

‘Old wine in new bottles’?

Gregory Palamas’ *Logos* on Saint Peter of Athos (BHG 1506)*

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In this article I attempt to enter the less studied ‘working room’ of the hagiographer and metaphrastes Gregory Palamas by contextualizing and analyzing, both on its own terms and comparatively, Palamas’ literary debut, the Logos on Saint Peter of Athos (BHG 1506). The article shows to what extent the hagiographer used, changed, supplemented, departed from his source—the tenth/eleventh-century Vita of Saint Peter (BHG 1505) written by a certain Athonite monk Nicholas—and refashioned the image of the saint when (re)writing his life.

Keywords: Gregory Palamas; Peter of Athos; metaphrasis; Palaiologan hagiography

‘Sainthood in itself is not interesting, only the lives of saints are. How does a man renounce himself and take the road to sainthood? But then how does one become a hagiographer? By following in their traces, by wetting the soles of one’s feet in their tears!’¹

Prolegomena

Prolonged civil wars and acrimonious religious controversies characterized middle Palaiologan Byzantium.² In spite of struggling with political fragility, fragmentation and territorial contraction, turmoils in ecclesiastical affairs, and increasing poverty, late Byzantium nonetheless nurtured a significant blossoming of learning. This also included

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1 E. Cioran, *Tears and Saints*, trans. I. Zarifopol-Johnston (Chicago 1995) 3–4.

2 See D. G. Angelov (ed.), *Church and Society in Late Byzantium* (Kalamazoo 2009); D. Krausmüller, ‘The rise of hesychasm’, in M. Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity 5: Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge 2006) 101–26.

an impressive revival of hagiographical production, of which almost eighty percent consisted of new versions (*metaphraseis*)—‘old wine in new bottles’ as Talbot phrased it—of *vitae* and *enkomia* of holy men and women from the distant past.³ Numerous Byzantine *pepaideumenoi*, be they statesmen or ecclesiastics, tried to write in this genre and at times employed it for promoting themselves and their competing political and religious standpoints; among them it suffices to mention Constantine Akropolites,⁴ Nikephoros Gregoras,⁵ and Philotheos Kokkinos.⁶ Gregory Palamas (c.1294/6–1357/9), an Athonite monk of distinguished upbringing, a theologian and spokesman of the hesychast camp, also tried to write in this genre.⁷ In line with contemporary trends, Palamas had an interest in older saints and wrote an encomiastic *Logos on the marvellous and angelic life of our father, saint and God-bearer, Peter, who practiced askesis on the holy Mount Athos* (BHG 1506),⁸ as well as homilies such as on *Christ’s highly revered prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John* (BHG 846) and on *The Great Martyr among the saints, Demetrios the Wonderworker and Myroblytos* (BHG 546). This *Logos*—a *metaphrasis* of an earlier *vita*—in particular has received little scholarly attention. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Bollandist Conrad Janning prepared the *editio princeps*, based on the fifteenth-century manuscript Paris. gr. 1239, fols. 249–63, and published it together with a Latin translation in the *Acta Sanctorum*. He dismissed its originality

3 A.-M. Talbot, ‘Old wine in new bottles: the rewriting of saints’ lives in the Palaiologan period’, in S. Ćurčić, D. Mouriki (eds.), *The Twilight of Byzantium. Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire* (Princeton 1991) 15–26; A.-M. Talbot, ‘Hagiography in late Byzantium (1204–1453)’, in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* (hereafter *Companion*), I. *Periods and Places* (Farnham 2011) 173–98, esp. 176–9; R. Macrides, ‘Saints and sainthood in the early Palaiologan period’, in S. Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (Birmingham 1983) 67–87; M. Hinterberger, ‘Hagiographische Metaphrasen. Ein möglicher Weg der Annäherung an die Literarästhetik der frühen Palaiologenzeit’, in A. Rhoby, E. Schiffer (eds.), *Imitatio, aemulatio, variatio* (Vienna 2010) 137–51. For the concept, process and production of *metaphrasis* in Byzantium, see Ch. Høgel, ‘Symeon Metaphrastes and the metaphrastic movement’, in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *Companion*, II. *Genres and Contexts* (Farnham 2014) 181–96.

4 On the hagiographical œuvre of Constantine Akropolites, often styled as ‘the new metaphrast’, see Talbot, ‘Hagiography in late Byzantium’, 177–9, 190; Hinterberger, ‘Hagiographische Metaphrasen’, 146–8.

5 On Gregoras as hagiographer and *metaphrastēs*, see L. Lukhovitskiy, ‘Nikephoros Gregoras’ Vita of St. Michael the Synkellos. Rewriting techniques and reconstruction of the iconoclast past in a 14th cent. hagiographical metaphrasis’, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 64 (2014) 177–96; Hinterberger, ‘Les vies des saints du XIV^e siècle en tant qu’œuvre littéraire: l’œuvre hagiographique de Nicéphore Grégoras’, in P. Odorico and P. A. Agapitos (eds.), *Les vies des saints à Byzance. Genre littéraire ou biographie historique?* (Paris 2004) 281–301.

6 On Kokkinos’ hagiographical writings, see D. Tsentikopoulos, *Φιλόθεος Κόκκινος. Βίος και έργο*, PhD Dissertation (Thessalonike 2001) 243–309.

7 See R. E. Sinkewicz, ‘Gregory Palamas’, in C. G. Conticello, V. Conticello (eds.), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition, II (XIIIe–XIXe s.)* (Turnhout 2002) 131–82, at 138–55.

8 Gregory Palamas, ‘Λόγος εις τὸν θαυμαστὸν καὶ ισάγγελον βίον τοῦ ὁσίου καὶ θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Πέτρου τοῦ ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ ὄρει τῷ Ἄθῳ ἀσκήσαντος’, in P. K. Chrestou (ed.), *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα*, V (Thessalonike 1992) (hereafter *Logos*) 161–91.

and characterized it as '*Nihil insolitum et inauditum, nihil ex variis consarcinatum, nihil alteri contrarium, nisi forte in numero per errorem tale quid reperiatur*'.⁹ Janning's edition was later reprinted with several corrections in *Patrologia Graeca*.¹⁰ In 1992 Chrestou produced a modern critical edition based on nine codices,¹¹ which he subsequently republished with facing Modern Greek translation.¹² In his monograph, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, Meyendorff dedicated a short entry to Palamas' *Logos*, which he assigned to Gregory's 'moins originales' didactical and spiritual writings. He mentioned Palamas' source, that is to say, the *Vita* of St. Peter of Athos (*BHG* 1505) written by a certain Athonite monk Nicholas (hereafter *Vita*),¹³ and he concluded that the *Logos* deserves a 'place de choix' within Palamas' didactical œuvre.¹⁴ In a recent contribution Polemis discusses Neoplatonic and hesychastic elements in Palamas' *Logos*.¹⁵ However, to date, the most comprehensive analysis of this *Logos* was presented by Rigo.¹⁶

The extensive scholarship on Palamas has mainly presented him in connection with the theological controversies in which he played a leading role and analyzed his writings in response to his theological opponents, Barlaam, Akindynos and Gregoras. The present article attempts to enter the less studied 'working room' of Gregory Palamas and portray him as hagiographer and *metaphrastes*. Contextualizing and analyzing his first composition, that is to say, the *Logos* on St. Peter of Athos, it will endeavour to investigate to what extent Palamas used, changed, supplemented, and departed from his source, and refashioned the image of the saint when (re)writing his life. Moreover, the article will address Palamas' theological programme, intended audience, and possible reasons behind his choice of subject. The study has a threefold structure: the first part, 'Saint Peter of Athos and his hagiographic dossier' (I), introduces the figure of St. Peter

9 *Acta Sanctorum*, June, II, 538–56.

10 J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 150, 996–1040.

11 See n. 8 above; among the codices he used I list the fourteenth-century Coislin. 97, fols. 193–202 (the text has several lacunae), Athos, Iveron 266, fols. 254–67; and the fifteenth-century Paris. gr. 1239, fols. 249–63, Athen. EBE 2715, fols. 187–200, Athos, Pantel. 215, fols. 609–40, Athos, Vatop. 134, fols. 318–34, Sinait. gr. 1604, fols. 539–64, and Sinait. gr. 1851, fols. 290–304. For his edition Chrestou did not use the fourteenth-century Mosquensis Syn. gr. 212, fols. 251–63, and the fifteenth-century Athos, Lavra 1573, fols. 259–63.

