

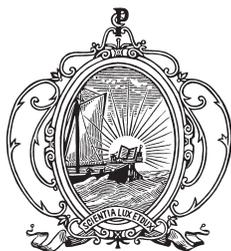
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# ENCYCLOPEDIC TRENDS IN BYZANTIUM?

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## CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS . . . . .	IX
INTRODUCTION BY P. VAN DEUN AND C. MACÉ . . . . .	XIII

### THE CONCEPT OF ENCYCLOPEDISM

P. SCHREINER	
Die enzyklopädische Idee in Byzanz . . . . .	3

### LATE ANTIQUITY

Y. PAPADOGIANNAKIS	
'Encyclopedism' in the Byzantine question-and-answer literature — the case of Pseudo-Kaisarios . . . . .	29

### 9<sup>TH</sup>-10<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

A. ALEXAKIS	
Some remarks on dogmatic florilegia based mainly on the florilegia of the early ninth century . . . . .	45
J. SCHAMP	
Le projet pédagogique de Photios . . . . .	57
M. GRÜNBART	
Byzantinische Briefflorilegien. Kopieren und Sammeln zur Zeit der Makedonenkaiser . . . . .	77
P. ODORICO	
Cadre d'exposition / cadre de pensée — la culture du recueil	89
F. MALTOMINI	
Selezione e organizzazione della poesia epigrammatica fra IX e X secolo — la perduta antologia di Costantino Cefala e l' <i>Antologia Palatina</i> . . . . .	109

T. FERNÁNDEZ	
Byzantine tears — a pseudo-Chrysostomic fragment on weeping in the <i>Florilegium Coislinianum</i> . . . . .	125
P. MAGDALINO	
Orthodoxy and history in tenth-century Byzantine ‘encyclo- pedism’ . . . . .	143
C. SODE	
Sammeln und Exzerpieren in der Zeit Konstantins VII. Porphy- rogenetos. Zu den Fragmenten des Petros Patrikios im soge- nannten <i>Zeremonienbuch</i> . . . . .	161
R. CEULEMANS	
The <i>catena Marciana</i> on the Song of Songs . . . . .	177

11<sup>TH</sup>-12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

B. CROSTINI	
Spiritual ‘encyclopedias’ in eleventh-century Byzantium? Miscel- laneous evidence for an encyclopedic outlook . . . . .	213
E. JEFFREYS	
Iakovos Monachos and spiritual encyclopedias . . . . .	231
I. DE VOS	
East or West, home is best. Where to situate the cradle of the <i>De Oeconomia Dei</i> ? . . . . .	245
S. NEIRYNCK	
The <i>De Oeconomia Dei</i> by Nilus Doxapatres — a tentative definition . . . . .	257
A. BUCOSI	
Dialogue and anthologies of the <i>Sacred arsenal</i> by Andronikos Kamateros — sources, arrangements, purposes . . . . .	269

13<sup>TH</sup>-14<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

PH. ROELLI	
Teaching Hesychasm by means of florilegia — sources of Mark the Monk’s <i>Florilegium</i> . . . . .	287

P. CANART	
Les anthologies scolaires commentées de la période des Paléologues, à l'école de Maxime Planude et de Manuel Moschopoulos . . . . .	297
M. FEATHERSTONE	
Theodore Metochites's <i>Seimeioseis Gnomikai</i> — Personal Encyclopedism . . . . .	333
F. TINNEFELD	
Zur intellektuellen Polemik des Nikephoros Gregoras . . . .	345
I. PÉREZ MARTÍN	
Les <i>Kephalai</i> a de Chariton des Hodèges ( <i>Paris, BnF, gr. 1630</i> )	361
A. RIGO	
Une <i>summa</i> ou un florilège commenté pour la vie spirituelle? L'œuvre <i>Méthodos kai κανών</i> de Calliste et Ignace Xanthopouloi	387

## INDICES

INDEX MANUSCRIPTORUM . . . . .	441
INDEX NOMINUM . . . . .	447
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS . . . . .	457

SPIRITUAL 'ENCYCLOPEDIAS' IN ELEVENTH-CENTURY  
BYZANTIUM? MISCELLANEOUS EVIDENCE FOR  
AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OUTLOOK

Barbara CROSTINI

### Introduction

The theoretical debate concerning what constitutes an 'encyclopedia' in the Byzantine context appears to be not only underdeveloped, but also carried out in a vacuum with respect to the Latin medieval counterpart (and vice-versa).<sup>1</sup> Yet questions about the Latin medieval concept of encyclopedia, such as those asked by Meier, certainly also apply to Byzantium: "Die Probleme der Gattungsbestimmung beginnen bereits beim Namen. Da das Mittelalter den Begriff Enzyklopädie nicht gekannt hat, bleibt zu fragen, ob und in welcher Form die Sache existiert hat und legitim so benannt werden kann".<sup>2</sup> The occasion of the Leuven conference has offered Byzantinists the opportunity of asking these questions not just in a theoretical manner, but through a wealth of examples across the centuries, and I am grateful to the organizers for having asked me to reflect upon my material from the perspective of 'encyclopedism'.

To continue quoting Meier's work, when he goes on to point out a distinction between 'geistliche' and 'weltliche' encyclopedias, he remarks on the large number of illustrated manuscripts purporting to offer an understanding of the world and instruction concerning it through the combination of words with images. Encyclopedia is, in Meier's re-making of the medieval metaphor of the world as book,<sup>3</sup> the book of the world:

<sup>1</sup> This funnelling of perspectives is methodologically justified by R. GIACONE, *Sul concetto di "enciclopedia" nel pensiero classico e medievale*, in *Rivista di studi classici*, 21.1 (1973), pp. 96-102, p. 96, given that 'scarse o nulle sono le interdipendenze o le influenze' viz. Arabic and Chinese encyclopedism. Greek is not even contemplated beyond the earliest period.

<sup>2</sup> CH. MEIER, *Grundzüge der Mittelalterlichen Enzyklopädie. Zur Inhalten, Formen und Funktionen einer problematischen Gattung*, in *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit. Symposium der germanistischen Kommission der deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft*, 5: *Wolfenbüttel*, 23.-26. September 1981, hrsg. von L. GRENZMANN und K. STACKMANN (*Germanistische Symposien-Berichtsbände* 5), Stuttgart, 1984, pp. 467-500, at p. 469.

