

**The History of Byzantine Literature: from Justinian to the end of  
the Eastern Roman Empire (527-1453)  
(2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Munich: Beck, 1897)**

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**Introductory sections translated by David Jenkins and David Bachrach  
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## Translators' Preface

Karl Krumbacher was born on Sept. 23, 1856 in Kempten, Bavaria and died on Dec. 12, 1909 in Munich. He was educated in the classics at the universities of Leipzig and Munich and in 1897 became Professor of medieval and modern Greek at the University of Munich. Arguably the greatest Byzantinist of his generation, his contributions to the field were profound. He both founded the discipline's leading international journal, the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, and authored its standard reference work, *Die Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur* (1892; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1897).

*Die Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur*, The History of Byzantine Literature, is a wealth of general and detailed information. General introductory chapters on particular genres are followed by shorter chapters on individual authors, and detailed bibliographies enrich its more than 1100 pages. It was the most comprehensive achievement of Byzantine scholarship and became a necessary addition to any reference collection. Its contents and bibliographies have now been updated by Hans Georg Beck's *Kirche und theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich* (Munich: Beck, 1959) and by Herbert Hunger's *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich: Beck, 1978).

*Die Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur* has never been translated into English (there is a modern Greek translation). We have translated only the introductory chapters and have not included the footnotes or bibliographies. The bold numbers throughout the text refer to the pagination of its second edition (Munich: Beck, 1897). We hope that these selections serve as an accessible introduction to both Byzantine literature and to the thought and work of Karl Krumbacher.

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David Bachrach

## Introduction

### The Concept and General History of Byzantine Literature.

[1] 1. In the literary as well as in the political consideration of history, it has become customary to date the Byzantine period between the years 527 and 1453, i.e., to begin with Justinian's assumption of the throne (or even with his closing of the university at Athens in 529) and to end with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. There is no controversy about the end point. The final destruction of the political, literary and cultural life particular to the Byzantines symbolized by the planting of the half-moon on the Hagia Sophia produced a historical moment as powerful and as definite as any in the history of humanity. There are, however, many problems concerning the prevailing view about the beginning of the Byzantine period. This view contradicts the facts and is without any historical foundation. The arbitrary decision to date the beginning of the period around the time of Justinian has significantly clouded the understanding of literary as well as other cultural developments. It is high time to prove and to establish definitively the untenability of this periodization. We must briefly consider not only the literary but also the political, ecclesiastical and cultural history of the later Roman Empire in order to reach a well-founded and lasting judgment. Rather than becoming mired in details, it is important to view the entire development in all areas of life from the first days of the Empire until the last of the Palaiologoi, and to do this from the loftiest standpoint, with a view free of the prejudice of old doctrines. After we have done that, the question, "Where is the origin of this age to be found?" cannot remain in doubt for long. It is the time when ancient paganism was officially replaced by the new world religion, when the nature of the State experienced a deep and [2] lasting transformation, when the Greek element in the Roman Empire began to grow to a politically powerful and exclusive ruling factor through the founding of a new capital city that lay in the Greek cultural sphere, and when fundamental and consequential changes were carried out in Greek language, literature and art. This was the beginning of the fourth century, or, if one demands an exact date, the year 324, when Constantine the Great ascended the Roman imperial throne as its sole ruler.

We have placed our conclusion about the origin of the Byzantine period right at the start for the sake of clarity. Nevertheless, it is important to explain at least in general terms the basis for our conclusion since we have not employed any artistic effect and have forgone a well organized and persuasive presentation of the evidence.

The greatest political difference between the Byzantine and Roman periods was the transfer of the center of gravity from the West to the East and the consequent gradual supersession of the Latin language by the Greek. The point of departure of this process, which determined the entire later history of the Roman Empire, lies undoubtedly in the founding of the new capital city, Constantinople, (326 A.D.) and in the definite partition of the Empire it into western and eastern halves (395 A.D.) that arose from it. This sealed the permanent separation of the Greek East from the Latin West and was also the fundamental reason for the estrangement that soon followed between the Greeks and the Latins. Over the course of centuries, this estrangement grew to become a deep-seated aversion resulting in open enmity in

innumerable political and ecclesiastical squabbles. The linguistic and cultural dualism had already existed before Constantine and Theodosius. However, it was only after the founding of New Rome and the partition of the Empire that it received its official confirmation. It was on this basis that the division could grow unhindered. The contrast was especially promoted and strengthened by the rapid growth of the new capital city, which conferred on the Greek or hellenized half of the Empire a political and geographical, and soon even a religious, social, literary and artistic center.

The centralizing tendency and power of Constantinople was noticeable in everything. New Rome triumphed over Alexandria on account of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The ruthless exclusivity of the new capital city expressed itself even in the insignificant area of chronology, when the older eras of Alexandria and Antioch were suppressed by that of Constantinople. The city on the Bosphoros was the Paris of the Byzantine Empire — indeed, of the entire eastern world. The truthfulness of this claim is made clear by the countless panegyric speeches of Byzantine writers, who never shrank [3] from the boldest comparisons in order to describe the all encompassing greatness of the marvelous metropolis. It is still expressed in the modern Greek proverb, “Ὁλος ὁ κόσμος δώδεκα κι ἡ Πόλι δεκαπέντε” (“The whole world twelve and the City fifteen”). However, the political collapse of the western half of the Empire was even more important for the growth and triumph of the Greek element than was the vibrancy of Constantinople. As a result of the events of the years 455 and 476, the power of the old *Imperium Romanum* became more and more concentrated in the eastern lands. It was here that for ages the Greek element had dominated in the broad mass of the people, in the society and in the church. While the entire political organism remained both externally and internally Roman, Greek could now take up the struggle for rule with entirely different means than before and with better prospects of success. Certainly, the Greeks considered themselves politically as Romans, and they maintained the name Romaii from the terrible period of Turkish rule until the present day as the living and most comprehensive denomination of the Greek people. By contrast, the occasional appearance of Γραικοί has little historical significance, and the term Ἕλληνες, which was reintroduced artificially by the government and schools, has hardly any importance at all. The simple fact that even modern Greeks call themselves Romaii reminds us to judge carefully the significance of this name in the Middle Ages. There is no doubt that the original meaning of this name gradually disappeared from the consciousness of the people after the complete hellenization of the Eastern Empire. A Roman was increasingly understood to be a Greek speaking citizen of the Roman Empire, and finally simply a Greek. Although historians made a precise distinction between Romans and Greeks and clearly expressed it until the final days of the Empire (e.g. Kinnamos and Laonikos Chalkokondyles), the word Ῥωμαῖος gradually lost its ethnographic and finally even its political significance among the broad masses of the people. That it came to this was a natural consequence of the great numeric superiority of the Greeks over the Romans in the Eastern Empire.

Since the founding of New Rome, and even more since the partition of the Empire and the demise of its western half, the Greeks again felt themselves to be the lords of their own house and began immediately to hellenize the state in its head and members with their own forcefulness and energy. Yet the Latin language was so bound to Roman legal thought, which was maintained in an unaltered state, that even after the crumbling of the greatest part of the

Latin empire it was preserved for some time in the administration of justice in the East, although here only Greek sufficed for practical purposes. The tenaciously maintained idea to unify and claim Italy and the other parts of the Latin West for the [4] Eastern Empire played well with this unnatural preservation of the Latin system; the abolition of official Latin could be taken as a concession of the western lands. Hence, Greek was only able to conquer the individual branches of public life slowly. The exchange of the Roman basis of the Empire with the Greek, the transition from Roman to Romaic or Byzantine happened in the different branches of the state at different speeds. In the end, however, the old system could not withstand the strength of natural relationships and was destroyed. Although the Latin form was still maintained in the great collection of law books that made the name of Justinian famous, most of the novels of this emperor, although he considered himself completely Latin, were composed in Greek, just as were all the laws of the following period.

For the longest time, this battle of languages was fought in coinage, where it can more or less be demonstrated *in figura*. At first, Greek was pressed into the small cut coins of copper, later in silver coins, and finally in the aristocratic gold coins. Greek letters had already appeared as a mark of value under the emperor Anastasios (491-518), but Herakleios (610-641) was the first emperor to introduce the Greek slogan Ἐν τούτῳ νίκη, and then only on coarse copper coins, which were probably struck specifically for the use of troops and provincials during his Persian campaign. Instead of the Latin title, Augustus, the genuinely Greek designations, Βασιλεύς and Δεσπότης first appeared during the eighth century. We find Greek slogans on the back of different coins for the first time in the middle of the ninth century. Even during the Macedonian dynasty, gold coins still displayed the bust of the Savior with the inscription: *Iesus Christus rex regnantium*. Such Latin inscriptions remained on certain coins until the second half of the eleventh century. However, it would be a mistake to conclude from this slow retreat of Latin on coins that this language was actually preserved in the Roman state. In coins as in many other areas, old forms and names often remained when they no longer had any practical significance. In the same manner, it would be correct to conclude that the continuation of pagan images and slogans on imperial coins after the conversion of Constantine can in no way be seen as evidence for the religious syncretism of this Emperor.

We can see a similar phenomenon concerning the nationality of the ruler. In this case too, the Greek element achieves dominance slowly and only after great fluctuations. In the period before Justinian, [5] we see Romanized barbarians from the border provinces primarily in the service of the emperor, generally as a result of their military prowess. The first Greek emperor was Tiberios, who ascended the throne in 578 after the expiration of the Justinian house. However, the imperial throne soon displayed a rather mixed picture in an ethnographic sense, in which Roman, Greco-slavic, Armenian and other Asiatic elements mingled. Only the last dynasties, the Komnenoi, the Doukas, the Angeloi, the Palaiologoi and the Kantakuzenoi were completely Greek and felt themselves to be Greek. This is clear from the fact that in their time Hellenism appeared most powerfully in literature.

It is possible to trace the political origin of the Byzantine period to around the year 800. At that time, a new Roman Empire was founded in the West, which raised a claim to the genuine inheritance of the *Imperium Romanum*, which was fundamentally different from the empire that

had considered itself previously as the only possessor of this succession. A scholar has recently claimed that the expression “Eastern Empire” or “East Empire” is only justified when a Roman Empire in the West opposed a Roman Empire in the East. That is completely accurate if we insist upon the correctness of the name; for even after 395 there were indeed two emperors but only one empire. However, Charlemagne’s artificial resurrection of the *Imperium Romanum* did not effect the inner development of this empire in the least. The historical phase of the genuine Roman Empire, which must be characterized as Byzantine or Romaic, begins long before the year 800. The only two possible dates are 395 and 324. The later date deserves our preference as the starting point because it approximately corresponds to the official introduction of Christianity. The authors of Byzantine chronicles believed that the Byzantine era began in the political sense with Constantine the Great. Indeed, they began a new period in their list of emperors with Constantine, utilizing titles such as, Ἀρχὴ σὺν θεῷ τῆς τῶν Χριστιανῶν βασιλείας or Βυζαντίου βασιλεῖς τῆς νῦν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως.

The opposition of Byzantinism to Hellenism or Antiquity in general rests for the most part on the opposition of Christianity to paganism. Consequently, it is first necessary to consider religious history in deciding the argument about the boundary between Greek and Byzantine literature. The attempt has been made to resolve the argument by saying that the Byzantine period in literature begins with Justinian since his famous edict of 529 destroyed the last vestige of old paganism by withdrawing support from the Greek School in Athens. [6] However, the uncertainty surrounding the circumstances and transmission of this edict, even if its date is accepted, suggests that it was relatively insignificant for the general history of culture and literature. It was an isolated act, which for us today is only significant because more recent writers partial to an effective stage-exit of Hellenism adopted and glorified it with the splendor of martyrdom. In reality, the victory of Christianity over the old worldview was decided much earlier, and the transformation of the pagan state into a Christian one was completed largely by Constantine the Great and Theodosios I. The Neoplatonic Academy at Athens was only a tiny point in the greater Greco-Roman world, and its removal produced no substantial disturbance or change to the structure of the whole. The teachers and students who were directly concerned with the edict were small in number and seemingly likewise in scholarly significance. They had long lost all connection with the great mass of the population. At best, the inhabitants of the city of Pericles felt the material disadvantage of the edict since the emperor seemed to have had his eye on the confiscation of the school’s ancient endowment. The edict is not even significant in the history of the city of Athens. As we know from Gregory Nazianzos and others, its ancient splendor had long ago disappeared never to return. In the history of the transition from paganism to Christianity, the closing of the Athenian academy was no more significant than perhaps the destruction of the last temple of Apollo on Monte Casino by St. Benedict, which also likely occurred in 529. In the first place, the victory of the new teaching was decided much earlier. The most decisive steps towards smashing paganism and the Christianization of the ancient world had occurred under these same two emperors, Constantine the Great and Theodosios, who more than any others promoted the hellenization and easternization of the Roman Empire through their political actions. Secondly, isolated pagan elements lived on long after even Justinian. As Constantine Porphyrogenetos tells us, the last remnants of the adherents of the ancient faith decided to accept Christianity for the first time under Basil I (867-886). [7] K. Sathas’ efforts to demonstrate the existence of a pagan Hellenistic party that

vigorously opposed Christian Byzantinism throughout the Middle Ages and into the time of humanism is as mistaken as his theory of the Albanians and other similarly far-reaching statements. Therefore, if we maintain that the most important and decisive characteristic of Byzantinism in opposition to Antiquity is Christianity, the beginning of the Byzantine era should be placed in the time of Constantine the Great, not in that of Justinian, who closed an isolated pagan institution and raged against the remnants of paganism without being able to destroy them completely.

We come to similar results when considering the inner conditions of the state, the general state of cultural relations, national education and social custom. The most numerous and important factors leading to the Byzantinization of the court and state arose in the third and fourth centuries. During this period, the Roman military monarchy was transformed into the bureaucratic-courtly organism that remained characteristic for the entire Byzantine period. This new order was founded by Diocletian. He gave to the State a form whose most striking peculiarities — the hierarchy of court officials, the classes of rank and titles, the ceremonial, the official uniform, the ornament of the Emperor and the Asiatic form of his veneration — not only marked the entire East Roman development, but were exemplary also for the West. The system developed continually from Diocletian to the time of the Palaiologoi although neither Justinian nor any other later emperor marks an especially remarkable high point. Even the efforts of Constantine Porphyrogenetos were more a literary fixation on prevailing rules than the creation of new ones. As was true of Byzantine court and political life, the spiritual and moral phenomena that are usually characterized as the symptoms and marks of Byzantinism — court intrigue, cringing sensibility, reckless cruelty and deceit, lack of character and originality, broad vagueness, the mixture of Latin, Greek and eastern elements, etc. — were already evident in the first centuries of the Empire. Many of these peculiarities, such as the phenomena in the court and political life noted above, have their roots, as is well known, in the Alexandrian period when they were transmitted to the Roman Empire largely by the Egyptians. A more detailed description of these psychological areas of national life, whose change was hardly noticeable to contemporaries, would be difficult. In so far as they can be found, the decisive events must be sought in the third and fourth centuries.

[8] The development of the plastic arts is more accessible. Even here, however, the period of Justinian marks no significant break with the past. The most important peculiarities of Byzantine art, which find a clear expression in the displacement of sculpture by ornament, begin in the fourth century. It can even be said of early Byzantine art that its birth occurred at the founding of Constantinople, where all the remains of ancient and early Christian art were reworked under the powerful influence of Syrian, Alexandrian and Roman elements. J. Strzygowski has provided more exact proof for the significance of Constantinople in the history of Byzantine art and for the fact that it began in the fourth and fifth centuries.

The decline of Antiquity is revealed in speech and popular meter at approximately the same time as in culture and art. Not long ago, the beginning of the medieval and modern Greek linguistic period was believed to have occurred at a much later date, perhaps in the tenth century. However, as a result of more recent research this supposed boundary has been shifted further and further back, and it is now irrefutable that the most important and consequential

changes to the ancient Greek language had either already taken place in the first century A.D. or took place during that century. Around this same time, the entire ancient poetic technique was lost as a consequence of the demise of vowel quantity, and a new metric principle appeared, namely, the accent. This principle came to be used in rhythmic church poetry from the fourth century onwards in the form of irregularly constructed verses. Somewhat later and more slowly it reached a breakthrough in the repetition of similarly constructed verses, especially in the political 15-syllable. The age of this verse, which dominates all Byzantine and Modern Greek poetry, has recently been pushed back by indisputable evidence first from the eleventh to the tenth, then even to the sixth century. In all probability, it is significantly older than the oldest literary evidence contained here and there in popular proverbs. As in poetry, the principle of accent has also been identified in prose since certain euphonic rules based on accent were in use since the fourth century. Recognition of these facts is one of the principal reasons for placing the beginning of the Byzantine era in an earlier period. As a result, understanding the pattern of Byzantine literary development, once frustrated by the supposed later beginning of medieval Greek language and meter, has now been brought into harmony.

Finally, in connection with the question about the boundary between the Hellenistic and Byzantine period, we might consider the general historical question, "When did the Middle Ages begin?" [9] A. v. Gutschmid wrote a famous article on this topic, in which, after a generally accurate discussion, he came to the conclusion that the year 476, when Antiquity usually ends in the text books, in reality makes no break at all. Even the sixth century, with its genuinely Roman personalities like Boethius, Cassiodorus and Priscian, belongs to Antiquity. Therefore, he placed the boundary between Antiquity and the Middle Ages somewhere around the year 572, when the first truly national rule was established in Italy, or to round off, the year 600, just as we might take the year 1500 as the beginning of the modern period through a combination of different and important facts. Other scholars stress other conclusions. Felix Stieve has the Middle Ages begin with the assumption of the throne by Clovis (481). Ed. Meyer sees a transition period in the five centuries between Diocletian and Charlemagne, during which a definite break cannot be identified. However, all of these divisions refer particularly to the history of the West. While Gutschmid considers the Eastern Roman world in an incidental manner, the above-mentioned names and facts show clearly that even for him the break came from the West. But in fact, the political and cultural development proceeded in the West in a completely different manner than in the East. The great dualism that cuts in two the world of European peoples and states comes to the fore precisely in the discussion of this boundary. In so far as the term, Middle Ages, expresses a purely temporal concept, it can also be used for Eastern Europe. In a cultural historical sense, however, the western Middle Ages is something completely different than the eastern European, and especially the Byzantine Middle Ages. The fundamental break with ancient culture and the formation of new nations, states and societies, new languages and literatures that so characterize the western Middle Ages, were almost completely lacking in the East. Here, the inherited cultural condition withdrew at a much slower pace, and no one drew a furrow deeply enough in the ancient soil to permit new forms to spring up. Consequently, the question, when did the Middle Ages begin, can only be asked in precise reference to Central and Western Europe, and its application to determining the boundary between the ancient and Byzantine period would only cause confusion.



Without first considering the question, when the transition from Hellenism to Byzantinism took place in politics, religion, culture, art and language, it would not be easy to establish the boundary in literature itself. For it was precisely in this area of national life that Antiquity was maintained with particular tenacity. A new type emerged at first only timidly and, from outward appearances, unremarkably. The age of Justinian did not mark an important break in literature in any way. [10] On the one hand, the ancient tradition extends far beyond this period, in a certain sense until the fifteenth century. On the other hand, essential features of the new period emerged long before Justinian. The dominant role established by Christian theological writings in Greek prose and poetry by the early fourth century shows that the periodization that we have assigned to the other areas of national life also applies to literature. However, even in the form and content of pagan literature it is clear that ancient Hellenism was fading and that Roman and eastern elements based on changed presuppositions were creating new tastes. Nonnos, the most gifted and influential poet in the centuries after Justinian, illustrates most clearly in his own person the transition to the new period. He converted to Christianity in old age and added to his secular works a paraphrase of the gospel of John. The eastern excessiveness of his imagination and the ascetic severity of his metrical form are unmistakable precursors of the Byzantine type. The Hellenistic spirit is expressed with even greater purity in several other poets of this period, for example, in Musaios' poem, *Hero and Leander*, "the last rose from the fading garden of Greek poetry," (Köchly) and in short epigrammatical odes. However, the flickering of a few individual lights should not deceive us of the fact that the comprehensive illumination of Hellenism was extinguished. In historiography, the genre of literature that in the Byzantine period surpassed all others in significance and extent, Antiquity ended with the authors of the Greek renaissance in the second and third centuries, with Arrian and Appian, with Dio Cassius, Herodian and Dexippos. In the period after Constantine, secular historiography evidently grew tired. It is not happenstance that from this period we possess only a few names like Eunapios, Olympiodoros, Priscus, Malchos, Candidos and only one complete work, that of Zosimos. In addition to these historians, who on the whole followed the antique tradition, there were also popular chronicles. Malalas used these now lost works extensively, and they served as his model. It is now certain that Malalas did not invent this genre, which governed the education of the masses throughout the entire Middle Ages and had an immeasurable effect on neighboring peoples. So here, clearly, the new reality pushed up against the old: Eunapios, Zosimos et al. continued to practice the inherited technique, but a previously unknown genre grew up alongside them. At first, it led a quiet life, but the genre soon acquired the greatest significance. The new spirit showed itself even more dramatically in the soil of historiography since it is at this point that church history achieved its greatest flowering. Hellenism seemed to maintain itself most powerfully in philosophy. But the syncretism and [11] mysticism influenced by different Asiatic and African elements into which Neoplatonic wisdom degenerated possessed little ancient Hellenism in themselves, and they were in part nothing more than a fumbling attempt to produce for pagans a surrogate for Christianity.

Having established that the beginning of the Byzantine era in politics, religion, culture, art, language and literature can be fairly assumed to be the fourth century, or, if an exact date is necessary, around the year 324, then it is manifestly clear that the development was not even or parallel in all areas. This is true whether we consider this development as a decline or a flourishing or a mixture of the two. The only area in which development took place without fits

and jumps was the living language, the form of expression most removed from conscious human influence. In all other areas, the influence of important individuals and political or ecclesiastical events conditioned a certain irregularity of development that effected education within particular temporal boundaries. This is especially the case for the area that we are primarily considering, the history of literature. Nothing is further from my mind than to set up an artificial system of upper and lower divisions according to famous models. However, a few periods appear so clearly to the historian that they deserve to be mentioned explicitly.

The first period, the one that distinguishes itself the most from both the preceding and subsequent periods, is the Early Byzantine, which extended from Constantine's assumption of power until about the death of Herakleios (324-640). This period witnessed the last battles of the ancient Roman-Hellenistic spirit with the medieval Christian-Byzantine, the new formation of language, and the complete development of Byzantinism. On the whole, the literature of this period paints a delightful picture. In poetry, the efforts produced by Nonnos and his school in the fourth century, efforts that were developing the most extreme refinement of form, were continued with fortunate results under Justinian by Paul Silentiarios, by Agathias and other epigrammatists, and under Herakleios by the productive George of Pisidia. This secular poetry was far surpassed by religious poetry, which achieved its most glorious bloom in Romanos under Anastasios I. It was also practiced by Emperor Justinian himself and in the seventh century found a talented representative in Patriarch Sergios. After it lost much of its significance in the two centuries after Constantine and conceded preeminence to church history, secular historiography experienced an unexpected rise in the works of the tremendous Procopius, the sensitive Agathias, the diplomatically trained Petros Patrikios, the original Menander Protector, and finally, in the first half of the seventh century, in Theophylaktos, whose works although affected in form are very important for their content. In addition to historiography, the disciplines of sophistry, rhetoric [12] and epistolography reached a considerable level in this period in men like Libanios, Themistios, Himerios, Julian the Apostate and the youths of the school at Gaza, among whom Chorikios was preeminent (a writer who has only recently attracted scholarly attention). Their achievements had the greatest influence on the later Byzantine period, though this phenomenon has yet to receive sufficient study.

Philosophical studies achieved a last flowering through Neoplatonism even if the results were not particularly gratifying. After Justinian's violent seizure of property deprived this nebulous and barely viable system of its funding, worldly wisdom was confined to a few commentaries on Aristotle. The most striking characteristic of philology in the narrower sense in this period, even more so than in the later Byzantine period, is the collection, assimilation and commentary on ancient material. Although apparently insignificant, philology is important for reaching a judgment about the level and method of education. Lexicography boasts the so-called Cyril, who in the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth expanded an ancient rhetorical lexicon from insignificant glosses and thereby created a work that played the greatest role throughout the entire Byzantine period in both school exercises and in the revision of new lexical aids. In considering grammar in the proper sense, Theodosios of Alexandria excerpted and clarified in the fourth century the ancient works of Dionysios Thrax, Apollonios Dyskolos and Herodian. In the sixth and seventh centuries teachers like Johannes Philoponos, John Charax and George Choiroboskos also clarified these excerpted works and transformed them into that

form in which they dominated the pedagogy of the Byzantine era and, in different revisions, even of the period of the western humanists and of the last century.

Given the lively activity in literature and in the propagation of education from the beginning of the fourth until the middle of the seventh century and the changes in the living speech that created powerful new forms influenced by Christian, Roman and eastern elements, the enormous gap in Byzantine cultural life after this period comes as a great surprise. This period of rich and often successful production is unexpectedly followed by a period of inconsolable desolation that spread evenly to all literary genres with the exception of the ecclesiastical. This unproductive period extends approximately from 650 to 850. We can reasonably exempt from this general characterization several popular chroniclers who in the beginning of the ninth century made their contemporaries again aware that on Greek soil there was once something like historical interest. Never before had the immense spiritual current represented by Greek literature from Homer to the days of Mohammed the Conqueror been dry for so long and so deeply as in these two centuries. [13] Secular writing was almost completely silent. Leo the Isaurian closed the Academy in Constantinople, and even if the report that he burned its library rests on invention or distortion, it is characteristic of what later writers ascribe to him. The century of Iconoclasm (726-842) was not merely fatal for images, but also for culture, and if the earlier often radical condemnation of the iconoclasts was unjustified, more recent scholars like Pappas, Lampros, Gregorovius, et al. who attempt to raise iconoclasm to one of the greatest deeds of Roman government interpret the phenomenon too exclusively from a purely political standpoint. Although the true causes of this powerful movement are as yet unknown, we get the clear impression from many of the extant details that, in addition to the images and the monks, the national culture also had to suffer indirectly from it. What was left in these truly “dark” centuries of learning, composition and poetic inspiration served chiefly the purposes of theology and edification. But even here, a significant slackening of creative delight is detectable. The only really great figure, John of Damascus, who conclusively summarized the achievements of ancient theology, was unable to fill up the desolation. Besides him and his friend Kosmas of Jerusalem, the only significant writers are Theodoreos Abukara, archbishop Germanos (d. 740), and patriarch Tarasios (784-806) in ascetic, moral and hermeneutic writing, and Andrew of Crete and a few others in church poetry.

