

Byzantine Hagiography in Slavonic Translation: Contexts and Digital Tools

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This thematic section contains a selection of the papers that were presented at the Workshop on Byzantino-Slavonic Hagiography in Francis J. Thomson's Card Index hosted by the KU Leuven department of Greek Studies on December 11, 2024. The workshop was organised in the framework of two ongoing research projects, a Cologne/Leuven collaborative project on The Bible in Middle Byzantine Hagiography and an Innsbruck/Leuven collaborative project on The Slavonic Metaphrasis of Byzantine Orthodoxy. In the weeks leading up to the workshop, the organisers shared with the participants a preview of the digital publication of the Hagiography section in the Thomson Index of Slavonic Translation Literature (ThISTL), on which they provided feedback in their papers and during the discussions.

With this introductory paper we aim to present ThISTL and the organizational context in which current research on Byzantine hagiography and its Slavonic translation is carried out.

1 Current trends in research on hagiography

1.1 Byzantine hagiography

The study of Byzantine hagiography advanced considerably in the last decades. Many new critical editions and translations appeared, especially of Lives of the Middle Byzantine period.¹ More hagiographical works are entered in the *TLG*. The widely cited handbook on Byzantine hagiography has been followed by other collective volumes.² Critical research on this literature has opened new horizons in Byzantine studies.³

1 Cf. the Dumbarton Oaks online survey of translations of Byzantine Saints' Lives (<https://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/resources/hagiography/translations-byzantine-saints-lives>, last retrieved 6. 8. 2025).

2 E.g. A. Rigo – M. Trizio – E. Despotakis (eds.), *Byzantine Hagiography. Texts, Themes and Projects*, (Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization, 13), Turnhout 2018. C. Gray – J. Corke-Webster (eds.), *The Hagiographical Experiment: Developing Discourses of Sainthood*, (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 158), Leiden – Boston 2020. The landmark handbook is S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, 2 vols., Farnham 2011, 2014.

3 R. BETANCOURT, *Byzantine Intersectionality: Sexuality, Gender, and Race in the Middle Ages*, Princeton 2020. See also N. DE RIDDER, *The Depiction of Jews and Judaism in Middle Byzantine Hagiography*, (PhD thesis, KU Leuven 2025).

While for a long time saints were primarily studied as the subject of a cult and Lives as historical sources, hagiography is now more often approached as literature.⁴ The application of narratological approaches that characterizes recent research on some Byzantine literary genres led to publications and research projects that advance the literary analysis of hagiography.⁵ Recent initiatives confirm this trend. One research project investigates the phenomenon of generic inclusion (esp. of the Greek novel) in hagiography.⁶ Another examines how on a literary-narrative level places of seclusion function in Lives.⁷ A long-term research program aims at studying biographical and hagiographical texts in the framework of storytelling.⁸ It focuses not just on Greek Lives from Constantinople and the provinces but expands its attention to the broader Byzantine world, including Slavonic hagiographical literature. The same cross-disciplinary approach underpinned the *Hagiography* workshop organized in Leuven.

This is the academic context of ongoing research on hagiography that framed the Leuven workshop. Several of the projects mentioned above benefit from the use of digital instruments, notably databases. The landmark *clavis* of the Bollandists is expanded in the form of the *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca manuscripta (BHGMs)* undertaking,⁹ of which the results are included in *Pinakes* and *Clavis Clavium*. Both today and in the past the publication of such catalogues of manuscripts and *claves* of ancient texts have injected their research fields with vitality.

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- 4 E.g. P. A. Agapitos – P. Odorico (eds.), *Les Vies des saints à Byzance: genre littéraire ou biographie historique? Actes du IIe colloque international “ERMENEIA”*, (Dossiers byzantins, 4), Paris 2004. T. PRATSCH, *Der hagiographische Topos: Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit*, (Millennium-Studien / Millennium Studies, 6), Berlin – Boston 2012. S. Efthymiadis – A. Rigo et al. (eds.), *Byzantine Hagiography* (review), *The Medieval Review* 19.12.16 (<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/28753>, last retrieved 6. 8. 2025). Ó. PRIETO DOMÍNGUEZ, *Literary Circles in Byzantine Iconoclasm. Patrons, Politics and Saints*, Cambridge 2021. C. Sode – D. Whalin (eds.), *Realism in Hagiography*, (Journal of Ancient Civilization Supplemental Series), Changchun, forthcoming.
- 5 E.g. A. ALWIS, *The Hagiographer’s Craft: Narrators and Focalisation in Byzantine Hagiography*, in: C. Gray – J. Corke-Webster (eds.), *The Hagiographical Experiment: Developing Discourses of Sainthood*, (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 158), Leiden 2020, 300–332. K. De Temmerman – J. Van Pelt – K. Staat (eds.), *Constructing Saints in Greek and Latin Hagiography. Heroes and Heroines in Late Antique and Medieval Narrative*, (Fabulae, 2), Turnhout 2023. J. VAN PELT, *Saints in Disguise. Performance, Illusion and Truth in Early Byzantine Hagiography*, (Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha, 22), Leuven 2025.
- 6 <https://www.novelsaints.ugent.be> (last retrieved 7. 8. 2025).
- 7 <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/imafo/research/byzantine-research/language-text-and-script/language-use-and-literature/spaces-that-matter> (last retrieved 7. 8. 2025).
- 8 <https://retracingconnections.org> (last retrieved 7. 8. 2025).
- 9 A collaboration between the *Société des Bollandistes* and the *Institut de recherche et d’histoire des textes (IRHT)* aimed at the digitization of the manuscript index of Greek hagiographic manuscripts held by the *Société des Bollandistes*. The digitization was concluded in 2017.

