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SHORT NOTE

Two more manuscripts for Basil the Bastard

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Two gospel lectionaries, Gregory-Aland l 367 and l 46, were probably commissioned circa 965–985 by Basil the Parakoimomenos: *the former as a gift for the St Basil Monastery that he founded, the latter for his personal use.*

Keywords: Basil Lekapenos; Byzantine Gospel lectionaries

From 944 to the 980s (when he was ultimately removed from office), Basil, natural son of emperor Romanos I, ranked among the most powerful men in Constantinople.[1] He is known to have commissioned a number of luxury objects[2] and is speculatively identified as the patron of a few further works of art and literature.[3] I hesitate to add two more items to this already long list, but the supporting evidence seems to me strong enough to be worth considering.

1 R.-J. Lilie et al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit* (Berlin 1998-2013) no. 20925 (with further bibliography).

2 For a diligent summary of the literature, see L. Bevilacqua, *Arte e aristocrazia a Bisanzio nell'età dei Macedoni: Costantinopoli, la Grecia e l'Asia Minore* [Milion, 9] (Rome 2013) 193-234, 294-300, 332-40. More of the same: Bevilacqua, 'Basilio "parakoimomenos", l'aristocrazia e la passione per le arti sotto i Macedoni', in A. Acconcia Longo et al. (eds), *La Sapienza bizantina: un secolo di ricerche sulla civiltà di Bisanzio all'Università di Roma* [Milion, 8] (Rome 2013) 183–202; Bevilacqua, 'Basilio parakoimomenos e i manoscritti miniati: impronte di colore nell'Ambrosiano B 119 sup.', in A. Rigo et al. (eds), *Vie per Bisanzio* (Bari 2013) 1013-30. – M. Kurysheva, 'Два «заказа» Василия Нофа: к датировке кодекса РНБ Греч. 55 и идентификации кольца из Лувра', in I. Konovalova (ed.), *Палеография, кодикология, дипломатика: современный опыт исследования греческих, латинских и славянских рукописей и документов* (Moscow 2013) 174–85, esp. 183-5, argues that Basil owned a finger-ring now in Paris, Cabinet des Médailles (inv. Schl. 126).

3 A. Schminck, 'Zur Einzelgesetzgebung der "makedonischen" Kaiser', *Fontes Minores* 11 (2005) 269–323, esp. 300-301; S. H. Wander, *The Joshua Roll* (Wiesbaden 2012) 93–132; J. Featherstone, 'Basileios Nothos as compiler: the *De Cerimoniis* and *Theophanes Continuatus*', in J. Signes Codoñer and I. Pérez Martín (eds), *Textual Transmission in Byzantium: Between Textual Criticism and Quellenforschung* (Turnhout 2014) 353–72.

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Manuscript *Supplément grec* 567 in the National Library of France is a short gospel lectionary, containing readings just for the Divine Liturgy on Sundays (from Easter onward) and on a few major feast days.[4] Henri Omont recognised in it a fairly mannered – and therefore late – kind of majuscule handwriting and tentatively ascribed it to the fifteenth century.[5] Amédée Gastoué observed that the 'ekphonetic' (musical) signs which accompany its biblical text (Fig. 1) cannot be later than 1200.[6] Jean Ebersolt proposed an even earlier date:

> Au fol. B sont écrits en or des vers en l'honneur du « proèdre Basile » qui possède une foi ardente, la conviction que les richesses spirituelles sont préférables aux biens matériels. Un monastère, un asile de vieillards, un bain pour les indigents, un hôpital, tels sont les bienfaits qu'il a répandus autour de lui. Il s'agit sans doute du haut dignitaire, qui joua un rôle important à Byzance, au X^{e} siècle; cf. G. Schlumberger, *op. cit.* [*Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris 1890)], p. 291 s.[7]

The text that Ebersolt paraphrases has not been edited in print before (Fig. 2–3):[8]