This long-lasting decline of literature and spiritual culture make such an impression on the historian that there is a tendency to see the entire previous period as part of Antiquity and to seek the beginnings of the Byzantine era in the unproductive period after Herakleios. Finlay placed the formation of the Byzantine state in the seventh century (633-716) and assigned the beginning of a specifically Byzantine history to the Isaurians. Gregorovius followed him when he remarks that since the end of the seventh century, and particularly with the Isaurian dynasty, the ecclesiastical, political and social process had taken on the complete form that Romaic Byzantinism would assume, with Constantinople at its heart absorbing every other autonomy. Zachariae von Lingenthal also considered the seventh century as a period of decline and of the dissolution of the Greco-Roman Empire and saw in the age of the Isaurian emperor the beginning of a new and very peculiar form that gradually developed into what is considered Byzantinism. Likewise, in the first edition of this book I expressed [14] the view with respect to

literature that Antiquity reached to the middle of the seventh century and that the Byzantine era begins with the era of desolation mentioned above. Careful consideration and a more exact study of the literature have caused me since to realize more and more clearly the error of this interpretation. However the earlier periodization was correct with respect to one point that clarifies its error, namely, the fact that in the period after Herakleios and especially under the Isaurian emperors, Byzantine civilization was completely developed, hellenization on the whole was completed and the new formation of the political, religious, cultural, linguistic and literary conditions was brought to a conclusion. After this point, it is clear that there was a unified Byzantine spirit free from any serious conflict with Antiquity. In order to illustrate the relationship with an abused but still useful image, the period of 324-640 can be characterized as the adolescent and rebellious youth, the following period as the adulthood and old age of Byzantinism.

The most difficult problem with this new periodization is its inability to assimilate the history of the Christian church and its literature. Most church and dogmatic historians assign the end of Christian Antiquity to the seventh or eighth century, and even in the literature of the Greek church, which reached its highpoint in the fourth century, Antiquity is extended to John of Damascus. However, this boundary proceeds from a standpoint that we should not assume here since the writers of church history and literature only consider the Christian period. Within that period there is a certain justification in taking together the era of the great dogmatic conflicts and the original literary activity and in describing this period as Antiquity as compared with that which followed. This Antiquity is, however, Christian Antiquity, and therefore a completely different concept than the one that is valid for dividing general world history. We are concerned with finding the boundary between the ancient-Hellenistic-Roman period and the Christian-Byzantine, and this falls in the fourth century. To be sure, this assertion can only be rightly understood if the concept "Byzantine" is interpreted in a somewhat higher sense than was customary in earlier literature, which opposed Byzantinism in the most hostile way and liked to limit it to times and circumstances whose entire character offered sufficient occasion for polemics. However, as noted above, even understood in this wider sense, Byzantinism did not appear all at once in a completely developed form. The period from the fourth to the seventh century is much more a period of transition in which old and new elements often struggle, mix or even suddenly pass by one another. Therefore, a varied and blended hue arises in which at first the former, then the future primary color predominates. In the end, the question is whether to put the break when the ancient color has almost completely disappeared from the historical stream, [15] or where the Byzantine-medieval coloring emerges for the first time in a greater number of places and over a more considerable area. Two entirely different divisions can now be reconciled with one another and the answer given to our question. If the antique development is assumed as the source of the stream, the end of it will be placed when the antique coloring actually disappears, therefore, somewhere in the seventh century. If, on the other hand, we proceed to the end of the stream, i.e., from the standpoint of the departing Middle Ages — the final stretch of the historical stream, modernity, remains outside of our consideration — we will naturally follow as far back as possible the period we want to separate from Antiquity and place its beginning when its essential qualities emerge for the first time in greater number and sharpness, therefore, in the fourth century. Since a description of Byzantine literature strives for the knowledge of medieval spiritual life and consequently proceeds from the

medieval standpoint, it must, without doubt, place the boundary in the fourth century. Certainly, those who want to study Antiquity exclusively may presume the right to take even the three following centuries with their antique remnants under the protective cover of Antiquity since otherwise these centuries would be homelessly isolated from him. However, with respect to this concession, it must be stressed that from the point of view of world history, it is better to divide the disputed area when the new spirit begins rather than when the old elements finally die out. For the young and vigorous elements that determined the following period deserve more attention than the old remains that were afflicted with the germ of death and were projected into a period that was becoming foreign to them. It is more useful for the understanding of the entire development to study the growth and life conditions of the former than the wasting and death of the latter. Only a blind adherent of classical autocracy will deny that in the transitional period of the fourth to the seventh century the new elements that lead to the Middle Ages are more interesting and important in a world historical respect than the continuations of Antiquity that had virtually no impact. My current division is different from the one utilized in the first edition simply because I let myself be taken too captive by the antique elements that survived in the transitional period of the fourth to the seventh century. I am now convinced that the penetrating moments of this period lay in the beginnings and preparations of the new historical era. Only with the help of this interpretation am I able to comprehend the Byzantinism that became a complete reality in the eighth century.

At the beginning of the ninth century, some life again stirred. Monastic chronicles, in whose clumsiness the barbarism of the previous period echoed all too obviously, were published. Leo the Byzantine received permission to teach publicly under the emperor Theophilos (829-842). [16] The University of Constantinople was reestablished under the successor of this emperor, Caesar Bardas, who in truth ruled in the name of Michael III. The great teacher of his nation, Photios (ca. 850), who reestablished antique literature and was the truest Byzantine according to his character and lifestyle, brought a new and powerful breath to spiritual culture. There was an increased participation in old forms of writing with concomitant growth in both its quantity and quality. This phenomenon grew to its highpoint in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The tenth century followed the age of Photios and stands out more for its extensive collecting than for its original works so that it can be characterized as the century of the encyclopedias. Constantine Cephalas, whose activity perhaps starts at the end of the ninth century, marks its beginning with his splendid collection of ancient epigrams. After the appearance of this work, most areas of literature benefited from expanded compendia commissioned by Constantine Porphyrogenetos. After these, purely philological works like the scholia of Arethas, the lexicon of Suidas and the *Etymologika* appeared. Finally, in theology Simeon Metaphrastes produced his redaction of legends that was so destructive to the ancient tradition.

It was, in fact, high time that more active attention was again paid to Antiquity. We owe to this circumstance the preservation of a large part of antique literature. The most important manuscripts survive from the time of this renaissance of classical studies, from the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. If the barbarism that was so destructive in the age of Iconoclasm had lasted any longer, it is likely that a greater part of the lesser-read ancient authors would be completely lost. Even the imperial majesty in the first half of the tenth century could no longer

hunt down many of them in undamaged copies. Furthermore, the scholarly impulse, which reached a wide expansion under the Komnenoi, would have found insufficient material for its activity.

The universalist phenomenon of Psellos lends a rhetorical-philosophical stamp to the eleventh century. At the same time, historiography, which in the ninth and tenth centuries was limited to the dry compiling of annals, began to take flight under the influence of lively cultivated studies. The prize of the century belongs to two older contemporaries of Psellos, the amiable and tasteful poets of epigrams, Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous. The literary renaissance reached its culmination in the twelfth century. As in the early Byzantine period, it was again historiography that revealed the best fruits of the care for spiritual culture. Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna Komnena, Kinnamos and Niketas Akominatos portrayed in four significant works the last bloom of Byzantine civilization, the great age of the Komnenoi. [17] Both laymen and theologians practiced the study of antique literature with renewed agility and often with the best results. No fewer than four metropolitans came into the service of secular literature in the twelfth century, the Aristotelian Eustratios of Nicea, the grammarian Gregory of Corinth, the rhetorically educated and poetically gifted Michael Akominatos, and Eustathios, who was distinguished as much by his genuine humanity as by his learnedness in striving to shed light on Homer and Pindar and to raise the spiritual level of monasticism, a vocation of great consequence for Byzantine culture. The grammatical zeal of schoolmasters (like Tzetzes) appears with less charm, but even they at least gave witness to the multiplicity of learned interests during this period. Hardly a subject of antique literature remained untouched by the general movement. Even the taste for erotic stories seemed to awaken again, and the genre of the Greek novel, which for more than a half millennium remained fruitless, was enriched all at once by four admittedly unsuccessful late examples. The contemporaries of the crusaders attempted poetic satire and dialogues modeled on Lucian with better luck. Even drama, which was the least productive Byzantine genre, produced a late and almost completely isolated straggler, which proves that for this kind of poetry all preconditions had been absent for a long time. Many panegyric and epigrammatic attempts fared better.

In spite of all outward success, the development of this flowering was sick with an incurable disease: it lacked the freshness of life, the force of nature that preserves, transforms and constantly creates anew. It was more like a carefully prepared mummy than a living organism. Because the artificial literature turned back again principally to classical or Hellenistic form, it estranged itself even more from popular consciousness and understanding. The cleft between the written and spoken language widened to a degree that no longer allowed an amicable reconciliation. The existence and justification of their own popular idiom became more evident. Since the beginning of the twelfth century, the new form found use in larger works, when previously only isolated quoted proverbs, satirical verses, untranslatable expressions and especially common forms had infiltrated literature. The well-intended effort to force literary forms into those of a long gone age was incompatible with the facts of a living language. As a consequence, a democratic reaction occurred that resulted in popular Greek literature. Now the sharpest contrasts met: on the one side were Atticism and Hellenism, carefully learned, excessively crafted, stiff and shriveled, which on account of the invincible power of tradition claimed the field victoriously. On the other was the vibrant [18] but awkward language from the

heart of the people, which, though often mixed in the most bizarre ways with artificial elements in orthography and morphology, in the lexicon and syntax and which was almost fearfully avoided and suppressed by the authoritative circles of literati, for the first time worked its way up after long exertion to some degree of agility, purity and expressiveness. Consequently, a rift arose in the spiritual life of the Greeks that since the twelfth century gave the appearance of a two-fold division to their literature and brought a dangerous element of untruth into their entire national culture. This split, lamentable for many reasons, could probably have been avoided if the writers of the eleventh and twelfth century had retained and perfected, in a way similar to what happened in the Romance languages, the system of a tempered colloquial language typified by Malalas, Theophanes, Constantine Porphyrogenetos and, with special success, a few naïve hagiographers.

In the Palaiologan period that now followed, the activity in artistic literature seemed to achieve, if not content and depth, then at least variety and range. While the learned Atticism was stressed more than ever in the Komnenian period and soon rejected any reconciliation with the language of the people and popular writing, efforts that formed the immediate inspiration for western European humanism arose more and more clearly out of the studies of this period. Therefore, the authors of this epoch stand between the Middle Ages and Modernity, between the last traditions of Antiquity in the East and the rebirth of the same in the West. Although the political organism, whose vital nerve the Latin conquest had snapped, met its final collapse slowly though inevitably, the last centuries produced an abundance of works in most areas of literature, in philosophy and rhetoric, grammar and exegesis, epistolography and historiography, even in poetry, works of uneven quality, but important for the knowledge of the political, religious and cultural life of the last centuries of the Byzantine people. This period preserves a striking stamp, which is often used unjustly to characterize the entire Byzantine age, on account of the struggles related to Union, which were waged with the passionateness of southern natures and outlasted in various echoes even the fall of the Empire. In comparison, the polemic against the Koran appears remarkably plain and docile as if the Byzantines could not recognize their true mortal enemy, whom they had underestimated politically for so long, even in the religious sphere. Especially characteristic both for the variety of the culture of this period and for the ever-stronger predominance of merely learned activity is the fact that literature now more than earlier acquired a polyhistorical character. Rhetorically and philosophically educated men made attempts in the most disparate fields so that it is sometimes difficult to arrange them with certainty according to their major accomplishments in definite genres of literature. [19] The most significant purveyor of this literary versatility in the thirteenth century was George Pachymeres. High above him stands Nikephoros Gregoras, the chief literary figure of the fourteenth century, a man who in the solidity and extent of his knowledge, in acumen, in his dialectic agility and in the strength of his character is surpassed by no Byzantine of the Palaiologan period. Finally, the most important polyhistorians of the fifteenth century, Gemistos Plethon and Bessarion, led in the circles of humanism, which, however, lies outside the scope of our treatment. After the conquest of the Empire by the Ottomans, every precondition of higher spiritual and literary culture was destroyed in the old cultural soil of Byzantium. The diplomatic correspondence of the first sultan composed in Greek gives remarkable witness (among others) of the barbarism that now crashed in with elemental force; in its odd formlessness it presents a contrast to the well crafted official documents of the Byzantine chancellery as if it were

separated from them by a thousand years.

Although literature, like most human affairs, gradually blooms and declines in such a way that there are seldom divisions as sharp as those arranged in the textbook mentality of the inexperienced and thoughtless, there are moments in the spiritual life of an individual, of nations and of humanity in general that can be characterized without exaggeration as legitimate breaks. Who doubts that Aristotle is the boundary between classical and Alexandrian literature? Who would argue that the spiritual life peculiar to the Byzantines ended in 1453? The literary historical scholar may establish the endpoint of Antiquity with similar justification. To a great extent, the historical understanding of Byzantine literature is dependent on the correct answer to this question. If a scholar as learned as Bernhardt calmly declared that the most scientific studies were unable to elicit a totality from the mass of Byzantine literature, it was his incorrect determination of the boundary that led him to this error. While he placed the beginning of medieval Greek literature with Justinian, he proceeded to give to the unbiased eye an offhand and hardly intelligible series of highlights, from Procopius to Theophylaktos, from Paul Silentiarios to George Pisides, then a gaping void, and finally a gradual ascent from the lowest level. But since they considered all of medieval Greek literature from the standpoint of the sixth century, Bernhardt and his successors [20] misunderstood and disavowed it thanks to this *apriori* position. In the place of the most unmistakable facts they put a flimsy Hegelian construct that takes its apparent central point from the idea of a continuous decline from the sixth to the fifteenth century. That reality completely contradicts this idea has already been made clear by the general overview given above and will be made even clearer in the specialized presentation of the individual genres of literature that follows. After the early Byzantine period, in which the old and new elements mixed and struggled, reached its conclusion, and after a long period of unproductivity, a unified development began. Rising naturally in the context of its age, it proceeded from dogmatic, ascetic and moral writings, from church hymns, legends and monastic chronicles and then gradually acquired a considerable variety of content and richness of form on account of the renewed study of ancient authors and a naïve grasp of contemporary affairs. It maintained itself for a few more centuries at a considerable height in order to ripen its last fruits in humanism on the one hand and in popular verse on the other.

The fact that our summary still begins in the old way with Justinian, in spite of the argument mentioned above, is simply a result of the practical requirement to make a direct connection to Wilhelm von Christ's literary history. Hopefully, the boundary can be shifted according to our mutual agreement with a later revision of the two books. The fact that the customary division has been adopted as standard in scientific discourse poses no unsurpassable difficulty. It is well known that in the last few decades other incorrect terminologies in linguistic and literary history have been set aside after a successful struggle. In the meantime we should remember to characterize works of the period from 324-640 as "early Byzantine" in contrast to the later.



## Characteristics

2. Byzantine literature is the most important expression of the spiritual life of the Greek nation and of the Roman state from the end of Antiquity to the threshold of modern times. Its evaluation must proceed first and foremost from this fact. After that, its significance rests in the influences which it had on the eastern, Slavic and western European people of the Middle Ages and finally in its intimate connection with classical philology. This last subject has recently received extensive attention. In so far as classical philology, as Bücheler remarks, now primarily seeks its progress in emerging from its previous isolation and in investigating the connections and commonalities in [21] language, customs and culture by which the Greeks and Romans were bound to people before and after them, then this expanding horizon finds the richest and most fertile field of activity in the writing of the Byzantines. There is hardly an area of antique philology and linguistics that would not profit in some way by a deepened study of medieval Greek literature. This has long been recognized and requires no proof. The antique tradition never completely died out in Byzantium, and an age of humanism could not have shone forth there in the same sense as in the West. The medieval Greeks always maintained a connection with Antiquity in a literary and political respect, with the partial exception of the darkness of the seventh and eighth centuries. Hence the artificially enhanced classicism that was customary since the Komnenian period never appeared to the Byzantines as something strange and lifeless, in complete contrast to the Latin literature of the humanists, which was never considered something national by the Italians. More recent scholarly studies have expressed more and more distinctly the relations of the Byzantines to Antiquity. In considering the total production of philological works in the last few decades, we are astonished with the quantity of studies dealing with the late Greek-Byzantine period. A series of scholars who work under the aegis of classical philology have sought the objects of their investigation in these indescribable centuries. We think of the first-rate accomplishments that are gradually creating light and order in the chaos of Byzantine historiography, grammar, lexicography, meter, *florilegia*, hagiography and church poetry. The best scholars of Antiquity, like Th. Mommsen, H. Usener, A. v. Gutschmid, W. Studemund, A. Reifferscheid, C. Wachsmuth, C. Bursian, W. Christ, E. Rohde, W. Meyer, O. Crusius, A. Elter, R. Reitzenstein, L. Cohn et al. have paid a longer and more productive visit among the Byzantines. Although the inner enthusiasm for Antiquity was hardly achieved by these isolated studies, the scientific gain is without a doubt, and we must be satisfied with that. If we wanted to justify every work on aesthetic or pedagogical grounds and to deny the end-in-itself of science, there would be very little left to research in philology or in any other discipline. The very first consequence of an artificial limitation on periods perfected in form and content would be a stagnation of spirits, into which even laudable pure enthusiasm and pedagogical force would sink. It is not a question of material but of human beings. Whoever works with a bright spirit and a fresh mind will find the way to truth and beauty even out of Byzantium.

Nevertheless, we must beware of an excessive emphasis on the ancient elements in East Rome. Nothing has confused the deeper understanding and evaluation of the Byzantine period more than [22] the tendency to consider everything in it only as a continuation and effluvium of Antiquity. In the view of most scholars, Byzantium was the vast death-chamber of the Hellenic race of giants, only worthy of attention on account of the remains and jewels preserved there

from a time long gone. Just as the prose literature of the medieval Greeks was generally seen only as a repository of antique forms and words, as a lost-and-found of variants, fragments, mythological, antiquarian and historical notices, so too in poetry attention was paid only to what referred back to ancient Greek and gave scholars the desired opportunity to immediately pursue the sources and to build “historical bridges.” This more or less consciously maintained principle directed research toward those works in which the utilization of ancient materials and the relation to its models appeared clearest, i.e., precisely in the worst concoctions of slavish imitation. Therefore the censure of worthlessness was impressed upon the creations of this age. This mark, once it was stamped, was repeated over and over again, seldom verified even in part and never examined throughout its entire range. No literary criticism rests on such a small mass of actual and self-acquired knowledge as the customary verdict over Byzantine literature. These judgments sound extremely harsh and exclusive; in both praise and censure, partial knowledge is always more excessive than scientific research. The dreadful saying, “Woe is you, that you are a grandchild,” has come to fulfillment a hundred times over for the Byzantines. Even men like Bernhardt let themselves be carried away to historically unjustified and confusing judgments by the exclusively “philological” consideration of Byzantine literature that made them want to take every thought, form and word as an echo from Antiquity. Those who are only comfortable with classical forms shut themselves off from an insight into the Byzantine essence right from the start. Who can, for example, do justice to the whole personality of an Eustathios or a Niketas Akominatos if he finds no other criterion for them than Aristarchos or Thucydides? Who can feel the incomparable sublimity of a Romanos if the inspiration of Christian faith has been lost to him, and if he does not possess the talent to transport himself into a very “unclassical” language and a strange meter?

Another reason for the careless mass execution that critics love to perform on the Byzantines is the bad habit of considering Greek literature of the Middle Ages as a uniform and generic mass as if the distinctions, valid everywhere else, of time, genre and individuality are here denied their effect. We can admit that the Byzantine character possesses a striking tenacity and lasts without significant change until the fifteenth century, but we should not overlook that this character is not so easily defined as is usually assumed, and that hostile characterizations such as dogmatic rigidity, religious fanaticism, vagueness and slavish imitation neither exhaust nor correctly describe it. As for the use of the word “Byzantine” to indicate a general servility in political life, a use very much [23] in vogue in the recent and most current literature of the day, unbiased historical consideration must admit that this negative quality is not at all peculiar to the Byzantines, but it exists whenever and wherever there are absolute rulers. Inner servility accompanied outer court ceremonial to such an extent in the West that cultured central Europe has no reason whatsoever to reproach the Byzantines. Byzantinism in Byzantium never flourished as opulently as it did in the courts of Charles V, Philip II, Louis XIV and the many petty princes of our fatherland. The German court poets of the good old days surpassed in servile toadyism anything similar produced by medieval Greek literature, and the ἥλιος βασιλεύς of Psellos found its true match in the *roi-soleil* of France. In truth, Byzantium is less absolutist than its reputation. In spite of all of the centralization of state power in the holy person of the Emperor, the Byzantine court could never have allowed the boundless corruption and extravagance that grew so wantonly in France and in so many German petty states obedient to that famous model. We hear little in Byzantium about the fabulous opulence of endless

amusements, of masquerades, shows and sweet pastoral plays, of light shows and fireworks, of wild carousing, disreputable hunting and forest festivals, of *filles d'honneur* disguised as pages. Taxes were imposed as relentlessly in Byzantium as they are in our own day. But the greatest part of the money that was raised was devoured in the unavoidable wars against the neighboring peoples attacking from all sides as well as in other needs of the state rather than by the opulence of the court. Excessive selfishness and insatiable appetites for power in Byzantium often resulted in bloody crimes. But in a polity where such great interests struggled with one another, such conflicts are actually preferred to "satiated virtue" and "dissolute morality." The hard metal out of which many Byzantines were forged, like Nikephoros Phokas, John Tzimiskes and Basil II, is more congenial to us than the polite trash of many central European courts of more recent times. Besides, there was no lack of princes who united a mild humanity with greatness of mind and iron energy, like the excellent John Komnenos and the brilliant chivalry of his son Manuel. The repugnant character that does in fact apply to a few eras such as the wretched transition period of 1025-1081 is unjustly transferred to the entire Byzantine age. Similarly, when considering its literature, it is necessary to distinguish among the periods, genres and individuals. [24] As soon as we consider individual cases in detail, their differences will become apparent and will discourage us from agreeing with the common generalizations.

The independent significance of the spiritual life of the Byzantines cannot be overemphasized. What they created is more than a mere appendage of Antiquity. Byzantine literature stands alongside its Greek and Roman counterparts as a new form in which Greek, Roman, Christian and eastern elements were fused into an original whole. Greek remained the dominant element, but the Byzantine Empire was anything but purely Greek, a point that cannot be emphasized enough. Rather, it was a particular amalgam of Greek and foreign components in which, besides Roman and eastern elements, barbarian elements (Slavic and German) contributed significantly to the psychic and moral rejuvenation as well as to the material empowerment of the state. While people whose language was Greek maintained the leadership, only a drop or two of ancient Greek blood could have flowed in their veins. The manifestations of spirituality in the state, in the church, in high and perhaps even in low society, in literature and in art happened almost exclusively in Greek forms. The old observation that the powers of a people reside in the spiritual is proven here decisively. The strikingly quick hellenization of the Slavic immigrants in central Greece and the Peloponnese proves (among other things) how undisputedly the Greek sensibility dominated the Empire. In fact, the Greeks have never played such a significant political role as they did in the Middle Ages. The petty life of states and tribes in the ancient world seems insignificant beside it. Still less should we be misled by the modest role which the Greeks had to play in the last four centuries (and unfortunately play to this day) in estimating the significance of Greek civilization in the Byzantine period. This powerfully real background should not be overlooked in the assessment of Byzantine literature. There is nothing similar in the West. If the second half of this volume had to take up a literary history of the Latin West as a means of comparison with this survey, the final result would rest more on an external analogy than on any internal relation between the two traditions. As new dominions emerged in the West in the place of the ancient *Imperium*, the direct tradition of language and literature dissolved into various separate and dissimilar forms. The artificial resurrection of the Roman imperial throne by Charlemagne could no longer change that. The Latin literature of the Middle Ages lacks a self-contained unity as well as a national, political and social foundation.

Their poets undertook no conscious competition with the ancients; they wrote private school exercises, and the striving for the laurel of immortality was unknown to them. [25] A fundamental reason for this great contrast between medieval Latin and medieval Greek literature can be sought in the differences in the social standing of the literary personalities who wrote in the two languages. In the West, all literary creation was limited to the still space of the cloister's cell; monks wrote and they wrote for monks. Even in Byzantium, many writers worked in the safe retreat of a monastery. However, most authors had a lively relationship to social and political life. Many of the most significant spirits like Photios, Psellos, Eustathios of Thessaloniki, Gregory of Cyprus, Nikephoros Gregoras et al. took an energetic part in the great movements of their time while holding the highest state and ecclesiastical offices. Others learned to know the life of the world in subordinate positions. The literate poor forms another group, the impoverished people living hand to mouth, like Theodore Ptochoprodromos, Michael Glykas, John Tzetzes, Manuel Philes, those who were unable to ascend to the profitable offices and consequently courted the favor of the rich and powerful in whining and plaintive tones. As a result of this manifold gradation in the circumstances of the author, the literature itself has a living, colorful and many-sided character. Admittedly, the antique models still had influence in Byzantine as well as in medieval Latin literature. However, in Byzantium the main emphasis remained on the independent production and presentation of new material. Only in a few learned disciplines, like grammar and metrics, where particular writings obtained and maintained a normative authority, are we justified in considering production exclusively from the antique point of view.

The unique division into literary genres that characterizes classical literature faded away after Alexander the Great. The syncretic and blurry character that applies to Greek literature in the Alexandrian and Roman periods also dominates in Byzantine literature. Most writers made simultaneous attempts in many (frequently completely different) genres. Therefore, a literary chaos arose to which it is difficult to bring order and clarity. If we wanted, as Fabricius and Schöll did, to assume a strong division according to types and materials, most authors would have to be divided into two or three or more pieces. The personalities would be completely lost in this case, and the entire literature would dissolve into an endless mass of books, treatises and fragments, from which every reader would have to carefully reassemble the individual authors according to their own desire and ability. A fair and correct judgment of the literary personalities and therefore of the time and people which they represent would be made much more difficult by a strong typological treatment. On the other hand, the main genres had to at least be represented in their historical context. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to establish a compromise between the synchronic and typological methods. Each author was assigned to the genre into which the heaviest concentration of his achievements falls. [26] Chronological order was strictly observed within the individual genres. As for the sequence of main genres, naturally prose demanded priority in artistic literature and poetry in popular literature. This mixed system could hardly reach the level of transparency by which in antique literature the chief forms and stages of development are recognizable. In any case, it combines more advantages than would a strong typology that caused a merciless splintering of individual authors, or a synchronic system in which the development of the genres would be far too unclear. Here as elsewhere, a certain expediency seemed to me to be more desirable than doctrinaire adherence to traditional models.

What today is rightly considered the vital element of every literary historical representation, the examination of genealogical relationships, cannot yet be carried out with sufficient clarity in Byzantine literature in its full range. This is not because there was no development in the Byzantine period as many have somewhat hastily assumed. Growth and decline exist here too, but the process moved slowly and irregularly. It is not reasonable to search in the Byzantine Age, characterized by an exceptional adherence to tradition, for a history of development comparable to the life of an individual as we find in the pre-Christian literature of the Greeks. This age, in which the conservative tendency predominated all areas of human life, did not experience deeply incisive revolutions of taste and fundamental changes in perspective. In order to understand the distinctions of the age and of the individuals, which are subtler here than in periods of wildly tumultuous power, our eye must become keen with long use. If we calmly accept the assurance of Bernhardt that all Byzantines possessed a certain familial similarity, then we will come no further in knowledge. Looking from a distance, the observer arrives at the same impression of relatedness in most authors of other literatures. How long did it take, for example, to separate out the various types from the apparently uniform mass of realistic-erotic French novelists and to learn to differentiate them from one another in order to identify a random sample of an author's work? Byzantium also possessed types that were as fundamentally different as Victor Hugo, Daudet, Zola, Bourget and Loti. Whoever does not wish to believe in these distinctions should remember the deepening of studies that was required before art history reached the differentiation of Greek and Roman art from the general concept of ancient art, then the recognition of an Attic, Peloponnesian and northern Greek school, and finally the subtler distinctions of individual artists. Who today still shares the conviction of Friedrich Schlegel that Christian painting and sculpture from the earliest period until the fourteenth century was dominated by a perfect unity and similarity in design and artistic execution? [27] "Where the old lovers of art imagined they saw a fixed immutability, we behold a extremely manifold change." The difficulty here stressed by Springer in recognizing in art history the variants from the common type and the breaking up of the latter into innumerable individualities also applies to the consideration of foreign literatures. Even here, we are captivated by the strong impression that the general peculiarities of the genre produce. Consequently, it is only by careful attention that we can recognize the particular schools and personalities.

