

Νέα Πώμη

Rivista di ricerche bizantinistiche

15

(2018)



Roma

Università degli Studi di Roma «Tor Vergata»

2019

Comitato scientifico

Giuseppe De Gregorio, Vera von Falkenhausen,
Antonio Iacobini, Andrea Luzzi, Brigitte Mondrain, Cesare Pasini,
Inmaculada Pérez Martín, Maria Teresa Rodriquez,
Francesco Scorza Barcellona, Agamemnon Tselikas,
Nigel G. Wilson, Agostino Ziino

Direzione

Francesco D’Aiuto (Direttore responsabile)
Santo Lucà

Coordinamento della Redazione

Donatella Bucca, Mario Re

Redazione

Luigi D’Amelia, Francesca Potenza,
Mariafrancesca Sgandurra, Domenico Surace

ISSN 1970-2345

© 2019 - Università degli Studi di Roma «Tor Vergata»

Università degli Studi di Roma «Tor Vergata»
Dipartimento di Studi letterari, filosofici e di storia dell’arte
via Columbia, 1 - 00133 Roma - nearhome@uniroma2.it

Distribuzione

Squilibri editore - viale del Prato della Signora, 15 - 00199 Roma
www.squilibri.it • e-mail: squilibri@tiscali.it // info@squilibri.it
tel. (0039) 06.44340148 • fax (0039) 06.92931574

Κήπος ἀειθαλής

Studi in ricordo di Augusta Acconcia Longo

III

a cura di

Francesco D'AIUTO - Santo LUCÀ - Andrea LUZZI

REUSE OF BYZANTINE MODELS IN THE *LETTERS*
OF GRIGOR MAGISTROS PAHLAWUNI (990-1058)*

Short accounts on the life and works of Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros are apparently more common in the last few decades than they have been in the whole 20th century¹. Grigor, an Armenian nobleman and polymath who lived approximately between 990 and 1058 between Armenia and Byzantium, seems to attract now the attention he has always deserved². Thanks to this state of affairs, it is no longer necessary to indulge on his remarkable erudition – already famous among the Armenians of his time –

* I would like to thank Theo M. van Lint, Anna Sirinian, and Irene Tinti for their helpful advice and support, and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

¹ Remarkably, the works by Theo Maarten van Lint and Gohar Muradyan: for the former see Th.M. VAN LINT, *Grigor Magistros*, in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900-1050)*, II, ed. by D. THOMAS – A. MALLETT – B. ROGGEMA, Leiden 2010, pp. 703-713; Th.M. VAN LINT, *Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni: die Armenische Kultur aus der Sicht eines Gelehrten Laien des 11. Jahrhunderts*, in *Ostkirchliche Studien* 61 (2012), pp. 66-83; ID., *Among Others: Greek in Context in the Letters of Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni (Eleventh Century)*, in *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions. An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. by F. GAZZANO – L. PAGANI – G. TRAINA, Berlin-Boston 2016, pp. 197-213. For the latter see G. MURADYAN, *Grigor Magistrosi Matenagrut 'iwnə*, in *Matenagirk' Hayoc' ŽA dar*, Erewan 2012 (*Matenagirk' Hayoc'*, 16), pp. 85-138; EAD., *Grigor Magistrosi Matenagrut 'yunə*, in *Banber Matenadarani* 20 (2014), pp. 5-44. These contributions now offer a solid base for a more detailed study of Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni, and also contribute decisively to his renown in the academic world.

² No major book or article has ever been devoted solely to the life of Grigor after V. LANGLOIS, *Mémoire sur la vie et les écrits du prince Grégoire Magistros, duc de la Mésopotamie, auteur arménien du XI^e siècle*, in *Journal Asiatique* 13 (1869), pp. 5-64. A partial exception is that of A.K. SANJIAN, *Gregory Magistros. An Armenian Hellenist*, in *Tò Ἑλληνικόν. Studies in honor of Speros Vryonīs, Jr.*, II, ed. by S. VRYONIS – J.S. LANGDON – J.S. ALLEN, New Rochelle, N.Y. 1993, pp. 131-158, together with two contributions in Armenian: L.G. XAC'EREAN, *Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros (985-1058 t' t')*. *Keank 'n u Gorcunēut 'iwnə. Ėrazmararē' akan cařayut 'iwnnerə ew gařap'arabanakan-Gitamankavaržakan hayeac'k'nerə «Meknut 'iwn k'erakani» erki k'nnakan bnagrov handerj*, Los Angeles 1987, and S. MXIT'ARYAN, *Grigor Magistrosi kyank'ə ew gəlarvestakan žařangut 'yunə*, Yerevan 2001. The first edition of Grigor's letters (*Grigori Magistrosi t' t' erə*, i loys əncayec' K. KOSTANEANC', Alek'sandrapöl 1910) has an introduction by the editor in which the life of Magistros is reconstructed in a concise and clear manner, even though the facts cited are not always traceable to any source.

