

**Caught in Translation:
Versions of Late-Antique Christian Literature
Leuven, 20–21 September 2017**

The ‘Caught in Translation: Versions of Late-Antique Christian Literature’ panel, convened by Dan Batovici and Madalina Toca (KU Leuven), was part of the EASR Annual Conference hosted in Leuven between 18 and 21 September 2017. It was devoted to the transmission of translations from patristic works (broadly conceived) in Late Antiquity and beyond. For the texts which are translated, the versions are not only textual witnesses, but also important testimonies of independent strands of reception, cast in the cultural context of the new language. The panel grouped ten papers on several traditions of late antique texts, with the explicit aim to sample the range of problems and approaches involved in addressing the reception of Christian literature in a comparative manner across the various languages in which it was transmitted, which included Latin, Coptic, Old Nubian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic and Sogdian. The panel was divided into four consecutive sessions of two or three papers.

The first session consisted of two co-authored, hence longer, presentations. Caroline Macé and Michael Muthreich (Patristische Kommission, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen) opened the panel with a paper on ‘The Latin and Oriental Translations of the ‘*Epistola de morte apostolorum*’ Attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite’, in which they presented the intricate transmission of this text, preserved in Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian, Latin and Syriac, but not in Greek (in which it probably originated). They showed that depending on the tradition, this text was to be found in homilies, collections of Pauline letters, collections with saint lives, but also among various other, not easily labelled, collections. C. Macé and M. Muthreich attentively discussed the manuscript tradition for each and every language, the available critical editions and their limitations—for instance in the case of the Arabic tradition, the edition is based on a single manuscript, while for the Georgian version there is no edition available yet—and also the possible relationship between these languages based on the contents they carry and on translation peculiarities. The presenters pointed to the possibility of two Greek recensions, one quite early reflected in Syriac and Armenian, and another reflected in Latin and Georgian. Finally, and quite interestingly, they advanced the idea that this letter might actually predate the coming into being of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.

The second presentation, by Alexandros Tsakos (University of Bergen) and Vincent van Gerven Oei (University of Aberdeen), was devoted to ‘Trans-

lating Greek to Old Nubian: Reading between the lines of Ps.-Chrysostom's *In venerabilem crucem sermo*'. After an introduction about the Christian Kingdoms of Nobadia, Makuria, and Alwa, and a brief overview of their literary outputs (graffiti, different types of manuscripts, etc.), the presenters focused on the manuscript production which was mainly representative of Lower Nubia. They emphasized the multilingual character of the Nubian society, with Old Nubian, Greek, and Coptic being largely used. Out of some 300 existing manuscripts, about two thirds are in Old Nubian and the remaining in Greek and Coptic. There are only four Patristic texts preserved in Old Nubian—*In quattuor animalia* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, and *In quattuor animalia*, *In venerabilem crucem sermo*, and *In Raphaellem Archangelum* all attributed to John Chrysostom—complemented with five Chrysostomian fragments in Greek, and a few authors preserved in Coptic. Focusing on Pseudo-Chrysostom's *In venerabilem crucem sermo* (the longest known text in Old Nubian) the authors proposed, by delving into the linguistic peculiarities and translation techniques, that this sermon was not translated from Coptic, but actually from Greek.

Starting the second session, Andy Hilkens (Ghent University) presented a paper on 'The Armenian Reception of the Homilies of Jacob of Serugh'. Apart from an intermediate period, which also saw the translation of Syriac texts, there are two main periods of translations from Syriac into Armenian: the first one dates back to the fifth century, and the second one (the so-called Cilician period) spans from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. A. Hilkens pointed out that the translations of Jacob of Serugh's works, together with the large majority of translations into Armenian, should be linked to the second period. With regard to the Armenian reception of Jacob, Hilkens discussed the need to update the corpus in order to include works omitted so far, previously misattributed works, as well as Jacob's works which have not survived at all in Syriac. In the process, the presenter also showed how Ephrem's and Jacob's receptions are heavily intertwined in the manuscript tradition of Armenian translations from Syriac.

Emilio Bonfiglio's (University of Vienna) paper 'Presences and Absences in the *Corpus Chrysostomicum Armeniacum*: The Issue of Selection' dealt with the transmission and translations of Chrysostomian works, authentic, spurious, and dubious, into Armenian. Focusing on the question of selection, E. Bonfiglio addressed the issue of which Chrysostomian texts were translated into Armenian and which were not, the reasons behind these choices and the connexion this selection process might have had with possible gaps in the manuscript tradition, suggesting that it might have to do more with what works were available to translators, than with theologically motivated

choices. The presenter formulated the desideratum of a comprehensive list and updated catalogue entries for the Armenian Chrysostomian corpus.