One reason, noted above, for this clouded understanding of the developmental history of Byzantine literature is the practice of Bernhardt and others of confining all medieval Greek literature to a continuously declining plane. This great historian of the Greek spirit was so blinded by his *a priori* doctrine that even the unmistakable revival from the ninth to the twelfth century eluded him. In his view, Greek literature sank continually from the end of the eleventh century, and the facts of its enfeeblement became more and more frequent. According to him, there is little literary activity to report from the Komnenoi of the twelfth century, etc. In short, every succeeding century appears darker, colder and emptier than the preceding. A man who dedicated his life almost exclusively to the study of the Byzantine period came to the same conclusion as a classical philologist. No less than Ph. Fallmerayer himself stated, "a true gauge and an unmistakable barometer of the sinking civilization of Byzantium is Byzantine literature as it has come down to us from the beginning of the fifth to the end of the fifteenth century." This

faulty view has led to the frequently repeated and mechanistic chronology that is based on the nonsensical formula, contradicted a thousand times by the facts, that the better the style, the earlier the work, and the worse the style, the later the work. The pernicious mania of the Hegelian school for establishing constructs, in which Bernhardt was entangled more so than any other literary historian, has seldom ripened such poor fruits as in the historical consideration of Byzantine literature. It is not superfluous to emphasize the real reason for this scientific error so that we might once and for all break with an interpretation that has clouded a mighty epoch to the historical eye. If this basic false principle is given up first, then the working out of the particulars can be undertaken with new means and prospects for success. Almost everything remains to be done.

The darkness that still lies over the history of Byzantine literature proceeds from the simple fact that many comprehensive works express opinions about the time of its origins [28] that differ by many centuries. A closer examination of the periods and manners of study will undoubtedly lead to important clarifications. Likewise, the uncertainty that reigns over the authorship of many works will certainly be clarified here and there by a more exact individualization and by detailed linguistic inquiries like those, for example, which Tycho Mommsen has undertaken and finally extended with success to the Byzantines in the important area of prepositions. Until now, the literary historical portrait of many authors has suffered because of the jumble of works that have been ascribed to a few famous names, attracted in a manner similar to that of a chemical attraction. Certainly, a considerable consolidation of preliminary studies is needed so that such inquiries can be carried out with prospects for success. The numerous absurdities and useless efforts that are observed in the literature related to Byzantium result primarily from the self-deception of naïve minds that believe that after some acquaintance with the well-tilled field of classical literature they can immediately find their way through primeval Byzantine forests. Even ancient philology is afflicted on a regular basis by a series of completely absurd contributions. This field is, however, far too well organized to allow such private sins to instigate more than passing amusement. But Byzantium is guarded by so few reliable troops that often completely childish ideas remain successful for a very long time. There is no monopoly in science, but some equipment should be demanded from everyone who wants to pass profitably through a thorny and dark territory. How often this requirement has not been observed on Byzantine soil can be experienced with painful reluctance. How frequently knowledge lacks the most necessary resources! How poorly things stand with respect to the knowledge of medieval Greek usage even among those who construct broad conclusions on this usage! How many seem to believe that the principles of criticism valid everywhere else are a superfluous ornament in Byzantium! Even scholars allow themselves to be carried away from painstaking carefulness to loose sloppiness as soon as they have something to do with the Byzantines. By a curious confusion of concepts they carry over their aesthetic and literary disdain for these imitators to their own scientific works. Lately there have even been bold adventurers who dared to bring Byzantine texts to publication without knowing the basics of Greek paleography. Finally, how frequently is it the case that aesthetic judgments are exaggerated! A few seem to be caught in the delusion that in the tenth century after Christ Greek authors were supposed to write as they did 15 centuries earlier. Against such errors it must always be emphasized that we should study the Byzantine epoch on its own terms like any other and pay particular attention to the numerous changes that gradually took place in the

religious, national, political, social and linguistic conditions.

[29] The most important historical facts concerning the details of Byzantine Greek are presented partly in the introductions to the main sections, and partly in the discussions of the individual authors. Only the general course of development can be described here. Within the written language we must distinguish between two chief periods. In the first, which lasted until about the end of the tenth century, a diction developed on a truly Byzantine basis that was strongly influenced by the church. A few prose writers like Malalas, Theophanes, Georgios Monachos and numerous authors of devotional books and saint's lives made so many concessions to the spoken language that they undoubtedly remained generally understandable. Likewise, most church poets maintained a connection with life. An uncontrived, naïve and even awkward tendency characterized the written language. Even authors who made use of refined expressions did not utilize classical models, from which they were now separated by an unbridgeable gulf, but rather borrowed from early Byzantines such as Procopius and Agathias, who were more closely related to them in both form and content. A unified character still dominated in the entire literary language throughout all distinctions of style. The second period, which was prepared by the renewed growth of classical studies, began with the scientific and literary renaissance in the eleventh century. The authoritative circles (Psellos, later Anna Komnena, Niketas Akominatos et al.) now returned to the antique sources, and as a result the natural development of the previous period and its historical context was interrupted. The striving for purity and Antiquity reached its climax under the Palaiologoi. The more these writers artistically lifted themselves above the level of their contemporaries, the stronger the contrast between the living and written languages became. W. Meyer's important discovery that the accent at the end of the sentence in Greek prose composed from the fourth to the sixteenth century was regulated by fixed rules demonstrates the extent to which Byzantine writers in the first as well as in the second period consciously and carefully paid attention to pleasant euphony in their compositions. On account of the dominance of vowel isochrony, word accent naturally supplanted long and short syllables. Therefore, there had to be at least two unstressed syllables before the last stressed syllable, like ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων, and there could be anything after the last stressed syllable, like διαλέγονται ἄνθρωποι, ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων, ἅπας σοφός, σοφίαν τιμᾶ. It goes without saying that these rules were not always followed. There were all kinds of restrictions and deviations, and individual authors observed the rules with various degrees of rigor. Moreover, many Byzantine texts were extensively revised, and as a result, the original rhythmic structure at the ends of sentences was slightly altered. [30] A similar phenomenon, the so-called *Cursus*, was observed in the Latin prose of the Middle Ages.

The main characteristic of the Byzantine literary language, especially in the second period, is the lack of a uniform form. Instead, it is characterized by a lively melding of different, often conflicting elements. Poetic flowers from ancient times, Ionic and Attic prose, Hellenistic neologisms, ecclesiastical idioms, phrases from Byzantine diplomatic style and technical expressions from Roman and medieval life were sometimes brought together to form an agreeable whole and sometimes tossed together in a superficial manner. Although this language frequently suffered from a surfeit of tradition, it cannot be described as completely dead in the second period. In many authors we still feel the pulse of life; their writing is free of ossification, and their sentences glide without obvious effort of the pen. The notion of the mummification of

this written language is as inaccurate as the opposite assertion that the educated circles of the Greek Middle Ages actually spoke their written language. The unevenness of Byzantine diction makes it difficult to characterize its authors in a formal way. The isolated comparison with some ancient model — a favorite theme of German doctoral dissertations — is not very helpful. The language of every individual must be grasped and appreciated as a whole, something that lazy lexical study does not accomplish. Hopefully, the time has at least passed when a scholar could believe he was excused from the necessity of an accurate historical evaluation simply through his employment of charged expressions like “bloated verbosity, terrible bombast, lack of taste,” etc. In addition to the common features we have mentioned, there is still considerable space for individual peculiarity; the writers worked with related means but went their own way in using them.

Much misunderstanding has arisen from the custom of branding Byzantine Greek as barbaric. It is a judgment based for the most part on Latin, Italian, Slavic and other foreign words. Writers who did not shrink from expressions like φοσσάτον, λίζιος, φρέριος, βουλκόλακας, quickly lost favor with petty philologists. Historical reflection will justify the Byzantines even in this respect. Since they had to express a mass of new ideas, especially in the government and military, they could not possibly limit themselves to the classical lexicon. To the extent that they both absorbed Roman terms into their written language and created new means of expression, they proceeded in just the same way as Polybius, Dio Cassius, Herodian and other historians of the Roman period. The often-reviled “barbarisms” are indispensable to the Byzantine lexicon; they fulfill their purpose and lend to its Greek a definite cultural and historical stamp. Consequently, we will have to evaluate them from the same standpoint as the somewhat unclassical but necessary neologisms of [31] Latin scholasticism (e.g. *essentia*), whose legitimacy cannot be denied by the most biased observer.

From the twelfth century onwards, the popular language appeared alongside the Byzantine literary language in greater literary works. We will treat this in the introduction to the third section.



## International cultural relations

3. In addition to the internal significance of Byzantine literature and its relation to classical philology, a correct evaluation of this literature requires an examination of its effects on the other peoples of the Middle Ages as well as on the influences that it received from abroad. If we cast our gaze first on the regions that the Greek spirit enriched the most and for the longest time in Antiquity, we find that it was precisely these areas that were least affected by Byzantine culture. Italy and the rest of the Roman and Germanic West came into contact with elements of Byzantine culture far less than their eastern and Slavic neighbors. Those parts of the West that were exposed to the cultural influences of Byzantium at the beginning of the Byzantine period were still part of the Roman cultural sphere and therefore less able to assimilate a strange culture. Consequently, the rest of the regions of the West, for which Italy would have had to play the mediator, remained removed from the effects of Byzantine cultural life. Later, as a result of the ever more strident aversion of the “Franks” for the Greco-Byzantine way of life as well as of the ecclesiastical conflicts arising in part out of this racial hatred, the gulf separating East and West grew so wide that already in the tenth century the eastern world confronted the Roman-Germanic as something strange and hostile. The Crusaders brought a closer contact between the West and the East. On the one hand, this contact was much more hostile than friendly, and on the other a new and powerful culture was then developing in the West that arose from the conditions of its native soil and therefore opposed the strange elements of the East. In any case, the sum of the cultural elements that flowed to the West in this time of liveliest exchange is less than that of the innovations that the Crusaders brought to the East. If Byzantine culture did not influence the West in a broader extent and was unable to determine its entire hue, there were nevertheless conquests limited to particular times and places. The eastern influence expressed itself most powerfully in Christian literature and art. The relations of Latin church poetry to the Greek are indisputable, but even here the connection slackened after the seventh century, [32] and Byzantine teaching seems to have been retained only in church music after this point (Notker). Even in the areas of prose literature and science there was soon little trace in the West of serious Greek studies like those pursued by Priscian and Boethius in the sixth century. Yet we should mention an isolated but important and consequential fact from the time when the connection between eastern and western culture began to dissolve: the Latin translation of the Chronicle of Theophanes produced by the papal librarian Anastasius around 870, a work that was significant for Latin annalistics of the Middle Ages. In the later Middle Ages Greek studies were cultivated in only a few places, particularly by the Irish. However, the surviving secondary materials and other evidence demonstrate that little attention was given to attaining a deeper understanding. In the plastic arts, powerful influences from the East undoubtedly penetrated the West until sometime in the twelfth century, especially in Italy. It remains one of the major tasks of Byzantine art history to establish the exact temporal and geographic range of this influence — questions that have recently benefited from several good studies. As was true in art, Byzantine influences in other areas (government, etc.) naturally appeared in those parts of Italy that had been bound to East Rome for a long time. Ch. Diehl has brought together with painstaking care everything that can be found about this in the widely scattered sources and unified these numerous pieces into a beautifully coherent whole. But all in all, it has to be said that this picture is pale and insignificant. Although Greek culture

advanced unnoticeably and was long supported by state power, the Byzantines remained more foreign here than elsewhere. Soon the formation of the unholy opposition between the Latin and Greek church began, which caused the separation of Europe into a Latin-Germanic and a Greco-Slavic world. The West received from Byzantium a gift that offered generous and immeasurable benefits only at the conclusion of the Middle Ages, namely, the knowledge of the Greek language and the remains of Greek literature. However, here the Byzantines were only mediators, and the spiritual life that they helped to awaken through their teaching in the West did not possess the Christian-Byzantine character but rather the pagan-Hellenic. Nevertheless, the most important works of the Byzantine period were disseminated at that time along with antique writings, and many of them had a considerable influence on western, especially Italian, literature.

[33] The Byzantines are more closely related in worldviews, customs and interests with their direct neighbors in the East than with the lands of the West. The Byzantines were closely tied to the Syrians, Arabs, Persians, Jews, Armenians and Turks for such a long time that their entire character assumed something half Asiatic. They even preserved a few things, although not directly, from far off India. Just as the eastern tone is remarkable among the medieval Greeks in expressions, fairy-tales, proverbs, popular opinion, in the ceremonial of the court and church, in gesture, in drapery and finally in the decorative tendency of their art and crafts, so too did the eastern peoples receive from the late Greeks and Byzantines the rich reciprocal gift of their spiritual and literary possessions. In particular, after their great political successes in the seventh and eighth centuries, the Arabs independently assimilated significant portions of Greek and Byzantine literature that the Syrians had transmitted to them. After the conquest of Spain (711) they communicated these to the Latin peoples of the West. This is a long known and often repeated fact of cultural history that does not need to be discussed any further here. The remaining peoples of the East, the Syrians, Persians and Armenians, also translated and assimilated historical, philosophical, medical, agricultural and other works of Greek and Byzantine authors. A Jewish Midrash contains an interesting witness to the transmission of Byzantine ideas to the easterners, in which a description of Solomon's racecourse follows a description of his throne. The author, who obviously proceeded with the view that public games were necessarily connected to the court life of a powerful regent, in a bold leap over lands and centuries transposed the famous hippodrome in Constantinople with all its features (e.g., the four factions) all the way to Jerusalem and the court of Solomon. Besides the literary evidence of the cultural relations between the Byzantines and the easterners, we must also consider epigraphical monuments. A very instructive piece is the inscription from Zebed (today Aleppo) composed in three languages (Greek, Syriac, Arabic), which is connected to the founding there of the church of Saint Sergios in 521. Many of these matters will be discussed in the course of the individual presentations. We still seem to be without an exhaustive description of this literary current and counter-current in its entirety. In the end, the Turks took over important parts of Byzantine culture, especially the institutions of civic life.

Of all the extended effects of Byzantine culture, its inestimable influence on the Slavic world had the greatest world-historical significance. That southern Slavic and Russian civilization in its general character [34] as in countless particulars rests on a Byzantine background is a historical fact that has never been seriously disputed, and it has very recently been more exactly proven and illustrated by an imposing corpus of new evidence. The

enormous inroads made by Byzantine culture in Eastern Europe led to a dualism in the general cultural development of Europe that continues to this day. Even if the great opposition of the Greco-Slavic to the Germanic-Roman world has often been exaggerated, the division still exists, and no one knows when the old and profound contrast will be resolved by the progressive means of spiritual and material intercourse and by the Europeanization of Russia. The present currents in the area of *belles lettres* do not seem at all to declare that “holy” Russia wishes soon to abandon its orthodox-Slavic feeling of exclusivity with respect to the influences of the West. The ideas of the poet Khomiakov, which have acquired an enormous circulation through the influence of the family of the highly gifted Aksakov, live more powerfully today than ever. In spite of his undeniable poetic gift, Turgenev was infected by the West and had to fight hard even in his own lifetime against the competition of writers in whom Russian culture was more genuinely expressed. Presently, the most typical of all Russians, Dostoyevsky, the great dissector of the soul, and Leo Tolstoy, who is spiritually related to him, seem to have emerged victorious over their talented rivals in Russia, whose tone is mixed with foreign elements, and to have triumphed over us as well. The gulf that still dominates even in scientific literature between the Slavic East and the Germanic-Roman West is revealed by a superficial perusal of the *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* and the *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, journals that report on a number of notable Russian, Bulgarian and Serbian works that are unknown and unused in “Europe.” Although the fact of the Byzantine character of Slavic culture is certainly established, opinions are widely split over the question whether Byzantine influence was beneficial to the Slavic people. If such prominent scholars as Pypin struggled against Byzantinism and saw in it only Chinese walls that excluded Russia from all moral and spiritual formation, Byzantium seems to have found discerning and spirited admirers in Lamansky, Th. Uspensky, Veselovskii, Vasilevskii and others, even if few will go so far as to want to build with Kireevskii the Slavic philosophy of the future on Byzantine ecclesiastical writers. Our participation in this controversy is naturally distant.

The cultural conquest of the Slavic lands occurred through Christianity, and the first carriers of spiritual formation were Greek or Hellenized priests. Even after conversion, the ecclesiastical elements were dominant among the spiritual influences through which Byzantium worked on the Slavs. [35] It was of great importance for the success of these civilizing efforts that the Christianization of the Slavs began in the ninth century, an era when the Eastern Empire still possessed very considerable political power. The Byzantine mission took its start from the activity of the famous apostles of the Slavs, Cyril (d. 869) and Methodius (d. 885) and the introduction of a Slavic alphabet. At first, Christianity spread to the southern Slavs, the Bulgarians and the Serbs, and then to the Russians. Soon after 956 (or 957) the great princess Olga received baptism in Constantinople with numerous followers, and in 988 Vladimir I raised Christianity to a state religion in Kievan Russia. Numerous works of Greek-Byzantine literature and art came to the Slavs along with Christian teaching. In most cases, the southern Slavs, the Bulgarians and the Serbs took on the role as cultural mediators. Cyril and Methodius and their students translated the Bible, works of the church fathers like Basil, Gregory Nazianzos, John of Damascus et al. and legends and liturgical books into Slavonic. Soon Byzantine chronicles like those of Malalas, the compendium of Nikephoros, George Monachos, whom the Russian chronicler Nestor assimilated, Zonaras and Manasses followed. Even ancient Greek works like the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus Flavius were available early on in a Slavonic translation.

The translators were particularly interested in spreading knowledge of ecclesiastical matters, and therefore monastic world chronicles like that of Georgios Monachos enjoyed special preference. The interest in purely theological texts was so strong that even authors who wrote on the early history of the Slavs like Constantine Porphyrogenetos remained unnoticed. The same tastes may help to explain the choices made in geographical literature. The main source of geographical knowledge for the Slavic Middle Ages was the Christian topography of Kosmas Indikopleustes. Besides the ecclesiastical, historical and geographical works, medieval legends and popular poetry played the greatest role in this translation literature. These belong in part to the Jewish-Christian circle of ideas, like the apocryphal stories of Adam and Eve, of Noah, of Abraham, the famous tale of King Solomon and the story of Barlaam and Joasaph. The legend of the Babylonian empire and the writings of Prester John (the *Legend of the Indian Empire*) were based on an ecclesiastical and political exchange. In addition, we have the circle of legends that spread throughout the entire Middle Ages, of the Trojan War and of Alexander the Great, the Christian beast literature of the *Physiologos*, eastern popular books like *Syntipas* and [36] *Stephanites* and *Ichnelates*, and finally the purely Byzantine folk epic on the life and deeds of Digenis Akritas. Byzantine traces have recently been followed with success even in the nationalistic Russian *Lay of Igor*. Likewise, various Byzantine reflections have been discovered in fairy-tales, folksongs, proverbs and magic spells. Old Slavonic compilations (*Sborniki*) with mixed contents, the so-called *Bienen*, derived from Byzantine sources and modeled after the Μέλισσα of Antonios, which served as parallels to John of Damascus and the *Ecloga* of Maximus, enjoyed great popularity as did translations of the aphorisms of Menander and other sentence collections. Even grammatical writings were recast, often without completely understanding their content, into Slavonic forms. The translation of the Byzantine law books acquired significance for the political and civic life of the Slavic peoples. Conversely, since the eighth century the Slavic inhabitants of the Empire exercised influence on agricultural legislation and the formation of certain religious currents. In addition to the southern Slavs and Russians, the Romanians, on account of their geographic situation, were also exposed to Byzantine influences to a great degree, and much of what is said here about the Slavs applies to them as well. It should be noted, however, that the Romanians received many literary and cultural benefits through Slavic mediation rather than directly from Greek sources.

Byzantinism dominated in Slavic art even more absolutely than in literature. Greek architects built the Slavic churches and Greek painters decorated them with religious images. Even today, the Slavic as well as Greek images of saints are purely Byzantine. It is more difficult to prove to what extent the Slavic, especially the Russian, hierocracy and bureaucracy and other general characteristics go back to Byzantine influences. But certainly, Slavic literature and art in their most important elements are still today a copy of the Byzantine, and they can only be understood and appreciated through the study of their model. Therefore, old Slavic and Byzantine studies are connected to one another in the closest mutual relationship. Yet even we western Europeans should not neglect this remote area since the eastern world forms an indispensable complement, companion and counterpart to the West in developing a comprehensive history of medieval culture.

## First Section: Prose Literature

### 1. Theology (by A. Ehrhard)

#### 4. Character and General History

[37] Byzantine literature is imbued with a fundamentally ecclesiastical and theological character. A very large percentage of the entire corpus has a theological nature. Men from the highest stations in civil life, including the emperors themselves, took their places alongside ecclesiastical officials and monks as theological writers. Even in the ranks of the secular authors we find some who based their works on a theological foundation. This phenomenon indicates an interest in theology that was unparalleled in the medieval West and must be willingly accepted by historians of literature and culture as indicative of an unbroken appreciation for the idealized or religious aspects of communal life. Byzantine literature maintained a higher degree of interest in and a concomitant connection to the antique Christian/patristic period until the twelfth century because, unlike the case in the West, there was no violent break with these older traditions as a result of the Germanic migrations. This point is also made clear by the influence of Byzantine theology on the Latin Middle ages that occurred despite the broadening gulf between the Greek and Latin churches. The extent and character of this influence has not yet been fully examined. This influence is clearest in the works of Scotus Erigena, who not only translated Dionysius the Areopogite and Maximus the Confessor but also utilized the theological and mystical concepts that he found in these authors and transmitted them throughout the West. In addition, it is important to note that John of Damascus' Πηγὴ γνώσεως served as an exemplar for Peter Lombard, the first systematic theologian of the western Middle Ages and *Magister sententiarum*. Moreover, Thomas Aquinas considered John of Damascus to be a high authority. However, from the end of the twelfth century the scholastics quickly outstripped Byzantine theology. It lacked the powerful stimulus that the entrance of the Germans into the Latin church gave to western theology as well as to all other aspects of western ecclesiastical effort. [38] This stimulus made itself apparent over time in the works of the theologians. The acceptance of the Slavs into the Byzantine church did not have similar consequences. A second factor that might have had an impact upon the theological life of Byzantium, namely the interaction with Islamic peoples and their religious doctrines, also failed to have any noteworthy influence on the development of Byzantine theology.

There were two periods of development that can be clearly differentiated from one another. The origins of the first period lie two centuries before the time when this discussion begins. This is the era of patristic literature that separated itself from antique Christian literature in the first half of the fourth century. The first exemplars of this tradition were the Arians and their opponents. As is true of the overall corpus of Byzantine literature, there are no objective grounds to tie this new period of development in theology to the reign of Justinian. Theology's task was fundamentally the same as it had been since the beginning of the fourth century, namely, to consolidate the teachings of the Orthodox church and to fight against differing interpretations. This task was carried out in the same manner that it had been in earlier periods. The fight against the Monophysites and the Monotheletes and even the Iconoclasts must be seen as part

of the great dogmatic period of Greek theology. John of Damascus, Theodore of Studios, and Nikephoros of Constantinople were the last representatives of this tradition. Following Krumbacher, this period can justly be called the Early Byzantine era. It was not simply the case that the beginning of this period corresponded with the foundation of New Rome. This foundation, bound as it was with the transformation in the external conditions of the church, was also crucial for its character. The Christian empire saw the establishment of a new court for theological and ecclesiastical matters. In large part, Arianism and the battles over Arianism were responsible for the extent and meaning of this court. The increasing influence that this new factor acquired from the Nestorian period up to the battles over iconoclasm became clear in the course of these dogmatic controversies. The individual steps in this process are marked most of all by the positions taken by the East Roman emperors. This mode of demarcation would require that we include all theological literature from the time of the Nicene Council in our study. However, in considering the mass of material, the easily accessible *patrologia* and the temporal boundaries established by Wilhelm von Christ's literary history, we have kept our distance from this early period.

The second half of the fifth century saw the beginning of the process that led to the second period. Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Kyrros, the last scions of the great Alexandrian and Antiochene schools, were the last Greek theologians of great style who were equally adept at dogmatics, apologetics, exegesis and homiletics. After these two there were no other great theologians in the fifth century. [39] When, in the sixth century, anti-monophysite polemics began to appear, the literary activities of the theologians began to shrink. What is of even more importance is the fact that by the beginning of the sixth century theologians began to employ Aristotelian terms in the service of theological speculation. This was the sign of the end of the patristic period and the beginning of the scholastic period. This came about as a result of the efforts of Leontios of Byzantium. We can see the increasing authority of the church fathers of the fourth and fifth century in his work. Dialectic and the authority of the fathers are the elements that led to the second developmental period, which we call the late Byzantine period.

This period was characterized by a traditionalism that adhered to the fathers on principle and rejected every new influence, however well developed. This traditionalist model rejected any consideration of novelty. In maintaining this position, John of Damascus denied any originality in his spiritual work, “ἐρῶ τοιγαροῦν ἔμὸν οὐδέν ,” and argued that he only wished to pass on the teachings of the fathers. This traditionalism came into a position of authority at a time when, with the Celebration of Orthodoxy, the last great dogmatic battles had been fought out, and the Greek church saw as its task the maintenance of their inheritance from the fathers. Although it is never more difficult to draw boundaries than when considering spiritual matters, if one were to determine a boundary point between the patristic or early Byzantine theology and late Byzantine theology, it would probably be best to place it in 843 at the Celebration of Orthodoxy, which seems to proclaim this division by its very name. The carriers and judges of orthodoxy were now the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and their writings were the sources out of which it was continually created. Byzantine theologians repeated countless times the principle that they were dependent upon the fathers. Theorianos declared to a Syrian bishop in the twelfth century, in all other matters the Romans were “ἀνδρικώτατοι ,” but they did not dare to overstep the boundaries of the fathers. At the end of

his dogmatic work, Manuel Kalekas declared that he had not included the conclusions of his own research but rather had passed on what he had learned from the fathers and from scripture. Simeon of Thessaloniki believed that it was necessary to make this same claim in the title of his masterwork. The actual dependence on the fathers was so widespread that it is necessary to investigate all of the late Byzantine theologians and their patristic sources and examples before it will be possible to establish their spiritual independence with any certainty.

