Transcript:
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The Lost Patriarchs Project:
Discovering Greek Patristics in the Medieval Latin Tradition
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In the early 9th century
emperor michael ii sent louis the pious
an unusual diplomatic gift
a modest little manuscript written in
greek containing theological works and
letters
allegedly composed by dionysius the
areopagite who had been converted to
christianity
by the apostle paul at athens
after receiving this token from greek
ambassadors in september of 827
louis immediately sent the manuscript to
the abia sandini
where the bones of dionysius lay buried
the codex reached the monastery on the
8th of december 827
the feast day of the saint whose works
it contained
the arrival of the book was a momentous
event
abbott hilduan reported that its
presence caused miraculous healings
as though it was a relic this greek
manuscript soon served as the basis for
two latin translations
of the corpus dianiciacum the first by
hilduan and a team of translators
sometime between 827 and 834
and the second by john scotus ariagana
in the late 850s
and 860s the greek manuscript gifted to
louis the pious by michael ii
underscores two important features of
the history of the reception of greek
patristics in the latin middle ages
first its survival highlights the rarity
of greek texts in the post-roman west

msbnf grec 437
is the only copy of any eastern
patristic writing to survive
in its original language in early
medieval europe
this should not surprise us given the
decline of greek learning north of the
alps after the dismantling of the
western imperial administration
and with it the state-funded education
system that privileged the study of
greek alongside latin
the number of greek readers in western
europe dwindled rapidly from the 5th
century onwards
only a few cultural outposts in northern
in italy and north africa with close
ties to constantinople
produced scholars proficient in greek in
the early middle ages
their northern counterparts like irigana
were few and far between
second the rapid translation of the
dionysian corpus into latin
not once but twice in quick succession
speaks to the demand for christian or
for eastern
christian learning among western readers
indeed throughout late antiquity in the
early middle ages dozens upon dozens of
works of greek patristics were
translated into latin
and circulated widely in monastic
libraries where they influenced the
devotional and doctrinal thought of
generations of latin-speaking monks
the history of the translation and
subsequent influence of greek
patriotistics in the early medieval west
remains to be written the influence of
greek patristics on western european
thought and culture remains an important
but largely overlooked aspect of the
history of medieval latin literature
in this talk the term patristics is used
in the broadest possible sense to

embrace
all christian greek authors writing
between the first and fifth
excuse me the first and eighth centuries
between the second and thirteenth
centuries latin translations of the
works of almost 100
christian greek authors laid antiquity
in early byzantium found their way into
the libraries of western europe
evidence for the consumption of greek
patriotistics among medieval latin
readers is widespread
but with very few exceptions these texts
have not received modern critical
editions
or translations into english let alone
substantive studies of their readership
and impact
this talk brings to light as neglected
tradition in medieval latin literature
and draws attention to a new research
initiative for the study of these
sources
the lost patriarchs project first
it presents a sample of the deep
reservoir of many latin texts with
christian greek origins
and provides evidence for the knowledge
and consumption of translated works of
christian patrist
of greek patristics among latin readers
in medieval europe
second it considers some of the reasons
why translations of christian greek
works in the latin
have thus far eluded scholarly inquiry
and third
it outlines the plans for an instrument
of reference tentatively entitled
the lost patriarchs a survey of the
greek fathers
in the medieval latin tradition
the translation of christian greek texts
was a formidable industry in the early
middle ages that produced dozens upon

dozens of latin works
the impact and influence of which have largely been overlooked by modern scholars
as a corpus these texts raise a host of fundamental questions
which of the greek patriarchs were translated into latin
were particular genres of works favored over others
to what degree were these works modified in the process of translation
and how do we proceed with cataloging them to facilitate research
what principles of exclusion do we apply when talking about them
as a corpus only after we've accomplished this groundwork can we begin to ask more profound questions about their broader significance
and investigate in particular whether or not they were consequential in the medieval latin tradition
and in the history of western christian doctrine and devotion
the work begins with the manuscripts themselves greek remained a language of cultural significance in the western roman empire until the end of the 4th century
and held on tenaciously until the 6th century in cultural outposts along the imperial edge
in frequent commerce with byzantium it was primarily during this period when knowledge of greek waned in the west that the majority of the surviving translations of the works of christian greek authors were rendered into latin
while there were several tools there are several tools that are disposable for making sense of these texts as a corpus
many of them have limitations of one kind or another
20th century research on the reception history of christian greek texts in