12 Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, VIII (Thessalonike 1994) 274–3.

13 'Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου καὶ θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Πέτρου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτου', ed. K. Lake, *The Early Days of Monasticism on Mount Athos* (Oxford 1909) (hereafter Lake) 18–39.

14 J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris 1959) 382–3.

15 I. Polemis, 'Neoplatonic and hesychastic elements in the early teaching of Gregorios Palamas on the union of man with God: The *Life of St. Peter the Athonite*', in S. Efthymiadis et al. (eds.), *Pour une poétique de Byzance. Hommage à Vassilis Katsaros* (Paris 2015) 205–21.

16 A. Rigo, 'La Vita di Pietro l'Athonita (*BHG* 1506) scritta da Gregorio Palama', *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 32 (1995) 177–90; see idem, 'De l'apologie à l'évocation de l'expérience mystique. Évagre le Pontique, Isaac le Syrien et Diadoque de Photice dans les œuvres de Grégoire Palamas (et dans la controverse palamite)', in A. Speer, P. Steinkrüger (eds.), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen* (Berlin 2012) 85–108.

and the sources testifying to his life and cult; offers a synopsis of Peter's *Vita* written by Nicholas; and finally looks at its dissemination and manuscript tradition. The second part, 'Gregory Palamas' *Logos* on Saint Peter of Athos (*BHG* 1506)' (II), undertakes to contextualize and interpret Palamas' *Logos*, both on its own terms and comparatively. The third part, "Old wine in new bottles?" (III), is dedicated to conclusions. The article is equipped with two appendices, the first providing synoptic tables of contents of Nicholas' *Vita* and Palamas' *Logos*, and the second bringing forward paratextual evidence from the fourteenth-century codex Coislin. 97 which may point to the readership of Palamas' spiritual writings.

I. Saint Peter of Athos and his hagiographic dossier

Peter the Athonite, renowned as 'the first monk of the Holy Mountain', is a mysterious character—'personaggio avvolto nella leggenda'¹⁷—who seems to have been a hermit living for more than five decades on Mt. Athos in the eighth and ninth centuries, in the period prior to the foundation of the great coenobitic monasteries. Unfortunately, the information regarding his life is scarce. He does not feature in the *Synaxarion of the Great Church of Constantinople*, a tenth-century liturgical collection of short hagiographical notes.¹⁸ The earliest source testifying to Peter's life is a canon seemingly composed c. 831–41 by a certain Joseph.¹⁹ If this is Joseph the Hymnographer (816–86), a prolific composer of ecclesiastical canons, then the year 886 would be a *terminus ante quem* for Peter's death.²⁰ The earliest manuscripts transmitting Joseph's canon are the tenth-century Hierosolym. Sab. Ms. 70, fols. 96–8 and the twelfth-century Hierosolym. Sab. Ms. 72, fols. 170–1.²¹ The latter is a four-month *menaion* (April–July), whereas the former is a *menaion* for June which seems to have been initially owned by the Constantinopolitan monastery of Christ Akataleptos as attested by a note of possession on fol. 139v. The canon praises a certain St. Peter who lived on Athos and was honoured at a local level on June 22. Although disclosing only sparse biographical data, it portrays an anchorite who lived an ascetic life for many years in *hesychia* and complete

17 R. Janin, 'Pietro, eremite sul Monte Athos, sancto', in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* X (1968) 712–3; *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit*, 26427 (hereafter *PmbZ*).

18 H. Delehaye (ed.), *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano, nunc Berolinensi, adiectis synaxariis selectis: Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels 1902); see A. Luzzi, 'Synaxaria and the Synaxarion of Constantinople', in Efthymiadis, *Companion*, II, 197–208; B. Flusin, 'L'empereur hagiographe. Remarques sur le rôle des premiers empereurs macédoniens dans le culte des saints', in P. Guran (ed.), *L'empereur hagiographe: Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine* (Bucharest 2001) 29–54, esp. 41–7.

19 D. Papachryssanthou (ed.), 'L'office ancien de Pierre l'Athonite', *Analecta Bollandiana* 88 (1970) 27–41, at 34–41.

20 Cf. N. Patterson Ševčenko, 'Canon and calendar: the role of a ninth-century hymnographer in shaping the celebration of saints', in L. Brubaker (ed.), *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot 1998) 101–14; *PmbZ* 23510.

21 Cf. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, II (St. Petersburg 1894) 118–31.

seclusion on Mt. Athos, like the prophet Elijah on Carmel, and who, because of his virtuous conduct, had a vision of God like Moses. Moreover, the canon mentions that Peter’s relics were discovered after many years and performed numerous posthumous miracles. In the second half of the ninth century a certain Arsenios composed a similar canon praising a monk with the name of Peter. However, it is uncertain whether this Peter is the same as the one Joseph praised in his canon. Arsenios’ canon celebrates the saint on June 5 and describes him in conventional terms as a hermit zealous in fasting and vigils, fighting demons, living in the desert emulating Elijah and John the Baptist, and whose relics performed many miracles posthumously and attracted a large number of pilgrims.²²

At some point between c. 980 and the mid-eleventh century,²³ Nicholas, an Athonite monk,²⁴ wrote the *Life and conduct of our holy and God-bearer father, Peter the Athonite* (BHG 1505), most likely relying on oral traditions and on the above-mentioned canons. In fact, as will be seen, Nicholas’ *Vita* does not offer any further data or chronological information on Peter’s life in addition to those already found in the canons. Nicholas presents Peter as an example of authentic ascetic life to be emulated especially by monks prone to the sin of striving after worldly possessions. The *Vita* includes ingredients common in hagiographical compositions, namely contests with demons, emphasis on asceticism, visions and miracles, and posthumous efficacy of the saint’s relics.

Nicholas’ *Vita* unfolds as follows: Peter, a soldier in the fifth *schole*, took part in a campaign against the Arabs, being subsequently captured in Syria and imprisoned at Samarra.²⁵ This misfortune is regarded by the hagiographer as a result of Peter not fulfilling his vow to become a monk. While imprisoned, he entreated St. Nicholas of Myra and St. Symeon the God-Receiver for help,²⁶ renewing his promise to go to Rome to assume the monastic habit; after he was miraculously liberated by the saints, Peter went to Rome where the pope tonsured him. On his way towards the Levant, his boat was miraculously held back close to Mt. Athos. Thus, Peter disembarked and settled on Athos where he lived an ascetic life for fifty years. Towards the end of his life, the saint was discovered by a hunter to whom he confided the story of his life (a common

22 ‘Κανὼν τοῦ ὁσίου Πέτρου ψαλλόμενος τῇ ἐσπέρᾳ φέρων ἀκροστιχίδα’, ed. A. A. Longo, *Canones Iunii*, in I. Schiro (ed.), *Analecta hymnica graeca e codicibus eruta Italiae inferioris*, X (Rome 1972) 11–22.

23 *Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database* (Washington 1998) 82–3; Papachryssanthou, ‘La vie ancienne de Saint Pierre l’Athonite. Date, composition et valeur historique’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 92 (1974) 19–61, had previously argued, although not convincingly, that the year 980 is most probably the *terminus ante quem* for Nicholas’ composition of Peter’s *Vita*.

24 Throughout the *Vita*, the hagiographer presents himself as ‘the humble Nicholas’ (ὁ ταπεινὸς Νικόλαος) [Lake, 35.10] and speaks of Mt. Athos as his own abode: τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ [Lake, 35.14], τὸ καθ’ ἡμᾶς τοῦτο θεῖον ὄρος [Lake, 39.17–18]; *PmbZ* 26139.

25 Samarra (nowadays a town in Iraq), situated on the east bank of the Tigris River, was briefly the capital of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate in the 9th century.

26 Janin, ‘Pietro’, 712, erroneously identified St. Symeon mentioned in the *Vita* with St. Symeon the Stylite.

hagiographical *topos*). The following year the hunter, together with his brother and two monks, returned to Athos and, finding Peter lying dead, took away his relics. By divine intervention, the relics were first placed in the *katholikon* of the monastery of Clement (perhaps the future Iveron)²⁷ and subsequently transferred to the Protaton church in Karyes. The final section of the *Vita* centres upon Peter's relics which were stolen and taken to the Thracian village of Phokomis,²⁸ where they performed numerous healing miracles. Finally, a local bishop acquired the relics and placed them in a church dedicated to the saint.

