items to the Mangana is also suggested in the epigram of Mauropous, linked with the diaconate of the Trophy-bearer, which was likely inscribed on a book used in the church of St George.

[66] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 368-370. Psellos' description of the figures carved in relief suggests it might have been one of the well-known middle-Byzantine ivory caskets. See: Kalavrezou 1997, 219-223, 227-237, who also notes that secular luxury objects were sometimes appropriated for ecclesiastical purposes. Casket no. 156 has gilded copper mounts, which may be what Psellos means by χαλκόν.

The verses associate the *sebastos* Monomachos and the *pansebastois augoustais* with the donation.[67] The use of this adjective likely implied that the *Sebaste* Skleraina was one of the imperial women involved with the donation of the book.

Presentations of Skleraina and Monomachos as joint renovators of the Mangana must have been most prominent in the months before Skleraina moved into the Great Palace, likely late in 1043. Their actions here thus foreshadowed their joint patronage of the communities at Galesion, which took place after Skleraina gained the *oikos* of the *sekreton* of St George in c. 1043. Passages in the late tenth-century *Patria* shed light on why Skleraina and Monomachos may have attempted to present themselves as joint renovators of the Mangana and joint patrons of Galesion.[68] The *Patria* describes several imperial figures as joint founders and renovators of churches. Amongst these are Pulcheria and Marcianos (r. 450-457), who are credited with the rebuilding (ἀνοικοδομὴν) of St Menas, when they also bestowed estates (τοῖς προαστείοις) and holy vessels (ἱεροῖς σκεύεσι) upon the foundation.[69] The details of these memories of their patronage bear parallels with the actions of Monomachos and Skleraina at the Mangana. The evidence in the *Patria* also gives an impression that joint patronage of religious buildings was perceived as model behaviour for imperial couples in the middle-Byzantine period, when the text was compiled.

Two well-known donor mosaics in St Sophia also present two imperial couples cooperating in their patronage of the church. The earliest depicts Monomachos himself alongside his legitimate wife Zoe (fig. 8), and the second shows John II Komnenos and Piroska-Eirene. In both the emperor offers an ἀποκόμβιον (purse) and the empress presents a document, which probably represents a privilege to the Church. The mosaic of Monomachos also seems to have been tiled over a previous mosaic depicting Romanos III Argyros (r. 1028-1034), so Monomachos there-

[67] Mauropous, *Poem* 71, l. 8.

[68] The *Patria* was compiled in 989/90 but redacted in the late eleventh century: Berger 2013, xvi. For the prominence of imperial founders: James 2014, 69.

[69] *Patria* (tr. Berger), 141. For Anastasios and Ariadne as joint-founders, *ibid*., 169. For Justin II and Sophia: *ibid*., 167.

fore likely replicated an original donation to the St Sophia which was made by Romanos and Zoe.[70]

The appearance of these couples as patrons of the St Sophia would have connected them with the sixth-century founder Justinian and his wife Theodora. There was a dedicatory inscription from the couple inscribed on an altar in the church, a joint cruciform monogram inscribed on the templon screen, and their monograms also appear on several capitals at the site. These features imply they both contributed to the foundation of the church in 537.[71] Monomachos and Zoe also seem to have co-operated to develop the monastery of Nea Moni on Chios.[72] John II and Piroska-Eirene on the other hand were presented as joint-founders of the Pantokrator complex during the 1120s. Here they followed John's parents, Alexios I and Eirene, who patronised foundations adjacent to one another, the Philanthropos and Kecharitomene.[73] Skylitzes also provides a further example of an imperial couple who acted as joint-refounders. He mentions that the emperor Isaac I and his wife Aikaterine adorned the church of St John Prodromos at Stoudios. Isaac was a usurper, so he and his wife must have felt pressed to publicly enact model imperial behaviour.[74] These examples show Skleraina and Monomachos' behaviour matched that of other imperial couples during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and earlier, who each prioritised action presenting themselves as joint-patrons of churches.

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[70] Demonstrated by Whittemore 1942, 17-20. See further: Oikonomides 1978; Kalavrezou 1992. Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 477.63-67, describes how Monomachos augmented the revenue of St Sophia so that the liturgy could be celebrated there every day. This was similar to Argyros' donation of a supplementary annual income of 80 litrai to St Sophia also described by, Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 375.49-54.

[71] Garipzanov 2018, 180-182; Angelova 2015, 167-172, 222. For evidence that contemporaries perceived Justinian and Theodora as joint founders of Hagia Sophia: Unterweger 2014, 106-108.

[72] A chrysobull issued by Monomachos to Nea Moni in 1048 references the contributions of Zoe and Theodora to the monastery. They are also described as having issued chrysobulls to Nea Moni in a chrysobull of Nikephoros III Botaneiates from 1079: Miklosich & Müller, vol. 5, 9 (no. 6).

[73] Demirtiken 2019, 185.

[74] Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakis), 110.17-19. For Piroska-Eirene, John II and the Pantokrator: Jeffreys 2019. For Alexios I and Eirene, Demirtiken 2019, 185.

In the *Chronographia*, Psellos presents Skleraina and Monomachos' behaviour in 1042 as impulsive and indolent. Yet, both the *Chronographia* and Zonaras' history hint that Monomachos and Skleraina's initial involvement with the Mangana constituted an attempt to present the couple as joint renovators of the area. Their actions at the site appear to have foreshadowed their subsequent joint donations to Galesion. Skleraina and Monomachos' patronage towards both these foundations matched with established patterns enacted by married imperial couples. Their actions and appearances at the Mangana seem therefore to have been designed to present their relationship as akin to other well-known married imperial couples, past and present.

The built and landscaped environment of the Mangana as a symbol for Skleraina and Monomachos

It is very likely that the church of St George and the wider complex was planned to appear as a conspicuous display of Monomachos' resources, also emphasising his piety and munificence.[75] Literary descriptions of the environment at the Mangana also include features which are thematically consistent with encomiastic material composed after Skleraina's death. This suggests that literary responses to the built environment there might have been linked to panegyric which crafted Skleraina's reputation. The lengthiest description of the Mangana, provided by Psellos, also matches closely with topographical evidence from the area. It is therefore possible that the built and designed environment at the site worked within a rhetorical programme which established a public image of Skleraina. Below I suggest that the environment of the Mangana was designed to present Skleraina's actions, and her relationship with Monomachos, as model imperial behaviour, providing imagery to visualise her involvement with the site.

[75] An example of propaganda linking the Mangana with Monomachos' munificence is provided by an epigram in manuscript *Marcianus gr.* 524 which responds to the building work at the Mangana and was likely inscribed on a hall in the palace. See: Spingou 2015, 61-65. The effectiveness of this propaganda is hinted at in, Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 650.3-5, describing how Monomachos was nicknamed Κωνσταντῖνος εὐεργέτης.

After she was buried in St George in 1047, Skleraina's tomb remained a significant feature of the interior of the church. In the longer term, tradition seems to have more strongly associated the tomb with her memory, rather than Monomachos, who was also buried there.[76] I would like to suggest that the building of St George was also designed to influence Skleraina's reputation during her lifetime. This suggestion is supported by the topography of the Mangana, but any investigation of this is complicated by the current difficulty of accessing the area, which is now a military base. A perspective of the Mangana can however be gained from on-board a boat passing through the Bosporus strait alongside the Sarayburnu promontory. Here, the length of the site causes it to remain in view for around a kilometre. It appears as a lush green area, punctuated by the buildings from the modern military base (figs 3, 4, 5 & 6).

When looking at the Sarayburnu from the sea, the church of St Sophia, where Justinian and Theodora were presented as joint founders, and Romanos III and Zoe as joint patrons, features prominently in the cityscape. The churches of St Sergius and Bacchus and St Eirene are also visible, and their domes appear to align with that of St Sophia. In St Sergius and Bacchus, an inscription on a gallery-level entablature associates both Justinian and Theodora with the church.[77] Likewise, monograms engraved on the capitals in St Eirene attest that it was redeveloped by both Justinian and Theodora.[78] The location of St George's substructure shows that its dome would have appeared slightly below St Sophia and St Eirene (figs 1, 2 & 3). The dome may, like that of St Eirene and St Sergius and Bacchus, have also appeared in alignment with St Sophia. The position of St George in Constantinople's skyline would have emphasised that the building, and its patrons, stood within established

[76] Choniates, *History* (ed. Van Dieten), 614, describes how in 1205 the Crusader Count Hugh of Pol was buried in the tomb of the *Sebaste* Skleraina, without mentioning Monomachos. In the fifteenth century, Ruy González de Clavijo highlights the monumental tomb of an empress as one of the most notable features of St George: Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane* (tr. Strange), 77.

[77] Angelova 2015, 168-169; Janin 1969, 225.

[78] Angelova 2015, 168; Janin 1969, 106.

imperial tradition. As St George was constructed, the emergence of the dome in the cityscape must have emphasised that Monomachos was akin to previous imperial patrons of Constantinople's built environment. Yet, if Skleraina's involvement with the building works was well-publicised, as I suggest, then she too would have been associated with the appearance of the dome. In this way, the dome of St George likely presented Monomachos and Skleraina as comparable with imperial couples from past generations.

It is possible that the appearance of the designed landscape around the church of St George also functioned as a symbol for Skleraina. In the *Chronographia*, Psellos' ekphrasis of the environment at the Mangana links gardens and water features in the area with the appearance of the church. Psellos begins his account of the construction of St George with substantial negative colouring, presenting Monomachos' spending on the site as excessive. Yet, the tone of his account changes abruptly at the opening of the ekphrasis, which is celebratory. When the ekphrasis is completed, Psellos returns once more to criticism of Monomachos' involvement with the site. Psellos' ekphrasis does not therefore appear to support the overall literary objective of his account, which seems designed to denigrate Monomachos' reputation. This suggests that the piece may well have originated as an earlier composition, which Psellos perhaps included in the *Chronographia* because of its literary merit.[79] The content of the ekphrasis is corroborated by Attaleiates, who presents the harmonious integration of the landscaped features and built environment at the site as a key feature of the redeveloped site.[80] It is further corroborated by Ruy González de Clavijo's fifteenth-century account, which describes several gardens running up to the walls of St George, and a monumental font outside of the church door. As Henry Maguire observed, Psellos' ekphrasis also matches with the topographical evi-

[79] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 524-530. The ekphrasis is also structured with repeated short clauses, indicating a connection to an oral performance. It is comparable with several other mid-eleventh-century texts which respond to Constantine's development of the Mangana, including Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 95 and John Mauropous, *Poem* 71 & 72.

[80] Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.11-20.

dence of the site, suggesting that it is anchored in reality.[81] The upper terrace of the Mangana is wide enough to accommodate the hanging gardens described by Psellos and the sweeping plain described in the text is still visible on the lower level of the site (figs 2, 4, 5 & 6).[82]

In the first place, fountains and running water are frequently employed as metaphors for munificence and acts of patronage in eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantine texts, including as we have seen, in an epigram likely intended for the Mangana.[83] Waterworks had also been prominent features at foundations on the Sarayburnu peninsula associated with the 'Macedonian' rulers of the ninth and tenth centuries. Panegyric responses to these foundations present them as symbols of munificence.[84] Outside of Byzantium, water seems to have been used as a symbol for royal generosity in the tenth – twelfth-century palaces of the Fatimid caliphs and the Norman Kings of Sicily.[85] Written panegyrics used water imagery to present Monomachos as a generous emperor, and this rhetoric must have been affirmed by the visible waterworks at the Mangana.[86] These features however seem likely to have also symbolised the charity and patronage which Skleraina enacted through the Mangana. I suggest that whilst also acting as a symbol of Monomachos'

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[81] Maguire 2000, 261-262.

[82] It is possible to view the south part of the lower terrace from the first courtyard of the Topkapi Palace, near the entrance to the military base. The northern part can be viewed from a balcony near the Mecidiye Kiosk in the fourth courtyard.

[83] For the preponderance of waterworks as metaphors for patronage in eleventh- and twelfth-century texts: Nilsson 2016.

[84] See the description in the *Vita Basilii* of the *phialai* at the Nea Ekklesia as symbols of Basil I's munificence: Constantine VII, *Vita Basilii* (ed. Ševčenko), 276-278. Leo Choirosphaktes' ekphrasis of the Leo VI's monumental bath may also associate the appearance of the water with a moment in the Brumalia when the empress distributed scarlet cloth to wives of officials: Magdalino 1988, 111. The text is transcribed and translated at ibid. 1988, 116-117.

[85] For example, the tenth-century Fatimid palatial complex al-Mansuriyya (southwest of Qayrawan): Bloom 1985, 28-29, and the Norman Sicilian Zisa palace (built 1154-1166): Tronzo 1997, 42. See, Staacke 1991.

[86] Psellos, *Oration to the Emperor Monomachos* (n. 2) (ed. Dennis), 18-50, ll. 667-669; Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 55. In the twelfth century Constantine Manasses depicts Monomachos' generosity through elaborate water imagery: Manasses (ed. Lampsides), I, 6161-6165 (tr. Yuretich, *Chronicle*, 244). See, Nilsson 2016, 268.

munificence, the fountains and running water also visualised Skleraina's roles as a renovator of the Mangana and administrator of the site's function as a εὐαγὴς οἶκος. The appearance of the built and designed landscape may have also crafted Skleraina's reputation in other ways. The two surviving encomiastic texts on Skleraina, written by Psellos and Christopher of Mytilene, both use the noun χάρις to describe her graceful and extrovert deportment.[87] These texts indicate that descriptions of this personal quality were a focus of panegyric on Skleraina. The reason for this is hinted at in Psellos' funerary poem, where the noun is used most frequently in a section which describes how Skleraina's urbanity and charm were enjoyed by everyone in the imperial court, implying this facilitated her integration into the ruling class.[88] Here it is also worth noting Angeliki Laiou's assessment of the funeral poem, which she thought presented Monomachos and Skleraina's relationship as founded upon loving affection orientated around mutual moral support (φίλτρον). In this respect the speech differs sharply from the account in Psellos' *Chronographia*, which presents Skleraina and Monomachos' relationship being driven by impulsive lust.[89] Both of Psellos' contrasting accounts match with themes present in other eleventh and twelfth century texts. On the one hand, marital relationships characterised by a loving affection detached from sexual lust are upheld as ideal.[90] On

[87] The personification of grace (εὔχαρις) is described as having fled the earth. Skleraina's death in, Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 70, l. 1. Skleraina's χάρις is described at, Psellos, *Verses* (ed. Spadaro), 74.73-74, 74.88, 75.109, 76.134, 79.215.

[88] Psellos, *Verses* (ed. Spadaro), 73.61-93.

[89] Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 370-374.

[90] Anna Komnene presents of her mother Eirene Doukaina as a guardian and aide of her father Alexios I in the *Alexiad* (ed. Reinsch), 364-368 (12.3.2-10). George Tornikios' presentation of Anna's relationship with her husband Bryennios is similar: Tornikios (ed. Darrouzès), 261. In the eleventh century, Psellos presents Eirene Pegonitissa and her husband John Doukas as attached and supportive of one another, but sexually restrained: Psellos, *Epitaph for the Kaisarissa Eirene* (ed. Kurtz & Drexl), 163.19-21; 181.26-27, 182.1-2. In the panegyric section of his *Chronographia*, he also celebrates Michael VII's φίλτρον for his wife, Maria of Alania: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 782.11-12. Outside of the ruling class, Psellos presents the relationship between his own mother and father on similar terms: Psellos, *Encomium for his mother Theodote* (tr. Kaldellis), 67-68.

the other hand, sexual passion is often presented as potentially disharmonious and disruptive to the social order.[91] These textual patterns may well be reflective of widespread Byzantine attitudes to marriage. Here it is worth noting that as well as implying charm and grace, the word χάρις infers generosity and kindness. It therefore seems likely that this personal quality was emphasised in panegyric on Skleraina to frame the relationship which she shared with Monomachos as one which met Byzantine ideals concerning marriage, and which therefore upheld the social order of the Byzantine ruling class.

In his poem on St George, Christopher of Mytilene uses χάρις twice to emphasise the aesthetic qualities of the church.[92] Psellos' ekphrasis also makes repeated use of the word χάρις to describe the harmonious integration of the component features of the Mangana area. This raises the possibility that literary descriptions of the Mangana and panegyric on Skleraina was deliberately paralleled. A link between Skleraina's reputation and the appearance of the built and designed features at the Mangana is also suggested by the opening nine verses of Psellos' funerary poem. This poem was likely delivered in St George.[93] The opening of the text describes a storm which has caused disharmony amongst the natural elements, and the speaker then twice appeals to these elements to lament Skleraina. As Panagiotis Agapitos notes, this is unique in Psellos' funerary writings.[94] These lines possibly refer to the landscaped features surrounding the church of St George. Psellos may be describing how the erstwhile harmony and tranquillity visualised by the integration of the

[91] For Zoe's destructive passion for Michael IV: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 148-166. See also the twelfth-century novels of Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich (tr. Jeffreys, 177-269), and Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* (ed. Conca), 305-497 (tr. Jeffreys, 351-458). See further, Laiou, 1992, 98-104; Magdalino 1992.

[92] Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 95, ll. 7, 10.

[93] The heading of this poem describes it as delivered at Skleraina's tomb. The poem may well have been delivered on a formal occasion at the tomb because the acoustic metrics of the poem suggest an oral performance: Agapitos 2008, 563-568. The poem also addresses a large, gathered audience, including Monomachos and the empresses Zoe and Theodora. Such a gathering would have been possible in St George.

[94] Agapitos 2008, 561.

buildings and landscape features at the Mangana has been disrupted by Skleraina's death. This would indicate that during Skleraina's lifetime, the harmonious appearance of the site had visualised Skleraina's χάρις.[95] Moreover, I suggest that this imagery would have provided visual reassurance that the joint-patrons of the site, Skleraina and Monomachos, shared a harmonious relationship, which would uphold the established order of the Byzantine Empire. If this is the case, Psellos' reference to the natural elements at the start of the *Verses* would have helped to develop his overall presentation of Monomachos and Skleraina's relationship as comparable to an ideal marriage.

The image of the harmonious integration of the built and designed landscape at the Mangana would have countered the main criticisms of Skleraina and Monomachos' relationship. Skylitzes attests that critics focused upon Skleraina's violation of Christian teachings on marriage and the possibility that she was a threat to the lives of the empresses Zoe and Theodora. Skleraina and Monomachos' lack of a legitimising marriage tie, and the adulterous status of their relationship after Monomachos married Zoe, must have encouraged Byzantine audiences to perceive that theirs was a lustful relationship, which threatened the established social order. This criticism must however have been predictable, and it is likely the couple would have anticipated it from the time Skleraina arrived in Constantinople. From the outset of the development of the site, the Mangana's appearance may then have been designed in part to present an image of harmony and *philtron*, to counter expected criticisms of Skleraina and Monomachos' relationship.

Both Skylitzes and Psellos show that complaints against Skleraina were expressed by members of the court, and at least a portion of the Constantinopolitan populace. An interpolation to Skylitzes' *Synopsis* adds that the widespread criticism of Skleraina was led by a monastic leader, Niketas Stethatos. The interpolator was possibly Bulgarian, suggesting that Skleraina's controversial reputation extended beyond Constantinople.[96] Again, especially given the recent uprising against

[95] For literary representations of middle-Byzantine gardens as places and symbols of order, harmony and safety: Nilsson 2013, 15-20.

[96] See above, n. 35.

Michael V, it is likely that Skleraina and Monomachos would have anticipated that criticism of their relationship would be voiced by groups across the Byzantine social order. The appearance of the built and designed environment at the Mangana may have been intended to communicate propaganda which could reach different audiences. On the one hand, literary descriptions of the site, either performed orally or circulated in manuscript form, were probably received by members of the imperial court and the social circles surrounding them.[97] However, we should also consider the importance of moments when viewers directly looked at the site. These occasions may also have influenced Skleraina's reputation amongst the imperial court, as well as wider audiences. As in the modern day, in the mid-eleventh century a view of the Mangana as a coherent whole would have only been possible from the sea (fig. 3). If the appearance of the integration of the component parts of the Mangana, as well as the position of the site within the cityscape, communicated a symbolic message, this would have been best received by audiences aboard ships on the Bosporus.[98]

There is in fact written evidence for an occasion when eleventh-century audiences would have looked at the Mangana from the sea. Attaleiates describes a conspiracy enacted when Constantine X Doukas attended a festival at the Mangana on the feast day of St George on April 23rd 1061, 'according to prescriptions established by Monomachos' (ὡς ἦν ἀπὸ τοῦ Μονομάχου τεθεσπισμένον). Attaleiates implies that the conspirators anticipated that Doukas would leave by sea. His account also describes multiple ships docked at the Mangana, possibly at the monumental seaward gates identified by Zulueta (fig. 7).[99] This indicates that the celebration was attended by multiple imperial courtiers who had arrived by ship. Thus, it appears that Monomachos had established an

[97] For the sharing of manuscripts and collective reading of poetry in eleventh-century social circles: Bernard 2014, 98-101.

[98] Notably, an anonymous eleventh-century poem focuses on the designed landscape of Constantinople whilst describing a voyage through the Bosporus: Sola 1916, 20-21.

[99] Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 54-56. His account is corroborated by Skylitzes, who asserts that the emperor did expect to leave the Mangana by boat: Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakis), 111.22-24.

annual celebration of the feast of St George at the Mangana involving the gathered imperial court. The ships described by Attaleiates were likely used from Monomachos' reign because this was a convenient way to move the court as the Boukoleon harbour was close to the imperial living quarters.[100] Thus, it is probable that the imperial court approached the Mangana from the sea from the first occasion that Monomachos established a celebration of the feast day of St George at the site.

The celebrations described by Attaleiates would not likely have been introduced until the inauguration of St George, after Skleraina's death. Yet, from an early stage in the development of the Mangana, this occasion may have been anticipated as an important moment when a gathered audience experienced a view of the entire site from the sea.[101] The moment when the imperial court arrived at the Mangana to celebrate the feast of St George may have thus been planned as an occasion when the integrated built and designed landscape at the Mangana could be presented as a symbol for Skleraina and Monomachos, to an audience of Byzantine courtiers.

There was also a high volume of sea traffic passing the site of the Mangana in the mid-eleventh century. These included fishing boats and ships carrying edible provisions and fuel to Constantinople. These ships also carried travellers to and from Constantinople.[102] When docking at other ports, both within and outside the borders of the Byzantine Empire, these travellers were sometimes interviewed for information on the city.[103] Descriptions of the appearance of the Mangana area on the

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[100] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

[101] For a comparative development of ceremonial occasions in the 1120s connected to the newly constructed Pantokrator monastery: Jeffreys 2019, 113.

[102] In 1204 Gunther of Paris was told that the local Greeks operated some 1600 fishing boats: Jacoby 2017, 632. Using written sources, Johannes Koder estimated that between 330 and 720 ships per year arrived at Constantinople to provide provisions: Koder 2002, 124. For travellers aboard ships: Pryor 2008, 486.

[103] An example is provided by a passage in the *Chronicle* of the twelfth century Arabic traveller Ibn Jubayr. He describes how he was interviewed by William II's commissioner for information on Constantinople, when he landed in Norman Sicily, and how Genoese travellers had previously given information to the king: Ibn Jubayr, *Chronicle* (tr. Broadhurst), 374-376.

seaward side of the eastern peninsula of Constantinople may in this way have been disseminated by travellers, both within Byzantine territory and further afield. Monomachos and Skleraina's patronage of Galesion attests to their concern to craft a public image of their relationship amongst an Empire-wide audience. However, there is no evidence that Skleraina's image was displayed on coins, which would have provided an effective means of displaying her image beyond Constantinople. The view of the Mangana from the sea may then have served as an alternative means of disseminating a physical image of Skleraina, and her relationship with Monomachos, across the Byzantine Empire.

Crafting a public image through the Mangana

Hitherto, Skleraina's connection to the Mangana area has been understood primarily as an economic arrangement. However, written, material and topographical evidence all suggests that the site was mainly significant to her as a resource for substantiating her contested imperial status and for crafting a public image of her relationship with Monomachos. Psellos writes that Skleraina hoped for imperial status before Monomachos was acclaimed emperor in June 1042.[104] Her likely residence near the Mangana from the moment of her return to Constantinople suggests that she and Monomachos had by now already planned to use the site to develop Skleraina's reputation. It seems that Skleraina and Monomachos planned for her to be integrated into the imperial family from at least 1042 and that they anticipated that this would provoke criticism. The Mangana was very likely planned as a symbol of Monomachos' own status. Yet, it seems to have also been designed as a resource for Skleraina and Monomachos to counter expected criticism of the relationship they shared, and of Skleraina's position within the imperial family. Skleraina's activities at the site were arranged to place herself and Monomachos within a tradition of imperial co-founders and joint patrons, whilst also developing Skleraina's personal reputation for munificence. The built and designed environment also carried implications which seem to have been intended to emphasise Skleraina's involve-

[104] Psellos, *Chronographia* (Reinsch), 364.

ment with the site alongside Monomachos, and to visualise the virtues of their relationship.

Skylitzes' account of the 1044 uprising, and the later interpolation, indicate that Skleraina's association with the Mangana did not work to encourage a consensus of approval of her relationship with Monomachos, or her imperial status. However, when writing the *Life of St Lazaros of Galesion* after 1057, Gregory the Cellarer was keen to emphasise Skleraina and Monomachos' shared connections with his religious community. This suggests that Skleraina's enactment of charity through the Mangana had generated at least pockets of support in Byzantine society. Her connections to the Mangana might have been more fruitful in the long run, if she had not died prematurely before the inauguration of the church. Nonetheless, Skleraina maintained a strong posthumous connection with the site, substantiated by her monumental tomb in St George. Monomachos' decision to be buried there, rather than next to his wife Zoe, was perhaps intended to persuade subsequent generations to remember himself and Skleraina as a legitimate imperial couple.

This article began with the supposition that an analysis of a wide-ranging source material would yield evidence for an imperial partnership which is obscured in literary sources. This approach has shed light on connections between Skleraina, Monomachos and the Mangana, which provides an unusual case study for the motives of imperial patrons. It also demonstrates how in the middle-Byzantine period, the reputation of imperial persons, and especially imperial couples, could be enhanced by joining patronage of a specific area with both literary and physical imagery.

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Maria, Monomachos and the Mangana: Imperial Legitimacy (1042-1046)

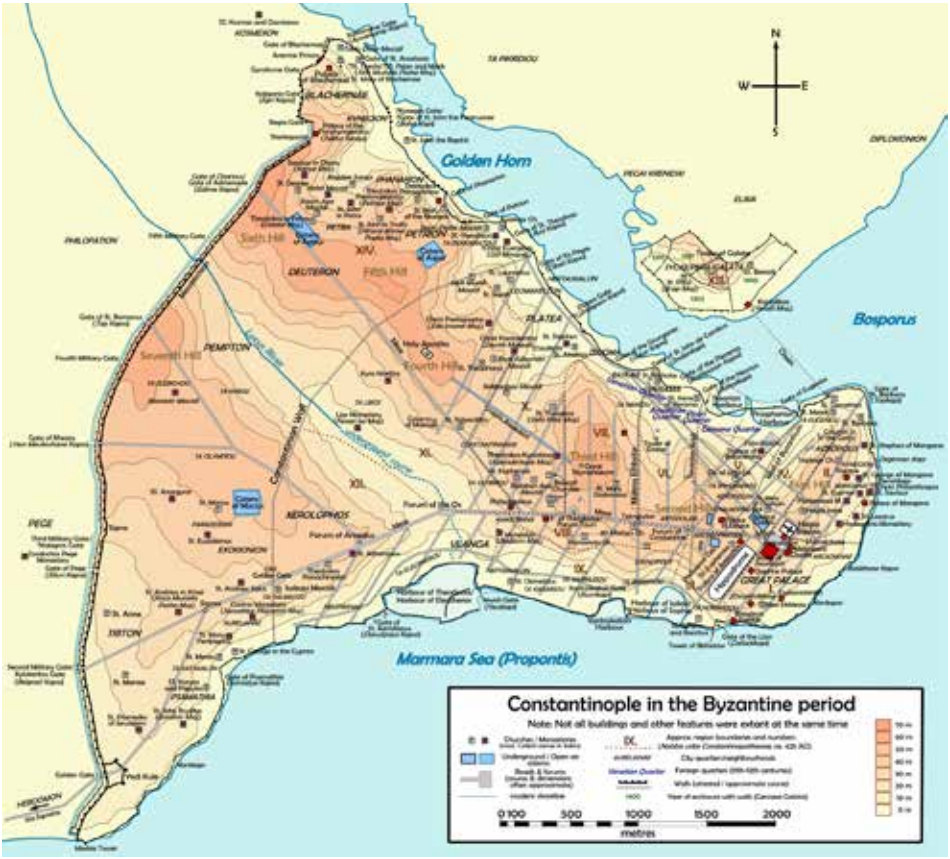

Figure 1: *Constantinople in the Byzantine Period. Map by Wikicommons user Cplakidas. Licensed according to the licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Universal Public Domain Dedication.*

Figure 2: *The Sarayburnu Promontory, Istanbul. Map by Henk Huig, 2020. 1. Gülhane Park 2. Column of the Goths 3. Northern point of Mangana 4. Approximate area of the Kynegion 5. Church and monastery of St George 6. Mangana Palace 7. Possible sea gates 8. Mangana terraced wall 9. Mangana cistern 10. Southernmost Mangana cistern. 11. Southwestern tip of Mangana. 12. Topkapi Palace 13. St Eirene.*

Figure 3: *The sea view of the Mangana, partially obscured by the China Triumph. The site runs from the northern point of the Topkapi Palace (right), to the area to below the Palace's first courtyard (left). Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.*

Figure 4: *The south-west corner of the Mangana, looking across the upper terrace north-east. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.*

Figure 5: *The centre of the Mangana, looking south-east towards the lower plain below. Photograph taken by Emma Huig 2020.*

Figure 6: *The north of the Mangana, looking north-east. Possible location of Skleraina's Kynegion residence. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.*

Figure 7: *Possible Mangana Sea Gates. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.*

Figure 8: *Constantine IX Monomachos and Zoe donor mosaic, St Sophia, Istanbul. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.*

Isaac Komnenos' poem to the Virgin: the literary self-portrait of a Byzantine prince*

Valeria F. Lovato

Isaac Komnenos Porphyrogennetos, third son of Alexios I and brother of Anna Komnene, is mostly known for his plots against his brother John II and nephew Manuel I.[1] Because of his failed attempts to seize imperial power, he spent most of his life in exile and died in Thrace, in the monastery of the Theotokos Kosmosoteira that he founded in his later years. Together with Isaac's political ambitions and patronage activities,[2] this monastery and its organization have been the

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1 I am currently editing a collective volume that will provide a comprehensive picture of Isaac's life and manifold interests: see Lovato (forthcoming). For the time being, the most detailed account of Isaac's life remains Varzos 1984, 238–254, which is bound to be enriched by Maximilian Lau's forthcoming monograph on the reign of John II. Shorter overviews can be found in Chalandon 1912, passim and Jurewicz 1970, 27–38, both discussed by Varzos.

2 On Isaac's political ambitions, see the preceding footnote, along with Magdalino 2016. On his patronage activities inside and outside the capital, see e.g. Ousterhout 2016 (on the Chora Church), Ouspensky 1907 and Anderson 1982 (on the Seraglio Octateuch), Linardou 2016 (on Isaac's artistic program and self-fashioning strategies) and Rodriguez Suarez 2019 (on the Latin influences detectable in Isaac's foundations).

main focus of modern studies.[3] Despite some notable exceptions,[4] less attention has been devoted to Isaac's literary output, which, however, not only played a crucial role in his strategy of self-presentation, but was also a central component of his carefully constructed legacy. The present study seeks to partially fill this gap by focusing on one of the least known literary texts authored by Isaac: his so-called poem to the Virgin, edited by Kurtz in 1926-1927[5] and henceforth almost completely neglected by modern scholarship.

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, I reexamine the text printed by Kurtz and present the first translation of the poem into any modern language. Secondly, I address two interrelated issues that might help us better appreciate the context in which and for which Isaac penned his invocation to the Virgin. Specifically, I first attempt to reconstruct the potential dating of the poem's composition. Subsequently, and finally, I offer an interpretation of the meaning and function of the text by comparing it to other similar verse compositions that were widely popular in Komnenian Byzantium, namely the so-called dedicatory epigrams.

1. Edition and translation

Isaac's poem to the Mother of God is composed of 41 dodecasyllables and is preserved in a single witness, the famous *Baroccianus graecus* 131.

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[3] On the architectural and artistic aspects of the Kosmosoteira monastery, see e.g. Orlandos 1933, Ševčenko 1984 and 2012, Sinos 1985 and Ousterhout-Bakirtzis 2007. The monastery's administration has been studied, among others, by Kaplan 2010 and Chatziantoniou 2019. On the Kosmosoteira *typikon* see Petit 1908 (the first edition of the text), Papazoglou 1994 (a new edition with commentary, based on a 16th-century manuscript not available to Petit) and Thomas & Constantinides Hero 2000 (with an English translation by N. Ševčenko, based on Petit's edition).

[4] Isaac's Homeric works have attracted, more than any others, the attention of modern scholars: see e.g. Kindstrand 1979 and Pontani 2007. Isaac may also have penned three paraphrases of Proclus' now lost treatises on Providence. However, the authorship of these texts is disputed: see e.g. Dornseiff 1966, who thinks that they were authored by Alexios' brother, also named Isaac. For a convincing counterargument, see Aglae Pizzone's chapter in Lovato (forthcoming).

[5] Kurtz 1926–27.

This miscellaneous manuscript contains a wide variety of texts, from rhetorical pieces to imperial chrysobulls and medical, meteorological and theological treatises, most of which are transmitted anonymously.[6] It has been argued that the Baroccianus, along with other comparable manuscripts, was composed at the behest of the court of Nicaea, with the aim of preserving the intellectual and cultural inheritance of the (temporarily) lost Byzantine empire.[7]

In the Baroccianus, Isaac's poem features quite unexpectedly between a letter by Simeon Magistros[8] and an excerpt from Anastasius of Sinai's *Quaestiones et responsiones*, which deals with the ornamentation of the *ephod* (shoulder piece) of the high priest of Israel. The text is not preceded by any kind of title or introduction, and this might explain why Coxe's catalog mistakenly defined it as "versus jambici in imperatorum Isaacii et Alexii matrem".[9] It was Kurtz who, based on the text's concluding lines, first identified it as a composition by Isaac Komnenos, son of emperor Alexios I and brother of John II.

The few scholars who examined the poem never questioned Isaac's authorship. However, we know that the *sebastokratōr* commissioned verse compositions written in his persona to a renowned court poet such as Theodore Prodromos.[10] So why should our text have been penned by Isaac and not by a Byzantine intellectual following his instructions? A first element that may confirm Isaac's authorship is the rather convoluted syntax of the poem, which, along with some stylistic features, is reminiscent of other texts that are generally attributed to Isaac, such as the paraphrase of the *Letter of Aristeas*. As I hope to show in what follows, these observations are strengthened by the similarities between the poem and another text that was undoubtedly penned by Isaac, that

[6] For a description of the manuscript, see Wilson 1978 and, more recently, Schiffer 2011.

[7] Pontikos 1989, xi–xii.

[8] Symeon Magistros, *Letters* 89, 150, 1–151, 42 (Darrouzès).

[9] See Kurtz 1926-27, 44.

[10] See Theodore Prodromos, *Carmina Historica* XL–XLII (Hörandner), first edited by Kurtz 1907, 107–110. Prodromos also wrote a prose encomium for the *sebastokratōr*: see Kurtz 1907, 112–117 and, most recently, Op de Coul 2007, 209–223 and 390–397.

is, the *typikon* of the Kosmosoteira monastery.[11] In turn, the affinities between poem and *typikon* may point to a late dating of the former text, which, if confirmed, would be an additional argument in favor of Isaac's authorship.

Before delving further into its dating and possible function, it is worth reading and briefly analyzing the text of the poem to the Virgin. For simplicity's sake, I discuss my proposed corrections to Kurtz's edition in the relevant footnotes.

Ζάλη με δινῶν κυματοστρόφων στρέφει, (1)
δέσποινα μῆτερ τοῦ Βασιλέως ὅλων,
οἰκτρῶς δαμάζει πασσάλῳ δυσθυμίας
τὸν ὄντα παντάπασιν ἠπορημένον,
πολλοῖς παραπτώμασι κατεστιγμένον· (5)
καὶ γὰρ τὰ κῆλα τῶν ἐμῶν ἁμαρτάδων
φρικτῶς ἀκοντίζοντα τὸν ξένον ξένως
ὠθοῦσιν εἰς βρύχοντα πόντον ἀθρόως
καὶ ῥοῖζον οἰκτρὸν εἰσφέρουσι φεῦ φρίκης
δεινῶς κλονούσης καὶ κατασπώσης κάτω. (10)
αἰ αἰ βλοσυρᾶς τῶν στροφαλίγγων κάκης,
αἷς παντὸς ἐκπέπτωκα λιμένος μόνος
πάτρης τε φίλης, καὶ βίου δυσπραγίας.
ἀλλ᾽ἐν κλόνῳ, δέσποινα, τῆς τρικυμίας
τὴν σὴν ἀρωγὴν προσκαλοῦμαι σὺν πόθῳ, (15)
φίλοικτε, κυδήεσσα καὶ θεοκράτορ,
κρατουμένη μάλιστα παιδὸς δυνάμει,
κἂν χείρες αἱ σαὶ συνέχωσι τὸ βρέφος
σεμνῶς θ᾽ὑπανέχωσι τὸν πλάστην ὅλων,
ὦ φρικτὸν ἀντάλλαγμα, μητροτεκνί[α]. (20)
ναὶ ναὶ δυσωπῶ δακρύοις πολυστόνοις
τὴν αὐτοπαράκλητον εἰς δυσωπίαν,
ἀντιλαβέσθαι τῆς ἐμῆς δυσποτμίας·
καὶ γὰρ σὲ συνέκδημον ἐν μεταστάσει
πρὸς βῆμα πανόψιον εὔχομαι φέρειν (25)

[11] All subsequent references to the Kosmosoteira *typikon* (henceforth *KT*) are based on Papazoglou's edition.

καὶ λύσιν εὑρεῖν ἀμπλακημάτων τότε,
ὅταν ἐρίφων καὶ προβάτων ἡ στάσις
πάντων καταπλήξειεν ἡμῶν τὸν νόον,
δίκην ὑποπτήξοντα τὴν φρικαλέαν
καὶ Ταρτάρου στόμιον ἠγριωμένον. (30)
ἴλαθί μοι, πάναγνε, σπλαγχνίσθητί μοι
φευκτῶς δακρυχέοντι παρ᾽ὅλον βίον·
δός μοι ταχινὴν τὴν μεσιτείας χάριν
τῇ πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν εὐμενεῖ δυσωπίᾳ,
σκαίροντα μητρὸς ἀγκάλαις ἀκηράτοις. (35)
καὶ τῶν φρενῶν μοι τήνδε τὴν στιχουργίαν
δέχοιο, πανόπτρια μῆτερ τοῦ λόγου·
δακρυρροῶν σοι ταῦτα καὶ πενθῶν λέγω.
Ἰσαάκιος στυγνὸς οἰκτρὸς οἰκέτης,
Ἀλεξίου παῖς Ἀυσόνων βασιλέως, (40)
ὁ πανόδυρτος ἐν τραγῳδίαις βίου.