> Πολλοὶ μὲν εὐπόρησαν ὑλῶν τιμίων,
> πολλοὶ προσεκτίσαν τε πλοῦτον μυρίον,
> οὐδεὶς δὲ τούτων ἔντονον προθυμίαν
> οὕτως ἔδειξε πίστεως θερμῇ ζέσει,
> ὡς ὁ πρόεδρος Βασίλειος εἰκότως·
> εἰς νοῦν λαβὼν γὰρ ἐκ τίνος τὸ χρυσίον
> καὶ πλοῦτος εἰσρεῖ, ταῦτα τούτῳ προσφέρει.
> Ἐντεῦθεν ἔργον πᾶσαν ἐκπλῆττον φρένα·
> ναοῦ τὸ κάλλος, κρεῖττος ἢ χειρὸς τάχα,
> οἶκος μοναστᾶις ἐκπρεπεῖ σὺν ἑστίᾳ,
> οἶκος γέρουσι, λουτρὸν ἠπορημένοις,
> οἶκος νοσοῦσι, φάρμακα, τροφή, σκέπη·
> τοσαῦτα ῥεῖθρα τῆς καλῆς ψυχῆς ῥέει...

4 A Π-shaped headpiece and a large initial letter, both filled with ornament of the 'flower-petal' type (cf. note 25 below), mark the beginning of each lection. All titles and paragraph initials are written in gold. There is no sign that the manuscript ever contained figural miniatures.

5 H. A. Omont, *Fac-similés des plus anciens manuscrits grecs en onciale et en minuscule de la Bibliothèque nationale, du IVe au XIIe siècle* (Paris 1892) pl. xxi.2. See also C. R. Gregory, *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*, I (Leipzig 1900) 420 (cat. 367).

6 A. Gastoué, *Introduction à la paléographie musicale byzantine: catalogue des manuscrits de musique byzantine de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris et des bibliothèques publiques de France* (Paris 1907) 80 (cat. 54). Cf. C. Høeg, *La notation ekphonétique* (Copenhagen 1935).

7 J. Ebersolt, *La miniature byzantine* (Paris 1926) 80. See also I. Spatharakis, *Corpus of Dated Illuminated Greek Manuscripts to the Year 1453* (Leiden 1981) cat. 302.

8 I have resolved the scribe's abbreviations without parentheses, and added subscript iotas and modern punctuation.

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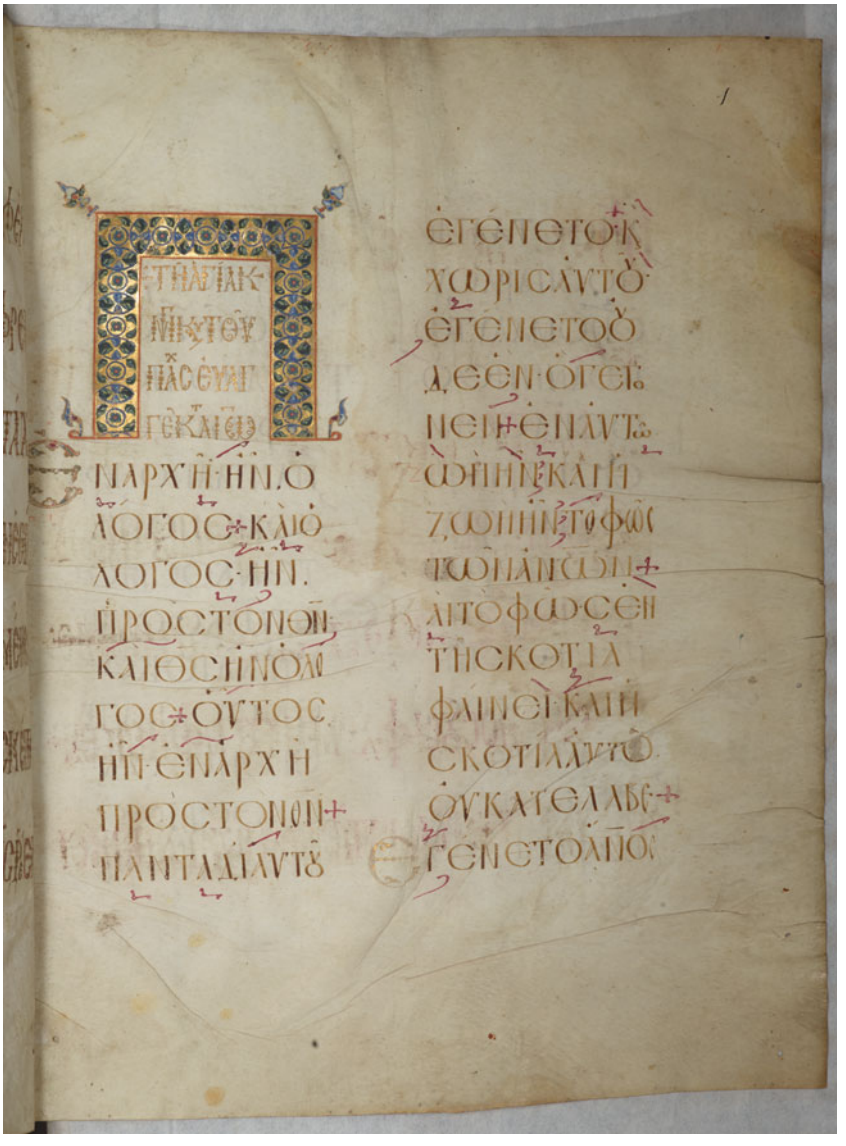