With a rich manuscript tradition of more than thirty codices, the earliest dating back to the eleventh century (i.e., Mosquensis Syn. gr. 174, fols. 122–43), Nicholas' *Vita* has received considerable scholarly attention. In 1909 Lake published a critical edition with a short introduction briefly discussing the content of the *Vita* and five of the manuscripts transmitting it. Moreover, he analyzed the sparse historical data of the life and concluded that 'Peter the Athonite is probably a historical person who lived the life of a hermit on Mount Athos in the ninth century'.²⁹ Lake's conclusion was subsequently dismissed by Binon³⁰ and Papachryssanthou. For instance, the latter qualifies the *Vita* as having no historical importance—'ne présente pas d'intérêt historique'—and is 'en réalité un éloge de la vie anachorétique'.³¹ The most comprehensive study of this hagiographical piece, as well as an Italian translation, has been written by Rigo.³²

Scholars have already noted that Nicholas composed Peter's *Vita* combining at least three different traditions, 'diverse per origine e argomento',³³ each having at its core a homonymous St. Peter. Thus, the first part describes the miracles of St. Nicholas of Myra performed for Peter *scholarios* ('the soldier') who was imprisoned by the Arabs; the second narrates the fifty years of eremitism of a monk Peter on Mt. Athos, and the third recounts the miracles effected in Thrace by the relics of a certain saint Peter. Therefore, it seems plausible that in his endeavour to reconstruct the life of the hermit Peter—minimally documented as already seen—the hagiographer Nicholas drew heavily on the typology of the unclothed hermit, hairy, skinny and hidden from people.³⁴ Moreover, Nicholas intertwined distinct traditions and gave his hero a past and a 'worldly' life (that is to say, Peter *scholarios*),

27 Cf. Papachryssanthou, 'Des groupes anachorétiques aux grands couvents', in Papachryssanthou (ed.), *Actes du Prôtaton* (Paris 1975) 61–93, at 64–5; P. Soustal (ed.), *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* XI (Vienna forthcoming).

28 Unidentified place; A. Külzer (ed.), *Ostthracien (Eurōpē). Tabula Imperii Byzantini* XII (Vienna 2008) 591.

29 Lake, 8–17 (introduction), and 18–39 (edition).

30 S. Binon, 'La vie de S. Pierre l'Athonite', *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 5 (1939) 41–53.

31 Papachryssanthou, 'La vie ancienne', 19, 21.

32 Nicola della Santa Montagna. *Alle origini dell'Athos: la vita di Pietro l'Athonita* (Magnano 1999).

33 Rigo, 'La Vita di Pietro', 178.

34 B. Flusin, 'L'hagiographie monastique à Byzance au IX^e et au X^e siècle. Modèles anciens et tendances contemporaines', *Revue Bénédictine* 103 (1993) 31–50.

as well as a posthumous cult, most probably inspired by the local cult of a homonymous saint from Thrace.³⁵ Furthermore, Nicholas quoted at length from an *Enkomion of Saint Nicholas of Myra* (BHG 1348)—the chapters 48–59 on ‘The Miracles for Peter *scholarios*’—and ascribed the legendary story to his saint. This *enkomiastion* is attributed to Methodios, Patriarch of Constantinople (†847).³⁶

Nicholas may have composed Peter’s *Vita* in the framework of the emergence of the great coenobitic monasteries—in the mid-tenth century Athanasios the Athonite founded the Great Lavra—on Mt. Athos.³⁷ Thus, one of the main reasons for writing this *Vita* could have been polemical rather than purely biographical. In the context of the tenth–eleventh-century competing Athonite monastic lifestyles and traditions, in other words eremitic vs. coenobitic, Nicholas may have aimed at bringing forward a hagiographical argument in favour of the former when writing the *politeia* of the founding figure of Athonite monasticism, the hermit Peter. As Flusin has noted, this *Vita*

fonctionne comme un mythe de fondation et, dans cette histoire des origines, le rôle central est tenu par un ermite parfaitement solitaire. La Vie de Pierre, dans l’Athos du X^e siècle finissant, est en effet un vibrant plaidoyer pour l’anachorèse, et contre les autres formes du monachisme. [...] Une Vie à these qui très volontairement propose comme seul idéal monastique le modèle anachorétique, qui l’organise tout entière. Mais cette radicalité même montre bien qu’il s’agit d’une protestation, d’une réaction contre d’autres formes monastiques qui, au moment où l’hagiographe est à l’œuvre, se développent et prétendent, elles aussi, à la sainteté.³⁸

Moreover, Nicholas might have aimed at promoting Peter’s cult which seems to have been diminishing in this period.

A renewed interest in St. Peter and a resurgence of his cult was rekindled on Mt. Athos, and especially at the Great Lavra, in the context of the thirteenth and fourteenth century hesychast revival. Evidence for this comes from the numerous late Byzantine manuscripts transmitting his *Vita*, such as Athos, Lavra 455, Philotheou 66, and

35 Papachryssanthou, ‘La vie ancienne’, 40.

36 G. Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos. Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche*, I (Leipzig 1913) 153–82. Lake, 17–8, overlooked this fact and instead explained why the hagiographer might have attributed his source to Methodios of Patara (†312). This *enkomiastion* is transmitted by numerous tenth- and eleventh-century codices such as Sinait. gr. 525, Vat. gr. 2084, Vat. gr. 1641, Vat. gr. 1673, Vat. gr. 824, Moscow Syn. gr. 26. A perusal of Anrich’s apparatus criticus and its collation with Lake’s edition of Nicholas’ *Vita* may offer further evidence with regard to the date of Nicholas’ composition. For instance, it seems that Lake’s account of the miracles of St. Nicholas of Myra (Lake, 18–23) follows the text of Methodios’ *enkomiastion* (Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos*, 174–81) very closely as transmitted by the eleventh-century manuscript Vat. gr. 824, fols. 176v–84.

37 Papachryssanthou, ‘Des groupes anachorétiques’, 61–93.

38 Flusin, ‘L’hagiographie monastique’, 36.

Esphigmenou 76.³⁹ Moreover, in this period St. Peter was regarded as the model for Athonite hermits. This is seen, for instance, in the *vita* (BHG 1237) written by Theophanes for the renowned hesychast Maximos Kausokalybites (d.1365/80). Thus, after he arrived on Athos and settled at the Great Lavra, Maximos read the *vitae* of both Peter and Athanasios the Athonite (BHG 187–8), the founding fathers of eremitic and respectively coenobitic monasticism on Mt. Athos.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the earliest preserved fresco of St. Peter, found in the *katholikon* of the Protaton church in Karyes and traditionally attributed to Manuel Panselinos,⁴¹ seems to date from the late thirteenth century. Peter's iconography to a large extent resembles that of the late fourth-century desert father Onouphrios. In fact, in the Protaton church the frescoes of the two saints are paired. They are also depicted together in frontal poses in the west ambulatory of the *katholikon* of the late Byzantine monastery of the Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson.⁴² St. Onouphrios was a popular figure in late Byzantium and received *vitae*, *enkomia*, and poems from authors such as Philotheos Kokkinos (BHG 1380) and Manuel Philes (BHG 1382c). Moreover, several Constantinopolitan churches were dedicated to him.⁴³ Both the typological (as unclothed ascetics) and iconographical association between Peter and Onouphrios come naturally, given that desert fathers were generally regarded in late Byzantium as models of hesychast conduct. For instance, in the *vita* (BHG 1236z) the Athonite hieromonk Niphon composed for his spiritual father, Maximos Kausokalybites, he portrays his protagonist as 'another Onouphrios and Peter of Athos'.⁴⁴ Additionally, the typological association between the two might have also triggered the liturgical celebration of these saints on

39 Cf. Papachryssanthou, 'La vie ancienne', 20, n. 3; Rigo, 'La Vita di Pietro', 179–80. There are considerably fewer Athonite manuscripts (to my knowledge only two) of the *Vita* dating back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries: Mosquensis Syn. gr. 387 (once the property of the Great Lavra) and Protaton 36.

