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Epigraphic Traditions in Eleventh-Century Byzantium General Considerations*

Abstract: Eleventh-century inscriptional material advances the changes that had gradually taken place in the previous, post-iconoclastic, era, and prefigures traditions that would become more firmly established during the twelfth century as well as in late Byzantium and beyond. Eleventh-century epigraphy employs an impressively wide range of artistic media, and a comparatively narrower range of inscriptional formulae. It displays diverse levels of formality. It places noticeable emphasis on visual appearance. The epigraphic presence of artists and craftsmen becomes more prominent, as they increasingly leave their names, and written records of their activities, in public texts. The proliferation of inscriptions set in the context of churches and monasteries can arguably be singled out as the most predominant feature of the overall epigraphic habit of this period. The eleventh-century material considered here shows that inscriptions can define space and symbolize ideology, authority, and status, that they can confirm religious tenets, show changes in religious practices, assume apotropaic significance, and be used to decorative ends.

A quotation from the eleventh-century Greek translation of the Eastern tale *The Book of the Philosopher Syntipas* gives us one of the most explicit descriptions of inscribed materials. By way of exploiting the motif of the role of philosophers in princely education, the story unfolds as the eponymous protagonist arrives at the royal palace as tutor to the son and heir of King Cyrus, and immediately announces the unconventional manner in which he intends to carry out his teaching duty:

‘You shall study and live in this house, my boy, until you fully master everything that I have represented [for you] on these walls!’¹

Syntipas’s idiosyncratic teaching method clearly attributes great importance to the epigraphic display of text and image. This point is emphasised even more strongly in the concluding chapters of the book, in which the philosopher’s young protégé describes his learning experience to his father in these words:

‘When you entrusted me to him, my teacher received me into his home and had immediately a new house built for me. He polished and white-washed the interior neatly and splendidly, and there he depicted (ἀνιστόρησε), spelled out in writing (γράμμασιν διεστίζατο) and outlined precisely (ἀκριβῶς ἀνετάξατο) everything he wished to teach me, and, moreover, he painted (ἀνεζωγράφησεν) the sun, the moon and the stars on the walls. He also inscribed (ἐνεχάραξε) [...] the ten chapters of his wisdom, knowledge and teaching.’²

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Research work for this paper has been carried out as part of my current project of studying middle and late Byzantine epigraphic cultures. During my term as a summer fellow at Dumbarton Oaks in 2011, I was able to examine hundreds of images of late antique and Byzantine Greek inscriptions from the DO Photographic Archive, many of which have helped elucidate eleventh-century epigraphic practices.

¹ Πάσα σου ἡ διαγωγή καὶ ἡ διαίτα, ὦ νεανία, ἐν τούτῳ ἔστω τῷ οἰκήματι, ἄχρις ἂν καλῶς ἐκμάθῃς ὅσαπερ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῦ τοίχοις παρ’ ἐμοῦ ἀνιστόρηται: ed. V. JERNSTEDT, Mich. Andreopuli Liber Syntipae. St. Petersburg 1912, 6, ll. 11–13.

² *Ibid.*, 119, l. 10 ff.: ... παραλαβὼν με ἀπὸ σοῦ ὁ ἐμὸς διδάσκαλος καὶ εἰς τὸν αὐτοῦ οἶκον ἀπαγαγὼν, εὐθὺς οἰκίσκον νεωστὶ μου ἐδείματο· καὶ τοῦτον ἔσωθεν κοσμίως περιχρίσας καὶ λευκότητι καταγαλῖσας, πάντα ὅσα ἐμελλεν ἐκδιδάξαι με ἐν τοῖς τοῦ οἰκίσκου τοίχοις ἀνιστόρησε καὶ γράμμασιν διεστίζατό τε καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἀνετάξατο, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ἥλιον καὶ τὴν σελήνην καὶ τοὺς

The content of the passage is less significant for its description of Syntipas's course syllabus than for the terminology that it uses to designate successive stages in the arrangement of the monumental display of text and image. Similar descriptions found in other narrative sources tend to be less precise, and to frequently elude readers of Medieval Greek literature and epigraphers alike.³ This passage also serves as an apt reminder of the communicative and didactic functions of inscribed material. It aptly illustrates one of the most striking developments in medieval Greek epigraphy whereby the written word, and the inscribed word in particular, become increasingly supplemented with, or even entirely supplanted by, a wide range of non-verbal, often pictorial, equivalents. For all the explicitness of the passage, however, it would be misleading to suggest that the *Story of Syntipas* testifies to any specific inscriptional conventions: the realm of fictional literature does not purport to replicate genuine epigraphic norms, nor can it be mined with confidence for evidence of inscriptional or social realities, even when it employs recognizable literary *topoi* that may find some grounding in attested practices.⁴

Far less ambiguous is the notion that for a society in which the level of even basic literacy was quite low, Byzantium dedicated a remarkably versatile role to writing.⁵ This had direct bearing on the significance placed on inscriptions as well as on the strategies that had to be devised in order to convey the wide range of literal and symbolic meanings associated with the public display of writing. The present essay seeks to explore precisely these developments against the backdrop of eleventh-century epigraphic material, and in particular with reference to the following questions: What do the Byzantines themselves report about the use and significance of inscriptions? How much material, and of what kind, does actually survive? What evidence do we have of the connections between production and reception, and between patrons, artists and their targeted audiences? Most crucially, what do we know about the social function of inscribed texts?

ἀστέρας ἐν τούτοις ἀνεζωγράφησεν. Ἐνεχάραξε δὲ τοῖς αὐτοῖς τοῦ οἰκήματος τοίχοις καὶ τὰ δέκα κεφάλαια τῆς τε σοφίας, τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας.

³ For the ambiguities in the meaning of the words like γράφω and ἰστορέω, which can denote the acts of both writing/describing and depicting/incising/decorating, see G. DAGRON, Psellos épigraphiste, in: C. MANGO – O. PRITSAK (eds.), *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on His Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students. Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983) 123; M. LAUXTERMANN, Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres (*WBS* XXIV/1). Vienna 2003, 90–93; S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, Painters' portraits in Byzantine art. *DChAE* IV 17 (1993–1994) 129–142; A. RHOBY, Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken (*Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* XV). Vienna 2009 (henceforth RHOBY I), index s.v. γράφω and ἰστορέω; IDEM, Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst (*Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* XXIII). Vienna 2010 (henceforth RHOBY II), index s.v. γράφω and ἰστορέω; IDEM, Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein (*Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* 35). Vienna 2014 (henceforth RHOBY III), index s.v. γράφω and ἰστορέω; B. PENCHEVA, The Sensual Icon. University Park, PA 2010, 57–96; I. TOTH, The narrative fabric of the Genoese *pallio* and the silken diplomacy of Michael VIII Palaiologos, in: H. G. MEREDITH (ed.), *Objects in Motion: The Circulation of Religion and Sacred Objects in the Late Antique and Byzantine World*. Oxford 2011, 95, n. 35; I. DRPIĆ, Painter as scribe: artistic identity and the arts of graphē in late Byzantium. *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 29/3 (2013) 334.

⁴ A similar literary *topos* can be found in the Komnenian novel *Hysmine and Hysminias* by Eumathios Makrembolites (ed. M. MARCOVICH, *Eustathius Macrembolites, de Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus libri XI*. Munich 2001; transl. E. JEFFREYS, *Four Byzantine Novels*. Liverpool 2012), Book Two, Chapters 2–11; Book Four, Chapters 5–18: the depiction of allegorical virtues, of enthroned Eros with an army of men and women, a host of birds and beasts, and a representation of the year's cycle—all inscribed with elucidating labels and instructive iambic verses. On the role of inscriptions in fictional narratives, see: N. SLATER, Reading inscriptions in the ancient novel in: M. PASCHALIS – S. PANAYOTAKIS – G. SCHMELING (eds.), *Readers and Writers in the Ancient Novel*. Groningen 2009, 64–78; C. CUPANE, Das erfundene Epigramm: Schrift und Bild im Roman, in: W. HÖRANDNER – A. RHOBY (eds.), *Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme. Akten des internationalen Workshop* (Wien, 1.–2. Dezember 2006) (*Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* XIV). Vienna 2008, 19–28. On late antique archaeological evidence from Egypt of a school building whose walls were inscribed with quotations from Homer, Euripides and Plutarch, and exhortations to students, see: R. CRIBIÖRE – P. DAVOLI, New literary texts from Amheida, ancient Trimithis (Dakhla Oasis, Egypt). *ZPE* 187 (2013) 1–14. On the monumental display of image and text for didactic purposes, see also: D. PETRAIN, *Homer in Stone. The Tabulae Iliacae in their Roman Context*. Cambridge 2014.

⁵ C. HOLMES, Written culture in Byzantium and beyond: contexts, contents and interpretations, in: C. HOLMES – J. WARING (eds.), *Literacy, education and manuscript transmission in Byzantium and beyond*. Leiden – Boston – Cologne 2002, 1–31.

Epigraphy remains one of the few woefully under-explored fields in Byzantine Studies, with a reputation that obstinately persists for being elusive and esoteric. It is therefore regrettable that important progress that has been made in the scholarship of the subject over the past decades has not so far been matched by any consensus over even the most fundamental issues such as the presentation and publication of primary material. Furthermore, there are very few comprehensive studies to help elucidate the epigraphic habits of distinct periods in Byzantine history, or, indeed, to assist in an effort to trace the diachronic development of individual epigraphic genres.⁶ At the same time, this very lack leaves scope for substantial progress through the study of general epigraphic practices within precisely defined chronological parameters. The same holds true for the study of eleventh-century inscriptions: because of their general neglect, even a cursory glance over a relatively limited amount of the extant evidence yields noteworthy observations.

What is immediately apparent is how the eleventh-century inscriptional material sits in the broader development of the Byzantine epigraphic habit. Rather than introducing any radically innovative practices, inscriptions produced within this timespan seem to advance the changes that had gradually taken place in the previous, post-iconoclastic, era, and to prefigure traditions that would become more firmly established during the twelfth century and later. Thus, the Byzantine epigraphy of the eleventh century cannot be easily separated from that of the preceding Macedonian and subsequent Komnenian periods, whose norms it continues and anticipates respectively, and from which it differs not so much in substance as in volume.⁷

The eleventh-century material survives unevenly distributed. Commemorative inscriptions are fairly widespread, and have been found in the more obvious settings of modern-day Turkey, the Greek mainland and islands, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Syria and southern Italy, as well as in several less predictable locations such as Egypt and the Caucasus. The inscribed objects of the minor arts, on the other hand, tend to be detached from their original context, and confined to modern public and private art collections, predominantly Western.

A distinct feature to have emerged in eleventh-century epigraphy is the predominance of extant evidence from the various provinces over that from the Byzantine capital. Whereas this can be explained by the diverse fortunes that different parts of the empire subsequently suffered, having decisive bearing on the survival rates of material culture and, consequently, of epigraphic material, it is also possible to make the case for a discrepancy in the original production. The clearest proof of this can be found in the monumental epigraphy of the eleventh century. The number and the contents of donor inscriptions from this period that have come down to us show the Balkans, the Greek mainland and islands, and even South Italy abounding in inscrip-

⁶ For extant overall assessment of the discipline and principal surveys of epigraphic habits in the middle Byzantine period, see: C. MANGO, *Byzantine Epigraphy (4th to 10th centuries)*, in: D. HARLFINGER – G. PRATO (eds.), *Paleographia e Codicologia Greca*. Alessandria 1991, I 235–49; IDEM, *Epigraphy*, in: E. JEFFREYS (with J. HALDON and R. CORMACK) (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*. Oxford 2008, 144–149; D. FEISSEL, *Le ‘malaise dans l’ épigraphie byzantine’: entre Antiquité tardive et Moyen âge* (lecture given at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in May 2010); A. RHOBY, *The structure of inscriptional dedicatory epigrams in Byzantium*, in: C. BURINI DE LORENZI – M. DE GAETANO (eds.), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. Atti in onore di Antonino Isola per il suo 70° genetliaco*. Alessandria 2010, 309–32; IDEM, *The meaning of inscriptions for the early and middle Byzantine culture. Remarks on the interaction of word, image and beholder*, in: *Scrivere e leggere nell’alto medioevo*. Spoleto 2012, 731–53; G. PALLIS, *Inscriptions on middle Byzantine marble templon screens*. *BZ* 106/2 (2013) 761–810; L. SAFRAN, *Public Textual Cultures: a case study in Southern Italy*, in: W. ROBINS (ed.), *Textual cultures in Medieval Italy*. Toronto 2011, 115–44; EADEM, *Deconstructing “Donors” in Medieval Southern Italy*, in: L. THEIS – M. MULLETT – M. GRÜNBART (eds.), *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*. Vienna – Cologne – Weimar 2014 (= *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* LX/LXI [2011/2012]), 135–151; G. SUBOTIĆ – I. TOTTH, *Historical Inscriptions in 11th and 12th-century Frescoes in the Western Regions of the Byzantine Empire* [in Serbo-Croat, summary in English]. *ZRV* 36 (1997) 99–118.