or on his exception as a philosopher – he was the only layman in medieval Armenia to open a school educating in the *artes liberales* of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* –, nor it is necessary to draw attention on his possible role in the Armenian translation of Plato: excellent and up-to-date works on this subject are at hand³, and more are expected to appear.

It is now possible to face directly the challenges posed by this enigmatic and fascinating personality, who lived and took part in what has been called – perhaps not unfittingly – the *belle époque* of Byzantium⁴ – and of Armenia, we may add. Grigor, offspring of the ancient Pahlawuni family⁵, left us a transposition of the Bible in verse⁶, a commentary on the *Ars Grammatica* by Dionysius Thrax⁷, and a collection of letters⁸. The present contribution will focus on the latter.

The letters by Grigor have always been considered as a paragon of lexical and syntactical challenge on one hand, and of highly (or rather over-) polished style on the other. Victor Langlois makes no effort to hide his

³ I. TINTI, *On the Chronology and Attribution of the Old Armenian Timaeus: A Status Quaestionis and New Perspectives*, in *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 35 (2012), pp. 219–282; EAD., *Grecisms in the Ancient Armenian Timaeus*, in *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions* cit., pp. 277–298; Ch. AIMI, *Platone in Armenia. Osservazioni sulla traduzione dell'Apologia di Socrate*, in *Rassegna Armenisti Italiani* 12 (2011), pp. 15–21.

⁴ M. ARNGOLD, *Belle Époque or Crisis? (1025-1118)*, in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, c. 500-1492*, ed. by J. SHEPARD, Cambridge, UK–New York 2008, pp. 583–626.

⁵ To which belonged, allegedly, the «Illuminator» of Armenia (and Grigor's namesake), St. Gregory, who converted the country to Christianity in the beginning of the 4th century. The Pahlawunis were in turn related to the Kamsarakan family, of Persian descent. On this matter, in addition to the bibliography in note 1, see S. KOGEAN, *Kamsarakannerə, Teark' Širakay ew Aršaruneac': patmakan usumnasirut' iwn*, Vienna 1926; N. AKINEAN, *Nersēs Lambronac'i, ark' episkopos Tarsoni*, Vienna 1956, pp. 329–457; and F. ALPI, *Messaggi attraverso il confine: l'Armenia e il confine orientale di Bisanzio nelle «Lettere» di Grigor Pahlawowni Magistros (ca. 990-1058)*, [PhD dissertation: Università di Pisa, 2015], pp. 17–26.

⁶ *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' ew Č'ap'aberakank'*, in *Matenagirk' Hayoc' ŽA dar, ašxatasirut'eamb* G. MURADYAN, cit., pp. 139–385; *Magnalia Dei. Biblical history in epic verse by Grigor Magistros*, critical text (...) by A. TERIAN, Leuven 2012 (Hebrew University Armenian Studies, 14).

⁷ *Grigori Magistrosi ew kitawnti ordwoy Vasakay Martirosi Meknut' iwn k'erakanin zor edeal ē zayloc' ew yiwroc' yaweal yimastic'*, in *Matenagirk' Hayoc' ŽA dar, ašxatasirut'eamb* G. MURADYAN, cit., pp. 386–481. See also the previous edition: *Grigori Magistrosi ew kitaunt' ordwoy Vasakay Martirosi Meknut' iwn k'erakanin*, in *Dionisij Frakijskij i Armjanskie tolkovateli*, izdal i izsledoval N. ADONTZ, Petrograd 1915 (Bibliotheca Armeno-Georgica, 4); French translation: N. ADONTZ, *Denys de Thrace et les commentateurs arméniens*, traduit par R. HOTTERBEECH, Louvain 1970.