B (= *Bar. gr.* 131, f. 178^{v})
1 δινῶν Kurtz: δεινῶν B || 6 κῆλα scripsi: κύκλα B Kurtz || 8 ἀθρόως Kurtz: ἀθρό $^{ως\ ον}$ B || 11 βλοσυρᾶς B: βλασυρᾶς Kurtz || 31 σπλαγχνίσθητι scripsi: σπλαχνίσθητι B, σπλαγνίσθητι Kurtz || 32 φευκτῶς B: φρικτῶς Kurtz || 33 μεσιτείας Kurtz: μεσιτείαν B || 34 εὐμενεῖ Kurtz: εὐμενῇ B || 35 ἀγκάλαις ἀκηράτοις Kurtz: ἀγγάλαις ἀκηράταις B || 39 οἰκέτης B: ἱκέτης Kurtz.

A storm of sea-twisting whirlwinds tosses me around,[12]
O Lady, Mother of the King of All,
and pierces me piteously with the spike of despair,
I who am completely at a loss
and bear the marks of numerous mistakes. (5)
For the darts[13] of my own sins,

[12] For a comparable image, see e.g. Manganeios Prodromos 98, 13–14 (first edited by Miller 1883, 40): Κἀγὼ πρὶν ἐν κλύδωσι καὶ πόνων ζάλαις | ἄγκυραν εὗρον τὴν σκέπην σου, Παρθένε (ἄγκυραν is Elizabeth and Michael Jeffrey's emendation for Miller's ἀργυρᾶν).

[13] I propose to emendate κύκλα ("cycles"), the *lectio* preserved by B and printed by Kurtz, to κῆλα ("darts"), which better fits the context. Indeed, κῆλα is a more suitable subject for ἀκοντίζω ("to transfix") and is in perfect agreement with the imagery

transfixing me, the stranger, in a strange and frightening way,
banish me incessantly[14] to the devouring sea
and bring upon me a piteous rush. Oh! the terrible, shivering fear
that agitates me and drags me under! (10)
Oh! the vortex of frightful wickedness,
which had me banished, alone, from every port
and from my beloved homeland! Oh! the adversity of life!
But, O Lady, from the turmoil of the waves
I invoke your help with deep yearning, (15)
O merciful, glorious Lady, you who reign with godly authority,
but are nonetheless subordinate to the power of your Son,
even if it is your hands that hold the new-born Child
and solemnly carry the Creator of all things,
O awe-inspiring paradox, mother and daughter at the same time.[15] (20)
Aye, aye, with my sorrowful tears I beseech you,
who are ready to succour those who implore you,
to assist me in my misfortune.
And I pray that I might take you with me as fellow traveler
also in my final voyage towards that tribunal for all to see, (25)

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employed in this passage: consider e.g. the expression πασσάλῳ δυσθυμίας ("spike of despair") at l. 3 and the verb καταστίζω ("to brand or mark with a pointed instrument") at l. 6. Moreover, the use of a rare and 'epic' term such as κῆλα would be in tune with Isaac's style and literary interests.

[14] As noted in the apparatus, the copyist of B added the desinence -ον right next to the abbreviation for -ως, without indicating his preferred reading. I chose to follow Kurtz in printing ἀθρόως not only because ἀθρόον is the *lectio facilior*, but also because ἀθρόως fits with Isaac's predilection for assonances and symmetry. By ending with ἀθρόως, l. 8 would almost perfectly echo the sounds and structure of the preceding line.

[15] μητροτεκνία is an integration proposed by Kurtz, who could only read the letters μητροτεκ… . A closer look at the ms. seems to confirm his suggestion. Immediately after the final *kappa,* it is indeed possible to see the faint traces of a *nu*; moreover, the two dots that are visible to the upper right side of the *nu* may have signaled the presence of an *iota*. As noted by Kurtz, the closest parallel for this otherwise unattested term features in Theodore the Studite, *Epitaph on his mother* 15, 511 (Pignani), where we find the *hapax* μητρότεκνος ("mother and daughter at the same time"). For another possible parallel, see again Theodore the Studite, *Letters* 458, 73 (Fatouros) (ἀδελφομητρότεκνον, "a daughter who is also a spiritual sister and mother", referred to an abbess).

so that I find deliverance from my sins on the day
when the division of the sheep and the goats[16]
strikes the mind of us all,
our mind that will cower before the formidable justice
and the cruel mouth of Tartarus. (30)
Be gracious to me, O All-pure One, pity me,
for my whole life has been marked by tears and exile.[17]
Grant me soon the grace of your mediation,
through your benevolent supplications to your Son,
who frolics in the pure embrace of his Mother. (35)
May you accept this poem which flows from my heart,
O All-seeing Mother of the Word.
It is between tears and lamentations that I, Isaac,
your abhorred and pitiable servant, [18]
son of Alexios, Emperor of the Ausonians, (40)
and most lamentable in the tragedies[19] of life, address these words to you.

[16] Matt 25: 33.

[17] As noted in the apparatus, Kurtz emendates B's φευκτῶς to φρικτῶς. However, considering that the copyist had already encountered the forms φρικτῶς and φρικτόν at ll. 7 and 20 respectively, it is difficult to explain the subsequent confusion between the familiar (and current) adverb φρικτῶς and the otherwise unattested φευκτῶς. Thus, given Isaac's predilection for neologisms, I decided to print φευκτῶς, which I tentatively interpret as a reference to Isaac's life-long wanderings. However, since the corresponding and well-attested adjective φευκτός generally has a passive meaning, the adverb φευκτῶς may also allude to Isaac's isolation (see also στυγνός, "abhorred", at l. 39): should this latter interpretation be correct, Isaac would rather state that he spent the entirety of his tearful life being shunned.

[18] Kurtz's emendation of οἰκέτης to ἱκέτης seems unnecessary. Not only is οἰκέτης well-attested in Byzantine dedicatory epigrams, but it is prosodically and stylistically more appropriate (see e.g. Rhoby 2010, 316, on an epigram where the locution οἰκτρὸς οἰκέτης appears in the same metrical position as in Isaac's poem).

[19] For a similar image see e.g. Manganeios Prodromos 92, 1–2 (first edited by Miller 1883, 35): Τραγῳδίας ἄξιον οὐδὲν ἐν βίῳ | οὗ πεῖραν, ἀπείρανδρε μῆτερ, οὐκ ἔχω.

2. Isaac as a *xenos*: the many exiles of an ambitious Komnenian prince

Now that the text of the poem has been presented and discussed, it is time to focus on the circumstances of its composition. My analysis will take its cue from the motif of exile, which is quite prominent throughout the poem and deserves further consideration. At l. 7 Isaac characterizes himself as a *xenos* at the time of writing and at ll. 11–13 he seems to hint at previous mistakes that not only led to his past exiles, but are also the reason for his *current* one (see the use of the perfect ἐκπέπτωκα at l. 12). If we accept my tentative interpretation of the *hapax* φευκτῶς (l. 32), we may consider it as a further reference to Isaac's life-long wanderings. These allusions to the author's exclusion from his homeland, and especially his self-designation as a *xenos*, have led some scholars to conclude, rather vaguely, that Isaac wrote this short composition when in exile.[20] While this observation is most likely correct, it is not very informative, especially if we consider that the *sebastokratōr* spent most of his life far from Constantinople.

It would thus be crucial to determine during which of his many exiles (if any) Isaac composed his poem to the Virgin. Based on Byzantine and non-Byzantine sources, we know that Isaac was sent away from the capital at least twice. According to Niketas Choniates, the longest exile stemmed from a 'minor' disagreement (μικρολυπία) between Isaac and his brother John,[21] which seems to have occurred around 1130. Our sources also relate that, during his travels in Asia Minor and the Near East, Isaac tried to gain the support of foreign leaders against his brother.[22] These diplomatic efforts were facilitated by the presence of Isaac's elder son, also called John, who was personally involved in his father's plans, as testified by his short-lived marriage with the daughter of the Armenian king Leo I.[23] During this first exile Isaac also visited the Holy Land, where he converted a couple of Jews and built an aqueduct for

[20] Kurtz 1926-27, 45 and Ševčenko 1984, 137 n. 9.

[21] Niketas Choniates, *Annals*, 32, ll. 6–13 (van Dieten).

[22] Varzos 1984, 239–243.

[23] Varzos 1984, 241, based on Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle* (see the French translation by Chabot 1905, 230–231).

the Monastery of John the Forerunner on the River Jordan. After many years (probably in 1138), Isaac finally reconciled with his brother and returned to Constantinople. As soon as he was back in the capital, he commissioned a poem to Theodore Prodromos, who duly celebrates the pious deeds that the *sebastokratōr* accomplished while in Palestine.[24] Our sources also recount that, shortly after his return, Isaac was once again sent away from the capital. This time, his destination was to be Heraclea Pontica, on the shores of the Black Sea. This event appears to be somehow connected to the treason of his elder son John, who defected to the Turks. However, if we are to believe John Kinnamos, this second exile must not have been a particularly distressing experience: to quote Kinnamos' very words, Isaac was sent to — and stayed in — Heraclea Pontica οὐ ξὺν ἀτιμίᾳ ("with no dishonor").[25] Finally, we have ample evidence that, at the end of his life, Isaac retired to his estate in Thrace. Here, he rebuilt the Monastery of the Theotokos Kosmosoteira, for which he also penned an extensive foundation charter or *typikon*. Unfortunately, the circumstances surrounding Isaac's final move to Thrace remain unknown. However, some passages of the *typikon* suggest that this final separation from Constantinople had not been voluntary.[26]

In summary, Isaac was forced to leave Constantinople on at least three occasions. But during which of his many 'exiles' did he compose his invocation to the Virgin? The long, first exile in Asia Minor and Palestine seems to be a rather implausible candidate and so does the second one in Heraclea Pontica. In the first case, Isaac was still quite young and rather resourceful — not to mention hopeful. The resigned tones of the poem to the Virgin, the estranged protagonist of which can only hope for salvation in the afterlife, do not seem to fit into this picture. Indeed, after reconciling with his brother and returning to Constantinople, Isaac does not put on the mask of the repented and desperate sinner, who has nothing to wait for but the Final Judgement. As mentioned, in one of the poems he commissioned to Theodore Prodromos soon after his return, Isaac almost celebrates his exile and the pious deeds he accomplished

[24] Theodore Prodromos, *Carmina Historica* XL (Hörandner).

[25] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Komnenos*, 32, ll. 11–13 (Meineke).

[26] See especially *KT* 2, 39–40, along with the discussion infra.

while in the Holy Land. After all, he was the first of the Komnenoi to visit Jerusalem and this seems to have played an important role in his self-presentation strategies.[27]

Let us briefly consider the second exile, which, as noted, may have been triggered by Isaac's son's defection to the Turkish armies. If, as it seems, this forced stay in Heraclea Pontica occurred soon after 1138, Isaac must not have been much older than he was when he commissioned the aforementioned poem to Prodromos. Moreover, according to our sources, this second and shorter exile was not a particularly distressing event.[28] Thus, just as the first exile in the East, the one in Heraclea Pontica seems quite incompatible with the picture painted by the prayer to the Virgin,[29] where exile is almost presented as an existential condition. Seen in this light, the many references to a life of endless suffering, coupled with the conventional – but particularly emphatic – insistence on the fear of the Day of Judgement, would be more appropriate for an older and disillusioned Isaac. Equally, the poem's recurrent allusions to Isaac's countless sins and his need for the Virgin's quick intermediation would make more sense if written in his later years. If, as it seems, Isaac considered his final move to Thrace as a veritable exile, the most likely timeframe for the poem's composition would thus be the years he devoted to the foundation of his monastery.

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[27] As shown by the paraphrase of the *Letter of Aristeas,* which Isaac seems to have composed as an introduction to the Seraglio Octateuch. According to Anderson 1982, 86 this manuscript dates from the years of Isaac's return to Constantinople after his travels to Palestine. If correct, this dating would strengthen the idea that the paraphrase, with its remarkable focus on Jerusalem, was a crucial component of Isaac's self-fashioning strategy (for further details, see Lovato 2021).

[28] This exile must have started sometime after John's defection to the Turks (dated to 1139 by Varzos 1984, 244) and it certainly ended before Manuel's coronation in 1143. According to John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Komnenos*, 32, ll. 20–22 (Meineke), as soon as he returned to Constantinople after his father's death, Manuel freed his uncle and welcomed him back to the capital.

[29] Both Kinnamos and Choniates report that, even after 1143, the overly ambitious Isaac still harbored the hope of becoming emperor (see Varzos 1984, 244–246). Their negative depiction of Isaac may be influenced by their respective authorial agendas. However, the fact that the *sebastokratōr* was likely forced to move to Thrace around the 1150s may imply that his presence in the capital was still perceived as a threat.

3. The poem to the Virgin and the Kosmosoteira *typikon*

So far, I have attempted to date Isaac's poem based on the information provided by Byzantine and non-Byzantine historiographical accounts. In this section, I will compare Isaac's invocation to the Virgin to another work that the *sebastokratōr* devoted to the Theotokos, namely the *typikon* of the Kosmosoteira Monastery. Since Isaac authored this monastic charter around the end of his life, any differences or similarities between the two texts may provide further clues as to the dating of the poem. Furthermore, this comparison will afford a clearer picture of Isaac's strategy of self-presentation and, more specifically, of the role that his devotion to the Virgin played within it.

Certainly, a parallel reading of the poem and the *typikon* cannot disregard the different form and aim of these two texts. While the *typikon* takes up 119 prose paragraphs of varying length, the poem is composed of 41 dodecasyllables. More broadly, whereas the poem has an occasional nature and depicts a specific moment in Isaac's life, the *typikon* aims to regulate the organization of the monastery and ensure that the memory of the founder is preserved for generations to come. What is more, if the differences between poem and *typikon* are likely connected to their 'genre' and occasion, the commonalities linking them may partly stem from Isaac's overarching self-fashioning agenda. Indeed, some of the thematic affinities that I will explore in what follows recur also in other works composed by or for Isaac. However, as I hope to show, there are some features that seem to be specific to the two texts under examination and may thus help us illuminate their potential connections.

Let us begin our comparative reading by considering the way in which the speaking 'I' is represented in both texts. The poem's *persona loquens*, a lonely sinner who has been wandering for most of his life and whose only hope is to obtain salvation in the afterlife, may seem quite at odds with the nuanced voice of the founder of the Kosmosoteira monastery. Despite being at the end of a troubled and sinful life, the Isaac of the *typikon* seems to oscillate between regret and hopefulness, between sorrow over his past mistakes and pride for his new foundation. As noted, these discrepancies are undoubtedly connected to the different form and purpose of the two texts. What is more, the *typikon* was like-

ly composed in numerous sittings, with the author often going back to topics and themes he had already treated in former sections.[30] Thus, the fluctuating tones of the monastic charter may also be a consequence of its convoluted editorial process.

This said, a close examination shows that the two texts do share some commonalities, which emerge especially if we compare the poem to the most 'autobiographical' sections of the *typikon*.[31] As expected, some of these themes perfectly conform to Isaac's self-fashioning strategy and emerge also in his other works. A case in point is the emphasis on the *sebastokratōr*'s refined education. Like his sister Anna, Isaac was proud of his *paideia*, which he considered a crucial component of his public persona. This must have held true also in the final years of his life, as demonstrated by the Kosmosoteira *typikon*. Far from being a dull imitation of former monastic charters, this text is characterized by a refined style and a wealth of classical and scriptural references.[32] The importance that Isaac attributed to his own literary achievements, and to education more broadly, is also attested by some of the *typikon*'s provisions. Indeed, not only did Isaac endow the monastery with a library, to which he bequeathed a copy of his own writings,[33] but he also encouraged the election of literate monks.[34] If we now look at the poem to the Virgin, we will remark that even the protagonist of this humble supplication seems to subtly draw attention to his own literary skills. Towards the end of

[30] See Ševčenko 1984, 135–136 n. 2 and Thomas & Hero 2000, 785–786.

[31] When I speak of the 'autobiographical' nature of some passages of Isaac's *typikon*, I refer to the sections that are more or less explicitly concerned with the dramatization of the speaking 'I'. This said, it is worth recalling Drpić's caveat against interpreting dedicatory epigrams as "direct reflections of autobiographical reality", a warning that applies also to monastic *typika*, including the apparently idiosyncratic charter authored by Isaac (Drpić 2016, 88). On monastic *typika* as 'autobiographical' documents see also Hinterberger 1999, passim and especially 183–201.

[32] See e.g. Petit 1908, 18 (on the classicizing and Homeric overtones of the document), Varzos 1985, 247 (on the Sophoclean references characterizing the description of the monastery's site) and Ševčenko 1984, 137 n. 9 (on the ekphrastic passages of the *typikon*). For a new and comprehensive appreciation of the *typikon* as a literary work, see Margaret Mullett's contribution in Lovato (forthcoming).

[33] *KT*, ch. 106, 1921–1926.

[34] *KT*, ch. 3, 62–65.

the text, the speaking 'I' states that the gift he is offering to the Virgin in exchange for her intercession is nothing but the very poetic composition (*stichourgia*) to which he is now entrusting his prayer for salvation. Notably, it is in this very same passage that Isaac chooses to address Mary as the mother of the divine Word (*Logos*). Considering the context in which it appears, this epithet may be read as an allusion to the multiple meanings of the word *logos*, which could indicate the divine Word made flesh, but also, more generally, concepts such as 'word', 'discourse' and 'literary or rhetorical work'.[35] By presenting his *stichourgia* as a suitable offering to the Virgin and by simultaneously hinting at the polysemy of the term *logos,* Isaac suggests that no gift could be more fitting for the Mother of *Logos* than the very words (*logoi*) of his poem. If my interpretation is correct, this combination of a typical motif of Byzantine dedicatory epigrams with the widespread theme of the 'gift of words'[36] is meant to further highlight the author's literary merits.

Another set of themes that surfaces in both the poem and the *typikon* concerns Isaac's position within the imperial family. While the *sebastokratōr* emphasizes his connection with his parents,[37] in neither text does he mention his offspring. Certainly, the former behavior is quite natural for a member of the Komnenian dynasty and is a pervasive motif in most of Isaac's preserved works. The deliberate silence concerning his descendants seems instead to be specific to the two texts under examination and may point to Isaac's isolation from his *genos* in the final stages of his life. Admittedly, when it comes to the poem it is hard to determine whether the lack of references to Isaac's progeny is the result of an intentional authorial choice. This absence may be due to the 'generic conventions' of Byzantine epigrams, which only allowed for short *sphragides* meant to quickly outline the social status of the speaking 'I'. Isaac's exclusive focus on his father may thus be simply ascribed to lack

[35] See e.g. Drpić 2016, 23. On the Byzantines' use of the expression οἱ λόγοι to refer to virtually any kind of contemporary discursive practice, see also Bernard 2014, 41–47.

[36] On the motif of the 'gift of words' see e.g. Bernard 2012.

[37] For Isaac's representation of his relationship with his parents in the *typikon*, see e.g. *KT* ch. 54, 1009–1920 (commemoration rituals in honor of Eirene and Alexios) and 89, 1697–1699 (Isaac wants their portraits to be placed at one end of his sarcophagus).

of space. However, there is another passage of the poem that may hide an allusion to Isaac's estrangement from his descendants. At ll. 24–25, Isaac presents the Virgin as his desired *synekdēmos* ("fellow-traveler"). This term appears also in the poem where Theodore Prodromos celebrates Isaac's pilgrimage in the Holy Land. In this latter text, however, the word refers to Isaac's son John, who is presented as his father's faithful "fellow-traveler" and "fellow-wanderer" (*synekdēmos kai symplanētēs*).[38] Interestingly, the same locution appears also in Niketas Choniates' account of Isaac's exile to the East: once again, the terms *synekdēmos* and *symplanētēs* designate the young John.[39] Considering that Choniates often used Komnenian court poetry as a source, the similarities between his account and Prodromos' poem may not be a simple coincidence. Would it be possible to establish a comparable interplay between the poem to the Virgin and Prodromos' composition? Unfortunately, differently from Choniates, Isaac only employs the (not uncommon) term *synekdēmos* and it is thus hard to determine whether this word may hide an allusion to Prodromos' description of John. If so, by presenting the Virgin as his *synekdēmos* Isaac would not only be stressing his exclusive relationship with the Theotokos, but he would also be suggesting that he has lost the support of his son, who has renounced his role as his father's fellow-traveler.

While the poem does not afford enough elements to draw a definitive conclusion, the *typikon* is considerably more explicit as to Isaac's relationship with his descendants. Despite being grateful for the assistance of his faithful 'men' Michael and Leo Kastamonites,[40] Isaac presents the Theotokos as his main interlocutor and ally. It is the Virgin who has supported him throughout his tumultuous life and it is to her that he now entrusts both his monastery and his salvation. Not only are Isaac's descendants conspicuously absent from the monastery's memorial ceremonies, but, at the beginning of the *typikon*, the *sebastokratōr* explicitly presents himself as a 'barren and senseless shoot'.[41] This self-depiction

[38] Theodore Prodromos, *Carmina Historica* XL, 52–54 (Hörandner).

[39] Niketas Choniates, *Annals* p. 32, ll. 7–8 (van Dieten).

[40] See especially *KT*, ch. 12, 259–264.

[41] *KT,* ch. 2, 34–35.

reverses the images of vegetal fertility and luxuriance that were employed to celebrate one's position within the imperial *genos*.[42] Indeed, as he implies in other passages of the *typikon*, Isaac has no descendants apart from his newly founded monastery, which he considers to be his only 'offspring' and legacy.[43]

This feeling of isolation is strengthened by another theme shared by both texts, that is, the many references to Isaac's estrangement from his "sweet homeland". As noted, in the poem Isaac represents himself as a wanderer who has spent most of his life in exile and is still tossed about by a real and metaphorical 'tempest'. While lacking the marine imagery of the poem, the first sections of the Kosmosoteira *typikon* equally depict the founder as a man who, due to his countless mistakes, is forced to spend his last days far from his homeland, even as he is consumed by a terrible illness.[44] Similar themes occur in another emotionally charged section of the *typikon*, namely the chapters where Isaac describes the future layout of his tomb. Here, the reader learns that the *sebastokratōr* had originally planned to be buried in Constantinople, in the church of the Chora monastery that he had restored while still living in the capital. Now, however, he has changed his mind and wants his tomb to be placed in the Thracian monastery he has just founded.[45] The mention of the City that he will likely never see again, together with the thought of his impending death, elicits one of the most pathetic passages of the entire document. Once again, Isaac remembers the misfortunes (δυσπραγία) that have kept him far from his homeland for most of his life (πατρίδος γλυκείας μοι τὸν πλείονα χρόνον τῆς ἐμῆς βιοτῆς ἀλλότριος γέγονα).

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[42] See e.g. the recurrence of expressions such as πορφύρας βλάστημα, πορφυράνθητος κλάδος/ῥόδον, ὄρπηξ πορφύρας in most contemporary courtly literature, including dedicatory epigrams. On this imagery and its implications for imperial propaganda see also Andriollo (forthcoming).

[43] See e.g. *KT* 117, 2128, where Isaac encourages his 'men' Leo Kastamonites and Michael to take care of the monastery and to consider it as something that lives in place of its founder (ἀντ' ἐμοῦ ταύτην ὡς ζῶσαν συνορᾶν καὶ λογίζεσθαι). On Isaac's isolation from his *genos*, see also Stanković 2011, 63–64.

[44] *KT,* ch. 2, 39–34: καὶ ἐγγωνιάζων, οἷς ὁ Θεὸς ἐπίσταται κρίμασιν, ἐκτὸς τῆς πατρίδος μου βαρυαλγήτῳ νοσήματι.

[45] *KT,* ch. 89, 1675–1681.

Now that he is ailing alone in a dark corner, estranged from the fame of his glorious ancestors (ξένος συγγενικῆς εὐκλείας) and about to fall into oblivion (εἰς λήθην ἤδη πεσὼν καὶ μνήμης ἀνθρωπείας), he finds solace in thinking that, after his death, his remains will be guarded by the mosaic icon of the Virgin Kosmosoteira, who will perpetuate for eternity his prayer for the remission of his many sins (ὡς μένειν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ ἐφεδραζομένην εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸν σύμπαντα ἀναλλοιώτῳ διαμονῇ πρὸς μεσιτείαν τῆς ἐμῆς ἀθλίας ψυχῆς).[46]

Before concluding my analysis, I would like to focus on a last detail that may further illuminate the relationship between our two texts. In both the poem and the *typikon* Isaac addresses the Virgin with a rather unusual epithet, that is, *panoptria*, "all-seeing". While this term features in some works of 12th-century court literati, such as Theodore Prodromos and Constantine Manasses,[47] it is quite uncommon. More significantly, Isaac seems to be the only author to explicitly refer it to the Mother of God. As it has been demonstrated, the Komnenians ascribed considerable political and symbolic value to the epithets they attributed to their holy patrons, especially when it came to their majestic monastic foundations.[48] If we consider that, in Komnenian times, the cult of the Theotokos played an increasingly central role in discourses of imperial legitimacy,[49] Isaac's original choice will appear all the more remarkable.

This impression is strengthened by the fact that, in both the poem and the *typikon*, *panoptria* is employed only in particularly meaningful passages. In the former text, the epithet is part of the last invocation to the Theotokos, which immediately precedes the concluding *sphragis* finally disclosing both the identity of the speaking 'I' and his imperial ancestry. As concerns the *typikon*, the reader or listener encounters this rare term in the first and last chapters only. Notably, in this last instance,

[46] *KT,* ch. 90, 1709–1721.

[47] See e.g. Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosicles* 4, 69 (Marcovich), Constantine Manasses, *Verse Chronicle* 4039 (Lampsides) and *Itinerary* 1, 96 (Chryssogelos).

[48] According to Stanković 2011, Isaac's choice of the epithet *panoptria* was intended as a reminder of his imperial status. Inter alia, the *sebastokratōr* aimed to connect his Thracian monastery with the church of Christ *Pantepoptes* ("All-seeing") founded by his paternal grandmother Anna Dalassene.

[49] See e.g. Pentcheva 2006, 165–187.

not only does *panoptria* open Isaac's final prayer to the Virgin, but it is also coupled with the other epithet that was meant to define and single out the holy patron of his monastic foundation, namely *kosmosōteira*, "savior of the world". Given the rarity of *panoptria* — and its even rarer association with the Theotokos — the epithet's occurrence in significant passages of both the poem and the *typikon* can safely be interpreted as a deliberate authorial choice.

In summary, despite the undeniable dissimilarities that stem from the different aims and form of the two texts, both the poem and the *typikon* present a speaking 'I' who, while being proud of his refined education and illustrious ancestry, fashions himself as a lonely exile, isolated from his homeland and — at least according to the *typikon* — from the rest of his *genos*. In both texts, the narrating voice ascribes his long wanderings to the many mistakes he has made throughout his life and contemplates the end of his existence as well as his destiny in the afterlife. His only hope is the mediation of the Virgin Mary, who is presented as his closest companion and ally. In both cases, moreover, Isaac seems to consider his exile as a permanent condition. However, while the *persona loquens* of the poem is still looking for a safe haven, the author of the monastic charter appears to have found some solace in his peaceful Thracian monastery. If we add that the poem does not make any mention of the illness that torments Isaac in the *typikon*, we are tempted to conclude that the monastic charter was penned at a later stage than the poem. Whatever the case, the two texts are not only likely to both date from the final stages of Isaac's life, but they are also part of a consistent devotional and self-fashioning project, which revolves around the figure of the Theotokos. This is confirmed by the pointed use of the unusual epithet *panoptria*, which Isaac wanted to be associated with 'his' Theotokos and with the foundation that he considered to be his main legacy. However, if the *typikon* was meant to convey this message to the Kosmosoteira monks, it is not as easy to understand who the intended recipients of the poem may have been. The following section explores this last issue by situating Isaac's poem into the broader context of Byzantine dedicatory epigrams.

4. A dedicatory epigram for a beloved icon?

Even if they take up different forms and are preserved by different media, dedicatory epigrams can be described as poetic compositions that were meant to accompany, introduce and enrich different kinds of gifts, from a book, a sword or a precious item of clothing to a sacred object offered to one's holy patron.[50] However, since most dedicatory epigrams have been preserved only by manuscript sources, it is often difficult to ascertain the circumstances of their composition and/or performance, especially when the texts are not introduced by a title or a prefatory description.[51] This applies also to Isaac's poem: the copyist of the Barocc*ianus* did not provide it with any manner of introduction and inserted it between two apparently unrelated clusters of texts. However, as I hope to show, a comparison with the broader 'genre' of dedicatory epigrams may help us formulate some hypotheses as to the function and audience of our text.[52]

The poem to the Virgin presents many characteristics that are commonly associated with dedicatory epigrams.[53] For one, the text is meant to fulfill two different and complementary purposes: not only does it convey a pathetic and intimate prayer to the divine patron of the speaking 'I', but it also provides the audience with a carefully staged portrait of the *persona loquens.* To fulfil this double agenda, Isaac's composition follows the structure of a canonical *ethopoiia*: after describing the present situation of the suppliant, the poem briefly focuses on his past and eventually expresses a heartfelt wish for the future. As noted by modern scholars,[54] this rhetorical structure is a conventional feature of dedicatory epigrams, as is the short *sphragis* that closes the poem to

[50] For a comprehensive repertoire of inscriptional dedicatory epigrams and a presentation of the different objects/artifacts on which they can be found, see Rhoby 2009–2018. For an overview of Byzantine epigrammatic poetry with updated bibliography, see now Drpić & Rhoby 2019.

[51] See e.g. Lauxtermann 2003, 150–151, Drpić 2016, 25–27 and Spingou (forthcoming).

[52] On the literary epigrams as a standardized 'genre' see e.g. Lauxtermann 2003, 151 and Spingou 2012, 178–222.

[53] For the conventional features and structure of Byzantine (inscriptional) epigrams, see Rhoby 2010.

[54] Drpić 2016, 88–89.

the Virgin. Even Isaac's allusion to the polysemy of the word *logos* is a conventional motif within this literary genre. Finally, and more significantly, like many dedicatory epigrams Isaac's poem seems to refer to a figurative representation of the holy patron it addresses. If we go back to the sections of the text that are devoted to describing the Virgin and the 'paradox' she embodies (ll. 14–20; 33–35), we will notice that the unfathomable relationship between the Mother of God and her Son, who is also her Father, is presented through a series of almost pictorial images.[55] Reading these lines, one can visualize the Virgin who lovingly holds her Child in her arms, while the latter wriggles in her embrace. Even if the poem does not provide any details as to the Virgin's posture and does not make any direct mention of an icon, we can quite safely conclude that Isaac had in mind a specific representation of the Mother of God, most likely belonging to a widespread iconographic type (such as that of the Virgin *brephokratousa*).

In light of these remarks — and considering the similarities between the poem and the Kosmosoteira *typikon* — I would like to suggest that this prayer to the Virgin was conceived as a dedicatory epigram for one of the numerous depictions of the Theotokos that Isaac dedicated to the Kosmosoteira monastery. Notably, while in most *typika* the icons of the foundation's holy patron(s) are mentioned cursorily only in the strictly normative sections or in the final inventories, the Kosmosoteira *typikon* devotes much space to the holy images placed inside and outside the monastery's enclosure. If we limit ourselves to the Theotokos, the *typikon* describes at least six different depictions of the Mother of God.[56]

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[55] The presence of descriptive elements does not mean that Isaac's poem can be defined as an *ekphrasis*. On the differences between *ekphraseis* and dedicatory epigrams, see the discussion infra along with Lauxtermann 2003, 160 and Spingou (forthcoming).

[56] 1. The mosaic icon of the Virgin Kosmosoteira, to be placed at one end of Isaac's tomb (chapters 1, 45; 89, 1698–1699; 90, 1716–1717; 109); 2. one of the two *proskynēsis* icons located in the *katholikon* (chapters 7, 123–124; 9, 166–173; 12, 280–282; see also Ševčenko 2012, 89); 3. the mosaic representation of the Dormition of the Virgin to be hung above the main entrance of the *katholikon* (ch. 65, 1190–1191); 4. a stone panel with the image of the Theotokos situated on the bridge for the veneration of passersby (ch. 67, 1214–1215); 5. a mosaic image of the Theotokos placed above the entrance to the monastery's enclosure (ch. 84, 1605–1606); 6. the *enkolpion* that

Amongst these, we may single out two representations of the Virgin to which Isaac seemed to be particularly attached: the *enkolpion* of the Mother of God and the mosaic icon (διὰ μουσείου εἰκόνισμα) of the Theotokos Kosmosoteira. Both were to play an important role in the layout of Isaac's resting place: while the former had been set in silver so as to be fixed onto the lid of the *sebastokratōr*'s marble sarcophagus, the mosaic icon of the Kosmosoteira was to be placed at one end of said sarcophagus, along with an icon of Christ.[57] Even if we are unable to determine how the Virgin was represented on either of these objects, I am inclined to think that the mosaic icon would have been a more likely candidate for the composition of a dedicatory epigram.

First, apart from one exception,[58] this icon of the Theotokos is the only one that the *typikon* consistently associates with the epithet *kosmosōteira*, which, as noted, was meant to single out Isaac's monastery from other foundations dedicated to the Virgin. More significantly, in the first lines of the *typikon*, the monastery's holy patron is introduced first and foremost *through* her icon, something that, to my knowledge, is not to be observed in any other monastic charter. This holy representation is so meaningful to both Isaac and the fate of his foundation that the entire monastery seems to revolve around it.[59]

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conventional would be fixed onto Isaac's sarcophagus (ch. 89, l. 1693–1695). The *typikon* mentions an icon of the Virgin that was to be kissed by newly appointed officials (chapters 34, 752–755 and 35, 767–768), but it is not clear to which of the abovementioned icons these passages refer to. The icon of the Theotokos that was to be carried out in procession on the feast of the Dormition (ch. 6, 1182–1183) may be the mosaic icon of the Kosmosoteira. As for the icon placed inside the hospital (ch. 70, 1214–1215), the *typikon* does not provide any information about its subject.

[57] On the layout of Isaac's tomb, see Ševčenko 1984. For a different perspective, see now Ousterhout-Bakirtzis 2007, with further bibliography.

[58] *KT*, ch. 9, 165–166, where the epithet *kosmosōteira* is referred to one of the *proskynēsis* icons in the *templon* area. See however ch. 90, 1715–1718, where Isaac seems to imply that only the mosaic icon that he found in Rhaidestos could legitimately be called *kosmosōteira*.

[59] *KT*, ch. 1, 1–5 (Τυπικὸν ἐμοῦ τοῦ [σεβαστοκράτορος] Ἰσαακίου (…) ἐπὶ τῷ καινισθέντι παρ' ἡμῶν νεοσυστάτῳ μοναστηρίῳ (…), ἐν ᾧ καὶ καθίδρυται τὸ τῆς κοσμοσωτείρας μου καὶ Θεομήτορος καὶ ἐν πολλοῖς εὐεργέτιδος διὰ μουσείου εἰκόνισμα). This mosaic icon of the Theotokos is the most prominent amongst all other depictions of

The *typikon* also informs us that Isaac had acquired this icon in a 'miraculous' way some time before, while he was in Rhaidestos.[60] Even if we are not told when this extraordinary event took place, we learn that Isaac had already prepared an icon stand for this sacred image in the Chora Church in Constantinople, where he originally meant to be buried.[61] While they do not provide a precise chronological sequence of events, these passages seem to indicate not only that Isaac had been carrying this icon with him for quite some time, but also that he had it with him when he left the capital for good. If read along with Isaac's poem to the Virgin, these details seem to perfectly match the latter text's description of the Theotokos as a faithful fellow-traveler. As a matter of fact, this interpretation might even help to explain the peculiar use of the verb *pherō* at l. 25 of the poem, where Isaac wishes he may 'take' the Virgin with him (εὔχομαι φέρειν) also in his final voyage to the Hereafter. By using a verb that would apply better to an inanimate object than a holy figure, Isaac may be alluding to the double role that the Virgin plays in this text: she is at the same time the divine agent who has assisted him in his misfortunes *and* the sacred representation of this same divine agent. In his final journey to the Hereafter, Isaac wants to have both with him: the presence of the Rhaidestos icon next to his tomb will ensure the presence of the Theotokos by his side on the Day of Judgment.

Admittedly, we are now in the realm of speculation and, while the evidence discussed above may be enough to refute the identification of the poem with one of the lost *ekphrases* is composed by Isaac,[62] we should consider other interpretations. For instance, instead of being a prayer addressed to an icon of the Virgin, Isaac's poem may have been composed for one of the many religious feasts connected to the Theotokos.[63] Dedicatory epigrams penned for such occasions were quite widespread in 12th-century Byzantium and, being sometimes inspired by iconographic representations of the events they celebrated, they could

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the Virgin and it features again in chapters 89, 90 and 109.

[60] *KT*, ch. 90, 1716–1717.

[61] *KT*, ch. 89, 1698–1699.

[62] As tentatively suggested by Ševčenko 1984, 137 n. 9.

[63] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer who pointed this out.

display distinctly descriptive tones, comparable to those of Isaac's composition. In our case, the poem's focus on Mary's 'paradoxical motherhood' could point, for instance, to the feast of the Annunciation. If we accept the possibility that both the poem and the *typikon* were penned in the final stages of Isaac's life, we may even go as far as to suggest that the former might have been inspired by the decorative cycle of the Kosmosoteira's *katholikon*, even though the *typikon* only mentions a mosaic representation of the Dormition.[64] This said, Isaac's poem seems to lack some features that characterize most epigrams composed for religious feasts. For one, this kind of epigrams generally allude to the event they commemorate,[65] while our text does not refer to any specific celebration connected to Mary's life. What is more, the 'image' described by Isaac does not seem to represent any recognizable scene or episode, but, as noted, is closely reminiscent of widespread icon types with the Theotokos holding her Child. Finally, the structure and contents of Isaac's invocation to the Virgin call to mind contemporary epigrams penned for the dedication (or the renovation) of holy icons.[66] Thus, while it may be impossible to identify the specific event for which Isaac composed his prayer to the Virgin, interpreting the poem as a dedicatory epigram addressed to an icon remains the simplest solution.

Before concluding my analysis, I would like to briefly discuss the potential occasion for the poem's performance, as well as its subsequent material and textual transmission. Due to lack of evidence, this is necessarily the most hypothetical section of my study. However, a comparison between our text and a dedicatory epigram that was undoubtedly linked to the Kosmosoteira monastery will allow us to at least make some educated guesses.

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[64] See Ševčenko 2021, 89 (with n. 22), who convincingly argues that the fresco decoration as it is currently visible in the Kosmosoteira church did not belong to the decorative program originally conceived by Isaac.

[65] A relevant parallel is Manganeios Prodromos 69 (partly edited in Miller 1881, 511). As attested by its title, this composition was performed on the feast of the Annunciation, to which it makes explicit references throughout (see e.g. ll. 1–18 and 56–57).

[66] See e.g. Theodore Prodromos, *Carmina Historica* XXI and LVII (Hörandner) and Nicholas Kallikles, *Carmina Genuina* 15 and 20 (Romano). The latter two poems are translated into English and thoroughly discussed by Andriollo (forthcoming).