medieval europe
was not abundant in fact albert
siegmund's
the belief around the greeks in
literature in the latino
characteristics is the only monographic
treatment of this topic
written in the modern period while
siegben provided a useful starting point
for inquiry into this topic
his descript his descriptive catalog of
greek authors available in western
europe and latin translation is both
incomplete and now out of date more
recently the editors of the clavis
patrum grey quorum
have signaled the existence of latin
translations of individual texts written
by greek or fathers
but the laconic entries of this
otherwise indispensable
reference work do not begin to elucidate
the rich and complex history of the
transmission of these texts
the manuscripts in which they resided
and their subsequent influence on
western readers
in the past few decades individual
scholars have drawn repeated attention
to the presence of manuscripts
containing latin translations of
christian greek authors in western
libraries but there is as yet no
comprehensive study of the influence of
eastern patristics in the medieval latin
tradition
published catalogs of early medieval
manuscripts remain extremely useful
resources like the 11 volumes of the
codices latini antiquires and its later
agenda
which together provided inventory of all
known manuscripts and surviving
fragments written before 800 ce
and the three hefty tomes comprising
bernard bishop's directory of 9th

century continental manuscripts
excluding those written in visigothic
and anglo-saxon
likewise a survey of medieval library
catalogs and book loan lists
reveals the presence of latin
translations of greek patriotistics in
numerous monastic libraries
lastly recent advances in the digital
humanities have made hundreds of
medieval manuscripts accessible online
opening up the collections of european
libraries to public viewing
and thereby facilitating research
a preliminary investigation of these
resources reveals a treasure trove of
christian greek texts in latin
disseminated widely throughout monastic
libraries in northern europe
these findings fall into four broad
categories based loosely on genre
keeping in mind that an author may have
text in more than one category
and a category may represent more than
one genre
first christian doctrine that is
teachings about the early christian
tradition
including doctrinal discussions
hammering out the elements of the faith
sermons letters of instruction and
homilies on the principles of christian
behavior
second apocrypha being stories about
christ
mary and the apostles modeled on the
canonical books of the new testament
as well as vision literature featuring
biblica featuring biblical characters
like the apocalypse of paul third
works of hey geography both the passions
of the martyrs and the lives of the
saints
and fourth history being accounts of the
past with an emphasis on god's agency in
the unfolding of events

but even these broad categories are not sufficient to encompass all the texts under consideration
which include anonymous collections of proverbial sayings attributed to greek hermits
the variable and translations of the acts of eastern church councils and to credles
the abbey of clooney offers an illuminated case study of the prevalence of christian greek literature and latin translation among medieval monastic readers
founded in 910 in burgundy the monastery of clooney grew in power and influence over the course of the 10th and 11th century
amassing a library of many hundreds of volumes and producing an abundance of manuscripts that attest to the devotional
and intellectual lives of the brethren residing there
according to the liberto mitis an early 11th century clinic customary from farfa the monk selected books for personal reading at the beginning of the lenten season
among the 64 manuscripts distributed to the brethren were several works of greek origin and latin guys
including origins homilies on joshua john chrysostom's homilies on the gospel of matthew
a collection of the sayings of saint basil ephraim the syrians treat us on the confunction of the heart
an account of the life of saint mary of egypt and an expanding the expanse of ancient histories of josephus
and eusebius the 12th century library catalog from clooney supports the impression of the libertarians that christian greek authors in latin translation made up a sizable portion of

