

## A cognitive analysis of metrical irregularities in the “Ὅσπερ ξένοι” book epigrams

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*This article considers the variation in the metres of the ‘Ὅσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams, collected in the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams (DBBE). In its canonical form, these epigrams follow a dodecasyllabic metrical pattern. The seemingly unmetrical decasyllabic and decatetrasyllabic variants are explained from a cognitive-linguistic perspective as the pairing of different cola – 5+5 and 7+7 instead of the usual 7+5 or 5+7. From this perspective, cola can be equated with the cognitive ‘idea’ or ‘intonation units’ (IUs) used in ordinary speech.*

**Keywords:** Byzantine metre; Byzantine book epigrams; metrical irregularities; intonation units; ‘principle of pairing’

### Introduction

The study of Byzantine book epigrams had been largely neglected until the recent launch of the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams (DBBE).<sup>1</sup> This has led to a number of

1 The DBBE is hosted by Ghent University at [www.dbbe.ugent.be](http://www.dbbe.ugent.be). Research for this paper was supported by grants from Ghent University’s Special Research Fund (BOF/15/GOA/034) and the Fund for Scientific Research-Flanders (FWO 3F02016000401). Earlier versions of the paper were presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> U4 Winter School on Antiquity (Istanbul, March 2016), the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Belgrade, August 2016) and Varieties of Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek (Ghent, December 2016). We take the opportunity to thank the following colleagues for their useful remarks and suggestions: Klaas Bentein, Sien De Groot, Ilse De Vos, Kristoffel Demoen, Marc Lauxtermann, Peter Mackridge, Renaat Meesters, Rachele Ricceri and Maria Tomadaki.

studies by members of the DBBE team,<sup>2</sup> but much investigation is still required, mainly due to the absence of critical editions for many of these texts. The metres of the book epigrams have never been studied before, even though this could provide new insights into the use and perception of metre in Byzantine times, because of the *ad hoc* character of many of the book epigrams.

Byzantine metre in general has received more scholarly attention, most notably by Maas, Jeffreys, Lauxtermann and Rhoby.<sup>3</sup> These studies typically aim to determine the regular outlines of the two innovative types of Byzantine metre, that is to say, the dodecasyllable and the decapentasyllable, or ‘political verse’ (πολιτικός στίχος), and compare them with Classical and/or Modern Greek metrical patterns. Most of the research concerning the dodecasyllable thus focuses on the development from the (post)classical iambic trimeter to its Byzantine counterpart and especially on the loss of prosody.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, studies regarding the decapentasyllable typically concentrate upon its origin as a composite verse, that is to say, as a combination of an octasyllable and a heptasyllable, which explains the fixed caesura after the eighth syllable.<sup>5</sup>

This article offers a cognitive-linguistic interpretation of the metrical irregularities in the ‘ὄσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams, along the lines of Janse (for the Homeric hexameter)<sup>6</sup> and

2 K. Bentein et al., ‘Book epigrams in honor of the Church Fathers: Some inedita from the eleventh century’, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 49 (2009) 281–94; K. Bentein et al., ‘New Testament book epigrams: Some new evidence from the eleventh century’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 103 (2010) 13–23; K. Bentein and F. Bernard, ‘A cycle of book epigrams on the four Evangelists’, *Scriptorium* 64 (2011) 237–49; F. Bernard and K. Demoen, ‘Byzantine book epigrams from manuscript to digital database’, in C. Clivaz, J. Meizoz, F. Vallotton and J. Verheyden (eds), *From Ancient Manuscripts to the Digital Era: Readings and Literacies* (Lausanne 2012) 431–40; F. Bernard, ‘Rhythm in the dodecasyllable: Practices and perceptions’, forthcoming; F. Bernard and K. Demoen, ‘Book epigrams’, in A. Rhoby, N. Zaglas and W. Hörandner (eds), *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry* (Leiden, forthcoming); K. Demoen, ‘La poésie de la συλλογή: Les paratextes métriques des manuscrits byzantins et le (vocabulaire du) recueil’, in C. Gastgeber et al. (eds), *Pour l’amour de Byzance: Hommage à Paolo Odorico* (Frankfurt 2013) 89–98; R. Meesters, ‘Byzantijnse boekepigrammen / metrische paratekst: Terminologie en classificatie’, *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 70 (2016, in press); R. Meesters, ‘Ascending the ladder: *Editio Princeps* of four poems on the *Ladder* of John Klimakos (Bodleian Baroccianus 141)’, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 56 (2016) 556–71.

