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## **Byzantine painting treatises: the case of Codex Panteleimoniensis 259**

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### Abstract:

This article aims to examine the material of a codex entitled *Hermeneia of the Painters*. The manuscript in question constitutes a copy of an esteemed *constitutio textus* of late byzantine period regarding the descriptions of Saint's physiognomy along with quotations from their dicta and an entry of verses and epigrams related to biblical events. As I am intended to prove, byzantine painting manuals were not just a collection of technical and iconographical advises, like the post-byzantine ones, but mainly a corpus of theoretical knowledge necessary for artists' nurture.

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## BYZANTINE PAINTING TREATISES: THE CASE OF CODEX PANTELEIMONIENSIS 259

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Unlike anything concerning the West Medieval Europe, the use of painting manuals in Byzantium is not fully documented. A fragment of technical advice - as to how a painter could create a face or a garment properly - is preserved in the codex Vaticanus Graecus 209 (ca. 1355)<sup>1</sup>. Another type of technical advice is included in the codex Vaticanus Graecus 214, which prof. Phevronia Nousia attributed to Isidore, archbishop of Kiev and scribe of the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. In the first six pages of this manuscript, recipes about the construction of various writing materials are set. In addition to the above mentioned fragmentary technical advises I am obliged to remind the descriptions of saint's physiognomy in numerous byzantine texts, such as the *Paschalion Chronicle* (7<sup>th</sup> c. = Vat. gr. 1941, 10<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>3</sup>, the Pseudo-Ulpious' text (9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c. = Par. Coislin. 296, 12<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>4</sup>, and the *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitane* (10<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>5</sup>, although these descriptions are hardly connected with painting practice.

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<sup>1</sup> See G. PARPULOV, I. V. DOLGISH, P. COWE, 'A Byzantine Text on the Technique of Icon Painting', *Dumbarton Oaks Paper* 64 (2010), pp. 201-216.

<sup>2</sup> See F. NOUSIA, 'Ανέκδοτο κείμενο περί σκευασίας μελανιού, κινναβάρεως, βαρζιού, καταστατού και κόλλησης χαρτίου (15<sup>ος</sup> αι.), *Βιβλιοαμφιάστης* 3 (2008), Reprint in N. TSIRONIS (ed.), *Το βιβλίο στο Βυζάντιο: Βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή βιβλιοδεσία*, Athens 2008, pp. 43-62.

<sup>3</sup> *Chronicon Paschale ad exemplar vaticanum* (Πασχάλιον Χρονικόν), *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, L. DINDORFIUS (ed.), vols. I, II, Bonnae 1832.

<sup>4</sup> M. CHATZIDAKIS, 'Ἐκ τῶν Ἑλπίου τοῦ Ῥωμαίου', *Ἐπετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 14 (1938), 393-414 (= *Idem, Studies in Byzantine Art and Archaeology, Variorum Reprints*, III, London 1972).

<sup>5</sup> H. DELEHAYES (ed.), *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae, e codice sirmondiano nunc berlinensi abiectis synaxariis selectis, Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, Bruxellis 1902 (Reprint 1956).



Moreover, our knowledge on painting practice in Byzantium is obviously based on what we know from late post-byzantine period. The book entitled «*Hermeneia tes zographikes technes*», the first complete, extensive, and well-structured painting manual written by the hieromonk Dionysius between 1729 and 1733, was instrumental in this<sup>6</sup>. Of course, many others still similar manuals have come down to us. But, the point is that all these texts, including that of Dionysius, perform doubtless a different reality than that of Byzantium. Consequently, we are still unaware of how painters were really being instructed in byzantine times.

Four years ago I detected a painting manual preserved in Saint Panteleimon's monastery on Mount Athos (fig. 1). The codex in question, entitled *Hermeneia of the Painters*, includes an actual, complete, and uncorrupted text on the first 37 folia (1r-37v) and after that several sections of disorderly additions with material relating to painting as well. The actual text is divided in two main, yet unequal as for the length and the context, parts. The first and extensive one concerns descriptions of Saint's physiognomy along with quotations from their dicta and an entry of verses and epigrams related to biblical events. The second part (33v - 37v) is about the creation and use of various mediums and materials of binding<sup>7</sup>.