<sup>3</sup> For a philosophical appreciation of this metaphor, see the important book by H. BLUMENBERG, *La leggibilità del mondo* [transl. from *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*], Bologna, 1984,

Nach ihrem Selbstverständnis ist die Enzyklopädie des Mittelalters ein Buch besonderer Art. Insofern Bücher die Welt oder Teile von ihr abbilden, sei es im kosmographisch-naturkundlichen, geschichtlichen, moralischen oder intellektuell-wissenschaftlichen Bereich, ist sie das Buch *par excellence*: Sie vereinigt diese Gebiete in sich und ist daher [...] ein 'Weltbuch', ein Buch, das die Welt inhält.<sup>4</sup>

Having said this, the structure and function of this book *par excellence* are still in need of some definition, which is, as Meier suggests, itself open-ended. The compilatory structure of the information, derived mainly from previous authors or authorities and presented in the form of a florilegium, is one that can be added to or subtracted from; whilst the didactic function can take place directly, in formal schooling, as well as indirectly, in furnishing material for sermons preached to monastic or lay communities. That the medieval encyclopedia has a strong Christian foundation cannot be doubted; this can be understood both in the fundamental grounding of the 'scientific' information therein presented and also through the particular interest in theological definitions and, above all, the biblical exegetical material that forms part of the actual examples of medieval Latin encyclopedias, such as the twelfth-century *Hortus deliciarum*.<sup>5</sup>

The abbess Herrad famously speaks of her work of compilation in terms that would not be incomprehensible to a Byzantine: she — but also her predecessor, Relindis, and the sisters of her nunnery of Landsberg — is a bee flying around the flowers of the Scriptures and other philosophical literature, whence her book is being composed.<sup>6</sup> One need only compare this well-known metaphor to the title chosen by the doyen of Byzantine encyclopedic studies for his edition of a gnomic florilegium, namely, *Il prato e l'ape*, to seize the import and extent of the 'cultura della sylloge'.<sup>7</sup> Whilst the ancient Greek and Latin approaches to encyclopedism may have varied widely — a difference which is often mentioned in the literature —,<sup>8</sup> the medieval Latin and Greek Christian peoples need

esp. ch. 2, pp. 11-15.

<sup>4</sup> MEIER, *Grundzüge der Mittelalterliche Enzyklopädie*, p. 472.

<sup>5</sup> G. CAMES, *Allégories et symboles dans l'Hortus deliciarum*, Leiden, 1961.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> ODORICO, *Il prato e l'ape*. For the patristic background to this metaphor, see C. CRIMI, *Le api sapienti di Gregorio Nazianzeno*, in *La cultura scientifico-naturalistica nei Padri della chiesa (I-V sec.)*. XXXV *Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana*, 4-6 maggio 2006 (*Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 101), Roma, 2007, pp. 233-239.

<sup>8</sup> See for example the very useful diachronical excursus by F. SIMONE, *La notion d'Encyclopédie: Élément caractéristique de la Renaissance française*, in P. SHARRATT (ed.), *French Renaissance Studies, 1540-70: Humanism and the Encyclopedia*, Edinburgh, 1976, pp. 234-262, esp. p. 235 and n. 4-8.

not have suffered the same alienation. This is not to state an identity, but to suggest a similarity, often voiced in art in terms of 'influences', a communality which, if recognized, to the extent that it is so, may be fruitful in developing otherwise slippery, controversial topics such as the use of the term 'encyclopedia' across these cultures.<sup>9</sup>

### Hrabanus Maurus

The eleventh century opens in the West with an editorial event whose repercussions go beyond the boundaries of the cenobium where it took place: Hrabanus Maurus' encyclopedia, *de universo* or *de rerum naturis*, was copied at the behest of Abbot Theobald in Montecassino, ca. 1023, where it is now MS 132. The particular feature of this edition is that it has been illuminated in a graphic, local style. Scholarly debate has centred on the question of establishing whether this work of illumination can be considered original to this manuscript, or whether it was simply copying a model, perhaps brought down from Germany, which however had been illustrated already in Carolingian times. In turn, this lost Carolingian exemplar may have been inspired by a non-extant illuminated edition of Isidore's *Etymologies*, given that textually Hrabanus' florilegium is largely based on Isidore's work, to the point of almost having been confused with it.<sup>10</sup> Cavallo suggests that the pictures, belonging, as Reuter has shown,<sup>11</sup> to a revised recension of Hrabanus' text, contributed to divulge his work more as an encyclopedia for a wider audience of learners than as a sophisticated hermeneutical reference work for high-ranking prelates: whereas in Byzantium the role of images as exegetical tools was ranked on a par with the written text, by contrast the Latin supremacy of the word would admit to illustrations only as didascalical. According to this

<sup>9</sup> ODORICO, *Cultura della συλλογή*, has the merit of grounding the notion of Byzantine 'encyclopædism' in the habit of collecting and re-presenting texts that was, however, not exclusive to the Byzantine *mentalité*. His choice of John Damascene's *Hiera* as a prototype for a correct use of the label 'encyclopædia' appears to favour the need for a reference structure within the compilation e.g. a table of contents or a system of cross-references, which, if made the condition for the use of the term, would obliterate its application to most of the medieval compilations.

<sup>10</sup> Both works were entitled 'Etymologies' in manuscripts up to the twelfth century: see G. BRAGA, *Genesi e fortuna del "De rerum naturis" di Rabano Mauro*, in G. CAVALLLO (ed.), *Rabano Mauro, De rerum naturis, Cod. Casin. 132/Archivio dell'Abbazia di Montecassino. Facsimile e Commentari*, Pavone Canavese, 1994, pp. 27-63, at p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> M. REUTER, *Text und Bild im Codex 132 der Bibliothek von Montecassino 'Liber Rabani de originibus rerum'*. *Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Illustrationspraxis (Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 34)*, München, 1984.

ranking, the second recension of Hrabanus, independent of the author's intentions yet belonging to the same Carolingian world, in some way lowered the lofty status of the initial opus. Still according to Cavallo, the hypothetical illustrated model arrived from Germany to Montecassino close to the time of its making, and remained unnoticed in the library there, in the guise of a 'fuoco sotto la cenere', until, almost two centuries later, Abbot Theobald took notice of it and ordered the copy to be made.<sup>12</sup>