3 P. Maas, ‘Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 12 (1903) 278–323; M. Jeffreys, ‘The nature and origins of the political verse’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974) 142–95; M. D. Lauxtermann, ‘The velocity of pure iambs: Byzantine observations on the metre and rhythm of the dodecasyllable’, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 48 (1998) 9–33; *The Spring of Rhythm: An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Meters* (Vienna 1999); A. Rhoby, ‘Vom jambischen Trimeter zum byzantinischen Zwölfsilber: Beobachtung zur Metrik des spätantiken und byzantinischen Epigramms’, *Wiener Studien* 124 (2011) 117–42.

4 Maas, ‘Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber’; Rhoby, ‘Vom jambischen Trimeter’.

5 M. Jeffreys, ‘Nature and origins of the political verse’; P. Mackridge, ‘The metrical structure of the oral decapentasyllable’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 14 (1990) 551–74.

6 M. Janse, ‘Homerische metriek: Orale poëzie in de praktijk [Homer’s Meter: Oral Poetry in Practice]’, *Didactica Classica Gandensia* 38 (1998) 125–51; ‘The metrical schemes of the hexameter’, *Mnemosyne* 56 (2003) 343–8; *Inleiding tot de Homerische taal en metriek*, 7<sup>th</sup> edn (Ghent 2016).

Soltic (for the Byzantine decapentasyllable),<sup>7</sup> rather than a revision of the regular Byzantine metrical patterns. Book epigrams constitute an ideal corpus for this type of research, because fewer epigrams maintain the artificial, quantitative prosody of ancient times, and many bear witness to the rather limited level of literacy of the scribes who wrote them. Not surprisingly, therefore, irregularities and deviations occur rather frequently in this corpus.

### **Text-related and scribe-related epigrams**

An important distinction to be made when one studies book epigrams is the one between text-related and scribe-related epigrams.<sup>8</sup> Each of these two types of epigram has a different context and must therefore be read and understood in a slightly different way.

Text-related epigrams are, in a broad sense, comments on the main text of the manuscript. This may be a metrical paraphrase, a clarifying note to the text, or simply a comment by the scribe regarding the content or the author of the text. Text-related epigrams are therefore very much bound to the specific manuscript they are written in and to the specific text that they accompany, in that they only make sense next to that text. They are sometimes even so closely connected to the main text that they were felt by later scribes to be part of it and copied as such. In this respect, text-related epigrams are quite fixed and not open to changes by the scribe, who generally copied them as faithfully as possible.

An entirely different and, for us, more interesting type of book epigram is the scribe-related epigram. The main topic of these texts is scribal activity, such as a prayer by the scribe before he starts copying, an expression of joy as he finishes the manuscript, or a metrical colophon. Scribe-related epigrams are much more fluid than text-related epigrams because they have very little connection to the main text and can therefore easily ‘migrate’ from one manuscript to another. They were not felt to be fixed, which caused scribes to adopt and adapt the texts to their own needs. When Christine Thomas defines ‘fluid texts’ she asserts that they behave ‘similarly to oral tradition, with each manuscript representing a new “performance” of the work in another context. Yet this

7 J. Soltic, ‘The distribution of object clitic pronouns in the Grottaferrata manuscript of Digenis Akritis’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 36 (2012) 178–97; ‘Late Medieval Greek πάλιν: a discourse marker signaling topic switch’, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 53.2 (2013) 390–419; ‘The late medieval Greek vernacular πολιτικός στίχος poetry: a modern linguistic analysis into Intonation Units’, *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 14 (2014) 84–116; ‘The vernacular medieval Greek romances and information structure: Linguistic features pointing to an oral style’, *Porphyra* (December 2015) 80–7; ‘Het modern taalkundig concept van de Intonatie Eenheid in de laat-Middeleeuws Griekse πολιτικός στίχος poëzie’, *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* (2015) 85–97.

8 F. Bernard and K. Demoen, ‘From manuscript to digital database’, 434; Bernard and Demoen, ‘Book epigrams’, 3.

occurs on the level of written text.’<sup>9</sup> This is certainly applicable to scribe-related book epigrams. Despite their fundamentally written character, they share certain characteristics with oral texts, since they were cited from memory rather than copied from paper,<sup>10</sup> which in turn leads to a very changeable type of text, with each variant being a performance in its own right and with its own value.