1.2 Slavonic hagiography and the Thomson card index

In 2008 the publication of two important reference works advanced research on hagiography in the field of Slavistics: Klimentina Ivanova's standard work for South Slavonic Hagiography *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica* and Oleg Tvorogov's catalogue of translated saints' Lives in Russian literature of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries.¹⁰ The study of hagiography occupies a central place in Palaeoslavistics, even if it does not fully match the prominence of the genre in early Slavonic translation literature.¹¹ Its focus and methodologies are still predominantly centered around the cult of the saints and the textual transmission and reception of individual vitae and hagiographical collections.¹² Also here the development of digital tools is redefining the field.¹³ For Slavonic translation literature in general the relaunch of the important *Versiones slavicae* database by Andrey Boyadzhiev and Aneta Dimitrova deserves mention.¹⁴ The early development of this database, which started with a project in 2011 directed by the late Yavor Miltenov, was inspired by similar tools in the Byzantine field (esp. the *Claves*, *BHG*, and *Pinakes*) and by the scholarly work and the famous *cartotheca* of professor Francis J. Thomson.¹⁵

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- 10 O. V. TVOROGOV, *Переводные жития в русской книжности XI–XV веков. Каталог*, Moscow – Saint Petersburg 2008. K. IVANOVA, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica*, Sofia 2008. A companion volume to the *BHBS*, the *Bibliotheca Homiletica Balcano-Slavica* (*BHomBS*) that will reference the contents of all types of Triodion Panegyrika from the eleventh to the seventeenth c. is being prepared by Tsvetomira Danova (BAS Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center), based on Klimentina Ivanova's handwritten card index of manuscripts.
- 11 Cf. G. PODSKALSKY, *Theologische Literatur des Mittelalters in Bulgarien und Serbien 865–1459*, Munich 2000, 271: "Wenn man nach der dominierenden literarischen Gattung in der alt- und mittelbulgarischen und altserbischen Literatur sucht, so wird der Blick automatisch – ähnlich wie in der Kiever Rus' – auf die Hagiographie gelenkt." See I. LUNDE, *Slavic Hagiography*, in: Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, op. cit., vol. I, 369–383. Also the part on Hagiography in S. A. IVANOV – A. TURILOV, Section VII Slavica, in Part IV Translation, Transmission, Edition, in: S. PAPAIOANNOU, *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, Oxford 2021, 666–667.
- 12 Projects as, for instance, the *Encyclopaedia Slavica Sanctorum* (<https://slavsanct.net/bg>) or the *SESDiva* virtual room with bibliography on popular saints (<https://sesdiva.eu/en/virtual-rooms/popular-saints>) do testify to an interest in hagiography. A topic that has received considerable attention is female sanctity: see, for instance, the Sofia conference of 29. 5. 2014 on *Women and Holiness in the Slav Middle Ages*, https://library.osu.edu/documents/hilandar/Workshop_Women_Holiness_2014.pdf, or the interest in the collection of female saints' Lives in the Ghent Vidin Miscellany, a full digital edition of which is forthcoming thanks to the efforts by Maya Petrova and Amber Ivanov (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Literature).
- 13 Many of the digital tools, resources, and projects in the field are gathered on the *Obshtezhitie* pages managed by Ralph Cleminson: <https://www.obshtezhitie.net> (last retrieved 28. 10. 2025).
- 14 <https://slav.uni-sofia.bg/exist/apps/vs/pages/index.html> (last retrieved 28. 10. 2025).
- 15 See Y. MILTENOV – A. DIMITROVA, The *Versiones Slavicae* database and the Old Slavonic Translations of St John Chrysostom's Homilies, in: L. Sels – J. Fuchsbaauer – V. Tomelleri – I. De Vos (eds.), *Editing Mediaeval Texts from a Different Angle: Slavonic and Multilingual Traditions. Together with Francis J. Thomson's Bibliography and Checklist of Slavonic*

