***The Byzantine Antiquarian: A Case Study of a Compiled Colophon[[1]](#footnote-1)***

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***Abstract***

*In this article, we present a colophon epigram found in the manuscript Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale, gr. II C 33. We edit the text, provide a translation and commentary and supply it with a thorough metrical analysis. Throughout the article, we investigate whether the scribe meant this colophon to be one text or three separate texts. By doing so, we will touch upon broader issues, such as Byzantine metrics in general and the Byzantine habit of compiling texts from an antiquarian perspective.*

***Keywords***: book epigrams, colophons, manuscript studies, Byzantine metrics, antiquarianism

**I. Introduction**

Byzantine manuscripts have proven to be real treasure troves for texts other than the well-known main texts. Indeed, the main texts are surrounded by different kinds of accompanying material, such as titles, scholia, images and marginal notes. One of the most popular kinds of these so-called paratexts is the colophon.[[2]](#footnote-2) Mostly found at the end of the manuscript, the colophon provides us with invaluable information about the production of the manuscript, such as the name of the scribe, the place and date of production, the patron who ordered the manuscript, etc.

Colophons could be written in prose (and they usually are in, for example, Latin manuscripts), but a considerable number of Byzantine colophons displays at least the intention of the scribe to compose metrical verses, usually dodecasyllables. For this purpose, some conventional formulas circulated, that could either serve as colophons on their own, or could precede a longer text. Two of the most popular colophon formulas are the following ones:

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| Ὥσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν ἰδεῖν πατρίδα,  οὕτως καὶ οἱ γράφοντες βιβλίου τέλος.[[3]](#footnote-3) | 'Like travellers rejoice upon seeing their homeland,  so too do scribes upon reaching the end of the book'.[[4]](#footnote-4) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ἡ μὲν χεὶρ ἡ γράψασα σήπεται τάφῳ,  γραφὴ δὲ μένει εἰς χρόνους πληρεστάτους.[[5]](#footnote-5) | ‘The hand that wrote rots in the grave,  but the writing remains till the end of time’.[[6]](#footnote-6) |

Both formulas were extremely widespread in Byzantine manuscripts and were eagerly elaborated upon by the scribes who copied them into their manuscripts. Words could be replaced by (near) synonyms, the orthography varied from one manuscript to another and even entire verses could be added to the epigram. The formulas were sometimes also included in other, longer epigrams.

We will not go into much detail about the particular occurrences of each of the formulas. Gérard Garitte[[7]](#footnote-7) and Basileios Atsalos[[8]](#footnote-8) have collected numerous manuscript witnesses of the ἡ χείρ-formula, while Kurt Treu[[9]](#footnote-9) and Julie Boeten and Mark Janse[[10]](#footnote-10) investigate the ὥσπερ ξένοι-formula more deeply. Other articles explore the relationship with manuscripts in other languages such as Armenian and Syriac, in which these very same colophon formulas also occur.[[11]](#footnote-11) Furthermore, we refer the reader to the *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams*, which aims to collect all occurrences of Greek book epigrams and which has by now assembled most of these popular formulas in manuscripts dated from 500 to 1500.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In this article, we will focus on one particular occurrence of the ‘ἡ μὲν χεὶρ ἡ γράψασα’ formula, transmitted in the manuscript Napoli, *Biblioteca Nazionale*, gr. II C 33. This miscellaneous codex consists of seven parts that were brought together into one book towards the end of the 15th century. The manuscript bears several subscriptions, the first of which is situated on f. 48r and reads ‘ἰω(άν)νης νοτάριος ταυτέγράφη’.[[13]](#footnote-13) A second, longer verse subscription was added on f. 476v, in which the scribe calls himself ‘ἰω(άννης) ὁ χθαμαλὸς τοὐπίκλην ξηροκάλιτ(ος)’.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The colophon epigram in which we are interested is situated towards the end of the manuscript, on f. 518r. It concludes a collection of letters by several authors, most of which are written by Photius. The last letter, immediately preceding our colophon, is *Epistula* 9 ascribed to Plato. A diplomatic transcription of the epigram can be found on the *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams*: [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5310](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5310).

**II. Edition and translation**

In this paragraph, we present a normalized edition of the epigram under examination, accompanied by a translation.