40 Theophanes, 'Βίος καὶ πολιτεία καὶ ἄσκησις καὶ φαιδροὶ ἀγῶνες καὶ θαύματα τοῦ ὁσίου καὶ θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Μαξίμου τοῦ τὴν καλύβην πυρπολοῦντος ἐν τῷ Ἁγίῳ Ὄρει τῷ Ἄθωνι', ch. 6, ed. Halkin, 'Deux vies de S. Maxime le Kausokalybe ermite au Mont Athos (XIV^e s.)', *Analecta Bollandiana* 54 (1936) 38–112, at 73.1–7. See also ch. 11, ed. Halkin, 81.13–5.

41 M. J. Milliner, 'Man or metaphor? Manuel Panselinos and the Protaton frescoes', in M. J. Johnson, R. Ousterhout, A. Papalexandrou (eds.), *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration: Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić* (Farnham 2002) 221–35.

42 E. C. Constantinides, *The Wall Paintings of the Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson in Northern Thessaly*, ed. J. Y. Perreault, 2 vols. (Athens 1992), vol. 1, 238–40, vol. 2, 102–3, 226. Another fourteenth-century portrait of St. Peter is preserved in the Church of the Holy Virgin at Mateič; see V. J. Djurić, 'L'art des Paléologues et l'État serbe: rôle de la cour et de l'église serbes dans la première moitié du XIV^e siècle', in *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues* (Venice 1971) 177–91, at 188 and n. 40.

43 R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantine. I. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique. III. Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd edn (Paris 1969) 384.

44 Niphon, 'Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Μαξίμου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτου καὶ Καυσοκαλύβη λεγομένου', ch. 2, ed. F. Halkin, 'Deux vies', 44.5–6.

the same day. Thus, whereas St. Peter's feast day had been celebrated on different days of June (that is to say, 22, 13),⁴⁵ in this period it was fixed on June 12. For instance, in a mid-thirteenth-century revision of the *Synaxarion of the Great Church of Constantinople*, transmitted by Petrop. gr. 240, St. Peter is celebrated on June 12 together with St. Onouphrios. Thus, it was in this context of hesychast revival and renewal of interest in St. Peter's life and cult that the hieromonk Gregory Palamas, living at the time in the vicinity of Great Lavra, dedicated an encomiastic *Logos* to St. Peter the Athonite.

II. Gregory Palamas' *Logos* on Saint Peter of Athos (BHG 1506)

In 1332/3, more than three centuries after the publication of Nicholas' *Vita* of Peter of Athos, the Athonite hieromonk Gregory Palamas, a man 'd'âge mûr',⁴⁶ started preaching and writing. His first publication was the *Logos on the marvellous and angelic life of our father, saint and God-bearer, Peter, who practiced askesis on the holy Mount Athos* (BHG 1506). In the lengthy biography he composed for Palamas (BHG 718), the Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (1353–1354; 1364–1376) wrote about Palamas' literary debut. According to Kokkinos, in the third year of his stay at St. Sabbas' hermitage, in the vicinity of Great Lavra, Gregory had a divine revelation after which he started writing:

Two years passed since the great Gregory had been living [...] in St. Sabbas' hermitage and in the third year, while he was alone, as it was his habit, and was turning his mind to God through *hesychia* and prayer [...] a shadow of sleep brought him this vision: he seemed to be holding in his hands a vessel full of milk which started suddenly to gush forth, overflowing the vessel; then the milk suddenly turned into a very good wine with a fine bouquet which poured so abundantly over his garments and hands that these became soaked and full of fragrance. 'And while I was rejoicing', said Gregory, 'a man full of light stood next to me and said: "Why don't you give to others a share of this divine drink so miraculously pouring forth, instead of leaving it to be wasted? Don't you know that this is God's gift and it will not cease to pour forth? [...] For you know exactly the commandment, the <story of> the talent (cf. Matthew 25:14–30), as well as the condemnation of the servant, who neglected commerce and did not work according to the order of his master".'⁴⁷

After reproducing Palamas' words and his dialogue with the angel, Kokkinos comments upon this divine revelation and makes a clear distinction within Palamas' literary

45 Joseph's canon praises the saint on June 22; moreover, the codex Mosquensis Syn. gr. 387 (11th c.) assigns the feast day to June 13.

46 Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 383.

47 Philotheos Kokkinos, 'Λόγος εις τὸν ἐν ἀγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης', ed. D. G. Tsames, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα, Α΄ Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἄγιοι* (Thessalonike 1985) (hereafter Tsames) 427–591, at 466–7.

output: ‘the transformation of the holy drink from milk into wine represents the transformation of the word from the clearly moral and simple word into the dogmatic and ascending word’.⁴⁸ Thus, according to Kokkinos, Palamas’ œuvre can be divided into the ‘holy drink of milk’, representing his moral and spiritual writings, and the ‘holy drink of wine’, namely his dogmatic and theological works. Of the former, Philotheos lists the first two:

Moved by this divine revelation and by the Holy Spirit, the wise Gregory begins thereupon to write and to compose orations in a wonderful manner. And the first discourse (*logos*) he composed was the one in honour of the holy father Peter, the very fruit of our land and inhabitant on the holy Mount Athos [...] and the second discourse, following this first, was the one on the Holy Entrance into the Holy of Holies and the Deiform Life of the Mother of God.⁴⁹[...] Besides these, he composed many other discourses truly worthy of praise and holy remembrance.⁵⁰

The manuscript tradition endorses the distinction Kokkinos makes within Palamas’ œuvre. Thus, Palamas’ spiritual writings, including the homilies and the *Logos* on St. Peter,⁵¹ have been transmitted as one collection. Such collections can be found, for instance, in the mid-fourteenth-century codices, Athos Iveron 266 and Coislin. 97.⁵² Upon the autopsy of the latter, one notices that after each title introducing either the *Logos* or any other homily, the scribe Manuel Tzykandyles added the formula *eulogeson pater* (or *eulogeson despota* for homily 57). This might indicate that soon after his death, Palamas’ spiritual writings were being copied, circulated and read aloud, most probably in monastic *milieus*, either during liturgical services or in the refectory.⁵³

The *Logos* on St. Peter was delivered by Palamas most likely on the feast day of the saint, June 12, 1332/3, in front of a monastic audience, a holy *theatron*⁵⁴ as he calls it, either at St. Sabbas’ hermitage or at the Great Lavra. In connection to this practice, Meyendorff noted that:

À Byzance, l’éloge public d’un saint était un exercice souvent proposé au rhéteur débutant, à l’issue de ses études. Les jeunes humanistes, comme

48 Kokkinos, Λόγος, 36, ed. Tsames, 467–8; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1–2, Hebrews 5:12–4.

49 BHG 1095 = *Homily* 53; Ch. Veniamin, *Saint Gregory Palamas. The Homilies* (Waymart 2009) 266–73.

50 Kokkinos, Λόγος, 37, ed. Tsames, 468–9.

51 Veniamin, *The Homilies*, xxv, argued that the *Logos* was originally a homily that later was expanded into a lengthy treatise.

52 Palamas’ *Logos* is interrupted on fol. 196v at the beginning of chapter 16 (*Logos*, 170.21) and on the next folio (197r), it jumps to chapter 24 (*Logos*, 189.18). Moreover, the *Logos* does not reach its end, stopping in the middle of chapter 52; see n. 11 above.

53 See Appendix 2.

54 On *theatron* in the Palaiologan period, see N. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik. Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Wiesbaden 2011) 17–53.