One of the projects that framed the Leuven workshop, *The Slavonic Metaphrasis of Byzantine Orthodoxy*,¹⁶ is centred precisely around Francis Thomson's unpublished card catalogue of Slavonic translation literature. Thomson (1935–2021) started the compilation of his catalogue in the early 1970s and he continued to work on it all his life.¹⁷ His research on Slavonic translation literature and the interrelation between Slavonic and Byzantine written culture built bridges between the scholarly paradigms of the two fields. His sustained effort resulted in an impressive catalogue of several thousand handwritten index cards, containing a wealth of information on all documented Slavonic translations, both South and East Slavonic, from the ninth century down to the late seventeenth-century reforms of Peter the Great.¹⁸

We can define the complexity of this card index by three of its properties. The first is the sheer bulk of the *cartotheca*: it contains more than 100,000 handwritten index cards, small and large, mostly written on both sides, most of them organised in 78 metal, wooden, and cardboard boxes of various sizes. Secondly, a double nature marks the card collection, as it is part manuscript for publication, part private toolbox. Thomson intended to bring the content of most of his cards together in a *Clavis slavica*. We can recognise in the *cartotheca* the sections he defined for publication in an article of 1980: Bible, Apocrypha, Hagiography, Liturgy, Law, Florilegia, and translated Authors, to which are added an Incipitarium and a vast Bibliography.¹⁹ On the other hand, his card library developed as an instrument for his own research, that is, both within the clearcut structure of the *Clavis slavica* and outside of it, in auxiliary sections (various sorts of sources, lists of repositories, abbreviations etc.) for personal

Translations: To Honour Francis J. Thomson on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday, together with Proceedings of the ATTEMPT Workshop held at King's College, London, 19–20 December 2013 and the ATTEST Workshop held at the University of Regensburg, 11–12 December 2015, (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 276. Bibliothèque de Byzantion, 19), Leuven – Paris – Bristol 2018, 213–224.

- 16 *The Slavonic Metaphrasis of Byzantine Orthodoxy. A Digital Inventory of South Slavonic Translation Literature applied to Research on Translated Authority and Linked Texts* (2024–2027), funded by the Austrian FWF and FWO – Vlaanderen (<https://research.kuleuven.be/portal/en/project/3H240031>).
- 17 On the scholarly career of Francis Thomson, see L. SELS, Francis J. Thomson (24. 11. 1935–21. 05. 2021). His Life, Work, and Legacy, *Palaeobulgarica* 45/4, 2021, 125–136.
- 18 Cf. THOMSON's programmatic article: A guide to Slavonic translations from Greek down to the end of the fourteenth century, in: *Paléographie et diplomatique slaves: rapports et communications du séminaire de paléographie et diplomatique slaves, septembre 1979*, (Balcanica, 3, Études et documents, 1), Sofia 1980, 27–37, as well as the introduction to his Checklist of Slavonic Translations, in: Sels – Fuchsbaauer – Tomelleri – De Vos (eds.), *Editing Mediaeval Texts from a Different Angle*, op. cit., 41–129.
- 19 THOMSON, A guide, op. cit.

use. A third characteristic is the ‘organic’ nature of the card collection, which grew and changed over decades, shaped both by intellectual considerations and practical contingencies.

Thomson became unable to systematically update the card index around the years 2015–2017.²⁰ Even if the information on the cards is partly outdated, the index has retained its relevance, not only as a witness to the *status studiorum* at the time and as a witness to Thomson’s personal evaluation of both the primary and the secondary sources, but also because of the wealth of references to important nineteenth and early twentieth-century publications easily overlooked by younger generations of scholars. Moreover, the card index offers scholars from other fields a gateway to information on the Slavonic traditions.²¹

The section on hagiography is one of the main components of Thomson’s card index.²² It consists of two collections.²³ The first – a collection of large index cards – is found in an unlabelled metal card box that contains exclusively cards on hagiography. Generally speaking, the collection is ordered alphabetically by name (i.e., of the saint), but the individual entries are preceded by introductory cards with general bibliography and information on particular topics (on vitae that have not survived in Greek, on hagiographic *topoi*, on canonization, folly in Christ, hagiography in Russia, Bulgarian and Serbian hagiography, and a few notes on Rumania and Croatia/Dalmatia), as well as by two thematic sections, viz. on menologia and *paterika*. The second collection – that is, of small index cards – is contained in a smaller metal box labelled ‘Menologia Translated