If only the writings of the fathers had been exhausted! Spiritual treasures were assembled in the early Christian and patristic periods that could bring new nourishment to the literature that relied almost entirely on them. However, more and more it was the case [40] that the historical understanding of the church fathers disappeared with the result that the theologians saw them simply as holy forms on a golden platform. In addition, there was a number of damaging restrictions. Latin theology remained unavailable. This included the works of St. Augustine, the most important theologian in the West, who became available in translation only in the fourteenth century. His work appeared at much too late a date and in a period that was too heavily charged with anti-Latin feeling for it to have had an effect on Byzantine theology. Even if this indifference, which had a parallel in the scholastic ignorance of many Greek fathers, can be explained on the basis of linguistic, ecclesiastical and general cultural conditions, it is very peculiar that Greek theologians of the first three centuries were completely forgotten. In any case, there were very few fragments of the pre-Nicene writers in the dogmatic and exegetical commentaries. They no longer provided any real role in theological literature. The names of the great Alexandrians appear very sporadically, and the apologists from the period up to Justin, which as a rule had been cited on the basis of forged manuscripts, disappeared. There is no trace of the oldest literature. The only exceptions to this rule were Antiochos, a monk from the monastery of Sabas, and Archbishop Arethas of Caesarea in Cappadocia. It is a great piece of bad luck that Origen was declared a heretic on baseless grounds. After the last struggle over Origen's work during the reign of Justin, there were no further efforts to save the true elements of his powerful theology. Even some among the post-Nicene writers were affected. The struggle over the three capitols eliminated the Antiochenes and with them an important element of the further development of higher meaning. Theodoret of Kyros' exegetical works were maintained but were not included in a productive manner in the development of theology. Only a few other authors remained who appear in later periods, including Athanasius, the father of orthodoxy, the three Basils from Cappadocia, Gregory Nazianzos, the theologian κατ' ἐξοχήν, the lesser Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria for dogmatic and polemic, Chrysostom for exegesis, Basil for aesthetics as well as Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopogite and Maximus the Confessor for mysticism. However, these figures were only included in so far as they were in agreement with the first four synods. Byzantine theologians held Gregory I's position that the first four synods were to be given the same honor as the four gospels. The church owed its trinitarian and christological positions to its strict adherence to these decisions in matters of belief. As a consequence, however, theology would always follow the same interpretative path. Origen's manner of thinking would never be recapitulated.

Holy scripture was maintained as a body of rules for belief, and exegesis served as the means of explanation. However, exegesis lost all of its originality, [41] and canon 19 of the synod of Trullo (692) bound it in an exaggerated manner to the commentaries of the fathers.

This one-sided dependence on the church fathers, on account of which theology was removed from the living spiritual currents of the time and forced to adopt an archaic appearance, is very clear in the commentary literature, whose beginning corresponded with the transition to the late Byzantine period. The formation of this literature demonstrates that even the original works of the fathers were seen in many circles to be a burden from which one sought to free oneself by reading them through for the important elements. Even when compiled works reached a wide audience as was the case with the commentaries, there is no doubt that these texts lacked an underlying energy and desire for accomplishment. The great disadvantages of this excessive traditionalism are especially clear in the dogmatic-polemic and exegetical realms. In the controversies concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit, most of the texts deal with the views of the fathers concerning this point. Since citations could be taken from the patristic sources both for and against the Latins' addition to creed, the dispute was condemned to a sisyphian existence. In a similar manner, the literature dealing with the struggle over the Hesychasts was ruled entirely by citations from the fathers that were adduced by both sides. We will discuss more fully the dependence of exegesis on patristic sources below. The remaining branches of theological literature, aesthetics, spiritual eloquence and hagiography, operated in areas that had not been dealt with by the canons of the first seven councils, which addressed the practical life of the church and the entire subjective side of Christianity. These areas demonstrated a greater degree of independence without, however, abandoning the models from the patristic period. When considering the literary value of Byzantine theology, we are more concerned with these latter branches than with dogmatics and exegesis.

It is hardly surprising that, given the fundamentally traditional character of Byzantine theology, internal stages of its historical development after the ninth century do not disappear, but they are very difficult to detect from the outside and cannot be fully identified without detailed study. However, theology had come to be treated as completely ossified. An argument against this interpretation is the fact that theology had always been of contemporary interest and had never suffered a period of complete devastation as was the case for secular literature in the period 650-850. Moreover, not a century passed during which there was not some new influence that had an effect on theology, even if these influences were often subsequently abandoned. Indeed, it is the case that there were theologians in Byzantium of whom any area of literature would be proud. [42] Photios' powerful personality in the ninth century cast the magic spell that fell over literary life in its entirety. However, Photios could not summon forth a sudden golden age in theological literature. His own role as a leader of the church and as the disseminator of classical knowledge was more important than his work as a theologian. Only hagiography and spiritual eloquence achieved a golden age in his lifetime. The early-tenth century benefited from the fruitful stimulus provided by the new literary direction of Archbishop Arethas of Caesarea in Cappadocia. He broke through the boundaries of the Nicene age and went back to the apologetical literature of the second and third centuries. Unfortunately, the region from which this stimulus originated was too far from the center of Byzantine spiritual life to influence a wider circle. Overall, the tenth century remained a period dominated by encyclopediasts, exegesis, homiletics and hagiography. The third personality who wished to bring about new modes in theology was Michael Psellos. He was the greatest polyhistorian of the eleventh century, who, like Arethas of Caesarea, combined secular and theological writing styles. Moreover, while he called attention to the oldest Greek literature, he tried to bring



antique philosophy, especially Platonism, back into the church. Unfortunately, his theological works are no longer well enough known to determine more precisely his theological and philosophical intentions. Nevertheless, his efforts were not successful. The contemporary patriarch of Constantinople, John Xiphilinos, fought against him despite their friendship. As a consequence, another stimulus to theology failed to bear fruit. There continued to be a preference for homiletics and hagiography until the mid-eleventh century when polemic against the Latins was revived. However, this development did not bring about the composition of great works of literature. Much more important in this regard was the development of mysticism that found two very important representatives in Symeon the Younger and his student, Niketas Stethatos.

In the meantime, the philosophical movement that Michael Psellos had called for his in lifetime and that was intimately connected to the re-establishment of the Academy in Constantinople was developed even further by John Italos and his school. They represent a noteworthy parallel to the contemporary struggles in the West between nominalism and realism that in the final analysis were based on the struggle between Aristotelianism and Platonism. However, by contrast with the West where philosophical speculation enjoyed a great deal of freedom, this was suppressed by Alexios I Komnenos as a threat to the church and the state. Nevertheless, philosophical speculation still exercised some influence. Indeed, the recovery of theology in the Komnenian period was tied very closely to speculative philosophy. The Πανοπλία δογματικη/ of Euthymios Zigabenos owed its existence to the reaction against the heretical tendencies of the time. In any case, it provides the best evidence for the fact that theology was not a match for its enemies. Force had to be used to make up for what the church and state lacked in spiritual strength. [43] Even Bishop Nicholas of Methone, who defended the authority of the fathers and sacred scriptures against neo-Platonic challenges, was at first judged far too favorably when in fact he took his wisdom from an old polemical text against Proclus by Prokopios of Gaza. This is a case that shows how important it is to carry out the investigation, called for above, of theologians who, at first glance, appear to be completely independent. Niketas Akominatos brought full attention to this theological controversy in his *Θησαυρὸς ὀρθοδοξίας* during the reign of Manuel Comnenos (1143-1180). These last witnesses of new life that penetrated dogmatics also demonstrate that the great dogmatic and speculative questions had disappeared for good from Greek theology. The twelfth century experienced a new golden age of exegesis while aesthetics, homiletics, and hagiography passed into the background. One of the noblest figures in the twelfth century was Archbishop Eustathios of Thessaloniki, who deserves mention here in part for his undivided interest in theology and secular literature, and in part for his efforts to reform monastic life. However, the twelfth century was not the high point of Byzantine theology. This high point was reached under the Palaiologoi after the terrible period of Latin rule in Constantinople when the Greeks used their last strength to avert the dangers that they saw pressing upon them more from the side of the Latins than from the Muslims. The efforts of the Palaiologoi to achieve a union of the churches gave new life to the polemics against the Latins in that they brought the conflicts between the supporters and enemies of the Latins into the realm of theology. Of even more importance, however, for understanding the overall character of Byzantine theology is the Hesychast controversy of the middle of the fourteenth century. This concerned a form of mystical contemplation that had endured for some time on Mount Athos but was carried over

into the realm of dogmatics by the Hesychasts' claim that the light on Mount Tabor was an uncreated and divine effect. However, the entire course of events involving the Hesychast conflict appears to have been a reaction of nationalist Greek theology against the inroads of western scholasticism, which, as a result of its superiority, now took hold thanks to the same law that had set the two sides in opposition to one another. The fact that this influence could make itself felt in the fourteenth century is a result of the translation efforts of Maximus Planudes and Demetrios Kydones, who made many of the works of Thomas Aquinas available in Greek. Consequently, the Hesychast controversy was provoked by a westerner, a monk named Barlaam, who was born in Calabria and was well versed in scholasticism. However, the attacks that were made on him fit exactly with the rational character of scholasticism. This character of the Hesychast controversy makes it clear that the opponents of the Hesychasts almost all stood on the side of the Latins in the Latin polemic [44] while the supporters of this movement maintained a program of Greek national interest. Any doubts about the validity of this judgment are laid to rest by the fact that Akindynos, the most active of Barlaam's supporters, believed he could only refute the friends of the Hesychasts by the silent appropriation and assertion of Thomas Aquinas' views concerning the relationship between God's essence and his activity. The theology of the supporters of the Hesychasts was victorious, and this victory was equally important for the rejection of scholastic theology. Nevertheless, despite this rejection it is still possible to see traces of this scholasticism in the last two compilers of a systematic treatment of dogmatics, in John Kyparissiotis and even more so in Manuel Kalekas. In the fourteenth century, the other branches of theological literature, namely exegesis, homiletics, mysticism, and hagiography, also enjoyed a last period of growth. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the most important area of literary activity was polemic against the Latins. This interest in polemic remained at the forefront even after the fall of Constantinople, until its final representatives, who had fled to the West, took Byzantine theology to its grave.

## 2. Historians and Chroniclers

### 95. Introduction

[219] No people, with the possible exception of the Chinese, have as rich a historical literature as the Greeks. There is an uninterrupted line of transmission from Herodotus to Laonikos Chalkokondyles. The Greeks and Byzantines maintained the chronicle of the East in a faithful manner for more than two thousand years. Throughout all of the developments brought about by desires and receptivity of a particular age, by changes in material and by individual capabilities, the literary genre of history maintained a considerable degree of competence among the Greeks until their final destruction as an independent national entity by the Ottoman Turks.

In the Byzantine period, all representations of historical events fell into two distinct categories. These were historical works in the antique sense and chronicles. The differences between the two genres are to be found in their content, form, and intended audiences. The writers of historical works, whom we will designate as historians, dealt with a moderate length of Byzantine history that they had personally experienced or that predated their own period by only a short time. In other words, they wrote contemporary history. Occasionally, they also employed geographic boundaries in their work. They followed the technical and linguistic models provided by Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybios as well as by other Byzantines who had modeled themselves on these exemplary figures. Consequently, in principle their diction was classical and pure even if it must be admitted that there are aspects of their works characterized by personal or temporal idiosyncrasies. They strove to make their style completely Attic or at least Hellenistic. The audience for these works consisted of the highly educated circle attached to the court, including the higher clergy and secular officials. This circle grew larger or smaller depending on the overall condition of Byzantine culture.

Alongside the historians were the chroniclers, who if they did not belong exclusively to the Byzantine period, at least achieved an important literary position at this time. They composed world histories that stretched from the creation of the world down to or just a little before their own time. They tended to end these histories at the accession of the emperor ruling at the time of the composition of their works. [220] Their themes did not generally produce a pragmatic portrayal of deeds, events and people that had importance for all time, nor did they concern themselves with the explanation of the inner connections in the history of the development of mankind. Instead, they were interested in popular and narrower themes that were suited to a naive narration of the broadest possible scope, a collection of historical details that often seemed to have a peculiar connection to general understanding. The chroniclers also gave great weight to providing detailed descriptions of the physical appearance and other peculiarities of important people. The origins of this interest in individuality can be found both in works like those composed by Varros Images and in Greek romances and pulp fiction such as Dares and Sisypheos. In addition, the popular chronicles were occasionally illustrated, such as the so-called *Excerpta Barbara* and the Zonaras manuscript (Cod. Mutin. III.D.3 p.14). So it is possible that the descriptions of the emperors can be traced directly back to an illustrated chronicle just as Hamza of Isphahan borrowed his detailed descriptions of the costumes of the

great Sassanid kings from the “Book of Images.” They were particularly interested in phenomena such as inflation, plagues, comets and other miraculous signs, earthquakes, building projects and the events of the racetrack. Matters of ecclesiastical interest formed the single largest category of themes for these authors. Consequently, the Bible formed the basic organizational principle for these works. Antique mythological history was put to Christian apologetical ends. These chronicles rarely provided even a superficial examination of their sources, much less a truly critical research method. The limited and superficial examination of the historical material corresponded to the form. The elegant periodic construction of Thucydides was irrelevant to the chroniclers. They wrote in a language that could be understood by a wide cross section of the population and that can be considered to be a moderate form of colloquial idiom. However, since the well-educated writers who led both the state and the church were accustomed to thinking of the traditional formal language as the only possible form of expression, it was not possible for the weak and scattered strength of the chroniclers to ennoble their popular diction in either phrasiological or syntactical terms. In their hands this popular diction remained a rather unstructured and awkward tool. However, the choice of some of the leading literary figures to use methods that were so thoroughly despised demonstrates that the chroniclers were not writing to the same audience as the historians. Rather, they were addressing their works to the great mass of the people, particularly the thousands of poorly educated inhabitants of the monasteries, who were eager as a result of their religious formation to learn about world affairs.

[221] By the later Middle Ages, the historical works of the higher style were no longer completely understandable to wider circles as a result of the continuing development of the living language. This was also true of chronicles despite the fact that they provided a simpler portrayal of events. As a consequence, many of them were translated into the contemporary popular idiom. Moreover, in many cases, this process did not stop at mere translation but instead led to the creation of entirely new works. In these cases, the entire tone of the texts as well as the vocabulary and form were popularized. Indeed, in some cases the content was brought closer to the tastes of the people through the insertion of mythological elements. Almost without exception, the compilers wrapped themselves in the darkness of anonymity. Contrary to common opinion, there is no proof, and it is highly unlikely, that historians organized the publication of popular versions of their works. There are a considerable number of these reworked texts. However, it is only recently that they have been appreciated, and only a few examples are known in any detail. This popular historical literature, which itself clearly illustrates the dualism in the medieval Greek language, contains passages from a number of authors, including Josephus Flavius, Theophanes, George Manachos, Kedrenos, Zonaras, Manasses, Anna Komnena and Niketas Akominatos among others. The popular character of these works is often demonstrated by the format of their manuscripts. Thus, for example, Cod. Marc. VII.20, which contains a historical text in vernacular Greek related to Manasses, has the same small quarto format that was common to the manuscripts of vernacular romances and to Venetian printed texts. It would be desirable to have a comprehensive study and description of this literary genre that were so important for the history of the education and language of the Greek people in the Middle Ages. Several preliminary studies and manuscripts will be dealt with in more detail in their specific chapter.

Of course, these two groups of texts do not exhaust the total corpus of written works in the Byzantine period that dealt with history. In addition to efforts of historians and chroniclers, the most important group of texts consists of saints' lives. They are exceptionally valuable sources for history, geography and topography. In addition to these texts, one must also include biographies, monographic depictions of important events, monastic records, sermons, letters, topical poems and, finally, the enormous collection of government, church and private documents of all types. More detailed information about these smaller and secondary historical-literary texts can be found in a few paragraphs at the end of the chapter dealing with historians, in a few sections in the chapters on rhetoric and poetry and in the footnotes. Without ascribing an independent literary significance to the great mass of documents that are important for the study of history, it is necessary to consider them according to the collective and individual editions noted below.

### 3. Geography

#### 170. Introduction

[409] The successful efforts of the Byzantines in the areas of historical study and representation stand in striking contrast to their undeniable neglect of geography. Just as their historical and philosophical works frequently demonstrate a dismaying lack of geographic and ethnographic knowledge, the Byzantines also appear to have lacked any theoretical works in these areas. In this, the Byzantines followed the Romans, their political predecessors. The latter, quite in contrast to the Greeks, neglected these matters and with few exceptions limited their efforts to itineraries and similar literary productions that had some practical application. This was due partly to the general decline in original scientific research, partly to the great uncertainties that accompanied long voyages throughout most of this period and, finally, to the decline of their naval capacity (the Byzantines were surpassed by the Venetians and Genoese by the time of the First Crusade).

In order to obtain some impression of the jumbled mass of geographic works, some of which are anonymous and some of which only survive as fragments, it is necessary to distinguish between two main groups that admittedly merge into one another on occasion: scientific (theoretical) geographical texts and works that served the practical needs of the church, state, and trade. The first group consists almost entirely of commentaries, compilations, and excerpts from older works. As is true of every other branch of Byzantine literature, it is necessary to separate out the older material in order to consider the additional and modified activity of the Byzantine spirit. The polemical views against antique geography brought about a relatively unsuccessful period. As was true of chronology, geography, at least in its practical elements, was forced to attempt a reconciliation of antique conceptions with the Bible and to settle real or apparent contradictions between the two. Even in this derivative and excerpted activity, the contrast with historiography is clear. While the masters of ancient history writing such as Herodotus, Thucydides, [410] Polybios, Diodoros, Dio Cassius and others were still read and copied in the Byzantine period, the great geographers of the earlier period such as Eratosthenes, Ptolemy, and Strabo were almost completely forgotten. Only Stephen of Byzantium appears to have had any significant influence on the Byzantines. It is possible to find traces of his works in Constantine Porphyrogenetos (*De thematibus*), Genesisios, Theophanes Continuatus, the *Etymologicum Magnum* and others. The production of the second group occurred in a more independent manner. Works of this group served the ecclesiastical and secular administration and included statistical summaries and other surveys of this type as well as itineraries, shipping and pilgrimage books, etc. Among these works we can include the antiquarian compilations falsely ascribed to Kodinos.

## 4. Philosophy

### 181. General Character

[428] The closing of the School of Philosophy at Athens (529) definitively sealed the fate of Neoplatonism, the last offshoot of ancient philosophy. Even without Justinian's decree, this nebulous system would not have lasted long. In the end, the mixture of Pythagorean and Chaldean forms, of oracles and fantastical hymns, calculated to appear as ancient wisdom, drove it to an excessive degree of speculation. Subsequently, philosophical activity that was original and effectively productive had as little chance to flourish in Byzantium as it did in the West. The general spiritual preconditions were just as lacking here as they were there. Therefore, Byzantine philosophical literature has, in general, the same character as that of its western contemporaries. At first, the formal philosophy of the ancients was used to formulate Christian teaching, and then an overbearing explanation and transcription of the ancient works dominated. Yet Byzantium was indisputably poorer in philosophical production than the West. The Orthodox Church did not have scholastics like Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.

In order to match them, the East produced the glory, father and founder of medieval church philosophy: John of Damascus. In this case as in so many others, the Greek spirit provided the first stimulus, which then spread further in the West. But it is likely that the reason for their later sterility also lies here. The fact that John achieved the status of canonical orthodoxy hindered the independent development of church philosophy. Something similar took place here as in other areas of Byzantine spiritual activity. The limitless authority of imposing ancestors inhibited the natural courage of original creativity. Philosophical activity developed for the first time in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, stimulated by the re-establishment of the Academy in Constantinople and its first Professor of Philosophy, Michael Psellos, and soon had a powerful influence on theological speculation. Propaedeutic subjects were pursued without a direct relation to theology. [429] While in the West Aristotle achieved sole dominance and Platonizing scholastics of the twelfth century knew Plato only superficially from secondary sources, (even Petrarch dared to express his preference for the Academy only timidly), the Byzantines of the eleventh century began the in-depth study of Plato in addition to Aristotle. Psellos and his successor John Italos combined an extensive knowledge of Plato with their admiration for Aristotle as did Theodore Metochites and others. The later struggle that would become so significant between the Aristotelians and the Platonists was foreshadowed for many centuries in Byzantium.

Astronomical and mathematical studies, which flourished in the Palaiologan period, were more gratifying than the extensive though nearly fruitless activity that was dedicated to the explanation and paraphrasing of the ancient philosophers since the eleventh century. Nikephoros Blemmydes, George Pachymeres, Theodore Metochites and above all Nikephoros Gregoras contributed as much to empirical and scientific research in the limited scope of Byzantium as Roger Bacon did in the West. At the same time, the question of Union and the Hesychast controversy stirred a lively polemic in theological circles. Just as the Church Fathers in their struggle against paganism took their best weapons from pagan literature, once again

ancient philosophy and rhetoric provided the last Byzantines with the technical tools and forms for dogmatic wars that were waged with both discernment and fanaticism. At the end of the era, Byzantine philosophy, like its philology, stimulated and enriched the West. However, the literary facts that relate to this, such as the works of Gennadios, Plethon and others, fall outside the scope of our treatment.



## 5. Rhetoric, Sophistry and Epistolography

### 187. School Rhetoric

[450] As was true of all other school subjects, eloquence was avidly pursued in the Byzantine period. There was less effort here than in other disciplines to discover new and original methods. Already in the Roman period, Hermogenes and Aphthonios had succeeded in lowering the subtle system of rhetoric to the level of superficial and mechanical instruction. The provisions issued by these two unimportant heads soon achieved an uncontested dominance over the schools. From generation to generation over the entire course of the Middle Ages these texts were supplemented, drawn out, explained and expanded through exercises in an endless chain of treatises and handbooks. However, we search in vain for new fundamental ideas. The disordered mass of Byzantine schoolbooks and teaching texts burdens libraries and bibliographies. If read correctly, however, they all derive from the same limited corpus of sources. A detailed examination and genealogical consideration of this untidy mass of copies is of little use either to philology or cultural history. At best, by considering the derivative new editions and revisions, it may be possible to gain some insights concerning Byzantine efforts in the schools. However, even here it is sufficient to note first the general observation that there was an unbroken chain of these books, and second, the certainty that the rhetorical tradition of the Roman period survived until the final centuries of the Byzantine period. The forms and material remained the same except for the fact that the themes taken from antique mythology and history were brought into harmony with Christian and medieval ideals. However, schooling in grammar and rhetoric became ever more important as the literary language became disengaged from the spoken language. One consequence of this development was that writers found it increasingly difficult to develop their own personal styles. A basic knowledge of the older forms soon became a necessity for every type of literary activity. In this manner, dead formalism gained increasing influence over literature and required the particular stereotyped character that is so evident when one reads great quantities of Byzantine writing in a short period of time. [451] Luckily, there were always individual men who understood how to escape the school models and to create original works from the brittle material taken from a literary language overloaded with tradition. At no point did model forms dominate the Byzantines to the extent that they dominated that Latins in the Dark Ages. The literary forms that played the most important roles in Byzantine instruction in prose style were the old *progymnasmata*, that is, the methodically advancing revision of fables (μῦθοι), tales (διηγήματα), maxims (χρεῖαι), refutations (ἀνασκευαί), proofs (κατασκευαί), judgments (γνώμαι), and descriptions of character (ἠθοποιίαι).

Chr. Walz published several studies of these tedious aspects of the Greek-Byzantine spirit in the nine volumes of his *Rhetores Graeci*, but he was less energetic in identifying the chronology and genealogy of these works. The same complaint can be lodged against Cramer and Boissonade who erred in other places in their *Anecdota*. In addition to many anonymous works, Walz included the rhetorical works of Michael Psellos, Nikephoros Basilakes (from the mid-twelfth century), John Tzetzes, Gregory of Corinth, George Pachymeres and Maximos Planudes, the Συγτομή περί τινῶν μερῶν τῆς ῥητορικῆς of George Gemistos Plethon, the

rhetorical epitome of Matthaëos Kamariotes (a teacher of philosophy, rhetoric, and grammar who lived in Constantinople in the middle of the fifteenth century), the Σύνοψις ῥητορικῆς of a certain Joseph Pinaros Rhakendytes, a text called Περὶ τρόπων by an otherwise unknown Kokondrios and others. Finally, the names of the authors that survive in the manuscripts of schoolbooks that were passed from family to family should be accepted only with the greatest care.

## 188. Guides for Letter Writing

[452] Epistolography belongs to rhetorical theory. In Antiquity stress was placed on the special preparation for this elegant genre that was tied so closely to practical life. The earliest instructions concerning letter style survive in a section of a work called Περὶ ἡρμηνείας, falsely attributed to Demetrios of Phaleron. This section also appeared and was printed separately. The same material was dealt with in a tract written by the elder Philostratos, which is probably a fragment of his Διαλέξεις. In addition, the Τύποι ἐπιστολικοί is a small text that survives in Cod. Laur. 60, 16 and is ascribed to Demetrios of Phaleron but should probably be considered anonymous. Twenty-one different letter forms are described in this text. The little book Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι χαρακτῆρες, which is sometimes attributed to Libanios and sometimes (in another redaction) to the Neoplatonic Proklos but which cannot in reality have been written by either of them, is a similar type of work. This text contains forty-one letter types, each defined and illustrated with a small exemplary pattern. Finally, Gregory of Nazianzos and Photios provide insight into letter writing styles in their own letters to Nikoboulos and Amphilochios respectively. However, the more the literary language lost contact with life in the Byzantine period, the more important it must have seemed to provide practical rules and examples for writing important letters to a public which was not practiced in literature. There should be no cause for surprise about rules of this sort if one considers the role that letter style manuals play in our age with its general education system, and if one realizes that these manuals address situations to which no one would attach much importance. In fact, there are numerous Byzantine manuscripts that contain letter writing manuals and other related texts. However, these documents must be examined and organized. The term epistolary is used rather broadly so that in addition to actual letters, it is also assigned to other written documents, including reports, installation decrees and other regulations. In addition, notary formularies and other similar documents are bundled together with letters. The highest level consists of formulas for the *proemia* of imperial and patriarchal golden bulls like those composed by Demetrios Kydones. The most important duties of the Byzantine letter writers concerned the state and the church. [453] However, there were also models for letters “to a beloved.” The address and titular books that were so important for etiquette in the classical lands can also be included among the letter stylebooks. Since the form of address changed as a function both of the addressee and of the writer, it was necessary to have exact instructions. Finally, appropriate forms of address were included in these auxiliary manuals when the sender used gold, silver, lead, and wax seals. The official address and titular books are also important sources for understanding the organization of the bureaucracy and of the hierarchy of the bishops and metropolitans. Their value lies in the fact that, in contrast to the *Notitiae episcopatum*, they contain the current reckoning of the situation.