Fig. 1. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Suppl. grec 567, fol. 1r

The leaf on which this poem once ended has been cut out of the book.[9] The verses must be original to the volume, since the parchment on which they are written is ruled in

9 Fol. B originally formed a quire with another leaf, of which now only a stub remains. – There are no quire signatures. Except for its first two folia (marked 'A' and 'B'), the manuscript is paginated. The last flyleaf (pp. 343-[4]), an inserted singleton (pp. 111-[12]), and fol. A are all made of identical, unruled parchment and must have been added at a later date. Fol. Ar is annotated (*supra*) 'Venetiis mense Junio 1583'. A second flyleaf at the back (pp. 341-2) is a recycled fragment from some other majuscule Gospel lectionary.

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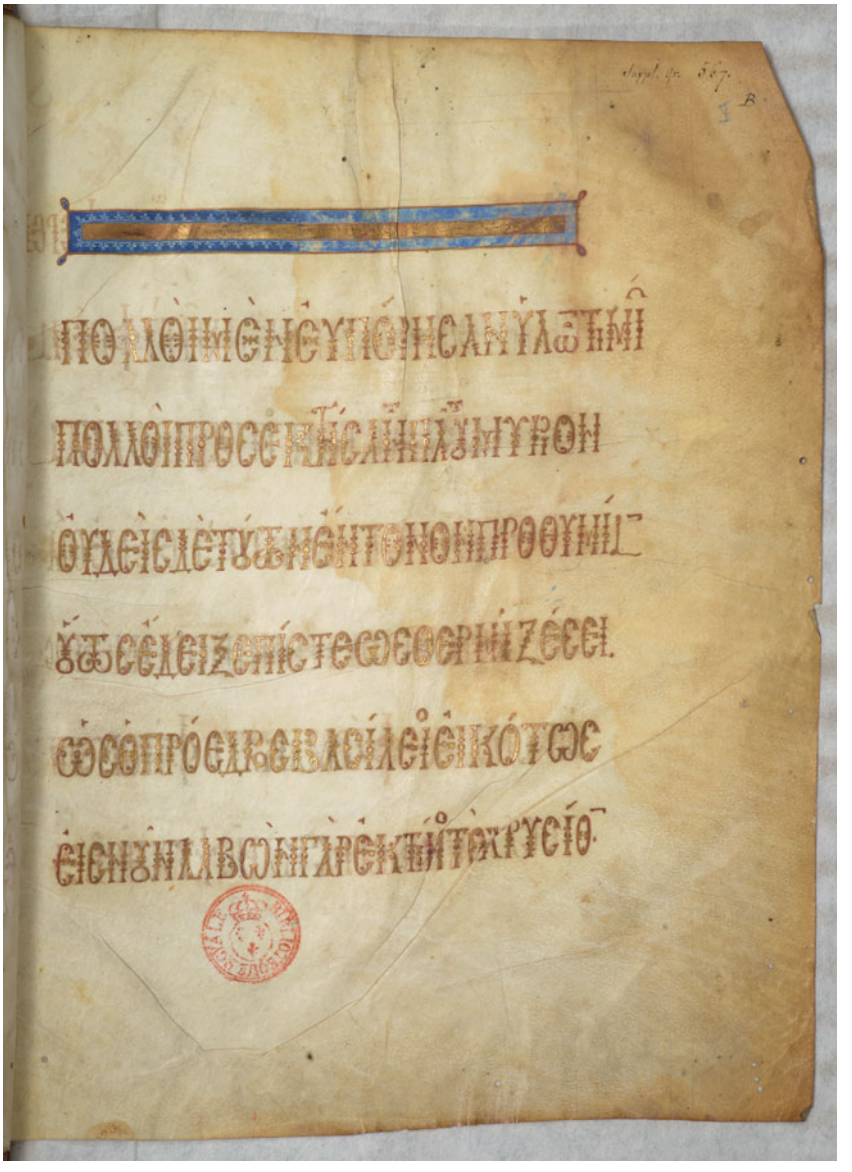