20 See the establishment of the tipping point to 2015–2016 for several texts in Amber Ivanov’s contribution, *infra*, §[5-6]§, as well as the mention of 2016–2017 by Maya Petrova, *infra*, §[2]§. Also Lora Taseva mentions the missing of more recent publications from 2016 on, see *infra*, §[2]§. In a presentation at the Innsbruck conference *Transfer of Ideas in European Intellectual History: From Medieval Manuscripts to Interactive Online Content* (30. 6. – 2. 7. 2025) Lara Sels determined the cut-off point at 2016–2017 for the cards on Ps. Athanasius’ *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*.

21 The Thomson cards were instrumental in the preparation of revised editions of the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* by Jacques Noret: vol. IV, Deuxième édition, revue et mise à jour, Turnhout 2018; vol. II/1bis, Deuxième édition, revue et mise à jour, Turnhout 2023.

22 THOMSON, A guide, *op. cit.*, 27. The cards of this section were scanned in March 2023 with support of the *Francis J. Thomson Legacy Fund*, which was established at KU Leuven in the Spring of 2021, championed by Francis Thomson’s widow, Professor Diana Phillips, and his daughters, Deborah and Catherine Thomson. The project relies on private funding and the support of academic organisations and aims to preserve, digitize and extend access to Thomson’s card index to preserve his academic legacy, and to promote further research in the field of Byzantine-Slavonic studies. Cf. <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/grieks/thomson>.

23 Undoubtedly, more information on hagiographic material can be found scattered over other categories such as ‘Florilegia’, ‘Apocrypha’, or ‘Liturgy’, as well as in some of the ‘toolbox categories’ that were not directly intended for publication, such as in the section labelled ‘Sources,’ or some of the smaller boxes of miscellaneous content. Two examples are (1) a small box labelled ‘special’ with among other things a limited bibliography on hagiography and calendars, and a section on *paterikon* excerpts, and (2) another box ‘Slav works,’ which falls outside the scope of a *Clavis* of translated literature but contains interesting information on saints’ Lives originally written in Slavonic.

Hagiography'. Here we again have an introductory section on menologia, followed by cards on individual saints, organised alphabetically by the saint's name. The small cards are to some extent of a more preliminary nature,²⁴ but they do not just contain preliminary notes but also "information on abridged or additional texts, viz. the Synaxarium text, eulogies or other fragments".²⁵ This observation partly explains the remarkable fact that some saints can be found in both the large and the small card collection, while others are found in only one of the two collections.

It is typical of the Thomson card index that all its constituent parts are interconnected, which makes it difficult to use one isolated section without recourse to the others. This is also true of the hagiography cards, which contain cross-references to other parts of the *cartotheca* and abbreviated references to secondary literature. One needs the other sections, especially the Bibliography,²⁶ to trace the cross-references and solve the abbreviations on the cards.

Officially donated by the Thomson heirs in 2023, the *cartotheca* is today part of KU Leuven Libraries Special Collections, where it is available for study.²⁷

2 Two digital tools

2.1 A database of biblical intertextuality in middle-Byzantine hagiography

Against the background of the research context sketched above, scholars in Cologne and Leuven teamed up to carry out collaborative research on Greek hagiography from the eighth to tenth centuries.²⁸

The focus on this period relates to the approach of the project: hagiography is approached as a form of written culture that reflects the impact and reception of political and economic decisions and measures taken by rulers and which serves as an instrument in their implementation and propagation. The eighth to tenth century was a turning point in Byzantine history: an existential crisis caused by internal and external turmoil was followed by the emergence of a transformed empire, ruled by emperors who actively reflected on its identity and governed with strengthened imperial authority.

As their point of entry, the researchers in the project focus on the role of the Bible.²⁹ Many of the controversies that made the eighth to tenth centuries such

24 THOMSON, Checklist, op. cit., p. 43: the large cards "have been studied in some detail," while for those on the small cards "evidence has been collected but not as yet [...] evaluated."

25 Amber Ivanov, *infra*, §[3]§.

26 The Bibliography section covers a vast collection of 38 boxes with bibliographic references ordered alphabetically by author, estimated at some 63,000 cards and currently being scanned by the Department of Digitisation of the KU Leuven Libraries.

27 <https://bib.kuleuven.be/english/special-collections>.

28 Funded by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung; PIs Claudia Sode and Reinhart Ceulemans. The reader finds a more extensive description on <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/grieks/onderzoek/bible-hagiography>, on which the following paragraphs rely.

