

ONLINE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



Written to Last: Medieval and Post-Medieval Inscriptions in Mount Athos (10th-16th c.)

16 and 17 February 2024



PROGRAM, AFFILIATIONS AND ABSTRACTS

Zoom link

<https://authgr.zoom.us/j/94245434744?pwd=Ly95VmozNDM2b2lIZEh6bFYyVklyUT09>

Passcode: 431367

Time schedule is Athens, GR (UTC/GMT + 2 hours)

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DAY 1 Friday, 16 February 2024

17.00- 17.10 **The Organizing Committee**
Welcoming remarks

17.10- 17.50 KEYNOTE LECTURE

Nektarios ZARRAS

Middle Byzantine Dedicatory Inscriptions: Text, Identity,
Ideology

1st SESSION – Middle Byzantine Inscriptions

Chair: Nektarios ZARRAS

17.50- 18.10

Alexandra-Kyriaki WASSILIOU-SEIBT

Imaging political ambitions and expressing social power on seals:
The case of Theodoros Branas

18.10- 18.30

Georgios PALLIS, Manos TSIKOURAKIS

Middle Byzantine Athos through Epigraphy: the role of
inscriptions in shaping athonite monasticism

18.30- 18.50

Brad HOSTETLER

Naming Relics: The Inscriptions of Mount Athos

18.50- 19.10

Dimitris LIAKOS

Two 11th century dedicatory inscriptions from the monasteries of
Vatopedi and Iviron; a comparative study

19.10- 19.30

Cyril PAVLIKIANOV

Οἱ ἀρχαιότερες σλαβικὲς ἐπιγραφὲς τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους

19.30- 20.00

Questions- Discussion

DAY 2 Saturday, 17 February 2024

2nd SESSION – Inscriptions in Athonite Art and architecture

Chair: Georgios PALLIS

10.30- 11.00

Dubravka PRERADOVIĆ

The Contribution of Gabriel Millet and the role of the
School at Athens in the Study of Athonite inscriptions

- 11.00- 11.20** **Elena KOSTIĆ**
Palaeographical examination of the accompanying inscriptions of the Palaeologan decoration in the Katholikon of the Vatopedi monastery
- 11.20- 11.40** **Petros KAPSOUDAS**
An eleventh c. inscription from the belfry of the katholikon of Megisti Lavra, Mount Athos
- 11.40- 12.00** **Oleg ULYANOV**
Panagiars from Athos with dedicatory inscriptions (to the history of the study)
- 12.00- 12.20** **Oleg ULYANOV**
A Greek Christian Text of Prophecies of the Hellenic Wise Men on Athos frescoes
- 12.20- 12.50** Questions- Discussion
12.50- 13.00 Coffee Break

3rd SESSION – Byzantine and Post-byzantine inscriptions. Case studies

Chair: Dimitris LIAKOS

- 13.00- 13.20** **Paschalis ANDROUDIS**
Inscriptions with Psalms from the byzantine church of Prophet Eliah at Thessaloniki
- 13.20- 13.40** **Miljana MATIĆ**
“The stronghold of the Faithful” - Inscriptions and Cryptograms of the Elder Nestor’s Cross at the Serbian Monastery of Dečani: A Reflection of Postbyzantine Monastic Practices
- 13.40- 14.00** **Darina BOYKINA**
The Silver Bowl from Samokov and Its Inscriptions
- 14.00- 14.30** Questions- Discussion
14.30- 17.00 Lunch Break