⁸ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae* [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*]; for an earlier edition see *Grigori Magistrosi t' t'erə* cit.

positivist contempt for Magistros' lavish prose: «Son style, qui se ressent de la barbarie du temps où il vécut, laisse beaucoup à désirer»⁹, particularly because of his «fatras d'érudition scolastique et pédantesque»¹⁰; admittedly, «l'influence de la langue et de la littérature grecques percent pour ainsi dire dans chacune des lignes de la correspondance de Grégoire»¹¹. More than a century later, Avedis K. Sanjian seems to be less *tranchant*: «Magistros' letters are written in a recondite style, replete with archaisms, unusual constructions compounded with Greek elements, and a most complex syntax»¹². The same author concedes that «although a number of his letters are still incomprehensible, it can be assumed that his letters must have been intelligible to his correspondents»¹³.

As both scholars have noted, many of the difficulties lie in the fact that Grigor consciously and thoroughly employs a style that is heavily reliant on Greek. Sanjian points out that the letters by Grigor are «imitations of Byzantine epistolography, a genre of writing akin to rhetoric, which was popular with the intellectual élite»¹⁴. More precisely – Sanjian continues – in Byzantium the «ideal letter had to be brief, clear, and phrased like a conversation, and it had to treat serious topics with elegant expression. [...] Magistros' letters conform to the Byzantine epistolographic norms as described above»¹⁵. The imitation of Byzantine epistolography, and therefore not only of Greek language but of a specific genre, is clear also to Alek'sanyan¹⁶, in whose study the peculiarity of Grigor's case is duly highlighted, and the mention of this fact is recurrent in almost every work that makes reference to Magistros' letters, at least in the last forty years or so.

It is however somewhat striking that no one has ever tried to gather evidence for this «conformation to the Byzantine epistolographic norms»¹⁷. Even if we consider such a conformation to be self-evident, it would

⁹ LANGLOIS, *Mémoire* cit., p. 23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² SANJIAN, *Gregory Magistros* cit., p. 141.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ A. ALEK'SANYAN, *Hay mijnadaryan namakə (IV-XIV daver)*, Erevan 1997.

¹⁷ Even the recent contribution by A. WELLER, *Byzantinophilia in the Letters of Grigor Magistros?*, in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 41/2 (2016), pp. 167–181, addressing the attitude of Grigor Magistros towards Byzantium, takes his reproduction of Byzantine epistolary models for granted: the elements that prove and describe the acceptance of the Byzantine model are not discussed by Weller.

perhaps be useful to know in which way and how far Grigor imitates Byzantine epistolography. A research with this scope would allow us, at the very least, to get an idea of how much Greek literary canons influenced medieval Armenia. It is true that any result in this sense would be apparently restricted to the limited field of letter-writing, and to the exceptional case of Grigor; but it is also true, as noted by Sanjian, that Grigor's letters must have been intelligible to his recipients: this means that a number of individuals, in 11th century Armenia, had enough philosophical and rhetorical devices to decipher and probably to appreciate Grigor's style. Any research conducted on Magistros' letters is potentially a research on the élites in Armenia and on the Eastern border of Byzantium in the crucial 11th century; additionally, by comparing these difficult Armenian letters with Byzantine letters (themselves not always easy to comprehend), it might be possible to obtain a better understanding of the text; finally, learning how much Grigor draws from a model and how much he elaborates on it can lead to a better appreciation of his character as a literary author.

Obviously, such an effort exceeds the limits of time and space allowed by this contribution. It is however possible here to introduce some preliminary remarks and to single out some cases in which Grigor seems to follow the rules of Byzantine letter-writing, discussing briefly the significance of such instances. Eventually, we will analyse how the Armenian prince not only «translated» from Greek models, but also how he interpreted the model itself.

Beginning with the second half of the 20th century, the number of studies dedicated to Byzantine epistolography has greatly increased, and we can only be grateful to this development, which brought about massive and fundamental efforts such as the much-anticipated critical edition of Michael Psellus' letters¹⁸. Thanks to these endeavours, we can now stress a few features which are typical of Byzantine letter-writing; such features will be useful in the comparison with Grigor Pahlawuni's style.

