

JOHN C. DAVIS – MARTIN HINTERBERGER, *The Metaphrase of Nike-
tas Choniates' History* (Byzantinisches Archiv 45). Berlin – Boston: De
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During the Paleologan period there is an interest in simplified versions of
difficult texts with interesting content. Such metaphrases have been pre-
served of the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnena and the *Βασιλικὸς ἀνδριάς* of
Nikephoros Blemmydes.¹ A further example is the metaphrase of the *His-
tory* of Niketas Choniates (ca. 1155–1217), the first complete edition of
which is discussed here.² The starting point for this editorial project was
a series of studies by JOHN C. DAVIS culminating in a doctoral disser-
tation presented at the University of Ioannina.³ Around 2010, MARTIN
HINTERBERGER joined forces with DAVIS, and the outcome is the present
monumental edition with commentary. As confirmed by the editors them-
selves, this makes every impression of being the result of a most happy and
productive cooperation.

The work is divided into two volumes. After Preface and Acknowledge-
ments (p. v), and Abbreviations and Short Titles (p. ix), there is an Intro-
duction (p. xi) and a description of the Manuscripts (p. xix), followed by a
discussion of Editorial Principles (p. xlvii). Upon this follow Facsimiles (p.
lvii), a List of Signs (p. lxiii), and the edition of the Metaphrase itself (pp.
1–404). In the second volume there are discussions of The Metaphrast's
Method (p. 405) and The Language of the Metaphrase (p. 441), a Com-
mentary on the edited text (p. 475), a Bibliography (p. 675), and, at the

1. HERBERT HUNGER (ed.), *Anonyme Metaphrase zu Anna Komnena, Alexias XI-
XIII. Ein Beitrag zur Erschließung der byzantinischen Umgangssprache*. Vienna 1981;
HERBERT HUNGER – I HOR ŠEVČENKO (eds.), *Des Nikephoros Blemmydes Βασιλικὸς
ἀνδριάς und dessen Metaphrase von Georgios Galesiotes und Georgios Oinaïotes*. Vienna
1986.

2. As far as the original *History* is concerned, the studies by JAN-LOUIS VAN DIETEN
are of particular significance. For his edition of the text, see: *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*
(*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* XI/1–2). Berlin – New York 1975.

3. *Η Μετάφραση της Χρονικής Διηγήσεως του Νικήτα Χωνιάτη*, Ioannina 2004:
<https://phdtheses.ekt.gr/eadd/handle/10442/20148>

very end, Indices of Personal Names and Geographical Terms (p. 683) and Notable Words (p. 691).

It is not possible to do full justice to all of this in a brief review. The Introduction's description of the manuscripts, including their relationship with each other, is fairly extensive yet fully justified in its detail. Important points are made (or reiterated from earlier research) about the stemmatic relationship of the manuscripts to each other and the genesis and dating (probably the second quarter of the fourteenth century) of the metaphrastic text. In sum, there are four manuscripts: Monacensis gr. 450 (B) Diktyon 44898, saec. XIV^{2/4}; Scorialensis ψ-IV-17 (S) Diktyon 15262, saec. XV^{4/4} vel XVI^{1/4}; Vindobonensis suppl. gr. 166 (X) Diktyon 71630, saec. XIV^{2/2} et XV^{1/2}; and Parisinus gr. 3041 (Y) Diktyon 52686, saec. XIV^{3/4}. It is convincingly argued that a precise stemma of the manuscripts cannot be drawn. Also, it is shown that the ms. B stands alone (in separation from the group constituted by S Y X) and must be considered the best manuscript.

Spelling, including accents, follows the lead manuscript to a high degree, and, in the case of Byzantine words, the variation present in this is respected. Thus, there is sometimes the form *Τούρκων*, sometimes *Τουρκῶν*, sometimes *Ἀλαμανός*, and sometimes *Ἀλαμάνος*. In contrast, words with a classical pedigree are standardised. Therefore, *ἀνάγκη* is standardised as *-γκ-*, although the manuscripts often have *ἀνάγγη*.

The iota subscript is never used in the edition, not even for the dative, and the reason given is that such an iota is rarely to be seen in any of the manuscripts.