4th SESSION – Inscriptions in Athonite art

Chair: Brad HOSTETLER

- 17.00- 17.20 **Paschalis ANDROUDIS**
Unknown and little-known minor inscriptions on Mount Athos
- 17.20- 17.40 **Arianna D’OTTONE RAMBACH**
Lā ra`à li-makdhüb – *Non est consilium mendacii arguto*: Mamluk
wisdom on a speaking tray from Mount Athos
- 17.40- 18.00 **Frédéric TIXIER**
À propos d'une plaque émaillée des Rois Mages du Mont Athos :
iconographie et inscriptions
- 18.00- 18.20 **Ioannis LIAKOS, Savvas PRASTITIS**
Notes from Cypriot musical manuscripts
on Mount Athos. A first approach.
- 18.20- 18.40 **Eka TCHKOIDZE**
Georgian ktetor’s inscriptions from Philotheou Monastery
- 18.40- 19.10 Questions- Discussion
- 19.10 END OF THE CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS

ANDROUDIS, Paschalis

Inscriptions with Psalms from the byzantine church of Prophet Eliah at Thessaloniki

With our announcement we present the inscriptions that we recorded on the stone and marble cornices of the north and south choir of the Byzantine church of the Prophet Eliah at Thessaloniki. These inscriptions contain sermons from the 117th Psalm, which are of great interest for their originality, as well as for the context in which their use can be interpreted.

ANDROUDIS, Paschalis

Unknown and little-known minor inscriptions on Mount Athos

This paper examines unknown and little-known inscriptions, mainly on objects of minor arts, from the Great Lavra of Hosios Athanasios, the monastery of Chilandar and other monasteries on Mount Athos.

BOYKINA, Darina

The Silver Bowl from Samokov and Its Inscriptions

The presentation will focus on a case study – the contents of the inscriptions placed on a silver bowl from the 17th century – and aims to investigate the long journey of this object, which began in Belgrade (Serbia) and somehow ended in a small town in Southeastern Bulgaria. The inscriptions on this item, written in different periods and in different places, give us hints not only about its history but they also show very clearly how unpredictable and dynamic could be the fate of artistically shaped metal objects from the early modern period.

D'OTTONE RAMBACH, Arianna

Lā ra`à li-makdhūb – *Non est consilium mendacii arguto*: Mamluk wisdom on a speaking tray from Mount Athos

This contribution aims at discussing a newly discovered Mamluk metal tray with an Arabic saying. This tray enriches the material evidence of Islamic metals – vessels, candlesticks, aquamaniles – preserved on Mount Athos and attested in church inventories sometimes also with Arabic or Turkish names (P. Androudís, *Muslim and Latin Presence in the Treasures of Mount Athos (13th-15th Centuries)*, “Arte Medievale”, IV s., X (2020), pp. 337-351). The inscribed tray will be put in the context of the Mamluk production of metal objects and in dialogue with the other Islamic artifacts already known from Mount Athos, the link-s between Mount Athos and Mamluk

Egypt will be detailed, and the inscription of the tray will be considered in the wider horizon of the speaking objects in both the Classical and Arabic traditions (for the Islamic side, see for instance: <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/collection-areas/islamicart/speaking-object>).

HOSTETLER, Brad

Naming Relics: The Inscriptions of Mount Athos

A piece of wood from the True Cross, a bone from a saint, and a stone from a holy site. These items are, at base, mundane matter. In order for them to be granted their sacred status, they needed to be associated with a particular holy person and/or a holy place. How was this done? Richly adorned reliquaries were certainly one way of conveying the special nature of their contents; gold, silver, and enamel signaled to their users that something precious was held within. For the Byzantines, this was not enough. Relics required identities: where they originated, to whom they were associated, and what powers they possessed. This is where the inscription comes in. I argue that no other mode of adornment was as vital to the transformation of mundane substances into sacred matter as were inscriptions. Whether they are short naming labels affixed directly to the relics or longer poetic epigrams displayed on the exterior of reliquaries, inscriptions were fundamental to conveying the identities, meanings and significances of the relics to which they were attached. Taking as my focus the inscriptions on reliquaries housed in the monasteries of Mount Athos, I examine some of the inscriptional strategies used by the Byzantines to convey the identity and sanctity of their relics.