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| 1  5 | Ἡ χεὶρ μὲν ἡ γράψασα σήπεται τάφῳ.  Θάλασσαν καὶ γῆν τὴν ἅπασαν εἰ δράμῃς,  τάφος, ἄνθρωπε, τὸ σῶμα σου καλύψει.  -----------------------------------------------------------------  Γυμνὸς ἐπέβην ἐν γῇ, γυμνὸς δ' ὑπὸ γαῖαν ἄπειμι·  καὶ τί μάτην μοχθῶ, γυμνὸν ὁρῶν τὸ τέλος;  Ὁ κόσμος σκηνή, ὁ βίος πάροδος· ἦλθες, εἶδες, ἀπῆλθες. | The hand that has written this rots in a grave.  Even if you’d run over the sea and the entire earth,  A grave, human, will cover your body.  ------------------------------------------------------------------------------  I came on earth naked, naked I will go under the earth.  And why should I toil in vain, if I see the naked end?  The world is a stage, life is a performance*: y*ou came, you saw, you departed. |
|  |  |  |

v. 2 δράμῃς ] cod. δράμοις

***Sources***

v. 4-5: cfr. *AP* X.58 – r. 6: cfr. Diels-Kranz 1935, 165.

**III. Commentary**

This case study is unique in its treatment of one of the scribal formulas cited in the introduction, as it draws inspiration from at least three different sources.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The first three verses constitute an elaborated variant of the ἡ χείρ-formula. This particular occurrence only retains the first verse of the formula and continues with two verses that are otherwise unknown to us and may therefore either be composed by the scribe himself or taken from a lost or unknown source. In any case, the message is clear: man cannot escape death.

Vv. 4 and 5 are based on an epigram from the *Anthologia Palatina*, with some slight variations:

**Γῆς** ἐπέβην **γυμνὸς** γυμνὸς **θ**᾿ ὑπὸ γαῖαν ἄπειμι·

καὶ τί μάτην μοχθῶ γυμνὸν ὁρῶν τὸ τέλος;

(AP X.58)[[16]](#footnote-16)

The original elegiac distich is part of the tenth book of the *Anthologia* and belongs to a collection of gnomic epigrams ascribed to Palladas.[[17]](#footnote-17) Our colophon, however, is marked by some changes in word order, which cause the first verse of the distich to scan faulty.

The last line of the colophon is known to us as a philosophical fragment in prose:

ὁ κόσμος σκηνή, ὁ βίος πάροδος· ἦλθες, εἶδες, ἀπῆλθες.

(Diels-Kranz 1935, 165) = fragment B 115, \*84

The fragment is usually transmitted in a collection of sayings ascribed to the philosopher Democritus, some of which may be original while others are certainly not. Diels-Kranz[[18]](#footnote-18) assume that our particular text belongs to the latter category.[[19]](#footnote-19)

If we take into account the visual presentation of the colophon, we must conclude that we can neither state that it is *one* text (as do Pierleoni[[20]](#footnote-20) and Atsalos,[[21]](#footnote-21) who both edit the colophon as a continuous text), nor that we are dealing here with *three* separate texts. The scribe sets apart the first three verses by adding a typical manuscript sign, consisting of three dots in the shape of a triangle (·.·) after καλύψει. This popular sign usually indicates the end of a text or section. Moreover, the word Γυμνός is marked as the beginning of a new text since it starts with an enlarged initial Γ written in red ink. Surprisingly, however, the scribe has by no means indicated a division between the second and the third part of the poem or, in other words, between v. 5 and 6. At this point, he merely wrote a high dot ( · ), used elsewhere in the text to highlight the division of verses or even cola within verses (see below under IV.2: *The commatic style of our case study*). Thus, we can conclude that our scribe considered the last three lines as one text.

This observation can be explained by looking at the manuscript tradition of the last two text segments. As mentioned in the edition of Diels-Kranz, the fragment of Ps.-Democritus follows after the very same epigram *AP* X.58 in four out of the five manuscripts used by the editors, which are, primarily, collections of gnomic sayings of Democritus.[[22]](#footnote-22) As an example, we refer to the manuscript Heidelberg, *Universitätsbibliothek* *Pal. gr.* 356 (14th century), which contains a set of gnomes of several philosophers on f. 143v-155r. On f. 144v we read first the epigram of the *AP* and then the fragment of Ps.-Democritus. In other words, the epigram was at some point silently inserted into the otherwise prose collection of gnomes, which was facilitated by its similarity in content to the gnomic sayings and to this fragment in particular. However, the manuscript does not indicate in any way that we are dealing with poetry. Moreover, both texts are clearly separated and do not (yet) form one whole, as they do in our colophon.

Similarly, in manuscripts in which the distich is preserved within an anthology of metrical epigrams, we notice that it may be followed by the prose fragment of Ps.-Democritus, without any indication that we are shifting from poetry to prose or that this fragment stems from a different source. The manuscript Paris*, BnF* gr. 1630 (14th century), for example, contains a small collection of epigrams, amongst which, on f. 62v, the epigram *AP* X.58, followed by the fragment of Ps.-Democritus, which is, again, marked as a separate text. Seemingly, the prose fragment was not felt to be out of place within an anthology of poems.

