



INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

PHILOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL LEARNEDNESS

HYMNS IN BYZANTINE EDUCATIONAL AND
SCHOLARLY CONTEXTS (9TH – 15TH CENTURIES)

ABSTRACTS



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This workshop is organized within the framework of the project “Perceiving, interpreting, teaching Byzantine liturgical poetry. Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos’ treatises on hymns” (FWF, ESP 269-G).

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Photo: © Bodleian Library, Cod. Auct. E.5.14, f. 181r (Nicephori Callisti Xanthopuli
Exegesis in troparium Tήν τιμωτέραν)

ABSTRACTS

PAOLO CESARETTI

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Were Byzantine Commentaries on the Liturgical Hymns Critical Editions of Texts?

The short communication aims to raise the question of how aware Byzantine commentators of liturgical hymns were of the problems related to the transmission of the texts of the liturgical hymns themselves. In particular, what are the elements of continuity and what are the elements of change between Gregorios Pardos, Theodoros Prodromos and Eustathios of Thessalonike (12th century) in their role as 'critical editors'? To what extent did the experience of reading the classics influence their attitude as interpreters? The topic will be addressed with the help of some significant passages.

KYRIAKOS COSTA

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Liturgical Hymns in An Imperial Manuscript: Exploring Codex Par. gr. 3041 and the Hymnographical Choices of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos

This study investigates the contextual, authorial, and educational dimensions of codex *Par. gr. 3041*, an imperial manuscript that belonged to Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425). The research focuses on two liturgical hymns contained within the manuscript: the *Parakletikos Canon to the Theotokos* attributed to Manuel himself, and the *Megalynaria on the Tomb of Christ* by an unidentified author.

The research aims to decipher the motivations behind Manuel's selection of these hymnographical genres, shedding light on his educational background, personal interests, and scholarly affiliations. Examining the *Parakletikos Canon*, the research inquiries whether its composition reflects Manuel's personal piety, an interest in composing liturgical hymns, or a combination of both. Furthermore, the paper explores the inclusion of the *Megalynaria on the Tomb of Christ* in the codex, considering its potential link to Manuel's journey to the West (1399–1402). Through an analysis of the stylistic, thematic, and theological features of these liturgical hymns, the study aims to illuminate Manuel's intellectual pursuits and potential influences from authoritative hymnographical and other texts, such as the *Canon for the Holy Saturday*.

A comprehensive analysis of the two hymns is undertaken, considering their position in cod. *Par. gr. 3041*, in an attempt to offer insights into the educational background, theological interests, and scholarly networks within the court of Manuel II Palaiologos. The study attempts to uncover the factors influencing Manuel's choices in hymnography, offering a nuanced insight into his involvement with Byzantine hymnography in his dual capacities as both emperor and scholar.

MARINA DETORAKI

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Paraphrasing the Paraphrase: the Testimony of the Codex Parisinus gr. 343

The codex *Parisinus gr. 343*, dated to the 15th C., preserves a rare testimony of an expanded commentary upon hymnographical texts (canons) of John Damascenus and Cosmas the Melodist. Each of the canon's strophes (troparia) is accompanied by an interpretative commentary in prose, developed in two parts: the first part of the text can be identified as the commentary of Theodoros Prodromos (*Commentarii in canones Cosmae Hierosolymitani et Joannis Damasceni*); the second part appears to be a paraphrase of the previously mentioned Prodromos commentary, providing the reader with more exegetic detail. This rather unique double analysis and interpretation allows us to make a number of observations regarding the function and purpose that this interpretative philology fulfilled within the audience it was destined for. In addition, it enables us to observe the evolution of the perception of specific issues and difficulties from the 12th C. (Theodoros Prodromos) to the 15th C. (*Paris. Gr. 343* testimony).

ANTONIA GIANNOULI

University of Cyprus

Byzantine Commentaries on the Kanons: Exploring the Comments on the Heirmoi

This study deals with the Byzantine commentaries on the *kanons*, with a particular focus on the comments on their *heirmoi*. More specifically, the *heirmos* is the first strophe in each of the nine odes of the *kanon*, which serves as a metrical and musical model for the strophes that follow in each ode. Thematically, each *heirmos* is inspired by a particular biblical ode; the first eight *heirmoi* have their roots in the Old Testament, while the concluding *heirmos* is based on a New Testament ode.

By focusing on the comments on thematically related *heirmoi* in the commentaries of, among others, eminent scholars such as Eustathios of Thessalonica, Theodore Prodromos, Gregory of Corinth, John Zonaras, this paper aims through the comparative study to identify and elucidate the different approaches taken by these commentators.

CHRISTINA HADJIAFXENTI

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Neophytos the Recluse's 'Interpretation of Canons on Despotic Feasts': An Exceptional Example of Hymnographic Commentary?

The manuscript Nr. 2 from the Leimonos Monastery in Lesbos houses nine texts by the 12th-century Cypriot saint Neophytos the Recluse, collectively titled 'Interpretation of Canons on Despotic Feasts.' Over time, scholars have raised numerous questions about these texts, with some even casting doubt on whether they genuinely delve into

the study of canons. There have been even suggestions that this title might have been assigned to a lost work of Neophytos.

This presentation seeks to delve into the content and structure of the texts, exploring whether Neophytos made a deliberate effort to interpret the canons or if there was a lack of such an attempt. The goal is to discern Neophytos' overarching purpose in crafting these texts and to determine if they serve as exegetical commentaries on hymns. Does this particular example from Neophytos stand as an exception to the systematic commentaries on hymns commonly found in the works of Byzantine writers? Does the absence of a systematic commentary mean these texts lack an interpretation of the canons? Did Neophytos intend to imbue a didactic character to these texts for his readers? These are some of the questions that will be explored in this paper, in order to investigate, whether these texts serve as an exception that proves the rule or whether they should be excluded from the exegetical tradition of hymns.