¹⁸ An endeavour that is currently being conducted by prof. Efstratios Papaioannou, Brown University, for the Teubner series (<http://vivo.brown.edu/display/epapaioa>). Of the vast bibliography now available on Byzantine epistolography, we only make reference here to a couple of the most recent general works on the subject: M. GRÜNBAERT, *L'epistolografia*, in *Lo spazio letterario del Medioevo*, 3/1: *La cultura bizantina*, a cura di G. CAVALLO, Roma 2004, pp. 345-378; S. PAPAIOANNOU, *Letter-Writing*, in *The Byzantine World*, by P. STEPHENSON, London 2010, pp. 188-199. Among the earlier publications on the topic, it is important to mention G. KARLSSON, *Idéologie et cérémonial dans l'épistolographie byzantine*, Uppsala 1962² (*Studia Graeca Upsaliensia*, 3); and K. THRAEDE, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik*, München 1970 (*Zetemata*, 48).

A SELECTION OF TYPICAL FEATURES OF BYZANTINE EPISTOLOGRAPHY

As often remarked, the ideal Byzantine letter had to be short and efficient: at least this was what letter-writers used to claim, according to the famous rule set by Demetrius in his manual on style¹⁹. When dealing with letters, this mysterious author proclaims that: φιλοφρόνησις γάρ τις βούλεται εἶναι ἢ ἐπιστολῇ σύντομος²⁰. According to modern literature, this rule was well known to the Byzantines, who systematically invoked it in their epistles, as is shown by abundant evidence²¹. To this goal of *brevitas* – or βραχυλογία as already Libanius put it²² – one should add of course those of χάρις, «grace», and σαφήνεια, «clarity»²³. It goes without saying, however, that the concepts of «grace» and «clarity» of the Byzantines did not necessarily correspond to our own. First of all, the letters were exchanged within an élite: its members shared a language of allusions and nuances to contemporary facts and knowledges which is almost completely lost for us; secondly, the taste for what can be called «graceful» inevitably changes with time; in third place, there were many things that a writer might prefer not to disclose in a written document, either out of prudence or just out of reluctance to reveal his or her intimate thoughts. Thus, what was tacitly clear between the author and the recipient of a given letter may be completely obscure to us, sometimes because of an explicit choice by the writer in this sense. Any author of a literary letter knew very well, in fact, that his work would have circulated among many people²⁴, probably also for many centuries, and was far from being restricted to the eyes of the recipient; as conveniently stated by Synesius of Cyrene, τὸ γὰρ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς πρᾶγμα οὐκ ἐχέμυθον, ἀλλὰ φύσιν ἔχει τῷ περιτυχόντι προσδιαλέγεσθαι²⁵ and at a later time, but with similar words Theophylactus of Ochrid remarked even more explicitly that ἦν ἂν οὐκ ἔδει διὰ γραμμμάτων δηλωθῆναι²⁶. For this

¹⁹ For a discussion on Demetrius (or Pseudo-Demetrius?) see the introduction in DEMETRIO, *Lo stile*, introduzione, traduzione e commento di N. MARINI, Roma 2007.

²⁰ DEMETRIUS, *De elocutione*, 231 [DEMETRIUS, *Du style*, texte établi et traduit par P. CHIRON, Paris 1993, p. 65].

²¹ KARLSSON, *Idéologie et cérémonial* cit., p. 15; GRÜNBAART, *L'epistolografia* cit., pp. 362-364.

²² LIBANIUS, *Epistulae*, 432, 1 [LIBANII *Opera*, X, recensuit R. FOERSTER, Leipzig 1921, p. 421].

²³ GRÜNBAART, *L'epistolografia* cit., pp. 362-363.

²⁴ PAPAIOANNOU, *Letter-Writing* cit., pp. 191-192.

²⁵ SYNESIUS CYRENENSIS, *Epistulae*, 137, 39-40 [*Opere: Epistole, Operette, Inni di Sinesio di Cirene*, a cura di A. GARZYA, Torino 1989, p. 332].

²⁶ See KARLSSON, *Idéologie et cérémonial* cit., pp. 17-18 for both quotes.

reason, part of the message was often put not in writing, but in the ears of the letter-carrier, who would then relate it to the addressee in direct speech²⁷. The γραμματιφόρος was, in fact, an ἔμψυχος ἐπιστολή, a «living letter»²⁸. Χάρις may also be not exactly «graceful» or easy to discern for us, since the Byzantines tended to convey «gracefulness» through rhetoric embellishments and erudite quotations²⁹. This can make the interpretation of Byzantine letters a very complicated matter, sometimes.