⁷ Bibliographic references to publications on middle Byzantine epigraphy can be found in the *BZ* and in F. BÉRARD [et al.], *Guide de l’ épigraphiste* (chapter 3). Paris 2010 with regular on-line supplements: <http://129.199.13.51/ressources/publications-aux-p-e-n-s/guide-de-l-epigraphiste/article/overview>. Useful for the estimate of the relative numbers and geographical distribution of 11th-c. inscriptions are: J. S. ALLEN – I. ŠEVČENKO, *Dumbarton Oaks Bibliographies*, II, 1. *Epigraphy*. Washington, D.C. 1981; C. ASDRACHA, *Inscriptions protobyzantines et byzantines de la Thrace orientale et de l’île d’Imbros (IIIe–XVe siècles)*. Athens 2003: Eastern Thrace, table 241; ‘Chronologischer Index’, in: RHOBY I 432, and RHOBY II 445.

tional material, against a scarcity of similar evidence from Asia Minor. Whether eleventh-century Anatolia lacked peace, prosperity and ambitious building projects or it simply underwent extensive ruralisation, either way, the absence of useful archaeological data from this region,⁸ matches a dearth in the epigraphic record. The extent of the disparity in comparison with the evidence found in other parts of the empire becomes even more obvious if we contrast the handful of extant donor inscriptions from Anatolia in its entirety (with the sole exception of the somewhat greater amount of evidence from Cappadocia) with, for example, the number of comparable texts from the backwaters of the Greek mainland, the Mani: judging by what still exists *in situ*, the Peloponnesian province, whose remote position may have facilitated the survival, has generated at least twice as much material as the whole of Asia Minor.⁹

Of course, none of the provisos stated above lessen the value of focusing on eleventh-century epigraphy. On the contrary, the ever-shifting political history, the increased social mobility, and, most significantly, the thriving intellectual life of the time, which saw the learned, the very guardians of the written word, as a part of the ruling elite, make it all the more important to undertake a vigorous exploration of what survives of the inscriptional traditions of the period, and of their continuing influence on Byzantine culture.¹⁰

THE BYZANTINE VIEW

Middle Byzantine textual sources provide a wide range of evidence for the implicit and attested roles of inscriptions in Byzantium. Above all, eleventh-century epigrammatic poetry has recently inspired a flurry of academic activity and caused the traditional view of inscriptional verses to be reassessed and radically revised. No longer are these poems considered tedious and obscure, nor are they any more buried in inaccessible publications. Their updated critical editions have become, and continue to be made, available. These have prompted a rise in the scholarship that contextualizes this material, and proposes more productive interpretative strategies for investigating the intellectual networks, literary invention and patterns of patronage behind the creative spirit of the eleventh century.¹¹ Verses that survive in their original epigraphic settings as well as

⁸ The scarceness of archaeological material from Anatolia has been noted in modern scholarship: C. MANGO, *Les monuments de l'architecture du 11e siècle et leur signification historique et sociale*. *TM* 6 (1976) 351–365. Cf. C. DELVOYE, *L'architecture byzantine au 11e siècle*, in: J. M. HUSSEY – D. OBOLENSKY – S. RUNCIMAN (eds.), *Proceedings of the 13th International Congress of Byzantine Studies*. London 1967, 225–234; H. BUCHWALD, *Western Asia Minor as a Generator of Architectural Forms in the Byzantine Period. Provincial Back-Wash or Dynamic Center of Production?* *JÖB* 34 (1984) 199–234. Cf. P. NIEWÖHNER, *What went wrong? Decline and Ruralisation in Eleventh Century Anatolia*. *The Archaeological Record*, forthcoming.

⁹ On the middle Byzantine epigraphy of the Mani, including *ca* twenty eleventh-century donor inscriptions, see: S. KALOPISSIVERTI, *Epigraphic evidence in Middle-Byzantine Churches of the Mani. Patronage and Art Production*, in: *Λαμπηδών. Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη της Ντούλας Μουρίκη*. Athens 2003, 339–354. For a survey of Cappadocian donor inscriptions, see: L. BERNARDINI, *Les donateurs des églises de Cappadoce*. *Byz* 62 (1992) 118–140. The remaining material from Asia Minor comprises three building inscriptions from the area around Ephesus (D. FEISSEL, *Les métropoles d'Éphèse au XIe siècle et les inscriptions de l'archevêque Théodôros*, in: *Byzantium, State and Society, in Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*. Athens 2003, 231–47), one inscription on a templon epistyle (W. H. BUCKLER – W. M. CALDER – W. K. C. GUTHRIE, *Monuments and Documents from Eastern Asia and Western Galatia* [*Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 4]. Manchester 1933, 32, cat. 95, pl. 27), one inscription from Aizanoi commemorating a rebuilding of an ancient temple to serve as a church (Monuments from the Aezanitis recorded by C. W. M. Cox, A. Cameron, and J. Cullen, in: B. LEVICK – S. MITCHELL – J. POTTER [et al.] [eds.], *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 9 = *JRS Monographs* 4 [1988] 170 ff., Kat.-Nr. 557; D. FEISSEL, *Bulletin épigraphique. Phrygie*, *REG* 103 (1990) 605–607), verses from Amaseia commemorating repair work on a church (C. MANGO, *A Homeric Inscription at Amasya*. *Nea Rhome* 8 [2011] 67–74), and a building inscription from a church in Skepsis (now in Assos/Behramkale) (RHOBY III, no. TR36). Inscribed tenth/eleventh-century templon screens found in several locations in Anatolia may go some way towards suggesting that the amount of archaeological and epigraphic material could have originally been somewhat more substantial: <http://mama.csad.ox.ac.uk/monuments/MAMA-XI-173.html>; PALLIS, *Inscriptions on middle Byzantine templon screens*.

¹⁰ M. ANGOLD, *Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204. A political history*. London – New York ²1997; A. KAZHDAN – A. WHARTON, *Change in Byzantine Culture from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Centuries*. Berkeley, CA 1985; H. AHRWEILER, *Recherches sur la société byzantine au XIe siècle*. *TM* 6 (1976) 99–124. The forthcoming proceedings of the SPBS symposium on the transformation in Byzantium in the eleventh century, held in Oxford in 2012, will shed more light on the political, social and cultural changes that Byzantium underwent in this century.

¹¹ For the new, revised or reprinted editions, see: RHOBY, I, II, III. Principal studies: W. HÖRANDNER, *Customs and Beliefs as Reflected in Occasional Poetry: some consideration*. *BF* 12 (1987) 235–247; LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 90–93; RHOBY, *The*

in extant manuscript collections, allow us to be reasonably confident in the claim that inscriptional poetry, and inscriptions in general, were commonly displayed and thus frequently encountered in public, such that they may be used as genuine testimonies of a considerable culture of writing in the middle Byzantine period.

The flourishing of epigrammatic poetry is complemented by the keen interest that middle Byzantine historians show in the public display of texts. These authors, not unlike Procopius, Agathias and Malalas in the sixth century, incorporate inscriptions into their narratives, and they occasionally even claim for themselves the authority of autopsy. John Zonaras, for example, makes note of inscriptional evidence dating back to ancient Rome as part of his agenda to reconcile the Roman and Byzantine past for the benefit of his contemporary readership.¹² His *History* includes discussions about the origins of inscribed architectural landmarks that could still be seen in his own time, although Zonaras's knowledge of these monuments seems to have come from an anthology rather than from seeing this material *in situ*.¹³ Among his accounts, we find references to ancient buildings that carried engraved writing, such as the bridge over the Sangarios River and the Sophiane Palace, and to funerary epigrams for Julian the Apostate and Constantina, the wife of the Emperor Maurice.¹⁴ The eleventh-century historian John Skylitzes quotes inscribed material *verbatim*: his choices feature Justinian's and Theodora's dedicatory epigram from the interior of the Church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople and, more bizarrely, *the worthless barbaric iambs* that the Emperor Theophilos had himself composed, and then ordered to be *inscribed on the foreheads of the Graptoi brothers by barbaric tattooing*.¹⁵

Unsurprisingly, for the fullest eleventh-century view on epigraphy, we must turn to the writings of the most charismatic intellectual figure of this period, Michael Psellos himself. Drawing on the more vernacular end of his expert range, this author teaches us that ancient statues can gain apotropaic powers if they have engraved seals (σφραγίδες) and written formulae (ἐγγράμματα) inserted into their cavities.¹⁶ It is very likely that Psellos's σφραγίδες and ἐγγράμματα refer to inscribed amulets that are known to have been widely used in the middle Byzantine period, and in many cases have been associated with workshops based in the Byzantine capital.¹⁷ Psellos may have drawn his knowledge of this topic from folklore or from textual material on medicine, theurgy or magic, but his advice also very much resembles that found in *Patria Konstantinoupoleos*, the account of the attractions of Constantinople, dated to the late tenth century. Just as Psellos' writings, this text too includes abundant evidence of what may be perceived as the attitudes of, or advice to, ordinary people in the Byzantine capital regarding still-ubiquitous ancient monuments and statuary, some of which

structure of inscriptional dedicatory epigrams; IDEM, Epigraphy, and Sigillography, in: Chr. STAVRAKOS – B. PAPADOPOULOU (eds.), Ἡπειρόνδε (Epeironde). Proceedings of the 10th International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography (Ioannina, 1.–3. October 2009). Wiesbaden 2011, 65–79; IDEM, Inscriptional Poetry. Ekphrasis in Byzantine tomb epigrams, in: V. VAVŘÍNEK – P. ODORICO – V. DRBAL (eds.), Ekphrasis. La représentation des monuments dans les littératures byzantine et byzantino-slaves. Réalités et imaginaires. Prague 2011 (= *BSI* suppl. 69/3 [2011]), 193–205; F. BERNARD, Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry, 1025–1081 (*Oxford Studies in Byzantium*). Oxford 2014; F. SPINGOU, Words and artworks in the twelfth century and beyond. The thirteenth-century manuscript Marcianus gr. 524 and the twelfth-century dedicatory epigrams on works of art (doctoral thesis, Oxford 2013).

¹² T. BANCHICH – E. LANE, *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus to the Death of Theodosius the Great*. London 2009, 1–19. On Zonaras's interest in ancient Roman history, see: R. MACRIDES, History-writing in the twelfth century, in: P. MAGDALINO (ed.), *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*. London 1992, 120–139.

¹³ On Zonaras's use of epigrams, see: A. CAMERON, Notes on the Sophiae, the Sophianae, and the harbour of Sophia. *Byz* 37 (1968) 11–20. Cf. MACRIDES, History-writing 131.

¹⁴ ZONARAS III 459, 174–175, 198, 68 (BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁵ Skylitzes quotes Justinian's and Theodora's epigram in the context of his praise of Basil I for his building and restoration of churches in Constantinople: *Synopsis historiarum* 161–162 (THURN). On the tattooing of the Graptoi brothers: ... καὶ τοῖς μετώποις αὐτῶν ἐπιγραφεῖναι βαρβαρικῶς ἐκκεντηθέντας οὓς συντέθεικε λήρους ἰαμβικοῦς. Skylitzes then proceeds to quote the verses *verbatim*: 62, l. 77–63, l. 88. Cf. on the *Graptoi* Theodoros and Theophanes *PmbZ* # 7526 (esp. 414 and 416, n.17) and # 8093 (esp. 594 and 595 n. 17)

¹⁶ Epist. 187 (SATHAS), 474; cf. C. MANGO, Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder. *DOP* 17 (1963) 61.

¹⁷ See, for example, J. SPIER, Medieval Byzantine magical amulets and their tradition. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993) 25–62.

carries inscribed texts.¹⁸ However, Psellos could certainly do better than merely show off his familiarity with popular superstition: indeed, one of his letters unmistakably demonstrates how an imperial request to interpret the text of what seems to have been an inscribed herm or a plaque depicting scenes from the Odyssey, when issued to an imaginative story-teller with a strong penchant for classicizing allusion, could prompt an epigraphic construal with an epic twist, interspersed with Homeric quotations, featuring the choice of mythological *personae dramatis*, and could even provide an excuse to boast some esoteric pharmacological knowledge.¹⁹ Here, however, we are clearly dealing with an author and antiquarian who excercises textual subjectivity and source manipulation and most certainly not an intellectual who assumes the role of a genuine *épigraphiste*.