ANASTASIA LIMBERGER

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Witnesses of Theological Learnedness: the Hymnographers in Byzantine Art

The interest in hymnography that especially flourished in the 12th century onwards was not limited to the exegesis of liturgical poetry and the further development of liturgical *typika*, but was also expressed in painting and in the design of liturgical space. By means of subtle stylistic changes in the Komnenian period, the saints' portrayals perform worship in their transfigured realm and frame the human liturgy taking place within the church space. The hymnographers, being explicitly presented as singers, received a special appreciation and an important role in monumental painting. They form a bridge between the earthly church space and the eternal reality they sing about. They may accompany scenes, such as the crucifixion or the *koimesis*, they may frame depictions of ecumenical councils, they may be outfitted like evangelists and occupy the space under the church dome. Through this contextualization they can be viewed as heralds of the Gospel, as witnesses to orthodoxy, and as guarantees of constant worship. In these roles they appear especially in the sepulchral context, where they sing the divine service and become witnesses of the founder's right belief and virtue. Thus, the consideration of the hymnographers' iconography meaningfully complements the historical and philological research on the role of hymnography in Byzantine society.

ILIAS NESSERIS

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Utilizing Liturgical Poetry for Educational Purposes: Insights from the Komnenian Period

It is a well-established fact that liturgical poetry, apart from its original primary function, was also implemented in Byzantium for educational purposes. For instance, during the twelfth century scholars like Gregorios Pardos, Theodore Prodromos,

and Eustathios of Thessaloniki authored commentaries to various canons of John of Damascus and Kosmas the Hymnographer, which addressed a broad spectrum of exegetical, lexicographical, grammatical, and other subjects. However, apart from the works of these renowned, high-caliber scholars, there exist other similar commentaries from the Comnenian period that have not yet been studied. A notable example is the commentary of a certain Stylianos on the troparion “ὡς ἀνθρώπος ὑπάρχω” (from the 9th ode of Kosmas the Hymnographer’s canon for Holy Thursday), which is transmitted by a single 14th-century manuscript. Additionally, a substantial number of troparia underwent a procedure of reappropriation during this period reemerging paraphrased within the framework of schedography. The aim of the present paper is two-fold: initially, to present these mostly unknown works and examine them in the broader context of the educational practices of the time and then to delve deeper into the scope and functionality of liturgical poetry as teaching material.

SILVIA RONCHEY

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Eustathios’s Exegesis in Canonem Iambicum Pentecostalem and its Relationship with the Monastery of Prodromos Petra

In investigating the manuscript tradition of the *Exegesis in canonem iambicum pentecostalem*, two features emerge with a high degree of likelihood: (a) the relationship of the work with the monastery of Prodromos Petra at Constantinople; (b) the relationship of Eustathios himself with that same monastery during his tenure as professor in the Polis. The paper will briefly illustrate the manuscript tradition of Eustathios’ *Exegesis* (5 extant manuscripts plus one *deperditus*) and their relations with the so-called *didaskaleion* of Prodromos Petra, suggesting that already in the course of the 12th century it might have been one of the “branches” of the Patriarchal School of Constantinople, and that Eustathios might have held there his teaching.

DIMITRIOS SKREKAS

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Byzantine Scholia(sts) and Commentaries on the Iambic Canons

In the middle Byzantine period, alongside Homer, ancient Greek tragedies, comedies, and texts of historians and philosophers, special emphasis was also put on ecclesiastical texts. Students were exposed to the poems of Gregory of Nazianzus, as well as other poetry, including hymns, among which were the iambic canons. Especially during, but also to some extent before, the Komnenian period, the asmatic canons were taught in schools, and they even retained their place in the curriculum under the Ottoman Empire. With this paper, I will present the various paraphrases and lexica of the iambic canons. Apart from the three main commentators of these texts, namely Gregory of Corinth, Theodore Prodromos and Eustathios of Thessaloniki, there are other usually

anonymous paraphrases. Almost all these works remain unpublished and more or less neglected. I will try to answer the following questions: who were their creators; can we discern different ‘schools’ and interpretative approaches, related to textual problems? What are their models? Do they belong to a particular tradition? Finally, what do they say about the thorny issue of the authorship of the three canons in question and especially the canon of Pentecost attributed to John of Damascus?

DIMOSTHENIS STRATIGOPOULOS

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Didactic Poetry in Hymnographic Form: the Case of Photios

This paper deals with the didactic use of poetic texts in the form of hymns in Byzantium. These texts used to be part of parahymnography. Today, this term is treated with scepticism and the relevant texts are considered to belong to didactic poetry.

One such group of texts is attributed to an author called Photios. These texts comprise two kanons and nine stichera, consisting of medical, geographical, and meteorological content, as well as three exaposteilaria with a list of Old Testament books.

The above manuscript texts are attributed to a Photius monk or philosopher. The question arose early on whether this was the patriarch, now known for his hymn-writing, or one of the same name. Karolos Mitsakis and Nikolaos Tomadakis supported that patriarch Photius was the composer of them. If it is accepted, then he was the first to use hymnographic forms to write works to create texts such as those related to medicine, geography, meteorology and anthropology.

Of course, neither the manuscript tradition nor the content of the texts proves this. Careful analysis leads us to the conclusion that these are the works of a Photius monk later than the 9th century. Our research is an attempt to place this author more precisely in time and to clarify his identity.

NOTES