These observations lead us to some conclusions. It is obvious that the two texts were somehow felt to be connected from at least the 14th century onwards. The order of the fragments is fixed: the epigram comes first and is followed by the gnome. The colophon in our manuscript, however, does present some innovations in comparison to the examples we have analysed. Firstly, it presents the two texts as one whole and not as two consecutive yet separate texts. Secondly, as will be discussed below, the first verse of the distich is slightly adapted in the colophon epigram, which is not the case in the other witnesses. Both of these innovations may be unique to our case study, or may come from an earlier source that is now unknown to us.

In short, we cannot indisputably state that these six verses/lines form one text as such, since the scribe indicated a division after the third verse. However, the colophon is still conceived as a meaningful whole, governed by an unmistakable unity of content. The different portions of text are centred around the idea that death is inescapable and that we will eventually return to the earth from which we sprung. As such, they form a short dialogue, since the first and third part are written in the second person, while the second part is written in the first person. The cohesion between the parts is stressed even further by the repetition of the word γῆ both in the elaboration of the ἡ χείρ-formula (v. 2) and in the second part of the colophon (v. 4). The presence of other words referring to the earth or the world (v. 4 γαῖαν, v. 6 κόσμος) additionally reinforces the thematic link between the parts.

Remarkably, our colophon does not refer to any type of afterlife at all. The usual conclusion of the ἡ χείρ-formula is that the writings of a scribe will remain forever, even after his death, thus ensuring his immortality. Although the ἡ χείρ-epigrams display a substantial amount of variation, they are rather consistent in retaining this idea, even if they formulate it differently. A smaller number of occurrences, for example, replaces the second verse (γραφὴ δὲ μένει εἰς χρόνους πληρεστάτους) with a direct entreaty to the reader to pray for the scribe to have a good afterlife or to remember him while reading his texts.[[23]](#footnote-23)

In our case study, however, the idea of a good afterlife is replaced by a complete focus on the vanity of life, which is present in the three constitutive parts of the epigram and forms, as such, the core around which the different pieces are centred. The most remarkable expression of the idea is to be found in the fragment of Ps.-Democritus. In this text, the world is compared to a theatre, in which man is merely an actor who plays his role and then leaves the stage. This *topos* was very popular from antiquity onwards,[[24]](#footnote-24) occurred in the Byzantine period and reached great popularity in the Baroque period, as is described, for example, by Barner in his book on Baroque rhetoric.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**IV. Metrical Structure**

How can we be sure that these texts may be edited in one and the same article, as though it were one text rather than three separate ones? Opposed what the content-based unity of the texts suggests, the formal characteristics very much propose that we are dealing with three separate segments. The poem consists of three different metrical sections which seem irreconcilable at first: can dodecasyllables, elegiacs and prose ever have been meant to be one whole?

If we try to interpret the text from a more Byzantine perspective, the metrical complexity of the occurrence poses no real difficulties. The way in which the Byzantines conceived of meter and rhythm was very different from how we think about poetry and prose today. Metrical complexity and hybridity abound in Byzantine book epigrams and it was not at all deemed strange if an author combined different kinds of meter in one poem, or even metrical lines with prose lines. Hybrid epigrams usually contain dodecasyllabic lines combined with political verse (some examples are *DBBE* 1800,[[26]](#footnote-26) 5136,[[27]](#footnote-27) 9206[[28]](#footnote-28)), or dodecasyllables combined with a prose ending (e.g. *DBBE* 1980,[[29]](#footnote-29) 3350,[[30]](#footnote-30) 6357[[31]](#footnote-31)). This has its counterpart in more literary texts as well: an example of political verses combined with hexameters is to be found in the *History* of John Tzetzes (§369).[[32]](#footnote-32) A combination of dodecasyllables with an elegiac distich and with prose, however, is quite rare and makes our case study especially interesting.