### The ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams

The popular scribal ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams,<sup>11</sup> which are the subject of the present article, are an example of scribe-related epigrams. The different occurrences of these epigrams abound in variation, including metrical variation on the dodecasyllabic type, which will prove to be important for our understanding of the pragmatics of Byzantine metre. Treu, Brock and Lemay have collected numerous occurrences of the ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams and they focus on lexical and grammatical variation.<sup>12</sup> However, none of these studies had access to the collection of the DBBE, in which more than one hundred and fifty occurrences of this type have so far been collected at the time of writing,<sup>13</sup> nor did they focus on the metrical variation in the different occurrences. The following example, metrically an accentual dodecasyllable, with strong caesura after the seventh syllable, has by far the most occurrences (24):<sup>14</sup>

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν π(ατ)ρίδ(α)·  
οὔτως καὶ οἱ γρά(φοντες) |<sub>B7</sub> βιβλίου τέλος +  
(DBBE 346;<sup>15</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Libr., Barocci 102, f. 210v)<sup>16</sup>

*Just as strangers rejoice in seeing their fatherland,  
So do writers at the end of their book.*

9 C. Thomas, *The Acts of Peter, Gospel Literature and the Ancient Novel. Rewriting the Past* (Oxford 2003) 40.

10 Bernard and Demoen, ‘Book epigrams’, 13, cf. *infra* under ‘3. The ὡσπερ ξένοι epigrams’.

11 This type of book epigram is called ‘colophon verse’ by M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts* (Vienna 2003) 200.

12 K. Treu, ‘Der Schreiber am Ziel: Zu den Versen ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν... und ähnlichen’, in J. Dummer, K. Treu and M. Richard (eds), *Studia Codicologica* (Berlin 1977) 473–92; S. Brock, ‘The scribe reaches harbour’, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995) 195–202; P. Lemay, ‘De functie en de evolutie van de verzen ὡσπερ ξένοι... in Byzantijnse manuscripten’, unpublished MA thesis, Ghent University, 2013.

13 The ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams in the DBBE all date from the period 900–1500.

14 DBBE 22, 275, 799, 800, 1137, 1159, 1362, 1513, 1696, 1758, 1765, 1814, 1871, 2129, 2906, 3004, 3285, 3495, 3687, 3907, 4505, 4915, 4919, 5633. It should be noted that the exact number of occurrences may change in the future, as the DBBE is continually expanding. In April 2017, the total number of ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams in the DBBE was set at 159.

15 Text source by DBBE.

16 All cited epigrams in this article are what the DBBE calls ‘occurrences’ (as opposed to ‘types’), i.e. the faithful transcription of the text as it was found in the manuscript. No normalizations have been applied to these texts and all orthographic mistakes/variances are retained.

The following, longer, variant with the same metrical structure has an impressive amount of occurrences as well (19):<sup>17</sup>

Ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν πατρίδα  
καὶ οἱ θαλαττεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> εὐρεῖν λιμένα  
οὕτω καὶ οἱ γράφοντες |<sub>B7</sub> βιβλίου τέλος·  
(DBBE 1900;<sup>18</sup> Athos, Monè Vatopedi 1486)

*Just as strangers rejoice in seeing their fatherland,  
And those at sea in finding a harbour,  
So do writers at the end of their book.*

The orthographical, lexical and metrical variation on these two examples is virtually endless, as authors added lines and words with apparently little regard for the pattern of the dodecasyllabic metre. The epigram was so popular – with over one hundred and fifty occurrences, no doubt we only slightly gain a glimpse of the real extent of its popularity<sup>19</sup> – that it must have been widely known, and therefore scribes must have had its blueprint in the back of their minds as they produced their own version of it.<sup>20</sup> This may to some extent explain the vast variation in the various occurrences, as every scribe could freely add to these epigrams as they pleased. However, it is interesting to note that there are discernible patterns in the recurring metrical deviations, which suggests that something more is going on here than simple idiosyncrasies or irregularities.

## Metrical variants

What we call ‘variants’ are often simply dismissed as mistakes. At first sight, that is indeed what they appear to be: mistakes by a scribe who was incapable of composing correct dodecasyllables. However, more seems to be at work here. The sheer number of deviations is staggering and might make one question whether any of these scribes knew what a dodecasyllable looked like at all. Of the one hundred and fifty nine ‘Ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams collected to date, only a mere seventy-nine are written entirely in correct dodecasyllables, while the remaining eighty all contain a metrical irregularity of some sort. It hardly seems likely that none of these eighty scribes knew how to count up to twelve syllables.

17 DBBE 1116, 1275, 1369, 1393, 1561, 1640, 1733, 1898, 1900, 1921, 1985, 2173, 5920, 5956, 5970, 6072, 7910, 7979, 8833.