29 R. Ceulemans – C. Sode (eds.), *The Bible in Middle Byzantine Hagiography*, (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense), Leuven, forthcoming.

a pivotal period, were of a religious nature. Moreover, the Bible was used by the rulers of that time as an important instrument in the development of their imperial ideology and in the design of their program of political and religious reform. This explains the highly significant role of the Bible.

In line with the focus of recent research on Byzantine hagiography, a central goal of the project is to investigate the way in which the use of biblical text and imagery was for Middle Byzantine hagiographers a tool of differentiation, next to register, style and subject matter, and how it interacted with the producer/consumer. Whereas hagiography in the transitional period of the seventh and eighth centuries features much spoken Greek of the time and a high degree of narrative vividness, hagiographers of the ninth and tenth centuries used elaborate means of expression and rhetorical ornaments. Style, language, and the use of specific literary devices (stereotypes and literary conventions) have been determined as the main elements of differentiation between individual hagiographers as well as in the relation between author and audience.³⁰ The role that the Bible played in this relation is investigated in the project: the use of biblical citations and allusions are a key to understand the rhetorical strategies that were used in the Lives to convey the narrative to the audience for whom they were composed.

To achieve this goal, PhD researcher Giulia Gollo studies biblical intertextuality in a large selection of new-saint Lives from the Middle Byzantine period.³¹ Biblical intertextuality engages with the recipient text on different levels, sometimes serving as a stylistic ornament but mostly triggering ideas and images relevant to interpret the content of the hagiographical narrative. Gollo assesses each text's literariness based on the comparative analysis of typologies, frequency and distribution of biblical references, studies the integration of biblical references in the narrative and reads the hagiographical texts as rhetorical acts.³²

30 See I. ŠEVČENKO, Levels of Style in Byzantine Prose, *JÖB* 31, 1981, 289–312. M. HINTERBERGER, Die Sprache der byzantinischen Literatur: Der Gebrauch der synthetischen Plusquamperfektformen, in: M. Hinterberger – E. Schiffer (eds.), *Byzantinische Sprachkunst. Studien zur byzantinischen Literatur gewidmet Wolfram Hörandner zum 65. Geburtstag*, (BA, 20), Berlin – Boston 2007, 107–142. N. CHURIK, Greek Explicating Greek. A Study of Metaphrase Language and Style, in: M. Kinloch – A. MacFarlane (eds.), *Trends and Turning Points. Constructing the Late Antique and Byzantine World*, (The Medieval Mediterranean, 117), Leiden 2019, 66–82. P. A. AGAPITOS, *Mortuary Typology in the Lives of Saints: Michael the Synkellos and Stephen the Younger*, in: Agapitos – Odorico, *Les Vies des saints à Byzance*, op. cit., 103–135.

31 Intertextuality refers to the relational nature of text interpretation, depending on vertical (*i.e.*, between source and recipient texts) and horizontal (*i.e.*, between text producers and consumers) exchanges of meaning. See J. KRISTEVA, Word, Dialogue and Novel, in: L. S. Roudiez (ed.), *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, New York 1980, 64–91: 66.

32 G. GOLLO, *The Practice of Intertextuality in Middle Byzantine Hagiography. A Literary Analysis of the Presence of the Bible in Hagiography from the Eighth to Tenth Century*, (PhD thesis, University of Cologne – KU Leuven, in preparation).

This research relies on quantitative data. As part of the project, the use of the Bible in Middle Byzantine hagiography is documented in the form of raw data, *i.e.* the collection of quotations and allusions of the Bible in hagiographical literature from the eighth to tenth century. These data underpin Gollo's research, and they increase our knowledge of popular reception of the Bible in Byzantium.³³ With Derek Krueger's pilot studies as a model, project collaborators identify citations and classify them. They group them per biblical book, distinguish different types (citations, allusions, ...), point to differences with the received version of the biblical text etc. The way hagiographers introduced biblical citations receives particular attention.

These data are made available through the OA database of *Bibindex*.³⁴ Around 3,000 entries are included there. They can be searched per biblical book/chapter/verse and appear among the results of search queries that users ask from the Bibindex database as a whole: in that sense, they serve biblical scholars interested in the use and popularity of the Greek Bible in Byzantium. The scholar of Byzantine hagiography can easily isolate the data by accessing the database through the page on Greek hagiography and look for citations and allusions in an individual Life.³⁵

This database of biblical citations enables scholars to investigate the use and reception of the Bible in Middle Byzantine hagiography and provides data for narratological research on intertextuality in this literary corpus.