1. ***Poetry, prose and Asianic oratory***

In order to come to a better understanding of the conception of meter and rhythm by the Byzantines, it is first of all important to note that there was no clear-cut distinction between prose and poetry in the Byzantine world as there is in our modern, western way of thinking. Especially the typically medieval, accentual meters[[33]](#footnote-33) were not considered to be very different from prose texts.[[34]](#footnote-34) The main reason for this is that Byzantine oratory was very rhythmical and abided by certain rhythmical rules, which made it resemble poetry.[[35]](#footnote-35) The very popular Byzantine homily is an example of this. Its rhythmical characteristics are derived from what was called ‘Asianic oratory’ in Late Antique times (as opposed to ‘Attic oratory’) and which survived into Byzantine times in the form of liturgical texts, homilies or eulogies, due to its immense popularity in the lower classes of society.[[36]](#footnote-36) The Asianic style was not fluent, like the Attic style was, but rather abrupt, in that the texts were subdivided into short prosodic units with a certain rhythm, that were repeated indefinitely. This made the text sound more ‘rapid’ than ‘fluent’ (cf. Lauxtermann and his idea of ‘γοργότης’).[[37]](#footnote-37) This is what is called the ‘commatic style’ or ‘writing κατὰ κῶλα καὶ κόμματα’.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Commatic texts consist of a series of self-contained clauses, easily cut up in smaller meaningful parts, which must have sounded very different from the flowing phrases of Atticist orators. This is also the reason why Cicero criticizes Asianic orators for almost singing their texts and why he spurns them as being slave of the rhythm.[[39]](#footnote-39) The commatic style implies that the orator finishes one thought within one rhythmical unit (i.e. κόμμα), which is perfect for underlining parallelisms or antitheses and which also made the often difficult content of the text more manageable for uneducated audiences. Another rule that was consistently applied to commatic rhetorical texts was that of the ‘Byzantine accentual cursus’,[[40]](#footnote-40) which is a rhythmical ending to a phrase or a semantic segment which signaled the end of this phrase or segment to the audience. This once again underlined the rhythmicality of the text.

Whereas the commatic style was connected with Asianic oratory and more ‘vulgar’ texts in Late Antiquity, it became the norm in later Byzantine times. Somewhere along the way, the bad reputation of this style must have gradually faded, as it became the manner in which a rhythmical text should be written rather than a choice of style. No doubt its popularity with more uneducated audiences was a contributing factor to the wide spread of this way of writing.

The rhetorical *commata* (κόμματα) of this commatic style resemble the metrical *cola* (κῶλα) or half verses of Byzantine metrics very much. Both have a prosodic unity, since they were pronounced as one whole, and both have a semantic unity, because one thought was finished within one unit. Moreover, the Byzantine accentual cursus is very similar to the consistent paroxytonic ending in accentual poetry (i.e. the consistent accentuation of the second-to-last syllable of each verse). In both cases, the end of a line or a phrase is clearly signaled to the audience.

In these respects, Byzantine prose resembles Byzantine poetry, but that is also true the other way around: Byzantine accentual poetry sometimes resembles prose as well. Some book epigrams in dodecasyllables or political verse do not seem to bother so much with the exact number of syllables, but rather display some sort of spontaneous expression of a deeper rhythmical feeling.[[41]](#footnote-41) An example is *DBBE* 4823,[[42]](#footnote-42) an epigram that starts off in dodecasyllables, interrupts this with a fourteen-syllable line (v. 3), goes on with political verses (vv. 4-8), interrupts yet again with a thirteen-syllable verse (v. 9), continues in political verses, and ends with another fourteen-syllable (v. 17) and thirteen-syllable verse (v. 18). The recurring metrical patterns indicate that it was indeed meant to be poetry – as do the consistent paroxytonic verse endings – but it cannot be pinned down or be considered one specific meter. Moreover, Hörandner[[43]](#footnote-43) and Lauxtermann[[44]](#footnote-44) assume that Byzantine accentual metrics may have originated from rhetorical rhythm and thus from prose.

This is not to say that there was no difference between prose and poetry at all for the Byzantines. However, we must assume more of a metrical-prosaic continuum, going from highbrow metrical poems on the one end to very low-register prose texts on the other, but also with texts that must be situated somewhere in the middle grey zone (such as *DBBE* 4823). One and the same text could thus migrate along this continuum and start off in a very poetical meter, but trail off in prose. Lauxtermann underscores this when he says: “In the Byzantine world, however, prose and poetry dance to the same tune and respond to the same rhythmical rules.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

1. ***The commatic style of our case study***

If we now apply all of this to our case study, we may conclude that it is not quite as problematic as it seemed at first that two different types of meter are combined with prose and it moreover does not prove that it was meant to be three separate texts instead of one. The most important rhythmical feature of the epigram under scrutiny here is its segmentation into prosodic *cola* or *commata*, and this feature encompasses all three parts of the poem, thus uniting them in one rhythmical unity.

The first dodecasyllabic part of the poem (vv. 1-3) is broken up into the very typical *cola* or half-verses of Byzantine meter. The inner caesura after either the fifth or seventh syllable (v. 1 *B7*,[[46]](#footnote-46) vv.2-3 *B5*) is a very strong line break in the dodecasyllable, which interrupts the prosody and often the semantic flow of the verse as well. Also note, moreover, how the scribe has visually marked each line break with a semicolon or a comma, thus visualizing this important breach in the line (cf. the transcription on [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5310](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5310)).[[47]](#footnote-47) Additionally, verse 3 does not maintain the prosody of the ancient iambic trimeter, which suggests that our scribe did not know how to produce prosodic verses or did not care about it very much.[[48]](#footnote-48) The number of syllables (twelve), the inner caesura and the paroxytonic verse ending are the most prominent features of the first three lines of our case study.