The famous *Marcianus Graecus* 524 preserves a short composition that was likely authored by one of Isaac's closest collaborators, namely the loyal *grammatikos* Michael whom we have already encountered in the Kosmosoteira *typikon*.[67] As we learn from the epigram itself, Michael wrote this short poem to accompany the dedication of a silver lamp to the church of the Kosmosoteira monastery: the artifact was offered as a token of gratitude to Saint Nicholas, who had saved Michael's son from a grave illness and had recently rescued Michael himself from an attempt on his life. In her analysis of the text, Foteini Spingou argues that, due to obvious space constraints, the twelve lines making up the poem could not have been inscribed directly on the lamp. For this reason, she proposes to consider the composition as a performative dedicatory epigram, to be read in occasion of the donation of the object and/or in other suitable circumstances. For instance, the donor might have presented the epigram at refined social gatherings attended by a selected group of literate friends. Spingou also suggests that, after such performances, a written copy of the epigram may have been somehow attached to the object that it was meant to accompany, so as to perpetuate the wishes and prayers of the donor.[68]

However it was disseminated, Michael's epigram must have been accessible long enough to be copied and inserted into the collection of the Marcianus. Its performance(s) in local literary circles may have been enough to ensure its preservation, but the text might also have been somehow available to the visitors of the Kosmosoteira monastery, who perhaps could read it next to the sacred offering it described. Are we to imagine a similar scenario also for the poem to the Virgin, which, if our previous analysis is correct, may be the only other dedicatory epigram from the Kosmosoteira monastery that has survived up to our times? Considering its length, the poem could hardly have been inscribed on the silver and gold frame that Isaac dedicated to his beloved Rhaidestos

[67] See Spingou 2012, 165–166 and 93. This epigram is discussed also by Drpić 2016, 96–98.

[68] Spingou 2012, 175.

icon.[69] A *podea* or an *encheirion* are equally unlikely to have provided a large enough surface for the embroidering of the *sebastokratōr*'s plea to the Mother of God. In addition, the fact that the poem itself is presented as an offering to the Virgin may indicate that it was composed first and foremost with a performative aim in mind. More specifically, given its likely reference to an icon of the Theotokos, its insistence on the fear of the Final Judgement and its plea for the Virgin's intercession, this heartfelt prayer to the Mother of God may have been meant to be performed (and possibly displayed) in the presence of the mosaic icon of the Kosmosoteira, which was to be placed next to Isaac's tomb so as to permanently mediate for his 'wretched soul'.[70] Considering the similarities between the poem and the Kosmosoteira *typikon*, we may even imagine that Isaac's epigram was intended to be read regularly just as his monastic charter, maybe on occasion of the annual commemoration of the founder.[71] Such a periodical performance would not only have perpetuated Isaac's prayer to the Theotokos, but it would also have guaranteed the survival of his legacy, thus dispelling the fear that seemed to haunt him almost as much as his dread of the Final Judgement: that of being forgotten.

[69] *KT*, ch. 90, 1718. Incidentally, the renovation and/or adornment of an icon's frame would have been an ideal occasion for the composition and performance of a dedicatory epigram.

[70] On the performance of dedicatory epigrams in churches, often in front of the related icon(s), see Spingou 2012, 143 and 164–165.

[71] In discussing the annual recitation of the Pantokrator's hexametric inscription, Spingou observes that "in some cases, the texts of verse inscriptions were read aloud from a manuscript in order to commemorate the donors" (Spingou 2012, 174). Even if we were to conclude that Isaac's poem was never inscribed on or next to the Kosmosoteira icon, we may imagine for it a similar scenario to that described for the Pantokrator inscription.

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Offspring of Vipers: the attitude of the 'eastern' literati towards their 'ὁμογενεῖς' of the 'west' under the new socio-political conditions of the late Byzantine period

Pantelis Papageorgiou

The dissolution and the fragmentation of the Byzantine empire in 1204 by the Crusaders resulted in a redefinition of the Byzantines' self-identification on account of their juxtaposition to the Latin invaders.[1] At this historical turning-point, a reevaluation of Byzantium's classical heritage had begun which led in a general use of the term "Hellene" among Byzantine intellectuals.[2] As a result, this late Byzantine period that started with the Latin domination of Romania is strongly connected to the origins of modern Hellenism by prominent historians.[3]

In these new post-1204 geopolitical terms, new Latin political entities were created in the former imperial territory; In addition, there were also three states, unrelated to each other in their origin, whose leaders claimed the continuity of the Byzantine empire. Two of them, Nicaea and Trebizond, were established in Asia Minor and the third in the Greek northwestern frontiers, in Epirus. It should be noted that those three Byzantine states fought against the western conquerors separately. Moreover, they were often in a conflict not only in the battlefield but also in ideological and political matters on account of their common

[1] Angelov 2005, 300; Gounarides 1986, 254; Laiou 1974, 17; Malamut 2014, 167-168.

[2] *Angelov* 2019, 205; Angold 1975, 65; Beaton 2007, 94; Mergiali 2018, 120; Page 2008, 126; Vryonis 1999, 32-33.

[3] Chatzis 2005, 170, 225; Svoronos 2004, 63, 69-70.

goal, i.e. Constantinople's recovery from the Latins. It is also worth highlighting that the Greek national and the European romantic historiography have considered the controversy between the "Greek" states of Nicaea and Epirus as the main cause for the survival of the Latin Empire of Constantinople for more than half a century.[4]

The collective self-definition of the Byzantines and its social aspects is an issue that has recently generated a great deal of heated debate among scholars.[5] In addition, the varying meanings of key terms, such as *Ῥωμαῖος*, *Ἕλλην*, *Γραικὸς* in Byzantine sources of the late period have been interpreted through different points of view by academics in particular papers and scholarly congresses.[6]

In this paper we are not concerned with the aforementioned terms in connection with the formation of a neo-Hellenic national consciousness at its incipient stage. The purpose is to focus upon Byzantine learned works originated in the primary "eastern" centers of power, the Nicaean court and after 1261 among the circles of Constantinopolitan literati,[7] in order to reconstruct their point of view of their "western" kindred people (ὁμογενεῖς), primarily the Epirotes. Specifically, this paper will examine exemplary works such as historical texts, orations and autobiographies in order to detect the formal perception of "eastern" erudite of the leading family, the ruling elites and the inhabitants of the state of Medieval Epirus.

To begin with, it is necessary to note that in the post-1204 geopolitical conditions, the traditional meaning of many historical terms had been modified. Significant transformations were clearly illustrated in the writings of the educated elites of Nicaea and Constantinople, where the state of Medieval Epirus (commonly known as "Despotate" in the modern bibliography) was described in geographical terms such as "δύσις"

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[4] Miller 1908, 83, 96; Paparrigopoulos 1887, 57-58, 67.

[5] Kaldellis 2017, 174, 207; Stouraitis 2014, 175-220.

[6] Kioussopoulou 2000, 135-142; Papadopoulou 2014, 157-176; Mergiali 2018.

[7] Mergiali 2018b, 61-62, where a commentary of the term "intellectual" related to the Byzantine reality and its uses in the modern bibliography and p. 81, where a classification of representative *types* of literati is detected in Constantinople during the Palaiologan era.

or "ἑσπέρα" (west) in contrast to the "ἕω" (east) which was considered to be the legal center of power.[8]

Niketas Choniates by referring to the splitting of the former imperial territory after 1204, included among the "tyrannies" (*τυραννίδας*) that were formed in the western parts of the Greek mainland (*ἑσπέρα*), the state of Medieval Epirus. In effect, he used the verb "usurp" (*ἰδιώσατο*) in order to describe the way that power had been acquired by Michael I Komnenos.[9] It is conspicuous that by choosing this particular terminology, the historian aimed to delegitimize the existence of the state of Epirus and its ruler's power. For this reason, Choniates included Michael among other powerful members of the Byzantine local elites, such as Sgouros and Chamaretos in Peloponnesus, who expressed centrifugal tendencies before Constantinople's fall to the Latins and profited from the new political circumstances.[10]

According to the historian of the Nicaean empire, George Akropolites, the members of the leading family of Komenoi who took control of Epirus were just the rulers of the "western" parts (*τὰ δυτικὰ μέρη/ τὰ ἐν δυσμῇ*) which were occasionally defined by natural boundaries such as mountains or rivers.[11] The historian did not outline the nature of their political formation and their power was delineated with geographical terms only. He also denied them any share in imperial power, after the

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[8] It should be noted that in the sources of the period under study the geographical limits of the terms "δύσις" or "ἑσπέρα" (west) as also the meaning of the adjectives "δυτικός" and "ἑσπέριος" (westerner) vary depending upon the context of the text in which the terms are located. Thus, the terms cannot be limited only as definition of the territories of the state of Medieval Epirus, as it is possible to encompass also cities or fortresses of other "western" areas, such as Macedonia or the so-called "παλαιὰν Ἤπειρον" (Old Epirus), which were temporarily under the authority of the Byzantine emperors. A more detailed research would surely be a worthwhile undertaking for the future in order to separately clarify the geographical viewpoints of each historian or rhetorician.

[9] Choniates, *Χρονικὴ διήγησις* (ed. van Dieten), 638.

[10] Ibid., 638: *οἱ ἐκ τῶν Ῥωμαίων τύραννοι.*

[11] Akropolites, *Χρονικὴ συγγραφὴ* (ed. Heisenberg & Wirth), 157: *καὶ τὰ ἐν δυσμῇ μέχρι καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ναξειοῦ ποταμοῦ*; 166: *τῶν οἰκείων ὅρων, εἴτουν τῶν Πυρρηναίων ὀρῶν, ἃ δὴ διορίζει τὴν παλαιάν τε καὶ τὴν νέαν Ἤπειρον τῆς Ἑλληνίδος καὶ ἡμετέρας γῆς*; 171: *τὰ Πυρρηναῖα ὑπερβάντες ὄρη.*

integration of the city of Thessaloniki, into their new extended territory whose eastern limit was the city of Adrianople. In this regard, Theodoros Komnenos, after his proclamation and coronation as emperor, was considered to be an usurper (*τῆς βασιλείας σφετερισάμενος*) who acted against the Nicaean political order: *μὴ θέλων μένειν ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ τάξει.*[12] The historian implicitly specified the office that the emperor of Thessaloniki should hold: he should be a Despot (*τῶν δευτερείων μετέχειν τῆς βασιλείας*), i.e. Nicaean emperor's territorial delegate in the "western" parts.[13] It is worthy of note that before succeeding his brother, Theodoros was a member of the Nicaean ruling elite and he served the emperor Laskaris as the rest of the "Rhomaic people" did (*ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων*).[14]

Akropolites, in order to serve the Nicaean ruler's purposes, expressed a derogatory perspective for Theodoros Komnenos; he was described as an irrelevant figure to the imperial tradition (*ἀφυῶς ἔχων περὶ τοὺς βασιλείας θεσμούς*) who handled political affairs as a "barbarian".[15] Moreover, there was a clear emphasis on his universalist pretensions to be the emperor of the "Rhomaic people".[16] On the other hand, it must be stressed that the historian, despite his hostility to the emperor of Thessaloniki, praised his victories over the Latins which were beneficial for the Byzantines.[17]

The initial deposition of the royal insignia by Theodoros' successors was followed by the integration of the city of Thessaloniki into the Nicaean territory. This fact gave the opportunity for Akropolites to clearly express his views on his emperor's rivals. Specifically, without defining them by any ethnonym, he presented them as adversaries (*ἐναντιόφρονες*) of the "Rhomaic people". He claimed also that Thes-

[12] Ibid., 33.

[13] Ibid., 34. See Patlagean 2007, 305.

[14] Akropolites, *Χρονικὴ συγγραφὴ* (Heisenberg & Wirth), 24.

[15] Ibid., 34: *βαρβαρικώτερον ταῖς ὑποθέσεσι προσεφέρετο*. See Page 2008, 130.

[16] Akropolites, *Χρονικὴ συγγραφὴ* (ed. Heisenberg & Wirth), 40: *ἐβούλετο γὰρ ὡς βασιλέα ἐκεῖνον πάντας ἔχειν Ῥωμαίους*.

[17] Ibid., 26: *μέγα Ῥωμαίοις ἐγεγόνει βοήθημα* (Latin emperor Peter of Courtenay's defeat in *Ἄλβανον*); 40: *παρέσχε τοῖς Ἰταλοῖς πράγματα*; 41: *πτοίαν πολλὴν τοῖς Λατίνοις ἐνέβαλε*.

saloniki finally came under the rule of the Byzantines. After that, in his eyes, the former occupants of the city, the Epirote rulers, were just dominants (*κρατοῦντες*).[18] By mentioning that in the year 1246 the city came under the Byzantine sovereignty, it seems that the historian equated the period of the Latin domination of Thessaloniki to the period that the city was under the dominion of the rulers of Epirus. Thus, he considered them as foreign as the Latins.

The opposition of the Despot of Epirus Michael II to the Nicaean emperor was emphasized by the use of proverbs, which were verified by the ruler's intolerance and treacherous disposition.[19] Deliberately, the Epirote ruler was compared to a black man who cannot turn white (*ὁ Αἰθίοψ οὐκ οἶδε λευκαίνεσθαι*) and to a piece of wood that once it is warped cannot be straight (*τὸ στρεβλὸν ξύλον οὐδέποτ' ὀρθόν*).[20] On account of their unreliable behavior and their infidelity, the leading family of Epirus was considered by the Nicaean emperor as the primary opponent of the "Rhomaic power" after Constantinople's fall to the Latins: *οὐκ ἄλλους οἰόμενος εἶναι ἐναντίους τῇ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ…ἀλλ' ἤ τούτους*.[21]

Akropolites' negative views were not limited to the members of the principal family of Epirus. He went further by creating derogatory stereotypes for the inhabitants of the "western" parts (*οἱ τῶν δυτικῶν οἰκήτορες*) in a way that reminded the audience of the stereotypes corresponding to the Latins. The "western" subjects were represented, like the Epirote rulers before, as being unreliable and opportunists due to their tendency to surrender to every potential sovereign in order to avoid catastrophes and to maintain their properties.[22] Additionally, he portrayed them as having the natural characteristic of incompetence over guarding their cities and as cowardly.[23] It is clear that the historian distinguished

[18] Ibid., 83: *ἡ μὲν πόλις Θεσσαλονίκη οὕτως ὑπὸ τὸν βασιλέα γέγονεν Ἰωάννην, μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους. οἱ γὰρ αὐτὴν κρατοῦντες ἐναντιόφρονες Ῥωμαίοις ἐτέλουν.*

[19] Ibid., 143: *ὁ ἀντάρτης Μιχαὴλ· ὁ ἀποστάτης Μιχαήλ;* 163, 165.

[20] Ibid., 89.

[21] Ibid., 89.

[22] Ibid., 167: *ῥαδίως πᾶσι τοῖς δυναστεύουσι ὑποπίπτοντες. ἐντεῦθεν τοὺς ὀλέθρους ἀποφυγγάνουσι καὶ τὰ πλείω τῶν σφετέρων περιουσιῶν διασώζουσι.*

[23] Ibid., 167: *φύσει γὰρ ὑπάρχει τὸ δυτικὸν γένος πρὸς φυλάξεις ἄστεων μαλθακώτερον.*

the "western" inhabitants from the Byzantines not only by creating the aforementioned pejorative stereotypes but also by delineating the former as a different nation, i.e. as "δυτικὸν γένος" (western nation) having specific natural negative aspects.

The Nicaean historian continued to consider the rulers and the inhabitants of the "western" parts as enemies of the Byzantines throughout his historical work. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that, after the battle of Pelagonia, the recovery of the city of Arta and the refutation of the siege of the city of Ioannina by the "westerners", i.e. the Epirotes, were unfortunate actions for the "Rhomaic affairs" (*ἀρχὴν κακῶν τὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων εἴληφε πράγματα*). For this reason, Alexios Strategopoulos was sent to the "western" territories to confront their adversaries (*τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὑπεναντίοις*) just before recapturing Constantinople.[24]

Nikephoros Gregoras, referring to the new post 1204 geopolitical terms, presented the rulers of Trebizond and Epirus as the only figures who did not recognize the Nicaean emperor's power. Certainly, the historian considered their territories' natural fortification, remoteness and distance from the royal city as the main reasons for the development of an illegitimate and hereditary power.[25] The members of the leading family of Epirus, the Angeloi, were usually described as one misfortune (*κακὸν*) for the Nicaean empire. The historian focused upon those figures who challenged the Nicaean authority, starting with Theodoros Angelos, who became emperor after the deliverance of the "western" cities (*ἑσπέριαι πόλεις*) from the Latins and the integration of the city of Thessaloniki to his territory.[26] The "tyrant" Theodoros was portrayed as a man of action, a rapacious man who plundered the cities of Macedonia and Thrace on his way to Constantinople.[27] His actions were compared to the actions of other "nations" (*ἔθνη*) in the area, the Latins and the

[24] Ibid., 172, 181.

[25] Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία* (ed. Schopen), vol. 1, 13-14: *οὗτοι γὰρ ... τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἡγεμονίας τὰ πέρατα λαχόντες ἐκ διαμέτρου, καὶ ἅμα τοῖς τῶν τόπων ὀχυρώμασι σφόδρα τεθαῤῥηκότες, τυραννικώτερον ἐπεπήδησαν τῇ ἀρχῇ, καὶ ... καθάπερ τινὰ πατρῷον κλῆρον, αὐτὴν παραπέμψαντες.*

[26] Ibid., 26: *αὐτίκα δὲ καὶ βασιλείας ἑαυτῷ περιτίθησιν ὄνομα.*

[27] Ibid., 26: *ἀνὴρ δραστήριος καὶ καινὰ δεινὸς ἐπινοῆσαι πράγματα, καὶ ἀεὶ τοῦ πλείονος ἐφιέμενος.*

Scythes, whose behavior towards the local inhabitants was characterized as very brutal. For this reason, his defeat by the Bulgarians, before invading Constantinople, was considered to be a punishment not only for his contempt for the legitimate imperial power of the Byzantines' and the usurpation of it, but also for his merciless behavior towards people of the same race (*ὁμοφύλους*), who had already suffered from the Latins and the Bulgarians.[28]

Michael II Angelos was a political figure who also preoccupied the historian. He was defined as the illegitimate son of the first ruler of Epirus, the first "apostate" Michael Angelos. The former's power was presented in terms which reflected the exercise of power in the Latin West; for instance, he seemed to be the inheritor of his relatives' territories after their deaths and thus the ruler of Aitolia, Thessaly and their environs.[29] After breaking a peace treaty with the emperor John Vatatzes, Michael aimed at the conquest of the "western" cities (*τῶν δυτικῶν πόλεων*) which were subjects to the "Rhomaic emperors" (*τοῖς Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῦσιν*).[30] This offensive strategy required the emperor's campaign against the apostate (*ἀποστάτου*) Michael in order to recover the temporarily lost "western" cities. Gregoras, by characterizing cities such as Kastoria and Prespa or fortresses such as Prilep and Velessos as "Rhomaic cities" (*δυτικαὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων πόλεις*), intended not only to limit the "apostate" ruler into a specific territory but also to present him as an outsider, as an enemy of the Byzantines who had no historical rights in those areas.[31]

The "apostate" Michael capitalized on various conjunctures, continued to attack and to plunder neighboring cities (*Ῥωμαίοις ὑπήκοοι*)

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[28] Ibid., 27, 28: *τῆς δίκης ὀψὲ περιελθούσης αὐτόν, ὧν τε τὴν νόμιμον περιεφρόνησε τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλείαν ... καὶ ὧν τοὺς ὁμοφύλους κακοπραγοῦντας ... οὐκ ἠλέησεν, ἀλλὰ δυστυχήμασι δυστυχήματα προσετίθει καὶ φόνοις φόνους.*

[29] Ibid., 47: *τελευτησάσης γὰρ τῆς ἄλλης συγγενείας ἐκείνου πάσης, περιῆλθεν ἤδη πᾶσα ἡ τῶν χώρων ἐκείνων ἀρχὴ εἰς ἕνα τουτονὶ τὸν νόθον Μιχαήλ.*

[30] Ibid., 48: *τοὺς οἰκείους ὑπερέβαινε χώρους ἐπὶ πονήρῳ τῶν δυτικῶν πόλεων, αἳ τοῖς Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῦσιν ὑπῆρχον ὑπήκοοι.*

[31] Ibid., 48: *ὡς ἀνάγκην εἶναι ἢ τὸν βασιλέα Ἰωάννην στρατεύειν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον, ἢ κίνδυνον εἶναι πάσας ὑπὸ τῷ Μιχαὴλ τὰς δυτικὰς γενέσθαι πόλεις.*

to his territory.[32] It is worth mentioning that after his son's marriage with the emperor's granddaughter, the title of Despot was assigned to him by Vatatzes as a result of their affinity.[33] After Lakaris' death, his in-law (*συμπένθερος*), the suzerain of Epirus Despot Michael, having no "Rhomaic people" to confront (*μηδὲ γὰρ ἔχειν Ῥωμαίους ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀποσοβήσωσι*), took advantage of the power vacuum in the Nicaean empire. He entered into an unsuccessful coalition with his sons in law, the prince of Achaia and the king of Sicily, in order to extend his territory to Macedonia and Thrace.[34] The Despot Michael and his Latin allies were defined as adversaries (*πολέμιοι*) of the Byzantines by the historian who also observed the weakness of their coalition in the different origins of the Latins from the ruler of Epirus: *ἑτεροφύλων ὄντων καὶ οὐχ ὁμογενῶν τῷ Ἀγγέλῳ*.[35] Despite this difference, Gregoras avoided clearly naming the suzerain of Epirus as "Ρωμαῖος": he included him among the adversaries (*πολεμίων*) and always determined him according to the territory over which he exercised his power. In spite of the defeat of the coalition, the "apostate" Michael, compared to a "thorny and malicious sprout of a malicious root" (i.e. the Angeloi family), was again presented as pursuing an "anti-Rhomaic policy" (*κακῶς τὰ Ῥωμαίων διατιθεμένῳ πράγματα*). It was he who finally defeated their armed forces under the leadership of Caesar Strategopoulos.[36]

Gregoras' views of the nature of the Epirote rulers' power were once again clearly expressed in terms of possession and heredity after the death of the Despot Michael II, who was portrayed as sharing his territory in two parts and bequeathing it between two of his sons.[37] Additionally, after the death of the Latin Despot of Epirus John II Orsini and the integration of his territories in the Byzantine empire his juvenile son rebelled against the emperor because he was deprived of his hereditary

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[32] Ibid., 48.

[33] Ibid., 49: *διὰ τὰς τοῦ κήδους μνηστείας*.

[34] Ibid., 71: *ἤλπισε μικρὰ πονήσας μεγάλης ἀρχῆς γενήσεσθαι κύριος*.

[35] Ibid., 74.

[36] Ibid., 83: *καὶ τῆς πονηρᾶς ἐκείνης ῥίζης πάλιν ὑπεφύοντο πονηρὰ καὶ ἀκανθώδη βλαστήματα*; 90.

[37] Ibid., 110: *σχίζει μέντοι καὶ τὴν ὅλην αὐτοῦ ἐπικράτειαν εἰς δύο μερίδας ὧν τὴν μὲν μίαν... ἀφίησι Νικηφόρῳ τῷ δεσπότῃ ... τὴν δὲ ἑτέραν ... Ἰωάννῃ τῷ νόθῳ παιδί*.

patrimony.[38] After the revolt's failure, the region of Epirus was submitted to the "Rhomaic authority" (*ὑποχείριος ἐγεγόνει τῇ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίᾳ*) and according to the historian, there was not any chance for Nikephoros to recover the power in his father's territories.[39]

According to George Pachymeres, Michael II Angelos was alternately described either as the Despot *of* the "western" parts (*δεσπότην τῶν δυσικῶν*) or as the Despot *in* the "western" parts (*ὁ ἐν τῇ δύσει δεσπότης*).[40] Pachymeres' last editor, A. Failler, has shown in one of his papers that the terms "west", "western" and "westerner" in the former's history were exclusively used as a description for the inhabitants of the western parts of the former Byzantine imperial territory and not for the Latins.[41] In this context, Michael II Angelos was presented, like his uncle the emperor Theodoros before him, as claiming the "Rhomaic kingship" under suitable circumstances. Specifically, the historian explained that Theodoros Angelos, whose royal power was limited to the "western" parts (*προβεβασιλευκότος ἐκεῖσε*), took advantage of the political disorder after 1204 and became emperor by recapturing territories from the Latin conquerors.[42] The Despot Michael II followed his uncle's example and profited from the political situation in the eastern parts (*τῶν πραγμάτων ἀρρώστως ἐχόντων*), i.e. the power vacuum after Laskaris' death and the weakness of the Latin Empire of Constantinople. He decided to besiege the historical center of the empire and become himself the emperor considering that his noble origin gave him a fundamental

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[38] Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία* (ed. Schopen), vol. 2, 545, 546: *ὁ μὲν παῖς τοῦ τῆς Ἠπείρου κρατοῦντος πρότερον κόντου Κεφαλληνίας ... ἐπειδὴ τὸν μὲν πατρῷον κλῆρον ὑπὸ τῷ βασιλεῖ γενόμενον εἶδε ... ἀποστασίαν ἐπινοεῖ.*

[39] Ibid., 553-554: *μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἔτι προσδοκίαν ἐπανελθεῖν ἐς τὴν πατρῴαν τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ κλήρου διαδοχήν.*

[40] Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 1, 37.

[41] Failler 1980, 116.

[42] Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 1, 115: *τῆς πρώτης ἐκείνης συγχύσεως ξυμπεσούσης Ῥωμαίοις, ἑαυτὸν ἀναλαμβάνει καί, πλείστοις ὅσοις τοῖς κατ' Ἰταλῶν πολέμοις ἐνανδραγαθήσας, τῆς βασιλείας ἐπείληπτο*, and 191: *ὃς καὶ βασιλικῆς ἀναρρήσεως κατὰ δύσιν ἠξιώθη, τοῦ Ἀχριδῶν ταινιώσαντος Ἰακώβου, ἱδρῶσι πλείστοις καὶ σπάθῃ ἐκσπάσας τῶν Ἰταλῶν, τοῖς ἰδίοις προσεποιήσατο.*

advantage: *εὐγενῆ γε ὄντα καὶ τῶν Ἀγγέλων*.[43] The alliance, established for the aforementioned purpose, with his Latin sons in law (the king Manfred of Sicily and the prince Guglielmo of Achaia) failed owing to internal conflicts (*οἱ εἰς ὁμαιχμίαν κληθέντες κατ' ἀλλήλων συνίσταντο*). Inevitably, the Byzantines took control of the "western" parts for a short time because soon after this, the Despot Michael II defeated them and captured their leader Caesar Strategopoulos.[44] Oddly enough, this is the only section of the Pachymeres' history in which the "eastern" Byzantines are called "Nicaeans" (*τῶν Νικαέων*) and not "Rhomaic".[45]

The loss of "western" territories and fortresses, which after being detached from the Latins formed the Angeloi's family heritage, could not be accepted by the Despot Michael II. He profited from the changeable nature of the "western" inhabitants (*τὸ ... τῶν δυτικῶν εὐρίπιστον*) and led them to revolt (*ἀποκλίνειν*) against the Byzantine power.[46] Besides, the unstable political behavior of the "western" inhabitants was noted by the historian on several occasions, particularly when they rebelled against the Byzantine authority.[47] Thus, it is clearly illustrated, that every military expedition for the submission of the "western" areas jeopardized the empire's eastern frontiers.[48]

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[43] Ibid., 115, 117: *Ταῦτα τοίνυν ὁ Μιχαὴλ ἐν νῷ θέμενος καὶ καταλαζονευθεὶς ... βουλὴν βουλεύεται ... τῇ πόλει προσσχών, περικαθίσαι καὶ πειραθῆναι κατασχεῖν, καὶ οὕτως βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευθῆναι Ῥωμαίων.*

[44] Ibid., 121: *κατοχυρώσαντες ὡς οἷόν τε πρότερον καὶ τοὺς κατὰ δύσιν τόπους.*

[45] Ibid., 125, 127: *πλείστους τε πεσεῖν τῶν Νικαέων παρεσκεύασε, πλείστους τε καὶ ἄλλους οὓς μὲν φονεύσας, οὓς δὲ περισχὼν καὶ αὐτὸν αἱρεῖ καίσαρα.*

[46] Ibid., 191: *τούτων μὴ φέρων ὁ Μιχαὴλ στερούμενος...τοὺς κατὰ δύσιν ὑποποιούμενος, εὐχερῶς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διὰ τὸ καὶ ἄλλως τῶν δυτικῶν εὐρίπιστον ἔπειθεν ἀποκλίνειν αὖθις.*

[47] Ibid., 45: *εὑρίσκει δὲ τὰ τῇδε συγκεχυμένα καὶ πρὸς ἀπιστίαν κλίναντα*, and 283: *Τότε τοίνυν καὶ πάλιν ἀπεπειρᾶτο τῶν δυτικῶν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν, οὐκ ἦν, ἐπὶ ταὐτοῦ μένειν ἐκείνους.* Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 2, 399: *καὶ ἐπεὶ πάλιν ἀνοιδαίνειν ὥρμων τὰ δυτικά.*

[48] Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 1, 283: *καίτοι τῶν κατ' ἀνατολὴν πονούντων, ἅμα δυνάμεσι πλείσταις τὸν δεσπότην ἐκπέμπει*; 317: *ἀσχολουμένου τοῦ βασιλέως τοῖς δυτικοῖς, ὡς δῆθεν ἀνακαλουμένου τῇ βασιλείᾳ τὸ λεῖπον, ἠσθένει τὰ καθ' ἕω.*

After Constantinople's recapture, the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos laid claim to the western parts of the former imperial territory. In his opinion, there was not any reason for the Despot Michael to maintain his rulership in the "western" territories, given that the emperor was already master of the empire's capital City (*τῆς πατρίδος*).[49] Pachymeres analyzed the Despot Michael's argumentation about his rights on his lands (*τὰ κατὰ δύσιν*) during the Latin domination and after the recapture of Constantinople. In effect, during the period before the City's recapture he represented the Despot Michael as arguing that the emperor should have claimed Constantinople rather than the "western" territories.[50] After the recapture the Despot was portrayed by the historian as claiming that his parents took control over those lands by cutting them off from the Latins and not from the Byzantines, so they bequeathed them to their children. The historian highlighted the Despot's views about a hereditary combination of territory and power, and noted his denial to surrender control despite the recognition of the emperor's rightful claims.[51] The Despot Michael was depicted as repenting his unstable behavior (*τὰς προτέρας παλιμβολίας*) towards the Byzantines and asking for a peace that he was not willing to respect: *πάλιν τὸν δόλον ἔκρυπτεν*.[52]

Of particular interest are also the Patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos' views on the leading family of Epirus and the "western" inhabitants. Pachymeres included in his text a Patriarch's short address to the emperor after his return to Constantinople from a campaign in the "western" parts; in this Arsenios Autoreianos expressed his opposition to civil wars (*ἐμφυλίους πολέμους*), i.e. wars among Christians. For this reason, he advised the emperor not to aim at any civil war and criticized his campaign against the Despot Michael, a fellow Christian.[53] Moreover, the

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[49] Ibid., 271: *ἕξω που τῆς πατρίδος ὄντος τοῦ βασιλέως, δικαιοῖτ' ἂν κἀκεῖνος τὰ μέρη κατέχειν*.

[50] Ibid., 275: *ἀπαιτητέα γὰρ εἶναι μᾶλλον τὸν θρόνον τοὺς Ἰταλοὺς ἢ ἐκεῖνον τὰ κατὰ δύσιν*.

[51] Ibid., 275: *χώραν ἣν οἱ γονεῖς ἐκείνου...προσεκτήσαντο καὶ κλῆρον κατέλιπον τοῖς παισί, πῶς ἂν καὶ δικαίως ἀπαιτούμενος ἀποδῴη*;

[52] Ibid., 285.

[53] Ibid., 315: *Οὐ τοὺς ἐμφυλίους πολέμους ἀπέλεγον μὴ ζητεῖν ... Αἱ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν εὐχαὶ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐκείνων πάντως, ἐπειδήπερ καὶ μιᾶς μάνδρας ἐστὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.*

Patriarch implied that the "westerners" were not enemies as the emperor thought.[54] From the Patriarch's exposition, it is clear that in his eyes the word "φυλή" had religious overtones.

The perception of a hereditary power inscribed in a specific territory was expressed by Pachymeres as it related to the rulers of the "western" parts. For instance, after Despot Michael II's death his power and his territories were divided, although unequally, among his sons.[55] Yet, after the Despot Nikephoros' death (*ὁ ἐν δύσει δεσπότης*) his widow Anna, afraid of various enemies, offered her power and her territories to the Byzantine emperor in exchange for a matrimony to the royal family. It is worth mentioning that Anna (*ἡ κατὰ δύσιν βασίλισσα*) was represented as accepting that her territories could have been integrated, through the proposed matrimony, to the "Rhomaic" imperial territory as a former part of it (*ἀρχαῖα ἐλλείμματα Ῥωμαΐδος*).[56] However, the prohibition of the matrimony on account of the already existing family ties between the two parts made Anna turn to Philip d' Anjou, offering him "western" cities and territories as her daughter's dowry.[57]

According to the emperor and historian John Kantakouzenos, after the empire's dissolution in 1204 whilst the "Rhomaic kingship" was restricted in the east (*πρὸς ἕω*) by the Latins, some local rulers had profited from the circumstances by usurping the power in "western" provinces (*τῶν ἑσπερίων ἐπαρχιῶν*). Among them were the Angeloi who had appropriated the power in "Ἀκαρνανία".[58] Indeed, with the term "Akar-

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[54] Ibid., 315: *οὓς μὲν ὡς ἐχθροὺς ἐζήτεις, οὐκ ἐχθραντέοι πάντως δικαίως.*

[55] Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 2, 399: *τοῦ δεσπότου Μιχαὴλ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γεγονότος καὶ τὸν μὲν Νικηφόρον ἐπὶ τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἀρχῇ καταλείψαντος, τῷ δέ γε νόθῳ Ἰωάννῃ χώραν οὐκ ὀλίγην διανενεμηκότος ἰδίᾳ*; 559: *Δημήτριος μὲν ... μοῖρα τῶν τοῦ πατρὸς χωρῶν προσκεκληρωμένη οὐκ ἀποχρῶσα τῷ μεγέθει τῆς κατ' αὐτὸν ἀξίας.*

[56] Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 3, 225, 227: *ἀποστέλλειν πρὸς βασιλέα ... ὥστε τὸν νέον βασιλέα γαμβρὸν ἐκείνῃ γενέσθαι, καὶ πᾶσαν χώραν καὶ ἑαυτὴν καὶ παῖδα ὡς ἀρχαῖα ἐλλείμματα Ῥωμαΐδος ἐγχειρίζειν.*

[57] Ibid., 450: *τὸν τοῦ Καρούλου υἱὸν ἐπεγαμβρεύσατο Φίλιππον ... καὶ πόλεις ἦσαν καὶ χῶραι τὰ εἰς προῖκα δοθέντα.*

[58] Kantakouzenos, *Ἱστορίαι* (ed. Schopen), vol. 1, 520-521: *βασιλεία μὲν ἡ Ῥωμαίων ὑπεχώρησε πρὸς ἕω· Ἀκαρνανίας δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν Ἄγγελοι προσεποιήσαντο ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλας τῶν ἑσπερίων ἐπαρχιῶν, ὧν ἕκαστοι ἔτυχον ἐπιτροπεύοντες.*

nania" Kantakouzenos seems to designate the large region of Medieval Epirus, which was a section of the "ἑσπέραν", i.e. the western parts of the empire.[59] At a critical juncture (ca 1337-1340), when some cities of "Akarnania" rebelled against the Byzantine authority, Kantakouzenos, as *megas domestikos* still, reminded the leaders of the rebels that this region was unjustly (*ἀδίκως*) cut off from the empire in 1204 by the first apostates (*ἀποστησάντων*), the Angeloi.[60] He drew special attention to the fact that the Angeloi did not liberate Epirus from the barbarians but usurped the power of a region submitted to the "Rhomaic emperors".[61] In addition, despite the recapture of Constantinople in 1261 and the operations of the two first Palaiologan emperors, "Akarnania" was not integrated into the restored empire; on the contrary, the Byzantine emperors had many losses fighting against the "Akarnanians" (*Ἀκαρνάσι*).[62] By using this term or the wider term "westerners" (*ἑσπερίους*) the historian defined the inhabitants of Epirus. For instance, he used the term "Akarnanians" in order to describe the ruling elites of the cities of Epirus and a division between them at a critical juncture of the 14th century. It is clearly illustrated that they were divided in those who supported the independence of their cities and those who preferred to integrate them into the imperial territory.[63] The inhabitants of the cities of Epirus and of other "western" cities were described by Kantakouzenos with an alternative but more general term: they were the "westerners" (*ἑσπέριοι*). For example, the emperor Andronikos III led a campaign in the "western" parts

[59] Ibid., 496: *πρὸς τὴν ἑσπέραν, ἐλπίσαντα Ἀκαρνανίαν ὑποποιήσειν ἑαυτῷ*.

[60] Ibid., 502: *τῶν πρώτως αὐτὴν ἀποστησάντων αὐθαδείᾳ καὶ ἀγνωμοσύνῃ τῇ πρὸς βασιλέα εἰς ἰδίαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀρχὴν περιποιησαμένων καὶ κρατυναμένων*.

[61] Ibid., 520: *Ἀγγέλους γὰρ οὐκ ἀπὸ βαρβάρων Ἀκαρνανίαν ἐλευθερώσαντας κτήσασθαι συνέβη τὴν ἀρχήν, ἀλλ' ὑποχειρίους ὄντας Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῦσι ... σφετερίσασθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν διὰ τὸν ἐπενεχθέντα τότε παρὰ Λατίνων Ῥωμαίοις πόλεμον*.

[62] Ibid., 504.

[63] Ibid., 499: *λόγος Ἀκαρνάσι πολὺς ἐγίνετο ... οἱ μὲν μὴ δέχεσθαι ὑπὸ βασιλεῖ ὑποχειρίους γίνεσθαι ... οἱ δὲ ἀντέλεγον*; 509: *οἱ παρὰ Ἀκαρνάσι μὴ βουλόμενοι δουλεύειν βασιλεῖ ... καιρὸν ἑαυτοῖς πρὸς νεωτερισμὸν εἶναι*; 519: *οὔτε δίκαια οὔτε συμφέροντα οὔθ' ἑαυτοῖς οὔτε τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἀκαρνάσιν*. For the political orientations of the leading family and the ruling elites of cities of Medieval Epirus during the critical years 1337-1340, see Papageorgiou 2021 (under publication).