2.2 *The Thomson Index of Slavonic translation literature*

Around the same time as the project just mentioned, the Innsbruck/Leuven project to study the South Slavonic translation of Byzantine literature was launched.³⁶ It seeks to enhance understanding of Byzantine-Slavonic literary relations within the context of the Slavs' adoption of Byzantine Christianity and to address both the normative and transformative tendencies that have shaped the textual culture of the Slavonic Middle Ages. The development of digital tools based on the handwritten card index of Francis Thomson is a central aim of this collaborative project. In Innsbruck, Jürgen Fuchsbauer, Ekaterina

33 See D. KRUEGER, *The Hagiographers' Bible. Intertextuality and Scriptural Culture in the Late Sixth and the First Half of the Seventh Century*, in: D. Krueger – R. Nelson (eds.), *The New Testament in Byzantium*, (Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine symposia and colloquia), Washington, D.C. 2016, 177–189. D. KRUEGER, *Biblical Quotations and Liturgical Echoes in Leontios of Neapolis' Life of Symeon the Fool: Scriptural Familiarity and the Culture of Reference in Seventh-Century Cyprus*, in: Th. Giankou *et al.* (eds.), *Κυπριακή Αγιολογία. Πρακτικά Α' διεθνούς συνεδρίου, Παραλίμνι, 9-12 Φεβρουαρίου 2012*, Αγία Νάπα-Paralimni 2015, 267–280.

34 www.bibindex.org (PI Laurence Mellerin).

35 <https://www.bibindex.org/en/author-groups/hagiography-greek-area> (last retrieved 6. 8. 2025). For details, see L. MELLERIN, *Patterns of Scripture: Exploring Biblical Textual Reuse Networks in Middle Byzantine Hagiography with BibIndex*, in: Ceulemans – Sode (eds.), *The Bible in Middle Byzantine Hagiography*, op. cit.

36 See *supra*, note 16.

Dikova and their collaborators launched *REGEST*, a Semantic MediaWiki on Greek-Slavonic translation literature from the ninth century to the Ottoman conquest.³⁷ In Leuven, Lara Sels and Reinhart Ceulemans and their team started to publish online as much of the huge *cartotheca* of Francis Thomson as possible, including the section on hagiography. This work covers the scanning, the digital transcription, and the OA publication with some metadata of the card archive in its pristine form, resulting in the digital tool *ThISTL*, the *Thomson Index of Slavonic Translation Literature*.³⁸

The section on hagiography is the first one to have been prepared for digital publication. To gather feedback from the academic field, the Leuven team headed by Lara Sels and Reinhart Ceulemans shared a preview of the publication with several scholars working on Byzantine and Slavonic hagiography and invited them to use the scans and metadata for their research and to report on the process and results in a workshop.

3 Thematic section on Byzantine hagiography in Slavonic translation

The Leuven workshop organized in December 2024 was part of the project team's approach to involve the field in broad and careful reflection on the way in which the Thomson cards should be published. The central aims of the December workshop were, first, in general, to present the *ThISTL* Hagiography section to scholars from various fields – Palaeoslavistics, Byzantine studies, historians, and others alike – and to stimulate a broad interdisciplinary dialogue around this material. Secondly, more in particular, we wanted to invite experts to integrate material from the *ThISTL* Hagiography section into their studies and papers, as test cases for the cards' relevance and the advantages and downsides of their use. This approach was grounded in the belief that feedback based on concrete user experience would prove to be priceless for further development of the *ThISTL* database.

The program of the workshop consisted of seven academic papers and a presentation of both research projects mentioned above. A selection of those papers forms the thematic section that we introduce here. The authors of the five papers in question all explored one or more Slavonic Lives with recourse to their records in *ThISTL*. Their papers offer interesting new information about a variety of hagiographical works in Slavonic translation. Next to that they evaluate the value, usability and limitations of the Thomson cards.

37 <https://wiki.uibk.ac.at/regest/index.php?title=REGEST>About> (last retrieved 6. 8. 2025). For a presentation of two case studies, the Slavonic translations of Christopher of Mytilene's hagiographic epigrams and the Slavonic *Dioptra*, see E. DIKOVA – J. FUCHSBAUER, *REGEST: The Reference Tool for Medieval Greek-Slavonic Translations*, *Scripta & e-Scripta* 25, 2025, 321–337.

38 After a test phase in another digital environment (see below *sub* 4) the various collections of *ThISTL* will be published gradually on <https://thomsonindex.org>.

3.1 *The twain shall meet*

This selection of papers shows that researchers of Greek (Byzantine) and Slavonic hagiography ask their respective corpus the same questions and approach it in similar ways. It is beneficial for both disciplines to also apply its queries and investigations to the other language context.