This reconstruction of the itinerary of text and images across centuries and countries may even, for what it is worth, prove correct, yet not only do we lack evidence to support it with any precision,<sup>13</sup> but its emphasis on the past necessarily demotes the newer enterprise to a merely imitative task. Indeed, the relatively scarce diffusion of Hrabanus' manuscripts until the later Middle Ages makes Abbot Theobald's choice a far from obvious one. Notwithstanding the political connections with Germany, which were particularly strong during his abbacy, it is the contemporary interest in the didactic use of Hrabanus' text that can be evidenced in Montecassino, for example through a compilation of the mathematical and musical sections of the *de universo* in a manuscript (without illustrations) written by Lawrence, teacher of Hildebrand of Soana, and later also bishop of Amalfi.<sup>14</sup> Thus the illustrated Montecassino Hrabanus has a special weight in the cultural climate of the first half of the eleventh century, during which time, as we know, Montecassino was acting as a kind of spiritual bridge between Rome and Constantinople, East and West. We may then ask whether there was an Eastern Hrabanus, or whether we might see in the creations of eleventh-century Byzantium any of the seeds sown in the omni-comprehensive, metaphorically and spiritually significant, scheme of his *de universo*.

### Cosmas Indicopleustes

Two out of the three extant illuminated copies of the so-called *Christian Topography* by Cosmas Indicopleustes were made in Byzantium in the eleventh century. Although this idiosyncratic work is not closely comparable in structure and approach to Hrabanus' broader universe — especially in

<sup>12</sup> G. CAVALLO, *Un autore, un'opera, un manoscritto*, in CAVALLO (ed.), *Rabano Mauro*, pp. 9-12.

<sup>13</sup> An illustrious dissenter in the chorus supporting Cavallo's conclusions has been B. BISCHOFF, *Die Überlieferung der technischen Literatur*, in *Artigianato e tecnica nella società dell'Alto Medioevo Occidentale (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 18)*, Spoleto, 1971, pp. 267-296, at pp. 269-70.

<sup>14</sup> MS *Marcianus Lat. Z 497*: BRAGA, *Genesi e fortuna*, p. 31, with bibliography.

what concerns the former's argumentative, pro-Christian and anti-pagan stance towards 'science' — the fundamental dependence on Scripture and the presence of some common themes, such as the description of natural phenomena, animals and gem stones, among others, allows a comparison between these works. Like threads revealing if not common sources, then a common patrimony of information and a shared outlook onto the universe, one can follow some of these themes, at times made visible in specific images, between the Latin and Greek worlds.

Both of the eleventh-century Cosmas manuscripts, *Sinait. gr.* 1186 and *Laurent. Plut.* IX.28, were illuminated. The Sinai witness, perhaps made in Cappadocia, displays a very late-antique taste in mode of illustration, particularly concerned with detailed captions on individual figures.<sup>15</sup> What concerns us here more directly is the manuscript now in Florence, which the latest editor of Cosmas, Wanda Wolska-Conus, tentatively declared to be from Athos.<sup>16</sup> Both general stylistic and precise iconographical observations put this manuscript in relation to a group of illuminated manuscripts produced and illustrated at Constantinople in the middle of the eleventh century. In particular, it was observed that an unusual iconography prefacing the Florentine Cosmas manuscript on fol. 1v depicts Peter and Paul standing on either sides of the Cross.<sup>17</sup> A close parallel for this image is found in the Stoudite edition of the *Physiologos*, where the same iconographical scheme is completed by a medallion of Christ who, from the centre of the Cross, offers the keys to Peter and a scroll to Paul.<sup>18</sup> While Wolska-Conus and Bernabò still subscribed to a later date for the Stoudite *Physiologos* manuscript, the two mss are now to be considered contemporary.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> K. WEITZMANN and G. GALAVARIS, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: the Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, Princeton (NJ), 1990, no. 23, pp. 52-65, at p. 62 describe the style as "rather uncommon for the period". See colour plates IX-XIII and figures 124-183.

<sup>16</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. W. WOLSKA-CONUS, 3 vols (SC 141, 159, 197), Paris, 1968-1973, I, p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> Sketch in Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. WOLSKA-CONUS, I, p. 229, fig. 44. The ruined state of the miniature in the *Laurentianus* — at least as seen on microfilm — does not allow to say with any certainty whether a medallion, perhaps here placed at the top of the cross, existed here too. The concept of gift, however, is clearly stated in the caption below Paul's feet: Θεοῦ δῶρον.

<sup>18</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. WOLSKA-CONUS, I, p. 95 and n. 3. See M. BERNABÒ, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne: le miniature del perduto codice B. 8 della Biblioteca della Scuola Evangelica di Smirne*, Firenze, 1998, fig. 75.

<sup>19</sup> The paleographical connexion with other illuminated Constantinopolitan manuscripts by the scribe Theodoros, writing in the 1050s-1060s, has definitively been established by I. HUTTER, *Theodoros Βιβλιογράφος und die Buchmalerei in Studiu*, in S. LUCÀ -

An even closer connexion between these manuscripts is established by the presence of extracts from the *Christian Topography* as texts supplementing the illustrated *Physiologos*, in a complex relationship that has been fully described by Wolska-Conus without, however, reaching completely satisfactory conclusions due to the difficulty of ordering the images according to the order of the text of Cosmas as we have it.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Book XI of the *Christian Topography* (itself originally belonging to a different work by Cosmas, the *Geography*) has been employed both to supply sections in the animal moralizations by the inclusion of Cosmas' animals (μόσχος, μονόκερος, χοιρέλαφος and ίπποπόταμος), and later as an addition to the manuscript text, where the rest of the book has been copied but without repeating the aforementioned animals. This coordinated selection across different parts of the *Physiologos* reveals, therefore, a precise plan on the part of the compiler.

We find the importance of the compiler's function in the *Physiologos* manuscript appropriately highlighted in the miniature on p. 156: in it, a certain Maximos receives a book from the hands of an elder enthroned behind a ciborium.<sup>21</sup> It has been suggested that here the compiler's name and function were celebrated. The miniature is significantly placed at the outset of the longer series of borrowings from Cosmas's text.<sup>22</sup> The receiver is a young beardless figure dressed in an elegant tunic, and the book which passes hands at the centre of the illustration is surely a copy of the illustrated Cosmas, as the caption, acting as a title to the following extracts, may also confirm: Μαξίμου γράμμα κοσμικήν γραφήν φέρων.