Nicolas Cabasilas, ont eux aussi passé par cette épreuve.⁵⁵ À l’Athos, le style de l’exercice était différent, mais la méthode restait la même: pour acquérir le droit d’enseigner, on prononçait un discours d’essai devant le chapitre des moines. [...] Grégoire Palamas tarda jusqu’à 38 ans à s’engager sur la voie de l’enseignement oral ou écrit et s’adonna d’abord exclusivement à la prière et à l’ascèse.⁵⁶

Chrestou argues that, since Palamas’ vision occurred shortly before the feast of St. Peter, this might explain why he chose to dedicate his first text to this saint.⁵⁷ Meyendorff offers a more plausible explanation:

Il est certain que le choix de saint Pierre n’est pas accidentel: saint Pierre était, et reste encore aujourd’hui, le patron et le modèle des hésychastes athonites, dans la mesure où ils refusent de se conformer à la Règle cénobitique apportée au X^e siècle par saint Athanase. Bien que lui-même ait longtemps vécu en communauté—à Lavra, à Esphigménou—, Palamas préfère la vie des ermitages, tels que Saint-Sabbas, et rédige la *Vie de saint Pierre* pour raviver à l’Athos l’idéal hésychaste. C’était également le but que poursuivait le moine Nicolas, auteur d’une première *Vie de saint Pierre*, qui servit de source à Palamas: le docteur hésychaste se réfère en effet à des documents antérieurs. [...] La spiritualité que le docteur hésychaste décrit chez saint Pierre est donc celle qu’il désire voir adoptée à l’Athos.⁵⁸

There might have been in fact an array of reasons triggering the composition of a *vita* or an *enkomion* of an old saint; they will be addressed throughout the article and especially in the concluding section. When composing the *Logos* on St. Peter, Palamas took as his point of departure the *Vita* written by Nicholas. He followed the structure of the original *Vita* closely, adding a lengthy *prooimion*, an epilogue, and some passages describing the hesychast experience and practice.⁵⁹ Thus, Palamas embedded into his first (hagiographical) composition, as will be argued, the very first contour of the hesychast theology which he would later deepen and develop in his theological and polemical writings.

In his highly rhetorical preface, which is far longer than that of Nicholas, Palamas states his aims and methods using several hagiographical *topoi*. If Nicholas underlines the spiritual benefit derived from writing and listening to saints’ lives, Palamas addresses his audience stressing the moral obligation of the Athonite monks to eulogize the native

55 N. Kabasilas, ‘Προσφώνημα εἰς τὸν ἔνδοξον τοῦ Χριστοῦ μεγαλομάρτυρα Δημήτριον τὸν Μυροβλύτην’ (*BHG* 543), ed. Th. Ioannou, *Μνημεῖα ἀγιολογικὰ* (Venice 1884) 67–114. Kabasilas mentioned his recently performed *enkomion* in one of his letters (dated around 1351/2), ed. P. Enepekides, ‘Der Briefwechsel des Mystikers Nikolaos Kabasilas. Kommentierte Textausgabe’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 46 (1953) 18–46, at 30–1.

56 Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 383.

57 *Logos*, 127.

58 Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 383.

59 See Appendix 1.

saint of Athos, St. Peter.⁶⁰ If his source enters immediately in *medias res* and begins to narrate Peter's captivity, Palamas pauses more on what he is about to undertake, stressing that his task is immense, if not impossible, due to the greatness of the subject which is difficult to reach through words (*rerum magnitudo*, a common hagiographical *topos*). Thus, he asks for God's help and the support of his 'holy' audience (*theatron hieron*).⁶¹

After these opening remarks, Palamas begins the proper narrative. Well-versed in the rules of rhetoric, he follows the classical pattern of a biography and eulogizes the *patris* of the saint. After alluding to his source, which has not passed on any information on Peter's childhood, parents, and fatherland, Palamas finds a way to fill this gap. This is his solution: as Peter's origins were carried down by time into the abyss of oblivion, Mt. Athos became his new and true fatherland. Palamas adduces evidence in support of Peter's Athonite citizenship by making a *synkrisis* with the Athenian rules of citizenship. Thus, given that in Athens one could become a citizen after three years of residence, by how much more then did Peter surpass this requirement by living on Athos for more than fifty years? Furthermore, as another criterion of citizenship he quotes Aristophanes' *Ploutos* (1151): 'where I live well, there is my *patris*', stressing that Athos was the place where Peter met God and contemplated the divine, and which finally granted him the heavenly *patris*.⁶²

Using asyndetonic structures that confer vividness to his account, Palamas writes in generic terms about Peter's captivity following a war with the Arabs. If Nicholas' *Vita* offers more details on this particular episode—informing the reader, for instance, that Peter, a soldier (*scholarios*) of the fifth *schole*, was taken captive by the Arabs while fighting in Syria and was imprisoned at Samarra—Palamas provides very few chronological coordinates and little geographical information throughout his *Logos*. Palamas goes on to narrate Peter's visions of St. Nicholas and St. Symeon who interceded before God for his liberation. Before further pursuing Peter's journey to Rome following his liberation, Palamas pauses his narrative to highlight Peter's act of introspection and decision to emulate the Apostle Paul.⁶³ Thus, Palamas goes beyond Nicholas' *Vita* by describing the inner self and the gradual spiritual growth of the holy man.

Upon reaching Rome, Peter was tonsured by the pope in a ceremony that is described in more detail in Nicholas' *Vita*. Palamas supplements instead the episode of Peter's presence at Rome with a suggestive detail, namely that once in Rome, Peter offered *proskynesis* to the divine icons.⁶⁴ This detail might have been meant to explain to his audience the rationale behind Peter's pilgrimage to Rome instead of

60 Lake, 18; *Logos*, 161.4–10.

61 *Logos*, 162.9–22. On hagiographical *topoi* in the *prooimia* of saints' lives, see Th. Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos: Griechische Heiligenwiten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* (Berlin 2005) 19–55.

62 *Logos*, 163.1–25.

63 *Logos*, 166.1–16.

64 *Logos*, 167.1–3.

Constantinople, since at that time (before 843) the latter was facing the iconoclast crisis.⁶⁵ Departing from Rome, Peter boarded a ship bound for the Levant. During a stop-over in a village—Palamas adding that it was somewhere in Crete—he met some afflicted men who were cured at the mere sight of Peter, in Palamas' version, and through Peter's words and the sign of the cross, in the *Vita*. Resuming his voyage, Peter had a vision of the Theotokos. In Nicholas' extensive account of the vision, the Theotokos spoke of the Mt. Athos she received as a legacy (*kleros*) from Christ and which would be entirely inhabited by monks and always under her protection. This prophecy had a large circulation, being copied and transmitted on its own (*BHG* 1505e), and becoming part of the Athonite tradition up to the present day. Placing it earlier in the *Logos*, Palamas considerably shortens the Theotokos' prophecy of the glorious monastic future of Athos which by the fourteenth century had already been fulfilled.⁶⁶

Subsequently, Peter miraculously arrived on Athos, as the boat was amazingly held back in the vicinity of the mountain. Now Palamas portrays Peter as a new Moses ascending Mt. Athos like a new Sinai and, entering its innermost part (cf. Exodus 24), fully dedicating himself to God.⁶⁷ Through *hesychia*, writes Palamas, Peter made his heart a divine vessel, another heaven and a dwelling-place more pleasant to God than the heavens. At this point, Palamas departs completely from his source and weaves into the fabric of his *Logos* an extensive section on *hesychia*.

Familiar with the writings of Church Fathers (Evagrius of Pontus, Diadochos of Photike, Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, Isaac the Syrian, and Maximos the Confessor) and probably acquainted with the works of Neoplatonic philosophers,⁶⁸ Palamas developed the theme of the returning of the mind (*epistrophe*) towards itself, which he will rework and extend in his later works (*Triads*, *On prayer and purity of heart*). The topic of *epistrophe* is widely encountered in hesychast spirituality (for example, Nikephoros the Hesychast), in Christian patristics in general, and can be traced back to the philosophical tradition of Neoplatonic philosophers such as Plotinos.⁶⁹ Thus, when the mind departs from the tumult of all external things and turns towards the inner man (*entos anthropos*), it observes his repulsive mask which the mind created by wandering around and it hastens to cleanse it through mourning (*penthos*). Consequently, bereft of its passions, the soul reaches peace and *hesychia*, and the mind remains in itself understanding itself and, through itself, its Creator as much as it possibly can. Palamas

65 See L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge 2011).

66 Cf. Rigo, 'La Vita di Pietro', 183–4; idem, *Alle origini*, 35–9.

67 *Logos*, 171.5–6. On the biblical figure of Moses as a model applied to saints, see C. Rapp, 'Comparison, paradigm and the case of Moses in panegyric and hagiography', in M. Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power. The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 1998) 277–98.

68 Rigo, 'De l'apologie à l'évocation de l'expérience mystique'; Polemis, 'Neoplatonic and hesychastic elements'; I. A. Demetrakopoulos, 'Υστεροβυζαντινή κοσμολογία. Η κριτική του Γρηγορίου Παλαμά στη διδασκαλία των Πλωτίνου και Πρόκλου περί κοσμικής ψυχής', *Φιλοσοφία* 31 (2001) 175–91.