KAPSOUDAS, Petros

An eleventh c. inscription from the belfry of the katholikon of Megisti Lavra, Mount Athos

In the monastery of Great Lavra in Mount Athos there is a founder's inscription dated in the 11 th century. The inscription is clearly a text written by a person with a high level of education. It refers to two buildings sponsored by Abbot Ioannis. The first one is the phiale, which still survives today to the west of the monastery's main church. The latter is a bell tower which was demolished, probably in 1814. The shape and the exact position of that bell tower are unknown. However, we believe that we can trace the building by taking into consideration the inscription, old icons, and the description of the monastery by people who saw the bell tower standing....

KOSTIĆ, Elena

Palaeographical examination of the accompanying inscriptions of the Palaeologan decoration in the Katholikon of the Vatopedi monastery

The examination of the paleographic characteristics of a painting ensemble provides scholars with the opportunity to explore the composition of painting workshops, to distinguish the hands of painters who participated in them, and possibly to identify their participation in other monuments. This paper examines the accompanying inscriptions of the Palaeologan painting of the katholikon of the Vatopedi Monastery, which in research is considered a product of a unified conception and execution. However, paleographic analysis indicates at least three different phases, executed by three different workshops, in three different spaces of the monument - the exonarthex, the narthex, and the nave. It also emerges that two of the painters originated from the circle of the so-called 'Astrapades'. The painter of the *Descent from the Cross* in the exonarthex undoubtedly participated in the decoration of the Panagia Perivleptos in Ohrid, while in the figure of the head painter of the nave, a disciple of *Michael Eutychiou* is recognized, with whom he worked at Protaton, at Staro Nagoričino, and at the King's Church in Studenica.

LIAKOS, Dimitris

Two 11th century dedicatory inscriptions from the monasteries of Vatopedi and Iviron; a comparative study

My paper focuses upon the evidence of two inscriptions of Vatopedi and Iviron; the inscription of Vatopedi was very recently revealed in the circular base-line of the dome in the katholikon; the other one, on the pavement of the katholikon in Iviron, already published by Millet-Pargoire-Petit, has so far attracted less attention among researchers. Both inscriptions yield significant evidence on the early building history of the katholika in Vatopedi and Iviron and on the eleventh century patronage on Mount Athos in general.

LIAKOS, Ioannis, PRASTITIS, Savvas

Notes from Cypriot musical manuscripts on Mount Athos. A first approach

The great amount of byzantine music manuscripts preserved on Mount Athos is, indisputably, a source of knowledge and information for a wide variety of research scientific fields, beyond the purely musicological ones. A lot of important information can be gleaned from the palaeographic and codicological data, from the bindings, the decorations, the historical course of each manuscript. Equally important are the owner's notes or side pages, which provide us with a huge range of information, of various forms and interest. Within the historical context of the presence of Cypriot musical manuscripts and Cypriot monks on Mount Athos, this presentation aims to present such notes and synthesize the resulting information with persons and events, which will help us to montage the portrait of the Mount Athos' byzantine-musicological tradition.

MATIC, Miljana

“The Stronghold of the Faithful” - Inscriptions and cryptograms on the Elder Nestor’s Cross at the Serbian Monastery of Dečani: A Reflection of postbyzantine monastic practices

The monumental wood carved cross is made of yew wood in 1565. It measures 260 cm in height and 136 cm in width. The face of the cross is dominated by the carved text with plentiful ligatures and ornaments, intermittently colored. The fourteen-line text along the vertical arms of the cross cites the saving properties of the cross, and mentions donorship of elder Nestor. The second part of the text on the cross was inscribed in three lines on the horizontal beams of the cross in the form of the exorcism prayer with its roots in the first exorcism (vow) of the baptismal rite. The back of the cross has no woodcarvings. It is decorated with multiple cryptograms. At the base of the cross, in a heart-shaped stylized band, there is a text mentioning the author who has made the cross, hieromonk Nikodim. As recent researches show, the cross was initially intended for Belaja hermitage of the Dečani Monastery.