When considering general trends in eleventh-century epigraphy—a mine of wealth for modern-day epigraphists—, it is important to remember that the operative range of any inscribed text frequently surpasses the artificially imposed limits of chronology and topical relevance. The example of inscriptional verses dating back to this period offers a case in point. The upsurge in their production was undoubtedly prompted by the efforts of the tenth-century scholars such as Gregory Magistros and Constantine Kephalas to collect and preserve older epigraphic poetry, as well as being directly inspired by the still standing epigraphic monuments from the previous centuries that must have constituted visible landmarks in all the major cities of the empire, Constantinople no less than elsewhere.²⁰ Moreover, not all poetry inscribed at this time was necessarily composed in the same period: the example of the epigrams by the ninth-century poet Theodore of Stoudios found in the eleventh-century churches of the Basilian monastery of Grottaferrata in Italy and of the Nea Mone on Chios reminds us that epigrams from the pens of authors like Gregory of Nazianzus, Theodore himself or, for example, the eleventh-century poet Christopher of Mitylene, as well as the fourteenth-century epigrammatist Manuel Philes, constituted the canon of Byzantine ecclesiastical poetry. Rather than remaining forever anchored to the setting and occasion that had inspired their composition, these poems, along with a number of religious verses, *tituli* and excerpts from liturgical books, became part of the standard and often reproduced repertoire of Byzantine church epigraphy, and the regular fixtures of its enduring inscriptional habit.²¹

All this prompts us to consider the timeless character of inscriptional material, which can inhabit parallel literary and spatial landscapes without necessarily originating in the same historical moment. More significantly, the literary evidence considered here shows epigraphic culture as a complex phenomenon in terms of both its authors/commissioners and the readership/audiences that it addresses. There is no doubt that the

¹⁸ Ed. T. PREGER, *Patria Constantinopoleos: Scriptorum Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, I–II. Leipzig 1901–1907 (repr. New York 1975); translation: A. BERGER, *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople. The Patria*. Washington, D.C. 2013; discussion: G. DAGRON, *Constantinople imaginaire: Etudes sur le recueil des 'Patria'*. Paris 1984; A. BERGER, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos*. Bonn 1988.

¹⁹ Ed. A. R. LITTLEWOOD, *Michaelis Psellis oratoria minora*. Leipzig 1985, 126–127. According to Littlewood, Psellos' addressee is the Emperor Michael VII Doukas; cf. also P. MOORE, *Iter Psellianum*. A detailed listing of manuscript sources for all works attributed to Michael Psellos, including a comprehensive bibliography (*Subsidia Mediaevalia* 26). Toronto 2005, no. 926; on the letter: R. DOSTÁLOVÁ, *Rhetorik, Allegorie in der Ekphrasis antiker Denkmäler*. Die *Ekphrasis* antiker Kunstdenkmäler als Weg zur griechischen Philosophie in Byzanz (am Beispiel von Michael Psellos), in: VAVŘÍNEK – ODORICO – DRBAL, *Ekphrasis* 137–145: 138–142; DAGRON, *Psellos épigraphiste* (Dagron identifies the emperor as Constantine X Doukas).

²⁰ On the work of compilers, see: LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine poetry* 73–74.

²¹ On the epigram from Grottaferrata: A. GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques médiévales d'Italie*. Rome 1996, 119–120; RHOBY III, no. IT5. On another epigram of Studites in the Nea Mone monastery: E. FOLLIERI, *Una perduta Epigrafe della Néa Moví di Chio nella testimonianza di Alessandro Vasilopulo (a. 1627)*, in: P. WIRTH (ed.), *Polychronion. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*. Heidelberg 1966, 184–195; cf. A. PAUL, *Dichtung auf Objekten. Inschriftlich erhaltene griechische Epigramme vom 9. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert: Suche nach bekannten Autorennamen*, in: M. HINTERBERGER – E. SCHIFFER (eds.), *Byzantinische Sprachkunst. Studien zur byzantinischen Literatur gewidmet Wolfram Hörandner zum 65. Geburtstag* (*Byzantinisches Archiv* 20). Berlin – New York 2007, 240 (no. 6); RHOBY III, no. GR52. On the reuse of inscriptional poetry: IDEM, *On the inscriptional versions of the epigrams of Christophoros Mitylenaios*, in: F. BERNARD – K. DEMOEN (eds.), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*. Farnham 2012, 147–155; LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine poetry* 149, 244, 350–351, 352, no. 104; H. MAGUIRE, *Image and Imagination: the Byzantine epigram as evidence for viewer response*. Toronto 1996; HÖRANDNER, *Customs and Beliefs*.

impetus for the close reading and recording of inscriptions in the eleventh century emerged from a specific intellectual milieu, from the class of the *pepaideumenoí*. Scholars like Skylitzes, Zonaras and even Psellos show themselves very much alert to the ancient and early Byzantine inscriptional heritage. They make it their task to gather and study this epigraphic material, even if their interests seem to be predominantly inspired by their own sense of cultural identity, and their antiquarian tastes in Byzantine written culture.²² The same class of the learned, or at least the literate, constituted the group in which we should look for the authors, and in many cases, commissioners, of the majority of newly composed Byzantine inscriptions. As to the Byzantines who were on the receiving end of epigraphic messages, they made up a much broader, and more versatile, category, consisting not only of readers, but also of an audience acutely aware of the power and significance of inscribed texts. There is no doubt that Byzantine epigraphs, like many other kinds of writings, were occasionally read out to the members of viewing public, and that the participants in such ‘performances’ could instigate their oral and aural promulgation, which was probably more widespread than we generally believe.

SURVIVING EVIDENCE

In addition to the frequent textual references to middle Byzantine epigraphic culture, we also have a considerable body of inscriptional material from this period that still survives today. This material can be found *in situ* and/or in various publications, although these are not always readily available. The sole exception concerns metrical inscriptions, whose editions are far more accessible now than it was the case hitherto.²³ In many ways, the accessibility of eleventh-century inscriptions is akin to that of Byzantine epigraphic material in general: at best, they are dispersed in publications covering a wide spectrum of research strands, but some still remain unpublished, and therefore unknown to a wider scholarly readership. The investigation that has been carried out for the purpose of this essay considers several hundreds securely dated inscriptions. A more vigorous search could undoubtedly yield a substantially greater body of material. However, even incomplete coverage allows for plotting the broad outlines of the eleventh-century epigraphic output reflecting an impressive geographic spread right across and even outside the territories of a Byzantine Empire that finds itself in a significantly expanded state after the death of Basil II in 1025. Paradoxically, in spite of the lasting reputation of this emperor as anti-intellectual and unsupportive of writing culture, the memory of Basil II informed the eleventh-century epigraphic habit in several significant ways.²⁴

THE EPIGRAPHY OF RELIGIOUS PATRONAGE

The historian John Skylitzes reports that in the aftermath of the successful military campaigns against Bulgaria in 1018, Basil II toured Greece, and arrived at Athens on a visit, which was purposely staged as a pious thanksgiving for the imperial victories on the battlefield. On this occasion, according to the same author, the emperor adorned the Parthenon, then the Church of the Mother of God, with magnificent and expensive dedications.²⁵ It would not be out of place to propose that this act of imperial endowment of the Athenian shrine

²² For the uses and readings of ancient inscriptions in middle Byzantium: A. PAPALEXANDROU, *Memory Tattered and Torn: Spolia in the Heartland of Byzantine Hellenism*, in: R. M. VAN DYKE – S. E. ALCOCK (eds.), *Archaeologies of Memory*. Oxford 2003, 56–80.

²³ Corpora with a considerable amount of eleventh-century material include: ASDRACHA, *Inscriptions protobyzantines et byzantines*; RHOBY, I, II and III; GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*; G. DE JERPHANION, *Une nouvelle province de l’art byzantin. Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, I–II. Paris 1925–1942.

²⁴ For the negative image of Basil II as anti-intellectual, see: M. LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine poetry and the paradox of Basil II’s reign*, in: P. MAGDALINO (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000*. Leiden – Boston 2003, 199–216.

²⁵ Skylitzes, *Synopsis* 364 (THURN): Ἐν Ἀθήναις δὲ γενόμενος, καὶ τῇ θεοτόκῳ τὰ τῆς νίκης εὐχαριστήρια δοῦς καὶ ἀναθήμασι λαμπροῖς καὶ πολυτελέσι κοσμήσας τὸν ναόν, ὑπέστρεψεν εἰς Κωνσταντινούπολιν (‘After reaching Athens and giving thanks for his victory to the Mother of God, adorning the temple with magnificent and expensive dedications, he returned to Constantinople’). Cf. A. KALDELLIS, *The Christian Parthenon. Classicism and Pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens*. Cambridge 2009, 82. On Basil’s visit to Athens, see: *ibid.* 81–91; C. HOLMES, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)*. Oxford 2005, 421, 501; most recently J. SHEPARD, *Adventus, Arrivistes and Rites of Rulership in Byzantium and France in the Tenth and Eleventh Cen-*

of the Theotokos may have been epigraphically commemorated. The staging of Basil II's *eucharisteria* and his donations to the Church of the Virgin Atheniotissa occurred at a time when religious patronage emanating from the highest social strata would have been acknowledged in writing both in official documents and by means of publicly displayed texts. The eleventh century was marked by exceptionally strong self-awareness among donors, who increasingly commissioned epigrams to immortalize their philanthropic activities, much more so, it seems, than in the earlier period.²⁶ Moreover, even though surviving evidence of corresponding epigraphic and documentary records of donor activities is sparse, it nonetheless suggests that practice of displaying official donation documents on the walls of churches had probably already become the norm by the eleventh century. A reference left by Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, the Spanish high official who took part in an embassy to the court of Timur in Samarkand in the early fifteenth century, when he also visited Constantinople, can be read in confirmation of this view. De Clavijo reports having seen on the walls of the Panagia Peribleptos the paintings of the castles and towns that its founder, the Emperor Romanos III Argyros, had bequeathed to the church in the eleventh century, alongside the inscribed documents that confirmed this grant.²⁷ Furthermore, we know that the testament of Nikodemos for the Monastery of *Nea Gephyra* in the Southern Peloponnes was originally carved on a column. It stated that the foundation was established in 1027 in order to protect a newly built bridge over the Eurotas River. The inscription was still *in situ* in 1730, when it was recorded and subsequently published, but has since been lost.²⁸ Likewise, the typikon of Nikephoros Erotikos for the Monastery of the Mother of God and the old age home, founded between 975 and 1000 on Mt Tmolos to the west of Lydian Philadelphia in modern-day Turkey. This document survives only as a monumental inscription and confirms that the epigraphic display of monastic typika was considered a suitable means to preserve and promulgate this type of legal material in the eleventh century.²⁹

THE (IN)FORMALITY OF *GRAFFITI*

Some modern scholars believe that it was during the same visit of Basil II to Athens in 1018 that one of the emperor's Varangian guards incised the long and now illegible runic *grafitto* on the flanks of the Lion of Piraeus, the statue which stood at the entrance of the eponymous harbor until Francesco Morosini had it transferred to Venice in 1688.³⁰ It is impossible to prove who exactly inscribed the sculpture, and when—unconventional epigraphic practices tend to defy precise contextualization—but the fact remains that the

ture, in: A. BEIHAMMER – St. CONSTANTINO – M. PARANI (eds.), *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean*. Leiden – Boston 2013, 348; St. EFTHYMIADIS, Michael Choniates' Inaugural Address at Athens: Enkomion of a City and a Two-fold Spiritual Ascent, in: P. ODORICO – Ch. MESSIS (eds.), *Villes de toute beauté. L'ekphrasis des cités dans les littératures byzantine et byzantino-slaves*. Actes du colloque international, Prague, 25–26 novembre 2011 (*Dossiers byzantins* 12). Paris 2012, 63–80.

²⁶ This trend continues in the subsequent centuries, when inscriptions tended to keep the identity of patrons equally prominent, and references to their acts of benefactions just as explicit: A. PAUL, Historical figures appearing in epigrams on objects, in: BERNARD – DEMOEN, *Poetry and its Contexts* 89–115; SPINGOU, *Words and artworks, passim*, and especially 111–123, 198–218.

²⁷ G. LE STRANGE, transl. Clavijo's Embassy to Tamerlane 1403–1406. London 1928, 64. Cf. C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1972, 217–218; S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Church Inscriptions as Documents*. Chrysobulls – Ecclesiastical Acts – Inventories – Donations – Wills. *DChAE* IV 24 (2003) 79 & note 1.

²⁸ Edition: D. FEISSEL – A. PHILIPPIDES-BRAAT, *Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance*. III. Inscriptions du Péloponnèse (à l'exception de Mistra). *TM* 9 (1985) 301–302. Translation and commentary: J. THOMAS – A. CONSTANTINIDES HERO (eds.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: a complete translation of the surviving founders' typika and testaments*. Washington, D.C. 2000, no. 18: Testament of Nikodemos for the Monastery of Nea Gephyra near Lakedaimon 323–325.

²⁹ The inscriptions have been edited by T. DREW-BEAR and J. KODER, Ein byzantinisches Kloster am Berg Tmolos. *JÖB* 38 (1988) 197–215, and translated into English and commented on in: THOMAS – CONSTANTINIDES HERO, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, no 16: Mount Tmolos: Typikon of Nikephoros Erotikos for the Monastery of the Mother of God and the Old Age Home called Ta Derma on Mount Tmolos 310–312.