If the importance of Cosmas's work is evidenced by the dedicatory miniature so oddly placed in the middle of the Smyrna *Physiologos*, the actual treatment of the borrowed texts is still far from clear. Wolska-Conus attempts a reconstruction of the order of miniatures, which have become disrupted in the codex, according to the order of the texts in the *Topography*, but the success of this enterprise is limited by the fact that here we are not dealing with full texts, but with shorter extracts, while the main emphasis is placed on illustrations that may or may not have exactly tallied with those in Cosmas's illustrated manuscripts — this too cannot be precisely established because of the lacunary character of the

L. PERRIA (eds.), *Ἐπιγράμματα, Studi in Onore di mgr Paul Canart per il LXX compleanno = BBGG*, 51 (1997), pp. 177-208, pl. 1-7.

<sup>20</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. WOLSKA-CONUS, I, pp. 94-107.

<sup>21</sup> BERNABÒ, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne*, pp. 4, 59-60, and fig. 74.

<sup>22</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. WOLSKA-CONUS, I, p. 95.

evidence. Unless substantial portions of the manuscript that included texts have been lost — and were lost before the fire in 1920, and thus before the last report we have concerning the ms —, what one witnesses is a peculiarly pictorial interest of the borrower based on suggestions from the *Topography*, but continuing beyond them, as Wolska-Conus says: “L’intérêt principal de l’excerpteur s’est porté sur l’illustration”.<sup>23</sup> This interest, idiosyncratically cultivated at the expense of the textual references, gives rise to the most amazing sequence of pictures in which the objects of Jewish cult from the Old Testament are not only understood as prefiguring the Christian liturgy, but specifically associated with the Virgin Mary and her baby-Son. Among the seven pictures in this sequence,<sup>24</sup> the most striking is perhaps that of Mary enthroned atop the Menorah, herself and the baby Jesus shining as the topmost light thereof.<sup>25</sup>

Prompted by the choice of frames in these images of the Virgin, Wolska-Conus suggests that the Stoudite interpretation and use of Cosmas’s text, or rather its imaginative translation, distorted the original cosmographical meaning into a more ready-to-use theological / devotional packaging: “Ainsi le symbolisme cosmique propre à la Topographie s’effaçait-il entièrement dans le manuscrit de Smyrne devant le symbolisme marial”.<sup>26</sup> Yet, later in the sequence of illustrations, there are in fact two further miniatures representing Cosmas’s universe (sky, firmament, earth, paradise and ocean: p. 179) and even its eschatological counterpart, the Kingdom of Heaven (p. 180).<sup>27</sup> The latter in particular is a very complex image that uses the ‘mountain’ structures typical of Cosmas’s illustrations. It seals the breadth of the ambition of the Smyrna *Physiologos*, a book which includes in it not only the animal moralizations of late-antique origin, but also the theological considerations on the ephod of the high priest (with extracts from Anastasios Sinaita), the significance of gemstones (*Lapidarium*) and

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> Mary is the Arc of the Covenant (p. 161), the Tabernacle (p. 162), the Table (p. 163), the light on the Menorah (p. 164), the branch of Aaron (p. 165), she is above Moses and Aaron with the vase of manna (p. 176), and on the dome of the Temple harbouring the objects of Jewish cult (p. 177). There is an eighth depiction of the icon of Mary and Jesus above Moses and the burning bush (p. 166). BERNABÒ, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne*, figs. 76-81, 85-86.

<sup>25</sup> See the presentation of these images in E. REVEL-NEHER, *Le témoignage de l’absence: les objets du sanctuaire à Byzance et dans l’art juif du XI<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle (De l’archéologie à l’histoire 1)*, Paris, 1998, pp. 38-39, figs. 29-30.

<sup>26</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. WOLSKA-CONUS, I, p. 99.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, I, p. 105; BERNABÒ, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne*, fig. 88: p. 179 has no extant photograph.

the special selection from Cosmas's biblical figures (esp. Noah, Moses and Aaron), as well as the cosmological descriptions, to achieve an astounding completeness akin to that of an illustrated encyclopedia.

### Animal lore

It is further to be noted that the compilations of moralized animal lore stood at the intersection between the realms of encyclopedic knowledge and preaching, a form of teaching characteristic of the Christian Middle Ages. This relation between encyclopedic compilations and their function of furnishing material for sermons is often suggested, but rarely pinned down with exactitude.<sup>28</sup> As Hrabanus Maurus says in his introduction, his book intends "to contain in a single manual all that could be needed for a sermon".<sup>29</sup> On one hand, preaching through animal moralizations brings us back to eleventh-century Montecassino through Peter Damian's 'Letter' to the monks there, based on the text of the *Physiologos* with *ad hoc* choices and expansions.<sup>30</sup> I have shown that some details in Peter Damian's sermon are actually best explained through the choice of imagery in the Stoudite *Physiologos* manuscript, with which the sermon is very nearly contemporary.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, animals and the moral significance suggested by their behaviour are found embedded not only in the *fabliaux* mentality of ancient Greece,<sup>32</sup> but across Byzantine times, as shown by their presence in the Byzantine encyclopedia par excellence, John Damascene's *Hiera*. The literary ancestry of the adaptable octopus can be traced to late-Roman gnomic tradition, in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*,<sup>33</sup> but its *Nachleben* is witnessed in a passage of the *Hypotyposis*

<sup>28</sup> MEIER, *Grundzüge der Mittelalterliche Enzyklopädie*, p. 491; see also, in a nutshell, the abstract to Michael TWOMEY's book, *Middle English Translations of Medieval Encyclopedias*, Ithaca College, 2006, in *Literature Compass* 3/3 (2006): 331-340, 10.1111/j.1741-4113.2006.00342.x [consulted 13/04/2010].

<sup>29</sup> Commented in Reuter, *Text und Bild im Codex 132*, p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, ed. K. REINDEL (*MGH. Epistolae 2. Die Briefe der Deutschen Kaiserzeit 4*), vol. 2, München, 1988, ep. 86, pp. 459-504; Peter Damian, *Letters 61-90*, transl. O.J. BLUM (*The Fathers of the Church, Mediaeval Continuation 3*), Washington (DC), 1992, Letter 86, pp. 255-298; Pier Damiani, *Lettere ai monaci di Montecassino*, transl. A. GRANATA, Milano, 1988, pp. 103-42.