PALLIS, Georgios, TSIKOURAKIS, Manos

Middle Byzantine Athos through Epigraphy: the role of inscriptions in shaping athonite monasticism

The foundation of the great Athonite monasteries from the 10th century and the first phase of their prosperity during Middle Byzantine period, was accompanied by an intense building and artistic activity, which was achieved through donations granted by the central administration and high rank church and state officials. Some of the surviving works of art and architecture of this era bear inscriptions transferring invocations to divinity or commemorating donations. Thanks to the official character of epigraphy as a means of public statements of eternal duration, sometimes addressing straightly God himself, this material is crucial to understand how the monasteries and their donors used inscriptions to declare their privileges and acts, as well to examine the impact of these epigraphic statements towards the shaping of a prestigious, special Athonite identity within the frame of Byzantine monasticism.

PAVLIKIANOV, Cyril

Οί ἀρχαιότερες σλαβικές ἐπιγραφές τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους

Ἡ ἀνακοίνωση ἀναλύει γλωσσικά, παλαιογραφικά καὶ τοπογραφικά τὶς ἀρχαιότερες σωζόμενες ἐγχάρακτες ἐπὶ λίθου καὶ ζωγραφισμένες ἐπὶ κονιάματος σλαβικές ἐπιγραφές, οἱ ὁποῖες ἐντοπίζονται στὶς 17 ἑλληνικές μονές τοῦ Ἄθωνος καὶ πέριξ αὐτῶν. Τὰ ἐπιγραφικά εὐρήματα τὰ σχετιζόμενα μὲ τὶς τρεῖς παραδοσιακὰ σλαβικές μονές τοῦ Ὄρους δὲν περιλαμβάνονται καὶ δὲν ἀποτελοῦν θέμα τῆς ἀνακοίνωσης. Ἐπὶ πλεόν σχολιάζεται καὶ ἓνα κατάλοιπο

ἐπιγραφῆς τῆς προχριστιανικῆς περιόδου ποὺ σώζεται σὲ κρήνη τῆς μονῆς Δοχειαρίου.

PRERADOVIĆ, Dubravka

The Contribution of Gabriel Millet and the role of the French School at Athens in the Study of Athonite inscriptions

The French School at Athens (École française d'Athènes) was founded in 1846. It was the first foreign research establishment in Greece. Although initially conceived as an institution dedicated to classical studies, with its program consisting of archaeological excavations and the study of classical texts, the field of research quickly expanded to other epochs where the study of Byzantine monuments gained significant importance. Between 1873 and 1876, a member of the ÉfA was Charles Bayet, who in 1874, along with Louis Duchesne, spent several months on Mount Athos, collecting inscriptions in Thessaloniki and its surroundings, which were published in the volume intitled *Mission au mont Athos* (1876). Charles Diehl, another famous Byzantinist was ÉfA member (1883-1885). During that period of time he dedicated his research to the monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phocis, publishing the first monograph on it in 1889. The longest tenure at the French School in Athens was held by Gabriel Millet (1891-1895), who, after researching the Daphni Monastery, focused on the architecture and art from the period after the restoration of the Byzantine Empire, especially monuments in Mystra and on Mount Athos. Considering his primary education as a historian and philologist, Gabriel Millet also dealt with inscriptions in his work. Millet published Byzantine inscriptions from Trebizond (1896) and from Mystra (1899), and of course, the well-known *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de l'Athos* (1904), which he edited together with Louis Petit and Jules Pargoire. In 1937, Gabriel Millet established the *Archives de l'Athos* edition, which continues to be published to this day. This presentation will focus on Millet's contribution to the research of Mount Athos monasteries, with a particular emphasis on the Athonite inscriptions.

TCHKOITZE, Eka

Georgian ktetor's inscriptions from Philotheou Monastery

King Leon I reigned in Kakheti, a part of Eastern Georgia, from 1518/20 to his death (1574). After the fall of Constantinople, in 1466 the unified Kingdom of Georgia was divided into small kingdoms and principalities. Leon I secured for Kingdom of Kakheti the most prosperous and peaceful period.

