Lexical correspondences between high and low-level Byzantine Greek

The lexical correspondences presented here are the result of two related research projects:

A) The Vocabulary of Byzantine Classicizing and Literary Koine Texts: A Database of Correspondences (VocByz)

funded by the A.G. Leventis Foundation and run by the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Cyprus during the period April 2014–April 2016.

Participants: M. Hinterberger (principal investigator), Ch. Modestou (research assistant), T. Taylor (IT-specialist), A. Kyritsi (project management) and J. Davis (advisor).

B) Lexical Differentiation in Byzantine Texts: The Correspondence between Learned Classicizing Vocabulary and the Vocabulary of ‘Usual’ Prose (LexByz)

funded by the University of Cyprus and run by the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Cyprus during the period January 2017–March 2019.

Participants: M. Hinterberger (principal investigator), A. Kazamia, V. Konstantinou, M. Kyriakidou, Ch. Modestou (research assistants), A. Kyritsi (project management), E. Schiffer and J. Davis (advisors).

The vocabulary of Byzantine classicizing and literary koine texts

Byzantine classicizing literature is notable for its carefully chosen vocabulary that is strongly influenced by ancient Greek literary expression. It is this classicizing vocabulary that marks the most obvious difference between high style literature and lower style literature composed in the literary koine. Despite its undoubted significance, register-related differences in vocabulary have yet to be systematically investigated.

How essential a stylistic marker vocabulary is, becomes immediately evident when high style texts are juxtaposed against their simplified versions. Such simplified versions, so-called metaphraseis, of 12th and 13th-century literary works were produced in the mid-14th century and constitute an ideal tool for establishing a concordance between classicizing and literary koine vocabulary, and consequently for assessing the dividing line between classicizing texts and those composed in the literary koine.

The vocabulary of Byzantine classicizing and literary koine texts: A database of correspondences

In 2014, with the support of the A. G. Leventis Foundation, a research project aiming at the investigation of the vocabulary of regular (or ‘usual’) prose and its relation to the classicizing vocabulary was initiated at the University of Cyprus. The goal of this project was to record systematically vocabulary correspondences from stylistically higher and lower versions of a text and thus provide a guide to the general stylistic evaluation of the vocabulary of Byzantine texts (including also those texts for which no metaphraseis exist), as well as a sort of high literary Greek - koine Greek dictionary.
In the first stage of the project (which ended in April 2016), we focused on the juxtaposition of Niketas Choniates’ *Chronike Diegesis* (= Chon) and its anonymous metaphrasis (= MChon), two very long texts (about 600 and 400 pages respectively in the modern editions). In contrast to previous studies where special emphasis was given to decidedly vernacular words, all words that acted as substitutes for others or that were substituted by others were recorded. In this way, light should be shed on the metaphrastic technique from the point of view of both the simplified text and the classicizing text (Choniates’ *History*). Thus, it was hoped that a clearer picture would emerge of which words it was considered necessary to replace in order to make Choniates’ text more accessible, and the specific words deployed in order to achieve this aim.

To achieve our objective, a database was developed in which all lexical correspondences between Chon and the MChon could be recorded. Although lexical correspondences have been established for the entire text, so far approximately 4000 words with 9000 occurrences have been processed, i.e. fed into the database. The database contains all words with their respective occurrences. Each has been allotted one of four stylistic qualities or markers (high, low, both, ambiguous) based on the occurrences collected so far (more details on this below).

For technical reasons, the database itself is currently not online. Yet, alongside this collection of terms and their stylistic quality, the database allows the extraction of two comprehensive lists of corresponding terms: the first displays the original high-level word and its one or more corresponding literary koine words (e.g. ἐγγίζω – πλησιάζω); the second, conversely, displays the terms found in MChon and their one or more corresponding high-level words (e.g. πλησιάζω – ἐγγίζω). These lists so far comprise 320 and 280 pages respectively, and are available in the form of searchable pdf files (see the files accompanying this Introduction).