³⁰ For the sources and the *status quaestionis*, see: KALDELLIS, Parthenon 83–84. On the Lion of Piraeus, see also: G. KREUTZER, Der Runenlöwe von Piräus, in: *Analecta Septentrionalia*. Berlin 2009, 715–727.

eleventh-century inscriptional habit shows an increased use of informally executed texts that have frequently been defined as *graffiti*. Although the perceived character of these public texts as unofficial and even subversive has so far discouraged modern scholars from examining them in any significant detail, the numerous examples of extant *graffiti* from the Holy Land, Constantinople, Ephesus, Cappadocia and Athens render study of such material of paramount importance for our understanding of Byzantine written culture in general.³¹ Due to the early publication of Orlandos and Branouses, the Athenian material has been best, even if still incompletely, explored. The edition of the Parthenon corpus as well as Ladas's publications of similar material from the Hephasteion (the Church of St George)³² show that the majority of dated *graffiti* come from the middle Byzantine period, and seem to suggest that Athens underwent something of a boom following the visit and patronage of Basil II. This momentous event may also have encouraged a revival of religious life, and, consequently, an expansion of religious epigraphy, which clearly thrived in this period. More pertinently, the visual impact of the surviving inscriptions makes the word 'graffiti' something of a misnomer: while they unquestionably feature on monuments that were originally not designated to carry such epigraphic display, still, many of these texts, far from being casual scribbles and scratches, reveal careful execution and, moreover, a thoughtful choice of content and style of presentation.³³ Some *graffiti* consist of personal names, and may have been intended as mementos of visits to the most venerated Athenian shrine. Many texts, however, present invocations to holy figures, to the Theotokos in the first place, on behalf of the holders of various ecclesiastical offices who were attached in their official capacity to the churches and monasteries on the Acropolis. Approximately one quarter of the total number of graffiti are obituaries for members of the clergy and local community, who clearly wished to inscribe themselves into, and thus stay permanently associated with, the religious foundations that were of the utmost significance to them.

THE COMMEMORATIVE EPIGRAPHY OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

The third piece of evidence that connects Basil II with the epigraphic practices of the eleventh century can be verified with a higher degree of certainty than the previous two. Peculiarly, it dates to a much later time. It comes from a fourteenth-century account about the discovery of the emperor's remains, which had been laid to rest in the Constantinopolitan suburb of Hebdomon in 1025, and were then found intact more than two hundred years later, soon after the re-conquest of the Byzantine capital in 1261. The report comes from the pen of George Pachymeres, who relates it in his *History*, stating that the emperor's burial was identified by a lengthy inscription labelling it as belonging to ὁ Βουλγαροκτόνος Βασίλειος.³⁴ The epitaph, made up of se-

³¹ Study of Byzantine graffiti is still in its infancy, with only very few publications dedicated to this material: A. K. ORLANDOS – L. BRANOUSES, *Tὰ χαράγματα τοῦ Παρθενῶνος ἤτοι ἐπιγραφαὶ χαραχθεῖσαι ἐπὶ τῶν κίωνων τοῦ Παρθενῶνος κατὰ τοὺς παλαιο-χριστιανικοὺς καὶ βυζαντινοὺς χρόνους*. Athens 1973; G. LADAS, *Βυζαντιναὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἱησοῦ ἐπιγραφαὶ ἀνέκδοτοι καὶ διορθώσεις εἰς τὰς ἡδη ἐκδομένας*. *Syllektes. Periodikon historias, bibliologias, kallitechnias kai panton sylloges* 1 (1952 [1947–1951]) 57–84; ANTONIN (KAPUSTIN), *O drevnih hristijanskih nadpisah v Afinah*. St. Petersburg 1874; M. Xenaki in this volume, pp. 157–166; C. JOLIVET-LEVY, *Invocations peintes et graffiti dans les églises de Cappadoce (IXe–XIIIe siècle)*, in: M.-F. AUZÉPY – J. CORNETTE (eds.), *Des images dans l'histoire*. Saint-Denis 2008, 163–178; C. FOSS, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor*. *DOP* 65 (2002) 138; graffiti from the cemetery of the Seven Sleepers in Ephesus: F. MILTNER, *Das Cömeterium der sieben Schläfer (Forschungen in Ephesos 4, 2)*. Wien 1937, 201–211; C. MANGO, *The Byzantine Inscriptions of Constantinople: A Bibliographical Survey*. *AJA* 55 (1951) 59; A. A. EVDOKIMOVA, *Korpus grečeskikh graffiti Sofii kijevskej na freskah pervogo etaža*, in: M. V. BIBIKOV – E. A. MEL'NIKOVA – V. D. NAZAROV (eds.), *Drevnejšie gosudarstva vostočnoj Evropy* 2009, 463–518 and in this volume, pp. 167–173.

³² LADAS, *Βυζαντιναὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἱησοῦ ἐπιγραφαὶ* 84. Cf. on the Church of St. George most recently Ch. BOURAS, *Βυζαντινὴ Αθήνα 100ς–120ς αἰ*. Athens 2010, 180–184 and *passim* (see Index).

³³ E.g., ORLANDOS – BRANOUSES, *Tὰ χαράγματα τοῦ Παρθενῶνος*, no. 89; RHOBY III, no. GR20. The autopsy of the Parthenon material carried out in July 2014 during the Summer Workshop in Byzantine Epigraphy (organized at the British School of Athens by Ida Toth and Andreas Rhoby) confirmed that much of what still survives *in situ* was probably intended as formal epigraphic display. The current research project on the medieval inscriptions of the Parthenon directed by Maria Xenaki on behalf of the École française d'Athènes promises to significantly advance our knowledge of this subject.

³⁴ Pachymeres, *History* 175–177 (FAILLER). Pachymeres also reports that Michael VIII Palaiologos had the remains subsequently transported to their permanent resting place in the Monastery of the Saviour in Selymbria.

venteen twelve-syllable verses, and transmitted in several Palaiologan manuscripts, exemplifies the genre of commemorative epigraphy in several ways: in spite of its poetic form, it makes use of a simple idiom and therefore communicates its message clearly; it uses the first person singular by way of lending voice to the illustrious honorand (ἐγὼ δὲ Βασίλειος, πορφύρας γόνος); its deictic language refers explicitly to the location of the imperial mausoleum (ἴστημι τύμβον ἐν τόπῳ γῆς Ἐβδόμου); and finally, it prompts perpetual commemoration by inviting the viewer to pray on behalf of the deceased (καὶ νῦν ὄρων, ἄνθρωπε, τόνδε τὸν τάφον / εὐχαῖς ἀμείβου τὰς στρατηγίας).³⁵

The eleventh-century witnessed a considerable change in the nature of provision for religious institutions. A significant number of new monastic foundations increasingly benefited from private patronage. This in turn gave rise to the phenomenon of aristocratic burial (*pace* Mango), and instigated noteworthy developments in middle and late Byzantine epigraphic traditions.³⁶ Some of the extant eleventh-century foundation documents confirm that wealthy families endowed monasteries and churches by way of protecting their private possessions. A few specify that the land donated to a monastery should continue to be held by the members of their respective families, and, in several cases, that their establishments should serve as family tombs, around which memorial prayers are to be regularly said by monks.³⁷ Consequently, middle Byzantine funerary chapels feature abundant inscriptional material of both a commemorative and dedicatory content. They display elaborate sepulchral iconography that commonly represents the deceased in supplication to holy intercessors, and monumental themes such as the *Deesis* and *Anastasis*.³⁸ It therefore seems justified to assume that inscriptions celebrating the lives of patrons found in these establishments may have been read out in the same way as the prayers requested in their foundation documents. The evidence of donor inscriptions from the Mani and Cappadocia certainly suggests that some kind of perpetual prayer was being requested, and probably took place in privately funded religious institutions.³⁹ However, we possess nothing similar to the twelfth-century epideictic poem honoring John II Komnenos and his wife Irene, whose inscriptional and performative contexts have been confirmed beyond any doubt. The manuscripts that preserve the poem clarify its purpose as having been to perpetuate the memory of the imperial couple for their joint patronage of the

³⁵ Ed. S. G. MERCATI, L'epitafio di Basilio Bulgaroctonos secondo il codice Modenese Greco 144 ed Ottoboniano Greco 324, *Bessarione* 26 (1922) 220–222 (= IDEM, *Collectanea Byzantina*. Bari 1970, II 233–234). A further epigram (probably inscription) on Basil II has been preserved in Cod. Par. gr. 1384 (s. XII), edited in: C. E. ZACHARIAE, *Fragmenta versionis Graecae legum Rotharis Longobardorum regis ex codice Paris. Gr. 1384*. Heidelberg 1835, 19, n. 10. Also, see: RHOBY III, no. TR54. On Basil II's epitaph, see: LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine poetry*, 236–240; C. ASDRACHA, *Inscriptions byzantines*. AD 44–46 (1989–1991) 309–316. P. STEPHENSON, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*. Cambridge 2003, 108 and IDEM, *The Tomb of Basil II*, in: L. M. HOFFMANN (unter Mitarbeit von A. MONCHIZADEH) (ed.), *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie. Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*. Wiesbaden 2005, 227–238; on commonplaces in Byzantine funerary verses: LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine poetry* 213–240; RHOBY, *Inscriptional Poetry*.

³⁶ On the documentary evidence of monastic foundations in the eleventh-century, see: J. DARROUZÈS, *Le mouvement des fondations monastiques au 11e siècle*. *TM* 6 (1976) 159–176; J.-Cl. CHEYNET, *Basil II and Asia Minor*, in: MAGDALINO, *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, 71–108; J. P. THOMAS, *Private religious foundations in the Byzantine Empire*. Washington, D.C. 1988, 149–244.

³⁷ See, for example, how the typikon of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon in Constantinople secures that his foundation is administered as family property, in: THOMAS – CONSTANTINIDES HERO, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, no. 19, chapters 10, 17, 22, 23, 37, 39. Chapter 31 of the same typikon is dedicated to the required commemoration, as are several sections of Gregory Pakourianos's typikon for the Monastery of the Mother of God Petritzonitissa in Bačkovo, which specify who should receive memorial services, and what these should include: *ibid.*, no. 23, chapters 12, 21, 27, 30.

³⁸ On middle Byzantine funerary iconography and epigraphy, see: T. PAZARAS, *Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι και επιτάφιας πλάκες της μέσης και ύστερης βυζαντινής περιόδου στην Ελλάδα*. Athens 1988; T. PAPAMASTORAKIS, *Επιτύμβιες παραστάσεις κατά τη μέση και ύστερη βυζαντινή περίοδο*. *DChAE* IV 19 (1996/1997) 285–304; C. MANGO, *Sépultures et épitaphes aristocratique à Byzance*, in: G. CAVALLLO – C. MANGO (eds.), *Epigrafia medievale greca e latina. Ideologia e funzione*. Spoleto 1995, 99–117; U. WEISSBROD, 'Hier liegt der Knecht Gottes...'. *Gräber in byzantinischen Kirchen und ihr Dekor* (11. bis 15. Jahrhundert). Wiesbaden 2003.

³⁹ For the use of the inscriptional formula *η ψαλοντες ευχεσθε ηπερ αυτου/αυτους* (νικτι και εν ιμερα) in donor inscriptions from the Mani, see: KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Epigraphic evidence in Middle-Byzantine Churches of the Mani* 340, 342–343; likewise, Cappadocian evidence features expressions such as *αναγιηνοσκωντες ευχεσθε αυτους/υπερ αυτ[ο]*: JERPHANION, *Les églises rupestres* II, no. 182, 309, no. 186, 334.

Pantokrator Monastery. These sources also attest that the verses were originally inscribed—indeed, we know that it could still be seen painted on the walls of the church in the sixteenth century⁴⁰—and also report that the poem was delivered annually before the congregation to commemorate the foundation of the monastic complex in 1139–1143.⁴¹

As to eleventh-century funerary epigraphy in general, verse compositions are found only seldom,⁴² while the majority of extant prose obituaries continue to employ the standard expressions, whose most familiar form includes the phrase *έκοιμήθη/έτελειώθη (έν ειρήνη/κυρίω) ό δούλος/ή δούλη του θεού* (followed by the name and titles/offices of the deceased. See, for example, plate no. 1).⁴³ This formula tends to be accompanied by a more precise dating according to the Byzantine era, and can also note the indiction, day, and month of death. Most corpora with middle Byzantine material also feature other types of commemorative epigraphs consisting of acronyms and *nomina sacra*,⁴⁴ of tomb labels *θήκη/τάφος* followed by a name in the genitive case, and more generally of devotional texts such as invocations *κύριε βοήθει/μακάρισε* and *ανάπαυσε/μνήσθητι*, and of *ex-votos* such as *ύπέρ εύχης*,⁴⁵ but also of some rather more antiquated expressions as *ύπέρ ανάπαύσεως* and *ένθα (κατά)κειται*.⁴⁶ These texts, in many instances, give no dating indications and cannot be securely attributed to the eleventh century even when marking monuments that have been identified as belonging to this century. By virtue of their formulaic character they acquire a timeless aspect typical no less of the middle and late Byzantine memorial practices, than of those of the post-Byzantine world.

Although these characteristics can be identified as the most commonplace in funerary epigraphy of any period, it is also true that the number of commemorative inscriptions in general had significantly decreased since the sixth/seventh century, and that in the eleventh century these texts almost exclusively featured in ecclesiastical or monastic settings. This means that they predominantly pertained to the members of secular or church hierarchies and/or monastic communities, that is, largely, to the most privileged strata of Byzantine society. Ordinary people presumably continued to be buried in unscribed graves. If any grave markers would have been used, they would probably have been made of wood or even ceramic shards, and would not have survived due to their perishable media.⁴⁷

Extant funerary *graffiti* from the churches of St George (Hephaisteion) and Panagia Lykodemou in Athens offer an insight into a further middle Byzantine inscriptional practice: incised in columns and walls of these buildings, they contain simple phrases consisting only of names, professions and times of death. As they do not indicate any actual places of burial, these texts do not represent genuine funerary inscriptions but

⁴⁰ A. RHOBY, Zu jambischen Versen an einer Mauer in Konstantinopel. *BZ* 96 (2003) 685–687.