In addition to these general trends of brevity, clarity and grace, as it has been remarked, there are no strict rules or *formulae* in Byzantine letters, and the approach to writing has been described as author-oriented rather than rule-oriented³⁰. This means that the Byzantines tended to imitate writers of the past, who were perceived as «canonical»³¹, adopting their language and their expression, thus effectively delineating what can be called a genre. Typical elements of this language – which will be later examined more in detail – are the use of abstract nouns such as ἡ ἀγιωσύνη σου («your Holiness»), ἡ βασιλεία σου («your Majesty»), ἡ λογιότης σου («your Wisdom») for addressing the recipient, probably reflecting the use of such terms in bureaucratic practice³². In a similar way, we often find the use of kinship terms such as «father», «brother» etc., to convey the idea of a close spiritual relationship with the correspondent³³; another feature that we can add is the use of the word κεφαλή, «head», when referring to the addressee of the letter.

COMPARISON WITH LETTERS BY GRIGOR MAGISTROS

Grigor Magistros seems to be acquainted with all the aforementioned features. Actually, an occurrence of most of them can be found in a single passage from Letter 7, which begins with these words:

Թէպէտես ըստ գեղեցիկ խնդրոյ քուն լուսափայլութեան, պետակա՛նդ
բոլոր սրբազանից եւ գլուխ առաքելական, պարտ վարկանիս երկարագոյն

²⁷ *Ibid.* – See also GRÜNBART, *L'epistolografia* cit., p. 359.

²⁸ SYNESIUS CYRENENSIS, *Epistulae*, 85 [ed. GARZYA cit., p. 232].

²⁹ GRÜNBART, *L'epistolografia* cit., p. 364.

³⁰ PAPAIOANNOU, *Letter-Writing* cit., p. 194.

³¹ Such an approach to letter-writers of the past can be found throughout the history of Byzantine epistolography: Libanius, Synesius of Cyrene and the Church Fathers (along with many others) are equally recommended by Photius in the 9th century and by Joseph Rhakendytes in the 14th century (see e.g. GRÜNBART, *L'epistolografia* cit., pp. 364-365).

³² *Ibid.*, p. 361.

³³ *Ibid.*

ծորագոյն բանս իմաստասիրել ծառայի քում, որով գուարճանաս իբր գիայր ի վերայ որդոց, սակայն սիրելի է ինձ միշտ կարճառատ հատանել: Վասն զի զբոլորն մասն միակի զիծ ուղղակի զբովանդակն պարտաւ գող-դանկիւնեացն, թէպէտեւ մասն գոյ: Եւ իմաստնոյն մի բան բաւական է զբիրն թերել զկնի հետեւաբար³⁴:

Even though in your beautiful request of [your] Brightness, oh apex of all holiness and apostolic head, you deem it fit that your servant talks at length about the philosophical discourse, with which you are pleased to entertain yourself like the father with his sons, I always prefer to reply briefly. In fact, a single straight line contains the whole of the rectangles, even if it is just a part. Therefore, for the wise man one word is enough to carry ten thousand by consequence³⁵.

We have here the use of abstracts, of the term «head» (and of kin terms), the preference for brevity and also an erudite allusion to geometry, which probably refers to the *Elements* by Euclides³⁶. However, despite Grigor's claim, one word cannot be enough here, no matter how much the reader is wise: it is necessary to summarise and compare in some greater length the features of Byzantine epistolography with what we find in Grigor Magistros' letters. To make the comparison easier, we will collect the examples taken by Byzantine authors in four groups:

- A. Use of abstract terms and of «head» for addressing the recipient.
- B. Role of the letter-carrier.
- C. *Brevitas*.
- D. Χάρις («gracefulness») and erudite allusions.

A. USE OF ABSTRACT TERMS AND OF «HEAD» FOR ADDRESSING THE RECIPIENT

This convention can be noted throughout Byzantine epistolography: John Chrysostom reassures Theodore, governor of Syria of his good feelings, by writing παρακαλοῦμέν σου τὴν λαμπρότητα, μὴ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ἀριθμῶ μετρεῖν ἡμῶν τὴν ἀγάπην, «We bid your Brightness not to judge our love by

³⁴ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 7, 1-3 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'uh'k' cit.*, p. 210].