The codex of the Panteleimon monastery was listed by the eminent Historian and ex-Prime Minister of Greece Spyridon Lampros (1851-1919) in his catalogue of Athonite manuscripts edited in the year 1895<sup>8</sup>. S. Lampros determined the manuscript's date in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, although the paleographical features and notes, the earliest of

<sup>6</sup> A. PAPAĐOPOULOS - KERAMEYS (ed.), *Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, Ἑρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης καὶ αἱ κόρια αὐτῆς ἀνέκδοτοι πηγαί, ἐκδομένη μετὰ προλόγου νῦν τὸ πρῶτον πλήρως κατὰ τὸ πρωτότυπον αὐτῆς κείμενον*, Petersburg 1909. Cf. P. HETHERINGTON (ed.), *The Painter's Manual of Dionysius of Fournā. An English Translation with Commentary of Cod. gr. 708 in the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Lenigrad*, London 1974.

<sup>7</sup> C. M. VAPHEIADES, *Tractationes byzantinae de picturae. Testimonium codicis Panteleimoniensis gr. 259. Editio, apparatus criticus et adnotatio*, Athenae 2017 (in Greek).

<sup>8</sup> S. P. LAMPROS, *Κατάλογος τῶν ἐν ταῖς βιβλιοθήκαις τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους ἑλληνικῶν κωδίκων*, vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1895, vol. 2, Cambridge 1900.

which is written in 1603, testify its creation in the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

However, even though the codex 259 is dated at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, its subject matter and layout is much earlier. As I am intended to prove, our manuscript constitutes a copy of an esteemed *constitutio textus* of late byzantine period. Besides, several kinds of errors, either unintentional or intentional, are being representative of its transcript character.

For example, an obvious dittography (duplication) occurs at the end of the section of the patristic citations. In the folio 10r there is an aphorism attributed to Dometianus the monk: *Go and be attached to a person who venerates God*<sup>9</sup>. This incipit is repeated right after below as the first part of another dictum attributed to the same person as well. An aphorism of Hilarion the monk derived from the Bible, from the Wisdom of Sirach precisely (chapter 2, verse 1), is set in the folio 6v: *My Son, if thou comest to be subject unto the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation*<sup>10</sup>. However, the Hilarion's verse has: *Οι προσερχήν* instead of *εἰ προσέρχῃ* - they who serve the God by praying and not they who come just to be subject unto the Lord. This is a typical error of homophony occurred in the Athonite manuscript.

Another typical error is linked to the so-called Parablepsis which is to say to an omission of a whole part of the text. Epigrams are included in the folio 20v. After this a raw of biblical quotations follows. However, these two dissimilar text sections are confused. The last word *πνεῦμα* (Spitit) of the last epigram, regarding Abraham's Hospitality, is repeated as the first one of the Genesis chapter 1, verses 1-3: *and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the deep, instead of over the waters*<sup>11</sup>.

Furthermore, a number of intentional additions are found in the text under examination concerning glosses inserted within it. Indeed, a corpus of biblical citations about Christ's actions entitled *Περὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ Παρουσίας* (= about Christ's Incarnation) is set in the folio

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<sup>9</sup> C. M. VAPHEIADES, *Tractationes...* cit., p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 68.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 152.

21v<sup>12</sup>. A comment about Jews' unfaithfulness to Christ's divinity, which was never part of the following prophetic utterances, is set at the beginning of them. It is abundantly clear that this comment is inserted within the text as an explanatory foreword of what is going to be accounted for. The same applies for the verses in the folio 24v<sup>13</sup>. In these lines we read an oration against Jew's errors which corrupts the quotation order. This oration was obviously a marginal gloss inserted afterwards in the text. It is not meaningless, that in the British Library codex Add 40726 (18<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>14</sup> - a copy of the Panteleimon manuscript - the anti-Jew text is entitled *Bebaiosis* (Testimony).

The aforesaid scribing errors testify that the under examination codex is indeed a copy of an earlier painting manual. But, the question is of which date and origin? Having the intention of testifying the byzantine descent of the material of the Panteleimon codex, I would like to proceed giving some proper examples.