The second part of the epigram is an elegiac (vv. 4-5) – or rather, is supposed to be an elegiac, since some adaptations by our scribe have made verse 4 metrically faulty. As was already mentioned earlier, the scribe based these lines of the epigram on an existing poem in the *Anthologia Palatina,* where the meter is entirely correct. Other manuscripts that are testimony of these lines (cf. supra) also maintain the correct meter of the *Anthologia*. What our scribe did, however, was change the word order, so that ‘γυμνός’ now stands first and ‘γῆς’/’ἐν γῇ’ is postponed until further down the line, thus ruining the hexameter. Why?

First of all, it is interesting to note that the punctuation marks (semicola and commas) that segmented the dodecasyllabic verses into *cola*, continue into the elegiac part. We must assume that these indicate a simple pause in the pronunciation, quite in the same way as in a dodecasyllable.[[49]](#footnote-49) What is striking, however, is that the punctuation mark in the faulty hexameter is situated after the seventh syllable, as though it were a dodecasyllabic *colon*. When one goes from line 3 to line 4 and starts reading ‘Γυμνὸς ἐπέβην ἐν γῇ·’, one might at first assume that the dodecasyllables simply continue, since this half verse could easily be mistaken for a first *colon* of a dodecasyllable. This would not have been possible if the original word order of the poem in the *Anthologia Palatina* was retained. It thus seems like our scribe still had the rhythm of the dodecasyllable stuck in his head whilst proceeding to a hexameter, and sacrificed the prosodic correctness of the hexameter to his need for a continued use of the same *cola*.

The punctuation marks of the previous two passages also persist into the final and prosaic part of the poem. There is a clear tendency to subdivide the text into *commata*, in the same way as happened in Asianic oratory. It does not attempt to be metrical in any way, but it exhibits the commatic style, thus including it into the poem, despite it being in prose, and sustaining the fractional character of the entire text.

The prosody was not considered to be the most important metrical feature in this epigram, since both the dodecasyllables and the elegiac exhibit prosodic mistakes. Rather, the combination of *cola* and the vague concept of εὐρυθμία (‘harmony’, ‘gracefulness’)[[50]](#footnote-50) are central. More than anything, the segmentation of the text into *cola* or *commata* was what made the text rhythmical.

**V. The Byzantines as antiquarians**

The scribe who wrote down this colophon may, to our modern eyes, seem to be a compiler rather than an author, since his job basically consisted of taking pieces of text from different sources and reassembling them. Thus, the colophon testifies of the Byzantine antiquarian habit that is obvious in different genres, i.e. the tendency to compile pieces of text or information from earlier sources and rearrange them in order to achieve a new and meaningful whole. A radical example of this is the *cento*, a poetic form that tells a new story in verses taken from an older work.[[51]](#footnote-51)

This antiquarian predilection has an impact on a larger scale as well. A good example of this is to be found in Byzantine book production. Although codices that were entirely devoted to the work of a single author are well attested, a considerable amount of manuscripts are in fact compilations or *florilegia*. In other words, their compilers collected different texts or fragments of texts, sometimes very short, and brought them together into one codex. These constitutive parts were not chosen at random, but were organised around a certain central theme (or: several themes in the case of larger manuscripts). In fact, the manuscript in which our epigram is transmitted (i.e. Napoli, *Biblioteca Nazionale*, gr. II C 33) is an excellent example in this respect. The seven constitutive parts contain texts or fragments of texts centred around diverse topics, such as astrology, theology, hagiography and philosophy. Genre could also be a criterion for compilation, as is illustrated by the collection of letters preceding our colophon.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Our short ἡ χείρ-epigram in a sense gives testimony of a similar literary preference as that of the *cento* or that of the manuscript collector, albeit on a much smaller scale. It collects several shorter fragments that are centred around the same idea, thus constituting a meaningful whole. In some respects, the result is something radically new and typically Byzantine, as it unites several texts coming from different backgrounds and even written in different meters, although the question remains if the scribe was aware of this fact.

**VI. Conclusion**

Our compiled case study is edited as one text in this article, because it is in its entirety that it bears witness to the antiquarian habit of the Byzantines. There are nonetheless arguments both for and against it being one, two or three texts. The diacritical signs and visual aspects seem to suggest that we are dealing with two texts (vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-6) instead of one, but as a colophon it has clearly been constructed as one entity. This is illustrated by the unity of content throughout the several parts of the epigram. At first, the meter seems to be the main plea against a unified text, but metrical hybridity is in fact not as problematic as is often thought, and can therefore not be used as an argument against it being one whole.