18 Text source by F. Evangelatou-Notara, *Συλλογή χρονολογημένων σημειωμάτων ἑλληνικῶν κωδίκων*, 13ος αἰ. (Athens 1984) 150.

19 An interesting parallel can be found in Syriac and Arabic manuscripts, where the same, popular simile frequently occurs, cf. A. C. McCollum, ‘The rejoicing sailor and the rotting hand: Two formulas in Syriac and Arabic colophons, with related phenomena in other languages’, *Journal of Syriac Studies* 18.1 (2015) 67–93.

20 Bernard and Demoen, ‘Book epigrams’, 13.

What is even more interesting is that the metrical variants of the ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams are not random, but instead the same types of ‘mistakes’ keep on recurring. One can as a matter of fact neatly subdivide the variants into three groups: decasyllables, decatetrasyllables and decapentasyllables.

We start with the least common variant, which is the decasyllable. The following example contains an irregular decasyllabic line in the third verse, whereas the rest of the epigram is composed in correct dodecasyllables:

‘Ὠσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν πατρίδα  
καὶ οἱ θαλαττεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> εὐρεῖν λιμένα·  
οἱ νοσοῦντες δὲ |<sub>B5</sub> τυχεῖν ὑγείας,  
οὕτω καὶ οἱ γράφοντες |<sub>B7</sub> βιβλίου τέλος.  
(DBBE 2049;<sup>21</sup> Athos, Monè Koutloumousiou 246)<sup>22</sup>

*Just as strangers rejoice in seeing their fatherland,  
And those at sea in finding a harbour,  
And those who are ill in regaining their health,  
So do writers at the end of their book.*

This is yet another argument against the assumed ignorance of the scribes, who were supposedly unable to compose correct dodecasyllables. It is clear that this scribe knew perfectly well how to do it, as he did it correctly in three out of four lines. Indeed, it hardly seems likely that he copied these lines from another manuscript, but made an error whilst copying line 3 (resulting in a decasyllable). As mentioned earlier, these popular formulas were most often not copied from parchment, but instead reproduced from memory. This means that our scribe must have read the extended version of the ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ formula somewhere else, reproduced it, but thought it necessary to change line 3 into a decasyllable. He knew what a dodecasyllable should look like (cf. lines 1, 2 and 4), but seemingly did not mind deviating from it. Should we then consider line 3 to be a mistake, or simply a variant? Was this felt by the Byzantine public, who read and/or heard this epigram, to be wrong or not?

It is important to notice that the deviating line exhibits a medial caesura, dividing the verse into two metrical cola of five syllables. The following, definitely less elegant, yet very similar, variant has a decasyllabic first line with the same colometrical division:

‘Ὡς ὁδοιπόροις |<sub>B5</sub> πατρίδα φθάσαι,  
οὕτω καὶ τοῖς γράφουσιν, |<sub>B7</sub> βιβλίου τέλος:-  
(DBBE 59;<sup>23</sup> Athos, Monè Vatopedi 314)

21 Text source by F. Evangelatou-Notara, *Χορηγοί-κτητορες-δωρητές σε σημειώματα κωδίκων, Παλαιολόγιοι χρόνοι* (Athens 2000) 257.

22 A very similar variant is DBBE 2473 (Vatican, Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana - Ross. 887).

23 Text source by S. D. Kadas, *Τὰ σημειώματα τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς ἱεράς Μεγίστης Μονῆς Βατοπαιδίου* (Mount Athos 2000) 57.

As it is for travellers to reach the fatherland,  
So is for writers the end of their book.

Thus we find a pentasyllabic colon on either side of the strong caesura at B5,<sup>24</sup> which is of course metrically irregular within the framework of the dodecasyllable, but nonetheless understandable because the pentasyllabic colon can occur both in pre- and post-caesural positions in a regular dodecasyllable.

The second largest group of metrical variants in the ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams consists of the decapentasyllable. Two examples are the following:

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίροντες |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν π(ατ)ρίδα  
καὶ οἱ θαλαττεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> εὐρεῖν λιμένα  
(...)  
οὕτω καὶ οἱ βιβλογράφοντες |<sub>B8</sub> εὐρεῖν βιβλίου τέλος  
(DBBE 4853;<sup>25</sup> Milan, Bibl. Ambrosiana Q 14 sup. f. 476v)

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν πατρίδα,  
καὶ οἱ θαλατεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν λιμένα,  
οὕτω καὶ οἱ βιβλογράφοντες |<sub>B8</sub> ιδεῖν βιβλίου τέλος,-  
(DBBE 6320;<sup>26</sup> Vienna, med. Gr. 26 f. 118r)