Fig. 2. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Suppl. grec 567, fol. Br

a manner very similar to the ruling for the biblical text.[10] Unlike a regular 'book epigram',[11] their topic (in their present defective state, at any rate) is not the gospel lectionary where they are inscribed but a monastery to which that lectionary had been given:

10 On fol. Br (Fig. 2), the ruling type is D 44D1 and the written area measures 198 × 155 mm. On p. 1 (Fig. 1), the written area measures 200 × 160 (65+30+65) mm. The ruling type there (and on all other text leaves) is D-K 44E2 (*sic*), i.e. the same as D 44D1 but with two text columns instead of one: cf. J.-H. Sautel, *Répertoire de réglures dans les manuscrits grecs sur parchemin* (Turnhout 1995) 239, 245.

11 M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*, I (Vienna 2003) 197–212.

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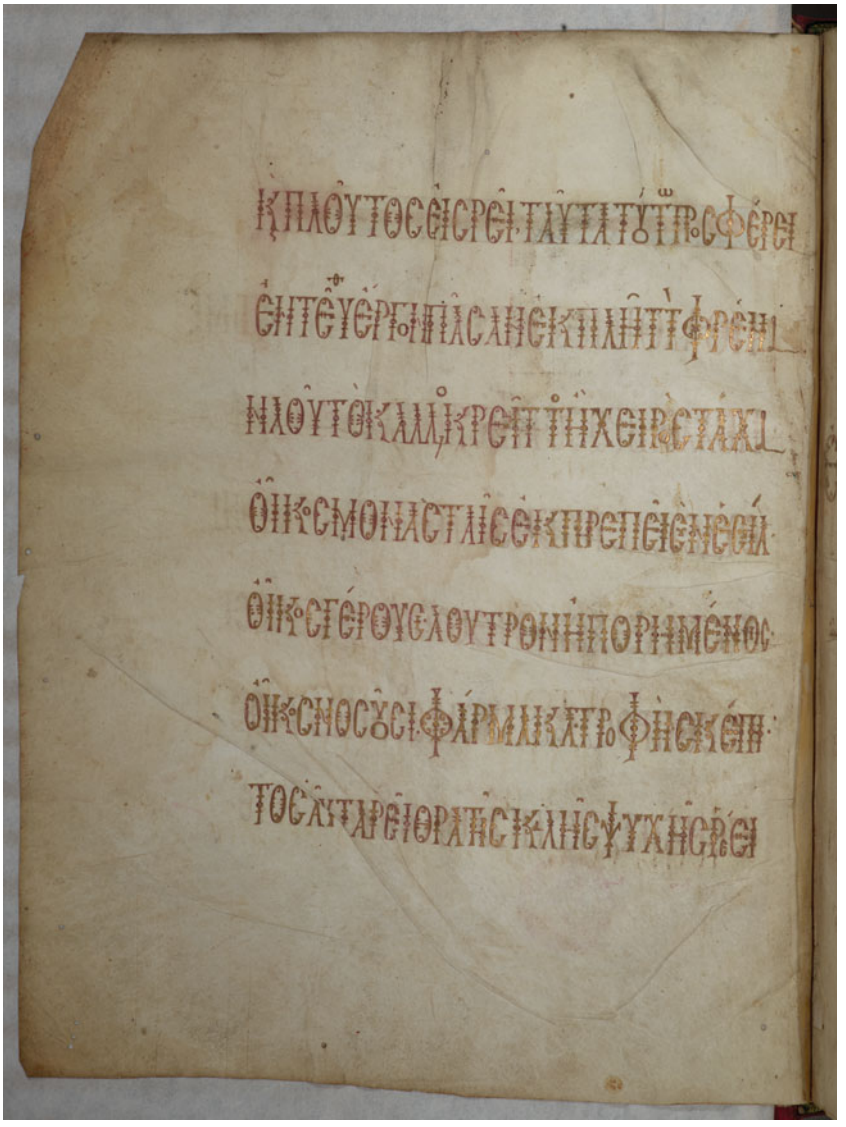