⁴¹ LAUXTERMANN, Byzantine poetry 32. Edition of the text: RHOBY I, no. 214 (after Moravcsik). Also, see: RHOBY, The meaning of inscriptions for the early and middle Byzantine culture 745–746; S. KOTZABASSI (ed.), The Pantokrator Monastery in Constantinople (*Byzantinisches Archiv* 27). Boston – Berlin 2013, 33–55 (P. MAGDALINO), 203–249 (I. VASSIS).

⁴² Among the most outstanding examples of eleventh-century verse epitaphs are: a lengthy poem by an anonymous spatharios for his young son, Stratigoules, and another one for the spatharios himself from the arcosolium in St Christina in Carpignano, Italy: RHOBY I, nos. 186 and 187, 267–272; the epigram for Paula found in the arcosolium of the narthex of Yılanli Kilisesi, Cappadocia: *ibid.* no. 203, 295–296 and WEISSBROD, ‘Hier liegt der Knecht Gottes...’ 228; the verses for the monk Symeon in the narthex of the Chapel of St Symeon in Kesisler Vadisi, Cappadocia: RHOBY I, no. 210, 299–302; four *dodekasyllaboi* for the donors of the parecclesion of St Nicolas of the Vatopedi monastery on Mt Athos (PAZARAS, *Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι*, no. 18, 28; RHOBY, *Inscriptional Poetry* 201; IDEM III, no. GR29); commemorative verses for the monk Theodosios in the monastery of Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece: N. OIKONOMIDES, The first century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas. *DOP* 46 (1992) 245–255; RHOBY III, no. GR112.

⁴³ PAZARAS, *Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι* no. 1, 21, no. 92, 56–57; GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, no. 146, 163–164, no. 148, 165–166, no. 227, 242; L. JALABERT – R. MOUTERDE [et al.], *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*. Paris 1929, no. 814, 463.

⁴⁴ See, for example, PAZARAS, *Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι* no. 17, 28, no. 44, 38, no. 61, 47, no. 90, 56.

⁴⁵ GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, no. 148, 165–166; no. 150, 167; WEISSBROD, ‘Hier liegt der Knecht Gottes ...’ 28, 227; 43.2, 241.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 23, 222; no. 24, 222–225; Ch. ROUECHÉ, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*. London 2004, no. 173: <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/-ala2004/inscription/eAla173.html>.

⁴⁷ For a grave marker on a ceramic shard from Southern Italy containing the inscription ΚΟΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΑΦΙΟΝ, cf. SAFRAN, *Public Textual Cultures* 125, & note 39.

only obituaries. It has nonetheless been suggested that they may be associated with the unidentified remains found in the tombs in the temple or the bone-pits excavated in the vicinity.⁴⁸ The example of two ninth-century inscriptions, one on a slab marking a tomb, the other inscribed into a column of the Parthenon, but both recording the death of the same person, Leo, the *protospatharios* and *strategos* of the theme Hellas, suggests that some people mentioned in the *graffiti* could indeed have been buried close to the temples, which bore their obituaries.⁴⁹ Remarkably, some of the inscriptions in the Hephaisteion make note of ordinary people such as dyers and shell gatherers, and thus indicate that the eleventh-century epigraphic habit penetrated deeper into the lower strata of society than is generally assumed.⁵⁰ Moreover, it also transpires that the setting of the church and the medium of *graffiti* could be employed in celebration of festive occasions as, for example, the announcement of childbirths, although our evidence of this practice is too meagre to allow any speculation about its range and frequency.⁵¹

BROADENING OF MEDIA/CONTRACTION OF GENERIC RANGE

The proliferation of inscriptions set in the context of churches and monasteries can arguably be singled out as the most predominant trait of the overall epigraphic habit in the eleventh century. Undoubtedly this came about as the consequence of the architectural transformation of the sacred space that had taken place over the previous two centuries, during which redecorated and newly-erected religious buildings were increasingly furnished with elaborate iconographic programmes, and equally abundant accompanying inscriptional material. The most lavish eleventh-century foundations of Hosios Loukas, Nea Mone, Daphni, and St John the Theologian on Patmos serve as outstanding examples, as well as being vast repositories, of Christian didactic epigraphy. They include a wide range of standard devotional texts, from simple captions to elaborate liturgical formulae, but without following any tradition precisely to the letter. Such flexibility within the set practices always leaves scope for regional deviations and peculiarities among which we can find, for instance, the feature, unique to eleventh-century churches in Southern Italy, of the isopseph $\rho\rho$ (99), which translates as ‘Amen’.⁵²

It has already been pointed out that some eleventh-century inscriptions appear on and around tombs, or, indeed, as obituaries carved or painted in the interior of churches and funerary chapels. These buildings originally also housed a large number of religious accoutrements such as liturgical vessels, books, processional crosses, icons, silks, reliquaries, etc. Although only a small proportion of these items survives, and even fewer can be found in their original context, their range can be gauged from documentary evidence, principally from monastic *typika* that include the inventories of gifts bequeathed to some churches and monasteries.⁵³ The typology of eleventh-century religious art is also fairly well attested due to the survival of some exquisite pieces in modern art collections, predominantly Western, where they arrived either as a result of their

⁴⁸ A. McCABE, Byzantine funerary graffiti in the Hephaisteion in the Athenian Agora, in: E. JEFFREYS (ed.), Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, II: Abstracts of Panel Papers. London 2006, 127–128.

⁴⁹ KALDELLIS, Parthenon 79–80. A more extensive study on Byzantine graffiti in the Hephaisteion by Anne McCabe will be published in the forthcoming Festschrift dedicated to the Director of the Agora Excavations at Athens, John Camp.

⁵⁰ On funerary graffiti from the Hephaisteion and Panagia Lykodemou, and on eleventh-century inscriptions commemorating a dyer and a shell-gatherer, see: McCABE, Byzantine funerary graffiti 128.

⁵¹ For a graffito from Soletto, Italy containing the formula $\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\nu\sigma\epsilon\nu$ $\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ $\upsilon\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$: A. JACOB, Notes sur quelques inscriptions byzantines du Salento méridional (Soletto, Alessano, Vaste, Apigliano). *Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 95/1 (1983) 66–71; GUILLOU, Recueil des inscriptions, no. 149, 166–167.

⁵² On Middle Byzantine religious architecture in the Balkans, see: S. ČURČIĆ, Architecture in the Balkans: from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent. New Haven, CT – London 2010, 355–436; on the iconographic programmes of the most significant eleventh-century religious foundations, see: V. N. LAZAROV, Istorija vizantijskoj živopisi. Moscow ²1986, I 61–122; on the use of isopsephic ‘amen’, see: SAFRAN, Public Textual Cultures 133–135.

⁵³ One, for example, has been transmitted embedded in the testament of Michael Attaliates. It gives a detailed list of religious objects that Attaliates bequeathed to his foundation: THOMAS – CONSTANTINIDES HERO, Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents, no. 19, 355–360. See, also: J.-M. SPIESER – B. PITRAKIS – M. PARANI, Un exemple d’inventaire d’objets liturgiques: le testament d’Eustathios Boilas (avril 1059). *REB* (2003) 143–165.

original function as diplomatic gifts or, as was more often the case, of the looting of 1204.⁵⁴ Irrespective of their value and quality, the majority of these objects tend to be conservative in character, and therefore also to use stock inscriptional material. Commonly employed are simple invocations, dedicatory formulae or patrons' names, but also religious texts such as sigla and eucharistic prayers that reflect a liturgical function.⁵⁵ Moreover, some pieces feature elaborate, specially commissioned verses, usually naming their patrons and donors who originally commissioned and bequeathed the objects to the religious foundations of their choice.⁵⁶ Liturgical vessels can display donors' portraits, although these appear very rarely.⁵⁷ Some carry inscriptional evidence of prolonged use and patronage by more than one donor.⁵⁸ Overall, these objects and their texts represent reliable witnesses of continuity though also, on occasion, of changes in religious habits whose purposes they served.⁵⁹

The monumental epigraphy of this period is especially prolific in donor inscriptions, although the surviving evidence of their distribution tends to be predominantly concentrated in the Greek mainland and islands, Cappadocia and Southern Italy.⁶⁰ The term 'donor inscription' is normally used in its generic meaning, to

⁵⁴ F.-A. BAUER, Byzantinische Geschenkdiplo-matie, in: F. DAIM – J. DRAUSCHKE (eds.), *Byzanz – das Römerreich im Mittelalter*, III: Peripherie und Nachbarschaft, Mainz 2010, 1–55; G. PRINZING, Zum Austausch diplomatischer Geschenke zwischen Byzanz und seinen Nachbarn in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa. *Mitteilungen zur Spätantiken Archäologie und Byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* 4 (2005) 141–173 and F. TINNEFELD, Mira varietas. Exquisite Geschenke byzantinischer Gesandtschaften in ihrem politischen Kontext (8.–12. Jh.). *Ibid.* 121–135; P. SCHREINER, Diplomatische Geschenke zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen ca. 800–1200: eine Analyse der Texte mit Quellenanhang. *DOP* 58 (2004) 252–282; H. KLEIN, Eastern Objects and Western Desires: relics and reliquaries between Byzantium and the West. *Ibid.* 283–314.

⁵⁵ As, for example, in: GUILLOU, Recueil des inscriptions, no. 51, 53–54 (a *staurotheke* with biblical text and invocation $\mu\eta\theta\eta\tau\eta$), nos. 82–86, 86–88 (sigla on reliquaries); nos. 88–89, 89–90 (two chalices with eucharistic formulae); no. 89, 90–91 (liturgical lamp with the invocation $\beta\omicron\iota\theta\epsilon\iota\ \tau\omega\ \sigma\omega\ \delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omega$); J. COTSONIS, Byzantine figural processional crosses. Washington, D.C. 1994, no. 2 (with the Deesis, monastic figures and a dedicatory inscription), 12 (figure and name of St George), 16 (nomina sacra, sacred text and invocation $\kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\epsilon\ \beta\omicron\iota\theta\epsilon\iota$); the plaque of St Hermolaos with a votive text (S. BOYD, Ex-voto therapy: a note on a copper plaque with St Hermolaos, in: I. ŠEVČENKO – I. HUTTER [eds.], *AETOS. Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango*. Stuttgart – Leipzig 1998, 15–27); H. R. HAHNLOSER, Il Tesoro di San Marco. Florence 1971, no. 51, 58, 67, 64–65, 67, 72 (two chalices and one paten with the eucharistic text); no. 78, 75–76 (lamp with an invocation on behalf of the patron, archbishop Zacharias).

⁵⁶ RHOBY II, nos. Ik4–7, 50–57 (three painted icons with four verse 'signatures' of the painter/commissioner John Tohabi); no. Ik13, 68–69 (bronze plaque with the engraved image of the Virgin and the Child and deictic verses); no. Ik55, 133–135 (marble icon of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Child with a fragmentary epiphastic epigram); no. Ik62–65, 141–144 (Virgin Hodegetria with four verse inscriptions); nos. Me5, 156–157; Me33, 200–201; Me99, 285 (reliquaries of the *myron* or *aima* of St Demetrios with epiphastic verses and two references to the commissioner); no. Me10, 169–70 (*artophorion* [or *panagiaron*, cf. I. DRPIĆ, *Zograf* 35 (2011) 56] with deictic verses); no. Me12, 172 (reliquary of St Christopher, verses 'spoken' by the commissioner Michael); nos. Me27, 92; Me29, 193–195; Me34, 201–203; Me51, 221–222; Me69, 238–239; Me89, 266–268; Me92, 274–275; Me97, 281–283; Me102, 287–290; Me106, 295–296 (all reliquaries of the True Cross inscribed with verse inscriptions); the eleventh century also produced a substantial number of ivories featuring religious scenes, labelled with sigla, and inscribed with verses e.g. nos. El26–30, 337–342 (triptych with the Deesis and a choice of holy figures) and ivory icons representing St John and Paul and St Andrew and St Peter respectively (no. El31 and 32, 342–346) both connected with the eleventh-century imperial workshop.

⁵⁷ For a processional cross with a donor portrait, see: COTSONIS, Byzantine figural processional crosses 29 and pl. 14b; J.-M. SPIESER – É. YOTA (eds.), *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin. Actes du colloque international de l'Université de Fribourg, 13–15 mars 2008 (Réalités byzantines 14)*. Paris 2012.

⁵⁸ For a ninth/tenth century cross with eleventh- and thirteenth-century donor inscriptions: COTSONIS, Byzantine figural processional crosses 29, 32, pl. 12 a–b.