<sup>31</sup> B. CROSTINI, *Moral Teaching in the Eleventh Century: the Physiologos between Stoudios and Montecassino*, in *Ἐξέμπλον. Studi in onore di Irmgard Hutter*, II = *Néa Póση / Nea Rhome. Rivista di studi bizantinistici*, 7 (2010) (forthcoming).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. T. MORGAN, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 2007, esp. pp. 57-83.

<sup>33</sup> MORGAN, *Popular Morality*, p. 39.

of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis, founded by Paul in 1054, bringing it closer to our period. Departing from the normative tone of this document, an unexpected passage condemns the changeable nature of those monks who appear to be what they are not in order to gain power in the monastery, and thus are placed in positions of authority. Paul compares them to the behaviour of the octopus, picking up a passage from Basil's *Hexaemeron* included in John Damascene's encyclopedia, and memorably illustrated there.<sup>34</sup> The monks behave 'like octopuses which when pursued by a bigger fish take a tight hold of the rocks nearby and simply pretend they are a rock, but whenever they escape the danger they are recognizable as octopuses again, which in fact they were.'<sup>35</sup>

Animals can thus offer single, proverbial terms for comparison with human behaviour, or escape into yet other contexts. The mythical unicorn that figures in the Stoudite *Physiologos*<sup>36</sup> as well as in the margins of the Theodore Psalter<sup>37</sup> undergoes a significant change when, in the pavimental mosaics of Otranto Cathedral, the majestic virgin who welcomes it on her lap appears transformed into a little, tonsured monk.<sup>38</sup> The example of the unicorn reminds us that the animal world is not bound by the confines of naturalism, and that the mythological and fantastic are both legitimate fields covered in the medieval encyclopedic mentality.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the intense animal life rendered with naturalistic flair in the Marcian *Cynegetica*, resembling the groups of slender dogs, leaping sheep and bristling boars of the Theodore Psalter, is found side by side with mythological scenes of Centaurs and Satyrs, heroes and Olympian Gods.<sup>40</sup> Ostensibly a hunting

<sup>34</sup> K. WEITZMANN, *The Miniatures of the 'Sacra parallela': Parisinus Graecus 923*, Princeton, 1979, p. 205 and fig. 546 (fol. 199v). Cf. *PG* 95, col. 1573 and *PG* 29, col. 153.

<sup>35</sup> P. GAUTIER, *Le Typikon de la Théotokos Évergétis*, in *REB*, 40 (1982), pp. 5-101: pp. 50-51.

<sup>36</sup> BERNABÒ, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne*, fig. 14 (a heraldic-type beast) and fig. 43 (Virgin and the Unicorn).

<sup>37</sup> S. DER NERSESSIAN, *L'Illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen-Âge*, II: *Londres, Add. 19.352 (Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques 5)*, Paris, 1970, fig. 202 = fol. 124v.

<sup>38</sup> A. WILLEMSSEN, *L'enigma di Otranto: il mosaico pavimentale del presbitero Pantaleone nella Cattedrale*, Galatina, 1980, pp. 60 and 104, tav. XXXVII.

<sup>39</sup> This aspect of Hrabanus Maurus' *De Universo* is emphasized in [http://www.fabelwesen.it/manoscritti/montecassino\\_132/index.htm](http://www.fabelwesen.it/manoscritti/montecassino_132/index.htm) [consulted 13 April 2010].

<sup>40</sup> I. SPATHARAKIS, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica in Venice, codex Marcianus graecus Z 139 [479]*, Leiden, 2004, pp. 71-75 and figs. 38-41, begin book II with a series of ancient Greek myths; myths and Gods are also found at fol. 24r = fig. 51, fols. 39r-40r = figs. 78-81. Cf. the standing heroes at fol. 13v = fig. 23 and those at fol. 33r = fig. 67 with the parade of Gods in Hrabanus Maurus, *MS Casin. 132*, pp. 385-391. See K. WEITZMANN, *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art*, Princeton, 1951, pp. 93-151 for the mythological scenes in the *Cynegetica*. Significantly, the first part of Weitzmann's book (pp. 6-92) is

manual, the *Cynegetica* in fact combines lore on animal life and an interest in the reproduction of the species,<sup>41</sup> and introduces, next to many realistic scenes of hunting, fishing and fowling, more idealized bucolic vignettes, for example those illustrating farming activities. These illustrations of human activities from ‘encyclopedic’ manuals such as the *Cynegetica* also migrate towards preaching contexts, for example to the famous homily by St John Damascene for the Nativity preserved in MS *Hierosolym., Taphou* 14.<sup>42</sup> The prevalence of depictions of farming, fishing and weaving, as also illustrated in MS *Athos Esphigm.* 14,<sup>43</sup> contrasts with the more down-to-earth choice of subjects from human activity, such as Hrabanus’ picturesque butcher shop.<sup>44</sup> Equally the physicians and money lenders in the illustrations from the *Sacra Parallela* may be taken over to the imaginative discourse of the Psalters with marginal illustrations, in which, however, the exegetical focus of the texts takes precedence and the worldly function is subordinated to the spiritual significance. For example, money is closely associated to the sin of simony through the figure of Simon Magus in the Theodore Psalter.<sup>45</sup>

### Branching out of ‘encyclopedic’ themes

The relationship between Psalter illustration — a sort of preaching-through-images — and encyclopedic lore is further attested in MS *Vat. gr.* 752, datable through its canon tables to 1058-1059. This learned enterprise, close in time, style and approach to the Stoudite psalters with marginal illustrations, offered a unique catena commentary (primarily based on Hesychios of Jerusalem) written in the margins next to illustrations especially

dedicated to the imagery of Pseudo-Nonnus’ commentaries to Gregory of Nazianus’ Homilies as the other major repository of classical imagery in the Byzantine world.

<sup>41</sup> SPATHARAKIS, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica*, fol. 14v = figs. 26-27; see also the care of animals for their offspring at fol. 43r = fig. 89.

<sup>42</sup> P.L. VOCOTOPOULOS, *Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem* (transl. by D.M. WHITEHOUSE), Athena, 2002, pp. 124-6, figs. 62-64; fol. 33r is also illustrated in SPATHARAKIS, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica*, fig. 143, suggesting further comparisons with two other 11th-cent. codices, *Paris. gr.* 533 (fol. 34v = fig. 141) and *Athos, Pantel.* 6 (fol. 37v = fig. 142).