Fig. 3. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Suppl. grec 567, fol. Bv

Many people own plenty of material riches and many have acquired abundant wealth, but nobody among them has demonstrated the intense earnestness of [his] faith with such burning ardour as the *proedros* Basil – for, being aware who is the source of gold and wealth,[12] he offers these [back] to Him. Hence [the] deed that amazes everyone's mind: a beautiful church [...],[13] a house for monks with a splendid refectory (?), a house for the aged, a bath for

12 Note the unusual enjambment between verses 6 and 7.

13 I do not understand what κρεῖττος ἢ χειρὸς τάχα means.

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> the poor, a house for the sick, medicines, food, shelter – such are the fruits of his good soul...

The poem's mention of an old people's home, a hospital, and a bathhouse adds to the sparse textual evidence for tenth-century Byzantine charitable institutions.[14] Psellos writes of a 'most splendid monastery that [Basil the Bastard] had built and dedicated to the great [St] Basil (whose name he bore), magnificently erected with great expense in labour (πολλῇ δαπάνῃ χειρός), combining intricacy with beauty, and more than sufficiently provided with abundant donations'.[15] It might well have been this convent that originally owned the Paris gospel lectionary: 1 January is one of the few feast days for which it contains a reading.[16]

Nothing stands in the way of dating the manuscript between 963, when Basil was made *proedros* (being the first ever holder of this title) and 985 or so, when he was deposed:[17] the type of decorative capitals in which the above poem is written (Fig. 2–3) is primarily, if not exclusively, attested in the tenth century,[18] while the gospel text itself (Fig. 1) is in a 'liturgical majuscule' easily attributable to that same period.[19]

Similar handwriting is found in a gospel lectionary now in Naples (Biblioteca nazionale 'Vittorio Emanuele III', MS gr. 2*, ex Vindob. Suppl. gr. 12).[20] Copied in gold ink on purple-coloured parchment, this unusually small book contains a very limited

14 D. J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick 1968) 170, 232-5.

15 Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. D. R. Reinsch (Berlin 2014) 11–12 (§ I.20). See also R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères* [La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin, I.3], 2nd edn (Paris 1969) 58–9; P. Magdalino, 'The House of Basil the Parakoimomenos', in O. Delouis et al. (eds), *Le saint, le moine et le paysan: Mélanges d'histoire byzantine offerts à Michel Kaplan* [Byzantina Sorbonensia, 29] (Paris 2016) 323–8, esp. 328. – Folia 293-303 of the gospel lectionary St Petersburg, National Library of Russia, СПбДА Б I 5 were copied in 985 at a monastery dedicated to St Basil: . N. Dobrynina, 'О двух греческих рукописях X в.', in I. M. Beliaeva (ed.), *Современные проблемы археографии* (St Petersburg 2011) 22–32, esp. 22-7. It is unclear whether this was the Constantinopolitan monastery founded by Basil the Bastard.

16 The outer half of p. 235, on which this reading begins, has been cut out of the book, and the corresponding title is now lost. The other feasts included in the *menologion* are 8 Sept. Birth of the Virgin (pp. 203-5), 14 Sept. Elevation of the Cross (pp. 205-12), Saturday of Pentecost (pp. 212-17), 1 Nov. Sts Cosmas and Damian (pp. 217-19), 13 Nov. St John Chrysostom (pp. 219-22), Sunday before Christmas (pp. 222-30), 25 Dec. Christmas (pp. 231-5), Sunday before Christ's Baptism (pp. 240-3), 6 Jan. Christ's Baptism (pp. 243-5), 2 Feb. Presentation in the Temple (pp. 245-50), 29 June Sts Peter and Paul (pp. 251-3), 6 Aug. Transfiguration (pp. 253-6). – After this point, the moveable (Easter) cycle of readings is resumed (unusual as it is, this must be the original text order, since pp. 255-6 is the first leaf of a regular quaternion). The volume ends with seven Ἀναγνώσματα ἑωθινὰ ἀναστάσιμα (readings for Matins on Sunday; nos 3-5, 7-8, 10-11 in current printed editions) on pp. 319-40.