If anything, this poem is a very Byzantine thing, because of its metrical complexity, in which the εὐρυθμία is achieved through the segmentation into *cola* or *commata*. But also the tendency to collect texts from several places, put them together and make them something entirely new, is a typically Byzantine characteristic. Our case study exhibits the very same antiquarian taste, but on a smaller level. Our scribe has assumed different texts and made them his own, thus creating an entirely new text.

*Ghent*

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2. M. D. Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts. Vienna 2003, 198; 200-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/typ/199> - last consulted 22/06/2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry (see note 2), 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/typ/76> - last consulted 22/06/2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry (see note 2), 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. G. Garitte, Sur une formule des colophons de manuscrits grecs. In: *Collectanea vaticana in honorem Anselmi M. Card. Albareda a Bibliotheca Apostolica edita*. Vatican 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. B. Atsalos, Die Formel Ἡ μὲν χεὶρ ἡ γράψασα… in den griechischen Handschriften. In: G. Cavallo (ed.), *Scritture, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisanzio*. Spoleto 1991, 691-750. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. K. Treu, Der Schreiber am Ziel. Zu den Versen Ὥσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν… und ähnlichen. In: K. Treu et al. (eds.), *Studia Codicologica*. Berlin 1977, 473-492. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. J. Boeten – M. Janse, A Cognitive Analysis of Metrical Irregularities in the Ὥσπερ ξένοι Book Epigrams. *BMGS* 42(2018), 79-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See e.g. S.P. Brock, The Scribe Reaches Harbour. *BF* 11 (1995), 195-202; A. McCollum, The Rejoicing Sailor and the Rotting Hand: Two Formulas in Syriac and Arabic Colophons. *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 18 (2015), 67-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cited from G. Pierleoni, Catalogus codicum graecorum Bibliothecae Nationalis Neapolitanae, t. I. Roma 1962, 281. Written in a monocondyllion. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. <http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5905> - last consulted 22/06/2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A similar case of an epigram compiled from other sources is discussed in P. Odorico, Poésies à marge, réflexions personnelles? Quelques observations sur les poésies du Parisinus graecus 1711. In: F. Bernard – K. Demoen (eds.), Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium, Burlington 2012: 207-224. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Cited from H. Beckby, Anthologia Graeca, (volume III). München 1958, 506. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Beckby (see note 15), 473. Palladas was a fourth-century school teacher who lived in Alexandria and wrote gnomic and satiric poems (*DNP* s.v. *Palladas*). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. H. Diels – W. Kranz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und Deutsch. Zweiter Band. Berlin 1935, 165. The fragment is preceded by an \*, which marks it as a “*sicher unechtes Einschiebsel.*” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. An interesting parallel to the last line of our epigram can be noted in the first two verses of a funerary inscription on a herme from Rome (2nd – 3rd century AD).

    **Οὐκ ἤμην, γενόμην· ἤμην, οὐκ εἰμί· τοσαῦτα·   
    εἰ δέ τις ἄλλο ἐρέει, ψεύσεται· οὐκ ἔσομαι.**

    Χαῖρε δίκαιος ὤν.

    Ὦ παῖ, φυλάσσου, μὴ σφαλῇς· ἡ γλῶσσά τοι

    αὐτὴ μὲν οὐδέν, ἡνίκ’ ἂν λέγῃ, πονεῖ,

    ὅταν δὲ ἁμάρτῃ, πολλὰ προσβάλλει κακά.

    (*IG* XIV 1201; *GVI* 1959).