In both epigrams, the decapentasyllabic line is the last one (if read with synzesis: καὶ οἱ = κῖ οἱ) and both times it is the odd one out in an otherwise dodecasyllabic epigram. We may assume in these two cases that the last line is meant to be a political verse and therefore belongs to another metre entirely. However, the question still remains as to why the scribe thought it suitable to suddenly switch from the dodecasyllable, which was a very familiar metre for book epigrams and had a rather archaic and therefore educated ring to it,<sup>27</sup> to the political verse, which was felt to be ‘unmetrical’ (μέτρον ἄμετρον),<sup>28</sup> rather low-brow, and much more suited to didactic poetry and longer narratives, such as epics, romances, and verse chronicles. Is it a mistake again or simply variation?

24 Maas, *Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber*, calls the inner caesura in the dodecasyllable *Binnenschluß* rather than ‘caesura’, as he correctly believes the nature of the dodecasyllabic pause to be different from the caesura in prosodic metres. Based on Maas’ terminology, the inner caesura is often referred to with the letter ‘B’ followed by the number of syllables preceding the *Binnenschluß* (B5 or B7).

25 Text source by E. Martini, *Catalogus codicum graecorum Bibliothecae Ambrosianae* I (Milan 1906) 753.

26 Text source by H. Hunger, *Johannes Chortasmenos* (ca. 1370-ca. 1436/37). *Briefe, Gedichte und kleine Schriften. Einleitung, Regesten, Prosopographie, Texte* (Vienna 1969) 72.

27 The Byzantines continued calling the dodecasyllable ‘iambic trimeter’, as if it was still the very same metre of ancient authors. More educated scribes even preserved the archaic prosody in their dodecasyllabic poems, in order to maintain the illusion of an archaic metre, cf. P. Maas, *Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber*; M. D. Lauxtermann, ‘The velocity of pure iambs’; *The Spring of Rhythm*; A. Rhoby, ‘Vom jambischen Trimeter’.

28 F. Bernard, *Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry* (Oxford 2014) 243–4.

The last and by far the largest group of metrical deviations is the group of the decatetrasyllables. No fewer than thirty-nine occurrences display one or more decatetrasyllabic lines. The following occurrence is typical:

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίροντες |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν πατρίδα,  
 οὐτ(ως) (καὶ) οἱ γράφοντες |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν βιβλίου τέλος:-  
 (DBBE 170,<sup>29</sup> Paris, BnF, Coisl. 28, f. 269v)

The two extra syllables in the last line are caused by the repetition of ‘ιδεῖν’ in the second line, ‘gegen das Metrum’, as Treu puts it.<sup>30</sup> This seems to suggest that the repetition here is due to inadvertence on the part of the scribe, who may have copied the word unwittingly in order to create a stylistic parallelism with the first line, at the expense of the metrical regularity of the verse. It looks as if this hypothesis is further corroborated by DBBE 22, where the second ‘ιδεῖν’ in the last verse seems to have been erased, possibly because the scribe realized he had written a decatetrasyllable instead of a dodecasyllable.<sup>31</sup>

However, stylistic parallelism does not account for the strikingly large number of occurrences with a decatetrasyllable in the last line (31), in which ‘ιδεῖν’ is sometimes replaced by ‘εὐρεῖν’,<sup>32</sup> nor for occurrences such as the following, where the decatetrasyllable occurs in the first line instead:

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίροντ(αις) |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν π(ατ)ρίδα γέν(ους)  
 κ(αὶ) οἱ θαλαττεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> ἐβρὶν λιμένα -  
 οὗτος καὶ οἱ γράφον(τες) |<sub>B7</sub> βιβλίου τέλο(ς)  
 (DBBE 1808,<sup>33</sup> Kalavryta, Monè Megalou Spelaiou 16, f. 193r)

In this case, the two extra syllables are caused by the addition of ‘γένους’ at the end of the first line, without any analogy to explain the metrical irregularity. The following occurrence even contains two decatetrasyllables, in the second and third lines respectively:

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν π(ατ)ρίδα·  
 καὶ οἱ θαλατεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> εὐρεῖν καλὸν λοιμένα,  
 οὗτος καὶ οἱ γράφοντες |<sub>B7</sub> ιδεῖν βιβλίου τέλος.  
 (DBBE 2611,<sup>34</sup> Firenze, Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 5, Cod. 25, f. 226r)

29 Text source by DBBE.

30 Treu, ‘Der Schreiber am Ziel’, 47.

31 DBBE 22 (Florence, Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 60, Cod. 15, f. 205r).

32 DBBE 22, 170, 801, 876 (εὐρεῖν), 957, 972 (εὐρεῖν), 1146, 1499, 1700, 1941, 1988, 2284, 2305, 2955, 3472, 3673, 4055, 4156, 4223, 4572, 4590, 5403, 5514, 5618, 5799, 6049, 6052, 6782, 6907, 7647, 7846.