The letter writing manuals appeared to have achieved their period of greatest dissemination during the last centuries of the empire and in the Turkish period. The epistolaries, which survive in large numbers on Mt. Athos, appear much more frequently in the manuscripts from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries than they do in earlier codices. We even find letter-writing manuals in the vernacular language and manuals for the common man (ἐπιστολόριον κοινὸν εἰς κάθε ἄνθρωπον). There are also ceremonial and mannered letters with the unclassical title: Ἐπιστολαὶ τζερμονιόζαι. The same late period also produced collections of sentences and expressions for letters: Γνωμαὶ καὶ ἐκφράσεις πρὸς χρῆσιν ἐν ἐπιστολαῖς. The most commonly used letter manual of the more recent period was Theophilos Korydalleus' frequently published Περὶ ἐπιστολικῶν τύπων. Other vernacular Greek letter manuals were also published.

### 189. Applied Rhetoric

[454] More important in their own right and more important for judging the value of the literary efforts of the medieval Greeks are the numerous works that dealt with the art of practical rhetoric. From a historical perspective, these works originated in the fifth and sixth centuries in Gaza during the golden age of its rhetorical schools. The eastern flavored and outrageously overburdened baroque style of Gaza, which still sought to outdo the antique Asian mode, always remained an important factor in Byzantine diction. Although it was normal to distinguish between the two styles, it was not possible to designate one or the other as completely correct. The historian Theophylaktos Simokattes is one of the most important representatives of the eastern manner both in his letters and in his historical works. The high point of this movement is to be found in the fine development of Photios' rhetorical work. This genre grew in strength and in activity under the Komnenoi and Palaiologoi in inverse proportion to the state of the empire. The most productive representatives of rhetorical literature belonged to the last centuries of Byzantium, men such as Gregory of Cyprus, Nikephoros Chumnos, Theodore Hyrtakenos and Demetrios of Kydone. Like Moschopoulos, Planudes and the remaining grammarians of the Palaiologan period, the orators of this era were important pioneers of Greek-Italian humanism. Frequently, their Byzantine character would appear to have been replaced by an entirely modern and realistic sensibility.

[455] The tenacious perseverance with which the care for a chosen expression and an artistic composition was carried out led to praiseworthy successes for some individual talents. Indeed, it is perhaps in this genre that Byzantium most closely approached Antiquity. Without doubt, the level attained by Isokrates, Libanios, Themistios and similar spirits was reached more than once, above all by Photios, who in his letters showed himself to be an equal of the old masters. But this is also true of many others such as Eustathios, Michael Akominatos, Gregory of Cyprus and finally a number of the Greek humanists. No attribute of the antique world flowered among the Greeks in the Byzantine and modern periods in a purer form than did joy in the beautiful use of language and in ringing pathos, to which, admittedly, empty luxury and thundering bombast remained inseparably bound. Nevertheless, it was frequently the case that a splendid form was sacrificed so that original ideas and true feelings could be expressed in an unvarnished form. All of the arts of practical rhetoric present in the antique world returned in Byzantium. Themes that were well known from antique literature appear in the Διαλέξεις,

Μελέται, Ἡθοποιίαι, etc. However, frequently adroit new forms appeared. Thus, the ethopoieia of Kinnamos appears to be a modification of Libanios' work, Τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους ζωγράφος γράφων τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα εἰς δάφνην ξυλίνην καὶ τοῦ ξύλου μὴ δεχομένου τὰ χρώματα (ed. Reiske 4, 1019-1022). In addition to the *progymnasmata*, other very important forms included panegyric speeches to emperors, princes and patrons, eulogies and displays of pageantry. Finally, the so-called ἐκφράσεις, which included descriptions of artworks, landscapes and the seasons demand a certain literary historical importance on account of their value to Hellenistic artistic poetry and romances in the late Byzantine period. The most productive factor in stimulating a higher degree of eloquence was the custom of holding public readings before the emperor and patriarch. The free competition among the greatest talents developed here. The famous Codex Escur. Y.II.10 contains a very interesting collection of model speeches whose themes were mostly of an ecclesiastical nature. In addition to its purely literary character, the genre of model letter books, utilized by virtually every important Byzantine, offers rich evidence for the history, geography and culture of Byzantium.

The general preparatory work for a detailed history of medieval Greek literary production in rhetoric and epistolography still remains to be done. Nevertheless, it is probably the case that following a thorough examination of the widely disparate materials it will be concluded that these areas experienced only limited development. It is often the case that we see a rhetor acknowledging his formal and material education under the direction of a particular contemporary teacher. Theophylaktos of Bulgaria followed Psellos, Theodore Laskaris was the student of Nikephoros Blemmydes, Gregory of Cyprus was the student of George Akropolites, [456] Nikephoros Chumnos was the student of Gregory of Cyprus and so on. A more careful examination will probably show traces of the immediate influences of these teachers. However, in a similar manner, the antique authors were the main teachers for all Byzantines. This is why they are so frequently the same. This is why it was so unlikely that the pattern of development could be broken. This is why, for example, someone like Photios could appear, whose perfection of form by antique standards would have required an extensive period of preparation. However, here everything depended on the greater or lesser ability of the individual to utilize the antique models for new ends.

## 6. Classical Studies

### 214. General Characteristics

[499] It is distinctive of Byzantine creative production that perhaps half of its surviving written works, leaving theology to the side, can be defined as philology in the wider sense. It is in this area of Byzantine literature that the connection with Antiquity is the most immediate and most manifest. Even the most strident proponents of the independence of the Classics recognize that in respect to this side of Byzantinism a connection between medieval and classical Greek studies is desirable. Consequently, this element of Byzantine literature is almost the only one that is known in any detail in wider philological circles, and it is through this genre that the totality of the strength and independence of the Byzantine spirit is judged. This must be warned against. Admittedly, occupation with Antiquity determined the cultural life of Byzantium to a great extent. The Byzantines had Antiquity to thank for an education system that was possessed by no other people in the Middle Ages. But it should not be forgotten that the works through which the Romani were most closely connected to their forefathers were less important for the general cultural and literary history of the Middle Ages than, for example, their production of history, church poetry, and works of popular fiction. It was only at the end of the Middle Ages, when the Byzantines collapsed, that their works of philology became fruitful in an unprecedented manner for the general education of humanity.

The concern for philological studies in Byzantium was very much the same as the interest in grammar in the late Roman period. The most important characteristics of the Byzantines were a lack of self-acquired erudition and systematic criticism as well as a great deal of garrulousness and a simple-minded adoption of older models. Real efforts to ask philological questions or even to state unselfconscious and healthy opinions were very rare. Nevertheless, one should be cautious before passing an unduly harsh judgment on the Byzantine philologists. If one wishes to deal with them in a historically just manner, it is not reasonable to set them alongside the learned men of Antiquity such as Zenodotus, Aristophanes, and Aristarchus. [500] They are separated from them by a thousand years, a period in which the conditions for philological erudition had steadily worsened. How inappropriate would it be to judge a Planudes or a Triklinios according the standards of Alexandrian criticism! Moschopoulos had nothing more to do with Aristarchus than did Melanchthon. How bad would the *Praeceptor Germaniae* look in comparison to the sharp-witted Alexandrian? Similarly, it is obvious that one cannot expect the same of the learned men of the medieval Greek period as one does of the modern researcher, who is supported by the greatest possible array of auxiliary materials, and who is formed through methodical schooling and a ruthless polemic. But it is the case that many make this very error when they raise their noses in disgust at everything Byzantine!

As is proper in every consideration of historical matters, a judgment can be just only if one considers the general conditions of a period, a nation and a society. The fact that this view has only recently gained acceptance is explained by the wrong-headed tendency to consider the entire Byzantine period simply as a long aftereffect of the great classical era. Prejudices of this type must be eliminated. Byzantine scholars should be studied within the context of their own

period. Their works should be compared with contemporary efforts of those in the West, that is, a Photios with an Alcuin or a John Scotus, a Psellos with Anselm of Canterbury and so on. It is impossible to understand in a historically correct manner the polyhistorical philologists of the final Byzantine centuries, (men such as Planudes, Moschopoulos and Theodore Metochites) if they are treated like the seedy students of the great Aristarchus. They must be treated for what they were, namely, the first, and, up to now misjudged, originators of European humanism. It is not only the refugees forced by political storms to the shores of Italy in the fifteenth century who have a claim on the revival of Greek studies. The humanistic spirit was already operating much earlier in Byzantium. This spirit shone forth in the ninth century from Photios' glittering style. Acting in a manner similar to the southern sun, his spirit shed light on an age almost completely enveloped in darkness and barbarism. In the next century, understanding of Antiquity and hopes for maintaining it appeared to have bottomed out. A despotic will threatened to destroy antique literature through generous but nevertheless mechanistic *florilegia*. However, alongside these works were the efforts of the guardians and commentators on the antique treasures, men such as the noteworthy Arethas and hardworking editors of literary historical auxiliary texts like Suidas. In the eleventh century, Psellos' universalist spirit came close to heathen Antiquity in the open manner that characterized humanism. The humanistic efforts in the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods are very clear. [501] Whoever intends to write a history of humanism must go back to Moschopoulos, Planudes and even to Eustathios, Psellos, Arethas and Photios. That this is a historical fact is made clear by the simple observation that a Theodore Gazes, a Constantine Laskaris, and a Manuel Chrysoloras advanced the study of Greek with works that were mostly derived from older Byzantine models, like the works of Theodosios, Moschopoulos and others.

Even if it is the case that the basic importance of Byzantine philology rested on its maintenance and productive dissemination of antique wisdom, there were nevertheless independent minds, which, to the extent that they were able, expanded the knowledge and understanding of the ancients and even hazarded the establishment of metrical systems. It can also be added that many Byzantines successfully engaged in the improvement of their texts. This circumstance should be kept in mind more than is usually the case when utilizing medieval manuscripts. In this context it should not be denied, however, that in the countless commentaries with which the generations of commentary loving medieval Greeks inundated the old poets, prose writers, church fathers, ecclesiastical poets and even their own works, there are often long stretches where the careful efforts of research fails to reap any useful reward. Whoever finds it necessary to work on a regular basis in this murky mass of materials might well regret that Justinian's order that prohibited commentary on the *Corpus Iuris* was not expanded to cover the rest of literature. The weakest element was grammar. The scientific development of this discipline was completely superseded by the internal needs of the schools. The countless treatises on formal instruction, syntax, prosody and meter that filled most libraries ought to be classified as trivial teaching and practice manuals from the Byzantine schools rather than as scientific works. But it is very seldom that one copy was identical to another. Each master and writer contaminated, shortened or lengthened his exemplar according to his own judgment and personal desire. Consequently, the first task for a critical examination of the evidence is to order the material genealogically and to identify the kernel of ancient learning from the whirling chaos whose connections are unlikely to be explained by any genealogical tree. This is a task whose

completion is not among the least of the duties of the editors of the *Corpus der griechischen Grammatiker* being issued by Teubner. The circumstances in Byzantine lexicography are worse than those in grammar, if this is even possible. The libraries contain dictionaries of all types that, for the most part, have not yet been sufficiently analyzed. These texts include encyclopedic and conversational *lexica* (Suidas), [502] simple word *lexica* with definitions, glossaries of etymologies, synonyms, orthographies, syntactic elements, Attic vocabulary and scientific terms, including those from theology, law, botany and alchemy, specialized dictionaries for individual texts and literary genres, including rhetoric, the Old and New Testaments, the church fathers, ecclesiastical poets and finally two-language dictionaries for learning Greek or Latin. All of these books are connected to one another in many ways, and they can be studied in isolation only with great difficulty. Consequently, it is necessary to carry out the same unimaginably difficult task of classifying, sorting and examining these sources that is required for grammatical, metrical and other types of teaching texts. G. Bernhardt, M. Schmidt, C. Boysen, L. Cohn, R. Reitzenstein, G. Wentzel and others have already begun to undertake this task since the plan for a *Corpus lexicographorum graecorum* has finally begun to take shape. Hopefully, the time is now past when any person can thoughtlessly publish some chance text to the dismay of professionals.

## 7. Scientific Specialties

### 258. Law

[605] Roman legal texts were originally published entirely in Latin. Even the great collections authorized by Justinian were issued almost entirely in Latin. In contrast, most of Justinian's novels and all new laws of the following period were issued in Greek. In addition, the crumbling of the western portions of the empire and the growing superiority of the Greek or hellenizing elements of the eastern world added an internal necessity to this process. The first chapter of Justinian's seventh novel includes an interesting section dealing with the replacement of Latin in the government's legal texts: 'Εκείνην γὰρ κατὰ πάντων κρατεῖν καὶ κυρίαν εἶναι θεσπίζομεν, διόπερ αὐτήν καὶ προϋθήκαμεν καὶ οὐ τῇ πατρίῳ φωνῇ τὸν νόμον συνεγράψαμεν, ἀλλὰ ταύτη δὴ τῇ κοινῇ τε καὶ Ἑλλάδι, ὥστε ἅπασαν αὐτὸν εἶναι γνώριμον διὰ τὸ πρόχειρον τῆς ἑρμηνείας. Although the rigid conservatism that ran through the entire Roman state served to maintain the use of Latin in official legal texts even after this served any practical purpose, it was nevertheless the case that as early as the third century certain parts of the old law were translated into Greek. In addition, under Emperor Justinian, large sections of the Latin law books were disseminated in Greek editions and excerpts. The first example of this was a Greek paraphrase of the *Institutes*, which C. Ferrini has wrongly ascribed to Theophilus Antecessor (died c. 537), one of the members of the team working on Justinian's *Corpus*. This same Theophilus reedited certain portions of the *Digest* in Greek. Dorotheos, *antecessor* of Berytus, composed an almost word for word translation of the entire *Digest* sometime after 542. At the end of Justinian's reign, Stephanos, also the *antecessor* of Berytus, supplied a portion of the original text with Greek commentary and undertook an edition of Theophilus' *Digest*. The remainder of his work survives in commentaries from Basil's period. In addition, sections of the *Codex Justinianus* were also translated into Greek during Justinian's reign.

The reign of Leo the Isaurian marks the beginning of a new state of affairs in legal matters. Several new legal texts were published around 740 during the period in which Leo and his son were joint rulers: [606] 'Εκλογή τῶν νόμων ἐν συντόμῳ γενομένη ἀπὸ τῶν ἰουστινιανῶν, τῶν διγέστων, τοῦ κώδικος, τῶν νεαρῶν τοῦ μεγάλου Ἰουστινιανοῦ διατάξεων καὶ ἐπιδιόρθωσις εἰς τὸ φιλανθρωπότερον, a law on agriculture (Νόμος γεωργικός), the Rhodian law of the sea (Νόμος Ῥοδίων ναυτικός κατ' ἐκλογὴν ἐκ τοῦ ἰδ' βιβλίου τῶν διγέστων), and finally a military law (Νόμος στρατιωτικός). The law concerning agriculture deserves special attention because of the influence exercised in this text by the pervasive Slavic element in the Byzantine Empire. The Macedonian dynasty saw the reinvigoration of Justinian law. Emperor Basil I (867-886) sought to make the old law more understandable to contemporaries and to make it easier to use. During the dark centuries, this older law had sunk into obscurity partly as a result of the general decline in national learning and partly because the Latin form of the legal books had been completely lost. In pursuit of his goal, Basil had sections from the *Institutes*, *Digest*, *Codex* and *Novels* published in 879 with the title 'Ο πρόχειρος νόμος. At the same time, a draft was made of a handbook, the Ἐπαναγωγὴ τοῦ νόμου, but this was not published. In addition, Basil had preparations made for a collection of ancient laws, including both those that had fallen in abeyance and those that were still



enforced. This work was finally completed in the reign of his son and successor Leo the Wise (886-912). It is a large compilation composed of texts from the indices of the *Digest*, the *Codex*, and the *Novels*. This collection was usually called the *Basilica* (τὰ βασιλικά). The *Basilica* were greatly expanded during the reign of Constantine Porphyrogenetos (912-959), and they soon completely surpassed the old *Corpus Justinianum*. The law school, founded in 1045 by Emperor Constantine Monomachos at Constantinople, was exceptionally important for the maintenance and dissemination of knowledge of Roman-Byzantine law. The novel Περὶ τοῦ νομοφύλακος which authorized the foundation of this school survives in the works of John of Euchaita. The first school director (νομοφύλαξ), later Patriarch John Xiphilinos (cf. p. 433-44) was a friend of Michael Psellos. The idea of teaching the sources of practical law in a technical manner appeared half a century later in the West and led to the establishment of the legal faculty at Bologna. Zachariae von Lingenthal argues that the Byzantine example had no influence on the establishment of this center. The connections between the law school at Constantinople and juridical studies in southern Italy and in Sicily are much clearer. The great importance of Greek language legislation is demonstrated by the existence of a Greek translation of Frederick II's law code.

The establishment of an imperial law school caused an active response in Constantinople and the eastern provinces. The product of this activity is still visible in the numerous manuscripts of legal works that survive from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One of the leading pupils of this new law school [607] was the historian Michael Attaliates, whose legal compendium still survives. The *Tipoukeitos* (Τιπούκειτος from τί ποῦ κέϊται; see the nickname of the rhetor Ulpianos attested by Athenaios I, Κεϊτούκειτος) belongs to this period, at least in its original form. So too does a table of contents that includes all of the books, titles and chapters of the *Basilica*. A legal compendium composed by Constantine Harmenopoulos (Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ Ἀρμενόπουλος) in 1345 in six books (and therefore called the *Hexabiblos*) enjoyed great popularity in the final period of the Byzantine Empire. This little work was translated into the vernacular around 1490 by Nicholas Kunalis Kritopulos (Νικόλαος Κουνάλης ὁ Κριτόπουλος) as was a related book of canon law written by Matthew Blastares. Theodosios Zygomalas (Θεοδόσιος Ζυγομαλάς) composed another vernacular Greek translation of Harmenopoulos' text in the sixteenth century. A third copy revised by Alexios Spanos (Ἀλέξιος Σπανός) appeared in Venice in 1744 and was reissued in 1766 and many times after that.

The late Roman and Byzantine periods produced even more new material in canon law than in secular law. The former was shaped in large part by factors that were foreign to Roman law. Around 535 these legal texts, the so-called canons, which survive in a number of collections, were organized according to their content into 60 titles by an anonymous editor. Around 550, John of Antioch, a scholar and priest who later became patriarch, composed a second work of this type organized into 50 titles. The purely ecclesiastical legal texts, the canons, were later mixed together with the secular laws, the *nomoi*. This is the origin of the *nomokanones*, collections of church law that over time were expanded by frequent additions and commentaries. The most important edition of these texts is not the work from 883 that is falsely attributed to Patriarch Photios, but rather the rescension issued by Theodores Bestes in 1090. *Magister* and *logethete* Symeon composed a synopsis of the canons. According to

Zachariae von Lingenthal this is not the same man as the *magistros* and *logothete* Symeon who wrote during the reign of Nikephoros Phokas, but was someone alive no earlier than 1000 (?). During the reign of Emperor John Komnenos (1118-1143), Alexios Aristenos (Ἀλεξίος ὁ Ἀριστηνός) added a large commentary to the synopsis that has been incorrectly attributed to Nicholas Doxopates. In this same period (according to Zachariae von Lingenthal, between 1159-1169), Johannes Zonaras composed his commentary on the collection of canons using Aristenos (cf. p. 374). Theodore Balsamon (Θεόδωρος ὁ Βαλσαμών) lived somewhat later, and in the final three decades of the twelfth century (until 1193) he worked on a commentary of the *Nomokanon* in 14 titles and on a commentary of the canons. He also left behind other church law texts. Demetrios Chomatianos (Δημήτριος ὁ Χωματιανός), who was *chartophylax* and later archbishop of Bulgaria in the early thirteenth century, composed a large collection of canonical decisions. [608] These texts are valuable because there is a significant difference between church law in Constantinople and its interpretation in Bulgaria and Serbia. Chomatianos' writings also include rich material for the history of the internal condition of the Slavic provinces of the empire. Around 1335, Matthew Blastares (Ματθαῖος ὁ Βλαστάρης) composed an alphabetical handbook of church law at Thessaloniki. The Turkish period also saw the production of many church law texts such as Manuel Malaxos' (Μαλαξός) *Nomokanon*, a collection of texts about the degrees of kinship by the priest Zacharias Skodylios (Σκορδύλιος), who was called Marapharas (Μαραφάρως), editions of church law in the vernacular, various patriarchal decrees, synodical decrees and other materials.

The history of Byzantine law is interesting in itself because it shows us the manner in which the individual elements of Roman law developed under the very different conditions of the Byzantine Empire, and because it makes clear the absence of Justinian's law in the later period. This history offers many lessons if we compare it to contemporary legal developments in the West that were sometimes very similar and sometimes totally different from eastern circumstances. Finally, this history provides the basis for understanding legal conditions in the Turkish Empire, in Moldau-Walachei, in Greece and in the Slavic lands. Joh. Leunclavius (Löwenklau), Guil. Beveregius, F. A. Biener, G. E. Heimbach, W. E. Heimbach, Rhalles and Potles, J. B. Pitra, F. Miklosich, J. Müller, A. Theiner, and A. Pavlov have done priceless work in editing and making Byzantine secular and church law accessible. We have the lifelong work of K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal (born December 24, 1812 and died June 3, 1894) to thank for our current understanding of the individual elements of the history of Byzantine private law, punitive law and trials.

## 259. Medicine

[613] Like they were for the other branches of knowledge, the writings of the antique masters were the chief sources for medical knowledge in the Byzantine period, especially those of Hippocrates and Galen, which were transmitted sometimes complete, sometimes in excerpts and revisions. Even in this area, which had the closest relationship to life and could have profited from repeated observations, the blind reverence for the ancients had a damaging effect on the development of original research and practice. [614] Around the middle of the fourth century, Oribasios (Ὀριβάσιος) compiled a selection of paraphrases from antique medical works that became the foundation for the compiling and excerpting activity that formed the

essential character of medical literary production in the subsequent period. Around the middle of the sixth century, Aetios (Ἀέτιος) of Amida in Mesopotamia, who studied in Alexandria and later became the imperial physician in Constantinople, arranged an eclectic collection of antique medical works, especially those of Galen. He composed this handbook, which is still extant, in the same manner as Oribasios and included his own peculiar additions. At the same time, Alexander of Tralles (525-605) wrote a comprehensive treatise on pathology in twelve books, which is remarkable for its refreshing independent judgment in relation to the teaching of the ancients. In addition to these three major compilations, the medical handbook of Paul of Aegina appeared in the seventh century, which for the most part was based on Oribasios but also contained many new and noteworthy ideas, especially in the area of surgery. The work of Paul was translated early on into Arabic, and from Arabic into Latin. Around the same time, Theophilus, *protospatharios* under Herakleios, compiled a work on the structure of the human body and a treatise on fever. Two others works are attributed to him with less certainty, one on urine, the other on the pulse. Stephen of Athens was a student of Theophilus who wrote a commentary on Hippocrates and Galen and a treatise on the effects of medicinal remedies among others. In the seventh century, John of Alexandria, who should be distinguished from John Philoponos, wrote a commentary on Hippocrates and Galen. He exercised a wide influence among the Arabs in the following period. Stephen of Alexandria, who more than likely is identical with the mathematician Stephen of Alexandria, also commented on Hippocrates and Galen.

In the subsequent dark centuries, there was an almost complete lack of productivity in medical literature, just as there was in the other areas of secular knowledge. Under Emperor Theophilus, the *iatrosophistes* Leo composed a Σύνοψις ἱατρικῆ. Meletios the monk probably also lived during this period, whose writings on the structure of the human body, the soul and the four elements are still extant. A more lively life began in the tenth century. First, Emperor Constantine Porphyrogennetos contributed to the preservation of antique medical literature when he commissioned Theophanes Nonnos to compile a medical encyclopedia, which was based mostly on Oribasios. A handbook of veterinary medicine probably also came from this period. Soon after, Arabic influences began to appear in Greek medicine. At the end of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh, a transcription of a slightly earlier book written by Abu Djafar Achmed was published under the title, Ἐφόδια τοῦ ἀποδημοῦντος. This work is still extant in many manuscripts, which usually cite a *protosekretarios* Constantine of Rhegion as its translator, [615] sometimes a certain Synesios. The Arabic original is itself indebted to Greek theories, especially those of Galen, but its method of treatment is purely Arabic. In the eleventh century, the *protovestiaros* and *magistros* Symeon Seth (Συμεὼν Σήθ), who on account of his translation of the Arabic *Fürstenspiegel* (Kalilah va Dimnah) was renown as a skilled Orientalist, composed a short treatise on the effects of nutrition (Περὶ τροφῶν δυνάμεων). Here he noted Galen's understanding of the medical and nutritional effects of plants, fruits, etc. and reported on several new eastern remedies. In addition, several other scientific writings go under the name of Seth: a Σύνοψις τῶν φυσικῶν, a Σύνοψις περὶ οὐρῶν, a work Περὶ χρείας τῶν οὐρανίων σωμάτων, et al. However, these attributions demand a closer examination. Probably somewhat older than the book of Seth on the effects of nutrition is another work on the same subject that was transmitted under the name of Michael Psellos.

Commissioned by Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, Demetrios Pepagomenos (Δημήτριος ὁ Πεπαγωμένος) wrote a very competent book on gout. Around the same time (the end of the thirteenth century) the *aktouarios* Nicholas, called *Myrepos* (μυρεψός, i.e., one who boils and prepared ointments), authored an enormous and comprehensive collection of prescriptions. An Arabic influence is apparent in his naming of medicines. Nicholas' book greatly influenced western medicine and remained the acknowledged *Codex pharmaceuticus* of the medical faculty at Paris until the seventeenth century.

Under Emperor Andronikos III (1328-1341), John, the son of Zacharias, usually called *Aktouarios* (ἀκτουάριος, i.e., court physician) wrote a very good handbook of medicine. He borrowed the system of Galen but also took note of the teachings of later Greek and Arab physicians and even included his own independent observations. The book is dedicated to Apokaukos, who later became *megadoux* and is mentioned in the history written by Kantakouzenos (Τῷ παρακοιμωμένῳ τῷ Ἀποκαύκῳ τῷ καὶ ὕστερον χρηματίσαντι μεγάλῳ δουκί). John's work, Περὶ ἐνεργειῶν καὶ παθῶν τοῦ ψυχικοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τῆς κατ' αὐτὸ διαίτης, is taken completely from Galen. His treatise on urine (Περὶ οὔρων) is remarkable for its comprehensiveness.

George Choniates (Γεώργιος ὁ Χωνιάτης), about whose life and period I know nothing, translated into Greek a Persian work on antidotes: Ἀντίδοτι ἐκ Περσίας κοιμισθεῖσαι καὶ ἐξελληνισθεῖσαι παρὰ τοῦ Χωνιάτου τοῦ Γεωργίου. The translation is extant, for example, in Cod. Escur. T.II.14, p.16. This manuscript also contains a treatise on urine by Isaac Taxeotes (Ἰσαὰκ Σύρου τοῦ Ταξεώτου περὶ οὔρων).

In addition to the literature that was admittedly dependent on but also enriched by antique medical science, various popular medical manuals and pharmacopoeia, the so-called *Iatrosophia* (ἰατροσόφια), collections of prescriptions, etc. were published in the Middle Ages. Most of this literature was a diluted and muddled infusion of antique teaching mixed up with all sorts of superstitious ingredients, [616] sympathetic remedies, formulas of exorcism, etc. An examination of this ragged literature, which in some cases is very interesting from a cultural and linguistic point of view, and a corresponding presentation of its peculiarities are not possible at this time since most of its examples lie unpublished in the dust of libraries. The strongest impression that one gets from the reading of these little books and pamphlets is of compassion for those whose diseases were treated with such principles and prescriptions. One may take solace in the fact that, in addition to the uneducated and superstitious quacks, there were always intelligent and experienced practitioners who combined the study of antique theories with their own observations of nature. On account of their method of treatment they served as models to a few capable colleagues and adepts.