³⁵ All the translations, except where otherwise stated, are by the author.

³⁶ Ἐὰν εὐθεῖα γραμμὴ τμηθῆ, ὡς ἔτυχεν, τὸ ὑπὸ τῆς ὅλης καὶ ἑκατέρου τῶν τμημάτων περιεχόμενον ὀρθογώνιον ἴσον ἐστὶ τῷ ἀπὸ τῆς ὅλης τετραγώνῳ («If a straight line be cut at random, the rectangle contained by the whole and both of the segments is equal to the square on the whole»): EUCLIDES, *Elementa*, II, 2 [EUCLIDIS *Elementa*, I-IV, ed. E.S. STAMATIS - J.L. HEIBERG, Leipzig 1969: I, p. 69; translation by T.L. HEATH, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, I-III, New York 1956²: I, p. 376].

the number of the letters»³⁷. A similar use is found in the 10th century, both when referring to the emperor and to things ἃ μὲν οὐ δεῖ λέγειν πρὸς τὴν βασιλείαν σου, «which one should not say to your Majesty»³⁸, and when trying to console his brother:

Ἵπὲρ μὲν ὧν τοῖς καθ' ἐκάστην ἐνταλαιπωρεῖ κινδύνοις ἢ ἀγιότης ὑμῶν, εἰ καὶ μὴ τῶν κινδύνων ἐσμὲν κοινωνοί, ἀλλὰ γε τῶν θλίψεων καὶ τῶν σπαρασσόντων ὀδυνῶν τὴν καρδίαν οὐκ ἐσμὲν ἀλλότριοι τῆς κοινωνίας.

Even if we are not affected by the dangers that threaten everyday your Holiness, we are not alien to the pain and the affliction that they cause in the heart³⁹.

The practice continues also in later times, as attested for instance in Jacob the Monk, a letter-writer from the 12th century: τὴν αὖξισιν γενέσθαι τῆς περιφανείας σου εὐχόμεθα, «We pray for the success of your Brightness to occur»⁴⁰.

The use of «head» with the sense of «my dear» in direct speech is already frequent in antiquity: Τεῦκρε φίλη κεφαλή (Hom. *Il.* X, 281); νῦν δέ μοι, φίλον κάρα, ἔκβαιν' ἀπήνης τῆσδε (Aesch. *Ag.*, 905-906); ὃ φίλον κάρα, δός μοι χερὸς σῆς πίστιν ἀρχαίαν τέκνοις (Soph. *Oed. Col.*, 1631-1632). In letter-writing, when addressing the recipient, this use is slightly less widespread, but still common, always in conjunction with an adjective⁴¹: Gregory of Nazianzus resorts for three times to the expression ὃ θεία καὶ ἱερά κεφαλή⁴²; similarly Synesius of Cyrene writes to his colleague Herculian δεῖ δὴ σου νοουθεσίας οὐκέθ' ἡμετέρας, ὃ φίλη κεφαλή, «You do not need our advice any more, my dear head»⁴³; in a similar fashion a master of style like Photius writes: ταῦτα οὖν καὶ τὰ παραπλήσια μελέτην καὶ βίου καὶ σωτηρίας, ὃ ἱερά

³⁷ IOHANNES CHRYSOSTOMUS, *Epistulae*, 139 [*Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca*, LII, accurante J.-P. Migne, Lutetiae Parisiorum 1859, coll. 563-760: 695].

³⁸ NICOLAUS MYSTICUS, *Epistulae*, 86 [NICHOLAS I, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Letters*, ed. by R.J.H. Jenkins - L.G. Westerink, Washington, D.C. 1973 (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 6), p. 346].

³⁹ NICOLAUS MYSTICUS, *Epistulae*, 98 [ed. Jenkins - Westerink cit., p. 366].

⁴⁰ IACOBUS MONACHUS, *Epistulae*, 30 [IACOBI MONACHI *Epistulae*, ed. a E. Jeffreys - M. Jeffreys, Turnhout 2009 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, 68), p. 111].