(*ἑσπέρας*) against the Albanians in 1337 because they plundered Byzantine cities and provoked problems for the "westerners": *τοὺς ἑσπερίους ἀδικεῖν*.[64] Remarkable is the fact that the Albanians were described as politically unstable and rebels, i.e. with the same characteristics in which the "westerners" were represented.[65] In effect, during the civil war between the emperor Andronikos II and his grandson (1321-1328), Kantakouzenos suggested to Andronikos III and to his proponents that before invading Constantinople, they had to submit the "western" parts (*τὴν ἑσπέραν*), given the fact that the "westerners" (*ἑσπέριοι*) were by nature apostates (*αὐθόρμητοι πρὸς τὰς ἀποστασίας*) and revolutionaries (*χαίροντες πρὸς τοὺς νεωτερισμούς*); That is to say, they could easily have supported them against the old emperor.[66] Moreover, during Kantakouzenos' reign in the middle of 14th century, when John V Palaiologos was appointed governor of Thessaloniki, his mother Anna of Savoy expressed fears for her son's exposure to dangerous influences. Certainly, she was afraid of the malice of the "westerners" (*τῶν ἑσπερίων τὴν μοχθηρίαν*) and their preparedness for revolution (*ἑτοιμότητα πρὸς νεωτερισμούς*).[67] She pointed out that in such an environment John V could be deceived by the "westerners" and a new civil war could have started.[68]

Returning to the subject of the revolution of some cities of Epirus (*ἀποστάσας πόλεις*) against the Byzantine authority at the end of the fourth decade of the 14th century, it is worth noting that the viewpoints of the leaders of the rebels are given in *speeches* apart from the main narration, a salient feature of Kantakouzenos' distinguishing his work from many other Byzantine histories.[69] For instance, Kabasilas, the leader of the revolution at Rogoi, was portrayed as having devel-

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[64] Kantakouzenos, *Ἱστορίαι* (Schopen), 495, 498: *Ἀλβανοὶ πρότερον τοὺς ἑσπερίους ἠδίκουν*.

[65] Ibid., 495: *Ἀλβανοί, εὐχερεῖς ὄντες πρὸς μεταβολὰς καὶ φύσει νεωτεροποιοί*.

[66] Ibid., 104: *οἵ τε γὰρ ἑσπέριοι…προσχωρήσουσι ῥᾳδίως τῷ νέῳ βασιλεῖ*; 106: *ἥ τε γὰρ ἑσπέρα πολλὴ καὶ πόλεις ἔχουσα πολλὰς καὶ περιφανεῖς … καὶ ῥᾳδίως προσχωρήσει*.

[67] Kantakouzenos, *Ἱστορίαι* (Schopen), vol. 3, 112-113.

[68] Ibid., 113: *μὴ, ὑπ'ἐκείνων ἐξαπατηθέντος τοῦ νέου βασιλέως, στάσις αὖθις καὶ πόλεμος μεταξὺ Ῥωμαίων ἐξαφθῇ*.

[69] Angelou 2013, 263-267.

oped and prioritized a local patriotism as he was determined to avoid conversing with the "Rhomaic people" (*ἀφίστασθαι Ῥωμαίων*) and to act according to what could be beneficial for himself and the other "Akarnanians" aiming at their liberation from the "Rhomaic servitude" (*τῆς δουλείας Ῥωμαίων*).[70] He expressed in public his emphatic anti-Byzantine feelings by claiming that he preferred to die rather than to be subject to the emperor.[71] The rebels of Arta also explained in their speech as constructed by the historian the reason for their defection (*ἀποστασίαν*) by presenting their historical rights in the area. In their opinion, "Akarnania" had been under the power of the Angeloi for a long time and not a part of the "Rhomaic authority": *ἐκ πολλῶν ἤδη βασιλέων μὴ προσοῦσαν τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίᾳ γῆν*.[72] For this reason, they tried to restore Despot Nikephoros to his patrimonial legacy.[73] It is also of great importance to note an offer that Kantakouzenos made to the tutor of the Despot Nikephoros, Richard, in order to persuade the rebels of the fortress Thomokastron to surrender. He proposed a matrimony between the young Despot and his daughter which would have resulted in the former's accession to the "Rhomaic" political system on account of the emperor's favor towards him: *περιφανῆ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις θήσει*.[74]

The sources on which this study is based are not limited only to the historical works of prominent Byzantine intellectuals; furthermore, this paper aims to combine the evidence presented so far with data as given by late Byzantine imperial orations, *ekphrasis* of cities and autobiographies. This is important in order to detect the viewpoints of the Nicaean and Palaiologan rhetoricians towards their "western" kindred people (*ὁμογενεῖς*), given the fact that the encomiasts through their speeches propagandized the imperial policy.

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[70] Kantakouzenos, *Ἱστορίαι* (ed. Schopen), vol. 1, 513, 514: *ὡς λυσιτελοῦντα δράσειεν ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἀκαρνάσι τῆς δουλείας αὐτοὺς ἐλευθερῶν Ῥωμαίων*.

[71] Ibid., 516: *μᾶλλον ἂν ἀποθανεῖν εἰλόμην, ἢ ἐκείνῳ ὑποχείριος γενέσθαι*.

[72] Ibid., 523.

[73] Ibid., 523: *Νικηφόρῳ πρὸς τὴν κληρονομίαν τοῦ πατρῴου κλήρου, τὸ ἔργον ὑπέστημεν τουτὶ καὶ τὰς πόλεις βασιλέως ἀπεστήσαμεν*.

[74] Ibid., 532: *ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτῷ τὴν ἐμὴν κατεγγυήσω θυγατέρα ... καὶ βασιλεὺς τῆς εἰς ἐμὲ εὐνοίας ἕνεκα τιμαῖς τε καὶ πολλαῖς εὐεργεσίαις περιφανῆ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις θήσει*.

Theodoros II Laskaris, in his oration for the emperor John Vatatzes, praised his father's victories over multiple enemies (Latins, Persians, Scythes, Bulgarians, Serbians, Tatars) and he referred also to a particular "anti-Rhomaic feeling" (*μερικὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν δύσνοιαν*).[75] It is very likely that Laskaris implied in this section of his panegyric the hostile standpoint of the "western" inhabitants and the rulers of Epirus towards the emperor. It should also be noted that the emperor Vatatzes was deliberately compared with the historical figure of Alexander the Great. In effect, as Alexander was the king of all the Hellenes (*βασιλείαν Ἑλλήνων...ὁλόκληρον...παραλαβών*), the Nicaean ruler was the emperor of all the "Rhomaic people" owing to his achievement in unifying under his rule a large part of the former imperial territory (*τὴν Αὐσονίτιδα γῆν...εἰς ἕν συνήγαγε*) including parts of the territory of the Angeloi.[76]

Besides, his oration for the city of Nicaea clearly illustrated the primacy (πρωτεῖα) which was given to the city during the period of Latin domination. That is to say, Laskaris distinguished Nicaea from other cities which escaped the submission to the Latins and remained under Byzantine authority (probably Arta, Thessaloniki, Trebizond).[77] He emphasized the revitalizing and connective role of this imperial city which succeeded not only in saving the Byzantine political system but also in ending the disunity with the rulers of the "west" (*τῆς οἰκειακῆς ἀρχῆς*) and finally unifying the "Rhomaic people".[78] It should also be said that, despite this deceptive reconciliation, Laskaris characterized the rulers of the "western" parts (*τῶν δυτικῶν ἀρχῶν*) as "offspring of vipers" (*γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν*) in order to remind his audience of their

[75] Laskaris, "Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ τὸν ὑψηλότατον βασιλέα κυρὸν Ἰωάννην τὸν Δούκαν" (ed. Tartaglia), 27.

[76] Ibid., 53.

[77] Laskaris, "Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν μεγαλόπολιν Νίκαιαν" (ed. Tartaglia), 79: *πολλαὶ νῦν πόλεις ... τὴν τοῦ οἰκείου γένους ἀρχὴν ἐστερέωσαν*.

[78] Ibid., 82: *τούτων ἐκ σοῦ ηὐμοίρησεν ἡ ἀρχή, τὸ μὲν φυλαχθεῖσα τὸ πρὶν ἐκ τῆς λύμης τῆς ἐθνικῆς, τὸ δ' ὅτι καὶ πᾶσαν διχόνοιαν τῆς οἰκειακῆς ἀρχῆς ἐκκόψασα καὶ ἑνώσασα τὰ διῃρημένα τὸ πρίν*.

negative aspects.[79] After all, he considered the emperors of Nicaea as the only legitimate emperors.[80]

The anonymous writer of John Vatatzes' encomium praised the emperor Laskaris' achievements over the barbarians (*τοῖς βαρβάροις*) not only in the eastern areas of the empire, which were called "Hellenic" (*τῶν ἑλληνικῶν ὁρίων*), but also in the European parts (*τῆς Εὐρώπης*). Among the emperor's enemies (*τῶν ἐναντίων*) in the European parts, were, according to the encomiast, the so-called "Illyrians, Thessalians, Akarnanians" (*Θετταλῶν, Ἰλλυριῶν, Ἀκαρνάνων*) and the "Macedonians" (*Μακεδόσι*) who rebelled against him.[81] It is worth noting that in the text as edited by Heisenberg there is not a comma among the three first above mentioned local groups of inhabitants. Therefore, it is likely that, in the writer's eyes these groups formed a territorial front against the emperor, which could coincide with the territories of the state of Medieval Epirus during the period under consideration.[82]

Jacob of Bulgaria, the ex-Archbishop of Ohrid, in his panegyric to the Nicaean emperor John Vatatzes, praised him for his accomplishment in unifying the Byzantines under his ideal rulership. He pointed out that Vatatzes succeeded in ending the fragmentation in different powers by becoming the sole emperor according to the admissible Byzantine political ideology.[83] It is very likely that the Archbishop Jacob implied that Epirus, an area remote from the east, was one of those unusual political formations (*ἐκτόποις ἐξουσίαις*), which actually divided and weakened the Byzantines against the Latins.[84]

Nikephoros Blemmydes, Lasakaris' tutor, in his autobiography mentioned that during the Latin occupation, the synod of eastern bishops, in a letter, asked, the usurper emperor Theodoros at Thessaloniki (*τῷ τὴν βασιλείαν ἐν τῇ Θετταλῶν σφετερισαμένῳ*) to resign from his

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[79] Ibid., 82.

[80] Ibid., 79: *ἐπειδὴ πολλαχῶς ἡ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ μερισθεῖσα παρὰ τῶν ἐθνικῶν στρατευμάτων καὶ ἡττηθεῖσα ... ἐν σοὶ μόνῃ ἡδράσθη καὶ ἐστηρίχθη τε καὶ ἐπαγιώθη.*

[81] *Βίος τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου βασιλέως τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος* (ed. Heisenberg), 209.

[82] Ibid., 209.

[83] Jacob of Bulgaria (ed. Mercati), 92.

[84] Ibid., 92-93: *οὐ λιμαγχονούμεθα ὡς τὸ πρὶν ταῖς ἐκτόποις ἐξουσίαις μεριτευόμενοι. νῦν γὰρ ὥσπερ ἕνα θεὸν οὕτω καὶ δεσποτεύοντα κοσμικῶς μονώτατον σεβαζόμεθα.*

imperial claims. The bishops argued that it was neither proper nor beneficial for their common interests as kindred people (*ὁμογενεῖς*,) to have two emperors and two patriarchs.[85] According to the rhetorician, this strange deviation, which promoted a model of bipolar authority in secular and ecclesiastical affairs, was developed in the usurper's mind: *τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκεῖνος διενενόητο*.[86] Moreover, Blemmydes by narrating a trip in search of books to Athos, Thessaloniki, Larissa and the "western" parts (*τοῖς δυσμικοῖς*) praised the amiable behavior of the rulers of the "western" cities towards him, although they were not subjects of the Nicaean empire. In effect, he explained that neither was their power given by the Nicaean emperor nor were they politically orientated towards him. For this reason, there was no need for them to obey the emperor's authority as they independently exercised their power (*αὐθέκαστοι καὶ αὐθαίρετοι*).[87]

The emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos in his autobiography referred to a crucial campaign in Epirus (*τὰ πρὸς δύνοντα ἥλιον*) before he became emperor, which strengthened his relationship with the emperor Vatatzes, owing to the defeat of their adversaries (*τὸ δυσμενὲς καὶ ἀντικείμενον*), the inhabitants of "western" parts.[88] In addition, he emphasized his victory in the battle of Pelagonia (1259) during the first years of his reign. More precisely, he pointed out the defeat of a Latin coalition in which the ruler of Epirus, Michael II Angelos, participated. In this context, he designated the rulers and the inhabitants of Epirus as "Rhomaic apostates" (*ἀποστάτας Ῥωμαίους*), for many years, who were worse than their natural adversaries, the Latins (*τῶν φύσει πολεμίων*).[89] It is conspicuous that the Epirotes were considered to be internal enemies

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[85] Blemmydes, "Περὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν διήγησις μερική λόγος πρῶτος" (ed. Munitiz), 14: *τῷ μὴ συνοίσειν τοῖς ὁμογενέσι μὴ δ' ἐπιπρεπῶς ἔχειν, αὐτοκράτορας εἶναι δύο καὶ πατριάρχας δύο*. See Stavridou-Zafraka 1990, 165.

[86] Blemmydes, "Περὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν διήγησις μερική λόγος πρῶτος" (ed. Munitiz), 14.

[87] Ibid., 33: *οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῖς ἀνάγκη, τοῖς βασιλέως ὑπείκειν θεσμοῖς, ὅτι μὴ ἐξ' αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶχον, ἣ νεύουσαν πρὸς αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἦσαν αὐτὴν αὐθέκαστοι καὶ αὐθαίρετοι.*

[88] Palaiologos, "De Vita Sua" (ed. Grégoire), 451: *καὶ πέμπομαι…τὰ πρὸς δύνοντα ἥλιον εἶχε νικῶντα μὲν σὺν θεῷ τὸ δυσμενὲς καὶ ἀντικείμενον*.

[89] Ibid., 455: *καὶ ἑνίκων … τοὺς τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς πολλῶν ἐτῶν ἀποστάτας Ῥωμαίους πολλῷ χαλεπωτέρους τῶν φύσει πολεμίων τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἐπιφυομένους πράγμασιν*.

because they also claimed a share in the Byzantine imperial power in contrast to the Latins who sought the dissolution of the Byzantine power. Inevitably, the emperor made a distinction between the Latins which were his natural enemies and the Epirotes which were clearly included among the "Rhomaic people". His victory resulted in the annexation to the Nicaean empire of a large territory, which included Medieval Epirus and other cities of the Greek mainland.[90]

The rhetorician Manuel Holobolos in his first oration to Michael VIII, although he described the defeat of the Latins in the battle of Pelagonia, actually remained silent about the participation of the Epirotes in this anti-Byzantine coalition. Nevertheless, it is likely that he labeled as "apostacy" the Despot Michael II's rebellion against the emperor Michael VIII, when he criticized the catastrophic accession of the "Franks" of Peloponnesus on his side against the Byzantine emperor: *πρὸς τὴν σύντροφον αὐτοῖς ἀποστασίαν ἐχώρησαν*.[91] In his second panegyric to Michael VIII, by describing Constantinople's recovery from the Latins, he noted the General's Strategopoulos initial mission before recapturing the historical City. He mentioned that the Caesar Strategopoulos was the head of an "eastern" troop (*ἑῷον στράτευμα*) sent against the ruler of the "west" (*τοῦ ἐς δυσμὰς ἄρχοντος*), the Despot of Epirus Michael II.[92] Holobolos clarified that Strategopoulos set apart for a short time the campaign in the "western" parts (*τὰ πρὸς δυσμὰς*) owing to his decision to turn to Constantinople in order to frighten the Latins.[93]

It is also worth noting that the scholar Nikephoros Choumnos in his oration to Andronikos II, although he listed the participants of the Latin anti-Byzantine coalition in the battle of Pelagonia, maintained his silence about the participation of the Epirotes in it.[94]

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[90] Ibid., 455: *Ἀκαρνανίαν Αἰτωλίαν ... ὑπεποιησάμην καὶ τὴν ἑκατέραν Ἤπειρον καὶ Ἰλλυριών ἐκράτησα· καὶ μέχρις Ἐπιδάμνου προῆκον.*

[91] Holobolos, "Λόγος Α΄" (ed. Siderides), 184.

[92] Holobolos, "Λόγος Β΄" (ed. Treu), 66.

[93] Ibid., 66: *παλίνορσα τούτοις ἐτίθει τὰ τοῦ σκοποῦ καὶ βραχὺ μὲν παρῶσαι τὰ πρὸς δυσμάς.*

[94] Choumnos: "Ἐγκώμιον" (ed. Boissonade), 11: *τὰ δὲ τοῦ κράτους ὤδινε πρὸς ἑσπέραν δεινὸν τινὰ πόλεμον ... πάντα τὰ ἑσπέρια, πλῆθος οἱονεὶ σύμπαν, τῶν σφετέρων ἐξαναστάντες, ἐδόκουν πανοικεσίᾳ καθ' ἡμῶν ἐκστρατεύεσθαι, πρίγκιψ Ἀχαΐας, Ἀλαμάνοι,*

Besides, the Patriarch Gregory II of Cyprus in his encomium to Andronikos II, believed that the emperor's birth had coincided with the most significant victory over the Latins, implying the Byzantine triumph in the battle of Pelagonia; Remarkable is the fact that neither the Patriarch, as Choumnos before, mentioned the Latins' alliance with the ruler of Epirus Despot Michael II.[95]

The scholar Nikolaos Lampenos in his imperial oration to Andronikos II provided information on an attack sustained by the "Rhomaic people" from the "apostates" of the "western" parts (*τῶν γὰρ πρὸς ἑσπέραν ἀποστατῶν*) during the first years of his reign.[96] Indeed, while the emperor was at the "eastern" parts confronting the advance of the Ottomans, he sent prominent generals of the army to defy an attack in the "western" parts in an expedition which ended victoriously.[97] By combining some chronological data and the emperor's presence in Asia Minor during the years 1290-1293, we could assume that Lampenos implied in this section of his oration the aggressive policy toward the Byzantines, which was followed by the Despot Nikephoros and a part of the ruling elites of Epirus who supported the independence from Constantinople and for this reason were called "apostates".[98]

According to Theodoros Metochites, the emperor Andronikos II's birth coincided with the restoration of the empire. In his first oration to Andronikos II, he praised emperor Michael VIII's victories over his enemies. By using the term "enemies" (*ἐχθρῶν*), Metochites delineated not only the Latins but also some Byzantine local rulers (*τῶν ἄλλων*) who had benefited from the empire's dissolution in 1204.[99] In his opinion, those rulers who sought their independence (*ἐπαναστάντες*) had created

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Σικελοί, οἱ ἐξ Ἀπουλίας, οἱ ἐκ Βρεντησίου, τύραννοι Πελοποννήσου, Εὐβοίας, Ἀθηνῶν, Θηβῶν, πάσης Ἑλλάδος, ἕτεροι συχνοὶ μετὰ τούτων πανταχόθεν ἀνάστατοι.

[95] Gregory II of Cyprus, "Ἐγκώμιον" (ed. Boissonade), 366: *Ἰταλῶν γὰρ ἦτται περιφανεῖς καὶ οἶμαι οὔπω πρότερον.*

[96] Lampenos, "Λόγος ἐγκωμιαστικὸς" (ed. Polemis), 47: *τῶν γὰρ πρὸς ἑσπέραν ἀποστατῶν Ῥωμαί[οις] ἐπιθεμένων καὶ περσικοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἑῴαν συστάντος πολέμου.*

[97] Ibid., 48.

[98] See Laiou 1972, 76; Nicol 1984, 37-38.

[99] Metochites, "Βασιλικὸς πρῶτος" (ed. Polemis), 164: *νίκας τοσαύτας κατ' ἐχθρῶν, Ἰταλῶν τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων.*

their own states by profiting from the uncommon political circumstances (*τῇ συγχύσει*). Moreover, they were accused of being "malicious" (*κακοὶ*) because they "had played" with "subjects that no one plays" (*ἐν οὐ παικτοῖς*) by usurping the power in various areas. For that reason, they were represented as adventurers who were interested in taking advantage of the common disaster only to serve their own ambitions.[100] Within this framework, it is permitted to assume that the rhetorician implied, among others, the ruling family of the state of Epirus, the Angeloi. In addition, he mentioned an unsuccessful attack on the Byzantines by those rebels; it is suggested by the editor of the text that this attack is identified with the defeat of the Epirote-Latin coalition in the battle of Pelagonia.[101]

Metochites in his second panegyric to Andronikos II, praised the emperor's campaign in Asia Minor during the years 1290-1293 for the fortification of the Byzantine provinces from the Ottoman aggression. He brought out the successful results of the emperor's presence in the eastern provinces, although he had with him only a small part of the Byzantine army because the largest part was in the "western" areas confronting other necessities (*ταῖς δυτικαῖς χρείαις*).[102] It is very likely that the rhetorician implied at this point the military operation against the rebel Despot Nikephoros of Epirus during the emperor's campaign in Asia Minor. Metochites claimed that this division of the army into the eastern and western areas of the empire encouraged the Ottomans to continue their attacks against the Byzantine eastern provinces.[103] Emphasis was placed on the emperor's concentration in his eastern campaigns against the Ottomans, despite the distractions from the "western" parts (*τὰ κατὰ δύσιν*), where a revolution against his authority was in progress.[104] Ac-

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[100] Ibid., 166: *κακοὶ κάκιστ' ἐν οὐ παικτοῖς κατέπαιξαν καὶ κατωρχήσαντο τἀλλότρια καὶ ὧν οὐδ' ὁτιοῦν προσῆκε σφίσι, τῷ κοινῷ κλύδωνι τὸ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς συμφέρον ἁρπάσαντες.*

[101] Ibid., 166: *μετὰ τῶν καιρῶν ἐπαναστάντες, κακῶς ὅμως ἀπήλλαξαν*, 167, see fn. n. 39.

[102] Metochites, "Βασιλικὸς δεύτερος" (ed. Polemis), 322: *στρατεύματα μὲν σχεδὸν ἅπαντα πρὸς ταῖς δυτικαῖς ἐκκεχωρήκει χρείαις ἐνασχολῆσθαι.*

[103] Ibid., 324: *ἀπῆσαν τηνικαῦτα πάντες κοινὸν ἄεθλον. ὯΙ καὶ μᾶλλον οἱ τἀναντία φρονούντες, ἔοικεν, ἐνταῦθα βάρβαροι θαρροῦντες ἐκινοῦντο.*

[104] Ibid., 324: *ἐπειδὴ τὰ κατὰ δύσιν τῆς ἀρχῆς κεκίνητο τηνικαῦτα μάλιστα καὶ δυσκολίας ἐπειρᾶτο καὶ πᾶν δεινὸν ἐνεωτέριζεν.*

cording to the rhetorician, the "Rhomaic people" had to confront at the same time enemies from the "east" and the "west" where the major part of the army was gathered.[105] He reminded the emperor and his audience that the submission of the "western" areas was also the emperor Michael VIII's priority (*ἡ μείζων ἀσχολία*) and he praised the current victories in the European provinces of the empire (in Epirus specifically) by distinguishing them as the most significant accomplishments.[106] After all, the emperor's determinative contribution in facing simultaneous dangers in the eastern and western parts of the empire (*ἀμφότερα*) was clearly illustrated despite the fragmentation of the army and the resources.[107]

In conclusion, after a close reading of a combination of key texts of the 13th and 14th centuries, the eastern literati's viewpoints of their "ὁμογενεῖς" of the "west" were detected and highlighted. In effect, their views of the Epirotes, under the constantly variable geopolitical terms of the late Byzantine period, were made clear. It should not be forgotten that a new historical period was inaugurated after Constantinople's fall to the Latins and their claims to the "Rhomaic kingship", which were manifested with the direct reproduction of the imperial Constantinian model of power in the Latin empire of the East.[108]

In confrontation with the Latin pretensions, the eastern literati's attitude towards their "western kindred people" was primarily connected to the geopolitical dynamics developed in the "western" areas after the empire's territorial fragmentation in 1204. It should be clarified that the geographical limits of the term "west" to describe the European parts of the empire, vary according to the sources studied in this paper. But certainly, one thing is clear: the remoteness and the distance of the "western" areas from the empire's historical Center was emphasized as a condition facilitating the development of separatist trends. Moreover, after

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[105] Ibid., 338: *καὶ δυοῖν οὕτω μεγίστων κινδύνων, τῷ μὲν ἦσαν Ῥωμαίων ἄντικρυς*.

[106] Ibid., 340: *καὶ εἴ τις ἐκεῖνα δὴ κατὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην τῶν τότε χρόνων νομίζει κάλλιστα πεπράχθαι Ῥωμαίοις, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς οἶμαι*.

[107] Ibid., 342: *ἀλλ' ἤδη νῦν ἔρρει Ῥωμαίοις τὰ πράγματα καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀντισχεῖν ἐφ' ἑκάτερα, ἀλλ' ἢ ἀμφότερα μερισθέντας, ἀμφοτέρα διολέσθαι, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ἀποχρώντως εἶναι*; 346: *καὶ παρῆλθον αἱ πρὸς ἀμφότερα τῶν πράξεων ἀποτελευτήσεις κρείττους συμπάσης ἐλπίδος*.

[108] Patlagean 2007, 289; Rapp 2008, 141-142.

Constantinople's recapture, an argument was developed in the eastern erudites' writings on the historical rights of the Palaiologan emperors in the "western" areas, now that they resided in Constantinople. On the other hand, the rejection of these "eastern" claims by the leading family of Epirus, the emergence of a local patriotism in the case of some "western" ruling elites and the opportunism of their subjects gave rise to sharp geopolitical separations constructed by the eastern literati in reference to the aforementioned "western" social groups. These distinctions prevailed, specifically among the historians, at the expense of any type of bonds, cultural, racial or otherwise, which tied the "westerners" to the "easterners".

In the light of evidence presented so far, one could plausibly argue that there are certain similarities as well as discrepancies between the historians on the one hand and the rhetoricians (or the emperor Michael Palaiologos himself) on the other concerning their perceptions of the "ὁμογενεῖς" of the "west". There are several common points among the historians regarding the "western" social groups. For these historians, the rulers of Medieval Epirus were the kind of political figures who had benefited from the dissolution of the Byzantine state in 1204 by usurping power in the "western" areas of the former imperial territory, and for this reason they are purposefully called "tyrants". It is worth noting that the Epirote rulers' opportunism and dishonesty became apparent in every occasion, in particular when the "eastern" centers of power faced internal problems or external enemies, such as the Latins and the Ottomans. Besides, owing to their frequent rebellions, the "western" rulers perpetuated the state of political fragmentation and for this reason they were considered the main cause of the empire's military enfeeblement at the eastern frontiers, especially in facing the Ottoman advance in Asia Minor.

In the eyes of the historians, Nicaea and Constantinople were the legitimate centers of power; thus the Epirote rulers, who exercised an illegitimate power and almost always rebelled against the "eastern" authorities, were "apostates". In addition, their power was exclusively delineated in geographical terms, and this not only as a means to limit it but in order to deprive it of any imperial claims and finally to delegit-

imize it totally, especially after Constantinople's recapture by the Nicaeans. It is remarkable also that, according to these "eastern" literati, a way for the Epirote rulers to enter the Byzantine political system without any military enforcement was intermarrying with Byzantine princesses, which resulted in the conferment of the title of Despot by the emperor.

The Epirote rulers were portrayed with negative and derogatory characteristics: they were malicious, perfidious, treacherous, unreliable, rapacious and dishonest. Moreover, special attention was drawn to their perception of power, which was represented in terms of possession and heredity, i.e. with terms that could be compared to aspects of the exercise of power in the Latin West.

Furthermore, negative stereotypes which were presented as natural, were created by the historians about the inhabitants of the "western" areas. Like their rulers before, they were also represented as rebellious, treacherous, unreliable, malicious, cowardly, unable to guard their cities, opportunists and politically unstable. These stereotypes reminded the audience of comparable stereotypes created by the Byzantine intellectuals for other hostile ethnic groups, such as the "Latins" and the Albanians. Of particular interest for us also is the fact that in the historical works under study neither the rulers and the ruling elites nor the inhabitants of the "west" are called "Ῥωμαῖοι"; on the contrary, they were characterized, by geographical terms mostly, as enemies of the "Rhomaic people". For this reason, apart from "westerners", they were called "Akarnanians" or they were represented as a different nation, the "western nation".

We may say that the "eastern" historians had adopted a confrontational position towards the leading family, the ruling elites and the "western" inhabitants; they set out in their texts the reasons why the so-called "westerners" could not be "Ῥωμαῖοι", neither politically nor culturally, even though their territories were historical parts of the empire for centuries.[109] They were censured for their disobedience to the political authority of the imperial office of Nicaea and Constantinople,

[109] See Page 2008, 133-134, where is noted that Trebizond's very existence was as far as possible ignored by the historians of Constantinople and Nicaea, and when it is mentioned, it is deprived of its "Romaness".

their claims for independence and also the adoption of some aspects of the exercise of power in the Latin West: for example, their perception of a hereditary power in a specific imperial territory and other practices incompatible with the dominant political ideology, and thus had sufficient reasons to be deprived of the sense of belonging to the "Rhomaic" political order. In addition, the stereotypes created for all the "western" social groups were not only characteristic of their lack of political conduct, but reflected also deficiencies in their character and the negative impressions they had caused to the eastern urban literati. They were represented with features of people living in the provinces, brought together by the geographical proximity, and affinities of their character as well as by common local interests.[110] Sometimes they were plainly called barbarians.

On the other hand, in the imperial orations, a reliable material contemporary to events, and also in the autobiographies, the collective noun "Ῥωμαῖοι" was not always denied to the Epirotes; despite the fact that they were called "apostates" or "enemies" in a political meaning, they could still be "Rhomaic people" by race, they were the kindred of Nicaeans: *ὁμογενεῖς*, *οἰκεῖον γένος*. Special attention should be given to the orations of some prominent Palaiologan rhetoricians, such as Holobolos, Choumnos and the Patriarch Gregory of Cyprus. In their discourses the Epirotes are noticeably absent from the anti-Byzantine coalition of the year 1259, even though the significant Byzantine triumph over the Latin leaders in the battle of Pelagonia was praised. It is very likely that the rhetoricians' silence was a way to express contempt for their "western" kindred people.

The imperial encomiasts and the emperor Michael Palaiologos, by considering Nicaea and Constantinople as the legal centers of power, regarded the Epirote rulers as internal adversaries, actually worse than their natural enemies; their claims to the imperial power, as also their separatist trends and disobedience to the "eastern" emperors, excluded them of the "Rhomaic" political order. Besides, the "western" sov-

[110] See Kiousopoulou 2013, 136-139, where similar defects are pointed out in the character of the mixed inhabitants and some toparchs of Peloponnesus during the 15th century.

ereigns were portrayed as malicious and opportunists who were after their own profit in the aftermath of the empire's collapse in 1204. That is to say, with characteristics of a degenerative behavior incompatible with the Byzantine political culture and with features that could not be compared with those of the Nicaean or Constantinopolitan urban elites. These rhetoricians highlighted the concern of the first two Palaiologan emperors in annexing the western provinces to their territory and in securing the fragile eastern frontiers against the need to suppress the revolts in the areas of the "west".

Oddly enough -and this is an important point- they did not create unfavorable stereotypes for other "western" social groups, as the historians before did. When they chose to volunteer information for their kindred people of the "western" areas of the empire, they focused upon the intolerable political actions of members of the leading family.

We should also keep in mind the condescending attitude of a "non-eastern" literary source for the Epirotes, which sheds light upon their treacherous disposition towards the Latins.[111] The anonymous writer of the Chronicle of the Morea gathers all the unfavorable traits of the "Ρωμαῖοι", heaps them on the Epirotes and calls them "Rhomaic people of the Despotate" (*Ρωμαῖοι τοῦ Δεσποτάτου*).[112] It is clear that the Latin enmity towards the Byzantines knew no distinctions between "easterners" and "westerners".

[111] Shawcross 2009, 194.

[112] *Τὸ Χρονικὸν τοῦ Μορέως* (Kalonaros), ln. 3923.

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Western travellers in search of Greek manuscripts in the Meteora monasteries (17th-19th centuries) *

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In Memoriam

Byzantine and post-Byzantine manuscripts and printed books from the sixteenth century onwards, form an integral part of eastern orthodox monasticism. Orthodox monks following the hermitic, idiorrhythmic or coenobitic types of monasticism, use manuscripts for liturgical services, for prayer, study and as source of spiritual guidance. Many Church fathers, as well as monks, preferred the study of the inner wisdom (ἡ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς σοφία) to secular (θύραθεν) learning. However, the contents of manuscripts in the monastic libraries refute this opinion, with many monastic *Typica* (foundation documents) showing respect for and recognising the value of books, both ecclesiastical and secular.[1]

One well-known scriptorium was that of the Constantinopolitan monastery of Stoudios, which under the spiritual guidance of its abbot St. Theodore (759–826), became famous, primarily for the copying of theological manuscripts. The rules of the monastery were established by St. Theodore and formed a model for many other monastic establishments throughout the Byzantine Empire. In his *Typicon,* St. Theodore

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[1] See Wilson 1967.

introduced specific and strict rules for the operation of the monastic library, along with the study, copying and preservation of its books.[2]

Within Stoudios, as well as other important Constantinopolitan monasteries, scribal activity highly developed; with prominent scholars, most of them monks, living, teaching, and founding major libraries. Apart from Constantinople, there were other important monastic centres, known today for their valuable manuscript collections, including Sinai, Athos, Patmos and Meteora.

On the high rocks of Stagoi, modern-day Kalambaka in Thessaly, which formed the western extent of the Byzantine Empire, the monastic community of Meteora was initially formed in the twelfth century, by anchorites and small hermitages. Two centuries later, Hosios Athanasios formed the first organized community, that of the Great Meteoron. Athanasios arrived at Meteora in the early 1330s from Mount Athos, with his spiritual father Gregorios. It was he who named the largest of the rocks *Meteoron*, where he also decided to reside because as he stated, it looked as if it was suspended in the air. There followed the foundation or reorganization of other great coenobia such as Barlaam, St. Stephanos and St. Nicholaos Anapausas, while during the first half of the sixteenth century, the Meteora monastic communities reached their peak.[3]

There are references to book collections belonging to small monasteries and hermitages since the fourteenth century, when Meteoric monasticism experienced its first period of prosperity. One such example is the cod. *Meteora, Rousanou* 46, f. 19r-v (Anonymous, Commentary on Canons for the feasts of the liturgical year, mid-14th c.; Diktyon, 42119), in which there is a list of books owned by the former monastery of the Virgin on the Stylos (Rock) of Stagoi.[4] The library of this monastery possessed a total of 31 volumes with mostly liturgical and hymnographic content (Four Gospels, *Apostolos*, Typicon, Psalter, *Triodion*,

[2] See the *Testament of St. Theodore Studites*, 119 (κς΄), *PG* 99, 1713B (κς΄) as well his *Poenae monasteriales*, *PG* 99, 1740AB. See also Thomas & Constantinides–Hero 2000, 93, 108 (26).

[3] Sophianos 1991; Agoritsas 2018b. On Gregorios and his relationship with the movement of Hesychasm, see Niphon 2020.

[4] Sophianos 1994, 287.1–288.8.

Heirmologion, *Octoechos*, *Sticherarion*, *Paracletike*, as well as *Synaxaria*, *Menaia* and works of the Church Fathers). In another document of the 1340s, a hermit refers to the fire that burned down his wooden hermitage and destroyed, "τὰ χαρτία του" ("his papers").[5] We assume that the books of this anonymous hermit were needed only for his daily ecclesiastical services and therefore were mostly of liturgical content. Furthermore, in a parchment Gospel Lectionary of the twelfth century, cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 556, f. 1v (Diktyon, 41966), 10 books, mostly liturgical, are recorded as follows: Four Gospels, Typicon, Psalter, *Prophetologion*, Liturgy, *Triodion*, *Synaxarion*, Funeral Service, and a Mytilenaios (perhaps Christophoros Mytilenaios' book of iambic distichs on saints throughout the ecclesiastical year).[6]

All of these lists of books dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and a few more published by Bees, contained many spelling and other errors which are suggestive of poor levels of literacy in some monastic communities. The relatively few collections of recorded books were mostly from hermitages and small monasteries on the rocks of Stylos and Hypselotera and ranged from seven to 27 volumes. They mainly included books necessary for the holy services, various patristic readings beneficial to the soul, such as Vitae sanctorum, *Synaxaria*, and *Menaia*, amongst others, as well as an *Iatrosophion* or a *Physiologus*.[7]

Nevertheless, there are some exceptions, such as the small book list in cod. *Meteora*, *Metamorphosis* 374, f. 1r (dated in 1359, Diktyon, 41784), where eight volumes were recorded, which were thematically different to those which one would expect to find in a small monastic collection. Amongst other texts, are listed a series of volumes including the history of *Barlaam and Joasaph*, an unnamed *Chronicle*, the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil of Caesarea, Josephus, an Iatrosophion by monk Nikephoros and, the Epistles of Synesios of Cyrene, *Erotemata* (*Ero-*

[5] Sophianos 2008, 22.19.

[6] Bees 1912, 273. For this work of Christophoros Mytilenaios see Follieri 1980.

[7] Bees 1912, 274. Another book collection is recorded in cod. *EBE* 175 [Gospel Lectionary, 14th c.; Diktyon, 2471] which is associated with the small monastery of Kallistratos in Meteora because of its ownership entry on p. 341. See Marava–Chatzinicolaou & Toufexi–Paschou 1985, 220–221.

temata grammatica by Manuel Moschopoulos?).[8] Although the scribe, in this case, was illiterate, we may assume that the owner (the *ktetor*) of these books was a scholar-monk or teacher.

The foundation and substantial growth of the Meteora monastic libraries which began in the late fourteenth century reached its peak during the period of Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century and continued until the eighteenth century as a result of the following factors:

a. The influx of monks from Mount Athos from the early fourteenth century onwards, as a consequence of the Turkish raids. Athonite monks brought to Meteora not only a different means of organisation, but also their books. They also appear to have encouraged a different perception of books and libraries, which was directly related to coenobitic monasticism.[9]
b. The patronage of local elites, such as the Greek-Serbian rulers of Trikala and Ioannina.[10]
c. The incorporation, mainly in the library of the Great Meteoron monastery, of other monastic libraries from earlier Byzantine monasteries, such as Zablantia and Lykousada, that ceased to exist during the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries.[11]
d. The desire of the founders of the monasteries and successive abbots to expand their libraries. Indeed, in the *Foundation Typica* of several monasteries such as Barlaam and Rousanou, the founders set strict rules for the protection and preservation of books, highlighting not only their spiritual value but also the high cost for their acquisition.[12] The need for the protection of books, mainly from theft is

[8] Bees 1912, 275–276.

[9] Agoritsas 2018b, 49-50.

[10] Sophianos 1996. See also Sophianos 2009, 273–274.

[11] See cod. *EBE* 210 which was donated to the monastery of St. Nicholaos of Zablantia by the *pinkernēs* Alexios Angelos Philanthropenos in the year 1378/79. The codex resulted later in the Great Meteoron library. See Evangelatou–Notara 1996, 222 n. 39.