their manuscript holdings
while many catalog entries show the
influence of major eastern authors of
christian doctrine like gregory
nazianzus
john chrysostom and effortless syrian
the monks and clooney also copied and
read greek works of salvation history
and the decrees of eastern church
councils in latin translation
while the evidence for the presence of
latin renderings of greek autistic texts
that clooney and other medieval abbeys
is clear in surviving manuscripts and
library catalogs
the influence of this devotional
historical literature on western
medieval thought remains unstudied
in no small part because very little
work has been done in the textual
traditions
and receptions of christian greek
authors in the west
so why has modern scholarship ignored
this important tradition in latin
literature for so long
our blind spots concerning latin
translations of eastern patriotistics
are deeply rooted in prejudices dating
back to the 16th century
our preference for original greek texts
over medieval latin renderings of them
is a regrettable legacy of renaissance
humanism the essential feature
of which was the possibility of a return
to the original greek
but the problem is even larger than this
the lack of scholarly interest in latin
translations of christian greek
materials is also bound up
in their subject matter most of these
texts are theological and exegetical in
content
their neglect is related to a general
disregard in anglophone scholarship and
to a lesser degree in europe

for what we would call the intellectual history of late antiquity
moreover scholars generally hold that the most important transmissions from greek into latin occurred not
in late antiquity but in the context of the later middle ages especially during the so-called renaissance of the 12th century
it was during this period that many works were translated from arabic into latin explicitly to recover works of ancient greek medicine and philosophy that were unknown
in the western tradition the attention given to these translation enterprises privileges the types of knowledge important to modern audiences philosophy and medicine at the expense of religious texts
theological treatises polemics homilies and exegesis
which were arguably as important if not more important to medieval readers
when scholars do concern themselves with these texts the questions asked of them often do not concern
their reception history but rather their significance to their contemporary authors and audiences
to study eastern patriotistic works surviving in latin translation scholars must shift the course of inquiry away from the original author's thoughts and contexts
and toward the cultural and intellectual histories of the western medieval reading communities
who read the latin renderings of these works
a related problem is our tendency to favor authentic sources from the middle ages to the exclusions of works of bricolage like epitomes floralegia and compendia
which are bountiful in medieval

manuscripts end of text translated from other languages into medieval latin of which there are no small number kasians diatesseron
a popular recasting of the four gospels into a single narrative
is a noteworthy example originally written in syriac or greek around 160 to 175
ce the diatestron survives only in latin and arabic translations from the early middle ages
the latin translation was widely read in monastic communities throughout western europe
for linguistic scholars the latin diatecturon plays a pivotal role in understanding early medieval gospel harmonies in old high german and old saxon
despite its importance no critical edition or translation of this work has ever appeared
we can we can attribute the general neglect of tatian's gospel harmony to its length
the diatestron is about the size of three gospels combined
but the ambiguity surrounding its textual identity is clearly
also an issue written by a second century author
yet extant as the cultural product of an early medieval latin translator
the diatestron defies easy categorization
fortunately a new generation of scholars is casting off these old prejudices and drawing attention to the wealth of evidence for the influence of christian greek literature in the western latin tradition
the reception of greek geographic texts in latin translations
has proven to be an especially fruitful avenue of research which reflects the

recent popularity of saints lives as
sources from medieval history
for example carmela franklin has
investigated the reception history of
the life of anastasius the persian
a sassanian soldier who's converted to
christianity in 628
and suffered martyrdom in caesarea
originally written in greek the account
of
anastasia's suffering and death
underwent considerable transformation in
the 7th century
and thereafter when latin authors
translated it for western audiences
more recently maya mascarinic has
deployed the
latin vitae of eastern saints in her
examination
of late antique holy men and women who
were venerated in rome between the 6th
and 9th centuries
successfully wedding the evidence of
saints lives with insights gleaned from
archaeology and epigraphy
the study of a geography of greek origin
in latin translation is hindered however
by a dearth of modern critical editions
and translations of this vast corpus of
texts
many of which languish unedited and
unread in the obscurity of early modern
compendia of saints lives
new editions of the latin translations
of anastasia's life of anthony
published in the series corpus christi
norm series latina show the way forward
as do recent translations of early greek
and latin martyr narratives by eric
grebiard and michael lapidge
the study of the reception of greek
christian apocrypha
is as rich and vibrant as the study of
hegeography
established in the popular imagination
by the industry of m.r james