<sup>43</sup> S.M. PELEKANIDIS *et al.* (eds.), *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts, Miniatures-Headpieces-Initial Letters*, The Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 3 vols, Athena, 1973-1979, vol. I, figs. 327-408 and pp. 361-383, esp. figs. 345-7 and 349.

<sup>44</sup> G. CAVALLO, *L’Universo medievale: il manoscritto cassinese del De rerum naturis di Rabano Mauro*, Ivrea, 1996, p. 30 (= reproduction of p. 352 of the MS).

<sup>45</sup> DER NERSESSIAN, *L’Illustration des Psautiers grecs*, fig. 107 = fol. 66r.

devised for this commentary, rather than directly referring to the psalter text. In it, extracts from Cosmas's *Christian Topography* were used among the prefaces to the Psalter.<sup>46</sup> The use of Cosmas's texts in this manner may to an extent explain the presence of an otherwise (to me) puzzling miniature of David as shepherd in a bucolic setting on fol. 1r of the Florence manuscript of the *Topography*.<sup>47</sup> The first editor of the illustration of this Vatican Psalter, Ernst de Wald, pointed to its displaying a special interest in ecclesiology visible in the assiduous depictions of church architecture, and which certainly deserves further exploration.<sup>48</sup> What is of interest here is that its miniatures also cover 'encyclopedic' themes that stretch from cosmological depictions of the otherworld<sup>49</sup> to those of natural phenomena. In fact, images such as that of the antipodes and of the personified sun and moon would more easily belong to a cosmographical work such as Cosmas's than to this exegetical context.<sup>50</sup> However, such a division seems not have belonged to the perception of the medieval thinker and planner of this particular manuscript.

The most famous full-page miniature of the Vatican Psalter chooses as its centrepiece a group of musicians, bearing different instruments, surrounded by the ring dance of adorned Jewish women celebrating the passage of the Red Sea. The striking circular scheme of this image group, comparable to the circular depictions of the zodiac (for example in the mosaics of the synagogues at Dura Europos, Beth Alpha or Da'aran in Israel) echoes the first part of our key-word, '*enkyklos*', recalling the classical meaning of the term as referring to the 'chorus' of Greek tragedies, bestowing upon music (including song and dance) a key role in a 'complete education'.<sup>51</sup> In fact, the history of early Byzantine instrumental

<sup>46</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. WOLSKA-CONUS, I, p. 113; other eleventh-century manuscripts listed here are *Vat. gr.* 342 and *Vat. gr.* 525.

<sup>47</sup> I consulted the manuscript in microfilm at the National Library of Rome. I am not aware of any commentary on this image. It can be described as follows: a pastoral figure with a pointed hat, holding a shepherd's crook, is standing on the left. He points upwards towards the gruesome scene of three dogs tearing the flesh of a bear lying dead on the (imaginary) ground above. Two sheep are represented to the right, one grazing, the other also looking up at the dogs. The caption says: 'David shepherding the sheep of his father'.

<sup>48</sup> E. DE WALD, *The Illustrations of the Manuscripts of the Septuagint*, vol. III: *Psalms and Odes*, part 2: *Vaticanus graecus 752*, Princeton, 1942, p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> The *etoimasia* and the eternal fire at fols. 27v-28r.

<sup>50</sup> Fols. 841r, 842v.

<sup>51</sup> See esp. L.M. DE RIJK, '*Ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία: a Study of Its Original Meaning*, in *Vivarium*, 3 (1965), pp. 24-91, esp. pp. 57-67.

music is largely written through the illustrations found in these eleventh-century manuscripts.<sup>52</sup>

Among the references to music, one might here recall those in the Stoudite *Physiologos*, where a group of musicians counteracts the deafness of the adder, as described in a verse from Psalm 57.4-5: in Hrabanus Maurus, this verse is paralleled to the deafness of the Jews to Christian preachers.<sup>53</sup> The salvific power of music is further highlighted in the striking depiction of pagan musicians attached to Pseudo-Nonnos' commentary on the sermons of Gregory Nazianzen in MS *Hierosolym., Taphou* 14. At fol. 310v, the story of Rhea saving the baby Zeus from Kronos is depicted in its two phases: on the left, Kronos eats the swaddled stone in place of the babe, and on the right, baby Zeus is safely kept on the island of Crete and his cries drowned by the din of music, so that Kronos will not find out his hiding place.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the depiction of idols holding musical instruments and performing bacchic dances atop pillars in the same manuscript attaches some criticism to the use of instruments when these statues are depicted as overturning and falling down from their pillars.<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to note in this context that the story of Abba Pambo's aversion to elaborate liturgical singing is included in Paul of Evergetis' *Synagoge* (Book II, 160-1),<sup>56</sup> contrasting for example with the overt praise of John Chrysostom as 'the trumpet of God' by John Damascene,<sup>57</sup> himself a celebrated poet and hymnographer. Could these images, fitting into an 'encyclopedic' perspective, underline a debate on this topic across different monastic circles of the capital? The recently restored frescoes in the staircase of the church of St Sophia at Kiev, from the first half of

<sup>52</sup> J. BRAUN, *Musical Instruments in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, in *Early Music*, 8 (1980), pp. 312-327, draws from the evidence of mss in Jerusalem and Sinai.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, 8.3 (PL 111, 251C-D), and the illustration in *Casin.* 132, p. 72; cf. my article, *Riflessi del contrasto con l'Occidente nei manoscritti studiati miniati del dopo-scisma (1054)*, in F. D'AIUTO (ed.), *Ortodossia e Eresia a Bisanzio (IX-XII s.)*. *Atti della IX Giornata di Studi dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini (AISB)*, Roma, 5-6 Dicembre 2008, forthcoming.

<sup>54</sup> SPATHARAKIS, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica*, figs. 166-8; WEITZMANN, *Greek Mythology*, fig. 36; cf. MS *Panteleimon* 6, fols. 162v-163r; WEITZMANN, *Greek Mythology*, figs. 38-39.

<sup>55</sup> BRAUN, *Musical Instruments*, pp. 317-318 and figs. 2a-d.

<sup>56</sup> BHG 2329b. I thank Prof. Chiara Faraggiana for guiding me to this and related passages in the Apophthegmatic literature.