[12] Agoritsas 2018, 92.234–237, 107–108; Sophianos 1992, 34.13. It should be noted that the founders of the monastery of Barlaam, Hosioi Theophanes and Nectarios Apsaras, as well as the founders of the Rousanou monastery, Hosioi Maximos and Joasaph, were descended from noble families of Ioannina.

revealed by the number of severe curses added in the colophons of most. An indication of the effort made during the sixteenth century to enrich monastic libraries is noted in cod. *Meteora, Barlaam* 38 (f. 128r) dated to 1518 in which the scribe, probably Leontios Dionysiates, states that he had travelled to many places without being able to find "an Acolouthia (sic) of St. John of Damascus better than this, neither in Ioannina nor in the Holy Meteoron, Mount Athos or even the Patriarchate (in Constantinople). Thus, I made a little effort, because of my great love and I copied them to increase the number of these books in the holy monasteries and in all the holy churches".[13]

e. The incorporation of the private libraries of highly educated monks and scholars, within that of the Great Meteoron as well as other monasteries, like St. Stephanos.[14]

f. Donations by local scholars, bibliophiles, and prelates, like Joasaph metropolitan of Larissa (1382/3–1401/2)[15] and later the bishop of Stagoi Parthenios (March 1751 – † 26 March 1784), who donated his valuable book collection and the entire archive of his diocese to the monastery of Barlaam, along with Paisios (12th May 1784 – 1808), who donated his library to the monastery of the Holy Trinity, consisting of manuscripts and printed books. One should add the donations by humble monks for their spiritual salvation and *in memoriam* of themselves and their parents. For example in the case of John Pestianetes, who devoted cod. *Paris. Coisl.* 203 (Theophylact's *Commentary* on Four Gospels, 13th/14th c., Diktyon, 49343) to the monastery of Barlaam, "διὰ τ(ὴν) ψυχὴν τοῦ π(ατ)ρ(ό)ς μου καὶ τῆς μητρός μου, | κ(αὶ) διὰ τὴν ψυχήν μου τοῦ ἁμαρτολοῦ (f. 435r)", "for the soul of my father and of my mother, and for my own sinful soul".

[13] Bees 1967, 47–48.

[14] On the operation of schools at the monasteries of Meteora during the Ottoman period and the presence of scholar monks, see Demetrakopoulos 1985, 79–106; Nemas 1995, 152–153 passim. More systematic research on the operation of schools will undoubtedly provide additional information.

[15] The codices *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 2 (1383/4), 21 (1386/7), 51, 450 (1388/9) and *EBE* 551 and 629 are attributed to Joasaph, who donated to the monastery of Great Meteoron at least 15 volumes. See Bees 1967, 4–5, 23–24, 75, 456; see also Diktyon, 41413, 41432, 41462, 41860, 2847, 2925.

g. It should be noted that for a long time the monasteries of Meteora served as places of exile for monks and hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Some were scholars, such as Gerasimos, former bishop of Raška, who was a well-known scribe of Nomocanons and whom the Swedish traveller J.−J. Björnståhl tried to help in various ways.[16]

During the early sixteenth century, hieromonk Ignatius listed his books twice in one of his personal volumes, i.e. cod. *Par. Coisl.* 292, ff. Br, 2r (Symeon the New Theologian, 14th c., Diktyon, 49433).[17] His first entry of 1516 listed approximately 34 volumes, while six years later in 1522, his library had increased by 10 volumes, mainly of liturgical content with works by Church Fathers, amongst others. It is striking that despite the presence of the coenobitic system in the monastery of Great Meteoron, there were monks who held personal libraries. Soon after the books of hieromonk Ignatius had been incorporated within the library of the monastery, the following severe curse was written on folio 1v of the codex mentioned above:

+ Τῶ παρῶν βιβλῆων· συμεῶν ὁ νέως θεολόγος· ὑπάρχει τῆς βασιλεικοτάτης | μονῆς τοῦ ἁγίου μετεώρου· κ(αὶ) οἵτης· τῶ ἀπὸξενώση ἐκ τῆν ρηθῆσ(αν) | μονῆν έστω αφωρη<σ>μένος, κ(αὶ) ἀσυγχώρετως· καὶ μεταθάνατον ἄλητως, κ(αὶ) | να ἔχη κ(αὶ) τῆς αρ<ᾶς> τῶν τριακοσίων· κ(αὶ) δεκοκτῶ θεωφώρων· κ(αὶ) ἀθανασίου | κ(αὶ) Ἰωάσαφ· κ(αὶ) τυμπανοιέως μενέτω.

This book of Symeon the New Theologian, belongs to the imperial monastery of the holy Meteoron; and whoever removes it from the afore-mentioned monastery, let him be excommunicated and unforgiven and after his death let his body be undecomposed, and let him have the curse of the 318 Church Fathers of Nicaea, and the curse of the Hosioi Athanasios and Joasaph (i.e. the founders of the monastery), and let his body stay swollen.

[16] On the life of Gerasimos, former bishop of Raška, and his scribal activities see Agoritsas 2020.

[17] Nau 1908.

To prevent any future removals of the parchment folios, the following severe curse was added to folio Iv of the same codex, "+ This volume consists of 18 folios, and if someone cuts any of them, let him be unforgiven". In another Meteoritic volume, now in Paris, the present *Paris. gr.* 1075, f. 249r (Church Fathers, 14th c., Diktyon, 50671) there is the following interesting entry (see fig. 2):

> + ἐτοῦτο τὸ βιβλίον, ὑπάρχει τῆς βασιλεικῆς κ(αὶ) θεί(ας) | μονῆς τοῦ μετεῶρου· κ(αὶ) ἔτοις τὸ ἀπὸ ξενῶσι· ἐκ τῆς | μονῆς τούτης· ἢ αναλῶσι ἐκ τῆς ἀμαθεῖας κ(αὶ) ἀπλη|στείας τῶν χειρῶν του· ἢ ρίψει αὐτῶ κάτωθεν ἀπό(νως) | ἔστω ἀφωρισμένος καὶ ἀσυχώρητος κ(αὶ) τὰς κατάρας | τῶν εὐρισκομένων ἐν τουτῆ τῆ μονῆ ἀσυγμέν(ων) | πατέρων, νὰ ἔχειο τὴν κειμένειν ἀπηλῆν εἶ.
>
> + This book belongs to the imperial and holy monastery of Meteoron and if someone removes it from this monastery, or destroys it by ignorance and because of the greed of his hands or even throws it down with heartlessness, let him be excommunicated and unforgiven and be menaced by the fathers who live in this monastery.

Curses or threats of excommunication which were written in almost all manuscripts, were not to be disregarded as they formed an 'institutional' legal code that set out to protect the manuscripts from all manner of threats. During the pre-industrial era, and considering a society of monks fearful of the final judgment by God and the possible loss of Paradise, curses written on books functioned as a deterrent. But as noted by Michaelares, the intimidating effect of these was dependent on the receptiveness of the potential pilferer and the degree of their reaction to such pressures and practices.[18]

It appears, however, that curses did not always have their intended result, when almost a century later the manuscripts referred to above arrived in Paris, as a result of the activities of the notorious Cypriot manuscript collector, Athanasios Rhetor (1571–1663). He travelled in Greece during the years 1643–1653, as an envoy of Cardinal Mazarin

[18] On curses and their effects, see Michaelares [2]2004, 168–175; Saradi 1994, 441–533; Morris 2002, 313–326.

and Chancellor Pierre Séguier.[19] The supposed mission and activities of Athanasios at Meteora were mentioned by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Dositheos II Notaras, in his handsome volume *Historike Dodekabiblos* (Bucharest 1715; published 1721–1723).[20] It should be noted that Athanasios himself never actually visited Thessaly, but he coordinated his activities from Constantinople, having sent a priest as his representative to Meteora in search of manuscripts. The following is a well-known reference to his activities by Notaras.

> Ἀθανάσιός τις Κύπριος, παπιστὴς ὅμως, καθ' Ἕλληνας ἠμφιεσμένος, καὶ ὑποκρινόμενος τὸν ὀρθόδοξον, ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ Ἄθωνος, καὶ εἰς ἄλλα μοναστήρια Θρᾴκης, Θετταλίας, καὶ Μακεδονίας, καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος πολλὰ βιβλία τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων καὶ τῆς ἔξω σοφίας, ἠγόρασεν αὐτὰ ὀλίγου τιμήματος, τοὺς δὲ ἐν τῇ μονῇ τῶν λεγομένων Μετεώρων πατέρας τοσοῦτον ἠπάτησεν, ὥστε καὶ τρυτάνῃ ὅπερ λέγεται κοινῶς στατέριον ἠγόραζε τὰ τῆς μονῆς αὐτῶν βιβλία, ἐν ἑκάστῃ τριλίτρῳ, ἤτοι ὀκάδι δοὺς αὐτοῖς τὴν συμπεφωνηθεῖσαν ποσότητα τῶν ἀργυρίων.[21]

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[19] On Athanasios Rhetor, see Omont 1902, 1–26; Manousakas 1940; Manousakas 1993, 27–35; O'Meara 1977. On the looting mission of Athanasios in Cyprus see Constantinides & Browning 1993, 23–26 with further references.

[20] For the edition of the *Dodekabiblos* see Sarres 2005. Later, in 1779 the bishop of Stagoi, Parthenios, narrated to the Swedish traveller J.–J. Björnståhl the alleged activities of Athanasios Rhetor in Meteora, as relayed by Dositheos of Jerusalem. While Björnståhl was still in Meteora (in the monastery of Barlaam), Parthenios sent him the edition of the *Dodekabiblos* to which Björnståhl has referred extensively. See Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 73–74, 96–97 (Mesevrinos).

[21] Dositheos of Jerusalem 1715, 1173. What Dositheos has said is repeated *mot–à–mot* by Komnenos Hypselantes, *Τὰ μετὰ τὴν Ἅλωσιν* 166 (Afthonides), while a few decades later in 1817, Oikonomou, *Τοπογραφία,* 136–137 (Spanos) noted that, "In these monasteries there are many libraries with valuable manuscripts, but the best of them were bought by Franks – the holy fathers, may their relics be sanctified! Such excess and useless things (i.e. manuscripts) were sold for 6 *parades* per oke (1.28 kg.)" (Εὑρίσκονται εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ μοναστήρια πολλαῖς βιβλιοθήκαις ἀπὸ ἀξιόλογα χειρόγραφα βιβλία, ἀλλὰ τὰ καλύτερα τὰ ἀγόρασαν οἱ Φράγκοι. οἱ πατεράγιοι, ν' ἁγιάσουν τὰ κόκκαλά τους! Τέτοια περίσσια καὶ ἄχρηστα πράγματα τὰ ἐπωλοῦσαν πρὸς 6 παράδες τὴν ὀκάν).

> A Cypriot named Athanasios, loyal to the pope, but dressed as a Greek and pretending to be an Orthodox, visited Mount Athos and other monasteries in Thrace, Thessaly and Macedonia, and after he had chosen many books of the holy fathers and of secular wisdom, he bought them at a low cost. Indeed, the fathers of the monastery called Meteoron were greatly deceived, because Athanasios also used a *trytanē*, which is called in the common language *statērion* (i.e. scales), to buy books of the monastery, giving to the monks the amount of silver coins they agreed for every three litres of weight.

Despite the exaggerations of Notaras, the activities co–ordinated by Athanasios Rhetor in Meteora in 1643 resulted in a rich harvest. Of the large number of manuscripts that arrived in France in 1653, thanks to the zeal of Jean de la Haye, the French ambassador in Constantinople, nine ended up in Mazarin's library (*Ancien fonds grec*), while seven were added to the library of Séguier which were later acquired by his grandson, the second-born son of Duke Coislin (*Les fonds Coislin*).[22] Most of the above manuscripts are not of secular wisdom, as Notaras claimed, or Athanasios would have wished. Their content was predominantly patristic, ascetic, hagiographic and canonical, as well as New Testaments, and texts of the Church Councils, amongst others.

The exaggerated story by Notaras regarding the supposed activities of Athanasios Rhetor at Meteora had negative consequences for the reputations of the Meteora monks in terms of their relationship with their collections of books. Repeatedly reproduced, it led to the assumption that the monks were uneducated, ignorant and unaware of the value of

[22] See Kolia 1984; cf. Géhin 2005, 38–40. They include the following volumes in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*: *Parisini graeci*, nos 506 (f. 2r, Meteoron; Diktyon 50081), 760 (f. 161 bis, St. Demetrios, Meteora; Diktyon, 50343), 876 (f. 1r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50464), 880 (f. 4v, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50468), 1075 (f. 249r, Meteoron; Diktyon 50671), 1123 (f. 163v, Barlaam; Diktyon, 50719), 1134 (f. 1r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50732), 1377 (f. 403r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50989), 2748 (f. 190v, Meteoron, Dousikon, Anapausas; Diktyon, 52383), and *Coisliniani* 59 (f. 259v, Anapausas; Diktyon, 49201), 198 (f. 4r, Barlaam; Diktyon, 49337), 203 (f. 435r, Barlaam; Diktyon, 49343), 237 (f. 2r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 49378), 264 (f. 275v, Meteoron; Diktyon, 49405), 292 (f. IIr, Meteoron; Diktyon, 49433) and 378 (note on *verso* of front cover; Diktyon, 49519).

their manuscripts, which they destroyed and sold for worthless amounts. It should be noted, however, that Athanasios' emissary had obtained the books in dubious circumstances. It is probably the case that in the presence of an ostensibly Orthodox clergyman, the monks of Meteora were misled, particularly given the difficult financial condition many of the monasteries were in the early seventeenth century.

It is also noteworthy that approximately four decades before the activities of Athanasios Rhetor, Antonius Salmatius Montiferratensis, an emissary of Cardinal Fridericus Borrhomaeus, had travelled throughout Greece in 1607–1608 and especially in Thessaly, Epirus and Corfu, during which he was able to secure a large number of manuscripts for the newly established Ambrosian library in Milan (1607). A total of 44 manuscripts (mostly of patristic and hagiographic content) are listed in the Catalogue of Martini and Bassi with just the phrase, *ex Thessalia advectus*. Consequently, it is difficult to know which were taken from the monastic libraries of Meteora.[23] Despite this, recent work on the manuscripts by Annaclara Cataldi Palau, focusing on the notes but also their script, has pointed to only two Greek codices as having with some degree of certainty, originated from the Meteora monasteries of Barlaam (cod. 46, Hagiographical works and Church Fathers, 11th/15th c.; Diktyon, 42236) and St. Nicholaos Anapausas (cod. 308, Church Fathers, 12th c.; Diktyon, 42718), along with one from the nearby monastery of Dousikon (cod. 236, Church Fathers, 11th c.; Diktyon 42544).[24]

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[23] They include the following manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana: nos 42, 46, 63, 64, 70, 75, 79, 136, 189, 193, 214, 236, 240, 257, 307, 308, 313, 366, 367, 371, 372, 374, 375 (and frg. D 137 suss., 36), 412, 413, 500, 529, 684, 695, 810, 813, 825, 860, 861, 862, 872, 876, 878, 884, 996, 1001, 1003 (D. 545), 1011, 1041 (and frg. D 137 suss., 49). See Martini & Bassi [2]1978; Kolia 1984, 74–75, n. 14, and Pasini 1997, 144–149, 176–181. From the above–mentioned manuscripts only codices 75 (14th c.) and 813 (15th c.) are of secular content (e.g. Procopius, *Gothic wars* and Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*).

[24] See Cataldi Palau 2008, 622; Cataldi Palau 2010. The author questions the origin of cod. *Ambr. C* 95 *sup. (gr.* 193*)* from St. Nicholaos Anapausas (Hagiographical works and Church Fathers, 11th/12th c.; Diktyon, 42432). The same scholar attributes as well cod. *Marc. gr.* 104 to Anapausas based on a list of books recorded on f. Ir (Church Fathers, 11th c.; Diktyon, 69575). See Mioni 1981, 148–150; Cataldi Palau 2009, 148; cf. the reference by P. Eleuteri in Cavallo 1998, 160–161.

In England, Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), Lord Protector and Chancellor of Oxford University donated his collection of twenty-two Greek manuscripts to the Bodleian Library in 1654. Amongst them is *Bodleian Cromwell* 6 (Church Fathers, 15th c.; Diktyon, 47796), with an ownership entry of the monastery of Meteoron [Τοῦ μετεώρ(ου), p. 407],[25] and *Bodleian Cromwell* 26 (a September *Menologion* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 11th c.; Diktyon, 47816), which is associated with the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas, because of an ownership entry on f. 1r and its characteristic binding.[26] Irmgard Hutter also attributed a Meteora provenance to cod. *Bodleian Cromwell* 13 (John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 10th c.; Diktyon, 47803).[27] How Cromwell acquired these manuscripts is still unknown.

The need for monasteries such as Great Meteoron and St. Nicholaos Anapausas to sell some of their valuable books, can partly be attributed to the difficult financial conditions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In 1568 the Ottoman sultan, Selim II, confiscated monastic properties, while in around 1585 to 1586[28] the Ottoman currency was devalued, events that left many of the Meteora monasteries in poverty. In the case of the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas, Cataldi Palau identified two periods during which manuscripts were sold or removed, during the first half of the seventeenth century and then again during the second half of the nineteenth century when the monastery was largely abandoned and fell victim to looting.

During the early seventeenth century, the abbot of Great Meteoron was forced to leave his cloister and to petition the Romanian Principalities for money (*zēteia*), as his monastery was in a serious financial condition.[29] The situation of Great Meteoron became even more diffi-

[25] Kolia 1984, 76; Nikolopoulos 1973, 195–197; Desprez & Rigo 2016, 335–336.

[26] Hutter 1982, 237; Cataldi Palau 2008, 622, 628, 636.

[27] Hutter 1982, 15–16.

[28] Alexander 1982, 99; Fotić 1994, 33–54; Pamuk 2000, 131–138.

[29] In the early 1580s the monks of Great Meteoron sent a letter to the Prince of Wallachia, Mihnea II Turcitul (1577–1583), asking for his economic support, while a few decades later the abbots of Meteora and Dousikon monasteries addressed the Prince of Moldavia, Vasile Lupu (1634–1653), asking for his protection. See Bees 1909, 236$^{νη΄-ξα΄}$ (no 12), 294–297 (text), and 236$^{νε΄-νς΄}$ (no 9), 279–283 (text).

cult following an unforeseen natural disaster. In a still unpublished letter dated June 1641, Ecumenical Patriarch Parthenios I mentions that Great Meteoron had suffered a fire a few years earlier, resulting in the loss of many of the monastery's heirlooms, including books and imperial chrysobulls. For this reason, the Patriarch permitted the Meteoron monks to visit the ecclesiastical provinces (*mētropoleis*) of the Patriarchate to petition for *zēteia*.[30] Just over a century later in 1779, J.–J. Björnståhl first became aware of this event, noting that a fire had destroyed a large collection of manuscripts at the monastery of Meteoron, while later he found a codicographical note referring to the event, which recorded it as having taken place on the 26th of October, 1632.[31] The fire and resulting difficult situation the monastery found itself in, probably explains how a few years later, Athanasios Rhetor was able to easily buy several of its manuscripts. As the manuscripts located outside of Meteora were mostly written on parchment and date from the Byzantine period, Cataldi Palau notes that "the Meteora monasteries sold their best and oldest parchment manuscripts, keeping the more recent liturgical texts which were more useful for the daily events of monastic life".[32]

Despite this and apart from the activities of Athanasios Rhetor, it is clear that during the seventeenth century the loss of manuscripts was

[30] See a letter of *zēteia* dated the 1st of February 1654, by three abbots from Meteora monasteries (Barlaam, Rousanou, St. Stephanos) as well as by the abbot of the Thessalian monastery of Lykousada to the Tsar of Russia, Alexis Mikhailovich, asking for his subvention in favour of the monastery of Great Meteoron. Another letter was written two days later (3rd of February) on behalf of the brotherhood of Great Meteoron and its abbot Damascenus. See Tchentsova 2009, 306, 312, 327–328 (figs 6–7).

[31] See Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 74, 88 (Mesevrinos), who refers to the fire that broke out on the 26th of October 7141 or 1633. However, the year 7141 corresponds to the year 1632. According to Vapheiades 2019, 123, Ottoman Turks plundered the monastery of Meteoron in 1609; Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 88 (Mesevrinos), says that a few years later, on Good Friday 1616, the monastery was plundered by Arslan bey, the Ottoman Pasha of Ioannina. Finally, a note in cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 454, f. 165r, records that in the year 1636/7 the Pasha of Ioannina on his way to Constantinople shelled the monastery, Bees 1967, 459. See also Bees 1967, 60, where in cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 39, f. 1v, it is mentioned that a fire burned the cells of the monks in 1639.

[32] Cataldi Palau 2008, 620.

fairly minimal. Despite the claims of Dositheos Notaras of Jerusalem, the monks of Meteora clearly showed great concern for the preservation of their books. Thus, apart from the explicit references to the protection of manuscripts in monastic *Typica* and the protective curses which are recorded in most of the codices, we also have concrete examples of the efforts of the monks to protect their books and libraries. So, when the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas was in serious financial condition during the late sixteenth century and its monks were forced to sell some of their manuscripts, the abbot of the Great Meteoron rushed to buy one of them, cod. *Paris. gr.* 2748, f. 3v (Church Fathers, late 14th c.; Diktyon, 52383), in order that it would not be sold outside of Meteora (see fig. 3).[33]

> + κἀγῶ παπᾶ Γεράσιμ(ος) καὶ ἡγούμ(εν)ος τοῦ Μετεώρ(ου) μὲ τὸν πρωηγούμ(εν)ον | τὸν πν(ευματικὸν) π(ατέρα) κῦρ Νεκτάριον ὁποῦ ἔγινεν ἐπίσκοπος εἰς τὸ Ζητούνη, | {ἀ}ἠγοράσαμ(εν) τὸ βιβλίον τοῦτο τὸ λεγόμ(εν)ον διόπτρα ἀπὸ τ(ὸν) ἅγιον Νικόλ(αον), | ἀπὸ τὸν γέροντα τὸν κῦρ Λαυρέντιον· καὶ ἀπὸ τ(ὸν) πν(ευματικόν) του τ(ὸν) […] καὶ | ἀπὸ τοὺς καλογέρους του. διὰ ἄσπρ(α) φ΄ ἤγουν πεντακόσια· νὰ ἔναι, | τελίως εἰς τὸ μοναστήρι· ὅτι ἐπουλήθη δια χρέως· κ(αὶ) ἤθελαν | νὰ τὸ πουλήσουν εἰς τ(ὸν) κόσμ(ον)· κ(αὶ) εἴδαμ(εν) ὅτι χάνετ(αι) καὶ δια τοῦτο τὸ ἐπήραμ(εν):
>
> Me, father Gerasimos and abbot of Meteoron, along with the former abbot (proegoumenos) and spiritual father kyr Nektarios, who later became bishop at Zetouni, we bought this book called Dioptra from the monastery of St. Nicholaos, from the elder kyr Laurentios; and from the spiritual father [...] and from the monks for 500 aspra;[34] in order this book to be found exclusively in the cloister as it was sold because of the monastery's debt and the monks wanted to sell it to the people outside, and we saw that it would get lost, and for this reason we bought it.

A few years later on the 1st of November 1623, a sale document (ὁμολογία) from the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas reveals that

[33] In 1608/9 the book was incorporated within the library of the monastery of Dousikon. See Cataldi Palau 2008, 637–638.

[34] The *aspron* ("white") or *akçe* was a silver ottoman coin.

abbot Parthenios and the monks were compelled to sell to the nearby Barlaam, their large illuminated Gospel for 4,600 *aspra*, to partly cover the debts of their monastery.[35] In 1671, while on duties (*diakonēma*) away from his monastery, hieromonk Chrysanthos discovered a missing manuscript from Great Meteoron (cod. 178, *Panthektē*, 16th c.; Diktyon, 41589) and paid 261 *aspra* to acquire it.[36]

In fear of the Ottomans and the incursions of rebel Albanian Muslim troops, especially during the 1770s, the monks of Meteora occasionally hid their heirlooms, including holy relics, books and other documents in the crypts. The vivid description by of N.-A. Bees of his discovery during the early 20th century, of dozens of manuscripts in the crypts at the monastery of Great Meteoron, reminds us of the fictional Franciscan Friar William of Baskerville in the 1980 novel, 'The name of the Rose' by Umberto Eco.[37] Finally, there were even book-binders such as the monk Gabriel Hagiamonites (eighteenth century) in Meteora and the hieromonk Chatze-Gerasimos (nineteenth century) in Dousikon, who took care of several handwritten and printed books.

What is also clear is that the monks were sceptical of foreign travellers. The Englishman Robert Curzon, who visited Meteora in November 1834, noted that he did not find any manuscripts of outstanding value in the monastic library of Barlaam, apart from a Slavonic codex and a Gospel of the eleventh century, about which he stated, "It was of no use to the monks themselves, who cannot read either Hellenic or ancient Greek; but they consider the books in their library as sacred relics, and preserve them with a certain feeling of awe for their antiquity and incomprehensibility".[38] In fact, the abbot was not swayed by the offer made by Curzon, who gave up his attempts to purchase manuscripts.

Over five decades prior to the visit by Curzon, in the spring of 1779 the Swedish orientalist and Hellenist J.-J. Björnståhl visited the monasteries of Meteora and the greater region of Trikala, hoping to obtain

[35] Theotekni nun 2018, 578–579. The document is now kept in the Archives of St. Stephanos convent.

[36] Bees 1967, 205.

[37] Bees 1910, 18–19.

[38] Curzon 1849, 290; Constantinides 2018, 179, 191 (no. VII).

biblical manuscripts. After his unexpected death of the 22nd of July 1779, his quest was continued during the spring of 1784 by the 27-year-old pastor A.-F. Sturtzenbecker, who also died unexpectedly a few months later on 14th of June.[39] Both left recollections of their journeys in manuscripts at the monasteries of Meteora and Dousikon.[40] Their visit to the monastery of Barlaam was recorded by the monk Christophoros Barlaamites (cod. *Petrop. gr.* 251), who was particularly impressed by the many languages that they knew. Reproduced below is the record of the visit as transcribed by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus.[41]

> 1780: κατὰ μῆνα ἀπρίλλιον. Ἦλθεν εἰς τὸ μοναστήριόν μας ἕνας Φράγκος ἀπὸ τὸ Βασίλειον τῆς σβετζίας ὀνομαζόμενος ἰάκωβος, πεπαιδευμένος καταπολλὰ εἰς τὴν ἑλληνικὴν γλῶσσαν καὶ εἰς ἄλλαις γλώσσαις […] Αὐτοὶ οἱ δύο φράγκοι ἦσαν περιηγηταί:
> 1784: Κατὰ μῆνα μάρτιον Ἦλθεν ἄλλος φράγκος ἀπὸ τὴν σβετζίαν ὀνομαζόμενος Φριδέριχος, καὶ ἦτον πεπαιδευμένος εἰς ταῖς γλώσσαις, ἕως γλῶσσαις δεκαπέντε.
>
> 1780: in April. A Frank from the Kingdom of Sweden, named Jacob, came to our monastery; he was highly educated, and he knew very well Greek and other languages. These two Franks were travellers.
> 1784: in March another Frank from Sweden, named Frederick, came; and he knew very well up to fifteen languages.

Sturtzenbecker carefully recorded the content of the great monastic libraries he visited in Meteora and elsewhere, including at Barlaam. He even noted on *recto* of the front flyleaf of cod. *EBE* 65 (*olim* Dousikon), how he marvelled at the ancient manuscripts of Dousikon monastery (see fig. 4).[42] It is likely that Sturtzenbecker, whilst living in Constantinople as pastor of the Swedish Embassy and during his travels around

[39] Stavropoulos 1982.

[40] Stavropoulos 1982, 436–448.

[41] Papadopoulos–Kerameus 1902, 144; Uspenskij 1896, 482. See also Bees 1926, 70; Stavropoulos 1982, 444–446; Rigo 1999, 33–36.

[42] See Diktyon 2361 (Four Gospels, 12/13th c.). A. F. Sturtzenbecker left another note in cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 545, f. 1r (Four Gospels, 13th c.; Diktyon 41855) in memory of his visit to the monastery on the 21st of March 1784. See Bees 1967, 545.

Greece, managed to acquire a large number of Greek manuscripts, which ended up in the collections of Uppsala University.[43]

In the case of Björnståhl, his surviving possessions included 13 codices which were also transferred to the library of Uppsala University. Three of these (cods *Upps. UB gr.* 12, 17 and 19) contain evidence that indicates that they originated in the monastery of Dousikon.[44] Björnståhl does not state whether he bought the manuscripts or how they came to be in his possession. However, the manuscript with quotes by Hesiod and Sophocles, scholia and interlinear *glossae*, which Björnståhl claimed to have found in the monastery of Great Meteoron, was not found amongst his possessions.[45] In the monasteries of Meteora, Björnståhl was fortunate in that he met accommodating monks who allowed him to search for books in their libraries. His knowledge of Greek certainly contributed to this, as well as the fact that he had at his disposal letters of recommendation from senior Church authorities. He was also on friendly terms with the local bishop of Stagoi and the ex-bishop of Raška, Gerasimos, who lived in exile in the monastery of Barlaam. During his visit to the monastery of Dousikon, he noted the presence of a lot of manuscripts in poor condition outside a damaged cell. He commented disparagingly regarding the indifference of the monks, who allegedly said that they did not need them as they already had enough printed books in their Library.[46]

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[43] See Aurivillius 1814, viii: *Eodem anno* (1787) *Upsaliam tandem pervenit magni pretii collectio Arabicor. Persicor. Turcicor. et Graecor. Librorum (voll. 227) maximan partem manuscriptorum, quam et Constantinopoli et in Graecia fecerat, et Academiae Upsal. A. 1783. testamento addixit, legationi S. R. Majest. Sveciae ad Aulam Byzantinam a Sacris, Magister Adolph. Freder. Sturtzenbecher.* See also Annerstedt 1914, 497; Rudberg 1968, 182 and Sabatakakis 2017, 100, n. 17. The mss *Upps. UB gr.* 9 and 10 belonged to A.-F. Sturtzenbecker. See Wasserman 2010, 92–94; Crostini 2018, 62–63 (and tab. 1).

[44] See Diktyon 64425, 64430 and 64432, and the website *manuscripta.se*; See also Rudberg 1977, 396–397 and Wasserman 2010, 96–97.

[45] Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 83–84 (Mesevrinos).

[46] Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 105–106 (Mesevrinos). It is noteworthy that the extensive borrowing of books from the library of the monastery of Dousikon resulted to the loss of many, both manuscripts and printed books. Therefore, in 1763 with the help of the metropolitan of Larissa (future Patriarch) Meletios II (1750–1768), a stone slab with

Cod. *Mingana gr.* 3 (*olim* Salisbury) in Birmingham (New Testament, 14th/15th c.; Diktyon, 9663), which originated from Great Meteoron, appears to have had a connection with Sweden. The codex originally belonged to Jan Pieter van Suchtelen, who between 1810 and 1836, was intermittently the Russian ambassador to the Swedish Court.[47] Suchtelen was an avid collector of printed books and manuscripts. At an auction in 1816, he bought part of the book and manuscript collection of Björnståhl, including his diary which is now missing. After the death of Suchtelen, his collection was initially transferred to the city of Tambov in central Russia, after which parts were found in Moscow and the university library in St. Petersburg.[48]

There is also an interesting reference by Björnståhl regarding the Prince of Moldavia, Nikolaos Gkikas, who asked the abbots of the monasteries to allow him to print their most valuable manuscripts, after which they would be immediately returned, a request which never materialized.[49] But Björnståhl confuses here the name of the supposed Prince Nikolaos Gkikas, with that of the other Phanariote Prince of Moldavia (1709) and Wallachia (1715), Nikolaos Mavrokordatos, who did manage to obtain manuscripts for his library, mainly from the monasteries of the Agrafa region in Thessaly.[50]

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inscription was placed to the right of the library entrance, threatening anyone who dared steal books from the monastery with excommunication. The inscription was published by Sophianos 1984, 57.

[47] The manuscript was successively housed in the collections of a nobleman of Dutch origin, the Russian ambassador to Sweden, the bibliophile Jan Pieter van Suchtelen (1751–d. 1836 in Stockholm), Christopher Wordsworth, bishop of Lincoln (1807–1885) and John Wordsworth, bishop of Salisbury (1843–1911). See Kolia 1984, 76 and Hunt [1997], 55–57.

[48] Sabatakakis 2021, 450-451 (in print).

[49] Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 74 (Mesevrinos).

[50] Mavrokordatos, who seems to have maintained contact with the archbishop of Canterbury and member of the college Aedis Christi, William Wake, probably gave him some of the manuscripts that he had acquired from monasteries in Thessaly. These manuscripts were received by the college library in 1737, a bequest by the archbishop. This is, for example, the case with cod. *Oxford, Christ Church, Wake gr.* 66 (works of Antonios of Larissa, 15th/16th c.; Diktyon, 48588), which originated from the monastery of Dousikon. On this subject see Hutter 1993, XXXIX–XLI, and Karanasios 2014.

The visit by Björnståhl to Meteora and everything he recorded about the monastic libraries sparked the interest of future travellers, as indicated by the frequent mention of his name in their works. For example, W.–M. Leake (1777–1860), military officer, diplomat (as British representative in Ioannina) and traveller, visited Meteora on the 11th of January 1810 and briefly mentioned Björnståhl, though he himself showed no interest in manuscripts.[51]

In the spring of 1811, the well-known philhellene Frederic North, 5th Earl of Guilford (1766–1827), visited Meteora but avoided climbing up to the monasteries on the rocks, when he was able to persuade the monks to descend by net with manuscripts for him to inspect, although he found none of interest or value.[52] However, his account is disproven by the presence of cod. *München, BSB, gr.* 639 in his possession (Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars* and *Jewish Antiquities*, 11th c.; Diktyon, 45089).[53]

During his sightseeing tour of Meteora in 1812, the British physician and writer Henry Holland (1788–1873) stated inter alia that,

> Biornstahl examined the libraries of four of the monasteries, but found nothing that was of very great importance, with the exception of a manuscript in the library of Great Meteoron containing fragments of Hesiod and Sophocles, but probably of recent date; … In the monastery of Barlaam are the works of many of the Greek Fathers, and various manuscripts, but with none of them having any considerable value.

But like Leake before him, Holland was not particularly interested in manuscripts.[54]

Another English clergyman, theologian and historian, Thomas Smart Hughes (1786–1847), briefly visited the monastery of Great Meteoron in 1813. In two volumes detailing his travels which were published in 1820, he referred to the unpublished description of another English clergyman, W. Jones, who visited Meteora in 1815. According to Hughes,

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[51] Leake 1835, 537–542 (chap. XLIII).
[52] Angelomati-Tsougaraki 2000, 58, 202.
[53] Berger, 2014, 256–258.
[54] Holland 1815, 234–240, esp. 238–239 (were references to J. J. Björnståhl).

Jones stated that at the monastery of Barlaam, he had requested without success to see manuscripts, while he also noted that the elderly abbot still remembered the visit of Björnståhl.[55]

The French consul in Ioannina, Fr. Pouqueville (1770–1838), also mentioned Björnståhl's visit to Meteora, as well as the excerpts of the works of Hesiod and Sophocles that Björnståhl discovered, noting however that these were already known about. The fruitless search by Björnståhl of the libraries of Meteora discouraged Pouqueville from climbing the rocks.[56] The precipitous climb was a common reason that many travellers avoided the ascent. Despite not actually having entered the monasteries, Pouqueville uncritically spread the rumour that the monks used old manuscripts as fuel to heat their ovens.[57] The comments in 1830 by the Scottish diplomat and politician David Urquhart (1805–1877), regarding this rumour are of interest. In response to his question, the monks of Barlaam monastery categorically denied that they did not respect their manuscripts and had burnt them.[58]

Shortly after in November 1834, as previously described, the British bibliophile and collector of manuscripts, R. Curzon (1810–1873) visited Meteora, guided by the writings of Björnståhl. According to his account, at the monastery of Barlaam he attempted unsuccessfully to purchase two manuscripts, while at the monastery of Great Meteoron he searched in vain for the manuscripts of Hesiod and Sophocles mentioned by Björnståhl.[59] There, Curzon attempted to purchase a beautifully illuminated manuscript and a smaller one with silver binding (cod.

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[55] Hughes 1820, 504–505.

[56] Pouqueville 1826, 333–336 and esp. 335–336.

[57] Pouqueville 1826, 336. A few decades later in 1860 a primary school teacher named Magnes repeated in his travelogue about Thessaly, what Pouqueville had previously stated, thus perpetuating the rumour and further tarnishing the image of the monks of Meteora. See Magnes 1860, 31.

[58] Urquhart 1838, 287: "The monks confessed themselves ignorant and barbarous, but they spurned the idea of having made use of their mss to heat their oven".

[59] Curzon 1849, 289–290, 303. One year earlier another Englishman, Christopher Wordsworth (later Bishop of Lincoln, 1868) visited the monastery of Great Meteoron and noted that "the Codex of Sophocles, which is said to have been there, has now disappeared"; Wordsworth 1833, 284.

EBE 58), which was the personal copy of the second founder of the monastery, Hosios Joasaph, the former Greek-Serbian ruler of Trikala, John Uroš Palaeologos.[60] Even though the amount offered would have been of great use to the monastery, the idea was strongly opposed by the monks and the purchase fell through, much to the disappointment of Curzon. Although he does not mention acquiring any manuscripts, a 16th century codex from Meteora was found in his collection which was bequeathed to the British Museum (*BL ms Additional* 39618).[61]

Adolphe Napoléon (Ainé) Didron (1806–1867), archaeologist and professor of Byzantine iconography, visited the monasteries of Meteora in 1840. Although he did not seem to be interested in manuscripts, but rather the Christian architecture and iconography, he still managed to gain access to the library of Great Meteoron, where he counted 372 manuscripts. He was less successful at Barlaam and St. Stephanos, where he notes that they had no manuscripts, although it is quite possible that the monks there did not trust him.[62]

During his stay at the French Archaeological School of Athens, another French archaeologist, historian and Hellenist, Léon Heuzey (183–1922), visited the monasteries of Meteora between July and August 1858, where he copied several inscriptions, documents and historical texts, such as the so–called *Chronicles of Meteora* and *of Ioannina*.[63] In his notebook, Heuzey noted that he saw several manuscripts, including a small parchment codex of the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI, written in gold characters and entitled "οἰακιστικὴ ψυχῶν ὑποτύπωσις", report on how the souls should be guided. The codex was removed a year later in 1859 by the Russian pilgrim and traveller, the clergyman (archimandrite) Porphyrios Uspenskij, eventually finding its way to St. Petersburg (cod. *Petrop. gr.* 205).[64]

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[60] Curzon 1849, 303–304; Sophianos 2018, 180–181. On the fate of this manuscript see Sophianos & Galavaris 2007, 44–45.

[61] Constantinides 2018, 182–189, with a detailed description of the manuscript. See also Diktyon, 39197.

[62] Didron 1844, 176–179.

[63] Heuzey 1927, 130–161, 173–190; Sophianos 2008b, 602–603.

[64] Granstrem [19] 1961, 218 (no. 230), and Olivier 2018, 781; cf. Sophianos 1997.