who translated many popular legends
about jesus mary the apostles and the
old testament patriarchs into english in
the early 20th century
this field of research has been an
enduring source of fascination for
scholars and the general public alike
fostered by academic organizations like
the north american society for the study
of christian apocryphal literature
scholars have worked diligently to bring
to light latin renderings of late
ancient greek extra-economical texts
and to chart the influence of these
texts in western medieval devotional
practices
mary three dollars recent translation
and commentary of the acts of the
apostle peter the act of petri
is a model study that provides access
and insight into this influential story
about the battle
between the apostle peter and his
adversary simon magus
meanwhile scholars of early medieval
england have led the way in determining
and delineating the impact of apocryphal
texts
on the preaching strategies and
devotional practices of the anglo-saxons
while this uh well this attention to
saints lives in biblical
biblical apocrypha serves to advance
research on the reception of latin works
of greek origin in western europe
much more work remains to be done on the
most prevalent and yet almost completely
neglected corpus of christian greek
texts in latin translation
patristics a new initiative the lost
patriarchs project
aims to cast light on this overlooked
yet influential tradition
of medieval latin literature
the goal of the lost patriarchs project
is the production of a collaborative

multi-volume instrument of reference called
the lost patriarchs a survey of the greek fathers
in the medieval latin tradition the aim of this work is to further the study of the transmission and reception of greek patristics in medieval europe
the book will present a catalog of the deep largely untouched reservoir of medieval latin texts that have christian greek origins
both those known directly from surviving manuscript copies and those known only indirectly from medieval library catalogs
as the word survey suggests this will not be a typical academic monograph but rather a research tool modeled on text and transmission a survey of the latin classics edited by l.d reynolds in 1983
that is an alphabetically arranged handbook that presents a series of concise accounts of the manuscript tradition
and transmission of greek christian literature in the medieval latin tradition
a reference tool of this kind would gather all that is known about these texts and current scholarship allowing future researchers to begin the work of creating critical editions of them
and incorporating them into our understanding of medieval thought
the sheer bulk and of primary source material available for study
doctrinal and polemical works devotional and aesthetic literature
homilies apocrypha hagiography history and more
requires the application of principles of exclusion to keep the work manageable
at the outset the project will focus exclusively on the works of named

greek authors active from the first to the eighth centuries
whose work survives in latin translation ranging from popular figures like john chrysostom and from the syrian gregory nancyanzas
and basil of caesarea to the most obscure
it will also include the ecclesiastical historians of the fourth and fifth centuries
for pragmatic reasons the project will not treat the genres of hagiography and apocryphal literature
there are many examples of greek saints lives in apocrypha in the latin tradition as we've seen
but the abundance of sources and the complexity of their reception histories demand
independent studies likewise the project will not cover anonymous christian works like the didactic series of moralizing animal tales known as physiologus
nor will it examine the reception of the translation of the acts of eastern church councils
except when those acts serve as the medium for the transmission of excerpts of
greek patristic texts into the west
the lost patriarchs project will develop over the course of the next decade in three distinct phases
in phase one the editor will conduct the research necessary to give the project a firm foundation
and i'm happy to report at this time that the project has now been funded for a year
by the national endowment for the humanities
so this will include charting the parameters of the survey with the aid of instruments of reference
like sigmund and the clavis patron

grecorum and digital manuscripts
compiling the alphabetical table of
contents of the 90 or so greek authors
and their works to be included in the
survey composing four to six sample
entries to serve as models for
contributors
drawing attention to the project through
international presentations like this
one
and publications and soliciting
contributors to write entries
in their areas of expertise in phase two
the editor will continue the research
agenda outlasted outlined in phase one
while also organizing international
conferences to publicize the project and
its contribution
to the widest possible audiences and to
provide venues for contributors to share
the progress of their work
phase three will involve the preparation
of the contributions for publication
with an internationally recognized press
that specializes in medical studies
needless to say a project
of this magnitude demands international
collaboration
the purpose of this introduction to the
lost pastry ranch project is to spread
word about the project to the largest
possible audience of specialists on
greek futuristic writings
and their reception and to solicit the
participation of scholars and their
students
who would like to contribute their
expertise to the publication
for more information about the future of
the project the editorial team
and how to take part please visit the
lost patriarchs project website
www.lostpatriarchsproject.com
thank you very much