Giulia Gollo and Lara Sels illustrate this well. Both scholars are interested in Studite hagiography, one in the Greek and the other in the Slavonic versions. Each of these language traditions raise text-critical obstacles: either through the existence of multiple versions (Slavonic) or the extremely limited textual basis (Greek). In both cases questions need to be asked about the extent to which the original version is represented in the surviving tradition and how sound the conclusions are when one presses one of the Lives in question for historical details about Studite monasticism. Joining forces, Gollo and Sels compare in their paper the Slavonic and Greek versions of the Life of St Blasios of Amorion (*BHG* 278). Their bi-lingual edition of a sample section of the Life (which anticipates that of the full text) shows that one of the Slavonic versions presents a more archaic state of the text than the surviving Greek one and, on a disciplinary level, that Palaeoslavistics are of value to the study of Byzantine hagiography and vice versa.

The latter element takes the form of an explicit appeal at the end of **Maya Petrova's** paper. She urges Byzantinists to take the Slavonic evidence into consideration and points out the important role of Palaeoslavistic text editing: that of providing a testimony to the existence of texts and text versions in Byzantium that have not come down to us in Greek. On the other hand, she writes, for scholars of the Slavonic tradition the Thomson cards are valuable precisely because of their solid identification of Greek sources and editions. These calls conclude Petrova's detailed investigation of two hagiographic dossiers: that of St Marina of Antioch (*BHG* 1165-1169) and the Empress Theophano (*BHG* 1794-1795). She focuses on Slavonic versions for which no Greek original has been traced and formulates hypotheses on dating, authorship and textual modification that occurred in the transmission history.

These papers confirm that both disciplines, the study of Greek hagiography and Palaeoslavistics, can benefit from interaction and dialogue.³⁹ This approximation can help to bridge the gap that is created by the different ways in which their methodologies develop. The recognition of each other's research community generates new questions and new results and creates an academic context that brings progress to both fields.

39 An example outside the field of hagiography is the project on Constantine of Preslav's *Didactic Gospels*, started in 2020 with funding from the Bulgarian Science Fund ФНИ and conducted at the BAS *Institute of Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology* in Sofia under the direction of Lora Taseva, see: <https://uchitelnoevangelie.eu>.

3.2 *Methodological advance*

Comparative research is at the heart of **Dieter Stern**'s paper as well. He compares several versions of the Slavonic Life of Eupraxia with Greek counterparts (*BHG* 631 / *BHL* 2718). In his treatment, this serves a case for testing a tool kit he proposes in order to tell independent translations from later retractions and redactions. It consists of criteria that consider textual tradition and transmission history, a balance of evaluations on the micro- and macro-level, and attention for the historical reality behind the Slavonic versions. Stern's attention for the last topic brings a new element to the thematic section of papers: textual research on variants and translation technique is linked to the study of the identity, ideology and cultural background of the Slavonic translator.

This paper underscores the importance of making methodological progress in the study of Slavonic translation literature and to move beyond earlier states of research. The Thomson card index forms one such *status quaestionis*. In fact, it is a contradiction in the cards on Eupraxia that initiated Stern's enquiry. As he rightly points out, such shortcomings need to be corrected. This is precisely the goal of the *REGEST* tool developed in Innsbruck, which is an instrument designed for continuous editing and updating, starting from earlier sources such as the Thomson card index.⁴⁰ Such an approach complements the archival concern for publishing the card index in its pristine state: the availability of the original cards jumpstarts research such as Stern's. That is the goal of *ThISTL*: to make the cards available to the wider public in the service of scholarship.

3.3 *Interpreting Thomson's cards on hagiography*

The card index is in the centre of focus of the last two papers. They pair an in-depth analysis of the cards on a specific hagiographical dossier to an update of the *status studiorum* on that dossier.

Amber Ivanov investigates the older and younger Slavonic versions of the Passion of St Thecla (dossier *BHG* 1710-1719) and updates the bibliography and state of research on this tradition, while referencing the relevant cards in Thomson's index. In much of her paper she broadens the scope and takes in view the *cartotheca* as a whole. This allows her to reconstruct Thomson's method and redactional layers. While acknowledging shortcomings and omissions, she applauds the latitude and systematic nature of Thomson's work and his addition of personal opinions. She offers important clues to users, one of them being the importance of asking which sources the information on the cards relies on. Ivanov's 'philological' approach to the Thomson cards is an important reminder of the fact that the *cartotheca* is also an historical document, *i.e.* in the history of scholarship.