33 Text source by F. Evangelatou-Notara, *Παλαιολόγιοι χρόνοι*, 174.

34 Text source by DBBE.



There are eight more occurrences of this type with a decatetrasyllabic line somewhere other than in the last line,<sup>35</sup> which suggests that it really was not that uncommon for scribes to produce decatetrasyllabic lines – with or without an analogy to spur this on. Moreover, parallel to the decasyllable, the decatetrasyllable invariably has a strong medial caesura at B7, which divides the verse into two heptasyllabic cola. An interesting variation on this pattern is the following:

ὥσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν πατρίδας·  
καὶ οἱ θαλαττεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> εὐρεῖν λιμένα·  
καὶ ὥσπερ οἱ αἰχμάλωτοι |<sub>B7/8</sub> ἰδεῖν ἐλευθερίας,  
τοιούτῳ καὶ οἱ γράφοντες |<sub>B7/8</sub> ἰδεῖν βιβλίου τέλος·  
(DBBE 3616;<sup>36</sup> Copenhagen, KB. Fabr. 94.8, f. 218v)

*Just as strangers rejoice in seeing their fatherlands,  
And those at sea in finding a harbour,  
And like prisoners of war in seeing their freedom,  
In the same way do writers rejoice in seeing the end of their book.*

The last two lines of this occurrence, if read without synizesis, consist of an octasyllabic colon before, and a heptasyllabic colon after, the caesura. In other words, they would result in two decapentasyllabic verses with strong caesurae after the eighth syllable. However, if read with synizesis (‘καὶ ὥσπερ’ = ‘κῑ ὥσπερ’ and ‘τοιούτῳ’ = ‘τοιούτῳ’), the same lines would again scan like decatetrasyllables, with a heptasyllabic colon on either side of the caesura at B7. Given the prevalent stress pattern of the first colon (XXXXXX), it makes more sense to read both lines as decatetra- instead of decapentasyllables.

In this context, it is interesting to note that Lauxtermann mentions a potential predecessor of these decatetrasyllables, when he cites a ninth-century hymn from Barb. Gr. 310 that was presented in paired heptasyllables.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, we must certainly not assume that we have stumbled upon a new Byzantine metrical pattern here, since decatetrasyllables were, despite everything, still considered to be irregular: there are no examples of epigrams written entirely in decatetrasyllables, but instead they are always the odd ones out in a dodecasyllabic epigram. In this regard, they were irregular, but still not so irregular that it was felt to be problematic to produce them on a relatively frequent basis.

35 DBBE 972 (last two lines), 1808 (first line), 1811 (first line), 1956 (second line), 3185 (second line), 4689 (first line), 5614 (last two lines), 5996 (first line).

36 Text source by B. Schartau, *Codices graeci Haunienses* (Copenhagen 1994) 435.

37 M. D. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*, 51. On the previous page, he mentions four other hymns in the same manuscript: three of them also in heptasyllables, the other one in octosyllables.

## A cognitive-linguistic analysis

The occurrence of deca-, decatetra- and decapentasyllabic lines in what is essentially a dodecasyllabic epigram is usually explained as being a metrical irregularity or a scribal error. As we have shown, however, simply dismissing these irregularities as mistakes is not entirely satisfactory. Why do the same types of mistakes keep on recurring? And why do they arise so very frequently? How do such ‘errors’ occur exactly? To understand this phenomenon, we have to take into account the cognitive mechanisms underlying the process of versification. The production (and interpretation) of verse is in important respects comparable to the production (and interpretation) of speech. This is particularly evident in the case of (conceptually) oral poetry, such as Homer,<sup>38</sup> but it is also true for fluid texts, such as the ‘ὡσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams. As was already mentioned earlier, fluid texts – such as scribe-related book epigrams – are texts with numerous changes and variations in their different attestations, as they could often be rewritten and adapted to new needs.<sup>39</sup> They therefore behave ‘similarly to oral tradition’,<sup>40</sup> because they were cited from memory rather than copied from paper. In a similar vein, Bakker calls the (conceptually) oral poetry of Homer ‘special speech’.<sup>41</sup> Like speech, poetry is not composed of long, continuous stretches, but of shorter units, called ‘idea units’ or ‘intonation units’ (IUs) by the American linguist Wallace Chafe.<sup>42</sup> In recent years, Chafe’s theory of IUs has been consistently and successfully applied to the analysis of the Byzantine πολιτικός στίχος poetry by Soltic, who has shown convincingly that the cola of the Byzantine metres are the metrical equivalents of IUs.<sup>43</sup> Cola are in essence cognitive units, both conceptually (qua ‘idea’) and formally (qua ‘intonation’), which function as the building blocks of the verse, an insight anticipated by Mackridge and Lauxtermann.<sup>44</sup> The latter’s ‘principle of pairing’<sup>45</sup> explains the origin of the decapentasyllable as the pairing of an octa- and a heptasyllable, two independent metres which