⁵⁹ The large number of reliquaries of the True Cross produced around the year 1100 naming emperors as patrons and commissioners indicates continuous imperial patronage of this cult: J. KODER, Zu den Versinschriften der Limburger Staurothek. *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 37 (1985) especially n. 52. On the other hand, the inscriptions on the reliquaries of St Demetrios (Moscow, Vatopedi, Halberstadt), testify that in the eleventh century the cult included a further, hitherto unattested aspect of the worship of this saint: the holy oil or *myron* which had begun to flow in his cathedral in Thessaloniki: I. KALAVREZOU, Reliquary of St Demetrios, in: H. EVANS – W. WIXOM (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–126*. New York 1997, 77–78, F. A. BAUER, *Eine Stadt und ihr Patron. Thessaloniki und der Heilige Demetrios*. Regensburg 2013, and M. WHITE, The 'grave covering' of St Demetrios between Byzantium and the Rus, forthcoming.

⁶⁰ For the list of donor inscriptions from Asia Minor and the Mani, see above, note 9. Additional eleventh-century material includes: St Sophia, Constantinople: donor portraits with imperial titles of Zoe and Constantine IX Monomachos (C. MANGO, *The*

denote a public text that registers any act of patronage by a prominent member of society, a *ktetor*. In the case of eleventh-century practice, however, the scope of this type of inscriptional material is much narrower. Whether they are laid in mosaic, cut in stone, or painted in fresco, such inscriptions commemorate the building or rebuilding, and decorating or redecorating, of predominantly religious foundations. Their content is equally formulaic. In prose or verse, with or without accompanying images, donor inscriptions tend to include basic information regarding the identity of their commissioner(s) and the character of their benefaction. In their most reduced forms, they can simply express a prayer (δέησις) or an invocation (μνήσθητι). More verbose versions may disclose specific information regarding patrons and their social standing, actions, motives, resources, as well as precise dating formulae according to the Byzantine era. They often name emperors or high-ranking church dignitaries in office, and, by way of referencing their own contractual nature, request remuneration for benefaction in prayers and divine grace. The more elaborate types of donor inscriptions occur regularly from the twelfth century onwards, but it is clear that their fully extended formula had already been in use in the eleventh century.⁶¹

Imperial building inscriptions constitute a small part of eleventh-century donor epigraphy.⁶² This type of inscriptional evidence survives in meagre quantity, and it rarely deviates beyond the formulaic declarations

Mosaics of St Sophia at Istanbul. Washington, D.C. 1962, 27–28, pl. 14, see, plate no. 2); Panagia ton Chalkeon, Thessaloniki: two donor inscriptions: one commemorating the consecration of the church by the protospatharios and katepano Christopher, his wife Maria and their children; another, a prayer on behalf of Christopher and Maria, probably added after the decoration of the church was completed (J. M. SPIESER, *Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. I. Les inscriptions de Thessalonique. TM 5* [1973] 63–64; RHOBY III, no. GR126, see, plate no. 3); Hosios Loukas, Phokis: verses commemorating monk Gregory, a donor, and portraits and names of a further four abbots and ktetores in fresco painting (OIKONOMIDES, *The First Century 245–252*; RHOBY III, no. GR110–111); Katholikon of the Vatopedi Monastery, Mt Athos: verses celebrating monk Sophronius for his patronage of mosaic decoration (RHOBY I, no. M1, 381–385); St Theodoroi, Athens: verses dedicated to Nikolaos Kalomalos, who rebuilds the church (V. LAURENT, *Nicolas Kalomalos et l'église des saints Théodore à Athènes. Hell 7* [1934] 72–82; RHOBY III, no. GR15, see, plate no. 4); The Virgin of the Angela (Madonnina) in Chandax, Crete: invocation on behalf of Eumathios, the protostrator and strategos of Crete (Archaeological Museum, Heraklion, see, plate no. 5); Cappadocia: Göreme, St Barbara founded by the *domestikos* Basil (JERPHANION, *Les églises rupestres II*, no. 182, 309); Karanlik Kilise: *deesis* inscriptions with donor portraits (*ibid.* I i, 458, nos. 42–44), Chapel 27: donor invocations Κύριε βοήθει (*ibid.* I ii, nos. 64–65, 281); Karaba Kilise: donor inscription of *protospatharios* Michael Skepides, Catherine and Niphon; further invocations for Michael, Catherine, Eudokia, Nyphon, Basil and Irene—all with donor portraits (*ibid.* II, nos. 186–187, 190–194, 333–339); St Nicholas (St Demetrios), Bari: katepan Basil Mesardonites erects a church/chapel dedicated to St Demetrios (GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, no. 143, 154–159; RHOBY III, no. IT2); St Nicolas, Naples: presbyter Peter builds and decorates the church (GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, no. 123, 136–137); St Eustratios, Locres, Calabria: donors Michael and John build a church dedicated to the Theotokos, St Eustratios and his fellow martyrs, and St Catherine (*ibid.*, no. 131, 143–144); St Severina, Rossano, Calabria: a cathedral built during the bishopric of Ambrose (*ibid.*, 139, 150–151); St George, Trani: Romanos Kladon (rather Klostonev, cf. *PmbZ* no. 26865; C. MANGO, *BZ 91* [1998] 131), a *strategos* of Kibyrrreotes builds the church (*ibid.*, nos. 181, 189–192), Sts Peter and Paul, Palermo: dux Robert (Guiscard) and his wife Sikelgaita build the church, care of the *parathalassites* of Palermo, Nikolaos, the son of Leo (*ibid.*, no. 195, 210–211); Vaste, Salento: Michael the African founds a church (A. JACOB, *Vaste en Terre d'Otrante et ses inscriptions. Aevum 71/2* [1997] 243–253); St Jason and Sosipatros, Corfu: donor inscription of the priest Stephen (P. L. ΒΟΚΟΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Περὶ τὴν χρονολόγησιν τοῦ ἐν Κερκύρα ναοῦ τῶν Ἁγίων Ἰάσωνος καὶ Σωσιπάτρου. DChAE IV 5* [1966–69] 149–174; RHOBY III, nos. GR67–68); Varnakova Monastery, Katholikon, Phocis: foundation of the monastery by the monk Arsenios (*CIG IV*, no. 8730, 337; new edition by O. DELOUIS – D. ROUSSET, *REB 70* [2012] 237–244); Hagia Trias, Koutzoventes, Cyprus (RHOBY I, nos. 222, 223, 319–322).

⁶¹ For the prevalent formulae in middle Byzantine donor inscriptions, see: RHOBY, *The structure of inscriptional dedicatory epigrams, passim* and 328–332; SUBOTIĆ – TOT, *Historical Inscriptions, passim* and 105–106.

⁶² Examples of imperially-sponsored building activities included in: ASDRACHA, Eastern Thrace: Tzouroulos, restoration of a tower by Basil II and Constantine VIII (298–301); Arkadioupolis: the same (301); Adrianople: Invocation for the same emperor (301); region of Derkon: epigram commemorating a reconstruction of a structure by Basil and Constantine (306–309; RHOBY III, no. TR97); Apros: restoration of a city gate by Constantine X and Eudocia, care of Symbatios, the general of Apros (309–312) (see, plate no. 6); monogram of Nikephoros Bryennios on a tower (313–315). Inscriptions on crowns: C. J. HILSDALE, *The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-Invented. Art History 31* (2008) 602–631. Medallion for Nikephoros Botaniates (Victoria & Albert Museum, London: R. CORMACK – M. VASSILAKI [eds.], *Byzantium 330–1453*. London 2009, no. 221); imperial silks: Lion Silks from Cologne and Berlin inscribed with the names of Basil and Constantine: A. MUTHESIUS, *Byzantine silk weaving AD 400 to AD 1200*. Vienna 1997, 34–37.

of the basic tenets of Byzantine imperial ideology. In the case of the eleventh-century material, we can rely only partly on what still exists in any epigraphic context: much of our information on imperial patronage comes from other narrative sources, and it reveals little by way of indicating any public display of text.⁶³

As to other eleventh-century samples that belong to the domain of secular epigraphy—here defined as non-liturgical epigraphy or any epigraphy set outside the context of religious buildings—they too survive very sparsely. Extant are inscriptions recording, for example, the building of secular structures such as city gates, citadels, towers and walls, and inscriptions marking boundaries and constructions of bridges.⁶⁴ In spite of its scarcity, such epigraphic material is particularly useful because it can be contextualised more easily: it could go a long way towards elucidating diplomatic relations,⁶⁵ military history,⁶⁶ and trends in the cultural and intellectual life of contemporary Byzantium.⁶⁷ Rather uncommonly, several eleventh-century inscriptions also show an interest in classical literature by making use of themes from Homer and Aesopic fables.⁶⁸

Eleventh-century epigraphy employs an impressively wide range of media such as stone, fresco, mosaic, textiles, precious metals, and techniques like cutting, carving, painting, incising, enamelling, and engraving. It also displays diverse levels of formality, although it has to be added that study in this area remains rather tentative: an understood division between formal and informal epigraphy does not make the question of taxonomy any easier nor does it help attempts to distinguish the individual typology of epigraphic evidence. Some clarity, however, can be achieved.

As a rule, eleventh-century verse inscriptions feature more frequently on objects of minor arts than in monumental epigraphy, and they tend to be less informative. Prose inscriptions are more conservative, and are displayed predominantly on buildings and tombs. They show a greater uniformity of inscriptional formulae, and offer more detailed factual information. We have already seen that some inscriptional categories also overlap, and that matching expressions such as κύριε μνήσθητι/ βοήθει can be found in commemorative and dedicatory epigraphy as well as featuring on objects that signify authority and ownership, such as seals.⁶⁹

⁶³ Textual sources indicate that the Constantinopolitan production was more substantial: e.g., in St Sophia, in Constantinople, a donor inscription commemorated repair works by Romanos III Argyros: G. MERCATI, *Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia*, in: *Collecanea Byzantina*. Bari 1970, II 293; a further imperial inscription from Nicaea marked the rebuilding of the Church of the Dormition after the earthquake in the 11th-c: RHOBY I, no. M17, 18, 405–406. For further evidence of imperial patronage, see: PAUL, *Historical figures*; F. BERNARD, *The Anonymous of Sola and the School of Nosiari*. *JÖB* 61 (2011) 81–88; W. HÖRANDNER, *Epigrams on Icons and Sacred Objects. The Collection of Cod. Marc. gr. 524 once again*, in: M. SALVADORE (ed.), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. Atti del I Convegno Internazionale di Studi*, Macerata, 4–5 maggio 1998. Alessandria 2001, 117–124; for 12th-c material SPINGOU, *Words and artworks*.

⁶⁴ Boundary stones: ASDRACHA, supplement, 310–316; bridge built by the monk Nikodemos over the River Eurotas (see above, note 28); a tower built by the bishop, synkellos and rhaiktor Leo of Athens (Byzantine Museum, Athens, no. BXM 861); gate of a praetorium in Chersonessos: B. LATYŠEV, *Ėtjudy po Vizantijskoj ėpigrafiĕ*, 3. *Nadpis' vremeni Isaaka Komnina, najdennaja v' Xersonisja*. *VV* 2 (1895) 184–188; Southern Italy: a fortified residence of the Byzantine governor in the port of Bari built by katepan Basil Mesardonites (GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, no. 143, 154–159; RHOBY III, no. IT2).

⁶⁵ As is the case, for example, with inscriptions on Byzantine imperial gifts such as crowns and silks: HILSDALE, *The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift*; MUTHESIUS, *Byzantine silk weaving* 34–37.

⁶⁶ On the role of the topoteretes of the Byzantine fleet Constantine in quenching the rebellion of George Maniakes in 1042, see: A. JACOB, *Le topotèrète de la flotte Constantin et la révolte de George Maniakès en 1042 dans une inscription inédite de terre d'Otrante*. *Nea Rhome* 4 (2007) 163–176.

⁶⁷ The astrolabe from Brescia testifies to an interest in astrology and Arabic culture in general in the eleventh century. It bears two inscriptions: in verse, describing the object itself, and in prose, with the patron's name, title and a dating formula: RHOBY II, no. Me52, 223–224; GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, no. 13, 14–15.

⁶⁸ For a building inscription from Amasya written in a Homeric style, see: MANGO, *A Homeric Inscription*; for the inscription featuring Aesopic fables in verse from a monastery in Eski Gümüş (M. GOUGH, *Anatolian Studies* 15 [1965] 162–164, cf. LAUX-TERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry* 176: RHOBY II edited other 'Aesopian' epigrams from Eski Gümüş: nos. Add19–21, 402–406); on Aesopic verses from the Mani and the Pontos, see: N. B. DRANDAKES, *Ανάγλυπτος παράστασις Βυζαντινού μύθου*. *EEBS* 39–40 (1972–1973) 659–674; E. KRIARAS, *Σχόλια σὲ βυζαντινὴ ἔπιγραφή*. *Hell* 29 (1976) 166–171 (repr. IDEM, *Μεσαιωνικά Μελετήματα*, II. Thessalonica 1988, 428–433 [no. LXXIV]); RHOBY III, no. GR50.

⁶⁹ For inscriptions on seals that use this kind of epigraphic formula, see the PBW catalogue of inscriptions on seals: M. JEFFREYS [et al.], *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*: <http://db.pbw.kcl.ac.uk/jsp/browseseals.jsp> (consulted in February 2014).