Uspenskij (1804–1885) visited Meteora and provides a detailed account of the monasteries, their history and relics.[65] However, upon leaving Meteora, Uspenskij took with him several manuscripts, fragments or folios of codices from the monastic libraries he had visited. There were donated to the library in St. Petersburg, now the Russian National Library, but so far, their study has proven problematic. We know that the following cods were from Meteora, *Petrop. gr.* 383 (9th c., Diktyon, 57455),[66] 73 (St. John Damascenus, 11th c.; Diktyon, 57143),[67] 205 (Leo's VI, *οἰακιστικὴ ψυχῶν ὑποτύπωσις*, 11th c.; Diktyon, 57277)[68] and 321 (*Praxapostolos*, early 12th c.; Diktyon, 57393);[69] cods *Petrop. gr.* 301 (1 leaf from cod. *Barlaam* 1, 12th/13th c.; Diktyon, 57373) and 235/235a (d. in 1337; Diktyon, 57307) originated from the monastery of Barlaam,[70] while cod. *Petrop. gr.* 251 (Diktyon, 57323) is miscellaneous, consisting of several gathered folios and fragments of manuscripts from Meteora.[71] According to Granstrem, two more codices, *Petrop. gr.* 124 and 256 (Diktyon, 57196, 57328) originated from the Rousanou monastery.[72]

Another noteworthy case is that of the 91 codices from Thessaly and Epirus that were acquired by the Anglican priest Reginald Barnes in around 1864 on behalf of Baroness Angelica Burdett-Coutts (1814–1906), from Constantine Tzimoures, an antiquary in Ioannina. The codices were auctioned in London by Sotheby's, initially in 1922 (62 cods) and later in 1987 (27 cods).[73] Manuscripts were acquired by the Univer-

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[65] Uspenskij 1896, 103 et seq.

[66] On the relation between cod. *Petrop. gr.* 383 and cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 573 see Granstrem [16] 1959, 235–236 (no. 76); Kavrus 1982, 241–244; Kavrus-Hoffmann 2010, 105; See also Olivier, 1995, 538–539, and Olivier 2018, 780.

[67] Granstrem [19] 1961, 206–207 (no. 210).

[68] Ed. by Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1909, 213–253 (no XI); cf. Granstrem [19] 1961, 218 (no. 230).

[69] The codex comprising three leaves, depicting the apostles Jacob, Paul, and Judas, was originally part of cod. *Paris. Supp. gr.* 1262 (Diktyon, 53926). See Granstrem [23] 1963, 169 (no. 310), and Olivier 2018, 780.

[70] Granstrem [23] 1963, 190 (no. 363); [27] 1967, 278–279 (no. 529).

[71] Granstrem [27] 1967, 287–288 (no. 552); Kolia 1984, 77–78; Sophianos 2008b, 603, and Olivier 2018, 775 [cf. Diktyon 57323].

[72] Granstrem [25] 1964, 199–200 (no. 472) and [27] 1967, 294.

[73] Cataldi Palau 2008, 625–627; Cataldi Palau 2009, 144–145; cf. Constantinides 2018b, 91–92 (no. IV).

sity of Ann Arbor in Michigan,[74] the British Library,[75] the National Library of Greece,[76] and other smaller institutions.[77] From the collection of Baroness Burdett-Coutts approximately 10 manuscripts originated from Meteora, mainly from the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas.[78] It is not known when and how these came into the possession of Tzimoures in Ioannina. However, it is most likely that they were stolen from the monastery of Anapausas, which had been almost abandoned during the nineteenth century.[79]

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[74] The 56 manuscripts acquired by the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, have not been described in detail yet. Of the total, seven are recorded as: *Ann Arbor Mich. Mss.* nos. 35, 38, 39, 44, 47, 78 and 79 originated from the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas in Meteora (see Diktyon, 892, 895, 896, 901, 904, 933, 934). Recently, Annaclara Cataldi Palau, and Kavrus-Hoffmann & Alvarez reviewed all these manuscripts and they published descriptions of those codices considered to be of Thessalian origin. See Cataldi Palau 2009, 149–167, and Kavrus-Hoffmann & Alvarez 2021, xxi, xxv-xxvi, 102-104, 112-117, 129-132, 139-144 (nos 35, 38, 39, 44, 47). Another manuscript from the same Collection, *Ann Arbor Mich.* 10 [18th cent., Diktyon, 866], is attributed by Hoffmann & Alvarez 2021, 13-17, to one of the Meteora monasteries based on the binding and the type of its script.

[75] From the 1922 auction the British Library purchased cod. *BL Add.* 40655 (Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* and Theodoretus, *Historia religiosa*, 11th c.; Diktyon, 39204; orig. from Rousanou monastery). The British Library also purchased the palimpsest cod. 54 at auction in 1987, containing *Grammatike* of Manuel Chrysoloras (now cod. *BL Add.* 64,797, 15th c.; Diktyon, 39258) which belonged to the monastery of Great Meteoron. The British Museum acquired one more manuscript from the Burdett–Coutts collection in 1938 which was from Meteora, cod. *Egerton* 3154, of the 11th century containing *Geoponika* by Kassianos Vassos Scholastikos, a manuscript which was also seen by Porphyrios Uspenskij; cf. Cataldi Palau 2009, 145; Tchernetska 2005, 23, 26, and Olivier 2018, 781 (Diktyon, 39455).

[76] At the 1987 auction, the National Library of Greece purchased 21 codices. They are described in a typewritten catalogue by the former Director of the National Library of Greece, Prof. P. Nikolopoulos. See Tchernetska 2005, 22–25; Cataldi Palau 2009, 145.

[77] Of the rest of the manuscripts in the Baroness Burdett–Coutts collection, one is owned by Brown University, Providence, USA. Another was acquired by McGill University, Montreal, Canada; see Tchernetska 2005, 24; Cataldi Palau 2009, 145.

[78] Cataldi Palau 2009, 146.

[79] After the Vlachavas' rebellion in 1808, all of the Meteora monasteries were shut down for some time on the orders of Ali Pasha of Ioannina, cf. cod. *Meteora*, *Barlaam* 106, f. 224r.

The case of the collection of Baroness Burdett-Coutts is not unique. During the second half of the nineteenth century more manuscripts found their way through auction houses to private collections abroad, such as cod. *Bodleian, Keble College* 52 (Liturgies, written by hieromonk Ioannikios from Trikke AM ,ζρκς′ = 1617/18), which originated from the monastery of Barlaam.[80] During the same time around 1864, cod. *Oxford, Bodleian liturg. gr.* 3 (*Heirmologion*, late 12th to early 13th century) which was probably from Meteora was also sold by auction.[81]

Eighteen years later, the Greek State took on the role of protector of manuscripts. In 1882, a year after the cession of Thessaly to Greece, the government established a committee under Spyridon Findikles, Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Athens and the Archimandrite Nikephoros Kalogeras, Professor in the School of Theology. The aim was to collect and transfer to the National Library of Greece in Athens, the most precious and important manuscripts of the Meteora monasteries. According to Kalogeras, this yielded 1,200 manuscripts, which is certainly an exaggeration. In fact, the process was not completely successful as the abbot of Great Meteoron, Polycarpos Rammides, the monks and the residents of the neighbouring village of Kastraki protested and the whole operation had to be cancelled, as they considered the removal of the manuscripts sacrilege and a serious impiety. Eventually, Kalogeras and Findikles managed with the assistance of an entire army battalion and after a serious confrontation with the locals, to collect nine boxes containing more than a hundred manuscripts, which were brought to Athens. Amongst these was the personal *Tetraevangelon* (Four Gospels) of the second founder of Great Meteoron, Hosios Joasaph (now cod. *EBE* 58; Diktyon, 2354).[82]

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[80] Hutter 1997, 31–43 (no. 15) and pl. 98–109 (Diktyon 48653); see also the online catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts in Keble College by Dr. F. Spingou: https://heritage.keble.ox.ac.uk/special-collections/greek-manuscripts/ (access on 15–10–2020). Ioannikios was a productive scribe in the monastery of Barlaam. See Politis & Politis 1994, 490.

[81] Hutter 1982, 201–202 (Diktyon 47994).

[82] Bees 1910, 13–16. For the seizing of manuscripts from the Meteora monasteries by the Greek state, see the detailed study of Sophianos 2004.

After 1882 and for the next few decades there were several allegations in the press about monks attempting to sell manuscripts; However, these reports were often incorrect and were considered to have been the result of anti-monastic sentiment.[83]

Any discussion regarding the fate of Meteora manuscripts is not complete without reference to a group of manuscripts held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), the codices *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 928 (Church Fathers, 16th c.; Diktyon, 53612) and 1257–1281, which are recorded as having originated in Meteora.[84] In fact, the last 25 codices (1257–1281) were bought by a Parisian bookseller and entered the BNF on the 31st of October 1928. These were mainly patristic and monastic works, Nomocanons as well as patriarchal sigillia. Of the codices mentioned above, *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1258 (Four Gospels, 13th c.) was considered by Cataldi Palau, to have originated from the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas based on its binding.[85] Cod. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1262, *Praxapostolos* written by Ioannes Koulix in 1101 (Diktyon, 53926), has now been broken up, with some of its folios (3 illuminations) comprising cod. *Petrop. gr.* 321, while another fragment forms cod. *USA (NY) Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Medieval Art and the Cloisters, mss. acc. no.* 1991.232.15 (Diktyon, 46612).[86] Finally, cod. *Paris. Suppl.*

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[83] In 1881 the newspaper *Nea Ephemeris* (No 2, 2.12.1881: 2) stated that they had been informed that monks from the Meteora monasteries had stolen or donated manuscripts. The Ministry of Ecclesiastical affairs ordered an investigation; but the accusation turned out to be false. The same newspaper article informs us that ten of the most important parchment codices as well as the library catalogue for the year 1805 had been sent to the Ministry by the monastery of Great Meteoron. Two decades later a new scandal was reported in the press, the case of Parthenios Demetriades, abbot of Great Meteoron, who was wrongly accused of having stolen nine Byzantine codices before trying to sell them to antiquity smugglers; see the newspaper *Hestia* (no. 316, 15.01.1899: 3; no 317, 16–01.1899: 2; no. 327, 26.01.1899: 3), and Vapheiades 2019, 193.

[84] Astruc & Concasty 1960 passim; Kolia 1984, 78–79, and Géhin 1989, 59–61. According to Nicol 1975, 181, these manuscripts were "perhaps removed from their monasteries during the Greco–Turkish War in 1897."

[85] Cataldi Palau 2008, 624. See also Diktyon, 53922.

[86] Kavrus-Hoffmann 2007, 90–94; Olivier 2018, 780–781. Regarding scribe Ioannes Koulix, see Constantinides & Browning 1993, 68–70, esp. 69 and n. 2 (no. 5); see also Parpulov 2017, 93–94.

gr. 1272 (Diktyon, 53936) is also associated with the monastery of Great Meteoron because of its ownership entry on f. 1v (see fig. 1), while cod. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1371 (Diktyon, 54028), which is a fragment of a *praktikon* (*diagnosis*) of the year 1163 (April) for the bishopric of Stagoi, was removed from the library of Barlaam monastery.[87]

The depopulation of the monasteries in Meteora during the final decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as military action which affected the area up the late 1940s, had an impact on the libraries of the monasteries, during which many manuscripts and printed books were lost.[88]

Despite all of the events described above, what is clear is that the removal of manuscripts from the Meteora monasteries was not the result of the previously widespread view, that ignorant monks were deceived and sold their books, thus enriching foreign libraries and other collections with Greek manuscripts. On the contrary, it seems that the loss of

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[87] The circumstances in which the manuscript originally came into the possession of the American collector Edward Perry Warren (c. 1859–1908) are unknown; and then into the possession of the English bibliographer and historian Seymour de Ricci on the 28th of October 1929. After his death in 1942 in France, the documents ended up together with other manuscripts in Bibliothèque Nationale de France on 29th of June 1944. They were then assigned to the collection of manuscripts *Supplément grec* in April 1958.

[88] In 1953 it was found that 36 codices had been lost from the Meteora monasteries, 16 from Hagia Triada, eight from St. Nicholaos Anapausas and 12 from Rousanou. Regarding these losses, as well as the fate of the library of the Hagia Triada monastery and consequently the loss of the personal library of Paisios, bishop of Stagoi during WWII, see Nicol 1975, 173–174 and Sophianos 1993, κε΄–κς΄, κθ΄. It should be noted that an illuminated leaf from a Byzantine gospel with a depiction of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew (11th/12th c.), the cod. *Toronto, Univ. of Toronto. Art Centre. The Malcove Coll. M.*82.450 (Diktyon, No. 75911), originated from cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 540. In 1909, Bees examined *in situ* this codex and gave a short description of its miniature illustrations, including that of Matthew. Almost fifty years later during the inspection that was carried out in June 1965, it was found that the miniatures of the Evangelists Mark and Matthew were missing. See Bees 1967, 675; Bentein & Bernard 2011, 240, and Olivier 2018, 780. The University of Princeton purchased in 1998 a small music codex, containing *troparia*, written by the scribe Jonas in Stagoi (1663) (now cod. *Princeton, UL, MS. Greek* 8; Diktyon 55633); see Kotzabassi 2009, 179 (n. 26), 180 (fig. 9), and Kotzabassi & Ševčenko 2010, 168–170.

the codices was due to the dire financial conditions of the monasteries during the seventeenth century and the attempt by the monks to secure either money or help from influential people. There were many cases in which the monks actively prevented the sale of manuscripts or their removal from Meteora, as also indicated by their reluctance to allow foreign travellers and scholars to access their libraries. This also explains how, despite all the losses, N.–A. Bees was able to catalogue over 1,100 manuscripts at the beginning of the twentieth century.[89]

More than a century after the systematic investigations by the enthusiastic scholar N.-A. Bees, significant research progress has been made on the fate of the Thessalian manuscripts in foreign libraries.[90] However, a more systematic survey and recording of those Meteora manuscripts which have come to light since then is a *desideratum*. This will enable scholars to establish the true wealth of manuscripts derived from the second largest monastic centre after Mount Athos and to expand our understanding of the various ways in which these manuscripts ended up in libraries and collections abroad.

[89] See Bees 1967, *43; Sophianos 1988, 56–65.

[90] See Olivier 1995, 533–540; Olivier 2018, 771–782.

APPENDIX I

Summary of the current location of 87 Thessalian manuscripts in foreign libraries, from the monasteries of Meteora and Dousikon, based on their notes and ownership entries

Canada

Toronto *(Univ. of Toronto. Art Centre)*

1. T*he Malcove Coll. M.*82.450 (Meteoron)

France

Paris *(Bibliothèque national de France)*

1. *Paris. gr.* 506 (Meteoron)
2. *Paris. gr.* 760 (St. Demetrios, Meteora)
3. *Paris. gr.* 876 (Meteoron)
4. *Paris. gr.* 880 (Meteoron),
5. *Paris. gr.* 1075 (Meteoron)
6. *Paris. gr.* 1123 (Barlaam),
7. *Paris. gr.* 1134 (Meteoron)
8. *Paris. gr.* 1377 (Meteoron)
9. *Paris. gr.* 2748 (Meteoron, Dousikon, St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
10. *Par. Coisl.* 59 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
11. *Par. Coisl.* 198 (Barlaam)
12. *Par. Coisl.* 203 (Barlaam)
13. *Par. Coisl.* 237 (Meteoron)
14. *Par. Coisl.* 264 (Meteoron)
15. *Par. Coisl.* 292 (Meteoron)
16. *Par. Coisl.* 378 (Meteoron)
17. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 928 (Meteora).
18. [*Paris Suppl. gr.* 1257–1281 (Meteora?)]
19. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1258 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)

20. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1262 (Meteoron)
21. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1272 (Meteoron)
22. *Par. Suppl. gr.* 1274 (Dousikon)
23. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1371 (Stagoi, Barlaam)

Italy

Milan *(Biblioteca Ambrosiana)*

1. *Ambr. gr.* 46 (Barlaam)
2. *Ambr. gr.* 193 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
3. *Ambr. gr.* 236 (Dousikon)
4. *Ambr. gr.* 308 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)

Venice *(Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana)*

5. *Marc. gr.* 104 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)

United Kingdom

London *(The British Library)*

1. *BL Add.* 39618 (Meteoron)
2. *BL Add.* 40655 (Rousanou)
3. *BL Add.* 64797 (Meteoron)
4. *Egerton* 3154 (Meteora)

Oxford

5. *Bodleian Cromwell* 6 (Meteoron)
6. *Bodleian Cromwell* 26 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
7. *Bodleian Cromwell* 13 (Meteora?)
8. *Bodleian, Keble College* 52 (Barlaam)
9. *Bodleian liturg. gr.* 3 (Meteoron)
10. *Christ Church, Wake gr.* 66 (Dousikon)

Birmingham

11. *Mingana gr.* 3 (olim Salisbury, Meteoron)

Sweden

Uppsala *(Uppsala University)*

1. *Upps. UB gr.* 12 (Dousikon)
2. *Upps. UB gr.* 17 (Dousikon)
3. *Upps. UB gr.* 19 (Dousikon)

Germany

Munich *(Bayerische Staatsbibliothek)*

1. *München, BSB, gr.* 639 (Meteoron)

Russia

St. Petersburg *(Rossijskaja Nacional'naja biblioteka)*

1. *Petrop. gr.* 73 (Meteora)
2. *Petrop. gr.* 124 (Rousanou)
3. *Petrop. gr.* 205 (Barlaam)
4. *Petrop. gr*. 235/235a (Barlaam)
5. *Petrop. gr.* 251 (Barlaam)
6. *Petrop. gr.* 256 (Rousanou)
7. *Petrop. gr.* 301 (Meteora)
8. *Petrop. gr.* 321 (Meteora)
9. *Petrop. gr.* 383 (Meteora)

Unites States

New York *(Metropolitan Museum of Art)*

1. *Department of Medieval Art and the Cloisters, mss. acc. no.* 1991.232.15 (Meteoron)

Michigan *(University of Michigan Ann Arbor)*

2. *Ann Arbor Mich* 10 (Meteora)
3. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 35 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)

4. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 38 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
5. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 39 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
6. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 44 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
7. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 47 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
8. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 78 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
9. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 79 (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)

Princeton *(Princeton University Library)*

10. *Princeton, UL, MS. Greek* 8 (Stagoi)

APPENDIX II

Historical events of the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries	Losses of manuscripts
1568: Confiscation of monastic property by the Ottoman sultan, Selim II.	
c. **1581–1583**: The monks of Great Meteoron request economic support from the Prince of Wallachia, Mihnea II Turcitul.	
c. **1585–1586**: Devaluation of the Ottoman currency.	
1608/9: The abbot of Great Meteoron buys a manuscript from the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas.	**1607–1608**: Antonius Salmatius Montiferratensis' mission (Milan), **3** mss.
1609: Great Meteoron is plundered by Ottoman Turks.	
1616: Great Meteoron is plundered by Arslan bey, the Ottoman Pasha of Ioannina.	
	1623 (Nov. 1st): The abbot and monks of the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas sell to nearby Barlaam, their large Gospel for 4,600 *aspra*.
1632 (Oct. 26th): Great Meteoron is partially destroyed by fire.	
1634-1653: The monks from the Meteora monasteries request economic support and help from the Prince of Moldavia, Vasile Lupu.	
1636/7: The monastery of Great Meteoron is shelled by the Pasha of Ioannina on his way to Constantinople.	

1641: The monks of Great Meteoron are permitted by Ecumenical Patriarch, Parthenios I, to petition for *zēteia.*

1643–1653: Athanasios Rhetor's mission (Paris), **16** mss.

1654: Three abbots from Meteora monasteries request economic support from the Russian Tsar, Alexis Mikhailovich, on behalf of the Great Meteoron monastery.

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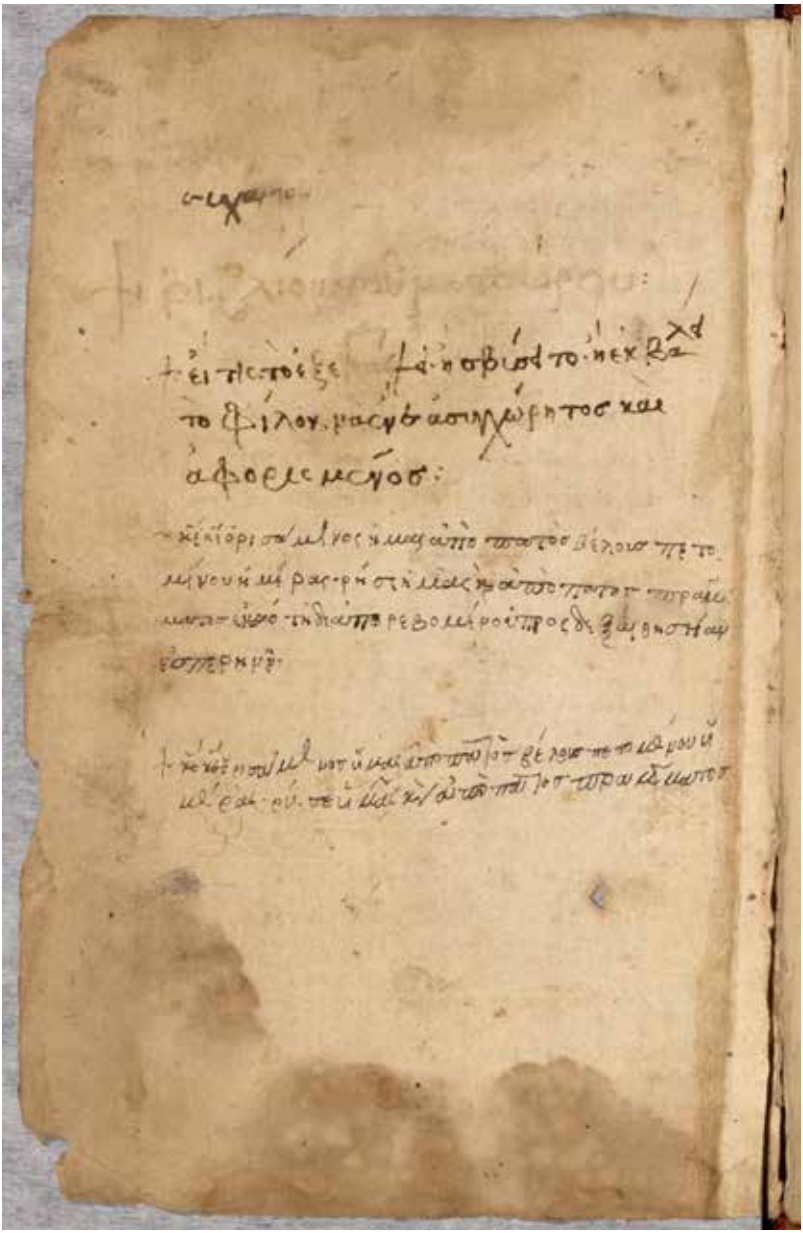

Fig. 1: *Fifteenth century note on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), cod. gr. suppl. 1272, f. 1v.*

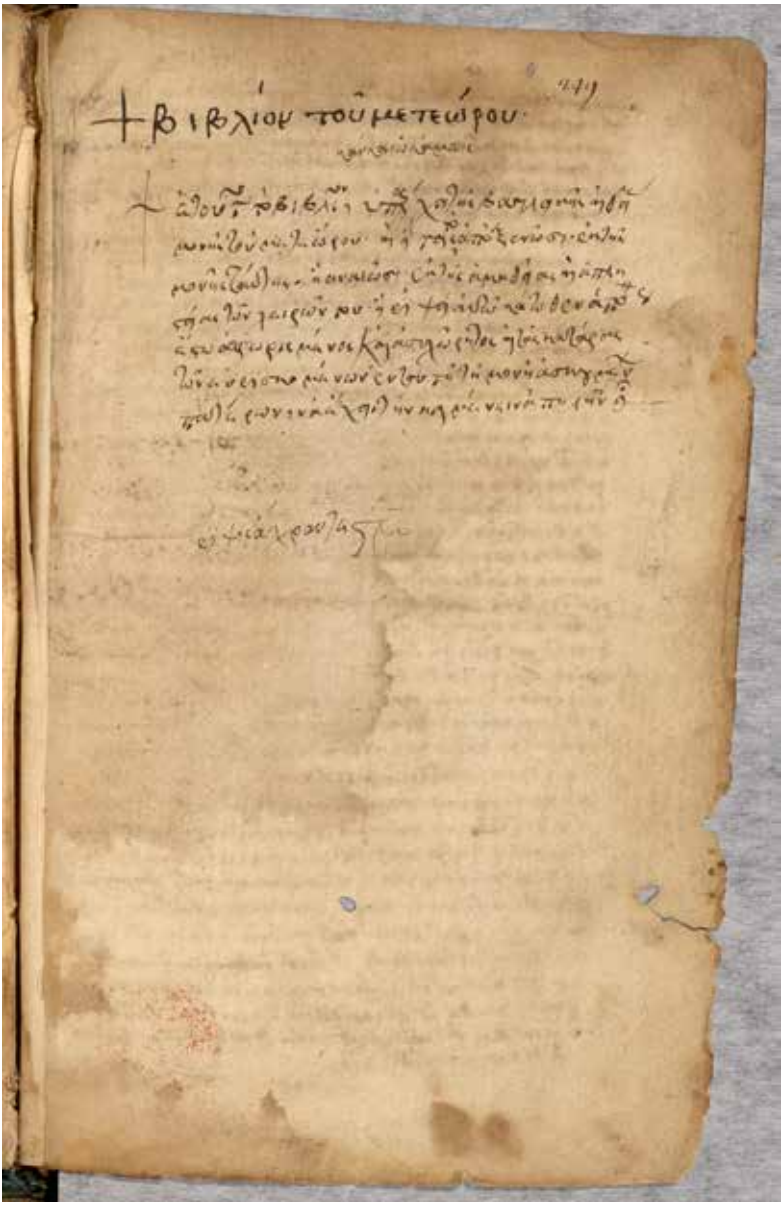

Fig. 2: *Sixteenth century note on Paris, BNF, cod. gr. 1075, f. 249r.*

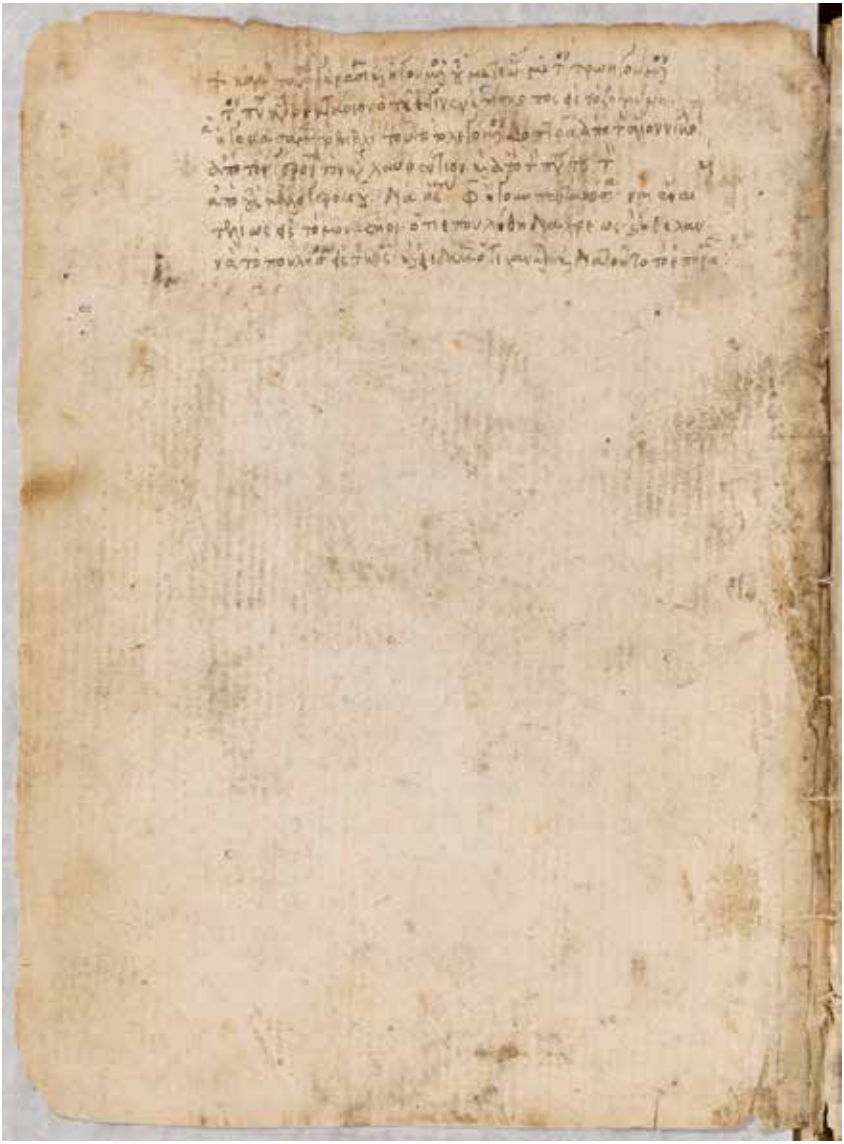

Fig. 3: *Late sixteenth-century note on Paris, BNF, cod. gr. 2748, f. 3v.*

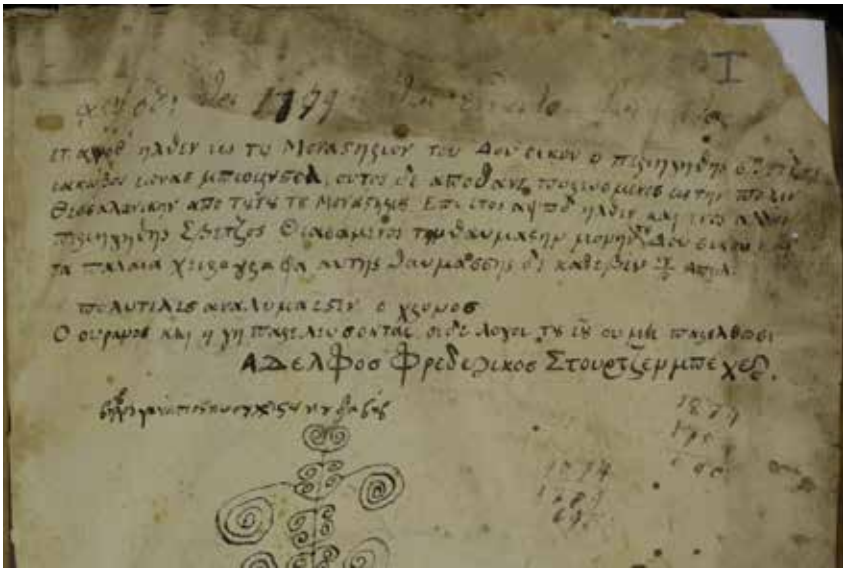

Fig. 4: *Note by Swedish traveller A.-F. Sturtzenbecker on Athens, National Library of Greece, cod. 65, front flyleaf.*

The Reception of Cavafy in Russia and Ukraine*

Anastassiya Andrianova

In *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, André Lefevere identified several factors that determine which literary works get accepted or rejected, canonized or not canonized, including power, ideology, and the patronage of persons and institutions; added to these, the translation of Greek texts in particular is influenced by the presence of a classical tradition, Philhellenism, and Greek diaspora.[1] As Joanna Kruczkowska points out in her discussion of modern Greek poetry translations into Polish, what is missing from Lefevere's theory is, however, the important factor of the translator's enthusiasm for individual authors.[2] Along with a Philhellenic tradition that brought Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933) to Russia and Ukraine, it is the enthusiasm of individual translators working in receptive literary and critical circles that evidently fueled the translation, publication, and dissemination of Cavafy's work in Russian and Ukrainian. Specifically, that of the Russian philologist Sof'ia Il'inskaia, who "discovered" Cavafy and produced the first translations of his poems into Russian; and other translators and critics, including Mikhail Gasparov, Irina Kovalëva, Vladimir

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1 Lefevere 1992.

2 Kruczkowska 2015, 106.

Toporov, and Tat'iana Tsiv'ian, as well as the émigré poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky; and Cavafy's Ukrainian translators and enthusiasts, Andrii Bilets'kyi (and the broader efforts of the Andrii Bilets'kyi Historico-Philological Society), Hryhorii Kochur, Iryna Betko, and Andrii Savenko. Most of Cavafy's works have now been translated into Russian and are readily accessible in the Cavafy Internet archive hosted by *Biblioteka Ferghana*, as well as in print in *Russkaia Kavafiana* (*Russian Kavafiana*), along with translations by Il'inskaia, Gennadii Shmakov (under Brodsky's editorial supervision), and others.[3] Although his entire corpus has yet to be translated into Ukrainian, the largest collection of selected poems, edited by Savenko, is available in print in *Konstantinos Kavafis. Vybrane* (*Constantine Cavafy*. *Selections*), along with some works available online.[4]

While much has been written about Cavafy in Russian and Ukrainian by Russian and Ukrainian scholars, little is known to anglophone readers about how Russian and Ukrainian critics received, translated, and disseminated Cavafy's work. To date, the reception of Cavafy in Russia and Ukraine has not been exhaustively documented in English. This history of translation and criticism would be of interest to Cavafy scholars outside of those linguistic contexts because some of the earliest public lectures on Cavafy were given to Russo-Ukrainian audiences, a little-known fact that puts in perspective the history of Cavafy's reception more readily identified with the anglophone and francophone West: crediting E.M. Forster and T.S. Eliot with promoting Cavafy in the English-speaking world and Marguerite Yourcenar, with introducing Cavafy to the French. Such a discussion would, moreover, widen and confirm the poet's cosmopolitan scope and global appeal, the two qualities highlighted by his Russian and Ukrainian translators alike. Kovalëva, the late Russian translator, philologist, and poet, alleged that "Cavafy is, perhaps, the only Greek poet since Homer and the tragic poets to have a truly worldwide significance".[5] Stressing Cavafy's trans-

[3] Konstantinos@Kavafis.ru 2009; Tsiv'an (ed.) 2000.

[4] Savenko 2017.

[5] Kovalëva 2004. All translations from the Russian and Ukrainian are my own—A.A. Transliteration follows the Library of Congress (ALA-LC) Romanization Tables, with ligatures omitted.

latability, Kovalëva also considered him the singular representative of twentieth-century Greek poetry for the foreign reader.[6] Savenko finds him the "most notorious" (on account of his politics and sexuality) persona in "the history of Greek letters, the cradle of the entire European literary tradition, which gave the world many famous names".[7]

Generally speaking, Russian and Ukrainian Cavafy enthusiasts appear less interested in the history of Cavafy's reception in their respective national languages than they are in his reception by Modern Greek scholars and poets, particularly George Seferis, and in analyses of poetics and form. Il'inskaia's monograph *K.P. Kavafis. Na puti k realizmu v poėzii XX veka* (*C.P. Cavafy. The Path to Realism in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, 1984), a telling example, analyzes Cavafy's poetic development from his artistic failures and uncertainty to the discovery of his path and the refinement of his philosophical and aesthetic positions, and concludes with a chapter on "Kavafis i potomki" ("Cavafy and His Descendants"), discussing the posthumous history of his reception in Greece. Il'inskaia did, however, give a talk on the interesting history of bringing Cavafy to Russian-speaking audiences –with his first introduction given to the Greek diaspora in what was then the Russian Empire but is now Ukraine.[8] Savenko provides a brief entry in the *Biblioteka Ferghana* archive detailing Cavafy's translation and dissemination in Ukraine, though similarly without reflecting on why Cavafy might generate interest among Ukrainian readers in particular, other than the select few members of Modern Greek- or Cavafy-oriented societies.[9] Such reluctance may be due to the belief, voiced by the translator in partial criticism of Il'inskaia's attempt to read contemporary historical events into Cavafy's poetry, that his style is too "protean" for narrowly focused, and especially political, interpretations; while bringing to light the critique of imperialism implicit in poems like "Waiting for the Barbarians", tendentious readings limit the texts' "broad perspective".[10]

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6 Kovalëva 2001.

7 Savenko 2017, 6.

8 Il'inskaia 2000.

9 Savenko 2020a.

10 Savenko 2017, 24-25.

Similarly, Savenko suggests that the "universal elements characteristic of [Cavafy's] poetics allowed [Cavafy] to find 'key themes' the interpretation of which is panchronic in nature".[11]

An overview of Cavafy reception in the Russian and Ukrainian contexts suggests the influence of Il'inskaia's, Savenko's, and other individual translators' enthusiasm on the appreciation and dissemination of Cavafy's work in translation among Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking audiences, efforts aided by institutional support from Philhellenic societies and cultural centers; it also reveals the more subtle ways in which social and political forces have facilitated or thwarted such dissemination—a history that is curiously missing from Russian and Ukrainian accounts. This essay provides one such overview of Cavafy's reception history previously inaccessible to anglophone readers while filling in some of these critical gaps.

Philhellenism and Early Reception

The long tradition of Russian and Ukrainian Philhellenism set the ground for the reception of Cavafy in the Russian Empire.[12] Greco-Russian relations date back to the Glagolitic alphabet, devised by the Thessaloniki-born Byzantine theologians (and later canonized saints) Cyril and Methodius in the ninth century and used to transcribe Old Church Slavonic. This intercultural connection was solidified through Christian Orthodoxy shared by Kievan Rus' and Byzantium. Concern for Greek language and culture is evident in the efforts of Tsar Peter the Great and Tsarina Catherine the Great, who promoted literary Philhellenism.[13] The latter patronized the Greek scholar Eugenios Voulgaris, founded a Greek *gymnasion* for Greek children in Saint Petersburg in 1775, and encouraged Greek settlements in Mariupolis (currently, Mariupol, Ukraine) and Odessa, both of which became important centers of Greek culture and

[11] Savenko 2020, 73.

[12] For more on Philhellenism, see Arsh 2007; for cultural, political, and economic connections between Greeks and Russians, see Sokolovskaia 2018; for Greek diaspora in the Crimea, see Nikiforov 2013.

[13] Arsh 2007.

trade. Φιλική Εταιρεία (Society of Friends), for example, was founded in Odessa in 1814 by young Phanariot Greeks from Constantinople and the Russian Empire with the goal of overthrowing the Ottomans and establishing an independent Greek state. Interest in Greece remains strong to this day in the south of Ukraine, where Greek minorities tended to settle.

Philhellenism undoubtedly explains why some of the earliest public lectures on Cavafy's poetry in the history of his reception were well received by Russian and Ukrainian audiences. The most comprehensive overview of Cavafy reception in the Russian context (first in the Russian Empire and later in the Soviet Union) is provided by Il'inskaia, his Russian "discoverer", in a talk she delivered at the Fifth International Symposium on Cavafy in November 1995, titled "K.P. Kavafis v Rossii" ("C.P. Cavafy in Russia"), which was first published in the Athenian journal Θέματα λογοτεχνίας. According to Il'inskaia, the first oral introductions to Cavafy's work in Russian took place in 1911 and 1912 "in two southern cities", Ekaterinoslavl' and Rostov, "with flourishing Greek populations, following an initiative by the Greeks".[14] The first bit of evidence comes from a library catalogue of the English club in Ekaterinoslavl', then part of the Russian Empire and presently the city of Dnipro in Ukraine. The lecture was given on May 20, 1911 by K. Vallianos and dedicated to the Greeks of Egypt and, specifically, "to the young poet Cavafy" (who was 48 at the time). The second lecture, mentioned in G. Skaramangas' unpublished journal, took place in December 1912 in Rostov, a city in southern Russia; Skaramangas notes that "in the hall of the public library the honorable audience listened to a lecture by Ambrosius Rallis on the Greek poet from Alexandria C.P. Cavafy".[15] Rallis, doctor and son of the painter F. Rallis, is listed among the people to whom Cavafy gifted his collections (a book from 1910). In the public appreciation of Cavafy those two Russian lectures were preceded only by Petros Petridis' 1909 lecture in Alexandria, which had mixed success, "clearly indicating that the public was not yet ready to

[14] Il'inskaia 2000, 563.