## 260. Mathematics and Astronomy (including Astrology and Fortune Telling)

[620] The Byzantines were unproductive for about half a millennium in the fields of [621] arithmetic, geometry, geodesy and astronomy. It was only in the Palaiologan period that there began to be signs of new life in these fields. This was brought about in part by the

influence of Persian and Arab science, in part by the general increase in scientific work and finally by the increasing study of the ancients. In addition to the great works of the Alexandrine Pappus (written during Diocletian's reign), Diophantus (who probably flourished during the middle of the fourth century) and Theon (who worked around 380), most efforts were concentrated in the Neoplatonic School at Athens where the study of mathematics was pursued. The schoolmaster Proklos (410-485) published a commentary on Euclid that was drawn together from many philosophical works. Marinus, who worked around the end of the fifth century, wrote an introduction to Euclid's work on dating. Simplicius, who wrote at the beginning of the sixth century, clarified the works of both Aristotle and Euclid. Finally, the philosopher and grammarian John Philoponos wrote a commentary on Nikomachos of Gerasa's *Arithmetic*, a text about the astrolabe as well as other works. The sixth century produced two men who gave practical value to the study of mathematics, the famous master builders of the Hagia Sophia, Isidore of Millet and Anthemios of Tralles. We have scraps of a text from the latter dealing with concave mirrors. One of Isidore's students was Eutokios (Εὐτόκιος) of Ascalon, who composed commentaries on various works by Archimedes as well as on Apollonios' conic sections. In so doing, he showed himself to be an energetic and well-informed reader. Domninos of Larissa, whose handbook on arithmetic has survived, should also be included in this period. The living connection to the old school tradition ended with Stephen of Alexandria who was active as a teacher and writer during the reign of Herakleios. He is usually described as a philosopher and public professor (φιλόσοφος, also μέγας φιλόσοφος and οἰκουμηνικός or καθολικός διδάσκαλος) in his texts. Like Choïroboskos, who was also called an οἰκουμηνικός διδάσκαλος, he was a professor in the university founded by Theodosios II at Constantinople in 425. He read Plato and Aristotle as well as the subjects of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music. We have a commentary by Stephen on Aristotle, *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*, and an astronomical text, *Διασάφησις ἐξ οἰκείων ὑποδειγμάτων τῆς τῶν προχείρων κανόνων ἐφόδου τοῦ Θεώνος*. Later on, apocrypha adhered to the famous name of Stephen including a text on alchemy and a book of proverbs (Ἀποτελεσματικὴ πραγματεία) that contained prophecies about Mohammed and the future of Islam and was probably written around 775.

There is little positive to report about the history of the mathematical disciplines among the Byzantines from the seventh through the thirteenth centuries. There is an interesting papyrus that comes from the seventh-eighth century, called the *Arithmetic Book of Achmim*, which is important for the understanding of Greek arithmetical practice. The first effort at reviving mathematical studies can be attributed to a study by Leo, also called ὁ φιλόσοφος or ὁ μαθηματικός, who held public lectures during the reign of Emperor Theophiles (829-842) in the Church of the Forty Martyrs. [622] He was later the metropolitan of Thessaloniki and finally took up a position as the head of the university established by Caesar Bardas, during the reign of Emperor Michael III, whom he also instructed in philosophy. He was still alive during the reign of Emperor Basil I (867-886). A remark made in the *Codex Bodleianus* of Euclid that was written for Arethas in 888 suggests that Arethas once heard Leo lecturing on Euclid.

However, this was not yet a truly productive new foundation for mathematical studies. Even Leo's purely scientific efforts do not appear to have remained free from astrological and magical fantasies. There is nothing to discuss from the following centuries except the geodesic

work of the so-called Heron the Younger, who would be better designated as the “unnamed surveyor of Byzantium.” In the eleventh century, Michael Psellos compiled his truly unimportant book about the four mathematical disciplines. Even weaker is Psellos’ work on astronomy: Περὶ τῆς κινήσεως τοῦ χρόνου, τῶν κύκλων τοῦ ἡλίου καὶ τῆς σελήνης, τῆς ἐκλειψεως αὐτῶν καὶ τῆς τοῦ Πάσχα εὐρήσεως. In the twelfth century, Emperor Manuel supported astronomical studies although he appears personally to have been drawn towards astrology.

It was only during the Palaiologan period that productive efforts in the areas of mathematics and astronomy were taken up under the inspiration of eastern works. We can observe here some of the most curious examples of literary remigration. In this period, the Greeks actually relearned the wisdom of their own predecessors through the mediation of Arabic and Persian sources. The Μεγάλη σύνταξις τῆς ἀστρονομίας in the eastern form of an almagest led to the reconstruction of astronomical studies among the Greeks. The direct sources of intellectual borrowing, however, came from Persia rather than Arabia. The Greeks became familiar with Persian astronomy about the end of the thirteenth century. In 1322, an unknown man composed a Greek edition of a Persian astronomical work by Schamsaldin of Bukhara (who was bowdlerized in Greek to Σαμψ Μπουχαρής), which survives in the valuable text Codex Laur. 28, 17. Gregory Chioniadēs, a Constantinopolitan born physician, played a major role in the transmission of Persian science. He lived at the imperial palace at Trebizond during the thirteenth or early fourteenth century. He traveled from there to Persia where he acquired Persian books and learned the Persian language. Concerning Chioniadēs’ letters, see page 478 footnote 4. Manuel, an otherwise unknown priest from Trebizond, used Chioniadēs’ collected books to teach the physician George Chrysokokkes (Γεώργιος ὁ Χρυσοκόκης) about Persian wisdom. In 1346, a work appeared called Τοῦ σοφωτάτου ἱατροῦ κυροῦ Γεωργίου τοῦ Χρυσοκόκη ἑξήγησις εἰς τὴν σύνταξιν τῶν Περσῶν ἐκτεθεισα πρὸς τὸν αὐτοῦ ἀδελφὸν κυπὸν Ἰωάννην τὸν Χαρσανίτην. [623] Soon after Chrysokokkes, a monk named Isaac Argyros composed several astronomical texts that depended on Persian works, such as the Παράδοσις εἰς τοὺς Περσικοὺς προχείρους κανόνας τῆς ἀστρονομίας and the Πραγματεία νέων κανονίων συνοδικῶν τε καὶ πανσεληνιακῶν. He also wrote an introduction to the production of an astrolabe as well as scholia on Ptolemy and Euclid among others (“Varia Collectanea poetica, logica et astronomica,” for example, in Cod. Vindob. phil. 247). The Ἀστρονομικὴ τρίβιβλος by Theodore Meliteniotes (Θεόδωρος ὁ Μελιτηνιώτης), the most comprehensive and learned astronomical work of the Byzantine period, depended in part on Persian foundations and in part on Ptolemy. Leo Allatius, without giving an indication of his source, noted that he lived around 1361. Meliteniotes only knew the Persian works that he used through translations. He used the texts by Ptolemy and Theon in the original. Thus, the Greeks, under the direction of the Persians, were again able to use their own scientific sources. Nevertheless, they very quickly and surprisingly abandoned these Persian influences. The golden age of the study of Persian astronomy by the Byzantines lasted only about 20 years (between c. 1340 and 1360). This fast decline is also apparent in the number of surviving manuscripts. We have many exemplars from Georgios Chrysokokkes and only a few from Isaac Argyros. We have only one complete manuscript from Theodore Meliteniotes.

Even before Meliteniotes, some Byzantines had already gone back to the original Greek

sources. Theodore Methochites had studied Euclid, Ptolemy, Nikomachos and Apollonios of Pergamon among others before he composed his astronomical work *Στοιχείωσις ἐπὶ τῆ ἀστρονομικῇ ἐπιστήμῃ*. The great polyhistorian, Nikephoros Gregoras, was introduced to the study of astronomy by Metochites. He worked hard to spread knowledge of astronomy and to eliminate the mistrust felt by many among the clergy, if not the Church itself, which had arisen against astronomical studies as a result of astrological errors. We have Gregoras' texts about the building and use of an astrolabe. This work requires further investigation in order to determine its relationship to the treatment of the same topic by Isaac Argyros. We also have his recommendation of astronomy that served as a prologue to Theodore Metochites' own work on the subject (*Πρὸς τὸν μέγαν λογοθέτην τὸν συγγραφέα τῆς βίβλου, Παρακλητικὴ περὶ ἀστρονομίας*). He also wrote a defense against the enemies of astronomy (*Πρὸς τινὰ φίλον, Περὶ τῶν ὑβριζόντων τὴν ἀστρονομίαν*) as well as texts dealing with improvements in the reckoning of time. Unfortunately, his recommendations for reforming the calendar were not adopted. Just like Gregoras, Nicholas Kabasilas drew from Ptolemy and also commented on him.

The pure mathematical sciences also enjoyed a period of renewal at this time. [624] Sometime before 1310, Maximos Planudes composed a commentary on the first book of Diophantus as well as an arithmetic book that used an Indian method (*Ψηφοφορία κατ' Ἰνδοῦς ἢ λεγομένη μεγάλη*) in which the numerical symbol for zero appears for the first time in Byzantine lands. Somewhat later, Manuel Moschopoulos wrote a tract on the magical square root, the sources for which have not yet been identified. At about the same time, Nicholas Rhabdas of Smyrna, who was also called Artabasdos (*Νικόλαος Ἀρτάβασδος ὁ Ραβδάς*), wrote a letter about arithmetic and a treatise on finger-reckoning (*Ἐκφρασις τοῦ δακτυλικοῦ μέτρου*). The Calabrian monk Barlaam wrote an arithmetical work (*Λογιστικὴ*) in six books. Concerning his other works see page 100 ff. There is nothing more to report about Byzantine mathematical-astronomical studies from the end of the fourteenth through the middle of the fifteenth century. However, the fact that these studies continued on in a lively manner is demonstrated by the fact that numerous manuscripts of antique and Byzantine mathematicians and astronomers survive from this period.

## 261. Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy and Alchemy

[631] It is no more possible to discuss Byzantine works in these areas, which would be considered scientific in our sense of the word, or to describe original literary works that came from this production than it would be to make similar observations about the medieval West. Alongside the more or less isolated studies of the ancients in the aforementioned disciplines, the Byzantines carried out work that was fundamentally determined by a paradoxical and occult point of view.

The first Byzantine author to produce a zoological work was Timothy of Gaza, who lived during the reign of Emperor Anastasios I. According to Suidas, Timothy wrote books about Indian animals. Unfortunately, we only have excerpts from these texts. Fortunately, Aristotle's history of the animals was studied and reedited during the later Byzantine period. We can also include widely circulated books on falcons, birds and hunting with hounds within the

sphere of Byzantine animal studies. The physician Demetrios Pepagamenos wrote a book on falcons (Περὶ τῆς τῶν ἱεράκων ἀνατροφῆς τε καὶ θεραπείας). It is somewhat less certain that he also composed a book on hounds (κυνοσόφιον). Both texts, along with an anonymous book on birds (ὄρνεοσόφιον), were edited by R. Hercher (Aeliani varia historia 2 (Leipzig, 1866) 333 ff., 517 ff., 585 ff. Compare H. Röhl, Zu Demetrios Hierakosophon, sec. 233, Jahns Jahrb. 117 (1878) 588). [632] An anonymous book on falcons, which was edited on the basis of a manuscript from Vienna and then given a German translation, can be found in three unpublished works on falconry (Pesth 1840 p. 81-93). The title of the little text is Ἱερακοσόφιν εἰς ἰατρείαν ὄρνέων καὶ εἰς κοπᾶς καὶ χρώμα οἶον ζαγάνων, φαλκονίων, πετριτῶν, ἱερακίων, τζουρακίων καὶ ὄξυπτερύγων. During the last years of the Byzantine period, a poet named Manuel Philes composed a long didactic poem about the peculiarities of animals as well as a poetic description of an elephant. The most important zoological work of the entire Byzantine period was the *Physiologos*. See its description in the section “Vernacular Greek Literature.”

In the area of botany, the Byzantines were almost exclusively concerned with the practical use of plants and fruits. Consequently, the most important and illuminating passages concerning the botanical knowledge of the Greeks are to be found in works dealing with land husbandry, medicine and pharmacology. An anonymous Greek poem concerning the efficacy of plants, which was included in the famous Vienna codex of Dioskorides, has recently been edited by M. Haupt. One can also find references to plants strewn throughout geographical and historical works. This is particularly true of Kosmas Indikopleustes and Michael Glykas. At present, there is almost nothing known about the work of Neophytos Prodromenos on plants (Codex Vatic. Palat. 77).

The occult was even more dominant in mineralogy than in zoology. The Byzantines were unable to overcome their belief in the inherent occult powers of the various minerals. One witness to this point of view can be found in the title under Psellos’ name called “On the Power of Stones” (Περὶ λίθων δυνάμεων). We know virtually nothing about the text by Neilos Diassorinos called “On Stones” (see p. 560)

Alchemy, that is the art of transforming one metal into another, was very closely related to mineralogy. The Greeks often described it as the holy, the divine and holy or even the great and holy art (ἱερά, θεία καὶ ἱερά, μεγάλη καὶ ἱερά τέχνη). At its core, this area of interest had an Egyptian origin. Doubtlessly, it began as the purely functional basis for coloring and counterfeiting metals and only later became imbued with magical and astrological resonances. By the third century, alchemy had taken on its own peculiar character among the Greeks and Romans. The oldest texts dealing with alchemy are the the Leiden Papyrus X from the later third or early fourth century, the treatise by Pseudo-Demokrites (Φυσικὰ καὶ μυστικά) and the so-called chemistry of Moses. Zosimos from Panopolis in Egypt exerted the greatest influence in the following periods. He was probably active during the early fourth century [633] when he composed a work dealing with alchemy and related content that was based on materials taken from many other texts. As a matter of curiosity, it might be mentioned that a fragment of Zosimos’ text contains the oldest Greek reference to the preparation of beer. Other alchemist writers include Synesios from the end of the fourth century (who is almost certainly not the same



man as the famous bishop of that name) and Olympiodoros, who may perhaps be identical with the historian. Two other works of alchemy, which are no longer extant, were attributed to Emperor Justinian and Herakleios. A wide-ranging but nevertheless careless work called Περὶ χρυσοποιίας has been attributed to the mathematician Stephen of Alexandria, but this attribution is probably incorrect. Stephen's lessons were transformed into Byzantine trimeter and reissued by alchemist poets named Heliodoros, Theophrastos, Hierotheos and Archaelaos. However, aside from these works, these men are otherwise unknown. Two Byzantine commentators, known as the "Christian" and "Anonymous" are important for the seventh century. In the final analysis, alchemists no longer played an active role in a practical sense during the later Byzantine period, and alchemy only seems to have survived in certain literary efforts. Two important collections of alchemy texts can be found in the Codex Marc. 299 and in Codex Paris 2327. The period in which they were written cannot be determined with any certainty, but it appears to have coincided with the production of the other great collections of the tenth century. A similar work has been attributed to the philosopher Nikephoros Blemmydes. In addition, there is also the Ἐρμηνεία τῆς ἐπιστήμης τῆς χρυσοποιίας of the monk Kosmas. A text composed by John Kanaboutzes also contains some material on alchemy. The fact that alchemy lost any practical force in the medieval Greek period, that is, from the sixth century on, is just as curious as the fact that it continued to be important in the East and in western Europe for more than a millennium. During the sixth century, these materials traveled from the Greeks to the Syrians. They later went on to the Arabs, and then, as the Arabic article in the word "alchemy" makes clear, from the Arabs to the western Europeans. Alchemy only passed from the scene during the early modern period after having given birth to its stronger daughter, chemistry.

## 262. Military Science

[635] Attempts have been made to charge the Byzantines with the pursuit of dead book learning and fruitless scholasticism. Recently, it has been made clear that this charge requires significant revisions. One of the areas in which it does not apply is military science. By contrast, here we wish for a greater degree of book wisdom. Whoever is familiar with Byzantine military history of the tenth through the twelfth century marvels at the high level of training that its army and fleet used to achieve such marvelous victories over enormous barbarian armies. However, the important practical efforts drawn from military scientific knowledge were not accompanied by an equally impressive military literature. As a consequence, the high level of tactical and disciplinary development in the army can only be explained by a powerful living tradition. Little effort was expended on the literary side of military science. As was true in all branches of knowledge, here too there were works from the ancients that were studied, copied and excerpted despite the fact that they fit very poorly in the changed circumstances of the Byzantine period. Collections, citations and paraphrases from the antique books on tactics and siege warfare by authors including Biton, Heron, Philo, Athenaeos, Aeneas, Aelian, Plyaen, Apollodoros, Onasander and others survive in numerous manuscripts from the Byzantine period. Examples can even be found in the great historical collection made by Constantine Porphyrogennetos in the chapter entitled Περὶ στρατηγμάτων.

The independent accomplishment of the Byzantines in the area of military science was

limited to a few texts. In the beginning of the sixth century, Orbikios (Ὀριβίκιος or Οὐριβίκιος) composed a small text (Ἐπιτήδειμα) in which he suggested to Emperor Anastasios that he provide his infantry forces with portable battering rams (κανόνες) in order to help protect them from barbarian horesmen. In addition, Orbikios wrote an essay on the tactics of Arrian (τακτικόν) and an article preserved in the *Etymologicum Magnum* on the etymologies of the ranks of the army and its leaders (Ὀριβικίου τῶν περὶ τὸ στράτευμα τάξεων). An excellent and original text from the reign of Justinian by an anonymous author deals with military science as an element of statesmanship (Πολιτικῆς πρακτικὸν μέρος ἦτοι περὶ στρατηγικῆς). In his introduction, the author expresses his intention to deal with warfare at sea as well. However, there is no evidence of this work in the edited text. Perhaps this promised work once existed in the unfortunately mutilated text by an anonymous author dealing specifically with the question of warfare at sea that was found and published by K. K. Müller. The military work known as the Στρατηγικόν appeared somewhat later and was distributed under the name of Emperor Maurice. On the basis of internal evidence, Maurice must be excluded as the author of this work. The true author may be the Rufus who is cited in the *Leges militares* as the author of a work on strategy. The so-called Maurice gave exact instructions for the training and division of an army, about strategy and tactics, ambushes (which were always of great importance in Byzantine warfare), the manner in which Scythians, Alans, Africans, and Italians fought, [636] surprise attacks, the art of building defensive structures as well as many other matters. The book is for the most part an unoriginal compilation. The only completely new element is the discussion of Byzantine rank insignia.

The work of Marcus Graecus on the use of Greek fire, which survives in Latin (*Liber ignium ad comburendos hostes*) but was probably translated from an original Greek text, belongs to Byzantine literature only indirectly. This work, which certainly was written no later than the beginning of the ninth century, is of the highest interest since it contains the oldest recipe for the preparation of gunpowder (*ignis volans*) and thus represents the starting point for the history of scientific pyrotechnics.

The most valuable book of military science from the Byzantine period is the *Tactica* that was transmitted under the name of Emperor Leo (Τῶν ἐν πολέμοις τακτικῶν σύντομος παράδοσις). Our research has shown that we are probably dealing here with Leo the Isaurian. The writer took some elements from Maurice but also included many original passages. He dealt with military justice in one chapter. There is an important section on Greek fire in his chapter on naval warfare that makes it clear that this fearsome weapon was nothing other than gunpowder. Compare the edition of Meursius-Lamius chap. 19, sec. 6 and 56-57 (p. 828 and 844). In addition, another text ascribed to Leo contains a collection of passages taken from antique works on military science (Στρατηγικὰ παραινέσεις ἐκ πράξεων καὶ στρατηγημάτων παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν, Ῥωμαίων τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων καὶ λοιπῶν, ἐν κεφαλαίοις κή). A superficial reworking of Leo's *Tactica* was issued later under the name of Emperor Constantine VIII (1025-1028). An important compilation (Στρατηγικὸν περὶ ἔθνῶν διαφόρων ἔθνῶν) was transmitted under the name of Constantine Porphyrogenetos. It would appear that Patriarch Basil Petinos reedited the aforementioned work in his historical encyclopedia. The same man is noted in the manuscripts, edited by Fabricius, as the composer of a text on naval warfare (Ναυμαχικά). However, this attribution probably rests on a

misunderstanding of the metrical dedication that points to a certain Basil. The date is uncertain for a composite work on siege warfare that draws material from Athenaeos, Biton, Heron of Alexandria, Philo and Apollodoros. The attribution of authorship to a Heron (the Younger) has also been made without sufficient caution. Concerning the military texts associated with the name of Nikephoros Phokas see p. **268** ff. The text that has been attributed to Psellos, Περὶ πολεμικῆς τάξεως, has no importance since it is an almost word for word compilation from Aelian. Finally, we should mention a military lexicon that was probably written sometime during the tenth century, Ἑρμηνεία τῶν ἐπὶ στρατευμάτων καὶ πολεμικῶν παρατάξεων φωνῶν.

## Poetic Literature

### 263. General characteristics

[639] “The Byzantines did not know poetry in the true sense of the word, and it never existed among them.” This judgment is harsh and without basis. However, if we want to speak the simple truth, we have to admit that this strong statement does apply to the works that Bernhardt looked at, which, with few exceptions, confirm his view to the letter. The few genres in which Byzantium produced original and well conceived works were nearly unknown during the lifetime of this great master of Greek literary history and therefore remained unnoticed. Since the prose literature of the medieval Greeks was generally considered only useful as a repository of antique remnants, scholars only paid attention to those elements that were connected to ancient Greek, particularly, the great verse romances, poetic descriptions of monuments and epigraphical and didactic poems. By contrast, the genres that sprang from the original life of the Christian-Byzantine people were ignored. They were not rooted in Antiquity, followed no ancient model, shed no light on the works of their classical ancestors, and yet, or precisely because of that, they are the only witnesses that refute the claim that the poetic vein had dried up in the Byzantine race. We are speaking here of church and popular poetry. The first arose from the entirely new principle of the Christian religion, from the passionate inspiration of its wondrous victories, its heroic martyrs and its beloved mysteries. The second developed as an original form from the particularly fertile soil of Byzantine folk life. [640] The common feature of both is their break with the Hellenic tradition in both form and content. Both disdain the imitation of ancient models, both mold new content into new forms, both are closely connected to the living feeling of the contemporary people, blood and spirit from the blood and spirit of the Christian Romani.

If we wanted to compare the two genres according to their literary merit, there could be no doubt that church poetry is superior to popular poetry. There are various reasons for this. Church poetry took its material from something that far surpassed in both power and popularity the most successful subjects of popular literature. In addition, church poetry found in the church language tempered by popular idiom and in rhythmic meter an excellent means of expression that satisfied all of its requirements. By contrast, popular poetry had to be content with the monotonous cosmopolitan verse. In addition, as a result of its rejection by the circle of the educated elite, the rough tool of the popular idiom was unable to attain a sufficient level of refinement and development.

### 264. Introduction

In order to organize Byzantine poetry according to its types, we will first have to leave aside popular poetry, whose consideration will be reserved for in its own section. Clearly, the beautiful structure of epic, lyric and drama that so uniquely characterizes the history of classical poetry did not continue on into the Byzantine period. The concept of a purely national poetry, which developed organically as a coherent whole according to inner laws, does not apply to an age that is bounded by the names of Alexander the Great and Mohamed II. From the great

mass of Byzantine poems, only the development of rhythmic church poetry that was used in the liturgy has the unmistakable features of growth, flourishing and decline. It is — with the obvious exception of popular poetry — the only poetic innovation of the late Greek-Byzantine period, and it deserves to be treated in its own section.

The second section will consider all other poetry. The common feature of this group, which was composed from very different parts, is its formal dependence on Antiquity. All the works that belong to this group maintained an antique genre and were composed according to antique models. The dominant forms in this group are quantitative meter and the political verse. Content is irrelevant in determining inclusion in this group. Consequently, poems that deal with spiritual matters, like the *Χριστὸς πάσχων*, epigrams on the objects of worship, etc. are included in this second group since their forms rest on Hellenic models. We can characterize the first group as Church-Byzantine and the second as Christian-Hellenic. Since the introductory chapter of the first section deals expressly with the origin, history and treatment of church poetry, the following discussion will essentially be limited to the works of the second group, that is, to secular and non-liturgical poems. [641] But first we will provide a short overview on the character and fate of the individual types of Byzantine poetry.

#### 265. Epic and Romance

A popular epic poetry in the antique sense first began in Byzantium with popular Greek literature. Indeed, artistic literature possessed numerous works that can be compared to the epics of the Alexandrian and late Roman periods. George Pisides celebrated the military fame of Herakleios in several iambic poems, and in others he offered instruction concerning the vanity of life and the creation of the world. The Deacon Theodosios glorified the victory of the courageous Nikephoros Phokas in exaggerated tones. Grammatical, medicinal, astrological, historical and allegorical-moral instructive poems appeared in great numbers after the twelfth century, some in trimeter, some in the comfortable sauntering tone of political verse. The medieval Greeks had much less use for these historical, panegyric and didactic works than for the romance when copying the narrative epic of the antique period. In the medieval period, this genre of literature replaced the ancient epic to the greatest extent possible. The Byzantines never suffered a greater defeat than in precisely this genre. We cannot help but wonder why. If drama could not flourish, it was a natural consequence of the transformed cultural conditions that had already arisen in the Hellenistic period. Romance, however, which was a child of late Greek sophistry, based its peculiar form on conditions that were still present in the Byzantine period. The reason for its decline is not immediately clear. It is likely that we will find the final and most important cause of this miscarriage in the internal substance of the Greek romance itself rather than in external circumstances. The unrealism of this genre appeared at its very birth, the deadly enemy of every true art. Consequently, cold and systematic works appeared that were anything but a true expression of their own time. Following an easily replicated formula, the meager scaffolding of a conventional narrative was covered over with a baggy apparatus of descriptions, declamations and letters. Like the geographic, ethnographic and cultural background, sensibilities and characters were also portrayed according to conventional school models without any consideration for real life. There were shadowy figures, nebulous regions that were gray on gray without the definite characteristics that impress the soul with form

or color. No Greek romance writer dared to grasp the fullness of human life. No one thought to study and to utilize his own time in an artistic manner, its familial, social and political relations, its philosophical and religious temper and the infinite richness of its folk life. No genre of literature teaches us so little about the finer features of Hellenistic culture than the very genre from which we should expect the most. These writers nervously avoided looking at the living model. They shut themselves in a stuffy antique hall and copied dead plaster casts. They had almost no talent for modern naturalism. They formed the most extreme opposition to the [642] genre of literature in which we rightly glimpse the understanding of contemporary society, to the works of Flaubert, Zola, Bourget, Freytag, Keller, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy.