⁴¹ Usually θεία or ἱερά, see M. Grönbart, *Formen der Anrede im byzantinischen Brief Vom 6. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert*, Wien 2005 (Wiener byzantinistische Studien, 25), p. 84. See also the brief discussion by Gioacchino Strano in Leone Choirosphaktes, *Corrispondenza*, Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e note di commento a cura di G. Strano, Catania 2008, p. 112.

⁴² GREGORIUS NAZIANZENSIS, *Epistulae*, 32, 13 [SAINT GRÉGOIRE DE NAZIANZE, *Lettres*, I, texte établi et traduit par P. Gallay, Paris 1964, p. 42].

⁴³ SYNESIUS CYRENENSIS, *Epistulae*, 143, 8 [ed. Garzya cit., p. 344].

κεφαλή, ποιούμενοι...», «Taking care of things such as these, both of life and salvation, oh holy head...»⁴⁴.

A similar lexical practice can be found also in Grigor Magistros' letters. For instance, he writes to the *catholicos* (head of the Armenian Church) Petros Getadarj, his friend: Եւ խնդրեմք ի քուսնէ լուսափայլութենէ զնորագոյնն սատեսան շնորհել սեզ, «And we ask from your Brightness that you bless us with the gift of the most recent book»⁴⁵.

Elsewhere, he addresses the patriarch of Antioch with a use of «head» very similar to that made by Photius: Ծանոցից քեզ սալս այսր, ո՛ւ սստուածային գլուխ, «I will let you know about this, oh divine head!»⁴⁶. The same expression is employed also when referring to the *catholicos* Petros: Գիտե՛ս, ո՛վ սստուածային գլուխ, զաղէտ այսպիսի թշուառութեան, «Have you got an idea, oh divine head, of the tragedy of such a calamity?»⁴⁷. Other examples can be easily found, but it is not necessary to enumerate them here.

B. ROLE OF THE LETTER-CARRIER

The importance of the individual who handed down the letter has already been highlighted by Gustav Karlsson⁴⁸, and we can use here the same example presented by him. It comes from a letter by the Byzantine general Nicephoros Ouranos, in the 10th century, and therefore by an individual very close in time and occupation to Grigor Magistros. Nicephoros concludes a letter to a judge of the Armeniakon theme stating:

ἀ δὲ παρ' ἡμῶν <β>οὔλει μαθεῖν, ὁ γραμματηφόρος ἀπαγγελεῖ σοι, ἰκανῶς ἔχων ὅσα καὶ γράμματα τούτοις διακονῆσαι.

The things that you want to learn from us will be explained to you by the letter-carrier: he can take care of this as well as a written message⁴⁹.

Such a statement is very similar to what Grigor Magistros writes to Sost'enēs, prior of the monastery of Marmašēn:

⁴⁴ PHOTIUS, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, 283, 509 [PHOTII PATRIARCHAE CONSTANTINOPOLITANI *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, I-VII, recensuerunt L.G. WESTERINK - B. LAOURDAS, Leipzig 1984 (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana): II, p. 252].

⁴⁵ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 21, 47 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, p. 272].

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 46 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, p. 197].

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25, 17 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, p. 285].

⁴⁸ KARLSSON, *Idéologie et cérémonial cit.*, pp. 17-21.

Չոր գրով այժմ ոչ պարտ վարկայ երկարել քունդ աննինաստ տեսութեան, սակայն բանիք եւ կենդանի ձայնի փոքր ի շատէ ինչ զհանգամանս եղելոյ գործառնութեան մերոյ ծանուցի, որ ի քէնդ առաքեցաւ առ մեզ: Եւ գայդոսիկ փոյթ անձին կալեալ արասցես վաղվադակի առանց յապաղանաց:

I thought it better not to dwell too much on this issue now, to the advantage of your most wise sight; rather I explained a little to the messenger you sent us, with words and in speech, the situation for the business of our concern. Take care to do immediately everything he will tell you, without delay⁵⁰.

In similar fashion, Grigor writes to the patriarch of Antioch: գոր ոչ կամեցայ յայսմ նամակի գրել, այլ կենդանի ձայնի կրաւնատորի ծանուցի, «I did not want to write all of this in this letter, but I informed your monk *viva voce*»⁵¹. This tendency to keep the letter short leads us to the next feature to be discussed.