Dan Batovici (KU Leuven) offered a paper on ‘The Versions of *In epistolas canonicas brevis enarratio* Attributed to Didymus the Blind’, which has survived as a whole only in Latin. This was edited in 1914, based mainly on three manuscripts which contain the *Adumbrationes* of Clement of Alexandria as well, with only a few Greek fragments preserved in the Greek catena. These fragments have also been translated in the Armenian catena which according to their editor might preserve an independent recension of the initial Greek catena, of which the extant Greek catena is another recension. Batovici discussed the parallels—the Greek, and their Latin and Armenian receptions—in an attempt to assess the relevance of the versions for the Greek text.

The third session started with a paper by Madalina Toca (KU Leuven) on ‘The Latin Reception of Isidore of Pelusium’s Letters’. The paper offered first an overview of Isidore of Pelusium’s Greek, Syriac, Slavonic and Latin reception, and of the scholarship devoted so far to each of them. The focus was then placed on the peculiarities of the Latin reception which consists of 49 letters (out of the two thousand in Greek) found in two witnesses: Vaticanus lat. 1319 and Codex Casinensis 2. A discussion of the larger context for Isidore’s Latin reception in ancient testimonies was then followed by a description of the manuscripts. In this case, the process of selection might be grasped when considering the manuscripts’ general theme and the other texts they preserve.

The paper by Francesco Berno (Sapienza Università di Roma) dealt with ‘The Nag Hammadi Reception of the Book of the Watchers’. Comparing the Greek Enoch preserved in the Gizeh Codex with the Coptic texts of gnostic treatises (the Valentinian Exposition – NHC XI, 2, and the Hypostasis of the Archons – NHC II, 4), Berno proposed an investigation of how the translation process from Greek into Coptic drove the initial theological intention of the text towards new directions and new configurations of thought.

Lara Sels (KU Leuven) then discussed ‘The Slavonic Reception of the Cappadocian Fathers’ Hexaemeron Commentaries’, focusing on Basil of Caesarea’s *Homiliae in Hexaemeron* and Gregory of Nyssa’s *De hominis opificio*. She proposed a comparison between the ninth/tenth-century exegetical compilation called Šestodnev (*Hexaemeron*), where both texts were freely translated, and the fourteenth-century Slavonic collection (*Šestodnevnik*) in which the texts are translated so literally that it almost loses the meaning by staying so close to the Greek. She also discussed the manuscripts as reception artefacts, the function of *marginalia* and other paratextual elements, and pointed towards Slavonic oddities coming from this hyper-attention to translate every detail from the Greek.

The first paper of the last panel, delivered by Marion Pragt (KU Leuven), dealt with ‘The Syriac Reception of Gregory of Nyssa’s *Homilies on the Song of Songs*’. M. Pragt presented the interesting case of the translation of the *Homilies*, which are preceded by the Peshitta version of the Song of Songs and two additional letters. One of the letters is authored by the translator, who describes his task, and seems to be aware of various Septuagint translations as well as of other works of Gregory. The presenter compared the translation’s features of a sixth-century Syriac witness of Gregory’s *Homilies* (Vat. sir. 106) with the ninth-century *Collection of Simeon* (Vat. sir. 103), reminding of the various interpretations of Gregory’s *Homilies on the Song of Songs*.

For the closing of the panel, Adrian Pirtea (Freie Universität Berlin) delivered a paper on ‘Isaac of Niniveh’s ‘Gnostic Chapters’ in the Sogdian Monastic Anthology E27’. After an overview of languages and manuscripts in which the works of Isaac have survived (and existing editions), he discussed the authorship of a Christian Sogdian fragment, which is part of a large monastic anthology (MS E27) comprising Sogdian translations from Greek and Syriac ascetic authors (Pseudo-Macarius, Evagrius, Abba Isaiah, Dādīšō ‘Qatrāyā, and others). Identifying Isaac as the author of a Sogdian fragment in E27, A. Pirtea underlines the significance of this new fragment, being the only work of Isaac translated into Sogdian, and thus a unique witness to the reception of Isaac’s *Second Part*, and also an input for the textual history of Isaac’s *Kephalaia*.

The ‘Caught in Translation’ panel grouped ten case studies on translation of patristic works in mainly oriental languages. This offered the opportunity for scholars working on different corpora to present and discuss a number of problems which proved to be shared by all, including the question of selection and of linguistic equivalences in the process of translation of this type of literature. The papers are being currently prepared for publication.

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The Coptic Book between the 6th and the 8th Century

Rome, 21–22 September 2017

The kick-off meeting of the ERC Advanced Grant 2015 ‘PATHs-Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature’, the international conference ‘The Coptic Book Between 6th and 8th Century: Codicological Features, Places of Production, Intellectual Trends’, took place in Rome on 21 and 22 September 2017.