38 M. Janse, *Homerische metriek; Metrical Schemes of the Hexameter; Inleiding tot de Homerische taal en metriek*.

39 P. Van Nuffelen, ‘John of Antioch, inflated and deflated. Or: how (not) to collect fragments of early Byzantine historians’, *Byzantion* 82 (2012) 446.

40 C. Thomas, *The Acts of Peter*, 40.

41 E. J. Bakker, *Poetry in Speech: Orality and Homeric Discourse* (Ithaca 1997).

42 W. Chafe, ‘Cognitive constraints on information flow’, in R. Tomlin (ed.), *Coherence and Grounding in Discourse: Outcome of a Symposium, Eugene, Oregon* (Amsterdam 1987) 21–51; ‘Prosodic and functional units of language’, in J. A. Edwards & M. D. Lampert (eds), *Talking Data: Transcription and Coding in Discourse Research* (Hillsdale 1993) 33–43; *Discourse, Consciousness and Time: The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing* (Chicago 1994); ‘The analysis of discourse flow’, in D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen and H. E. Hamilton (eds), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Oxford 2001) 673–87.

43 Soltic, ‘Late medieval Greek vernacular πολιτικός στίχος poetry’; ‘Distribution of object clitic pronouns’; ‘Late medieval Greek πάλιν’; ‘Vernacular medieval Greek romances’.

44 Mackridge, ‘Metrical structure of the oral decapentasyllable’; Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*.

45 Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*, 51.

were often paired to form decahexa- and decatetrasyllabic verses respectively.<sup>46</sup> Lauxtermann very appropriately observes that ‘the juxtaposition of two metrical segments rather rudimentarily corresponds to certain cognitive processes of the human mind.’<sup>47</sup>

It is interesting to note that this principle of pairing is not something that is only limited to Byzantine metrics. This very same concept of pairing together shorter units is applied in a similar way in many Byzantine rhetorical and liturgical texts, mostly in order to emphasize an antithesis or a parallelism. This is what is called the ‘commatic style’, which is used most often in Asianic rhetorical texts (as opposed to Attic oratory).<sup>48</sup> It is not very surprising that Byzantine oratory and Byzantine accentual poetry exhibit striking similarities, since the Byzantines did not consider these two categories to be separate from one another, but instead conceived them to be two ends of one continuum. As Lauxtermann states: ‘In the Byzantine world ... prose and poetry dance to the same tune and respond to the same rhythmical rules.’<sup>49</sup>

The principle of pairing suggests that the composition of a verse – any verse – is a cognitive process which not only helps poets to produce their verses by stringing together cola as cognitive building blocks, that is to say, IUs, but which also assists the poets’ audiences to process these IUs by tying them together, one after the other. The principle of pairing also explains the occurrence of ‘irregular’ verses within what is otherwise a standard dodecasyllable. The scribes write, or rather compose, their verses by pairing cola which, if paired improperly, may result in decasyllables (5+5), decatetrasyllables (7+7) or even decapentasyllables (8+7), since octasyllabic cola were as common as penta- and heptasyllabic cola during the period under scrutiny here. A good example is the following occurrence, which combines a dodecasyllable, a decatetrasyllable and a decapentasyllable:

ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> εἰδεῖν π(ατ)ρίδα,  
καὶ οἱ θαλατεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> τοῦ φθάσαι εἰς λιμένα·  
οὕτω καὶ οἱ βιβλογράφοντες |<sub>B8</sub> εὐρεῖν βιβλίου τέλος.  
(DBBE 1956;<sup>50</sup> Udine, bibl. Arciv. 264 f. 232r)

The cognitive independence of the colon as an IU is further illustrated by the fact that it resembles the formula of epic poetry, as in the following occurrence:

46 *Op. cit.*, 50.