Although the epigraphic production of this period has uncovered a few surprises, for example, in the cases of the obituaries of ordinary people and inscribed boundary stones⁷⁰ the overall trends can be unmistakably identified, whereby the formulaic character of inscriptional texts dominates the epigraphic habit, and the range of inscriptional media becomes wider than the generic range of their epigraphic formulae. These developments can be clearly recognized from the eleventh century as they continue uninterrupted into the Komnenian and Palaiologan times.

THE VOICE OF THE ARTIST

The eleventh century seems to have been a time when the epigraphic presence of artists and craftsmen became more prominent, as they increasingly left their names, and written records of their activities in public texts. One of the most outstanding attestations of this practice can be found on the bronze door of the Church of St Paolo Fuori le Mura in Rome, which was exported from Byzantium in 1070. It preserves the memory of a craftsman, the metalworker (χύτες) Staurakios, who expresses himself bilingually, in Greek and Syriac, and leaves his exhortation for a perpetual prayer inscribed on his artwork (οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες εὐχεσθε καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ). The same door carries the signature of the second bronze worker, Theodore, who invokes the protection of Sts Peter and Paul as remuneration for his work on the decoration (γράφειν) of the door.⁷¹ Another example of artists' self-representation can be found in the strikingly colourful crypt of the Church of the Madonna delle Grazie (Sts Marina and Christina) in Carpignano Salentino, whose painter (ζωγράφος) Eustathios signed his work using the customary formula 'by the hand of' (διὰ χειρός).⁷² A somewhat different pattern can be seen in the case of the family of metalworkers from Pugliano, who were probably of Greek extraction, and acted in their capacity as patrons, rather than being exclusively artists. They left a votive dedication composed in Latin (but written in the Greek alphabet!) on a sarcophagus in the Chapel of St Antonio of the Church of Santa Maria.⁷³

The inscriptional record of artists and their activities for this period is particularly strong in Italy though it is by no means exclusive to this region. A further three pieces of evidence coming from the Greek mainland and Mt Sinai supply additional layers to the question of artistic presence in eleventh-century epigraphy. The first concerns a group of middle Byzantine donor inscriptions from the Mani that preserve the names of stonemasons who executed the majority of inscriptions commissioned by the patrons from the local monastic, ecclesiastical and secular communities. In some cases, the stonemasons go so far as to inscribe themselves among the donors, and thus leave little doubt about the significant position that they themselves had in their society. The Mani inscriptions testify to the existence of at least three marble workshops. Craftsmen from each of these disclose their names, professions and even places of origin. Νηκῆτας μάρμαρας ἀπὸ χώρας Μαήνης, for example, leaves his signature in five different instances, while Γεώργιος μάστορας even places his name before those of the patrons who must have commissioned his services, and would have customarily been afforded the more prominent place in the display.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ It has been suggested that both obituaries of ordinary people and boundary stones had been obsolete since the seventh/eighth centuries: MANGO, *Byzantine Epigraphy* 242–249. Their demise, however, was not abrupt, so it is possible to find obituaries (see above, note 50) and boundary stones that date to later periods (the surviving specimens include e. g. 8th-c boundary stone in Pylai and inscribed boundary stones marking the border between Byzantium and Bulgaria in the tenth century: V. BEŠEVLIJEV, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften*. Berlin 1963, 216, no. 46; cf. *PmbZ* II no. 27467, 191 and 198 n. 17).

⁷¹ On the inscriptions on the bronze door in St Paolo Fuori le Mura, see: GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, nos. 53–54, 56–58; on the Syriac inscription, which Staurakios incised together with the Greek text, see: A. SHALL, *Zur syrischen Inschrift am Bronzetur der Basilica San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rom. Römische Quartalschrift* 65 (1970) 232–237.

⁷² A. JACOB, *Inscriptions byzantines datées de la Province de Lecce (Carpignano, Cavallino, San Cesario)*. *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti della Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche dell' Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* VIII, 37 (1983) 47.

⁷³ GUILLOU, *Recueil des inscriptions*, no. 128, 140–141.

⁷⁴ KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Epigraphic evidence in Middle-Byzantine Churches of the Mani* 339–46. The Church of St Michael in Bezir Hane in Cappadocia preserves an inscription left by a stonemason, *maistor* Niketas: JERPHANION, *Les églises rupestres* II, no. 79, 499. The donor inscription from Vaste, Salento also mentions the *ktistes* Michael Ko(u)rkouas, who may have been the master builder: JACOB, *Vaste en Terre d'Otrante* 246.

A further two pieces of epigraphic evidence shed a somewhat different light on the question of artistic self-expression. One dates back to the very end of the eleventh century (or possibly the beginning of the twelfth), and connects the name of John Tohabi with a total of six icons whose elaborate inscriptions make use of both the Greek and the Georgian language, and indicate Tohabi's direct involvement in the process of the production and display of the images and texts. The icons are inscribed with five deictic and highly self-referential epigrams, four of which are in Greek. They also feature two donor portraits, most probably of Tohabi himself, who is seen depicted in the act of adoration before the Virgin and, in the second instance, in front of the Gate of Paradise.⁷⁵ The epigrams are painted on the reverse of the wooden panels, and describe the scenes on the anterior so accurately as to leave no doubt that they were purpose-made and intended to accompany precisely the images to which they refer. Moreover, the poems disclose explicit personal detail about John Tohabi: he is mentioned as a presbyter and monk (πρόθω μοναστήης εὐτελής Ἰωαννης, οἰκτρὸς πρεσβύτερης, μοναχός, and δύστηνος ἐν μονοτρόποις), the painter and/or the author of inscriptions (the terms used could denote the acts of both painting and writing/inscribing: ἔγραψε, ... γράφας ... ἐρυθροβαφῆ, στηλογραφῆσας, ἀνιστορήση) and as a donor (τὰς ἱεράς ... ταύτας εἰκόνας, ἅς καὶ δόμῳ δέδωκε). In spite of the vagueness of inscriptional formulae, we are very likely witnessing an exceptionally creative individual, who may have united in himself the roles of the patron, the author, as well as possibly also acting as the artist. Challengingly, the vocabulary employed in the poems does not allow us to ascertain the exact level of Tohabi's artistic and/or authorial involvement in the execution of the icons and the accompanying inscriptional material. The same vagueness of expression can be found in the case of Stephen, who uses the verbs ἱστορέω and somewhat more emphatic μορφέω, to denote his own role in the making of the two eleventh-century icons, of Elijah and Moses, for the St Catherine's Monastery on Mt Sinai. He, like Tohabi, leaves inscriptions in two languages, although, in this case, Stephen's invocation in Greek is repeated almost *verbatim* in Arabic.⁷⁶

Overall, however, at least considering eleventh-century evidence, we still know more about artists who executed manuscript illumination than about those who worked in other crafts. Hortatory formulae and terms of humility that the painters and metalworkers use in their inscribed signatures to a great extent coincide with those found in the contemporary manuscript material.⁷⁷ It seems therefore likely that the epigraphic custom of signing one's work, which had dwindled since early Byzantium, when mosaicists customarily requested prayers on behalf of themselves, fellow-workmen and their own families, was gradually reintroduced into the middle Byzantine inscriptional habit from contemporary scribal practices. That the connection between these two artistic media may have been even more immediate is suggested by several graffiti from the Chapel of Niketas Stylites in Kızıl Çukur in Cappadocia. This site preserves an extraordinary number of informally incised and painted epigraphs, some of which display such precision and skill as to seem to have been executed by professional scribes.⁷⁸ More generally, the noticeable epigraphic presence of authors and craftsmen in the eleventh century implies a much improved social status, allowing for greater confidence in self-presentation, and ever more assertive disclosure of identity. In the cases of the bronze-worker Staurakios, the monk John Tohabi and the donor Stephen, this was accomplished by the use of bilingual signatures in Greek and Syriac, Greek and Georgian, and Greek and Arabic respectively by way of revealing, with some sense of pride, their own diverse cultural background, and possibly also promulgating the message to potential pa-

⁷⁵ S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, Painters in late Byzantine society. The evidence of church inscriptions, *CahArch* 42 (1994) 134–136; edition, translation and commentary: RHOBY I, 50–57 (nos. 1k4–7); M. LIDOVA, The artist's signature in Byzantium. Six Icons by Joannes Tohabi in Sinai Monastery (11th–12th century). *Opera. Nomina. Historiae. Giornale di cultura artistica* 1 (2009) 77–98; cf. A. RHOBY – W. HÖRANDNER, Beobachtungen zu zwei Epigrammen auf byzantinischen Ikonen. *BZ* 100 (2007) 157–167: 162–167; G. GALAVARIS, An Eleventh Century Hexptych of the Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai. Venice – Athens 2009.

⁷⁶ Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai [exhibition catalogue] (Eds. R. NELSON – K. COLLINS). Los Angeles, CA 2006, nos. 28, 29, 190–193; RHOBY II, nos. 1k2–3.

⁷⁷ For the lists of eleventh-century scribes and illuminators, and their signatures, see: F. EVANGELATOU-NOTARA, Σημειώματα Ελληνικών κωδικών ως πηγή διά την έρευναν του οικονομικού και κοινωνικού βίου του Βύζαντιου απο του 9^{ου} αιώνος μέχρι του έτους 1204. Athens 1982, 144–86, I. ŠEVČENKO, The Illuminators of the Menologium of Basil II. *DOP* 16 (1962) 243–276.

⁷⁸ N. THIERRY, Haut Moyen Age en Cappadoce. Les églises de la région de Çavuşin, II. Paris 1994, 278–279, nos. 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, pl. 146a–e.

trons of themselves as the makers of highly accomplished and widely recognized artwork. The trend of signing one's work continues into the later period. Late Byzantium in particular generated far more frequent instances of artists' inscriptions, and it has attracted scholarly attention much more than is currently the case with the evidence dating to the eleventh century.⁷⁹

THE VISUAL QUALITIES OF ELEVENTH-CENTURY INSCRIPTIONS

The formulaic nature of textual evidence makes much of the inscriptional material associated with the eleventh century notoriously difficult to date with precision. This aspect of the middle Byzantine epigraphic habit serves as an apt pretext for discussing a further noteworthy development, dated to the end of the tenth century, of a noticeable change in the palaeography of Greek inscriptions, whereby monumental texts start to be executed in a markedly elaborate and decorative manner. Although the script largely remains majuscule, it makes abundant use of ligatures, abbreviations, writing marks, and some minuscule letters, even at the expense of the general legibility and visibility.⁸⁰

Although the exact reasons for this modification are still not clear, the gradual evolution that had taken place over roughly a century, being completed in the course of eleventh century, allows us to roughly date otherwise undated Byzantine inscriptions on the grounds of their script to the time either before or after this period. The epigraphic material considered in this essay concurs with this observation, as well as indicating that a more precise dating on the basis of a palaeographical analysis cannot be fully productive unless the regional character of Byzantine epigraphic material is taken into consideration, and the features of language, orthography, dating systems, and inscriptional formulae are also explored in some detail. Such methodology is best tested against the backdrop of evidence that is homogeneous in chronology and provenance, as can be demonstrated, for example, by a study of public writing found on the site of the medieval Acropolis in Athens. On the basis of the uniformity of style in many of the extant middle Byzantine inscriptions from this site, the existence of professional stonemasons and painters can be surmised, who were presumably based in the neighbourhood, and could offer their services to pilgrims and locally based customers.⁸¹ The evidence of donor inscriptions from the Mani confirms that such workshops continued to exist in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and that the consistency in the palaeography and contents of local monumental writing can be attributed to them.⁸²

The claim about the local traits of Byzantine epigraphy notwithstanding, it also seems to have been the case that some trends in the palaeography of middle Byzantine inscriptions were carried from the centre to the periphery, or the other way around, but either way further afield: Nicole Thierry, for example, identifies a 'schematic' style in the Church of St Michael Ihlara in Cappadocia, which she then associates with the styles of painting and writing found in eleventh-century ecclesiastical material across the empire.⁸³ This approach, however, must come with a caveat: many churches dating back to the middle Byzantine period were subject

⁷⁹ KALOPISSI-VERTI, Painters in late Byzantine society; EADEM, Painters' Information on Themselves in Byzantine Inscriptions, in: M. BACCI (ed.), *L'artista a Bizanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale*. Pisa 2007, 55–70; B. TODIĆ, Signatures des peintres Michel Astrapas et Eutychios. Fonction et signification, in: *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη Σωτήρη Κίτσα*. Thessaloniki 2001, 643–662; I. ŠPADIJER, Pisar ktitorskog natpisa svetog Save u Studenici. *ZRV* (2006) 43, 517–526; DRPIĆ, Painter as scribe 334–353. On the authorship of some twelfth-century epigrams on objects of art, and the relationship between the donor, the poet and the artist, see: F. SPINGOU, The anonymous poets of the Anthologia Marciana: Questions of Collection and Authorship, in: A. PIZZONE (ed.), *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: modes, functions, identities* (*Byzantinisches Archiv* 28). Boston – Berlin 2014, 137–151.

⁸⁰ MANGO, Byzantine Epigraphy 242–249. Evidence suggests that from the eleventh century onwards minuscule letters, accents and abbreviations feature prominently in a wide range of inscriptional material irrespective of the level of formality and quality of execution: A. RHOBY, Inscriptions and Manuscripts in Byzantium: A Fruitful Symbiosis? *Segno e Testo*, forthcoming.