<sup>57</sup> L. BROTTIER, *Figures de l'évêque idéal: Jean Chrysostome: Panégyrique de Saint Méléce; Jean Damascène: Panégyrique de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, Paris, 2004, p. 73, cf. pp. 54, 80, 103.

the eleventh century, have been reinterpreted as depicting a sacred ensemble performing music such as that described in Psalm 150, thanks to the sharper focus on the mantice-operated organ, occupying a central place, and the identification of the harp or cithara next to it, psalmodic instrument par excellence usually attributed to their author, David.<sup>58</sup> The study and practice of instrumental music was therefore closer to the church environment than is probably still commonly perceived for Byzantium.

## Saints

Not departing from the realm of liturgical celebrations, a monothematic encyclopedia imposes itself to scholarly attention in the eleventh century, namely the collections of saints in Menologia, headed by the massive work of compilation and rewriting carried out by Symeon Metaphrastes. Whilst the scope of his *metaphraseis* and his selections of people and topics are still in need of detailed study, a negative connotation had at first become attached to Lemerle's notion that at this time, saints were becoming relegated to an encyclopedic form, i.e. absorbed intellectual or antiquarian pursuits, rather than being experienced in living rituals and devotional practices.<sup>59</sup> Høgel rightly balances these apparently contrasting perspectives with a corrective:

Yet, the true observation that literary and encyclopedic approaches to hagiography became increasingly frequent, should not lead us to the wrong conclusion that hagiography in its religious context therefore lost importance. No matter how fictitious or encyclopedic hagiography became in the post-Iconoclastic period, it never ceased being primarily a kind of literature dealing with the holy... more than in the ages before, it now aspired to the status of liturgical text, as liturgical collections of hagiography began being produced on a much larger scale.<sup>60</sup>

Further on in his study of the Metaphrastic collections, extant in over seven hundred manuscripts, of which the earliest dated is *Athos, Iviron*

<sup>58</sup> See the account of the restoration works by I.F. TOCKAJA and A.M. ZAJARUZYNYJ, *I musici dell'affresco detto degli "Skomorochi" nella cattedrale della Santa Sofia a Kiev*, and the interpretation by F. LUISI, *Per una lettura musicologica dell'affresco detto degli "Skomorochi" nella cattedrale della Santa Sofia di Kiev*, in A. IACOBINI and E. ZANINI (eds.), *Arte profana e arte sacra a Bisanzio*, Roma, 1995, pp. 281-302 and 303-314 respectively.

<sup>59</sup> LEMERLE, *Premier humanisme*, pp. 293-294, criticized by ODORICO, *Cultura della συλλογή*, at pp. 6-7: this debate is summarized by Ch. HØGEL, *Symeon Metaphrastes, Rewriting and Canonization*, Copenhagen, 2002, p. 49 n. 104.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

16 copied in 1042, Høgel repeats the notion that there was no official canonization practice in Byzantium, but adds that “the saints and texts that were included in officially sponsored collections and decoration programs were *de facto* canonized”.<sup>61</sup> I fully agree with Høgel’s analysis, and only wish to point out the connection between saints’ lives and iconography. The splendid example of Basil II’s illuminated Menologion,<sup>62</sup> where text and illustrations share equal status on the page, can be considered the precursor of the diffusion of saints’ figures in the marginal psalters, an ‘irruption des saints’, in Mariès’ words,<sup>63</sup> that need not perhaps be explained other than in terms of visibility and definition of the Christian identity.<sup>64</sup> But it is striking that of the small portion of illuminated mss out of the total number of metaphrastic menologia, all the seven editions grouped together by Nancy Ševčenko are datable to the second half of the eleventh century, and mostly around the 1050s-1060s.<sup>65</sup> Some of these manuscripts display stylistic and formal similarities with the illustrated productions from Stoudios which Ševčenko begins to point out, but which ought to be pursued in greater depth for their wide-ranging cultural significance.

A special place in our short survey of eleventh-century encyclopedism must be assigned to the ‘Romance of Barlaam and Ioasaph’, whose strict ascetic message makes the existence of several luxury copies almost an oxymoron.<sup>66</sup> This narrative could itself be characterized as a sort of encyclopedia of Christianity, since its structure — which has variously been characterized as a fable or a Platonic dialogue — is that of the question-and-answer literature as well as a sort of florilegium of the tenets of the

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59; see pp. 62-63 on the mss.

<sup>62</sup> Here I may signal the new commentated facsimile, *El «Menologio de Basilio II»*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1613. *Libro de estudios con ocasión de la edición facsimil*, F. D’AIUTO and I. PÉREZ MARTÍN (eds.) (*Colección Scriptorium* 18), Città del Vaticano - Athena - Madrid, 2008, which however has not yet been available to me.

<sup>63</sup> L. MARIÈS, *L’irruption des saints dans l’illustration des psautiers byzantins*, in *AB*, 68 (1950), pp. 153-162.

<sup>64</sup> I am thinking of the recent more punctual attempts at pinning down the choice of saint with the liturgical use of a specific Psalm verse made by Ch. BARBER, *The Theodore psalter: electronic facsimile*, Champaign (IL), 2000, without, however, coming to very satisfactory conclusions.

<sup>65</sup> N. ŠEVČENKO, *Illustrated Manuscripts of the Metaphrastian Menologion*, Chicago, 1990, pp. 197-203, with 6 microfiche illustrations.

<sup>66</sup> Still useful is the comprehensive survey of the illustrated mss by S. DER NERSESSIAN, *L’Illustration du roman de Barlaam et Ioasaph d’après les clichés de la Frick Art Reference Library et de la Mission Gallery Millet au Mont-Athos*, Paris, 1938.

faith.<sup>67</sup> In particular, codex *Iviron* 463, recently backdated to the 1060s on palaeographical grounds,<sup>68</sup> would appear to cohere with the approach to universal Christian instruction in words and images that we have been trying to explore around the production of particular illuminated manuscripts of the mid-eleventh century. First, the attribution of this peculiar work to the authority of John Damascene, as his full-page portrait in the illuminated frontispiece to the *Iviron* manuscript proclaims,<sup>69</sup> reveals an interest in making the Christianization of this Buddhist myth as effective as possible in its pedagogical impact on the Christian faithful. The primary modification to the underlying story of the Buddha, namely, the insertion of Barlaam's role as teacher and preacher, emphasizes the essence of Christianity as a religion preached and taught — as opposed to self-taught —<sup>70</sup> and at the same time assigns to monks and ascetes the role of teachers par excellence. Thus, the authenticity of the attribution is less interesting than the reason for which this work was diffused under John's name.