47 *Op. cit.*, 85.

48 H. B. Dewing, ‘The origin of the accentual prose rhythm in Greek’, *The American Journal of Philology* 31.3 (1910), 312–28; V. Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium: the Sound of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2013). Both Hörandner and Lauxtermann even assume that Byzantine accentual poetry has its earliest roots in rhetorical rhythm, cf. W. Hörandner, *Der Prosarhythmus in der retorischen Literatur der Byzantiner* (Vienna 1981); W. Hörandner, ‘Beobachtungen zur Litararästhetik der Byzantiner. Einige byzantinische Zeugnisse zu Metrik und Rhythmik’, *Byzantinoslavica* 56.2 (1995) 279–90; Lauxtermann, *The velocity of pure iambs; The Spring of Rhythm*.

49 Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm*, 77.

50 Text source by DBBE.

ὥσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν π(ατ)ρίδα,  
καὶ οἱ θαλαττεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν λιμένα,  
καὶ οἱ στρατευόμενοι |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν τὸ κέρδος  
καὶ οἱ νόσῳ κείμενοι |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν ὑγείαν  
οὕτω καὶ οἱ γράφοντες |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν βιβλίον τέλος.  
(DBBE 2305;<sup>51</sup> Thessalonike, Monè Blatadon 93, end of ms.)

*Just as strangers rejoice in seeing their fatherland,  
And those at sea in seeing a harbour,  
And those at war in seeing profit (?),  
And those bedridden by illness in seeing health,  
So do writers in seeing the end of their book.*

The extension of the standard book epigram by several lines – in which seafarers, soldiers, sick people, merchants, and sometimes fishermen or prisoners of war underline the parallelism with the writers – is quite common and different scribes often opt for different similes, sometimes only including the seafarers or sometimes inventing even more comparisons. However, in this particular occurrence, something seems to have gone astray in the third line. The simile with the soldiers is usually the following one: ‘καὶ οἱ στρατευόμενοι |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν τὸ νίκος,’<sup>52</sup> while the idea of profit commonly occurs in a simile about merchants: ‘καὶ οἱ πραγματεύοντες |<sub>B7</sub> ἰδεῖν τὸ κέρδος,’<sup>53</sup> both of which make more sense in terms of content. What seems to have happened here is that the scribe mixed up these two very well-known verses in his head and merged them into one.<sup>54</sup> More precisely, he paired cola belonging to two different verses, which confirms the idea of metrical cola as being cognitive units and building blocks of the verse.

## Conclusion

If one applies the canonical rules of the dodecasyllable to the ‘ὥσπερ ξένοι’ book epigrams, it seems as if most of the occurrences contain metrical irregularities (of the one hundred and fifty-nine occurrences, only seventy-nine are written in correct dodecasyllables)<sup>55</sup> and thus supposedly have very little literary value. From a cognitive point of

51 Text source by S. Efstratiades, ‘Ἀγιορειτικῶν κωδικῶν σημειώματα’, *Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς* 3 (1919) 150.

52 DBBE 60, 1499, 2305, 3472, 3673, 4055, 5514, 6782.

53 DBBE 1499, 2045, 3472, 3673, 4055, 6907, 7647.

54 The same phenomenon occurs in DBBE 4156 (Athos, Monè Megistes Lavras Θ 147, f. 137r), which displays a very similar text but with some minor differences: χαίροντες instead of χαίρουσιν in the first line, εὐρεῖν instead of ἰδεῖν in the second line, the fourth line is omitted, and βιβλίου instead of βιβλίον in the last line.

55 There is no clear chronological evolution in the metrical irregularities of the ‘ὥσπερ ξένοι’ epigrams: mistakes occur at random from the ninth to the fifteenth century. Combinations with decapentasyllabic lines only emerge from the tenth century onwards (i.e. the genesis of the decapentasyllabic metre) and become considerably more popular during the fifteenth century.

view, however, it appears as if the Byzantine scribes had a different perception of metre, in that they were more concerned with the pairing of existing (penta-, hepta- and octasyllabic) cola than with the resultant metre per se. Deviant metres, such as the deca- and decatetrasyllable, were not considered to be very irregular or even wrong, but simply resulted from a different application of the principle of pairing. *Variatio delectat* – as long as the ‘εὐρυθμία’, the fluency, and eloquence of the verse was not compromised.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> For more on εὐρυθμία and its use in both poetry and prose, see M. D. Lauxtermann, ‘The velocity of pure iambs’, 19-20.