    These two lines express the same idea of transience found in the last line of our epigram. Moreover, similarly to our case study, this inscription combines an elegiac distich (v.1-2) with prose (v. 3) and iambic trimeter (v.4-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Pierleoni (see note 13), 282. Pierleoni, moreover, does not seem to be aware of the fact that the text is (partially) metrical and transcribes it as if it were an entirely prose subscription. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Atsalos (see note 8), 727. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Diels – Kranz (see note 18), 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See, for example *DBBE* 1651 (<http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1651> - last consulted 28/06/2018). Theepigram preserves the first verse of the formula and continues with a series of horrible events that will befall us after death. Lastly, the poet asks the readers to remember him, followed by the date of composition. Thus, the epigram evokes the notion that the texts written by the scribe can offer him immortality in the memory of his readers. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See for example Plato, *Philebus* 51c: Μηνύει δὴ νῦν ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν ἐν θρήνοις τε καὶ ἐν τραγῳδίαις <καὶ κωμῳδίαις>, μὴ τοῖς δράμασι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ **τῇ τοῦ βίου συμπάσῃ τραγῳδίᾳ καὶ κωμῳδίᾳ**, λύπας ἡδοναῖς ἅμα κεράννυσθαι, καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις δὴ μυρίοις (J. Burnet, Platonis opera, vol. 2. Oxford 1901 (repr. 1967): St II.11a-67b.) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. W. Barner, Barockrhetorik. Untersuchungen zu ihren geschichtlichen Grundlagen. Tübingen 1970, 86-131, in which the author gives examples of how different traditions and authors use the image of the *theatrum mundi*. His main focus is the use of the image in Baroque works, but he also mentions earlier examples, including the fragment of Ps.-Democritus. Famous Baroque examples are Shakespeare, *As you like it*: “All the worlds a stage, / And all the men and women merely players” (Barner 87) and Vondel in an epigram written above the entrance to the National Theatre in Amsterdam: “De weereld is een speeltooneel, / Elck speelt zijn rol en krijght zijn deel” (Barner 87) . Both of these references date from the 17th century. A Byzantine example of the *topos* can be found in the work of Theodore Prodromos, as discussed by Eric Cullhed: E. Cullhed, Theodore Prodromos in the Garden of Epicurus. In: A. Cameron – N. Gaul, Dialogues and Debates from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium. London – New York 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1800](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1800) - last consulted 28/06/2018. The first verse is a political verse, the second one is a dodecasyllable. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5136](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5136) - last consulted 28/06/2018. The epigram is written entirely in dodecasyllables, except for the last verse, which is in political verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/9206](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/9206) - last consulted 28/06/2018. The first verse is a dodecasyllable, the second one is a political verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1980](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/1980) - last consulted 28/06/2018. Verses 1 to 5 are dodecasyllables, v. 6 is a political verse and v. 7 is a dodecasyllable again. After this, the meter starts to waver, first with two lines with 13 syllables instead of 12 (vv. 8-9), then with a fourteen-syllable verse (v. 10), a political verse (v. 11), a dodecasyllable (v. 12) and another political verse (v. 13). After this, the meter is lost and lines 14-15 are prose. V. 16 is yet again a political verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/3350](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/3350) - last consulted 28/06/2018. The first part (up to v.3) are dodecasyllables, followed by two political verses (vv. 4-5), after which the poem slips away into a rhythmical sort of prose. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/6357](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/6357) - last consulted 28/06/2018. The first 3 verses are dodecasyllables, but from v. 4 onwards there is no metrical pattern anymore. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. P.A.M. Leone, Ioannis Tzetzae historiae. Galatina 2007. This cannot be entirely equated with what happens in the epigram here, since Tzetzes purposely and deliberately combines these meters in some sort of literary game, which was most likely not the case for the author of the epigram. But it does show that the combination of several meters in one text was not deemed to be wrong or aberrant. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. These are the dodecasyllable and political verse (πολιτικὸς στίχος), since they are based on the alternation of accentuated and non-accentuated syllables. They are opposed to hexameters and elegiacs, which are prosodic meters, meaning that they are based on the alternation of long and short syllables. Some dodecasyllables maintain prosodic features as well, but their more obvious characteristics make them an accentual meter rather than a prosodic one. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. M.D. Lauxtermann, The Velocity of Pure Iambs: Byzantine Observations on the Meter and Rhythm of the Dodecasyllable, *JÖB* 48 (1998), 9-33; M.D. Lauxtermann, The Spring of Rhythm: an Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metre. Vienna 1999; W. Hörandner, Der Prosarhythmus in der retorischen Literatur der Byzantiner. Vienna 1981; W. Hörandner, Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik der Byzantiner. Einige byzantinische Zeugnisse zu Metrik und Rhythmik. *Byzantinoslavica* 56.2 (1995), 279-290. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. V. Valiavitcharska, Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium: the Sound of Persuasion. Cambridge 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Lauxtermann, Spring of Rhythm (see note 34); Valiavitcharska (see note 35). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Lauxtermann, Velocity of Pure Iambs (see note 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* I.9: *“I have considered it necessary to bring the following to mind: the holy Hiëronymus, out of consideration for his simple brothers, said in the preface to the Prophets (i.e. Praefatio in Esaiam) that, because of those who had not learned textual distinction from their teachers in secular literature, he had subdivided his own translation into cola and commata (***colis et commatibus***), in accordance with how it is read today.”* (edition: R. A. B. Mynors, Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones. Oxford 1937). There are moreover manuscripts of the bible and writings of Cicero where the text is visually divided into κῶλα, which suggests that this technique was used to proclaim these texts to a wider audience. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Cicero, *Orator*, 231: “*The orator who avoids these faults, who does not transpose words so that it seems to be done intentionally, who does not stuff in words as though to fill up the cracks, who does not cut up and weaken his sentence in his pursuit of short rhythms, who does not use the same form of rhythm without variation, will avoid nearly all faults”* (edition and translation: G. L. Hendrickson, Brutus; Orator. Londen 1962). Also see Cicero, *Orator*, 212-214. About the bad reputation of Asianic rhetoric, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ῥητόρων* 1-2 (L. Radermacher – H. Usener, Dionysii Halicarnasei quae exstant, vol. 5. Leipzig 1899). He accuses the “new” rhetoric (i.e. Asianic rhetoric) of a “theatrical shamelessness” (ἀναιδείᾳ θεατρικῇ) and compares it to a “senseless harlot” (ἑταίρα δέ τις ἄφρων). It was considered to be vulgar, because of its popularity in the lower classes of society. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Valiavitcharska (see note 35), 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. F. Bernard – K. Demoen, Book Epigrams. In: W. Hörandner – A. Rhoby – N. Zagklas, (eds.) *Brill’s Companion to Byzantine* *Poetry*. Leiden forthcoming. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. [www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/4823](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/4823) - last consulted 28/06/2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Hörandner, Prosarhythmus & Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik (see note 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Lauxtermann, Velocity of Pure Iambs & Spring of Rhythm (see note 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Lauxtermann, Spring of Rhythm (see note 34), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Maas, Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber. *BZ* 12 (1906), 278-323. Maas called the inner caesura of the dodecasyllable ‘Binnenschluß’ rather than ‘caesura’, because he believed the nature of the dodecasyllabic pause to be different from the caesura in prosodic meters. Derived from Maas’s Binnenschluß, the abbreviation ‘B’ is often used, followed by the number of syllables preceding the Binnenschluß. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. For more about dodecasyllables and a semicolon at the caesura, see: W. Hörandner, Weitere Beobachtungen zu byzantinischen Figurengedichten und Tetragrammen. *Nea Rhome* 6 (2009), 291‒304. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The first verse was almost certainly taken from another ἡ χείρ-formula that the scribe read in another manuscript, which accounts for the prosody in at least this line. However, it is uncertain whether the following two lines are originally from our scribe, or whether he copied them as well. It is striking that only the third verse is unprosodic and this seems to suggest that the last verse was produced by another scribe (either our scribe or an earlier one), who did not know how to produce prosodic lines. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. With the loss of the distinction between long and short syllables, the original pronunciation of the hexameter was also lost. Whichever role caesurae may have had in the ancient pronunciation, they have now become a clear line break for the Byzantines, in the same way as the Binnenschlüße functioned in the dodecasyllables. M.D. Lauxtermann, Appendix Metrica. forthcoming, 301: “… the Pisidian hexameter was well on the way to becoming a truly accentual meter: a 17-syllable verse…” . The caesura had therefore become a Binnenschluß. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. H. G. Lidell – R. Scott – H. S. Jones – R. McKenzie, A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford 1966. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. K. O. Sandnes, The Gospel ‘According to Homer and Virgil.’ Cento and Canon. Leiden 2011, 3: “In short, a cento is a pastiche of lines or quotes from a classical text.” Or: p. 108: “Centos are poems made up entirely of verses lifted, verbatim or with only slight modification, from Virgil, if they are Virgilian centos, or from the Iliad and Odyssey, if Homeric centos. A cento is thus a poem or a poetic sequence made up of recognizable lines from one or more existing poems, usually highly valued literature.” See also, amongst others, M.D. Usher, Prolegomenon to the Homeric Centos. *American Journal of Philology* 118 (1997): 305-321; S. McGill, Virgil Recomposed. The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity. Oxford 2005; S.S. Cullhed, Proba the Prophet. The Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba. Leiden-Boston 2015: 1-17 and bibliography offered by these publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Interestingly, one of) the scribe(s) of this manuscript describes the activity of compiling texts in a book epigram on f. 476v (*DBBE* 5905 (<http://www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/5905> - last consulted 28/06/2018). The epigram gives us an excellent insight into the way in which Byzantines thought about the activity of collecting and reassembling older texts, as well as their purposes in doing so. In the first place, we can conclude that the selection of fragments for a manuscript could be made by the scribe and not necessarily by the person who commanded the book. The scribe makes this clear by using the participle ἐρανισάμενος (v. 4) and the emphasised personal pronoun ἔγωγε (v. 9). He has collected texts from many books (v. 4: ἀπὸ πολλῶν βιβλίων) and compares his activity to that of bees gathering honey, a common metaphor for collecting wisdom (v. 9-10). After this comparison, the author tells us why he has made this collection. It was not only meant for learning, but also to bring pleasure to the soul of the readers and a welcome pause from work (v. 11-16). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)