Punctuation normally follows the lead manuscript, although some exceptions are made, so that middle or upper stops are either replaced by commas (or other signs, such as brackets) or completely ignored.

When it comes to such principles, the present edition certainly follows some current trends in Byzantine philology. To me, the lack of the iota subscript adds an ever so slight confusion in a small number of cases, whereas, otherwise, it is more of an annoyance: it looks odd, and it is not (not to me, at least) entirely evident what the added value is in leaving it out. In contrast, there is reason to believe that Byzantine punctuation means something, and this makes it justifiable to respect it (actually, the Byzantine punctuation is sometimes ignored in the present edition and condemned as superfluous, see p. 1). No doubt the discussion on these matters will go on.

On this follows the edition itself, which takes up somewhat over 400 pages. This is accompanied by three separate apparatus (for the editors' discussion

of these, see p. lii). The first of these accounts for marginal notes (comments on the text and the like, whereas corrections are dealt with in the critical apparatus), which are a feature of the mss. B and Y. Secondly, there is a critical apparatus keeping track of the lead manuscript (mostly B) used to establish the text. Finally, and thirdly, there is a critical apparatus accounting for readings in the remaining manuscripts, i.e., in S X Y.

All of this is laid out with great clarity, and it functions really well. However, what is lacking is an apparatus fontium et parallelorum. This is understandable, since the book is bulky as it is. Furthermore, citations and parallels are (more or less) the same as those in the original text of Choniates' *History*, to the editions of which the reader may turn. Yet, it is somewhat of a pity that such an apparatus is lacking. It means that the *Metaphrase* is not allowed to stand alone, and it may even be felt that it is signalled that it is inferior to the *History* (p. xlvii the feasibility of a parallel edition of the *History* and the *Metaphrase* is briefly discussed and rejected).

As far as the constitution of the text is concerned, there is little to disagree with. It is the ambition of the editors to keep to the manuscript evidence as much as possible, and corrections/conjectures are well justified. All the same, I would like to raise a matter of principle. When corrections of the lead manuscript (that is, as has been said, most often B) are made, it is mostly the case of conforming with the evidence of the other manuscripts. In other words, the aim of the edition is an ideal text, which no doubt is considered to represent the intention behind the lead manuscript, as opposed to what the scribe did write. However, corrections of the lead manuscript are sometimes made even when it can be argued that its reading makes sense and may represent someone's intention. As an example of a category of readings in B that have been corrected, participles may be mentioned. In this manuscript, participles are not always declined in accordance with customary rules, and the deviating forms have been corrected (see e.g. 171,15 ἔχοντα<ς>, 189,12 κρατοῦν<τα>, 189,13 συμπνίγον<τα>, and 196,23 ἀκούσαν<τες>. Perhaps this is the correct way to do it. However, it has to be kept in mind that the morphosyntax of participles is breaking down and, therefore, that some of the slightly odd forms may be more than mere mishaps.

The level of accuracy is very high, and errors caused by the editors are extremely rare. For instance, (p.) 1, (line) 11 Παῖμόνδου (pro Παῖμούνδου), 100,24 αντίπερας (pro ἀντίπερας), and 245,24 οὐπω (pro οὐπω) I take to be genuine misprints. Similarly, the title of book 18 in the upper margin

contains the form ὁιοῦ. Perhaps unintended are also 31,5 αἶγε (pro αἶγες?) and 85,3 ναῦ (pro ναῦν?), although this is not quite clear. Furthermore, citation marks are not placed with the same kind of spacing every time, see, e.g., p. 358. Yet, the brevity of this list of errata speaks for itself.

After the edition, there follows a section on the Metaphrast's Method (p. 405), distinguished from a section on the Language of the Metaphrase (p. 441) and a Commentary (p. 475), which is linguistic and limited to explaining how the metaphrast understands and deals with the original text (it is not a commentary on the content of the work). All of this significantly enhances our knowledge of the metaphrastic language.

In sum, this is an excellent edition and a welcome addition to previous scholarship. In addition to answers, it poses many new questions.

Keywords

Niketas Choniates; *History*; Byzantine Greek; Metaphrase; register; critical edition