This popular story emphasizes the threat that a non-Christian king poses to the well-being of the monks, who stand in the frontline of persecution because of their otherworldly beliefs and singular — and for the most part objectionable — ascetic mores. While other expressions of Christian life may accommodate to worldly requirements, the stark figure of Barlaam the solitary, juxtaposed to the rich and young prince Joasaph, throws into relief the paradoxical nature of the Christian religion, its uncompromising stance and radical difference from the 'paganism' which is portrayed across this manuscript production as idol worship. Rooted in a universal reflection on death, the message from this story is condensed in a complex image also found in the marginal psalters, and best preserved

<sup>67</sup> The introduction to R. Volk's new edition of this text is a very thorough study of the type of literature to which it belongs, as well as of its likely context for composition and diffusion: see R. VOLK, *Historia animae utilis Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria): Einführung* (PTS 61.1), Berlin - New York, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> I. PÉREZ MARTÍN, *Apuntes sobre la historia del texto bizantino de la Historia edificante de Barlaam y Josafat*, in *Erytheia*, 17 (1996), pp. 159-177; see also F. D'AIUTO, *Su alcuni copisti di codici miniati mediobizantini*, in *Byz*, 67 (1997), pp. 5-59.

<sup>69</sup> *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol. I, fig. 53; colour reproduction of the illustrations are figs. 53-132, with description at pp. 306-322.

<sup>70</sup> I have gathered further evidence on the importance of teaching in eleventh-century Byzantium in *Value and Forms of Christian Teaching in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century: New Authorities, Ancient Texts*, in N. GAUL and S. STECKEL (eds.), *Networks of learning in Byzantium and the Latin West. Approaches to scholars' social relations, identity and authority, c. 1000-1200 (Philicittia series)*, forthcoming.

in the Barberini Psalter,<sup>71</sup> depicting the apologue of the black and white mice: the man who flees his own sins, and ultimately death in the shape of a threatening unicorn, in vain clings to worldly security, which is being constantly and inevitably eroded on the ineluctable journey to the underworld. The convergence of stories and images reveals that we are dealing here with a common world view prevailing in eleventh-century Byzantium, and especially in the monastic circles of the capital probably identifiable with, or at least connected to, the Stoudite foundation.

### Conclusion

The seemingly random exercise of retracing encyclopedic themes across the production of eleventh-century illuminated manuscripts in Byzantium has in fact brought us, according to the extant evidence, to some more specific conclusions. If encyclopedias, in their complete or pure form, were compendia for teaching, ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία stands as a characteristically Christian, and even specifically monastic, conception of knowledge, articulated singly and collectively in the extraordinary production of eleventh-century illuminated manuscripts, perhaps ultimately to be reconducted to the concerns and ideological preoccupations of the 'imperial' monastery of Stoudios.

A survey — however superficial — of these extant witnesses has sharpened our sense of the wide-ranging yet intricately networked interests that permeated the *mentalité* of the eleventh century at least from a recognizably monastic standpoint. These were given expression not merely in the choice of texts to assemble, but also in a more immediate visual expression, through which these common themes become particularly apparent. Which audience was targeted by this rich imaginific vocabulary remains a topic for debate — the luxury character of these productions tends to favour the hypothesis of aristocratic patronage, whether close to the imperial court or to the highest echelons of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, including abbots. But one wonders whether, at least as symbols of their culture, the knowledge of these editorial enterprises was actually intended for a broader outreach, and whether the choice of illustrations, besides and beyond language, acted as fundamental cross-cultural vehicles in promoting exchanges and understanding across the shores of the Mediterranean. The depth of reflection assembled in these visual

<sup>71</sup> *Vat., Barber. gr.* 372, fol. 231v: reproduction in DER NERSESSIAN, *L'Illustration des Psautiers grecs*, fig. 332.

commentaries suggests that, if we wish to call them encyclopedias at all, this definition is not particularly meaningful concerning the breadth encompassed in their subject matter, but may be more relevant to the mode in which their 'teaching' was imparted: through ritual readings, in the repetition of liturgical cycles, where the cyclical element is key to the manner of reaching the target audience. Something we may now call 'continuing education', or, less poetically, adult learning.

This aspect may seem obvious in the case of the creation and diffusion of *Etymologica*, which, echoing Isidore as the 'first cause', even Byzantinists call encyclopedic as a matter-of-course;<sup>72</sup> and also in the one-topic manuals dedicated in depth to a specific lore, whether secular, such as the recently re-proposed *Hippiatrica*,<sup>73</sup> or religious, such as menologia or panegyrika volumes. Other uses in the world of art history, for example, appear more impressionistic, such as the definition of the Salerno ivories as offering a 'pocket encyclopedia',<sup>74</sup> still, however, attempting to catch the import of a microcosm that seems selected for a significance greater than that of its component parts. As Fr. Taft would keep reminding us, 'Words are words, and things are things'. Such things as these were produced in Byzantium, and we need not apologize for using the word 'encyclopedic', provided we keep in mind the semantic range and specificity of this word within the medieval *mentalité*.

<sup>72</sup> K. ALPERS, *Eine byzantinische Enzyklopädie des 9. Jahrhunderts. Zu Hintergrund, Entstehung und Geschichte des griechischen Etymologikons in Konstantinopel und im italogriechischen Bereich*, in G. CAVALLO - G. DE GREGORIO - M. MANIACI (eds.), *Scritture, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisanzio: Atti del seminario di Erice (18-25 settembre 1988)*, 2 vols, Spoleto, 1991, vol. I, pp. 235-269, and 10 plates.

<sup>73</sup> A. MCCABE, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine: The Sources, Compilation and Transmission of the Hippiatrica*, Oxford, 2007, does not seem to need theoretical support for her choice of definition. I have, however, only consulted this book on the web [Google Books, consulted 21/04/2010], and read the review by H. ALKHATEEB SHEHADA, in *BMGS*, 33 (2009), pp. 104-106, which seemed to confirm this impression.

<sup>74</sup> This term was adopted for the famous tablets by Francesca Dell'Acqua in a paper circulated to the participants in preparation for the international conference on 'Gli Avori Salernitano/Amalfitani ed il Mediterraneo Medievale', Amalfi, 10-13 Dicembre 2009.