⁸¹ KALDELLIS, Parthenon 79. Some eleventh-century material in particular shows a high degree of uniformity, such as, for example: ORLANDOS – BRANOUSES, *Τὰ χαράγματα*, nos. 55–60.

⁸² KALOPISSI-VERTI, Epigraphic evidence in Middle-Byzantine Churches of the Mani, *passim*.

⁸³ N. THIERRY, Un style byzantin schématique de Cappadoce daté du XI^e siècle d'après une inscription, in: *Peintures d'Asie Mineure et Transcaucasie aux Xe et XIe s.* London 1977, no. XII.

to continuous repair work, and this could cause epigraphic testimonies that carry eleventh-century dates to be unreliable by virtue of displaying palaeographic characteristics of later centuries.⁸⁴

Naturally, the more closely associated the material is with the major centres of production, the more confidently it can be contextualised, just as has been possible in the case of the three eleventh-century Greek inscriptions from Otranto and Bari in Italy. These epigraphy have been connected with Constantinopolitan workshops on the basis of their style and quality of execution.⁸⁵ Most recently, a Homeric inscription from Amaseia has been re-dated to the tenth/eleventh century because it provides ‘an excellent example on stone of what Herbert Hunger, speaking of middle Byzantine manuscripts, called *epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel*.’⁸⁶ This script features fairly regularly in middle and late Byzantine manuscript material, where it exemplifies the epigraphic style used for inscribing prose and verse peritext such as titles, colophons and book epigrams. It has been frequently linked with the production of Constantinopolitan, and even more directly, imperial, scriptoria and workshops, but it can also be traced, beyond writing on soft materials, across other artistic media, that is, in stone, mosaic, and fresco painting. This indicates that in the eleventh century as well as later there existed a clear idea of the specific visual appearance and signification of formal inscriptional writing. The existence of such scripts also suggests that they could be employed to send strong messages of officialdom and authority even without any elaborate verbalization of their formal or institutional provenance.⁸⁷

The noticeable emphasis on visual appearance in many eleventh-century inscriptions does not seem to have been restricted only to epigraphic material in Greek. The example of the rising number of pseudo-Kufic inscriptions offers a case in point. The middle Byzantine period was marked by a lively interest in Eastern culture and art. Islamic artisans worked for Byzantine patrons, including the emperor, and the Constantinopolitan court developed a taste for Arabic-style art through the trade of luxury objects and diplomatic gifts from the east. This eventually prompted Byzantine imitations of these objects. The well-known glass bowl, now in San Marco in Venice, decorated with the images of Greek deities and arabesque ornament in the form of a Kufesque inscription, represents an extraordinary example of an otherwise larger body of material that employs Arabic-style writing on portable objects including textiles and manuscripts, as well as in architectural decoration and wall painting.⁸⁸ The impressive number of pseudo-Kufic ornaments on eleventh-century

⁸⁴ See, for example, the case of the donor inscription in the Panagia Phorbiotissa in Asinou (Cyprus), which was originally painted in 1105/6, but whose date was wrongly copied by the fourteenth-century painter, who misread the original inscription: A.-M. WEYL CARR – A. NICOLAÏDÈS, *Asinou across Time. Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa*. Washington, D.C. 2012, 54. On a further eleventh-century inscription, which survives only in its thirteenth-century copy, see: D. KOCO – P. MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, *La basilique de St. Nicolas au village Manastir dans la région de Moriovo*, in: *Actes du Xe Congrès international d'études byzantines*. Istanbul 1957, 138–139; F. BARIŠIĆ, *Dva grčka natpisa iz Manastira i Struge*. *ZRVI* 8/2 (1964) 13–27; G. SUBOTIĆ – B. MILJKOVIĆ – I. ŠPADIJER – I. TOTH (eds.), *Dedicatory Inscriptions from the Central Balkans, Volume 1: Thirteenth Century*, forthcoming.

⁸⁵ JACOB, *Une inscription inédite* 167.

⁸⁶ MANGO, *A Homeric inscription* 73.

⁸⁷ H. HUNGER, *Epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel*. Beitrag zu einem bisher kaum beachteten Kapitel der griechischen Paläographie. *JÖB* 26 (1977) 193–210; IDEM, *Minuskel und Auszeichnungsschriften im 10.–12. Jahrhundert*, in: *La paléographie grecque et byzantine. Colloques internationaux du centre national de la recherche scientifique*, no. 559, Paris, 21–25 Octobre 1974. Paris 1977, 201–220; R. STEFEC, *Anmerkungen zu einigen handschriftlich überlieferten Epigrammen in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel*. *JÖB* 59 (2009) 203–12; IDEM, *Anmerkungen zu weiteren Epigrammen in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel*. *Byz* 81 (2011) 326–361. On the so-called ‘maiuscula liturgica’ see now ORSINI, *Scrittura come immagine. Morfologia e storia della maiuscola liturgica bizantina (Scritture e libri del medioevo 12)*. Rome 2013; A. RHOBY, *Inscriptions and Manuscripts in Byzantium: a fruitful symbiosis? Segno e Testo*, forthcoming. The project on Byzantine book epigrams based at the University of Gent (<http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/node/4>) promises to shed more light on the epigraphic script and visual presentation of peritext in Byzantine manuscript material.

⁸⁸ A. CUTLER, *Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies*. *DOP* 55 (2001) 247–278; A. WALKER, *Meaningful Mingling: classicizing imagery and Islamicizing script in a Byzantine bowl*. *Art Bulletin* 90/1 (2008) 32–53, and see, note 7 with the bibliography on the use of pseudo-Arabic script in the Byzantine context. Evidence from medieval Egypt shows that from the 10th-century onwards, saints in churches were depicted wearing Arabic-style inscribed garments, and that similar textiles could be found in Christian burials. These fabrics were probably seen as apotropaic, but, as expensive luxury products, they also symbolized elevated social status: J. VAN DER VLIET, ‘In a Robe of Gold’: Status, Magic and Politics on In-

Athenian churches such as the Holy Apostoles of Solakis, Hagioi Theodoroi, Hagioi Asomatoi, Panagia Lykodemou and Kapnikarea can also be viewed in this context. While the decorative motifs on their walls in imitation of the old Arabic script may have been influenced by the abundant islamicizing decorations of Hosios Loukas in Phocis, which preserves the earliest example of arabesque cloisonné brickwork in Greece, there is little doubt that these monuments follow the general trend of cultural hybridity in middle Byzantine art. The verbal meaning of the Athenian pseudo-epigraphs—if any at all was intended—remains obscure, but the presence of such inscriptional material most certainly adds a semantic note of cosmopolitan, exotic, and apotropaic nature, and it thus enhances symbolic value that inscribed texts commonly encompass and convey.⁸⁹

Although preliminary, the present study aims to demonstrate that, in addition to their literal sense, inscriptions could also communicate alternative and equally potent meaning. The eleventh-century material considered here shows that inscriptions can define space and symbolize ideology, authority, and status; that they can confirm religious tenets, show changes in religious practices, assume apotropaic significance and be used to decorative ends.

Equally significantly, the epigraphic evidence considered here prompts us to think about the Byzantine culture of writing as a complex phenomenon in terms of both the readership/audiences that it addresses, and the ideas that it communicates. Eleventh-century inscriptions remind us that, in the manner of epigraphic *heteroglossia*, the same or similar inscriptional material can vary in its stylistic and linguistic registers. This in turn provides a more complete and longer-lasting public statement about the intellectual background and social status of the commissioner. The inclusion of religious imagery further enhances the message of piety and spiritual integrity by way of reaching the widest spectrum of possible recipients.

These notions arguably cannot be considered as independent from the idea of epigraphy; rather, as their appraisal expands the operative range of any inscribed text that they accompany, they should be viewed as an integral part of any inscriptional practice within which they feature. Therefore, when we lament the declining epigraphic habit in Byzantium and the poor state of the discipline of Byzantine epigraphy in modern times, we should also bear in mind that, in order to manage these deficiencies, it is no longer sufficient to simply generate more studies that are concerned with reading inscriptions as mere texts. Although it goes without saying that being sufficiently well equipped to understand the literal sense of any inscribed writing is a mandatory starting point, this material, whenever possible, should also be examined with a good understanding of its original context and function, and with full appreciation of the material aspect of writing, and of the verbal, visual and symbolic meaning that it carries.

scribed Christian Textiles from Egypt, in: C. FLUCH – G. HALMECKE (eds.), *Textile Messages: inscribed fabrics from Roman to Abbasid Egypt*. Leiden – Boston 2006, 23–67. Byzantine *ktetores* in 11th-century Cappadocia were also portrayed wearing tiraz-style inscriptions on their clothing: L. RODLEY, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia*. Cambridge 1985, 199, fig. 38c–d; M. PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images: Byzantine material culture and religious iconography (11th–15th centuries)*. Leiden 2003, no. 8, 326, nos. 11, 12, 14, 327, no. 22, 329.

⁸⁹ On middle Byzantine churches and the pseudo-kufic decoration in Greece and especially Athens, see: R. ETtinghausen, *Kufesque in Byzantine Greece, the Latin West and the Muslim World*, in: *A Colloquium in Memory of George Carpenter Miles (1904–1975)*. New York 1976, 28–47; N. ZORZI, *L'epigrafe bizantina dalla 'Trula' della cattedrale di Bari*. *Nea Rhome* 4 (2007) 55–56; A. WALKER, *Pseudo-Arabic as a Christian Sign: Monks, Manuscripts, and the Iconographic Program of Hosios Loukas*, in: J. PAHLITZSCH – V. TSAMAKDA (eds.), *Monks, Merchants and Artists in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Relations of Byzantium to the Arab Near East (Ninth to Fifteenth Centuries)*, forthcoming; EADEM, *Islamicizing Motifs in Middle Byzantine Church Decoration*, in: A.-M. YASIN – R. ETLIN (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Religious Architecture*. New York, in press (I am very grateful to Alicia Walker for allowing me to consult the manuscripts of her unpublished work); BOURAS, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* 122–244; C. KANELLOPOULOS – L. TOHME, *A True Kūfic Inscription on the Kapnikarea Church in Athens? *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 20/2 (2008) 133–139; on the general issue of the visual qualities of inscribed texts, see the forthcoming collective volume edited by Antony Eastmond on *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World* (CUP 2015).*



Fig. 1: Antioch: obituary of Bardas



Fig. 2: St Sophia, Constantinople: donor portraits of Zoe and Constantine IX Monomachos



Fig. 3: Panagia ton Chalkeon, Thessaloniki: donor inscription



Fig. 4: St Theodoroi, Athens: Pseudo-Kufic decoration and verses dedicated to Nikolaos Kalomalos



Fig. 5: Invocation of behalf of Eumathios, the protostrator and strategos of Crete

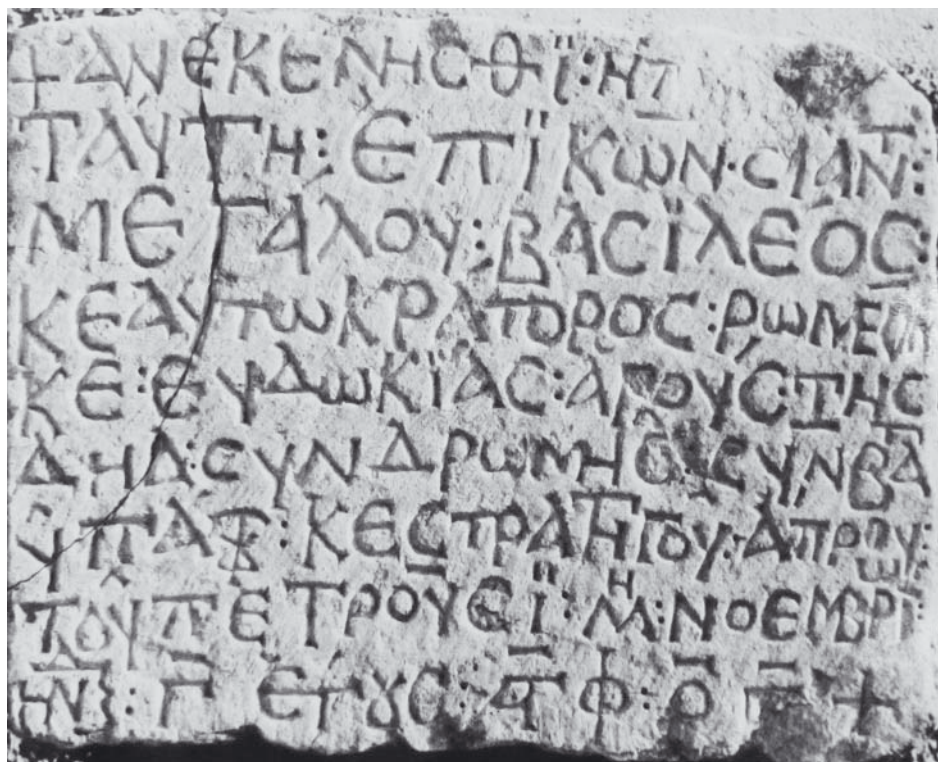


Fig. 6: Apros: restauration of a city gate by Constantine X and Eudocia