One principal goal of this collection of correspondences has been to provide information about the stylistic character of a certain word. In the database, each word is given one of the following stylistic characteristics: ‘high’, ‘low’, ‘both’, and ‘ambiguous’, based on the instances of a specific word/term in texts, which, in turn, are characterized as either high or low. For example, the metaphrasis of Choniates’ *History* is certainly a downgraded version of the original text whereas the texts reworked by Symeon Metaphrastes are generally believed to constitute an upgrade. The first time a lexical item (word) appears, it is categorized according to the stylistic nature of the text in which it is used (for example, ἐγγίζω is qualified as ‘high’ since it appears in Chon). Only thereafter will this qualifier perhaps be modified to ‘both’ or ‘ambiguous’.

This stylistic qualification of terms has proved more problematic than expected. As the project progressed, for methodological reasons, we decided that the qualifications allotted to a certain term should be based exclusively on the context of the processed material (and not also on our biased experience or arbitrary judgement). Since the material processed in the database is strictly limited to lexical correspondences, only corresponding (but not identical) parts of the texts are taken into consideration (at least at this stage of the project). Two categories of vocabulary have not been taken into consideration so far, namely those passages from Chon that have been used in MChon without any change (approximately 30% of the text),
as well as those passages in Chon or in MChon that do not have corresponding
passages (omissions or additions in MChon).
Accordingly, the four stylistic qualifiers (‘high’, ‘low’ etc.) refer exclusively to the
appearance of the terms in the framework of the material incorporated in the
database. Thus, ὀφθαλμός, although used both in Chon and MChon, appears as a
stylistically ‘low’ term, because within pairs of correspondences it always appears in
MChon, that is, they are ‘low’ text. The same is true, for example, for terms such as
βασιλεία, μετὰ, παλάτιον or πάλιν. For practical and methodological reasons, we
ignore the fact that παλάτιον is rarely, and βασιλεία, μετὰ or πάλιν quite frequently,
used in Choniates’ text (that is, they are ‘low’ terms within an overall ‘high’ text).
Accompanying notes in the database, of course, explain this fact, which constitutes
an important characteristic of MChon, namely that certain highly classicizing terms in
Chon are replaced with koine terms not alien to Choniates’ text. This means that in a
second stage we need to examine if terms qualified as low also appear in Chon. In
this respect, the qualification ‘high’ is much less problematic than the qualifier ‘low’,
since Choniates uses a considerable number of terms that appear only in his History,
but not in the metaphrasis.
The qualifier ‘both’ is assigned only to those words that correspond with other items
from both the ‘high’- and the ‘low’-level text. For example, βούλομαι, γίνομαι,
ἐπακολουθέω, θέαμαι, παραπέμπω or δύναμις, ὁπλον, ὀργή, οὕτος are defined as
‘both’, which, however, does not mean that they are all used in exactly the same
way when used as a high and a low term respectively. βούλομαι, for instance, is,
generally speaking, a stylistically high-register term meaning ‘to wish’ (whereas θέλω
is primarily low level, with the same meaning). However, in the
combination/colligation (καὶ) μὴ βουλόμενος ‘(even) against his will’/’not
willing’/’reluctantly’, βούλομαι is used as a substitute in MChon in order to render
clearly high-style terms such as ἀκούσιος or οὐχ ἐκόν (‘unwilling’).
Last, the label ‘ambiguous’ is reserved for those terms in MChon that are rendered
as a combination of the same term plus another term, as though the metaphrast was
not quite sure if the term in question was totally intelligible: for example, θρασύτητα
> ἀλαζονείαν καὶ θρασύνητα, μόλις > μόλις καὶ μετὰ βίας, τυραννεῖον > τυραννεῖον
καὶ κάθισμα and ὑπεκρίνετο > ἐμιμεῖτο καὶ ὑπεκρίνετο. Interestingly, one word can
occasionally occur both as high and low term, but in each case with different
semantics. For example, παρακαλέω in the sense of ‘to comfort/console’ is high
style, whereas παρακαλέω, ‘to ask for’, is low style. κυβέρνησις means ‘government’
in high style, but ‘care/accommodation’ in the low text. These terms are also labelled
as ‘ambiguous’.