So if the original was based on hollow appearance, it is natural that the imitators of such rambling works would lose all feeling for life and healthy taste. We could expect that the reading public in the medieval Greek period would have had much less of a reaction than was true in earlier years. Over the course of time, the level of general education had sunk significantly, and with it, the finer feeling for the harmony of form and content. The exaggeration of eastern fables contributed a great deal to the transformation of taste. These stories at first penetrated the lowest level of society, but they also soon became a significant factor in Romanic cultural life just as eastern influences also become noticeable in Byzantine art. A few techniques of the romance, such as the detailed descriptions of individuals and the miraculous contrivance of dreams and visions, etc. were also heavily utilized in other popular genres of literature, including the apocryphal apostle stories and chronicles. Quite clearly, these techniques met the needs of the strongly pronounced sensibility of this period. In spite of these “mitigating circumstances,” the artistic romance of the medieval Greeks with its boundless lack of taste remains a riddle, and it is difficult to find a vantage point from which this miscarriage can be seen in a pleasant light. Nevertheless, the great number of manuscripts demonstrates that Byzantine romances found a reading public. If we wish to seek out works of a related spirit in modern literature, we have to go back to the pathetic products of the second Silesian School, which were directly influenced by the sophisticated romances that had spread in numerous translations since the sixteenth century. It is characteristic that here as in Byzantium, the union of cannibalistic brutality with nauseating flirtation and the most extreme pompousness was considered the pinnacle of beauty.

The bridges that connected the Hellenic to the Byzantine romance are not yet understood with sufficient clarity. Indeed, it is certain that the romances of the Sophistic period were still read, excerpted and commented on in the following centuries. Even Patriarch Photios considered these erotic works worthy of his attention (Cod. 94). However, it is still remarkable that after Chariton there would appear to have been a centuries long hiatus in the original production of this genre. This fact points out one of the effects of the exclusively Christian spirit of literature, a spirit that was cultivated almost without exception by members of the clergy from the seventh to the eleventh centuries. [643] We also know that the renaissance of the romance falls in the period when Hellenic Antiquity was once again dealt with by contemporaries in a completely unbiased manner. The romance writers whom we know, Prodrornos, Manasses, Niketas Eugenianos and Eustathios, all lived under the Komnenoi in an age of humanistic renaissance. Moreover, the long break in the technical tradition produced a certain awkwardness in the works of romance writers. The popular Greek romances in verse deserve a more

favorable judgment. Influenced partly by the East, partly by the West and partly grown on national soil, they were detached from Antiquity in form and conception. Compare the section on “Vernacular Greek Literature.”

## 266. Lyric and Dramatic Poetry

Byzantine lyric and dramatic poetry are represented best by church poetry, in which elements of both types are blended in imposing works of art. By contrast, the objective impulse that dominated the entire Byzantine period did not allow secular lyric to develop. We can count several works by John Geometres, Christophor of Mytilene, John Euchaites and others, in which personal experiences are tastefully expressed. [644] However, the epigram in all its variations remained the dominant form even for this subjective poetry. Many, like Constantine the Sicilian, made attempts at Anacreontic ditties. Better lyrical voices appeared later in popular Greek poetry. The medieval Greeks lacked dramatic poetry in the strong sense of the word. They also lacked the prerequisite for this form, namely, the public performance of dramas. K.N. Sathas wrote a dense and erudite book in order to prove the opposite. However, he tries so hard to turn every bit of good or bad evidence to his advantage and to ignore every hindrance that he manages to annoy the objective reader time and time again and to strengthen more than ever the belief in the lack of drama during the Byzantine period. As early as the late Roman period, mime and frivolous pantomime suppressed the taste for serious drama. The theater was replaced by the banal lusts of the circus and the music hall. The forlorn stages of a more serious character were more susceptible to the struggle waged by an empowered Christianity against all types of theater than were the polite obscenities of the pantomime’s antics, to which a large percentage of the highest and lowest circles of society flocked with pathetic eagerness. Dramatic literature was left to academic study and lectures. Christianity created a replacement for the ancient stage with its richly and meaningfully crafted liturgy, the reading of holy and secular poems at public feasts, the dramatic treatment of Christian topics and, finally, the religious performances from which the western mystery plays later developed.

We hear about Christian dramas, or rather, dramatic dialogues, of which the Ἐξαγωγὴ of the Jewish Ezechiel (ca. 150 B.C.) is a precursor, from the beginning of the fourth century. Saint Methodios (d. 311) is named as the author of dialogues in which he fights against the Gnostics. In one of these, Valentinian and Orthodox struggle περὶ ἀντεξουσίου. The subject of the piece is announced in a prologue as Euripidean drama, but it is made clear that the drama will be Christian not Hellenic, a claim, in any case, that does not hinder the author from inserting Homeric verses. The second poem of Saint Methodios that is similar to drama is his famous *Symposion of the 10 Virgins*, which likewise consists of a prologue and a dialogue (see p. 653). In a similar manner, Arius seems to have tried to create a counterweight to the pagan stage with his poem Θάλεια (lost save a few fragments), which was apparently a kind of liturgical drama. [645] The popularity of the great heretic’s *Thaleia* did not go unnoticed by the Orthodox party. Consequently, it created an Ἀντιθάλεια in order to combat the Arians with their own weapons. Unfortunately, nothing more is known of it. Dramatic dialogues, like those inserted, for example, in Patriarch Proklos’ (434-477) praise of the Blessed Virgin (Migne, PG 65, 736 ff.), only prove that a sense for the effect of the dramatic form was not completely lost. Under the Emperor Maurikios (591), we are informed of an apparently pantomime mystery

play, which Theophylaktos Simokattes characterizes as a θεανδρικὸν μυστήριον and a θεανδρική πανδαισία. In the eighth century, the iconoclasts were said to have enjoyed theatrical productions. As a homoeopathic antidote for them, John of Damascus allegedly composed a now lost drama, *Susanna*, which Eustathios calls Euripidean. There is thin evidence for a drama, Ὁ θάνατος τοῦ χριστοῦ, allegedly written by Stephen the Sabbaite around 790. If we want to get a sense for these “dramas,” we should think more in terms of the short dialogue of Ignatios than of the Χριστὸς πάσχων. These are the beginnings, shrouded in almost complete darkness, of religious drama, which had not completely disappeared even in the later Byzantine period. When Bishop Liudprand among the other objectionable practices that he saw among the Greeks, comments on the use of the Hagia Sophia as a theater, he can only be talking about some kind of a mystery play. Finally, to these examples we add the works that were similar to drama from the time of the Komnenoi and the Palaiologoi, the Χριστὸς πάσχων and the moral-allegorical dialogues of Ignatios, Haplucheir, Ptochoprodromos and Philes. However, none of these were ever destined for the stage. Like the Τραγωδοποδάργα and Ὁ κύππος of Lucian, these dramas were meant to be read. It would appear that very few religious plays remain today in the Orthodox Church. The only example that I am aware of is the so-called Νιπτήρ, i.e., the Feet-Washing, which is performed every year on Maundy Thursday on Patmos and in Jerusalem, and sometimes even in Constantinople. It is a performance put on by monks, yet it cannot be called a mystery play since its sparse dialogue is based on Scripture and not on an original or popular text.

In the period following the end of Antiquity, the remnants of the secular theater did not always lead a very respectful existence in the hippodrome and in similar places. Procopius’ stories about the early life of Theodora show the kind of freedoms that may or rather must have been permitted to the degenerate followers of the Dionysian artists by the pleasure seeking inhabitants of the great cities in the middle of the Christian era. [646] The reports of the performance of theatrical pieces under Anastasios and Justinian, to which we should add the speech of Chorikios on actors, an epigram of Agathias about an actress, and the mention in Menander Protector’s autobiography, sound rather indefinite and in any case are only evidence for the sixth century. The decisions of the second synod at Trullo in 691 are obviously directed against pantomime and related activities, not against theatrical performances in the ancient sense. Government officials were forbidden to take part in the theater and to wear theatrical costumes. Theatrical songs were supposed to be banned in churches. Likewise, the hippodrome was condemned, and priests were ordered not only to avoid even a glimpse of theatrical productions but to stay away from weddings where actors (σκηνικοί) might appear as well. Naturally, the circus parties hurried to raise great protests against such severe restrictions. Later, we hear of even stronger church ordinances against public plays and frivolous mimes. In order to support his theory about the immortality of the antique stage, Sathas points to the well known acclamations of the circus parties and the army to the emperor, public mocking displays (διαπομπεύσεις), the Gothic Christmas play described by Constantine Porphyrogennitos and similar material. Even if one cannot deny that these presentations had a certain dramatic character, it is still clear to those who would see, that this evidence cannot be used to demonstrate the continuation of a true theater in the Byzantine period. It is possible that here and there individual pieces of the new comedy were put on during the sixth century. However, the intruding barbarism soon brought these efforts to an end. When, several hundred years



later, the desire began to awaken again for the old literature, the cultural conditions had changed to such an extent that it was no longer possible to conceive of a return to the old theater. Just as was the case in literature and cultural life generally, the dark break from the seventh to the ninth centuries cut deeply between antique and medieval theater.

An illuminating illustration of the later history of the antique theater is provided by the fact that the expressions τραγωδία, δράμα and κωμωδία, changed in over the course of time in a manner similar to that experienced by the word *comoedia* in the Latin lands. The medieval meaning of the latter term achieved fame in a world historical sense as a result of its use by Dante in his *Divina Comedia*. [647] Kyniker Diogenes, Krates and Oenomaos demonstrate in their “tragedies” how the meaning of the concept of τραγωδία had expanded. By contrast, as early as Diodoros and in the works of Dionysios Thrax, in the school of Theocritus and among the church fathers, the words τραγωδία, τραγωδῶ and τραγωδός had the meaning “song, I sing, and singer.” Moreover, in modern Greek, τραγουδῶ simply means “I sing,” and τὸ τραγουδι is the technical expression for a folksong. It is noteworthy that τραγουδῶ (τραγουῖδι) is only used to describe secular songs. When discussing church songs, the only appropriate words are ψάλλω, ψαλμωδία, ψάλτης. The word δράμα experienced a similar fate. As the original meaning of the word became shrouded in darkness, it came to denote a pathetic event, and then later — probably sometime in the fifth century after Christ — it came to designate the romance. Thus, Photios called Antonios Diogenes’ romance δραματικόν (Cod. 166), and Byzantine romance writers regularly used the word δράμα to mean “romance.” Finally, it appears that the word κωμωδία was used in the post Christian period to designate the prose discussion of freely invented material, finally including even maxims.

## 267. The Metrical Forms of Byzantine Poetry

[648] There were three major metrical genres in the Byzantine period:

### 1. Quantitative meter that survived from Antiquity.

Of the numerous types of antique verse form, the medieval Greeks largely used the iambic trimeter and only seldom the dactylic hexameter, the elegiac distichon and the Anacreontic dimeter and trimeter. The fate of the latter forms of verse in the Byzantine period has not yet received close attention. Recently, scholars have only turned their attention to the iambic trimeter, which dominated in the majority of the poetry written according to the quantitative principle. As a rule, the Byzantine trimeter had 12 syllables, a novelty that can in no way be described as a result of poetic impotence. W. Meyer has correctly argued that a Greek poetic school of the sixth century consciously chose to cast off the dramatic trimeter with its resolutions and anapests in exchange for the so-called lyrical trimeter. The widely read works of Lykophron offered a good example of this type of meter. George Pisides used his newly ruled trimeter with no less pride and energy than had Nonnos when he composed in hexameter. A second peculiarity of the Byzantine trimeter was the fact that the penultimate syllable (11th) regularly had the accent. “Agathias and John of Gaza usually avoided accenting the last syllable of the trimeter, while this was almost always the case with George Pisides. Agathias stressed the third to last syllable in many trimeters, but John of Gaza never did this. George Pisides did it

frequently in two of his works and otherwise never did it at all. The complete avoidance of the proparoxytone at the end of the trimeter did not happen until the tenth century” (W. Meyer). Historical development permitted the prosody of Byzantine trimeter as well as the other forms of metrical verse, to make use of short, long and intermediate syllables with gradually increasing degrees of freedom. After considering this development together with the contraction in the number of syllables and the paroxytonic conclusion noted above, Is. Hilberg divided the entire body of Byzantine iambic writings into three groups: A. *The Classicists*. They are characterized by the absolute correctness of the versification with respect to quantity and caesura. The lengthening of vocally expressed short end syllables when they were followed by a double consonant was strictly limited in Antiquity, but gradually these rules began to slacken. B. *The Imitators*. They shared correct form with the Classicists with respect to caesura. However, they only kept the correct quantities in those cases where it would be clear to the eye. Thus, the diphthongs and η and ω were always long, and the lengthening effect of the double consonant was always observed. In addition, [649] an α produced by contraction or crasis or provided with an iota subscript remained long as a rule. Its shortening was only permitted in very limited cases (compare the more detailed discussion by Hercher, *Erot. Script. Gr.* 2, p.li f.). The vowels ε and ο could only be treated as long in personal names and in artistic expressions. In the first case, this only happened if the name could not otherwise be used in the twelve-syllable trimeter. In the second case, the vowels would be long only if the expression could not otherwise be used. A long α (aside from the types discussed above), ι and υ could also be treated as short if the writer desired, in which case the betraying circumflex over the affected vowel would have to be replaced with an acute accent. Short α, ι and υ were used without any restrictions as long vowels in initial and medial syllables. However, in final syllables they could only be long in free words (concerning the concept of the “free word,” see Hilberg, *Prinzip der Silbenwägung*, p. 2). There was no limitation on the lengthening by a following double consonant on a final short syllable (compare p. 218 and 234 f.). One representative of this group is Theodoreos Prodromos. C. *The Bunglers*. The verse writers in this group were not all of the same type. However, the common characteristic that sets them apart from the Imitators is their unlimited use of short α, ι or υ as long. In general, they tried to follow the rules of the Imitators. However, the awkwardness and hastiness of these would-be poets condemned them to numerous errors. Nevertheless, it was only the least capable of this group of incompetents who shortened diphthongs and η and ω and disregarded the lengthening effect of the strong double consonant. One of the less incompetent of these bunglers was the composer of the *Christus patiens*. To the extent that any conclusions can be drawn concerning the chronology of iambic composition, it would appear that the period of the the Imitators followed upon that of the Classicists, while the Bunglers were in part contemporaries of the Imitators and in part extended beyond them.

It was always assumed that there were additional intermediate parties that existed alongside these main groups. The researches of E. Kuhn have proven conclusively that this view is correct. I am not able to judge the extent to which Hilberg’s rules concerning dactylic and Anacreontic poetry are accurate since I have not been able to carry out my own investigations concerning the meter of secular poetry. There is no area more in need of exact and comprehensive preparatory works than here, where incidental and isolated observation always cause more confusion than illumination. Finally, it must be emphasized that the entire

body of quantitative poetry in the Byzantine period was composed without the firm foundation of a living language and therefore appeared like a mechanical game laboriously put down on paper. It was far less justified on truly artistic grounds than the verse forms based on accent, even though these forms were often considered barbaric.

## 2. The rhythmic system.

This system was produced in the context of church poetry and was used almost exclusively by church poets. [650] The main principles used in place of quantity were the number of syllables and the final accent. In this system, verses of different measure were grouped first by period and then by strophe. The origins, forms and main peculiarities of rhythmic poetry are treated in detail in chapters 282-291.

## 3. The political system.

Political and rhythmic poetry had in common the fundamental abandonment of antique quantitative rules that had long before disappeared in the living language. They differed in so far as political poetry repeated the same verses (ποίημα κατὰ στίχον) while rhythmic poetry changed verse measures within the same period (ποίημα κατὰ περίοδον). Political verse in the wider sense is understood as all verse that is composed based on accent and repeats the same measure line after line (κατὰ στίχον). Such similarly lined rhythmic poems were rather uncommon among the Greeks before the tenth century. The most common verse of this genre is the 15-syllable, a iambic verse divided by a caesura following the eighth syllable:

U -    U - U - U - || U - U - U - U  
 Καὶ πῶς θρασὺς ὁ τὴν αἰδῶ    προβεβλημένην ἔχων

This schema permits different variations. In particular, the beginning of the two half lines can be long-short just as easily as short-long. Sometimes there was so much freedom that, regardless of the end, all concern for the defined feet was set aside, and only the syllables were counted. In addition to the 15-syllable form, other similarly lined verses were constructed according to accent. These included the 12 syllable iambic trimeter and the iambic and trochaic dimeter among others. However, these other variations did not achieve much importance. Thus, when discussing Byzantine verse it should be understood that we are always dealing with 15 syllables. In the case of the newer material, the 15-syllable form is also the most common. The 15-syllable form dominated the literary genres that were meant for general public purposes as well as the entirety of popular poetry and song until the time of the modern Greeks. Its thousand year long and continuing period of vitality is one of the most striking aspects in the entire history of popular poetic form.

There is a great deal of discussion about which antique form produced political verse. Eustathios believed that it came from trochaic verse. It may well be the case that he was thinking about those antique verses which could be read as political, as for example Aeschylus' Ἦ βαθυζώνων ἄνασσα Περίδων ὑπερτάτη. Maximus Planudes, who followed Eustathios' line of thought, saw political verse in the trochaic and iambic catalectic tetrameters used by the

tragedians and Aristophanes: Τοῖς εἰς τὸ πολιτικὸν ἄρτι μετανασστᾶσιν ὄνομα στίχοις καὶ Τραγικοὶ πάντες καὶ ὁ Κωμικὸς ἔστιν οὗ χρησάμενοι φαίνονται, οὐκ ἀμέτρως μέντοι, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν τροχαίοις ποιήσαντες, ὁ Κωμικὸς δὲ καὶ ἰάμβοις ἑκάτεροι μέντοι τετράμετρον καταληκτικὸν αὐτοῖς ὄρον ἔστησαντο. [651] He provided numerous other examples including the verses from Aeschylus mentioned above. It is certainly not possible to talk about the intentional construction of political verse by the ancients, a point that even Planudes does not appear to have contested. Nevertheless, the verse forms mentioned by Planudes can be used as a starting point. However, a clear solution to the entire question is made difficult by the fact that the steps and intermediate links between the quantitative poetic art and the political measure do not appear to have survived. It is true that as a result of recent observations the two forms are now thought to be more closely related in chronological terms. While Henrichsen and Bernhardt believed that it was not possible to identify political verse before the twelfth century, W. Wagner and W. Meyer transformed Psellos into a famous political poet. In any case, W. Meyer has suggested that a scholar first discovered this verse, which he would have considered an imitation of the iambic tetrameter of the ancients. The political verses transmitted by Constantine Porphyrogenetos in his report of a popular acclamation are themselves much older than Psellos. Even more important for establishing an early threshold for the age of political verse is the fact that a number of maxims set forth by John Klimax (c. 525-c. 600) and John Moschos (d. 619) must be read as political verse. In addition, the acclamation set in motion in 600 against Emperor Maurice undoubtedly contains political verse. These considerations combined with the fact that political 15-syllable form has survived up to the present day in Greek areas as almost the only verse measure for popular songs would appear to indicate that this measure probably had a popular origin. One might look to Bernhardt's identification of the tetrameter surviving in Plutarch's *Sulla* Συκᾶμινόν' ἐσθ' ὁ Σύλλας ἀλφίτω πεπασμένον. One might also be permitted to compare this with the 14-syllable line found in Methodios and Gregory Nanzianzos. The dispute turns on the question whether the iambic or the trochaic tetrameter was responsible for the origin of this verse form. But it is probably the case that both bear some responsibility; it is likely that political verse arose from a contamination of both of these popular antique measures.

## 1. Church Poetry

### 268. Works in the Antique Form

[653] As was true of the other genres in late Greek-Byzantine literature, church poetry originally was written under the influence of antique Greek forms that had a powerful impact on the development of free originality. Most poetic efforts by Christian Greeks, which became well known to wider circles, conform in language, meter and representation to antique models. They were learned imitations of the same type as most of the secular poetry of this period. Included in this group are hymns ascribed, probably incorrectly, to Clemens of Alexandria (d. around 215), that were written in anapestic mono- and dimeter and survive in a manuscript of Clemens' Παιδαγωγός. The second piece of this type is the famous maiden's song in Saint Methodios' (d. around 311) "Symposium". This work is apparently a copy of the Platonic Symposium. It was written in prose and praises virginity through the mouths of ten maidens. It closes with a song where one maiden sings and the rest stand to the left and right of her. At the end of every strophe they answer with the happy refrain (ὕπακούουσι). The poem may have been motivated in part by the Παρθένια of Alkman and by Pindar. The form certainly offers much that is worthy of notice. The verse measure is iambic. However, the poem contains so many inexplicable violations against the quantitative rules that there can be no question of this being accidental. As W. Meyer noticed, the Christians, who spoke a foreign language, possessed a strong poetic principle that stood alongside the internal principle of quantitative poetry. This may have led them to undervalue or even abandon the rules of quantitative poetry when composing in a form that was the opposite of antique pagan poetry. Gregory of Nazianzos (d. 389) remained much more faithful to the antique school tradition. With only two exceptions, he used antique verse forms such as the hexameter, trochaic septenarius, iambic trimeter and others in his numerous poems. [654]. Since he was inspired by a warm religious feeling, in later periods he was the object of extensive attention and, like the secular poets, was equipped with learned commentaries. He took first place among the Christian Greeks who wrote poetry in the antique forms. Nevertheless, his works remained distant from the people, from the community and from church practice. Gregory's powerfully penetrating language was understood when he spoke from the pulpit, but the church never utilized even one of his artistic poems in official worship. The rigid forms of the aged meter did not give sufficient freedom to the fire of his feeling. It is possible to search for his true enthusiasm bursting from within as many of his hymnal writings make clear. His poetry is noble and large, full of art and consideration. However, it does not carry people along with it. It did not speak heart to heart in the same manner as Romanos' incomparable Christmas song. Even more so than Gregory, his contemporary Apollinarios the Younger (d. 390) stood firmly within the antique tradition. His inheritance from his family was a rigorous schooling in the old forms. Apollinarios' father, none of whose works survive, wrote tragedies with Euripides as his model, comedies following Menander, odes after Pindar and Jewish antiquarian works following Homer. We possess one of the younger Apollinarios' paraphrases of the Psalms in hexameter. The technique of this piece provided a model for Nonnos. The skill with which he used the countless memories from the old poets, the famous images, their glistening epithets and their dialectic forms can satisfy the antiquarian. However, the Psalms lost their own form and intrinsic simplicity in the context of

this metamorphosis. They became too Homeric to remain Psalms any longer. Philological games of this sort could not become popular, and thus we can understand the church historian Socrates' comment that by his time the works of the two Apollinarios had become so unknown that it was as if they had never been written. Ammianus' paraphrases of the Psalms, which followed the model of the two Apollinarios, had even less success. Synesios' (c. 370- c. 413) famous poems were just as learned. The predominance of Hellenistic elements was characteristic of his work, and the hymns he wrote as a Christian are consistent with those he wrote as a pagan. His Neoplatonism is betrayed in both. Even Synesios' use of the Doric dialect [655] was not based on the contemporary language of his homeland at Cyrene, but rather on purely learned imitation. In general, he was much more of a philosopher than a poet. His metaphysical considerations provided fitting material for the learned salon, but they were not meant to be sung and understood by thousand voiced masses. Even Nonnos (at the beginning of the fifth century) had no success with his metrical paraphrase of the gospel of John. He wrote as a Christian in old age. However, the project was so wrongheaded that even a greater poetic genius than he would not have been able to make it successful. This project failed, moreover, despite the fact that Nonnos' meter was innovative in a certain sense for secular poetry and found many imitators, including Tryphiodoros, Kolluthos and Musaeos. Nonnos was not the last Greek to muster the armor of antique Greek forms in the service of Christian ideas. The learned custom of imitating antique meter did not die out even after the rise of rhythmic and political poetry. This is demonstrated by the dry poems of St. Sophronios, the three iambic canons of John of Damascus and the numerous other religious poems written in anacreontic and other measures by Ignatios the Deacon, Leo the Wise, Prodromos, Manuel Philesu and others. The efforts of the later poets to maintain dead forms that were no longer understandable — efforts that were thoroughly destructive to true art — were kept up in full measure. Very few of these artistic poems actually deserve the name poetry. No one could reach the hearts of the people with tones that no longer found any purchase in the living language. The historian should not underestimate the danger of this situation. If another art form had not been found and gained legitimacy in time, the Greek people would forever have been denied the grace of a true religious poetry. This new form is alone responsible for the rise of a new literary genre, which might be placed alongside the best offerings of antique poetry in terms of poetic content, variety and depth. This exceptionally effective artistic form, which awakened the poetic striving of the Hellenes with a magic stroke and provided new power of speech to its quieted tongue, is rhythmic poetry.

## A. The History of Rhythmic Church Poetry

### 269. Terms and General History

As is demonstrated by letter changes in inscriptions and by other facts, the living language lost the fine differences between short and long syllables in the Roman period. The new spoken language contained neither long nor short vowels but rather isochronic vowels, that is, vowels that are all spoken for the same length of time. A new modern conversational idiom [656] grew out of the antique musical and quantitative language so that a word like ἄθροπος

sounded like a simple dactyl. Whoever now wrote poetry quantitatively was using a dead form. It could have an artistic appearance on the page, but it could no longer be understood by listeners. It was only when Christian poetry freed itself from this unbearable burden and found its release in the rhythmic construction of verses that it truly came alive. The principle of this new form of poetry did not rest on the length or shortness of syllables but rather on their number and accent, that is, those things which people could hear and which still dominate poetry in the present day. However, the word accent did not simply take the place of the earlier verse accent. Instead, the old verse forms were put to the side, and various new lines and strophes were introduced.

It is only in works composed in the rhythmic form that Christian poetry among the Greeks possessed a true pattern of development. The form began with weak efforts that quickly rose to a pinnacle and then sank again. Unfortunately, the history of this development has received very little attention. We know well enough that the enormous body of surviving church songs is the result of a gradual process of creation. We can recognize important differences in form, in poetic content and in their representation and conception. We see that a powerful and manifold stream gradually grew out of insignificant sources. However, it is not now possible to show clearly the course of its ramifications and tides. One of the major hindrances to a more exact understanding of its history is the problem of anonymity. We know the names, periods and status of very few of the poets. For many of them we know only their names, and in the case of many of the oldest works, we do not even know those. Consequently, we can describe the developmental history of Greek church poetry in only the most general terms. Viewed with sufficient care, it is possible to identify three major periods: first, the preparatory period characterized by small pieces interpolated among the Psalms and other parts of holy scripture, by popular acclamations and finally by isolated poems of well known writers; second, the golden age in which extensive hymns, composed of 20-30 or more strophes, achieved their highest form; and third, a period characterized by the development of a new form of architectonic poetry, that is, the so-called canons. This threefold division should not be taken to indicate that the characteristic genres were the only ones composed in a particular period. The acclamations and the small pieces that were the signature of the first period continued on into the second and third periods as well. Likewise, the hymns that were characteristic of the second period continued on into the third.