A list of the Seventy Apostles and afterwards a list of the Apostles' martyrdoms are set in the folios 12v-14v<sup>15</sup>. Each Apostle's name is accompanied by brief biographical information and a face description of them. Catalogues like this are known since the old times. Indeed, the catalogue of the Panteleimon manual came directly from sources such as the Paschalion Chronicle<sup>16</sup> and spurious treatises about Seventy Apostles especially that of Pseudo-Symeon Logothetis<sup>17</sup>. It is quite clear that the author of the Panteleimon manuscript embodied this corpus in his text adding a face description particularly for each one of the Apostles. It is to be noticed that this invention is of a great importance as it constitutes an early stage of forming painting manuals in Byzantium, although this option will be abandoned in late post-byzantine times. Dionysius of Fournas submits only the Apostles' names with a brief face description.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 154.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161.

<sup>14</sup> Unpublished

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 118-131.

<sup>16</sup> L. DINDORFIUS (ed.), *Chronicon Paschale...* cit., vol. II, pp. 121- 129, 142.

<sup>17</sup> T. SCHERMANN (ed.), *Prophetarum vitae fabulosae. Indices apostolorum discipulorumque domini Dorotheo, Epiphano, Hippolyto aliisque vindicate*, Lipsiae 1907, pp. 177-183.

Ten pages of the manuscript are full of quotations from the Bible, mostly from the prophet books, concerning actual events of Christ's life. Because of the Christological context of this citation corpus, it is usually located in intermingled (*symmictoi*) codices of byzantine period, the content of which is related to the monk's theological education, not to painting. Consequently, the prophetic quotations of the Panteleimon codex are not associated with art practice, provided that these verses are not linked to what we read in painted scrolls, but to the religious instruction of the artists. So, it is not unintentional that none of these verses are found in post-byzantine manuals such as that of Dionysius.

Two lengthy adjusted name catalogues which bear no relation to painting, are set after the folio 15v<sup>18</sup>. The first list includes the names of the Byzantine emperors, while the second one includes the names of the Patriarchs of Constantinople. It is to be noted that these two catalogues are constituted by iambic verses of twelve syllables, a foot very common in byzantine Poetry. As it is known, a lot of historical Chronicles are written in iambic verses, such as the one well-known of Ephraim the monk (first half of 14<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> C. M. VAPHEIADES, *Tractationes...* cit., pp. 136-144, 215-224

<sup>19</sup> *Ephraemii Monachi, Imperatorum et Patriarcharum recensio, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, I. BEKKERUS (ed.), Bonnae 1840.

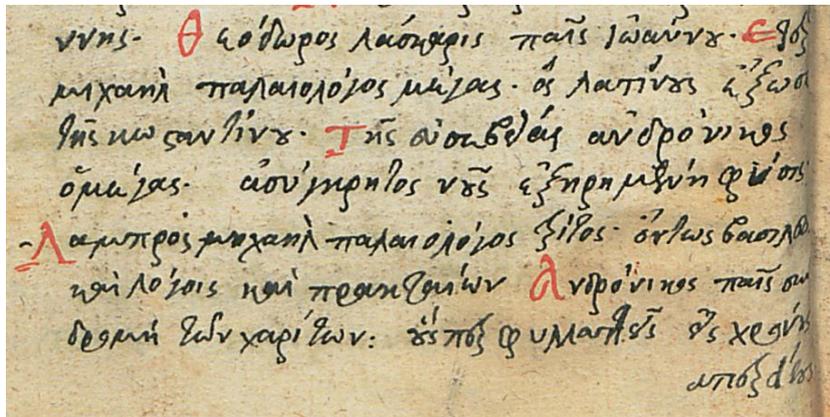


Fig. 2.

Moving on, the last six verses of the emperor list sings an encomium to the Palaeologan dynasty, with especially reference to Andronicus II and his heirs, co-emperor Michael and Andronicus III (fig. 2). Clearly, the author is favorably disposed towards Palaeologan dynasty, if not depended on them. Obviously, Andronicus III was still alive, when these lines were being written. We also know that he was born in 1297 and that his father Michael died in 1320. One year later Andronicus III rebelled against his grandfather. The Andronicus' childhood in connection with the name of patriarch Isaias, who is ascended to the throne of Constantinople in 1323 (-1334) and whom the author also praises, dates the lists before this year. But, who is the author of these metrical lists?