69 Meyendorff, 'Le theme du «retour en soi» dans la doctrine palamite du XIV^e siècle', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 145 (1954) 188–206; see n. 68 above.

explains that the mind, stepping out of its own nature, advances towards God provided that it surrounds itself with a fortification which bars access to the devil so that the latter cannot appropriate it and make it an encampment of his own knavish phalanx. Having expelled all passions, the mind turns towards itself, also turning along all the powers of the soul, and thus, standing before God ‘deaf and dumb’, the divine grace transforms it towards the better.⁷⁰ Thus transformed, the mind passes on to the body spiritual gifts such as miracle-making and foresight.⁷¹ However, Palamas emphasizes that in themselves these gifts are not the main aim of the hesychast monks. Instead, they are secondary to ‘the fruit of the true *hesychia*’. For Peter, the ‘great-minded’ saint and the hesychast *par excellence*, the aim is to restore the inner man and, through synergy with the divine grace, to achieve the likeness with his Prototype (that is to say, Christ). Palamas concludes that Peter experienced the vision of God, not only through the imaginative spirit (*phantastiko pneuma*), which Aristotle called ‘the chariot of the intelligible soul’ (*On the Soul* 428a), but in a real way through the immaterial radiance of the divine light.⁷²

Palamas resumes the thread of his narrative and extensively describes Peter fighting the devil. In order to pull him out of the hesychast paradise (Athos), the devil – likened to Amalek, Proteus and the Hydra – attacked Peter four times, in the guise of a general, dragon, servant, and angel of light. Each time he cunningly tried to deceive Peter either through fear, social discourse (in other words, false compassion for others) or eulogy of his perfection. Peter warded off these attacks through his humility and by calling upon the Theotokos. In Nicholas’ *Vita* Peter prayed each time to the Theotokos by saying ‘Holy Mother of God, help your servant’, which attests, in the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, the practice of a ‘prayer of the Theotokos’ alongside the famous ‘Jesus prayer’.⁷³ Palamas emphasizes that Peter reached the summit of virtue (humility), leaving behind the devil whose wings of wax were melted by divine fire, as in the myth of Icarus. Thus, for forty-six years Peter lived a paradisiac life in *hesychia*, being nourished by angels like Elijah.⁷⁴

In keeping with the structure and the chronological order of the former *Vita*, Palamas describes how a hunter miraculously found Peter after his fifty years of solitude. The hagiographer presents the physical portrait of the saint like that of the fourth-century hermit Onouphrios, that is to say, a slim and ascetic figure with long hair, and deprived of any garment. Following their encounter, Peter narrated his entire life to the hunter (a recurrent hagiographical *topos*, for example, St. Mary of Egypt and St. Zosimos

70 *Logos*, 171.17–172.24. Kokkinos quotes this passage *in extenso* in his encomiastic *Logos* on Palamas.

71 See Polemis, ‘Gregorio Palamas e la spiritualità athonita dell’epoca: Esperienze soprannaturali e il loro contesto’, in S. Chialà, L. Cremaschi, A. Mainardi (eds.), *Il Cristo trasfigurato nella tradizione spirituale ortodossa* (Magnano 2008) 296–98.

72 *Logos*, 172.24–174.5.

73 Rigo, *Alle origini*, 18.

74 *Logos*, 173.13–182.14.

of Palestine, and St. Theoktiste of Lesbos and the Euboean hunter).⁷⁵ This meeting not only ensured Peter’s afterlife in the form of a *vita*, but was allegedly also influential for the hunter, who decided to emulate the life and conduct of the saint. However, Peter recommended that he first go back to his home and return and become a hermit after following a set of rules for a year. Palamas emphasizes this encounter and presents the spiritual program prescribed by the saint for the hunter while living in the world, stressing especially the fact that it is equally possible for any person, be they monks or laymen, to practice the hesychastic way of life. Tailored for everyone, this urban hesychast program entails charity, constant remembrance of God (in other words the Jesus prayer), and reading divine books.⁷⁶ This was in fact the quintessence of the hesychast apostolate, carried out in Thessalonike between 1325 and 1335 by Isidore Boucheiras, a close friend of Palamas and future patriarch of Constantinople (1347–1350).⁷⁷

Obedying the holy man and returning after one year, accompanied by his brother and two monastics, the hunter found Peter dead. The relics of the saint cured the huntsman’s brother from demonic possession and afterwards were miraculously kept in an Athonite monastery where they effected numerous miracles. Nicholas identifies this monastery with the so-called monastery of Clement and adds that at some later point the relics were transferred to the Protaton church in Karyes. Furthermore, Palamas briefly recounts an episode of *furta sacra*. Peter’s body, described as ‘a dead man more powerful than the living’, was stolen by the monks who first found the relics together with the hunter and it was taken to the Thracian village of Photokomis (Phokomis in Nicholas’ *Vita*). There the saint’s relics cast out demons and performed numerous healing miracles; for instance, Palamas emphasizes, again quoting Aristophanes, that the saint made the blind ‘more sharp-sighted than Lynceus’ (*Ploutos* 210).⁷⁸ Finally, the relics were placed in a church dedicated to the saint. Palamas conceals additional details found in his source. Thus, Nicholas speaks further of a local bishop who purchased the relics for 100 *nomismata*, the attempt of the devil to set them on fire, and their *translatio* to a newly built church.⁷⁹

At the end of their accounts of Peter’s life, Nicholas briefly eulogizes the ascetic life of the holy man and exhorts his audience to emulate Peter’s *politeia*, whereas Palamas provides a more extended epilogue. The latter portrays Peter as a universal saint, honoured both in heaven and all over the world. Quoting Thucydides (*History* 2.43.3),

75 See F. Halkin, ‘La Vie de saint Onuphre par Nicolas le Sinaïte’, *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 27 (1987) 7–27; M. Kouli, ‘Life of St. Mary of Egypt’ and A. C. Hero, ‘Life of St. Theoktiste of Lesbos’, in Talbot (ed.), *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation* (Washington 1996) 65–93, 95–116; Flusin, ‘L’hagiographie monastique’.

76 *Logos*, 184.24–33, 185.1–9.

77 Kokkinos, ‘Βίος καὶ πολιτεία καὶ ἐγκώμιον τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰσιδώρου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως’ (*BHG* 962) 22–4, ed. Tsames, 329–423, at 353–8; idem, *Λόγος*, 29, ed. Tsames, 457–8.

78 *Logos*, 188.14–5, 189.25–6.

79 Lake, 38.

Palamas emphasizes that virtuous men have tombs all over the world and everyone proclaims their excellence (*aristeia*). Moreover, through divine grace, Peter achieved omnipresence which is inherent only in divine nature; thus, he is present both on earth, due to people's continuous praise and remembrance, and in heaven, praising God with the angels and the other saints. Persecutor of demons, benefactor of mankind, and fellow-citizen of angels, Peter has given up everything while alive and inherited everything upon dying. Thus, he renounced the world and so inherited both the earth and heaven.⁸⁰ Finally, Palamas exhorts his audience to follow in Peter's footsteps and emulate his example of 'true philosophy' and virtue.

If Palamas began the *Logos* stressing that his task is immense, if not impossible, because of the greatness of the subject which is difficult to comprehend through words, he ends by saying that in fact the subject is not only one that can be adorned by words, but one that in itself adorns them. Thus, his endeavour was bound to succeed due first and foremost to the greatness of its subject, that is, St. Peter himself.⁸¹

III. 'Old wine in new bottles'?

Late Byzantine *pepaideumenoi* showed a predilection for penning *vitae* and *enkomia* of saints of bygone eras. The reasons for this interest might have ranged from the wish to honour and promote the saint, to edify and exhort a specific audience, antiquarianism,⁸² a desire to improve the style of the older *vita*, pride in one's monastery or civic loyalty, to engaging in political and ecclesiastical polemics. For instance, Gregoras' new *vita* of the Empress Theophano (*BHG* 1795) contains a veiled critique of the hesychast doctrine and of contemporary ecclesiastical disorder.⁸³ Writing to Gregoras, Akindynos – one of Palamas' theological opponents – praises his composition:

I have generally admired everything in it, and profited from everything, but especially from the end where you denounce the ecclesiastical tempest and turbulence. And even before that, the theory that it is natural to receive representative visions and images of God, which you discuss excellently, gave me the greatest possible pleasure. For you prove that the most pretentious boasts of seeing with the eyes of the body the face and glory of God in its nature and essence, without spiritual cover, are filled with folly and error, and

80 *Logos*, 190.10–3, 19–27, 191.12–3.