17 Schminck, 'Einzelgesetzgebung', 302-3, argues that Basil actually fell from power in 989.

18 P. Orsini, 'La maiuscola distintiva "liturgica ornata"', in M. D'Agostino (ed.), *Ἀληθὴς φιλία: Studi in onore di Giancarlo Prato* (Spoleto 2010) 525–40, esp. 539.

19 Orsini, *Scrittura come immagine: morfologia e storia della maiuscola liturgica bizantina* (Rome 2013) 40, 54 ('type C').

20 Orsini, *Scrittura come immagine*, 40, 54 ('type A'), 57n.154.

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selection of passages and must have been intended for private perusal.[21] Its opening page carries the words 'Basil's power' (Βασιλείου κράτος), inscribed within a cross.[22] Kurt Weitzmann understood this as an ex-libris of the (illiterate) Basil I[23]– but there are obstacles to dating the manuscript in that emperor's reign (867-886). First, the headband (evidently *not* a later addition) on the title page is filled with ornament of the 'flower-petal' type,[24] which originated in the mid-tenth century.[25] Second, one of the scribes who produced the lectionary supplied his text with ekphonetic signs,[26] and such signs are not attested with certainty before 900.[27] Beside Basil I, there are just two other possible patrons for the Naples manuscript: Basil II (r. 976–1025) and his great-uncle Basil the Bastard. The word κράτος is more appropriate for an actual emperor, but during the reign's first decade it really was the older Basil who ran the affairs of state.[28] The Bastard's resulting self-confidence could have been reflected in the embellishment of a book made for his personal use – before hubris brought about his downfall.

21 K. Weitzmann, 'Ein kaiserliches Lektionar einer byzantinischen Hofschule', in O. Benesch et al. (eds), *Festschrift Karl M. Swoboda* (Vienna 1959) 309–20, esp. 313; repr. in Weitzmann, *Byzantine Liturgical Psalters and Gospels* (London 1980) no. viii.

22 Weitzmann, 'Ein kaiserliches Lektionar', fig. 75 (fol. 1v). Colour photograph: F. Romano (ed.), *Biblioteca Nazionale 'Vittorio Emanuele III' Napoli* (Florence 1993) 46.

23 Weitzmann, 'Ein kaiserliches Lektionar', 317-18. See also B. Flusin, 'Le livre et l'empereur sous les premiers macédoniens', *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 2 (2012) 71–84, esp. 75.

24 Weitzmann, 'Ein kaiserliches Lectionar', fig. 73 (fol. 2r).

25 Spatharakis, *Corpus*, cats 9, 12, 14, 15. See also K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 1935) 22–32; G. Parpulov, 'The beginnings of flower-petal ornament', in A. L. Saminsky (ed.), *Путем орнамента: исследования по искусству византийского мира* (Moscow 2013) 93–5.

26 Weitzmann, 'Ein kaiserliches Lektionar', fig. 73 (fol. 2r); G. Cavallo, 'Funzione e strutture della maiuscola greca tra i secoli VIII-XI', in *La paléographie grecque et byzantine* (Paris 1977) 95–137, esp. 129 with fig. 34 (fol. 10r).

27 The earliest precisely dated examples are from 949 and 967: Spatharakis, *Corpus*, cats 10, 18. For the correct date of a supposedly ninth-century specimen, see I. Hutter, *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften: Oxford, Bodleian Library*, III (Stuttgart 1982) 28 (cat. 16). Cf. Høeg, *Notation*, 77-83, 105-8; S. G. Engberg, 'Greek ekphonetic notation: the classical and pre-classical systems', in J. Raasted and C. Troelsgård (eds), *Palaeobyzantine Notations: A Reconsideration of the Source Material* (Hernen 1995) 33–55, esp. 38-50; S. Martani, 'Das ekphonetische Notationssystem in den datierten Evangeliarien des 10. Jahrhunderts', in G. Wolfram (ed), *Palaeobyzantine Notations*, III (Leuven 2004) 27–47, esp. 37.

28 C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire* (Oxford 2005) 469–74.

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