## 2. Popular Poetry

### 292. Introductory Remarks

[706] The title of this section is to be understood in the broadest possible sense. As was noted above, we are dealing here with all non-liturgical poetry, part of which is truly secular poetry and part of which is religious poetry of other types. The decisive points are intention and form rather than the content of the material. While church poetry served the practical needs of edification and elevation and blazed entirely new paths in form, the works of the second group followed purely literary goals and appear as more or less faithful continuations of antique genres. The most important concession made by Byzantine secular poetry to the spirit of its age was political verse, which struggled for mastery with antique meters. In ordering the material in this manner, the question arises whether the genres, whose character and history were discussed above (p. 641 ff.) in general terms, should be separated into more specific treatments. Although a handbook dealing with a systematic consideration of epic, lyric, drama, didactic poetry, satire and others would seem to have much to recommend itself, the internal and external fundamentals of Byzantine poetry argue against a strenuous execution of this typology. These fundamental aspects include the eclectic character of the poets and the lack of a large and clear development within the individual types. While the organization of genres in antique Greek literature was based on an organic development, in this case the organization was carried out in an artificial manner. As a result, the reader comes away with a historically incorrect vision of the nature and development of Byzantine poetry. Understanding of its basically blurred character has been destroyed by the willful and incorrect presentation of the independent existence of the different types. No less difficult are the practical objections against the employment of a typological system. On the one hand, most poets must be considered according to several types, which speaks against the tectonic principle of the entire book. On the other hand, the individual types can only be filled out and firmly established in a very uneven manner. Thus, for example, what sense would it make to have a division for dramatic poetry that would have to begin with an anonymous Passion and end in the same manner? [707] Likewise, there is no enduring and apprehensible development in the area of the romance. After the genre had lain dormant for more than half a millennium, all of a sudden four works appeared that were almost completely isolated. Furthermore, they were not bound by any intermediate connections to their models. The most useful thing would be a freestanding consideration of late Greek and Byzantine epigrams. However, even this type of study does not contradict the general principle.

There is still no comprehensive consideration of the entirety of Byzantine secular poetry. Consequently, it is only possible to make some preliminary observations about developmental levels, interconnections and influences of the various types on one another and on prose literature. Given the demands of time and energy, it is our intention to provide to the best of our ability an overview that may lead to further research.

What concerns sixth-century secular poetry, the subject with which we began our presentation, has already been dealt with in the literary history of Wilhelm von Christ as well as in our discussion of anthologies (sec. 304). Georgios Pisides, the only important secular writer



of the seventh century, worked within two very different genres. On the one hand, as the last representative of the school of Nonnos he was bound to the disappearing forms of late Antiquity. On the other hand, he was the most admired and copied model for poets of the following period and consequently played a very important role in the history of Byzantine secular poetry. After Pisides, there was a large gap in hellenizing poetry, which was only partially filled by John of Damascus' poems constrained as they were by both the quantitative and rhythmic systems. It was only in the ninth century that secular poetry, like most other literary subjects, began to enjoy the more vigorous expression that had been limited almost exclusively to epigram writing. The duty of reviving this poetic genre fell to Abbot Theodore the Studite (d. 826), who took Pisides as his model. Soon after the death of this heroic defender of images, Emperor Theophilos took an active role in the writing of epigrams — albeit in a very strange manner — by having twelve of his own poetic compositions written in trimeter burned into the foreheads of brothers Theophanes and Theophilos. The explanation for the details of this punishment — if it is a true explanation — shows that great importance was placed on metrical correctness at the time of Theophilos despite the fact that the literary renaissance had hardly begun. The emperor accompanied his orders to his officers with the words “and if the verses are no good, do not worry about it.” He knew that the two brothers were very learned and were very experienced in the instruction of poetic forms. One of the courtiers offered the terrible joke, “They do not deserve to have good verses.” [708] The original poet Kasia successfully tried her hand at epigrammatic and gnomological games during the reigns of Emperor Theophilos and his successor Michael. Over the course of the entire ninth, and perhaps the early tenth century, Ignatios the Deacon, Ignatios the Grammarian, Kometas, Constantine the Sicilian, Constantine the Rhodian, Emperor Leo and Leo the Philosopher wrote epigrammatic and related poems. During the reign of Emperor Nikephoros Phokas (963-969), Deacon Theodosios published his poem in praise of the capture of Crete. By doing so he stepped out of the circle of minor poets. However, he had no other model at hand than the poetry of George Pisides — also followed by the epigrammatic poets — among whose collected works were similar panegyric poems. Another poet from the second half of the tenth century, namely John Geometres, stood much higher. He worked mostly with epigrams and poetic descriptions and explanations. In the eleventh century, Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropus brought epigrams and occasional poems to their highest level. The production of secular poetry grew richer and more varied from the end of the eleventh century until the end of the Byzantine period. The epigrams and occasional pieces, which continued on in an undiminished form, were joined by countless — mostly dreadfully dull — didactic poems, written by among others Michael Psellos, John Tzetzes, John Kamateros and Manuel Philes. Other poetic forms from this period included long romances by Prodromos, Manasses, Niketas Eugenianos and Eustathios Makrembolites, verse chronicles by Manasses and Ephraim, edifying and moral poems by Philip Solitarius and George Lapithes, allegorical poems such as the curious work by Meliteniotes, and finally dramatic efforts such as *Christus patiens* and Manuel Philes' apparent drama. However, as the poetry in the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods gained in variety and breadth, they lost even more in inner strength and refined individuality. Agathias, George Pisides, Theodore Studites, John Geometres, Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropus remained the leading practitioners of secular poetry in the Greek Middle Ages. A retrospective judgment of the remaining secular poets is unlikely to bring anything of value to light with respect to their form and content. Even more so than in other areas of Byzantine

literature [709], it is important to abstain from absolute aesthetic judgments and to strive from a relatively pure scientific standpoint to accompany the flight of appearance with the resigned but affectionately eager view of the philologist, the cultural historian and the ethnic psychologist.

## Vernacular Greek Literature

### Introduction

#### 328. Discussion of terms

[787] Just as was the case in Latin and Latinized lands where a common idiom grew up alongside a relatively coherent written language, in the Greek East, the living language diverged over time from the generally stable written language to such an extent that it is necessary to designate the former as something identifiably different. The Greeks called their simple, popular and conversational language γλῶσσα δημῶδες, ἀπλή, ἀπλοελληνική, καθημαξευμένη, καθωμιλημένη, Ῥωμαϊκή in contrast to the Attic, Hellenistic and κοινὴ διάλεκτος. While in the West, Latin developed into several different national languages, uniformity was maintained in the East. Of course, several new dialects developed that were very different from the older forms as a result both of their internal character and of their geographic distribution. Their differences, however, were not great enough to rise to the level of new languages. In addition, the continual centralizing tendency of the Byzantine Empire, which controlled most of the Greek speaking provinces during the crucial centuries when language development was underway, placed considerable obstacles in the way of this process. A second difference in the linguistic development of the Greeks and Latins was to have more important consequences. The most important linguistic exfoliation occurred at the same time and in the same manner in both East and West. While the Latin nations thankfully adopted and made use of the fresh and powerful new constructions, [788] the Greeks, in the spirit of their education, preferred to carry on with the artificially maintained, ossified, faded and lifeless old skin as a literary Sunday suit or at least to cover over and conceal the new skin with scraps of the old. In a gradual but ineluctable process, Latin was supplanted by the national languages, first in popular literary genres and then in the learned ones as well. In the end, Latin could only maintain its place as a dead language maintained in a written form. The Greek East never experienced a break of this magnitude between the old and new, the dead and the living. The school tradition was able to maintain such a level of resistance that the popular language always remained a relatively weak rival and was unable to achieve permanent success in any area of written expression. The Byzantine written language, which was supported by old Greek formal instruction and vocabulary, maintained the upper hand in the important literary genres, in history writing, philosophy, theology, rhetoric, classical studies and even in poetry. Its dominance outlasted the cataclysmic political events brought about by the first and second conquests of Constantinople and remains with few changes to the present day. The Greeks did not have a Dante who transformed the contemptible popular language into an incontestable monument of beauty and truth, which demonstrated that this language was capable of expression, and which furthermore helped it to attain its legal rights in view of the whole world. Rather, on account of the rebirth of classical studies, a concern for linguistic purity grew strong precisely during the period that would have offered the best opportunity for the development of a new literary language, namely, from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. This concern estranged literary language more than ever from living speech. Although by the eleventh century the popular language had conquered some areas in literature, as they had done in earlier periods, the leading users of language in the nation

and most of the learned people pushed aside the popular language as a low, mean and unusable tool for the expression of finer thoughts and artistic constructions. The contemptible place of the popular language is made clear by the literary historical fact that with a diminishing number of exceptions (Prodomos, Glykas) writers utilized the written or the popular language exclusively. This separation weighed even more on the scale because in the Byzantine world generally the mixing of literary genres and styles was being carried out in an unrestricted manner. The literary development of the Greeks took a different path than that of the Romans from the medieval period onwards. While Italian, French and Spanish literature appears to have developed along coherent lines in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, a dualism reigned in Greek literature that has not yet been overcome and [789] may perhaps never be overcome. One of the external results of this history of European languages and literature is the fact that there is no single, generally recognized and used name for the medieval and modern Greek vernacular language. Modern Greek is not sufficient because this term excludes medieval vernacular Greek on the one hand and includes the modern artificial language on the other. It would be better to use the term Romaic, which reflects the former political allegiance of the Greeks to the Roman Empire and remains common among the people today. But this has found little support because it designates a foreign nationality and could too easily lead to false impressions. Consequently, in the absence of a useful alternative, we are forced to keep the inappropriate term vernacular or “demotic” Greek. We continue to use this term without providing chronological boundaries for the vernacular language of Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the modern period. The term vernacular Greek stands in contrast to the ancient, medieval and modern Greek artistic or written languages. In our usage, the expression vernacular Greek, when not otherwise defined in narrower terms, will be understood to refer to the medieval vernacular.

The foregoing section permits the observation that the term vernacular Greek is not completely parallel to the concept of vernacular Latin. It is only possible to discuss Latin as a vernacular until such a time that the provincial languages appear as recognizable and demonstrable entities. In contrast, vernacular Greek attained even greater importance at exactly that moment when vernacular Latin began to be swallowed by the provincial languages. The language called vernacular or provincial Latin came to an end, in round terms, in the ninth and tenth centuries. What we understand as vernacular Greek survived this period up to our own day. Finally, it is necessary to warn against a view common today that haunts many books and heads, namely, that vernacular Greek is to be identified or confused with the κοινή διάλεκτος. Κοινή is a written language that developed from Attic by means of many concessions to the language of the people, the military, the chancery and perhaps the Macedonian-Alexandrian dialect as well. Its deviations from Attic are far less evident in its morphology than in its vocabulary and syntax. It is closer to the living language of the Alexandrine and Roman period than to the Attic dialect used by the ancients. However, this language was something different than the speech of the common people that was constantly transforming its stresses, forms, words and constructions. It stands in a middle position between the pure Attic language and the fluctuating idiom of the people.

### 329. Historical Overview

[790] A popular manner of expression exemplified by negligence in pronunciation and sentence construction, by the disappearance of grammatical forms, by the use of analogous constructions and by the disruption and simplification of the vocabulary appeared in Greek, as it did in Latin, as soon as a linguistic norm had been established by means of an abundant and worthwhile literature. These foils, which provide us with our only evidence for the details of the lower manner of speech in Greek, were created by the authors of the Attic golden age. The first traces of popular idioms that deviated from the written dialect began to appear soon after the end of this period. We find them from the second century before Christ in Egyptian papyri, in inscriptions and in works of literature. Sometimes they appear in large numbers, sometimes as individual exemplars, sometimes in closely bunched groups and sometimes widely separated from one another. It all depended on the chance circumstances of their transmission. The common idiom did not remain fixed but rather changed over time. The dominant position enjoyed by Attic and Hellenistic authors suffered a heavy blow at the hands of Christianity. Christian authors, because they had to make use of language as a practical means of making themselves understood, frequently made bold jumps over the strictures imposed by the schools. The New Testament in reality is more of a memorial to vernacular Greek than to κοινή. Consequently, many characteristics of the popular language forced themselves into the legends, church songs and edifying texts meant for a wider audience. Indeed, these freedoms developed more out of a silent compromise with the needs of the many than with any fixed goal. Furthermore, the Christian Greeks did not openly oppose the tyranny of the artistic language. In general, the official language of the church closely followed the models set forth by the schools until the beginning of the Byzantine period. While Gregory the Great unabashedly utilized grand expressions, he considered it unworthy to conceal the words of divine revelation under Donatus' rules. Among the Greeks, the leading church teachers and office holders [791] had already demonstrated their respect for the purity and correctness of the language. Remarkably, even the increasingly apparent problem that the mass of the population could no longer understand artificial homilies did not open the eyes of the learned academics to the defective and corruptive aspects of their pedantic efforts. They paid less attention to the danger of a general estrangement of the people from church dogma and ethics than to contraventions of grammatical and rhetorical models. A story told by the canonist Balsamon about Patriarch Nicholas Muzalon (1147-1151) offers a particularly valuable insight into the views of the higher clergy, especially during the period of the tenth and eleventh-century literary renaissance. Among the synodical statutes issued by this church authority was one against the *Life* of Saint Paraskeue of Kallikrateia, which was composed "by a farmer in an uneducated manner that was unworthy of the angelic saint." The patriarch had this document, which was written in the vernacular idiom, thrown into the fire and then asked Deacon Basil to write another biography. The complaints of the learned metropolitan of Athens, Michael Akominatos, that his peasant flock did not understand him offer a clear illustration of how this foolish classicism operated. We would have thousands of similar complaints if common listeners had written down their own feelings about these rhetorically garnished sermons.

The most important evidence for the influence of vernacular speech in the written secular literature of the imperial period comes from the warnings of the Atticizers. Pseudo-Dositheos'

two-language conversation manual and the small dictionary, which in its oldest surviving form provides a picture of the slang of the third century before Christ, is an important piece of evidence. There are some morphological and lexicographical traces of vernacular language in scientific literature, particularly in medical texts. This brief overview hopefully makes clear that vernacular Greek was not, as is often suggested, a result of the “degeneration into barbarism,” “the replacement of Hellenism by foreign nations,” or the “popular disorder and loss of territory in the Byzantine period.” Rather, this process began in the pre-Christian era, was only marginally affected by external forces and was the natural development of the Greek language.

Malalas’ chronicle is the first comprehensive work in which the popular idiom triumphed over the traditional written language. However, this text cannot be described as medieval Greek vernacular literature for the same reasons that it is not possible to describe Gregory of Tours, Fredegar and the other authors of the sixth through the ninth centuries as French literature. Malalas’ language is vernacular Greek in the ancient sense, that is, [792] in the same manner as certain papyri texts and silk inscriptions are vernacular Greek. However, this text is neither medieval vernacular Greek nor Romaic because at the time that it was written, the spoken language had not yet attained the point that we designate as medieval Greek vernacular or Romaic. About a century after Malalas, during the reign of Emperor Constans II (642-668), Bishop Leontios of Neapolis (in Cyprus) wrote his *Life of Archbishop John the Merciful of Alexandria and Symeon the Monk* with the title “Fools for Christ.” This text, which was written in a popular style, was a forerunner of vernacular Greek literature. Compare Theophanes’ chronicle (p. 190 f.), whose value was not completely appreciated until C. de Boor’s excellent edition, offers an important monument to early ninth-century vernacular speech. Constantine Porphyrogenetos’ writings are important for the study of vernacular Greek in the following centuries.

In addition to these and other works in which vernacular Greek has come down to the present in a limited and somewhat obscure form, a number of smaller witnesses provide valuable information concerning the origins of vernacular Greek literature. The evidence, surviving in numerous historical works from the seventh century onwards, includes the political street songs sung by the Circus parties, satirical poetry, attestations of approval, proverbial sayings, dicta and the famous acclamations of the people and the army. A few examples should illuminate the character of these pieces. In 600, a man who looked like Emperor Maurice was dressed in a black cloak, wreathed in garlic and led through the city on a donkey. At this sight, the people sang a satirical song that portrayed the current form of the vernacular language:

Εύρηκε τὴν δαμαλίδα ἀπαλὴν καὶ τρυφερὰν  
 Καὶ ὡς τὸ καινὸν ἀλεκτόριν οὕτως αὐτὴν πεπήδηκεν.  
 Καὶ ἐποίησε παιδία ὡς τὰ ξυλοκούκουδα.  
 Καὶ οὐδεις τολμᾷ λαλῆσαι · ἀλλ’ ὅλους ἐφίμωσεν.  
 Ἄγιέ μου, ἄγιε, φοβερὸ καὶ δυνατὸ,  
 Δὸς αὐτῷ κατὰ κρανίου, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρηται ·  
 Κάγώ σοι τὸν βούν τὸν μέγαν προσαγάγω εἰς εὐχὴν.

Verses 1, 3, 4, and 6-7 have fifteen syllables in the political trochaic form. This same form could hold in verse 2 with the simple exchange of τὴν for αὐτὴν. The invocation in verse five, which leads off the second part of the song, is composed of two catalectic trochaic tetrapods. A translation in the same verse form ought to shed light on the tone of this very interesting cultural-historical example of a satirical song:

[793] When he found a heifer sweet, tender and so delicate,  
 Then at once he pounced upon her, like she was a fresh new hen.  
 After that he procreated, as a yeoman planes a board.  
 No one dared to speak against him, after he had shushed us all.  
 Holy Lord, my Holy Lord, terrible and powerful,  
 Lest he thinks he's something special, give him one upside the head;  
 Then I will, I swear it, Master, give to you a bull instead.

Soon thereafter (in 602), the Blue party greeted the usurper Phokas in the Hippodrome with the words Μαυρίκιος οὐκ ἀπέθανε, Μάθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν (⊖ – ⊖ – | ⊖ – ⊖ – || – ⊖ – ⊖ – ⊖ –) “Maurikios is not yet dead, do your best to learn the truth,” on account of which Phokas was moved to have the former emperor Maurice killed along with his children. The Green party sang a song in 608 against this same Phokas that contained two iambic dimeters:

Πάλιν ᾽ς τὸν καῦκον ἔπιες,  
 Πάλιν τὸν νοῦν ἀπώλεσας.

Again you drank the tumbler dry,  
 Again you left your mind behind.

During his siege of Saniana, Michael II (820-829) had his agents report the following to the commander of the city:

᾽Ακουσε, κὺρ Οἰκονόμμε,  
 Τὸν Γυβέριν, τί σου λέγει ·  
 ᾽Αν μου δῶς τὴν Σανιάναν,  
 Μητροπολίτην σε ποίσω,  
 Νεοκαισάρειάν σου δώσω.

Listen up, lord Oikonomus,  
 What Gyberis offers to you:  
 If you give me Saniana,  
 I will then make you a bishop;  
 You will have New Caesarea.

His successor Theophilos (829-842) greeted his people as the victor in a war game with the following words: Καλῶς ἦλθες, ἀσύγκριτε φακτονάρη. The number of these examples could easily be increased threefold. The custom of the Byzantine people, which can be compared with what goes on at Habersfeld in upper Bavaria, to show their approbation or

displeasure with the emperor and other high office holders continued for a long time. However, the examples taken from eleventh-century historians are not very valuable because by this time vernacular speech was beginning to appear in an independent manner in important literary monuments.

The oldest of the greater poems to use the Romaic vernacular language [794] were likely to have been the heroic songs that were later amalgamated by semi-learned writers in the epic of Digenis Akritas. Nothing has survived, however, from the earliest forms of these songs. The earliest prose monuments of the Romaic language come from a tenth-century document that was composed in lower Italy and was published in Trinchera's collection. Literary circles in the capital city used popular speech in their admonitory, panegyric and supplicatory poetry since the early eleventh century. It was only in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, that vernacular Greek conquered a broad area of Byzantine literature. The leading texts in this tradition were poems that were similar to romances both in their extent and in their meaning. They dealt with both antique and medieval material and sometimes followed Frankish models. One group dealt with poetic stories about animals and plants. Their material and perhaps their inspiration as well can be traced to the *Physiologos*. Several later works are tied together with the national heroic period of Digenis Akritas. By and large, these works recast history in mythological terms. The great verse chronicle of Morea is almost unique both in its purpose and in its content. In addition, there are poems with mixed contents, love songs as well as didactic, edifying and allegorical poems. The flow of minor poetical works was particularly strong from the middle of the fifteenth century on Crete. In addition to the Greco-Italian sources mentioned earlier, vernacular Greek prose survives in several popular works, legal collections, chronicles as well as in numerous paraphrases of historical, religious and medicinal texts, which are mostly found resting in the dust of libraries

The most important preparatory works for the scientific study of vernacular Greek literary history are still lacking. The present state of research makes it impossible to answer the most basic questions, including the dates and places where these works were composed. Only a very few works have been closely dated and localized. It appears, however, that the trail can be broken since most works were composed in a very few places, namely Constantinople, Cyprus and Crete. There is even less information about the chronology of these works than there is about their places of origin. Unfortunately, it is not likely that even exacting and comprehensive studies of their language will bring sufficient light to this problem. Almost everything remains to be done regarding investigations of the internal relationships of the individual works and genres. The same is true of the connections between vernacular Greek texts with ancient Greek and Byzantine artistic literature on the one side, and with Christian legends, modern Greek popular poetry and mythology on the other. [795] It is also necessary to tie in the literature and popular transmission from eastern, Slavic and western peoples. In general, I can give little more than a record for the awakening of participation in and the illumination of future detailed studies, with a record of the main facts and bibliographic materials.



### 330. Language and Meter

The spoken form of vernacular Greek works shows significant variations that affected the intonation, morphology, vocabulary and syntax. These variations can be explained in part by the periods and places from which these texts originated, and in part from the different roles assigned by individual authors to the popular and written languages. Differences of the first type need no explanation. It is natural that the record of popular speech would appear different in the twelfth century than they would in the sixteenth, and that a Cypriot would speak differently to his fellows than would a Cretan to his. The only real difficulty, and one that has not yet received sufficient attention, concerns the question of how writers dealt with the popular and artistic languages, that is, to what extent did vernacular Greek literary works represent the real linguistic conditions of their time and homeland. I am not attempting to provide an exact description of the history and content of the controversies touching on this point. However, it is necessary to provide some outline of the requirements needed for a formal assessment of vernacular literature. Current scholarship on this question is divided between two extreme poles. Some maintain that the language of medieval Greek vernacular works is a mixture of written, self-composed and living elements that is arbitrary and therefore almost useless for an investigation of the history of writing. Others describe this admittedly tangled and unusable material as the purest expression of the changing and living Greek of a particular time and place. The truth lies in the middle. First, one must recognize that this problem cannot be judged in a general manner, but rather each author must be considered, and indeed each work. For example, it is undoubtedly true that many Cretan works from the sixteenth century provide a generally true portrait of the popular language current in Cretan cities as it had been modified by foreign influences. But this does not mean that one can then make this claim about the rest of the literature. There are works whose authors, like Burdian's donkey, moved between hay bales of the written language and those of the popular idiom. Their styles are inconsistent, and this leads to many difficulties in understanding. [796] It is often difficult to ascertain whether a word is being used in the antique, contemporary or specifically medieval manner. In general, it is possible to say that the naive faithfulness to the replication of the spoken tone and word increased with the development of vernacular Greek literature. The vernacular language in the Cretan poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries appears to have been completely independent from artificial blemishes. It is completely natural that this state of affairs took time to develop. As soon as an author learned to read and write and had attended church a few times, he found himself quite unconsciously under the powerful spell of artistic Greek. At the most basic level, Byzantine instruction was used almost exclusively because of its antique grammar and literature. Furthermore, no one had ever heard a song or prayer in a Byzantine church that was composed in the popular language. Under these conditions, it would have been a marvel if the bold beginners who first composed the vernacular Greek texts could have distinguished with certainty between the contemporary popular language and the artistic Greek of the schools in tonal, morphological, lexicographical and syntactical terms. In order to reach this level it was necessary to have a great deal of experience and practice. It is difficult in individual cases to distinguish between written influences and general, popular or dialectical peculiarities. Here too it is necessary to have a detailed and refined method, a well-developed feel for the language and rich literary experience. Under these conditions it is possible to bring light to questions that lie now in utter darkness and bring a solution closer to fruition.

The metrical form of vernacular Greek poetry is known almost exclusively from political verse, whose construction and history were handled above. In addition, one can find the trochaic eight-syllable verse (see Fr. Hanssen, *Accentus grammatici*) in numerous works, including Hermoniakos' Ilias, in the oracles of Leo the Wise, in the story of the wise old man, in the poems of Phortios, in Trivolis and others. Additional accented verses are very rare and cannot be found among the best poems until the sixteenth century.

331. The transmission of vernacular Greek works had similar peculiarities to those found in the Latin and national vernacular literatures of the medieval West. Unlike classical and holy books, vernacular Greek texts were not seen as unalterable compositions complete both in form and content. Instead, like real popular works, they were changed sometimes more and sometimes less to fit the taste and needs of the time. These changes could take the form of a modernization of the language, a flattening out of the verse or a lengthening, rounding off or shortening of the text. These new forms regularly concealed or superseded the original text. [797] In many cases, two or more redactions of the text survive so that it is possible to observe gradual changes and to disentangle the oldest elements, to a certain extent, from the jumble of additions. However, even in those texts that have come down to us in a single form, it is possible to draw conclusions about how they have been changed through comparison with the various editions of works that have survived in many redactions. The comparative study of these changes and the marking off of a base text, which the most diplomatic methods of classical philology have quickly demonstrated to be a blunt instrument, is still the most important and uncompleted prerequisite for the chronological and generic construction of vernacular Greek literary history. The growing number of verses is an external sign of the course of development of the editions over time. However, this rule, as the transmission of the story of the wise old man shows, does not always hold. The number of surviving vernacular Greek manuscripts is smaller than one might expect given the fact that they were meant to be read by a wide audience and circulated in many copies. The reason for the loss of most of the manuscripts clearly lies in the indifference or active opposition of the learned and ecclesiastical circles to popular literary productions. They rarely made their way into the larger private libraries because of their external and internal shabbiness. They were largely excluded from monastic libraries because of the frequently erotic or crude nature of their contents. Consequently, their survival was left largely to chance. First place among all of the known surviving vernacular Greek manuscripts, with respect to the richness and diversity of its contents, can be ascribed to the famous collection, written between 1508 and 1560, that Emperor Ferdinand I's representative, A. Busbeck, acquired with many other manuscripts in Constantinople and brought back with him to Vienna (now cod. Vindob. theol. gr. 244, Nessel 297 in Lambecius). There is a description of this text by K. Sathas and W. Wagner in the *Carmina graeca medii aevi*, ed. W. Wagner, pp. ix-xiv. Other sources of vernacular Greek works are Cod. Ambros. Y.89.sup; Bodl. Misc. 287; Constantinople in the Old Serail Nr. 35 a. 1461 (compare Fr. Blass, *Hermes* 23, 224); Cryptoferrat. Z. a. 44; Escur. Ψ. IV. 22 16 c. (?) (Lybistros and Rhodamne, Poulologos, Psarologos; a description by R. Wünsch will appear shortly in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*); Leidens. Scalig. 55; Leidens. Vulc. 93; Marc. 408; IX 32; XI 19; XI 24; Neapol. III. A. a. 9, 16 c.; Neapol. III.B.27 16 c.; Oxon. Aedis Christi 49 15 c.; Paris. Gr. 396; 929; 2027; 2909; Paris. Suppl. Gr. 444; Paris. Coisl. 316; Vatic. 1139.

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