81 *Logos*, 191.14–8.

82 Cf., although for an earlier period, Rapp, 'Hagiographers as antiquarians', in S. Efthymiadis, C. Rapp, D. Tsougarakis (eds.), *Bosphorus. Essays in Honour of Cyril Mango* (Amsterdam 1995) 31–44.

83 Talbot, 'Old wine in new bottles', 22; cf. Theodora Raoulaina's (d. c.1300) *vita* of Theophanes and Theodore Graptoi (*BHG* 1793), the iconophile confessors, in which she criticizes the contemporary imperial policy of Michael VIII (r.1259–82) regarding the Union of Lyons; cf. also the anonymous *enkomion* of St. Theodosia that contains an invective against Michael VIII; E. Kountoura-Galake, 'Constantine V Kopronymos or Michael VIII Palaiologos the New Constantine? The Anonymous Encomium of Saint Theodosia', *Symmeikta* 15 (2002) 183–94.

thus you pull up from the bottom, so to speak, the root of their polytheism and, for your part, deliver the Church from the ensuing tempest and turbulence.⁸⁴

As narrated above, at the age of thirty-eight, while practicing *askesis* on Athos in the vicinity of Great Lavra, Gregory Palamas reportedly had a vision which encouraged him to share the wisdom bestowed upon him from on high. His first publication was the *Logos* on St. Peter of Athos, a *metaphrasis* of an earlier *vita*.

Peter, ‘the first monk of Athos’, lived in solitude and did not leave easily accessible traces behind. Rigo likens the secluded life of the hermit to a subterranean river (‘un fiume carsico’), ‘hidden’ in the depths of the earth.⁸⁵ Just as its ebb and flow reveal too little to the eyes of the beholder, so the life of the saint remained hidden in the deep past. The first to bring Peter to the surface was the Athonite monk Nicholas, who reconstructed his life from different liturgical and oral traditions. This ‘old wine’ served as the source for Palamas’ *Logos*.

Not surprisingly, as in many other *vitae* and *enkomia* of older saints composed by Palaiologan hagiographers, Palamas did not present any new biographical material. However, as this article has endeavoured to show, Palamas’ *Logos* is far from lacking in originality—contrary to what Janning or Meyendorff would say—especially when taking into account the manner in which he reused, changed or supplemented his source. Thus, even though he followed the structure of the original *Vita* closely, Palamas added numerous rhetorical passages, a lengthy *prooimion* and epilogue, and an extensive account describing the hesychast experience and practice with special emphasis on the topic of *epistrophe* (the returning of the mind towards itself). Moreover, Palamas did not simply recast ‘old wine in a new bottle’, but filled the new bottle of his *Logos* with a new essence. Throughout his *Logos* the hagiographer and *metaphrastes* delves with psychological finesse into the inner life of the holy man and pauses his narrative to give Peter moments of introspection.

Moreover, with Peter as his spokesman, Palamas promotes a hesychast programme accessible to everyone, weaving into his hagiographical narrative the first contours of the hesychast doctrine which he would later deepen and develop in his theological and polemical writings. Thus, the thematic interest of Palamas goes beyond the boundaries of the hagiographical genre, giving way to theology. Following Kokkinos’ division of Palamas’ oeuvre into the ‘holy drink of milk’ (his moral and spiritual writings) and the ‘holy drink of wine’ (his dogmatic and theological works), it could be argued that the *Logos* displays the early signs of the transformation from the ‘clearly moral and simple word to the dogmatic and ascending word’. Nevertheless, instead of a dry theoretical treatise, Palamas writes an engaging narrative, or what Gregory of Nazianzus would call ‘a rule for the monastic life in the form of a narrative’.⁸⁶

Palamas renders Peter’s life in a higher stylistic and linguistic register than Nicholas does. Thus, he uses the rules of encomiastic discourse and the precepts and formulae of

84 Letter 17, ed. Constantinides Hero, *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* (Washington, DC 1983), 66–7, 339–41.

85 Rigo, *Alle origini*, 46–7.

86 *Oration* 21.5, ed. J. Mossay [*Sources chrétiennes* 270] (Paris 1980) 118: τοῦ μοναδικοῦ βίου νομοθεσίαν ἐν πλάσματι διηγήσεως.

rhetoric in order to impress, persuade, and edify his audience. Rhetorical ornaments, such as metaphors, *paroimia*, biblical, patristic and classical references and allusions permeate the *Logos*. Gregory employs a plethora of biblical quotations, especially from the Psalms, Gospels and the Letters of the Apostle Paul. He also adorns his narrative with quotations from Aristophanes (*Ploutos* 210, 1151), Aristotle (*On the Soul* 428a), and Thucydides (*Histories* II. 43.3), and with *simili* and references to the biblical and classical figures of Moses, Elijah, David, Job, Amalek, Hydra, Icarus, Lynceus and Proteus. This implies that Palamas addressed a learned monastic audience, although Athonite monks were generally accused of ignorance and illiteracy by anti-hesychasts. However, through the rules of rhetoric Palamas also refashioned Peter so as to meet the horizon of expectations of an educated urban, perhaps Constantinopolitan or Thessalonian, audience. Thus, he portrayed Peter as an international hesychast,⁸⁷ whose image and example travelled well beyond his *patria* of Athos.

By analyzing the *Logos* on St. Peter, this study has entered the 'working room' of Gregory Palamas, encountering not only a learned and gifted hagiographer and rhetorician, but also a foreshadow of the theologian and spokesman of fourteenth-century hesychasm. Palamas not only masterfully adorned the subject he chose for his first publication, but was in turn adorned by it. Both Peter and Palamas provide perfect models of sanctity, the former through his own life, the latter through his writing.⁸⁸ Through writing a saint's life, Palamas derived spiritual benefit and, appropriating the saint, engraved him unto his heart. Within a decade after his death (c.1357/9), Palamas was canonized as a saint and his doctrine became authoritative in the Orthodox Church. Thus, the hagiographer Palamas, wetting the soles of his feet in Peter's tears, as Cioran would say, came to follow very closely in the traces of his hero: the hagiographer made his own claim to sainthood.

87 Cf. A. Elian, 'Byzance et les Roumains à la fin du Moyen Age', in M. Hussey, D. Obolensky, S. Runciman (eds.), *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies* (London 1967) 195–203, at 199.

88 Cf. Rapp, 'Hagiographers as antiquarians', 41.

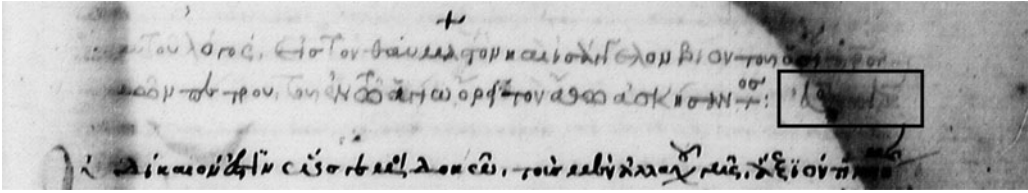
Appendix 1: Synoptic table of the contents of the *Vita* and the *Logos*