Leon's fresco with relevant inscriptions from Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos is one of the important sources, which reveal Leon's rich donations to the monastery and the continuation of Greek-Georgian spiritual relationships even after the fall of Constantinople.

In the current paper the main characteristics of political, economic, educational and cultural activities of Leon and his son and successor, Alexander II (1574-1605) will be presented. All inscriptions from Philotheou Monastery will be analyzed broadly. In

addition, we shall present inscriptions from Gremi Archangels' church, which was built by Leon as the center of Kingdom of Kakheti. Those inscriptions also mention his donations to the Holy Mountain and are important for better understanding of Athonian inscriptions.

TIXIER, Frédéric

À propos d'une plaque émaillée des Rois Mages du Mont Athos : iconographie et inscriptions

Dans le trésor du monastère du Pantocrator du Mont Athos est conservée depuis la seconde partie du Moyen âge, une exceptionnelle et belle plaque émaillée, sans doute d'origine germanique, représentant l'adoration des Rois Mages. De grande qualité esthétique, cette œuvre a également été associée, dans la tradition locale, à un fragment du « bouclier de saint Mercure », un important saint militaire et mégalomartyr chrétien. Cette communication souhaite donc revenir sur quelques aspects de l'objet, à travers une étude historique, iconographique et stylistique. De même, il sera question des nombreuses inscriptions qui ornent la plaque (sur le quadrilobe et les bordures extérieures). En effet, celles-ci font toutes référence à la scène représentée ou bien à des passages de l'Ancien Testament : se dessinent alors en filigrane les rapports étroits qui unissent l'Orient et l'Occident avec la diffusion des objets orfèvres et ce, dès la période médiévale.

ULYANOV, Oleg

Panagiars from Athos with dedicatory inscriptions (to the history of the study)

ULYANOV, Oleg

A Greek Christian Text of Prophecies of the Hellenic Wise Men on Athos frescoes

WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Alexandra-Kyriaki

Imaging political ambitions and expressing social power on seals: The case of Theodoros Branas

On the eve of Constantinople's Latin occupation (1204), some Byzantine aristocrats pursued centrifugal tendencies. One of them was the magnate Theodoros Branas who had reached independence in Adrianople and its surroundings, where he planned to establish a separate small state. He even had imperial ambitions, demonstrating them in a provocative manner on a remarkable seal by a metrical inscription to be presented and analyzed.

ZARRAS, Nektarios

Middle Byzantine Dedicatory Inscriptions: Text, Identity, Ideology

Patronage in Byzantium was a strong social necessity subsuming even the personal motive of the belief in salvation after death. Apart from the internal and agonizing issue of personal salvation, another strong motive for patronage, of more external character, is *mimesis*, which as a phenomenon of social projection contributes decisively to the development of *ktetoric* activity. Patronage functions in all social classes, irrespective of economic and educational level, either to elevate the *ktetores* or to confirm the traditional values of aristocratic society through the necessity of patrons.

Through characteristic and representative examples, mostly from northern Greece the lecture spotlights the manners of self-presentation employed by patrons of monastic foundations and of secular public building projects with emphasis on defensive works. It aims to interpret dedicatory inscriptions and portraits by exploring the spiritual world of the *ktetores* and their views about patronage, as expressed in the epigrams, and by situating them within their ideological universe. Furthermore, the historical context, the prosopographical data, the resonances of state defensive works in the local communities, through the personality of the military officials and their ambitions, are presented as a whole in the inscriptions on fortification walls and castles, proposing a new way of thinking about and examining the inscriptions on such constructions. The deeper exploration of the spiritual world of the *ktetores* as expressed in the inscriptional material, in combination with the often dynamic presence of these texts in the decoration of the church, call for a different approach to the examination of dedicatory inscriptions.