[15] Ibid. 563.

appreciate Cavafy".[16] Forster, of course, would not introduce the poet to the English-speaking world until 1919, with the first English translations appearing four years later.[17]

Il'inskaia suggests that Cavafy could have been introduced to Russian audiences as early as 1903 or 1904 by Mikhail Likiardopoulos, who published on Russian literature in two Greek journals (*Παναθήναια* and *Νουμάς*) and on Greek literature and culture in the leading modernist journal *Vesy* (*Libra*), and whose "Letters from Moscow" appear in the same issue as Xenopoulos' essay on Cavafy and Cavafy's own poems, "Unfaithfulness" and "Voices".[18] However, Likiardopoulos' interests shifted to Oscar Wilde and away from Russian-Greek connections before he did any work on Cavafy.[19] Il'inskaia is confident that Likiardopoulos must have read Cavafy, and that if anyone could have introduced him to Russian readers, it was he, especially since he collaborated with the Russian decadent Mikhail Kuzmin, who also, theoretically, could have introduced the poet to Russian readers, but did not: the two –Kuzmin and Cavafy– had a famous "nevstrecha" (non-meeting) in Alexandria, where Kuzmin had traveled in 1895.[20] To Kuzmin, who produced a collection titled *Aleksandriiskie pesni* (*Alexandrian Songs*), Alexandria was also very meaningful; his homosexual thematics, erudition, and Gnosticism all seem to have originated there.[21] Il'inskaia concludes that the first time Kuzmin and Cavafy actually "met" was on the pages of her essay collection, *K.P. Kavafis i russkaia poėziia "serebrianogo veka"* (*C.P. Cavafy and the Poetry of the Russian "Silver Age"*), first published in Greek in 1995 and reprinted in *Russkaia Kavafiana* in 2000.[22]

The next chapter in Cavafy's reception in the 1930s tells the story of individual enthusiasm inauspiciously unreciprocated by Cavafy himself. Two letters from Moscow were written and sent to Cavafy in 1931 by a

[16] Ibid. 564.
[17] Longenbach 2009; Kovalëva 2001.
[18] Il'inskaia 2000, 562.
[19] Ibid. 543.
[20] Ibid. 473, 542.
[21] Ibid. 551; Tsiv'ian 2000, 577-578.
[22] Il'inskaia 2000, 543.

certain Timofei Glikman, a self-professed philologist-Hellenist. With a record of translation from Spanish and Italian, Glikman appears to have been the first Russian to want to translate Cavafy; he had a serious interest in Greek culture and wrote under the pseudonym "Timofei Grek" (Timofei the Greek). But Cavafy never responded to his requests.[23]

Reception in the Soviet Union

One would expect the political and cultural contexts that shaped Soviet letters in the 20th century –Socialist Realism, censorship, and dissident art; Marxist purging of bourgeois texts; homophobia; and Joseph Stalin's attempt to create a monolingual supranational identity– to have shaped the reception of Cavafy. These factors must have contributed to some degree: whereas the first public lectures on Cavafy date to when the Greek diaspora prospered in the Russian Empire, Stalin's policy of aggressive Russification and the closure of Greek language schools, banning of Greek publications, and terrorizing of Greek minorities must have precluded any work on Modern Greek literature.

Indeed, Cavafy's work in translation was not formally introduced to Russian and Ukrainian readers until 1967 and 1969, respectively, that is, following the Khrushchev Thaw, the period from Stalin's death to the mid-1960s, which witnessed the relaxation of repression and censorship and would have made it (more) possible to publish the works of a poet who was not overtly communist or pro-Soviet. Cavafy's homoerotic poems, however, would not be printed until the fall of the Soviet Union. In other words, it was over fifty years after the two early public lectures in Ekaterinoslavl' and Rostov that Cavafy was published in Russian and Ukrainian translation. In 1965 Il'inskaia's translation of Cavafy's "The Satrapy" was featured in a story by Mitsos Aleksandropoulos. Two years later, in August 1967, 11 of his poems were published also in Il'inskaia's Russian translation in *Inostrannaia literatura* (*Foreign Literature*). Founded in 1891 as *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury* (*The Herald of Foreign Literature*), this journal underwent various changes, both in

[23] Ibid. 564-565.

name and orientation, throughout the Soviet period. Under Stalin, it was under three levels of censorship: like other journals, it was policed by the censorship agency Glavlit,[24] which had to approve any publication, however trivial; like other serious literary journals, moreover, it was also subject to the party's ideological control, and added to this was the censorship of the Comintern,[25] which determined the lists of writers who could and could not be translated, with preference given to those openly professing socialist or communist ideals or, at the very least, showing some "tendency in that direction", including pro-Soviet writers like Romain Rolland, Louis Aragon, Bertolt Brecht, and Pablo Neruda.[26] Despite such strict censorship, not all works published in the journal supported the ideological interests of the working class: Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, John Dos Passos, and Thomas Mann appeared on its pages, and even James Joyce's *Ulysses* (though its publication was truncated). *Foreign Literature* also featured the translations of W.H. Auden, Federico García Lorca, Ted Hughes, and other avant-garde poets who did not subscribe to Socialist Realism.[27] Blium alleges that "all this was done for show, to keep up appearances, in the old Russian tradition of creating 'Potemkin villages', but it nevertheless made a strong impression on Western intellectuals".[28] That nearly a dozen Cavafy poems was included in *Foreign Literature* seems appropriate not only as a façade for the West, but also as a legacy of Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization and, perhaps in a different way, the general corruption and inefficiency characteristic of Leonid Brezhnev's time as General Secretary (1964-1982).

These first translated poems reached the Russian diaspora abroad, including Igor Efremov, the head of the New York-based Russian publishing house "Hermitage", who recalled reading Cavafy in Il'inskaia's

[24] The abbreviated title of the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

[25] Communist International, whose leadership consisted of general secretaries of national communist parties.

[26] Blium 2005.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

translation.[29] It was abroad, as well, that Brodsky published his famous 1977 essay "On Cavafy's Side", a review of Edmund Keeley's *Cavafy's Alexandria*. Originally written and published in English, Brodsky's review was then circulated in various Russian translations under different titles, including in *Russkaia Kavafiana*, thus adding to Cavafy criticism in Russian in and outside of Russia: for example, Lev Losev's 1978 Russian translation (titled "Na storone Kavafisa") first appeared in the French *L'Echo.* In 1988, 19 poems were published in the literary supplement to the newspaper *Russkaia mysl'* (*Russian Thought*), in Shmakov's translation with Brodsky's editorial assistance. A collection of Cavafy's poems in Russian came out in the journal *Khudozhestvennaia literatura (Literary Fiction*) in 1984, as well as in *Nauka* (*Science*), along with Il'inskaia's aforementioned monograph, *C.P. Cavafy. The Path to Realism in Twentieth-Century Poetry*.[30]

Ukrainian critical interest in Cavafy dates to the same decade as his Russian reception, and was largely due to the individual efforts of Bilets'kyi and his spouse Tat'iana Chernyshova, later carried on by their disciples, who translated several poems into Ukrainian. Kochur, first a neophyte and later a Cavafy expert, produced some of the earliest translations of "Waiting for the Barbarians", "Thermopylae", and "Candles", among others.[31] These were published in the journal *Vitryla* (*Sails*) in Kyïv in 1969 and then in *Druhe vidlunnia* (*The Second Echo*). The next to come out was a selection of translations along with a brief introduction written by Chernyshova, for a journal on foreign literature in translation titled *Vsesvit* (*Universe*).[32]

Reception in Post-Soviet Russia

In both the Russian and Ukrainian contexts longer selections started appearing in the 1990s after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In 1995 the Soviet and Russian philologist and translator Boris Dubin pre-

[29] Il'inskaia 2000, 566.
[30] Ibid. 566-567.
[31] Savenko 2020a.
[32] Ibid.

pared a special edition of *Foreign Literature* titled *Portret v zerkalakh: Kavafis* (*A Portrait in Mirrors: Cavafy*) consisting of essays by Auden, Brodsky, and Yourcenar.[33] The journal *Literaturnoe obozrenie* (*Literary Review*) dedicated a special issue to 20th-century Greek literature in 1997, in which Cavafy was prominently featured, and then in 1998, the journal *Kommentarii* (*Commentaries*) published a translation of Seferis' seminal essay "C.P. Cavafy and T.S. Eliot: Parallels". The publication of *Russkaia Kavafiana* in 2000 marks the final phase of Cavafy's reception in post-Soviet Russia, as it includes translations into Russian of practically the entire poetic corpus (including 69 poems previously unavailable in Russian translation), two monographs, and a series of articles by Cavafy experts. In 2003, a tome of his prose was also published.[34] That the majority of critical output in Russia came out around or after 1984 may be attributed to the further relaxation of censorship under Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost (openness, transparency), with its objective to promote open discourse between the citizenry and the mass media, followed by the liberal policies of post-Soviet Russia's first president Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999).

This rather late publication of Cavafy's oeuvre perhaps explains why the leading Russian philologist Toporov would claim, in 2000, that Russian readers "have only very recently begun to familiarize themselves with the Cavafy phenomenon: with some rare exceptions, he is not yet their own".[35] Toporov laments this in "Iavlenie Kavafisa" ("The Cavafy Phenomenon"), while also asserting that Cavafy is not only prominent in 20th-century world literature, but also the culmination of three millennia of Greek literature and culture—a gesture toward Cavafy's transhistorical legacy reiterated by Russian and Ukrainian critics alike.

One notable essay from this period is Il'inskaia's previously mentioned *C.P. Cavafy and the Poetry of the Russian "Silver Age"*, originally published in 1995. By drawing parallels to three early 20th-century

[33] Kovalëva 2004.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Toporov 2000, 491. This is an expanded version of his 1994 article "Dve zametki o poėzii Kavafisa" ("Two Notes on Cavafy's Poetry"), published in *Znaki Balkan* (*Balkan Signs*).

Russian modernist poets who participated, Il'inskaia argues, in a unified European process, she set the stage for the reception of Cavafy in the Russian literary sphere. This is the kind of sponsorship that Lefevere describes in his discussion of translation.[36] Specifically, Il'inskaia traces independent parallels between Cavafy and the leading Russian Symbolist Valerii Briusov, the aforementioned Kuzmin, and Nikolai Gumilev, the cofounder of the modernist Acmeist movement. She draws attention to a shared symbolism and, at the same time, a tendency, especially for Briusov and Cavafy, toward concrete meaning, clarity and precision in expression, which made them break out of the Symbolist aesthetic.[37] All three took similar approaches to solving problems in their creative processes and also similarly faced the fin-de-siècle dilemma between revolution and evolution, choosing bold evolutionary moves. Additionally, they shared Cavafy's unrestrained dedication to art, turned to high culture as a fund for creativity, and tended toward universality while also understanding that they were living in an age of major cataclysms.[38] With Kuzmin in particular, Il'inskaia insists, Cavafy shared an interest in Alexandria as a locus of content, figure, and lexicon, so much that their works could be read as "Greek and Russian variants of the same texts".[39]

Homoerotic Poems

Kuzmin and Cavafy shared not only aesthetic interests and thematics, as Il'inskaia notes; both poets' works were subject to the social repression and literary censorship of sexuality during the Soviet era. Kuzmin, Russia's first openly gay writer, was condemned to "official obscurity" for decades.[40] The criminalization and pathologizing of homosexuality in the Soviet Union prevented Cavafy's homoerotic poems from being

[36] Lefevere 1992.

[37] Il'inskaia 2000, 531. Cf. Savenko 2017, 11, who describes such precision in terms of Eliot's "objective correlative".

[38] Il'inskaia 2000, 528-529.

[39] Ibid. 533.

[40] Malmstad & Bogomolov 1999.

published. Indeed, unique to the 2000 edition of *Russkaia Kavafiana*, as compared to previous publications, including a small volume of 159 pages titled *Lirika* (*Lyrics*, 1984), was the addition of the erotic poems;[41] the latter, in Kovalëva's words, "we could not even dream of printing in 1984", pre-Glasnost[42]—that is, two years before a Russian respondent famously claimed, in one of the first Soviet-American tele-bridges, that "there [was] no sex in the USSR" ("U nas seksa net…"). That even as late as 2001 Kovalëva felt the need to refer to Cavafy's sexuality euphemistically in a popular literary newspaper ("Cavafy, as it is said nowadays, 'adhered to a nontraditional orientation'…"), suggests that at least some aspects of the poet's biography remain taboo.[43] In contrast, in *The New York Review of Books* in 1977, Brodsky wrote openly about Cavafy's visits to homosexual brothels.[44]

Homosexuality was criminalized during most of the Soviet era, though some discussion of decriminalization was initiated in the 1960-70s; the entry in the *Big Soviet Encyclopedia* on *gomoseksualizm* (homosexuality) claimed it to be a pathology, and some psychological research was published in the 1980s; at the end of that decade the Libertarian Party was the first to recognize the rights of "sexual minorities".[45] Male homosexual intercourse (*muzhelozhstvo*, or "man-lying-with-man") was decriminalized only in 1993. Even after its decriminalization, however, homosexuality continues to be pathologized in Russia in a general atmosphere of homophobia, with activist voices intervening in discursive practices around homosexuality but falling short of social recognition.[46]

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[41] Savenko's *Vybrane* (2017) features such homoerotic poems as "Zmal'ovane" ("Pictured", 85), "Do dverei kav'iarni" ("At the Café Door", 88), "Na vulytsi" ("In the Street", 91), "Pered statuieiu Endymiona" ("Before the Statue of Endymion", 93), and "Iunyi literator na 24-mu rotsi svoho zhyttia" ("A Young Poet in His Twenty-Fourth Year", 175). These, along with several others, are also included in *Russkaia Kavafiana* (2000), respectively: "Narisovannoe" (67), "U vkhoda v cafe" (70), "Na ulitse" (97), "Pered statuei Ėndimiona" (79), and "24-i god iz zhizni molodogo literatora" (159).

[42] Kovalëva 2001.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Brodsky 2000 (1977), 486-487.

[45] Kondakov 2013, 408.

[46] Ibid. 409.

The history of sexuality in the Soviet Union and beyond further puts in perspective Il'inskaia's claim about the missed opportunities of introducing Cavafy to Russian readers early on, particularly given Likiardopoulos' literary proximity to the Modern Greek poet. The honest portrayal of same-sex love in Kuzmin's novel *Kryl'ia* (*Wings*, 1906) was well received by his Russian modernist peers, including Briusov; in an unprecedented move, Briusov chose to devote an entire issue of the journal *Libra* (the modernist journal where Likiardopoulos published some of his work) to this novel by the "Russian Oscar Wilde".[47] Theoretically speaking, building on such momentum Cavafy could have become "a phenomenon" in Russia prior to 1917. After 1917, "gay men were at times imprisoned for violations of 'public order' in Soviet Russia if they acted on their inclination, [and] campaigns were carried out for the eradication of the 'disease'"; in fact, "several of Kuzmin's gay friends and his lover were arrested, interrogated, and blackmailed by the secret police".[48]

Reception in Post-Soviet Ukraine

Similar to the post-Soviet Russian context, Cavafy's work became more widely available to Ukrainian audiences after the fall of the Soviet Union. In 1991, the year of Ukraine's independence, the first edition with 10 poems came out, translated by Betko, Nadiia Hontar, Kochur, Oleksandr Ponamariv, and Sviatoslava Zubchenko. Since then more translations and editions have appeared, with the publication of *Vybrane* in 2017 containing the most comprehensive, though yet incomplete selection, edited and introduced by Savenko, the translator of the majority of the volume's poems, who has also translated into Ukrainian works by Seferis, Vizyinos, Papadiamantis, Lucian, and the ancient Greek lyricists. In the mid-1990s, moreover, the Fund for Greek Culture in Odessa started an initiative to publish a bilingual edition of the entire poetic oeuvre, which was, however, never completed. In 1999 most of the se-

[47] Malmstad 2000, 86.
[48] Ibid. 88n.

lected materials were published in the third volume of *The Notes of the Andrii Bilets'kyi Historico-Philological Society*, with an introductory chapter prepared by Betko and translations by the society's members, including Betko, Savenko, and Kochur.[49]

Evidence of Cavafy's relevance in contemporary Ukraine may be gleaned from a 2005 announcement of a local photography exhibit of Mount Athos landscapes in Kharkiv, held as part of the city's celebration of Greek culture. This announcement alleges that Greek antiquity and Hellenism are formative for all European (and world) cultures, but "Slavic culture in particular, because it spiritually grew out" of Greek culture.[50] Although the article makes no mention of Cavafy's poetry, the announcement is titled "Nam greki ne chuzhie skazal poet Kavafis" ("Greeks are not foreign to us said the poet Cavafy"), suggesting that Cavafy would be familiar to the popular newspaper's Philhellenic readers. In 2013, moreover, the project titled "2013—god K. Kavafisa v Ukraine" ("2013, the Year of C. Cavafy in Ukraine") was meant to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Cavafy's birth and the 80th anniversary of his death; sponsored by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, Religion, Culture, and Sport of Greece and the Greek Cultural Fund in Odessa, the year saw a number of events dedicated to Cavafy's life and work.[51]

The flourishing of Cavafy initiatives and publications was contemporaneous with Ukraine's emergence as a new independent nation, along with which came efforts to critically reevaluate Ukraine's past history of Soviet, Moscow-centered neo-imperialism and to reorient itself vis-à-vis the European West, most starkly evident in the Orange Revolution (2004-2005) and Euromaidan, the second wave of protests and civil unrest (2013-2014).[52] This can hardly be seen as coincidental, even if Ukrainian Cavafy experts themselves are not invested in drawing such connections. In Savenko's criticism, preoccupied with Cavafy's

[49] Savenko 2020a.

[50] Slavko 2005.

[51] "Proėkt" 2013.

[52] For more on modern and contemporary Ukrainian culture and post-colonialism, see e.g. Andrianova 2015; Chernetsky 2007; Grabowitz 1995; Pavlyshyn 1997.

place in the European literary canon, there are no parallels to Ukrainian literature's perhaps similarly fraught positionality, in light of Ukraine's colonial history as both "a semi-autonomous or vassal country" and "a somnolent province of Russia",[53] and its more recent efforts to align with the European Union and the West, which is culturally constructed as a "return" (*povernennia*) "to Ukraine's true identity, a return to enlightened Europe and Ukraine's European roots".[54]

In his introductory chapter to *Vybrane*, Savenko makes no mention of sociopolitical factors contributing either to Cavafy's obscurity during the Soviet era or to his emergence starting in the late 1960s and culminating in the post-Soviet period; rather than Cavafy's reception in Ukraine, Savenko comments on the poet's cosmopolitanism and connection to England and the English language, and his early realization of leading a "bifurcated life", partly due to homosexuality (one aspect of Cavafy's "social seclusion") but also due to the problem of pursuing humanist ideals and surviving in a society Savenko sees as plagued by a "dehumanizing crisis" (by which he means the broad disregard for or outright suppression of individuality and aesthetic sensibility).[55] Savenko describes Cavafy's choosing "the path of a small Chekhovian person" by becoming, in the words of J.A. Sareyannis, "the man of the crowd", assuming the position of civil servant, like his fellow modernists Stéphane Mallarmé and Eliot.[56] Notable in such contextualization are both the anglophone parallel and the Chekhovian allusion which, for the Ukrainian reader, would presumably highlight Cavafy's cosmopolitanism (and foreignness) while also making him more familiar through the Russian (though also worldly, because humanistic) tradition. Curiously missing from such grounding in the tradition of European letters and humanism is the more obvious parallel to Cavafy's modernist Ukrainian counterpart and near contemporary Lesia Ukraïnka (1871-1913), who was a Hellenophile and spent time in Egypt, and whose dramatic poems also foreground the tension between high ideals and crushing mundan-

[53] Grabowicz 1995, 678.
[54] Naydan 2009, 187.
[55] Savenko 2017, 7.
[56] Ibid. 7-8.

ity, while problematizing the dehumanization and commodification of art and artists.[57]

Besides broader transhistorical concerns, Savenko is largely interested in questions of form; he mentions the protean quality ("proteïsm") of the poet's process, his continuous revision and work with language, with the goal of eliminating anything superfluous to find the ideal form.[58] With respect to language in particular, Savenko comments on the juxtaposition of two communicative modes in Cavafy's idiom: Δημοτική (vernacular formed in colloquial settings on the basis of dialect) and Καθαρεύουσα (an artificial dialect created at the turn of the 19th century by literary, high culture), the combination of which (often through irony, also analyzed in Cavafy criticism) is said to have contributed to the creation of a unified Greek cultural tradition.[59] "Mury", Savenko's translation of "Walls" and the first poem in *Vybrane*, features the translator's approximation of this dialectical combination.[60] As other scholars, Savenko focuses on Cavafy's Hellenism and his reception of antiquity and Byzantium.[61] His most recent work proposes a more "engagé" reading of Cavafy's "Potentate from Western Libya" to explore what Savenko calls "the poetics of doubt" and the forging of a "queer discourse", teasing out, among other meanings, the poet's exclusion from the world of communication due to his queer identity.[62]

A similar preoccupation with form is evident in the critical reception of Cavafy in Russian. Any attempt to summarize this overwhelming archive would be impossible; notable for its lasting impact is, however,

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[57] See e.g. Luckyj 1969; Zabuzhko 2007. I am not aware of Ukraïnka's familiarity with Cavafy, but one will likely discover independent parallels, akin to those Il'inskaia draws with Russian Silver Age poets.

[58] Savenko 2017, 10.

[59] Ibid. 11-12.

[60] Savenko 2017, 29. Note, for example, the past form of the masculine reflexive "not hearing" (*nezchuvsia*) in the closing line, for the Greek Katharevousa Ανεπαισθήτως, rather than the more common *ya ne chuv* (I did not hear): *Nezchuvsia, i mene vidrizano vid svitu* (I did not hear, and I am cut off from the world); similarly, *U bezrusi* ("motionless", in line 3) rather than the more common *neruhomyi* (still, stationary) for the original κάθομαι**.**

[61] Kovalëva 2001; Chiglintsev 2009; Bekmetov & Perebaeva 2016.

[62] Savenko 2020, 73, 78.

Brodsky's essay "On Cavafy's Side", which homes in on Cavafy's language and poetics. Cavafy gains from translation, according to Brodsky, due to his use of "poor" ("bednye") poetic devices, without rich imagery or comparisons, and with reliance on the primary meaning of words, which further strengthens such "economy".[63] This technique comes from Cavafy's realization that language is no longer a means of knowledge, but of (material, bourgeois) possession, and by stripping it of accoutrements (poetic devices), poetry can win over language. The result is a kind of "mental tautology which frees up the reader's imagination". Cavafy does, however, continue to use metaphor, but in a peculiar way: he makes the "vehicle" of his poetry Alexandria, and the "tenor"—life (in I.A. Richards' terminology).[64] Composed in collaboration with Brodsky, Shmakov's translation of Cavafy's "Walls" into Russian ("Steny"), however, reveals that Brodsky perhaps overemphasized the original's linguistic paucity. Shmakov uses some of the same diction as does Il'inskaia in her translation of the poem, thus confirming the influence of Il'inskaia's translations on the way Cavafy was received, but he also employs imagery that could hardly be seen as "poor".[65] That Brodsky's evaluation (specifically of Cavafy's ostensibly "poor" devices) has been accepted as dogma can be inferred from its unattributed use in popular media. Brodsky's reading is offered as a general poetic strategy in the announcement of the lecture on "Pereklady K. Kavafisa" ("Translations of C. Cavafy"), held as part of the 2018 program by the Greek Fund of Odessa dedicated to the 155th anniversary of the poet's birth, which featured Savenko and other Ukrainian Cavafy experts.[66]

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[63] Brodsky 2000 (1977), 483.

[64] Ibid. 483-484.

[65] Il'inskaia 2000, 27; Shmakov, in *Biblioteka Ferghana* 2009. Shmakov's translation follows the original poem's rhyme scheme, as does Il'inskaia's, and opts for nearly identical diction: *vozdvigli* (erected) for the building of the walls; *peremeny* for changes in fate (cp. Il'inskaia's *peremenoi*); and the participial *rastushchego* (growing; cp. Il'inskaia's *rosla*), an organic term to qualify the (lifeless) bricks (lines 2, 4, 7). It also evokes both aural and visual imagery, e.g. the personified *glukhonemye steny* (literally: deafmute walls) in line 2; *promorgal* (I blinked through; I was blind to) and *zatmilo* (eclipsed; overshadowed) in line 6.

[66] "Ukraïns'ki vymiry Kavafisa" 2018.

Conclusion

More boldly than Auden who mentioned Cavafy's "seem[ing] always to 'survive translation'",[67] Brodsky alleged that, "Every poet loses in translation, and Cavafy is no exception. What is exceptional, however, is that he actually gains from it".[68] Toporov agrees with Brodsky's judgment on Cavafy's translatability: he gains because his language is stripped of all excess.[69] Whether Brodsky and Toporov were right about translation, scholarship on Cavafy reception would certainly gain from adding the Russian and Ukrainian contexts to the ever-expanding archive previously inaccessible to anglophone Cavafy scholars and students. An overview of Cavafy reception in Russia, the Soviet Union, and Ukraine reveals how a combination of the translators' enthusiasm for Cavafy, aided by institutional support and a history of Philhellenism, and broader historical forces has contributed to the dissemination of his work across linguistic and national borders. By reading Cavafy in Russian and Ukrainian translation, we find, in fact, a wealth of approaches, from Igor Zhdanov's romanticized adaptations[70] to Gasparov's "abbreviated" versions.[71] The wide gamut of interpretive transformations confirms Lawrence Venuti's claim about translation being "an interpretive act that inevitably varies source-text form, meaning, and effect according to intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture".[72]

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[67] Longenbach 2009.

[68] Brodsky 2000 (1977), 483.

[69] Toporov 2000, 527.

[70] Zhdanov, in *Biblioteka Ferghana* 2009. E.g. Zhdanov's translation of "Walls" ("Steny") expands the original eight lines to 20 and accentuates the poet's torment with the image of a deep, oppressive well, evoking Charles Baudelaire's fallen poet as albatross; through its emphasis on stifling confinement, his translation of "Windows" ("Okno") calls to mind the poetry of imprisonment by the Russian Romantics, e.g. Aleksandr Pushkin's "Uznik" ("Prisoner", 1822) and Mikhail Lermontov's 1837 poem with the same title.

[71] Gasparov relied on English, French, Polish, and Russian translations (made available in the 1984 volume); finding Cavafy's language too wordy and prosaic, he produced "abbreviated" ("sokrashchionnye") versions which he thought might be "more to our taste". E.g. Gasparov's "Thermopylae" consists of seven very short lines, as compared to the 14-line original.

[72] Venuti 2019, 1.

Yet, what we do not find in contemporary Russian or Ukrainian scholarship on Cavafy is a serious consideration of the sociocultural and political factors that shaped this reception history, except for one mention of sexual repression and homophobia which delayed the publication of Cavafy's homoerotic poems. Rather, Russian and Ukrainian scholars attribute the poet's appeal to his cosmopolitanism, humanism, and aestheticism; even when suggesting more concrete literary parallels (Il'inskaia, to early 20th-century Russian "Silver Age" poetry; Savenko, to Chekhovian drama), these connections are largely philological and transhistorical. Savenko, for example, faults Marxist critics for not realizing that Cavafy's poetry transcends time because "[t]he poet does not point directly to any painful questions of today, though in many of his texts he reveals the broad functioning of social repression and the methods of its concealment", thus anticipating a Foucauldian critique of power.[73] This would be a perfect place to note the relevance of such politically charged ideas to Ukrainian readers familiar with their own nation's history of repression, first under the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union. However, no such mention is made. Similarly, when discussing Cavafy's poem "Nero's Term", his Russian translator Kovalëva suggests that by dating "Those Who Fought for the Achaian League" (1922), Cavafy meant to evoke the Asia Minor Catastrophe—but again, she fails to note any relevance of this gloss on empire to Russia's history of imperialism.[74]

The previously mentioned historical factors might have made Cavafy, a member of the petty bourgeoisie, an ideologically dangerous poet during periods of severe censorship under Stalin (1924-1953), which coincided with the posthumous rise of Cavafy's global popularity.[75] By the present century, however, such concerns should no longer be guiding post-Soviet scholarship. Such omission is all the more surprising given the influence Cavafy has had on translators in other national literatures, allowing them to intervene in contemporary

[73] Savenko 2017, 25.

[74] Kovalëva 2001.

[75] For more on Cavafy's popularity, see Jusdanis 2015.

debates about national identity in their respective historical contexts.[76] One counterexample is the so-called "Fergana" school of poetry which originated in the late 1980s-early 1990s in Uzbekistan, taking its name from Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley and its capital city, with its roots in Russian language and culture yet intent on mapping out a new linguistic identity more cosmopolitan than that of Uzbek language and literature. "[C]ombining in its Russian imagery both western and eastern aesthetics" and positioning itself at "the crossroads of world cultures", the "Fergana" school looked to Cavafy's Mediterranean and modernist identities for inspiration, its members having been shaped by the translations of Cavafy published in the 1970s.[77]

It is difficult to gauge why Russian and Ukrainian scholars tend not to historicize their accounts of reception into their respective languages, choosing to provide factual literary history and publication information without recognizing the ways in which editorial and publication decisions, as well as the broader mechanisms of state censorship which control them, are shaped by and reflect specific historical contexts; they fail to do this even in prefatory materials that more readily lend themselves to such discussion than monographs or articles with more narrowly defined objectives. It may be partly due to disciplinary gate-keeping and institutional constraints that delimit the scope of these scholars' projects to Modern Greek and Byzantine material. Savenko's caution against bringing political realities (though not biography) into discussions of Cavafy's poetry is symptomatic of a larger formalist philological trend. This paper has therefore attempted not only to introduce English-speaking audiences to the fascinating history of Cavafy's reception, from the early public lectures in the Russian Empire to the present, but also to glean the behind-the-scenes forces that have in the past and continue to mold it.

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[76] See e.g. Goldwyn 2016: the discussion of Yoram Bronowski's Hebrew translations of Cavafy in light of contemporary Israeli debates; and Goldwyn 2012: on Cavafy as a model for Albanian poets during and after the collapse of the Communist regimes in Albania and the former Yugoslavia.

[77] Bekmetov & Perebaeva 2016, 184.

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The Better Story for Romans and Byzantinists?

Review essay of Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland. Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2019. 373 pp. – ISBN: 978-0-674-98651-0, and

Roland Betancourt, *Byzantine Intersectionality. Sexuality, Gender, and Race in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, New Jersey – London: Princeton University Press 2020. 288 pp., 58 illus. – ISBN: 978-0-691-17945-2

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It has become commonplace to claim that Byzantinists are out of touch with both the contemporary theoretical approaches and the concerns of their day and age. Still, it seems that at least on the topic of identities there is a race in the field to get up to speed, even as the global public sphere shows signs of reaching a saturation with identity debates. A skillfully nuanced *Introduction* to a recent collective volume *Identity and the Other in Byzantium* offers an insightful, up-to-date summary of both the theoretical debates and Byzantinist publications on the matter.[1] Two recent publications, dealing with questions of ethnicity on the one hand, and of sexuality, gender, and race on the other hand, programmatically ring a bell for uprooting paradigm shifts in the field. By looking at them in parallel, this essay aims at nurturing a wider space of respectful, rigorous, and fruitful debate in the field of Byzantine studies.

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[1] Durak & Jevtić 2019, 3–22.

Romanland and *Byzantine Intersectionality*, the two volumes under review, have many points in common. Both authors argue against the deep-seated paradigms of the field. They both call for critical reassessments of their subject matter and claim to offer evidence from the sources, working theoretical definitions, and model approaches to emulate. They analyze significant corpuses that cover centuries of Byzantine history, dismissing the importance of factual/fictional divide for the study of identities. They detect the colonial gaze, medieval or modern, cast upon the Romans, which they claim distorted or misinterpreted the historical record in different ways. They ask their colleagues to take the voices from the sources seriously when they affirm their own ethnicity or gender, respectively. They seek cures for elite and Constantinopolitan biases and contend to account for wide or neglected portions of medieval Roman society.

However, their differences are consequential and call for a careful scrutiny. They concern, above all, the contrasting answers to their shared methodological questions, which are bound to have even greater impact on the future of the field than the undoubtedly interesting results of their own inquiries. What can modern theory do for Byzantinists, and is there an advisable manner to use it? Is 'anachronism' a useful concept in this debate, is it revelatory or occlusive? Are cultures translatable across time and languages? What is identity, what does it do, and who makes the rules? Whom is history about and whom is it for? Is an absolute disciplinary consensus possible and something we should strive for?

After laying out the content of the two publications, I examine the fashion and the degree to which they execute their programmatic assertions, by focusing on three main points: treatment of the historical record, theoretical groundedness and methodological consistency, and intellectual and ethical ramifications of their respective approaches for groups and individuals from the past and the present. By way of conclusion, I give a short assessment of implications of the two approaches for the future of dialogue inside the field. In a reference to Dina Georgis's book *The Better Story* (2013), this essay stresses the risks of binary choices and the importance of nuance and polyphony in debates on Roman and medieval identities today.

Romanland. Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium is the second book in Anthony Kaldellis' announced iconoclast trilogy, set to convey a seemingly simple stance: Romans in the Middle Ages were both a dominant ethnicity and a nation in a monarchic republican nation-state. The focus of this volume is on ethnicity, inseparably bound to the notions of nation and Empire in the author's theoretical construction.[2]

In the *Preface*, the author defines empires as polities in which an ethnic minority rules over a multitude of other ethnic groups. He announces his book as the first "proper study of empire in the case of Byzantium" (x), that engages "critically and directly with ethnicity" (xi), by studying "identity through the claims and narratives made by the culture in question" (xiii) and providing "both working definitions and empirical evidence" (xiv).[3] He defends the use of the name 'Byzantium', only as recognizable disciplinary designation.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one, *Romans,* begins with the chapter *A History of Denial.* After initial 'snapshots' from sources and definitions, which I will come back to, the author dedicates the chapter to various ways in which the Byzantinists have denied Romans their Romanness. He suggests a sweeping genealogy of 'denialism', starting from the Holy Roman Emperor Louis II in 871, passing over French Enlightenment philosophers, the Crimean War, and Edward Gibbon, directly to the late-twentieth century (mostly British) historians. Modern Byzantinists are marked as unconscious epigones of the Western European colonial views on Byzantium, comparable to Edward Said's Orientalism.

The second chapter, *Roman Ethnicity*, offers a mixture of theoretical claims and examples from Byzantine texts where authors identify themselves or others as Romans or ethnic others. Kaldellis draws attention to what he defines as a dominant ethnicity (or nation) in *Romanía* by extracting a list of criteria (belief in common ancestry, history, common homeland, language, religion, cultural norms, an ethnonym, perception

[2] While the first part (Kaldelis 2015) focuses on republican ideas and practices in Byzantium, the third is set to reinterpret its institutional framework.

[3] Since this essay focuses on identities, I leave the questions of political governance of *Romanía* largely out of discussion.

of difference from outsiders, and an ideal of solidarity) (46–47). He documents who was included and who was excluded from thus-defined Roman ethnicity, before examining how the notion of ethnicity functioned in medieval Roman language and culture. He asserts that the Roman ethnicity was felt and asserted throughout, regardless of gender, class, occupation or geographical location. He sets out to prove that Roman ethnicity was not imposed by Constantinopolitan elite, and that the population of the Roman polity was largely not multiethnic. In the following chapter, he emphasizes the vernacular, bottom-up formation of the word *Romanía*, as well as 'patriotic feelings' expressed in medieval texts. He zooms into two of his aforementioned criteria of ethnicity – language and religion – and their treatment in these texts in relation to the Romanness of their authors and characters.

The second part, *Others*, contains four chapters. The first one, *Ethnic Assimilation*, looks at "ethnic extinction and Romanization in Byzantium" (124), focusing on the cases of the Khuramites and Slavs. The main argument is that 'foreign' ethnic groups were systematically assimilated, while their ethnonyms could continue to be used for rhetorical and political purposes. Similar to the chapter on 'Roman denialism', the one called *Armenian fallacy* is a critique of modern historians who overextended the attribution of Armenian ethnicity to an astonishing number of historical figures with little warrant from the original texts. The people who were tacitly or explicitly Romans, the author claims, were in large numbers designated as Armenians in the twentieth century, based on names, questionable family ties, and misinterpretation of toponyms – the process he labels as biological or racialized thinking.

In the last two chapters, the author asserts that *Romanía* did not have enough minority ethnic groups to *be* an empire according to his definition, around the year 930, while the Roman nation-state might have *had* an empire around the year 1064, after a significant territorial expansion and before any extensive assimilation. These conclusions are based on Kaldellis' catalogues of ethnicities in the provinces, in Constantinople, and in the army, respectively.

In his book *Byzantine Intersectionality. Sexuality, Gender, and Race in the Middle Ages* Roland Betancourt sets out to "look at how stories

give us a glimpse into the intersectionality of identity in the medieval world, exploring how these various categories overlap with one another—not as distinct identities but as enmeshed conditions that radically alter the lives of figures, both real and imagined" (2). The meaning of the concept of identity is not explicitly defined, but can be deduced to mean both the sense of unity of an alterable subjectivity, being and acting in the world, and the subject's identification with a certain group, engendered through personal, social or institutional agency and perspective. The author puts a clear emphasis on the 'how', rather than the 'what' of identities.

The study begins with a story from the sources, the hagiographical narrative of Mary of Egypt (*Introduction*, 1–18). The author uses it to highlight how an overlap of chosen or assigned identities can leave an array of textual and visual traces upon a single figure from the historical record. It also serves as an illustration of an approach that the author will apply in five case studies that make up the book. The first chapter, *The Virgin's Consent* (19–57), follows the narratives of Annunciation and the interaction between virgin Mary and archangel Gabriel, in textual and visual sources from Late Antiquity to late Byzantium. It uses glimpses of rape narratives from homilies, hymns, historiography, ekphrasis and a *progymnasma* as points of comparison. The questions of sexual consent, conception, violation, virginity, and shame are systematically historicized, embodied, and contextualized in a dynamic Christian environment. Mary's consent becomes in turn a sign of distinction from both pagan women and Eve, a deflection of social shaming, something that can be tacitly assumed, and finally an important intellectual faculty and an essential element of Christian salvation, while both the psychic and the physical boundaries of her body are drawn and redrawn.

Slut-Shaming an Empress (59–88) gives an original reinterpretation of Prokopios' narrative of Theodora in his *Secret History*. Sketching "a process intended to shame and socially ostracize a person for their sexual actions, proclivities, or choices" (59), the author gives insight into how, in Prokopios' narrative, Theodora's sexuality crosses paths with her class, education, and non-elite origin in order to be transformed into an invective. But by tying it up to her acquired social privilege, this

narrative also gives insight into and array of contraception and abortion practices, available in different degrees and forms to elite and non-elite figures. Thus, the initial story of shame becomes an account not only of Theodora, but of specific bodies, diverse sexualities, medical knowledge, and social solidarities, which either voyeurism, or attempts of redemption usually obscure in modern historiography.