Although lexical correspondences were the clear focus of the project, morphological-
syntactical correspondences were also recorded, though less consistently. These
morphological-syntactical correspondences (e.g. monolectic pluperfect – aorist or
dative – various circumlocutions) are to be found at the beginning of each list of
correspondences.
Lexical Differentiation in Byzantine Texts: The Correspondence between the Learned Classicizing Vocabulary and the Vocabulary of ‘Usual’ Prose

Within the framework of a follow-up project funded by the University of Cyprus, which started at the end of 2016, the scope of the investigation was extended to other texts that also appear in at least two versions. The aim of this new project was, on the one hand, to create a control measure and to confirm the findings based on the comparison of Choniates’ History and its metaphrasis with Anna Komnene’s Alexias and its metaphrasis, and, on the other, to investigate other simplifying metaphrases of the fourteenth century, such as the metaphrasis of Nikephoros Blemmydes’ Imperial Statue and the metaphrasing epitome of George Pachymeres’ History, as well as the thirteenth-century reworking (Retractatio) of the twelfth-century Book of Syntipas.

On the other hand, we wished to compare the metaphrastic process as observed in the Choniates-to-metaphrasis transformation with the process that underlies the rewriting of hagiographical texts, particularly in the framework of the so-called tenth-century Metaphrastic Menologion. In addition, other stylistically upgrading metaphraseis such as Nikephoros Ouranos’ reworking (BHG 1690) of the earlier Life of Symeon the Younger Stylite (BHG 1689), as well as fourteenth-century metaphraseis of hagiographical texts and Nikephoros Xanthopoulos’ Explanation of the Heavenly Ladder (which not only explains, but transposes the old seventh-century text by John Klimakos into classicizing Greek) were taken into consideration.

For practical reasons, we have started with pairs of relatively long texts (preferably at least one part of which is available in a modern critical edition) such as the Lives of Euthymios (BHG 649) and Sabbas (BHG 1609), the Life of Stephen the Younger (BHG 1666) or the martyrion of the Edessian Confessors Gurias, Samonas, and Abibos (BHG 736-38), as well as shorter texts, for example, the martyrion of Anastasios Perses (BHG 85) or the martyrion of Blasios (BHG 277). So far a substantial part of the correspondences between Kyrillos of Skythopolis’ old Life of Euthymios (BHG 647) and Symeon’s version have been processed.

A substantial amount of correspondences has already been established by the research team, but not yet processed. So far, a representative portion of the Life of Euthymios (around 40 pages in Schwartz’ edition) as well as smaller parts of the Life of Sabbas, the Life of Theodora of Alexandria (BHG 1727) and the martyrion of the Edessean Confessors have been entered in the database, so that a certain provisional results can be presented.

More recently, high level / low level lexical correspondences that are recorded in Byzantine lexica such as the Suda or the lexicon of Pseudo-Zonaras were taken into consideration as well.
List of texts analysed in the framework of the two projects

(only lexical correspondences of those texts from which a substantial amount of words has already been processed (below in bold) are displayed in the form of pdf-files – these lists will be regularly updated as the project progresses)


**Metaphrasis of Niketas Choniates’ History** (= MChon) - J. Davis and M. Hinterberger, *The Metaphrasis of Niketas Choniates’ History*. Berlin – New York to be published by De Gruyter 2021 in the series ‘Byzantinisches Archiv’ (references to book, chapter, section according to the edition by van Dieten, Maisano and Pontani (1994-2014) as well as to page and line of the provisional text established by Davis and Hinterberger – the latter will be aligned with the final pagination in due course).


**Metaphrasis (Retractatio) of Michael Andreopoulos, Syntipas** (= SyntipRE) – ed. ibid. (lower part of pages).

**Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of Sabas** (*BHG* 1609) (= SymMet, VSab) - ed. K. Koikylides, *Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὀσίου πατρός ἡμῶν Σάββα*, Jerusalem 1905, 1-95.


- **Life of Sabas** (*BHG* 1608 (= KyrilSkyth, VSab) - ed. ibid. 85-200.


Anonymous works


Indicative bibliography


Please refer to the material published in the accompanying pdf-files (the list of lexical correspondences) as *Lexical correspondences between high and low-level Byzantine Greek-Project*. For further questions please write to Martin Hinterberger (siebens@ucy.ac.cy).