The above-mentioned catalogues are related to the Ephraim's Chronicle. Indeed, the Ephraim's bishop catalogue concludes in the patriarchy of Isaias. Another source being instrumental in composing these lists is the *Enarratio de episcopis byzantii* written by the eminent historian Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos (1256 - † ca. 1335)<sup>20</sup>. A number of late byzantine codices usually in the form of intermingled

<sup>20</sup> NICEPHORI CALLISTI XANTHOPULI, *Enarratio de episcopis byzantii et de patriarchis omnibus constantinopolitanis*, (Νικηφόρου Καλλιστου Ξανθοπούλου, Διήγησις περί τῶν ἐπισκόπων Βυζαντίου καὶ τῶν πατριαρχῶν πάντων Κωνσταντινουπόλεως), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, J.-P. MIGNE (ed.), Parisiis 1865, vol. 147, pp. 147, 450-468.

ones, include the lists in question such as the codex Dionysiou, number 282, and the codex of National Library of Greece, number 373<sup>21</sup>. The lists of the aforesaid two codices are similar to that of the Panteleimon manual, although after the Andronicus III name others follow, until the second kingship of John V Palaeologos (1379-1391). Additionally, the last six verses dedicated to the Palaeologan dynasty are repeated in the History of Georgios Kodinos (15<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, a great number of epigrams devoted to Blessed Virgin, Saints, holy vessels, and works of art are classified between the folia 18r-20v<sup>23</sup>. These epigrams, unknown in post-byzantine painting manuals, are closely connected with the byzantine versification. *Exempli gratia*, the last verse of the devoted to St. Mary of Egypt epigram (τὴν ζῶσαν ὡς ἄνθρον, ὕλη μὴ γράφει) is derived from an poem of Manuel Philis<sup>24</sup>. In folio 18v there are verses are supposed to be devoted to a holy paten (Τράπεζα γέγονεν ἐν σοι etc.). These verses came directly from the Service of the *Elevatione Panis*<sup>25</sup> that is to say from a troparion also found in middle-byzantine Panagiaria such as that of Chilandar monastery<sup>26</sup>.

Moreover, prophecies of Greek philosophers are set at the end of the Panteleimon codex. These spurious quotations are dated in the old times. Many of them are found in historical texts such as those of Malalas, of Theophanis the monk and of Michael Glykas. But, these utterances seem to be formed, as a corpus of prophecies about the truth of Christ Incarnation, in Palaeologan times. Certain late byzantine manuscripts contain this corpus as a component part of clerics and monk's education. However, it is worthy of mention that these prophetic citations are also seen in post-byzantine manuals such as that of Diony-

<sup>21</sup> Both unpublished.

<sup>22</sup> Georgii Codini, *Excerpta. De antiquitatibus Constantinopolitanis* (Γεωργίου τοῦ Κωδινού, Παρεκβολαὶ ἐκ τῆς βιβλίου τοῦ χρονικοῦ περὶ τῶν Πατρῶν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως), *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, I. BEKKERUS (ed.), Bonnae 1843, p. 164.

<sup>23</sup> C. M. VAPHEIADES, *Tractationes...* cit., pp. 144-152.

<sup>24</sup> E. MILLER (ed.), *Manuelis Philae, Carmina ex codicibus escurialensibus, florentinis, parisiis et vaticanis* (vols. I, II), Parisiis 1857, vol. I, p. 243.

<sup>25</sup> J. GOAR (ed.), *Εὐχολόγιον sive rituale graecorum completens Ritus et Ordines*, Lutetiae Parisiorum 1647, p. 866.

<sup>26</sup> See I. DRPIĆ, 'Notes on Byzantine Panagiaria', *Zograf* 35 (2011), pp. 51-62.

sus. But, in this case the prophetic texts are accompanied by both issues a notice of writing these on the Philosopher's scrolls and a face description of each of them. Yet, the lack of the latter in the athonite manuscript makes it clear that these prophetic citations are hardly connected with painting till the end of Byzantium.

Apart from the biblical and patristic citations, I would like to proceed to iconographical information derived from the Panteleimon manuscript. The description of the Last Judgment follows an arrangement which is performed in the middle-byzantine examples Sinai icon (12<sup>th</sup> c.). According to the author of the manual, the garments of the Apostles are supposed to be white. This is a precocious element met in Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello mosaics (12<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, the Apostles hold open codices bearing inscriptions. This invention firstly appeared in Ayvali Kilise, Cappadocia (913-920)<sup>28</sup>, although this seems to be an option of a later period as we can see in the church of St. Peter in Kouvara, Attica (1232)<sup>29</sup>.