Nicholas the Athonite	Gregory Palamas
Βίος και πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου και θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Πέτρου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτου	Λόγος εἰς τὸν θαυμαστὸν και ἱσαγγελον βιον τοῦ ὁσίου και θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Πέτρου τοῦ ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ ὄρει τῷ Ἄθῳ ἀσκήσαντος
BHG 1505	BHG 1506
Ed.: K. Lake, <i>The Early Days of Monasticism on Mount Athos</i> (Oxford 1909) 18–39.	Ed.: P. K. Chrestou, <i>Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμῆ συγγράμματα</i> , V (Thessalonike 1992) 161–91.
§ 1 Introduction (18.1–12)	§ 1 Introduction
	§ 2 (161, 162, 163.1–26)
	§ 3
	§ 4
	§ 5
§ 2 Peter's imprisonment at Samarra (18.13–28, 19.1–11)	§ 6 Peter's Arab captivity (163.27–8, 164.1–16)
§ 3 First prayer to St. Nicholas (19.11–38, 20.1–10)	§ 7 Peter's visions of St. Nicholas (164.17–30)
§ 4 Second prayer to St. Nicholas (20.10–38)	
§ 5 Prayer to St. Symeon; Peter's escape from prison (21.1–38, 22.1–13)	§ 8 Sts. Nicholas and Symeon set Peter free (165)
_____	§ 9 Peter emulates the Apostle Paul (166.1–16)
§ 6 Journey to Rome (22.13–22)	§ 10 Peter at Rome; his tonsure; departure by boat towards Asia (166.17–29, 167.1–16)
§ 7 St. Nicholas and the Pope (22.23–38, 23.1–3)	
§ 8 Peter in St. Peter's in Rome and his dialogue with the Pope; Peter's tonsure (23.3–19)	
§ 9 Peter's departure from Rome (23.19–33)	
§ 10 Voyage and healing miracles (23.33–8, 24.1–35)	cf. § 13–14
§ 11 The vision of the Theotokos and the revelation of Mount Athos (24.35–8, 25.1–38)	§ 11 The vision of the Theotokos and her prophecy about Mount Athos (167.17–28, 168.1–21)
	§ 12
cf. § 10	§ 13 Sojourn in Crete and healing miracles (168.22–34, 169.1–31)
	§ 14
§ 12 Miraculous arrival at Mount Athos (26.1–28)	§ 15 Miraculous arrival at Mount Athos (169.33–5, 170.1–18)
	§ 16
§ 13 Peter settles in a cave full of vermin and devils (26.28–38, 27.1–5)	_____
_____	§ 17 Peter as hermit living in <i>hesychia</i> (170.33, 171.1–23)
_____	§ 18 On <i>hesychia</i> (171.24–9, 172, 173.1–12)
	§ 19
	§ 20
§ 14 The first assault of the Devil (27.5–30)	§ 21 The first assault of the Devil (173.13–31, 174.1–26)
	§ 22
§ 15 The second assault of the Devil (27.30–8, 28.1–3)	§ 23 The second assault of the Devil (174.27–31, 175.1–25)
	§ 24
§ 16 The third assault of the Devil (28.3–38, 29.1–18)	§ 25 The third assault of the Devil (175.26–9, 176, 177, 178.1–28)
	§ 26
	§ 27
	§ 28
	§ 29

(Continued)

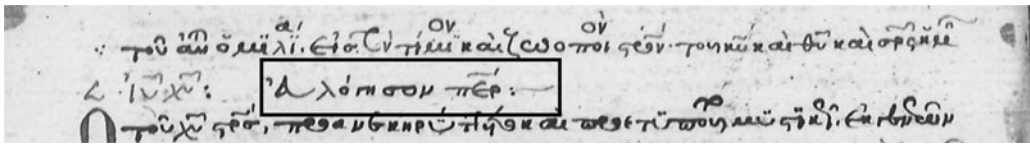
Nicholas the Athonite	Gregory Palamas
§ 17 The fourth assault of the Devil (29.18–38, 30.1–20)	§ 30 The fourth assault of the Devil (178.29–30, 179, 180, 181.1–10)
	§ 31
	§ 32
	§ 33
§ 18 The vision of the Theotokos and the gift of manna (30.20–33)	§ 34 Peter reaches the summit of virtue; nourished by angels (181.11–29, 182.1–14)
§ 19 The last fifty-three years of Peter's life (30.33–8, 31.1–7)	§ 35
§ 20 A hunter discovers Peter (31.7–38, 32.1–6)	§ 36 A hunter discovers Peter (182.15–30, 183.1–26)
	§ 37
§ 21 Peter's effect on the hunter (32.6–22)	§ 38 Peter's effect on the hunter (183.27–31, 184, 185.1–7)
	§ 39
§ 22 After one year the hunter discovers Peter's relics (32.23–38, 33.1–3)	§ 40 After one year the hunter discovers Peter's relics (185.8–22)
§ 23 Peter's relics heal the hunter's brother from demonic possession (33.3–22)	§ 41 Peter's relics heal the hunter's brother from demonic possession (185.23–31, 186, 187.1–8)
	§ 42
	§ 43
§ 24 The journey of Peter's relics to the Clement Monastery (33.22–38, 34.1–10)	§ 44 Peter's relics at an Athonite monastery (187.9–28)
§ 25 The relics at the Clement Monastery (34.10–29)	
§ 26 Peter's relics are stolen by some monks (34.29–38, 35.1–10) Nicholas' reason for writing St. Peter's <i>Vita</i> (35.10–34)	§ 45 Peter's relics are stolen and brought to Thrace (187.29, 188.1–12)
§ 27 Peter's relics outside Mount Athos at Phokomis (35.34–8, 36.1–9)	§ 46 Peter's relics cast out numerous demons at Photokomis (188.13–30, 189.1–23)
§ 28 The "Chiliarch" devil at Phokomis (36.9–38, 37.1–18)	§ 47
	§ 48
§ 29 A bishop acquires Peter's relics (37.18–38, 38.1–11)	_____
§ 30 The complaint of the Devil and the attempt to burn Peter's relics (38.12–23)	_____
§ 31 The deposition of Peter's relics in a church (38.24–32)	§ 49 Other miracles; a church is erected for Peter (189.24–8, 190.1–13)
§ 32 Concluding exhortation (38.33–8, 39.1–30)	§ 50 Concluding exhortation (190.14–29, 191.1–24)
	§ 51
	§ 52

Appendix 2: Paris. Coislin. 97, BnF (collection of Gregory Palamas' spiritual writings)



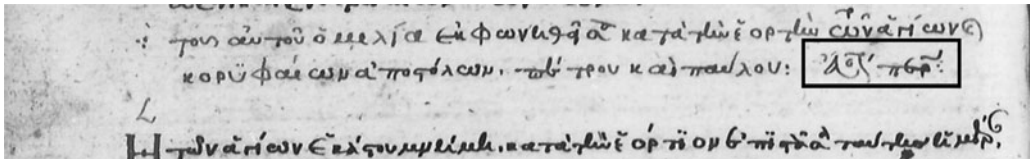
Coislin. 97, fol. 193r (detail), BnF

Gregory Palamas' *Logos* on Saint Peter of Athos (title): αὐτοῦ λόγος εἰς τὸν θαυμαστὸν καὶ ἰσάγγελον βίον τοῦ ὀσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Πέτρου τοῦ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὄρει τοῦ [τὸν cod.] Ἰθῶ ἀσκήσαντος: **εὐλόγησον πάτερ** [my emphasis]



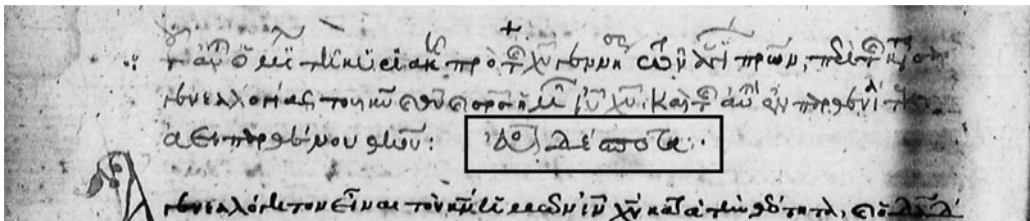
Coislin. 97, fol. 12v (detail), BnF

Gregory Palamas' homily (no. 11) on the Holy Cross (title): τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὁμιλία εἰς τὸν τίμιον καὶ ζωοποιὸν σταυρὸν τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: **εὐλόγησον πάτερ** [my emphasis]



Coislin. 97, fol. 67v (detail), BnF

Gregory Palamas' homily (no. 28) on the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (title): τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὁμιλία ἐκφωνηθεῖσα κατὰ τὴν ἑορτὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ κορυφαίων ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου: **εὐλόγησον πάτερ** [my emphasis]



Coislin. 97, fol. 170v (detail), BnF

Gregory Palamas' homily (no. 57) on the Sunday of the Fathers (title): τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὁμιλία τῆ κυριακῆ πρὸ τῆς Χριστοῦ γεννήσεως τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων, περὶ τῆς κατὰ σάρκα γενεαλογίας τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ τῆς αὐτὸν ἐν παρθενία τεκούσης ἀεπαρθένου Θεοτόκου: **εὐλόγησον δέσποτα** [my emphasis]