The following chapter, *Transgender Lives* (81–120) uses the notion of gender as a continuum of diverse forms of identity – felt, imposed, chosen, expressed, or embodied – to put three corpuses into a constellation: the hagiographies of persons whose sex was assigned female at birth, but who spent a part of their lives as (often eunuch) monks; the Byzantine reception of the account of the emperor Elagabalus' gender-affirming surgery; and excerpts from Michael Psellos' writings and other texts that suggest the existence and practice of gender-fluid and non-binary identities in Byzantium.

The chapter *Queer Sensations* (121–160) offers complexity, sensibility, and new meanings. Alongside a theoretical examination of the concept of queer – not only as a name for same-gender desire, but as an intersection of sexuality, love, and radical, utopian sociality that can open transtemporal deadlocks of categorization and belonging – the author presents an analysis of verbal and visual narratives clustered around the lives of transgender monks, the Doubting Thomas biblical scene, and monastic life in general. Refusing to either oversexualize or render 'respectable' the medieval subjectivities and relations, Betancourt contextualizes the way the same-gender desire "was a present reality, manifested both chastely and erotically, in monastic and broader religious life" (131), but was at the same time "only a small facet of […] queerness as a radical cohabitation" (160).

The final chapter, *The Ethiopian Eunuch* (161–204), starts with an interpretation of various visual representations (9th – 14th centuries) of the hagiographical narrative in which the Apostle Philip baptizes a eunuch from the entourage of the Ethiopian queen Candace. The author then expands the inquiry into other textual and visual narratives, looking both at the meaning attributed to diverse skin tones or colors, and at other types of "articulation and management of human differences" (178)

that might correspond to the modern conception of race without being identical to it in content. He stresses the importance of the intersection between gender, sexuality and race, before concluding that skin-color diversity was rather a culturally accepted norm in Byzantium, while racial difference might have been conceived along different lines. The *Epilogue* emphasizes the importance of the concept of intersectionality and argues against the common paradigm of center and periphery for the study of social dynamics and identities.

Using the Sources

In an interesting methodological approach, Kaldellis begins the first two chapters of *Romanland* with eight 'snapshots', that is eight translated and heavily commented excerpts from medieval Greek texts (two hagiographies, four historiographic works, and two governance treaties, 3–11, 38–42). These 'snapshots' are treated as diaphanous, representative, and generalizable, so much so that in two cases the names of the author and the text from which the content is drawn are not even mentioned. They are referred to throughout the book, allowing for other excerpts from the sources to be shorter and less contextualized when they appear. The texts are framed as speaking for themselves and telling us that the Romans were not only a self-conscious ethnic group *or* a nation, but that they were one hundred percent so, and that this was their autonomously dominant identity. A closer look at one of the 'snapshots' shows a more complex state of affairs.

This excerpt is taken from the seventh-century anonymous *Miracles of Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki*. Kaldellis tells a story of a group of (male?) Romans, who were captured and transported across the Danube by Avars, married non-Roman women, but kept a Roman identity by passing it on to their children for more than sixty years. Driven by their ethnic impulse and led by a chief appointed by the Avar *khagan* from their own ranks, they rebelled against the Avars, crossed the Danube back into *Romanía*, and were reintegrated into their ethnic or national community. The story is framed by references to the Egyptian captivity and the Exodus of the Jewish people. Kaldellis defines Roman identity

of the characters as the stuff of narrative (6–7). The story is evoked six more times in the study and used to establish the criteria of ethnicity and prove that Roman identity was not a Constantinopolitan, elite imposition. Kaldellis implies that the dispersal of the migrant Romans throughout *Romanía* is presented as a standard assimilation technique, ordered by the emperor as if by habit (145).

When we zoom in on, or out of, the 'snapshot', the picture is much more complex. It is unclear why the author translates "ancestral dwellings" (τῶν πατρίων τοποθεσιῶν),[4] the object of yearning of the Transdanubian Romans, as a singular "ancestral homeland", when the very next passage he quotes says that the people "longed to return to its ancestral cities" (7). The basic premise of the plot is not that the Romans returned to *Romanía* because they managed to stay Romans, but that they wanted to return to their cities (Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and cities in Thrace). Contrary to that urge, their chief wanted to keep them together in the vicinity of Thessaloniki, so that he could use them as military and political leverage over the emperor. The emperor lets them stay together at first, and forces the presumably Slavic tribe of the Drougoubites into an uneasy economic symbiosis with the newcomers. When the people started dispersing after all, the chief and his evil councilor feigned a dispute between them, in order for the councilor to be able to enter and take over Thessaloniki. From there, the two would join forces and try to launch a wider rebellion against the emperor, occupying the islands and Asia. Thessaloniki was saved by the intervention of saint Demetrios, who inspired an admiral sent from Constantinople to action, and the polity was preserved by the skimming chief's son, who betrayed the secret of the conspiracy to the emperor.[5]

The story is immensely rich in interpretative possibilities, including questions of identity. On the narrative level, it is fascinating how certain Odyssean elements were intertwined with the story of the Exodus. Even though the story is framed as a biblical homecoming, the author

[4] *Miracles of Saint Demetrius*, 228.13; The Greek edition and the French translation of this particular miracle by Paul Lemerle on pages 222–234.

[5] Ibid, 228.30–229.1.

implies that some of the people returning were not orthodox Christians.[6] The reader wonders how the people from Thessaloniki spoke, since the author says one of the immigrants knew our local (καθ' ἡμᾶς) language, as well as "the one of the Romans, Slavs and Bulgarians" (sic!).[7] The anxiety of having an armed force inside the city walls, as well as that of a civil war looms behind the text. Saint Demetrios is a religious figure, but also profoundly Thessalonican. The interplay of territorial (urban and regional), ethnic, tribal, religious, and political identities is as crucial for the story, as it is complex. While they pass the 'Roman impulse' down the generations, once in *Romanía*, the migrants use their agency to go to their old cities. The anonymous author refers to them as *Sirmians*, presumably because they spent sixty years living around the city of Sirmium, across the Danube. It is unclear if ethnonyms *Slavs* and *Drougoubites* should be read as synonymous, or if one is always considered as a subcategory of the other. The very title of this story designates Kouber and Mauros, the leaders of the rebellion against the *khagan* and the empreror, as *Bulgarians*, despite the 'Roman impulse' that brought them 'back' across the river. It would not be anachronistic to remember the identity struggle of the Anatolian refugees of the twentieth century, designated as Romans or Greeks in Turkey, and as Turks in their new Hellenic homeland. If there is a point to this story, it is that of intersectionality and complexity of identities, as well as of overlapping individual, collective, and institutional agencies that take part in their definition. A simple transition from Lemerle's "Greek race"[8] to Kaldellis' "Roman ethnicity or nation" does not seem to be able to account for that complexity, nor do the ethnic catalogues.

Betancourt also opens the *Byzantine Intersectionality* with a story from the sources, concerning Mary of Egypt (1–18). But the author's technique comes closer to a 'cartographic study' than a 'snapshot'. From zooming in on Mary's apparent mastectomy scars and gestures in visual representations, to zooming out to textual transmission and transformation of her hagiography and contemporaneous medical and legal lore,

[6] Ibid, 228.30–229.1.

[7] Ibid, 229.22.

[8] This is how the French Byzantinist rendered the *Roman genos*.

he gives ground for the use of the theoretical spatial metaphor of intersection. Mary stands in a very specific crossroads of gender, sexuality, class, occupation, geography, race, and religion. And while her agency in choosing or accepting any of these identities is both acknowledged and limited, all of these identities influence both her subjectivity and each other. Betancourt makes a strong point for examining them together. Furthermore, if the proposition that all historical and literary figures stand at intersections of different identities is generalized, Mary's particularity is still acknowledged.

When approaching his textual sources, Betancourt introduces the context of his excerpts, the history of the text, and its generic, social, cultural, and ritual environment. His perspective often branches out to adaptations and contemporaneous or diachronically parallel stories or practices in order to nuance his initial interpretations. He applies a similar approach to visual sources. The importance of bringing down the walls between philology, literary studies, history, and art history becomes particularly obvious in the interpretation of Nikoalos Mesarites' ekphrasis of the Holy Apostles. While some of the sources the author analyses have been in the spotlight for a long time, many of them are taken from the margins of Byzantinists' spheres of interest. The study has no pretentions to holism; thus, it is likely to inspire related inquiries into other periods, images, and texts it has knowingly left out.

Concepts, Methods, Theories

Romanland displays its author's seeming distaste for theory in general, which occasionally slips into simplification, irony, or mockery (28–9, 74), and a fusion of theoretical concepts in particular. Kaldellis rightly pleads for a critical and direct engagement with ethnicity. In his opposition to the racializing thinking of the twentieth century, he embraces one of the versions of a constructivist theory of ethnicity. Ethnic group (or nation) is defined as a socially constructed group with a common ethnonym, language, customs, laws and institutions, homeland, and sense of kinship, of solidarity and of difference from other ethnic groups, or at least some combination of these categories.

However, the way Kaldellis uses a theoretical concept, such as ethnicity (or nation), is by looking for correspondences between his definition of a concept and generalized beliefs held by medieval Roman authors. He interprets that correspondence as a proof of validity of the concept. He states, for example, that "Konstantinos' [VIII, M.V.] concept is equivalent to standard modern definitions of the nation" (8). Without nuanced interpretation, apart from being ahistorical, this kind of a circular approach creates paradoxical situations. A laudatory comment on Steven Runciman, which asserts that "for 1929, when the apparatus of the term "ethnicity" did not yet exist, Runciman's formulation of the distinction between ethnic background and nationality is not bad" (34), seems to imply that it was virtually impossible to understand the Romans for what they *really* were before the second half of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, the author does not systematically make a distinction between the concepts of an ethnic group and an ethnic identity. Ethnicity, the most common term in the book, appears to be closer to the meaning of ethnic identity, but the author explicitly claims that the Romans "were, and knew that they were, an ethnic group" (xiii), and the readers can rarely be sure which one of the two stances Kaldelis is trying to prove at any point in the book. This simple fusion absolves the author from proving the status of an ethnic (or national) group as a real thing in the world,[9] and allows him to generalize the alleged phenomenon.

But it also presents us with a double danger. On the one hand, it obscures the essential character of diverse types of communities absent from the historical record, but tracible in the material one, such as communities of practice. It disregards warnings from both sociologists and archeologists against overstressing ethnicity – a warning that should prompt us to consider the role of the written sources and historians in ethnogenesis or nation building.[10] On the other hand, it introduces determinism into the picture, since the author seems to imply that there is only one predictable way a nation (or an ethnic group) can develop (14–15).

[9] There are different shades of opposition to this kind of approach from Barth (1969) to Brubaker (2002).

[10] Jones 2008; Carter & Fenton 2010; Steidl 2020.

Readers might also find the casual fusion of distinct conceptual couplets – ethnic group/nation, ethnicity/nationality, patriotism/nationalism – confusing. Romans were, according to this position, an ethnic group and/or a nation. Although the author gives a list of theoretical or applied works in the notes and bibliography, this specific position seems to be original. The works referenced to support the conflation of ethnic and national identities either say that this practice is possible, but should be resisted;[11] or argue against rigid distinction and amalgamation, but assert that one phenomenon develops out of or replaces the other;[12] or argue for studying ethnicity and nation under the same domain, but not as a same category, while stressing they are epistemological and not ontological categories[13] – a clear contrast to this book's position (47). This claim seems to raise more questions than it answers. Where else, apart from Byzantium, were ethnicity and nationality the same thing? What were conditions for this fusion? Why should we need to retain two terms that cover the same semantic field? And since the terms are used as almost synonyms, what could the term "ethnic nation" (48) mean? Does nation imply nationalism, or does national discourse construct the nation?

Pointing out this confusion is not a simple "theoretical squeamishness" (95). It has clear consequences for the interpretation of the sources, as seen in the example from the *Miracles of Saint Demetrios.* Similarly, this approach allows the author to compare phenomena across space and time without always corroborating that they are indeed comparable. The terms 'Arab' and 'Muslim' are both used as ethnonyms, either as synonymous, or with distinction, or in a compound way, without any explanation or indication if they should be seen as ethnic, national or religious. Another unexplained fact is that certain parts of the Slavic ethnic groups are systematically referred to in the Roman sources by their tribal names (e.g., *Milengoi*), but the analyzed category in the book remains 'the Slavs'. The study reports the occurrences of the Roman ethnonym in non-Greek sources, but the Roman ethnicity or nationality seems to exist and endure in a vacuum, with the only possibility of inter-

[11] Spira 2002.

[12] Pohl 2013, 19–20.

[13] Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov 2004, 45–49.

action with other ethnicities being for the Romans to engulf them once the former enter their territory.

The author summarily criticizes the 'modernist' theorists of nations – the notion that nations appear only in modernity – with no reference to either their works or their critics (48, n.25), but it would be interesting to see his view of Roman identity confronted with that of one of the most influential anti-modernists, Caspar Hirschi, since it is diametrically opposed and thematically close to his own. Hirschi postulates the emergence of nations and nationalisms out of a temporally specific contradictions of frustrated Roman imperialism and the political fragmentation of late medieval Western Europe, and sees external multipolarity and interaction as its constitutive element. He stresses the role of intellectuals and historians in this process.[14] Since its publication, this position gained a wide dissemination in Medieval studies. Although theoretically sound and well documented, Hirschi's discussion unsurprisingly does not feature Byzantium. Testing the notion of multipolarity of nations could take the study of Romanness out of the aforementioned vacuum. But while it seems that Kaldellis ultimately aims at making Byzantine studies accessible and attractive to non-Byzantinists, his text remains overinvested in a fierce intradisciplinary intellectual dispute against a theorized, modernist, materialist, Constantinopolitan, ideological, top-down notion of Romanness.[15] Consequently, oversimplified, binary, mutually-exclusive alternatives are set before Byzantinists who might consider investigating these issues.

The final loose concept is that of "denialism", which is framed as a type of Orientalism à la Edward Said or even colonialism, concocted in the West, extending over a millennium, and directed towards Byzantium. Denying the 'realness', however defined, of the Roman identity of either the polity or the people in question makes no sense at all today. However, no evidence is offered of institutions, texts, images, or objects that could have served as vehicles transporting the Western bias from the ninth to the twentieth century, from kings to historians, in an unbroken line from Louis II to Averil Cameron. Existing literature on colonialism,

[14] Hirschi (2012).

[15] Stouraitis 2014; 2017. Scare quotes could be added to some of these qualifications.

Orientalism and reception history in the Byzantine context is equally absent.[16] While this study's claim might well be accurate, this question deserves much more dedication and nuance.

Romanland rages against the unquestioned dogmas in the field, and rightly so. As such, it can inspire intellectual bravery in young scholars and attract future Byzantinists. Many enticements and conclusions in this volume are sound and worthy of attention: the need to critically reassess ethnicity and political organization, the place of religion in Byzantine society, the Constantinopolitan elite biases and the role of colonial practices in knowledge-making processes. However, for its lack of theoretical clarity and consistency, the book does not always live up to the standards it sets for itself.

Byzantine Intersectionality seems to acknowledge that concepts change and interact when traveling between different contexts, discourses, and periods, while addressing the issue of anachronism head-on. As Betancourt puts it:

> The problem here is less the possible inaccuracy or anachronistic use of the term "transgender" in a premodern context; rather the danger lies in the modern assumptions about a binary gender system and a conflation of sex and gender that the terms "transvestite nuns" and the like imply (90).

The author introduces the readers with care into what might seem to be a niche theoretical realm. While defining and modifying the concepts he employs – sexuality, gender, race, trans, non-binarity, queer, slut shaming – he simultaneously argues against their marginality. The central theoretical concept Betancourt uses – intersectionality – has been travelling between academic disciplines and activist discourses for more than three decades.[17] It sprang from the recognition that women of color in the United States found themselves in a social position, including

[16] Cameron (2003) was the first to examine the applicability of Orientalism and postcolonial theory in Byzantine Studies. See also Auzépy (ed.) 2003; Nilsson & Stephenson (eds) 2014; Betancourt & Taroutina (eds) 2015; Marciniak & Smythe (eds.) 2016; Marciniak 2018; Alshanskaya, Gietzen & Hadjiafxenti (eds) 2018.

[17] Crenshaw 1991.

particular social invisibility and oppression, whose cause could not be reduced solely to either their racial or their gender identity, but was a specific amalgam of the two. Over the years, the term failed to become a unified, policed, hegemonic concept, remaining instead more of a nodal point, than a closed system, "a gathering place for open-ended investigations of the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities."[18]

It is this tool that allows the author not to banalize or shy away from messy and complex subjectivities. He does not normalize the strangeness of the information found in the sources; he does not try to establish whether a figure was more female, or less Christian, more socially privileged or less Ethiopian; he does not affirm the masculinity of the Romans to balance out the feminizing colonial gaze of the medieval Western Europeans, nor stress the empresses' charitable works to make up for her alleged sexual voracity. His approach is as queer as his objects of study, and the subjects he interprets are as byzantine as they are Byzantine and Roman. Betancourt is adamant and explicit about it: "Future scholarship must acknowledge that marginalization, oppression, and intersectionality are not modern constructs – they are methodologies. Even if such self-critical language is missing from our primary sources, we cannot state that the lived realities and experience of these subjectivities are not historically valid or present" (207). Indeed, it seems that the communication between categories of identity that ensue from such an approach is what allows the researcher to get the most of each individual category, as in the case of noting that the skin tone was more consequential for gender, than it was for race in Byzantium. Finally, it should be noted that intersectionality was first introduced into the Byzantine studies by Adam Goldwyn, and his observations on intersections between human and non-human realms of the past and the links between academia and activism remain one of the most promising avenues for taking this approach further, in conversations on identities and beyond.[19]

[18] Sumi, Crenshaw & McCall 2013. For the heuristic potential of the concept, see Hill Collins 2019, 34–41.

[19] Goldwyn 2018, 7–19.

Betancourt's study is bound to raise both questions and objections. It dedicates noticeably more space to gender and sexuality than to race (or class). Possible reason for that might be the fact that he has a much longer history of women, gender and sexuality studies in Byzantium to build upon. He not only cites but engages with works of Laiou, Talbot, Galatariotou, James, Smythe, Brubaker, Messis, Constantinou, Tougher and Neville, to name just a few.[20] Still, he diverges from them, or takes their findings further, in two important regards. He goes past the divide between positivist, reconstructionist history and textual, visual, or material semiotics. He also deconstructs the conventional binary (or tripolar) categories of gender and sexuality and tries to look between and beyond.

Readers reticent to interpret religious feelings and expressions as historical, socially conditioned, and embodied practices and phenomena might not be ready to accept his discussion of the Virgin's consent or the physicality of apostolic or monastic interactions, despite of all of the medieval images and texts involved. Similarly, scholars who do not accept the full implications of the notion of performative gender – that is, both the unfoundedness of the natural sex/cultural gender divide, and by consequence the non-binarity of gender – might have a hard time agreeing with the conclusions on Byzantine transgender monks.[21] Thinking of 'trans' not as a motion from one to another, and conceiving of it rather as a motion beyond the notional binarity, might be a useful approach for the reader who is trying to understand the voices and identities of these particular persons. It is also the reason why the author does not need to define Byzantine eunuchism as a 'third gender', for example. Moreover, since the eunuchs are not a central object of his analysis, the framework he constructs leaves a space for researchers to account for traits he does not dwell on.

Lastly, it seems improbable that a multitude of Byzantinists will outright accept the pronouns *they/them* when referring to Michael Psellos, despite indications that this author conceived of gender in general and,

[20] See the regularly updated and rapidly growing *Dumbarton Oaks Bibliography on Gender in Byzantium*: https://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/resources/gender-bibliography.

[21] See now also Spencer-Hall & Gutt (eds) 2021.

at times, of his own gender, as being fluid and non-binary. However, more important than any unanimous consensus among Byzantinist at this moment in history, is the possibility to think what has thus far been unthinkable in Byzantine studies, due to modern conceptual constraints and disciplinary traditions. Betancourt's text creates a possibility of speaking, in English, of a Byzantine person of non-binary gender, or about whose gender we would prefer not to speculate. This possibility is unmistakably political and important for a number of modern history writers and readers. But instead of focusing on the conservative backlash it is bound to provoke, I propose we should open a serious discussion about what it can and cannot do. How would this debate be translated into Romance or Slavic languages, which are grammatically gendered beyond the third person pronoun and still do not have easily available tools to frame it, or into grammatically genderless languages as Armenian, Georgian, or Turkish. What would it mean for the speakers of these languages, their identities and histories? Accepting a degree of untranslatability of any culture could, in my opinion, stimulate insightful debates, not stifle them.[22]

Certain assertions in the book could be finetuned. The story of Abba Moses the Ethiopian might have offered further interpretative possibilities if his class or socio-economic identity before ordination – that of a violent outlaw and brigand – had been taken into consideration (184–5). Even though the author takes class identity or social position into consideration when analyzing Byzantine figures, the theoretical toolbox and vocabulary of this social aspect seems to be much less developed and nuanced than those of the three domains from the title of the book – sexuality, gender, and race. Furthermore, the idea that "Byzantine writers were clearly proud of the ethnic and racial diversity of the empire, its subjects, and the citizens of Constantinople" (173) needs either further temporal and spatial contextualization, or some additional nuancing to account for instances of ethnic intolerance and violence in some of the texts. However, Betancourt puts a strong emphasis on the open-ended and transitional character of his findings. Thus, to those who might want

[22] Castaño 2019.

to say that the Byzantines could not have *really* been what this book claims, the study seems to respond that the Byzantines were *also* all that. This open-endedness is not accidental. It comes with his choice of theoretical tools.

Filling in the Gaps

Do historians have a sort of an ethical responsibility towards the unreachable persons from the past and their widely and diversely conceived readership? Kaldellis' study is syncopated by invectives of unjustly denying a historical community their ethnic identity. Still, he argues for a Roman ethnic (or national) identity that is absolutely hegemonic. Not only is it present throughout the society and territory of *Romanía* (maybe excluding the slaves), not only does it flawlessly assimilate all other ethnic identities, but it also presents itself as the most important identity to each and every Roman, making other identities either into criteria of the ethnic identity (such as religious identity), or into completely independent and irrelevant phenomena (territorial, occupational, class, and gender identities).

I can only agree with the author when he argues against the oversaturation of Byzantine studies with references to Christian/Orthodox aspects of Roman society, but it remains underexplained why a religious identity must be a function of an ethnic one, and not vice-versa.[23] The hierarchy and different levels of porousness between these categories are untheorized. The author writes, interpreting a thirteenth-century chronicle:

> Each pair, in its complementarity, is meant to convey the sense of everyone: «Urban and rural, slave and free, noble and common, ethnikos and Roman, poor and rich, worthy and unworthy, and every person of whatever station in life.» The pairing of Roman and ethnikos as an exclusive complementary pair means that «Roman» encom-

[23] Nuance added in Kaldellis 2020.

> passed both rural and urban Romans, rich and poor Romans, and so on (66–67).[24]

The reader might fail to understand why the combinations Roman and slave, or rural and ethnikos are theoretically less probable, real, or visible, that is, why ethnic pair should be interpreted as superordinate in this paratactic string.

Kaldellis subsumes all identities under ethnic/national identity, explicitly claiming that all categories of individuals subscribed to it, regardless of the presence or absence of those individuals in the historical record. Furthermore, he supplies evidence from the sources against the argument that the over-represented Constantinopolitan elite generated Roman identity for or imposed it on the systematically silenced majority.[25] However,

> [d]espite nationalisms' ideological investment in the idea of popular unity, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender difference. No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state.[26]

Interestingly enough, the excerpts that Kaldellis uses to affirm that women, about a half of the population of *Romanía* at any moment of its history, were and saw themselves as Romans include: a thousand Roman women to be married to the Khurramite immigrants; some women that "certainly" expected their Persian husbands to convert to Christianity; Roman women raped by Armenian soldiers; some Rum women enslaved by the Arabs; some women who were "obviously" implied, if not mentioned, in Manuel Komnenos' alleged conception of *Panromaion* as an extended kin;[27] and some Romans assumed to be women

[24] Conjunctions between categories are added in translation.

[25] A meaningful argument, diligently addressed by Krallis 2018.

[26] McClintock 1993, 61.

[27] Notice the essentialization of both kinship and ethnicity in this example. The logic seems to be that since both of these social groups reproduce through time, the membership of women in them is an assumed biological necessity and does not need to be mentioned. For a nuanced recent examination of the role of women in the Byzantine *genos* see Leidholm 2019, 106–109.

because they were textile workers (56, 76, 128, 249). It is also assumed that women were crucial for the transmission of ethnicity, even though, in the only overt case that we saw, the *Miracles of Saint Demetrios* depicted it as a practice undertaken by fathers (164). If this is a list of instances where gender and ethnic identity overlapped for Roman women in the historical record, can we still claim the universality of the ethnic experience across categories? Is this an anomaly of the sources, or an inherent characteristic of the category observed?[28]

It is noteworthy that juridical and commercial documents, as well as poetry and epistolography, from which fragments of historical female voices could possibly be extracted, are absent from the bibliography. Could the reason for this be their lack of interest in ethnic or national identification? I am not claiming that gender identity trumps ethnic identity or that ethnicity did not matter for women, but that the two are best observed in intersections and without any assumption based on an inferred and abstract universal subject, or omnipresent community. The 'realness' of the intersection is specifically recorded and remarked by the author in one case. The intersection of two ethnic or religious identities (Roman and Jewish) with the female gender identity, allowed the Roman Jewish women to initiate divorce proceedings and maintain some sort of economic independence (211).

It is through cases like this that the *Byzantine Intersectionality* helps us realize that not only marginal figures, but even the most elite and visible ones, like Theodora, stood at specific intersections of diverse categories of identity. Staying attentive to how both privilege and oppression shape historical records, Betancourt borrows the post-colonial concept of "reading without a trace" from Anjali Arondekar, and applies "recuperative hermeneutics of accessing minoritized lives and historiographies" (16). Furthermore, his focus on textual and visual traces of bodies and embodied practices, as well as his emphasis on how diverse identities were 'stamped' upon or into bodies (7, 102, 110–114), make the individual subjects in his book appear more 'real' than do the disembodied collective beliefs and consciousness usually encountered in

[28] Cf. Kinloch 2020, and Vilimonović 2020.

studies of Byzantine identities. It is also considerate of the diversity of its readers, and does not hide its political and community building impulses.

Finding oneself at the intersection of multiple identities of the same or diverse categories is different from having fluid identities. Mockingly attacking this latter concept, Kaldellis writes:

> One can allegedly wake up in a Serbian household, play the Greek in the marketplace in the morning, then switch to an Albanian persona at a wedding in the evening, pray at a Muslim shrine, and correspond with Jewish relatives at night […] They are a misleading and even fictional basis for studying historical ethnicities, which are not that easy to perform in a native way. Most people can manage only one in a convincing way, two at most. Truly "fluid" people are extremely rare (2019, 272–273).

A humorous response to this observation could be that it would be as tiring and challenging to do all those things in a single day for a single person, while constantly being a Roman. A more serious one would notice the practice of either "boundary work", or "boundary maintenance" in this remark. This kind of reasoning goes more with the process of ethnogenesis than with that of ethnic analysis.[29] It ironically proves the Kaldellis' point that writing on ethnicity in particular, and identity in general, is inherently political (273). Checks and balances for this sensitive process should not be provided by a common-sense mirage of objectivity, but by theoretical clarity and ethical responsibility.

Thus, when explaining the transition from racial to national and ethnic theories in the twentieth century, Kaldellis states that the 'West' with its heritage of racism, genocide and colonialism, should refrain from policing the "parochial nationalism of Balkan, Turkish, and Caucasian views of history." While their national institutions naturalize the temporal continuity of these groups today, the "Romans of Byzantium lack that advantage *and* face the sanctions of denialism" (46, author's emphasis). There is something more problematic here than deterministical-

[29] Brubaker 2016, 31–39; Barth 1969, 15–16; Jenkins 2008, 13–14.

ly extending the alternative or hypothetical history of the Roman nation into modern era.

In the course of the twentieth century, the alleged representatives[30] of at least three ethnic groups or nations from the cited territory conducted one or multiple genocides, while the term 'ethnic cleansing' was invented to describe their actions.[31] The perpetrators of such crimes that happened during my own lifetime and in my name, actively used medievalisms and projected their notions of national and ethnic groups onto the medieval history to justify their actions, often with the direct aid of national institutions and historians. Caution with the use of the term 'advantage', as well as the insistence on nuance and intersectionality when discussing identities (especially of the ones who are muted in this discussion) has to be inherently political, because the concept itself is.

The parallel reading of Kaldellis' and Betancourt's monographs resonates strongly with the critique of cultural artefacts presented in Dina Georgis' book *The Better Story. Queer Affects from the Middle East*. This anthropologist tries to interpret diverse aesthetic expressions of contemporary postcolonial identities. Relying on psychoanalytic, feminist and postcolonial theory, she defines her queer not as identity, but as affect.[32] She defines queer affects as sites and moments of vulnerability or trauma that linger, that have "no place in the social symbolic" and thus "threaten the logic of community, collective thinking and their narratives". Even so, and as such, her "queer affects" tell us as much about the subjects that experience them, as about the identities that those subjects refused or could not access. She focuses not only on the voiceless subaltern that are absent from the historical record, but also on the postcolonial voices that refused or were rejected from both the colonial identities and the anti-colonial hyper-masculine national allegiances. Her subjects are not

[30] Brubaker 2002, 163–189.

[31] It is worth noting that in a "Personal postscript" to the *Armenian fallacy* chapter Kaldellis both avoids using the term genocide and seems to classify it as something one might react to only emotionally, not intellectually, something to keep out of the main body of the study (2019, 195). Thus, the opportunities to both study the affect in the process of ethnogenesis and to engage with intellectual consequences of post-genocidal societies are lost.

[32] It should not be confused with the queer sociality in Betancourt's study.

'either/or', but 'neither/nor' and 'both/and'. Vulnerability is inherent in subjectivity, according to Georgis, because individuals rely on others to narrate their selfhoods. She reveals the "postcolonialities that are monstrous to the stable narratives of postcolonial resistance and heroism", and they teach her "that we are not obligated to live by the stories that no longer help us live well".[33]

The Romans that we, as Byzantinists, encounter now seem to have been at different times assimilating colonizers and victims of colonial-like violence. On top of that, a significant number of them have suffered different kinds of textual violence, whether they are present in the sources or not. Both Byzantinists and Romans need the better story. Certainly, Romans need to be acknowledged as Romans, their political organization needs a serious scrutiny, and provincial, non-elite identities need to be studied with care. But doing this without theoretical, interpretative, and ethical rigor and care exposes us to a risk of supplanting one denial with another. When identity is at stake, the choice is not between the Byzantines and Romans, or elite Romans and non-elite Byzantines, or Romans and non-Romans: the choice is between complexity and silence. Studying identity without intersectionality today, or treating this concept as a marginal gimmick, would be like throwing out the baby and keeping the bath water. To rephrase Kimberlé Crenshaw's echoing of Anna Julia Cooper – when transgender monks enter, all Romans enter.[34]

[33] Georgis 2013, 15, 22, 26.

[34] Crenshaw 1989, 160–167.

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A Neglected Storyworld Brought to the Fore: The Land of Rome in Byzantine *and* Turkish narratives*

Review essay of Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors, Martyrs, and Dervishes: Moving Frontiers, Shifting Identities in the Land of Rome (13th to 15th Centuries)* (Leiden 2020)

Ingela Nilsson

Buket Kitapçı Bayrı's new study of the Land of Rome (*Rum İli* or *Rum*) is based on a combination of sources that I think remain largely unknown to many Byzantinists: Turkish warrior epics, Late Byzantine *martyria*, and Turkish dervish *vitae*. These groups of texts are investigated in three successive chapters entitled "Warriors", "Martyrs" and "Dervishes", each investigating four different themes appearing in these texts: the Land of Rome, Frontiers, Us, and Them. The aim of the author is "not to reconstruct the real-historical world of medieval Asia Minor and the Balkans but to understand perceptions of the land of Rome, its changing political and cultural frontiers, and in relation to these changes, the shifts in identity of the people inhabiting this space" (p. 3). The focus is accordingly on perceptions and identity, seen not as stable, but as shifting and changing. Accordingly, this book not only fills an important gap as regards understudied material highly relevant to Byzantine Studies, but also makes a welcome methodological contribution to the study of historical sources at large.

Byzantium is often described as the culture that somehow falls between East and West, absent in discussions of both European and Asian history. Recent years have seen a growing interest not only in bringing Byzantium (back) into the discussion, but also in looking at long-dis-

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tance chains of contact in which the Byzantine empire played an important role. A landmark was Peter Frankopan's bestseller *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*, first published in 2015. The plural of the title is significant, because it means breaking away from the idea of a single Silk Road traversing Central Asia, and instead conceptualizing multiple roads and connections between places and peoples. In an interview published in 2019, Frankopan described the history of Central Asia as "a crucible for exchange – of languages, ideas and beliefs, as well as goods and products".[1] His interest in Constantinople and Byzantium is very much related to its being part of such a process, which lends it a place not only in the history of the Middle Ages, but in global history at large.

While attention has long been directed at the connections between, for instance, Byzantium and the Arab world,[2] or Byzantium and China,[3] and we have – over the last decade or so – seen an intensified interest in the identity of the Byzantines themselves (whatever that means),[4] one aspect of the Byzantine empire is most often left out of the discussion: the encounters and interactions between the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the borderlands and the Turkish-speaking groups that were not only invaders and enemies, but also neighbours for centuries. One of the reasons for this omission is, as often, linguistic – many scholars focus on either the Greek or the Turkish sources, and Ottoman Turkish is demanding even for Turkish-speaking scholars. With an increasing availability of translations into and studies in English, French and German, there is good reason for Byzantinists to be more inclusive when it comes to the Turkish point of view; otherwise it may seem as if there is a lack of interest in this specific aspect of Byzantine history and culture. That

[1] Frankopan 2019, 10.

[2] Of particular interest to readers of the book reviewed here are perhaps el Cheikh 2007 and Eger 2014.

[3] Right now, note especially the PAIXUE project at the University of Edinburgh, http://paixue.shca.ed.ac.uk/. For a couple of fairly recent publications, see e.g. Zhi-Qiang 2006 and Kordosis 2008.

[4] I am thinking in particular of the well-known work of Yiannis Stouraitis and Anthony Kaldellis; for a full discussion with references, see the review essay by Milan Vukašinović in this journal issue. More recently, see also Theodoropoulos 2021.

is certainly not the case, with studies by – among others – Alexander Beihammer and Nevra Necipoğlu firmly offering fruitful directions for future studies. And the new book by Kitapçı Bayrı now offers an excellent example of how to look at the Byzantine empire from a new angle.

Her combination of sources represents in itself the basic methodological choices: "In this study, the Turkish Muslim epics and the Byzantine martyria are brought together not in regard to a religious space, as has often been the tendency, but on a broader geopolitical and cultural space, the land of Rome, the story-world of these texts." (p. 17) By looking at the texts' spatial expressions from the cultural-political rather than the religious perspective, Kitapçı Bayrı allows for a different kind of analysis: one that sees medieval identity not primarily in terms of ethnicity, language and religion, but also from the perspective of haircuts, food and sex. On the frontier, these issues become particularly relevant, since encounters with 'the Other' lead to "a merging of different cultural, religious, and ethic elements rather than the replacement of one entity by another" (p. 9). This is a refreshing contrast to some recent attempts to tie down Byzantine identity to one or two defining features.[5] A similar attitude is clear also in the recent volume *Identity and the Other in Byzantium*, edited by Koray Durak and Ivana Jevtić, in which Kitapçı Bayrı describes identity in terms of the "complexities of being, remaining, becoming, and re-becoming Byzantine".[6]

Such complex processes of identity formation are exemplified in the study of both Turkish and Byzantine sources under investigation in Kitapçı Bayrı's book on the Land of Rome. In the warrior epics *Battalname*, *Danişmendname* and *Saltukname*, the conquest of Byzantine territory is narrated in three different yet overlapping ways. Their story-world is obviously marked by the narrative setting on the frontier: there are mountain passes, rivers and defence towers, and the desire to conquer the land of Rome and capture Byzantine women dominate much of the storylines. It is a militarized environment where supernatural powers may appear and where chivalrous actors (*pehlivan*) may be respected across ethnic and religious boundaries. In this world of transgressive

[5] Kaldellis 2019, 272–3; cited by Vukašinović in this journal issue.

[6] Kitapçı Bayrı 2019, 114.

identities, even Christian infidels can be respected friends while Muslim Arabs can be *küffar*. Ethnicities are not necessarily important, since the heroes of these narratives not always identify themselves as Turks or the hero of Saltukname sees himself both as a Turk and a Rumi, drawing on the cultural space in which he had intruded.

Byzantinists are obviously reminded of the storyworld of *Digenes Akrites*, another hero on the frontier whose identity is transgressive and whose story is a kind of biography based on actions and events rather than on character. While Digenes is an *akrites* concerned with defending what is 'his', the heroes of the Turkish stories burn with the desire to conquer – like the Emir, father of Digenes, who abducted a Christian woman and married her. But Digenes, too, is a conqueror, not the least of women, and violent sex and warfare mark his short life. Another similarity concerns the traces of historical layers in the texts that have come down to us. As noted by Kitapçı Bayrı, the Turkish warrior epics function as a kind of repository of collective memory, offering eleventh- and twelfth-century events as 'backward projections' from the perspective of the thirteenth and fourteenth-century Anatolians who compiled them (p. 25). The same can be said for *Digenes Akrites*, often said to reflect historical events of the eighth or ninth centuries, with part of the tradition cast in a twelfth-century form, but only preserved in later manuscripts.[7]

In that sense, this kind of heroic storytelling on the frontiers balances on the border between historicity and fictionality. They belong to the category of medieval narratives discussed under the heading "Between history and fiction" by Panagiotis Agapitos in his major investigation of fiction and fictionality in "Rhomanian, Frankish and Persian Lands", even if the Turkish texts were not included in his survey.[8] More comparative studies of these kinds of narratives, like the Arabic *Sirat Delhemma* or the Persian *Shahname* – the "The Book of Kings" in which the emperor of China decides to invade Persia with the help of its vassal (Turkic?) state of Turan –, will offer new ways of understanding the shared storyworld of hunting, drinking and lovemaking in medieval narratives. By looking at the function of space and identity, we might be

[7] For a recent discussion with references, see Goldwyn and Nilsson 2019, 191-192.

[8] Agapitos 2012.

able to move away from the simplistic and prejudiced genre designation of 'epic' for such texts, abandoning the classicizing and above all nationalistic connotations it inevitably carries.

Kitapçı Bayrı understands storyworlds as imagined spaces, based on the idea of "imagined communities" and of space as being closely connected to politics and identity (e.g. p. 18). From there, it is not a very big step to the narratological understanding of the concept as "mental models": a "worldmaking practice" according to which the reader maps and works to comprehend a narrative.[9] That concept has already found its way into Byzantine Studies, together with a rather intense interest in space and spatial practices. Accordingly, the new book by Kitapçı Bayrı could hardly be more timely, offering an alternative model for how to understand both space and identity in a non-binary way that can only benefit our field of study. The final words of the book say it all: "A dialectic identity formation takes place whereby the newcomers transform the physical, social, and cultural space in an inclusive manner as they themselves are transformed, and the 'natives' reformulate their identity in a vast and vaguely defined space in a highly exclusive fashion." (p. 194)

[9] Herman 2009, 106.

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