This approach is supplemented by **Lora Taseva**, who, like Ivanov, shares her experience as a user of the Thomson index but from an evaluative perspective. An expert on the textual tradition of Proclus of Constantinople's *In transfig-*

urationem Domini (BHG 1980), Taseva evaluates in the cards on this dossier several aspects of Thomson's work, such as the incorporation of earlier research ("Synthese des Wissens") and the uniformity of references to manuscripts and primary sources. Her views are in part informed by comparison with Klimentina Ivanova's *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica*. Taseva points to the important issues of the accessibility of the reference parts of the index (especially the Bibliography) and the need to update Thomson's information. She formulates these prerequisites as a task for the wider scholarly community.

4 A note on *ThISTL* permalinks

The digital version of Thomson's card index is continuously in motion, as was the paper version during its author's lifetime. Its current state differs considerably from that at the time of the workshop. The reader is asked to keep in mind that the articles in this thematic section are based on user experiences of an older situation. We present an overview of past and current developments, to frame the way in which they affected the contributions below, and *vice versa*.

The section on hagiography was scanned by the Department of Digitisation at KU Leuven Libraries in 2023.⁴¹ The images were stored in the Digital Asset Management (DAM) system *Canto*, where they are accessible through a drop-down menu, organised in folders in a hierarchical tree structure that (1) distinguishes between the large (HAG_L) and the small cards (HAG_S) and (2) lists the introductory themes and the letters of the alphabet (folders A, B, C etc.). A click on a letter shows (3) the folders for thematic subcategories as well as alphabetically ordered folders per saint (*viz.* based on the standard Latin name).

This environment mimics the structure of the physical collection. It is mirrored in the *Canto* filenames, which provide information on the place of a particular card within the larger collection. For example, in the Hagiography collection [HAG] the large card [L] from the A-folder [A] with its unique number [e.g. 00180], recto and verso [1-2], is named "HAG_L_A_00180_1-2".

Some metadata have been added to the cards in *Canto* – the saint's name, *Pinakes* permalinks, for some of the cards BHG and CPG numbers – but in the user view most metadata (though searchable) are hidden 'under the hood.' Right from the start it was our intention to add full transcriptions to the scans, but that intention had not yet materialised at the time of the workshop. No transcriptions are added to the hagiography cards in *Canto*.

In this *Canto* form, an online preview of the *ThISTL* Hagiography collection was shared in the autumn of 2024 with the authors of the five papers published here.

In March 2025 the entire *ThISTL* database, including the hagiography section, migrated to the relational database environment *FileMaker*. This also implied a change of file names: we assigned simple numerical IDs to the cards and created stable links through their publication on the project platform thomsonindex/org.

41 See note 22 above.

To assure clarity and consistency with future references, we replaced the old filenames with the new permalinks in the contributions to this thematic section. However, the reader is asked to keep in mind that in the preparation of their paper the authors used the older *Canto* preview of the database, with restricted search possibilities, and without access to the bibliography cards or other sections of the database.⁴²

At present the cards of the hagiography section are still available in their old *Canto* preview.⁴³ They will remain accessible until the collection will find its final place on thomsonindex.org.

This thematic session originates from a workshop organized by Lara Sels and Reinhart Ceulemans in Leuven (11 December 2024). Its academic context is formed by two ongoing research projects: *The Bible in Middle Byzantine Hagiography* (Cologne – Leuven) and *The Slavonic Metaphrasis of Byzantine Orthodoxy* (Innsbruck – Leuven). We are grateful to our fellow PIs of these projects, Claudia Sode, Jürgen Fuchsbauer and Ekaterina Dikova, for their constructive collaboration. Through these projects, the workshop was financed by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung and FWO – Vlaanderen. For further funding we thank the KU Leuven department of Greek Studies. Organizational support was provided by Ms Liesl De Windt and PhD researcher Evelyne Diels.

We are grateful to all the participants who presented their research at the workshop and took part in the discussions. Their feedback on *ThISTL* gave us concrete clues on how to proceed in terms of metadata, searchability, user guidance etc. We are following up on these suggestions at this moment. A special word of thanks is for Catherine Mary MacRobert, whose input has been most valuable.

Not all the papers delivered in 2024 are published here. We are indebted to Petra Melichar and the *Byzantinoslavica* team for accepting this thematic section into their journal. We also thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their valuable comments and advice, from which the individual papers and the thematic section as a whole benefited.

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42 On request additional cards were put at the authors' disposal.

43 The collection: <https://kuleuven.canto.global/v/thomsonindexhagiography/allfiles?view-Index=1>, The user guide: https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/grieks/thomson/thistl-hag_02.pdf (last retrieved 6. 8. 2025).