The actual text, the most extensive in the painting manual under examination, gives us a florilegium of biblical and patristic quotations, and epigrams of all kinds. As I previously noticed, this material came directly from certain texts of the byzantine era. However, this fact raises a crucial point I would like to shed some light on.

The larger part of the aforesaid corpus, including emperor and patriarch's lists, is hardly linked to painting, as the author is not interested in pointing out how this information, theological or historical, can be used by an artist. It is also worthy of mention that the Pan-

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<sup>27</sup> O. DEMUS, 'Studies among the Torcello Mosaics', II, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 84/491 (1944), pp. 41-45. I. ANDREESCU, 'Torcello I. Le Christ inconnu, II. Anastasis et Jugement dernier: têtes varies, têtes fauses', *Dumbarton Oaks Paper* 26 (1972), pp. 183-223. A. KRAUZE-KOLODZIEJ, 'Corpi dei Dannati all' Inferno dulla base della rappresentazione dalla Basilica di Torcello', in R. NAUKOWA, U. M. MAZURCZAK (eds.), *Studia Antropologica, Bógranicza historii sztuki i kultury*, Lublin 2013, pp. 197-207.

<sup>28</sup> N. THIERRY, 'Le Cénacle apostolique à Kokar Lilise et Ayvali Kilise en Cappadoce: Mission des apôtres, Pentecôte, Jugement dernier', *Journal des Savants* 4 (1963), pp. 228-241

<sup>29</sup> N. COUMBARAKI-PANSELINO, *Saint-Pierre de Kalyvia-Kouvara et la chapelle de la Vierge de Mérenda*, Thessaloniki 1976, pp. 93-98, pl. 41.

teleimon codex does not embody any information about the design and rendering of biblical themes. There is not a single reference as to how somebody can paint the portrait of a saint. Only one scene is described, the Last Judgment, just because it bears a lot of inscriptions and epigrams worthy of memory. In addition, the few technical advises at the end of the manuscript concern adhesive materials and not the painting practice itself.

Therefore, what actuates the author to this option, why does he treasure quotations, apophthegmata, and inscriptions in his manual and not devises as to how a figure can be painted? The answer is possibly that byzantine painting manuals are not *manuals* in the strict sense of the word, but texts of intermingled material with a great deal of inscriptions and verses. This material is obviously derived from other texts not connected with painting, but with cleric and monk's instruction. Indeed, the emperor and Patriarch list, the Order of the Patriarch Sees, the biographical notes about the Seventy Apostles, the prophetic citations, and the Christological comments were apparently component parts of the monastic and church education.

Nevertheless, other chapters of the text in question are associated with painting practice such as the face description of the Saints, the martyrdoms of the Apostles, and the patristic dicta usually set on the Saints' scrolls. But, again the author of the Athonite manual seems to be concerned more about treasuring iconographical directions than about giving devises of painting practice, like the author of the fragment in Vaticanus gr. 209 does<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, the author of the Pan-teleimon codex describes only saint's portraits following and old tradition that of Malalas, the Ulpian's text, and the Synaxaria. It is known that Synaxaria include the name of a Saint. But they also provide information on his life and, occasionally, a brief description of his face. On the contrary, except from the Last Judgment, no other biblical event is described.

What is this option for? The answer is that Saints, as models of virtue in the service of God, and their worship was of a great importance regarding monks' nurture. Another point, concerning paint-

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<sup>30</sup> G. PAPPALÀ, I. V. DOLGISH, P. COWE, 'A Byzantine Text on the Technique of Icon Painting', *Dumbarton Oaks Paper* 64 (2010), pp. 201-216.

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ers' training, was the precise rendering of Saint's physiognomy as this was settled upon the Church decrees.

Taking all the above into consideration, the manuscript of the Pan-teleimon monastery is a copy of an earlier manual written by a byzantine monk-painter, possibly from Mount Athos. The monk-painter in question composed his manual receiving its material from popular in Byzantium texts such as *Chronicles*, *Synaxaria*, etc. This material was intended to offer a proper theological education and not information about painting practice. This fact indicates that byzantine painting manuals were not just a collection of technical and of analytical iconographical advises, like the post-byzantine ones, but mainly a corpus of theoretical knowledge necessary for artists' nurture. As I believe, this fact sheds new light on what painters did in Byzantium.