C. *BREVITAS*

As noted above, concision is particularly dear to Byzantine letter-writers, and it would be somewhat inconsistent to spend here too many words for clarifying the concept. It is stressed for instance by Photius, who writes:

Καὶ εἰ μὴ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὁ νόμος ἐπέσχεεν καὶ τοῦ ὑπογράφοντος ἡ χεὶρ (καὶ τότε κλαπτῆσα) ἐμποδῶν ἴστατο, ἔδειξα ἂν ἀκριβέστερον καὶ διὰ πλείονων τὸ τε ἡμέτερον ἄλλοσ καὶ οἷς ἐκεῖνος ἡμᾶς ἐλυμῆνατο.

And if the laws of letter-writing did not restrain me, and had not my hand – which fails me, at times! – prevented me, I would have shown you more precisely and with plenty of examples our suffering, and the ways by which he mistreated me⁵².

Similar «laws» are invoked by Theodore of Stoudion, who writes: Στήτω ὁ λόγος ἐνταῦθα, μὴ ὑπεραλλόμενος τοῦ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς μέτρου, that is: «Let the discourse stop here, lest it surpasses the convenient measure for a letter»⁵³. After all, as Photius remarks in another example:

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 21, 47 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, p. 272].

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4, 129 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, p. 204].

⁵² PHOTIUS, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, 174, 283 [ed. WESTERINK – LAOURDAS *cit.*, II, p. 57].

⁵³ THEODORUS STUDITES, *Epistulae*, 361, 35–36 [THEODORI STUDITAE *Epistulae*, I-II, recensuit G. FATOUROS, Berlin 1992 (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis, 31): II, p. 495].

Καὶ μυρία ἂν τις τὴν ἄθεον αὐτῶν γνώμην διελέγχων τοῖς εἰρημένοις ἐπιμετρήσειεν, ἃ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἔῤα νῦν ἐντάττειν οὐδὲ παρατίθεσθαι.

One could count the thousands by checking their godless beliefs with further accounts, which the laws of letter-writing do not allow us to list nor to enumerate here⁵⁴.

Moreover, ὢν εἴ τις ἐπιμνησθῆναι θελήσειεν, βιβλίον ὄλον ἂντ' ἐπιστολῆς ἂν γράψειεν, «If one were to remember all of them, he would write a book rather than a letter»⁵⁵.

Grigor Magistros seems to have assimilated these «laws of letter-writing» since he clarifies, in words very similar to those employed by Photius, that

Յայցանէ յղղազոյս ինձ սակարել քեզ ոչ դժուարիւ է: Բայց են ի սցանէ երկարազոյս, գոր ոչ քրթով բաւականացի:

It wouldn't be difficult to add many more examples to the aforementioned ones. Some of them are however rather long, so much so that a letter [or: the paper] wouldn't suffice⁵⁶.

That the choice of brevity is dictated by style and not actually by availability of time and supports for writing is made explicit by many more passages in Grigor's *Letters*. For instance, he is apparently trying to curb his sometimes-abundant elocution as he writes:

Եւ յայսուիկ կամէի սուղ ինչ ինաստասիրել պատռնական նորազոյս առասանութիւն, քանզի սիրելի էր քեզ այսոքիկ, սակայն կարճաբարտ հասանել հաւանեցայ:

I wanted to discuss a little more the recent discourse about Plato⁵⁷, since you loved it so much. However, I decided it was better to cut short⁵⁸.

Incidentally, since here the discourse is about philosophy, it can be useful to remember that in late antiquity (and to some extent in Byzantium) it

⁵⁴ PHOTIUS, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, 2, 202 [ed. WESTERINK - LAOURDAS cit., I, p. 47].

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 161, 7-8 [ed. WESTERINK - LAOURDAS cit., II, p. 15].

⁵⁶ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 14, 26 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, p. 247].

⁵⁷ The same words can also be translated «the recent platonic dialogue», but it must be noted that Grigor never calls elsewhere the platonic dialogues պատռնական առասանութիւն, as is the case here: he just calls them սատեան («book») or սրանարանութիւն, «dialogue», a perfect calque of Greek διάλογος. On the other hand, առասանութիւն (although it does partially overlap with the semantics of διάλογος, and therefore «dialogue») is rather modelled on Greek πρόσησις, «addressing», sometimes even in the sense of χρησμός, «oracle».

⁵⁸ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 25, 42 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, p. 287].

was deemed inappropriate to discuss philosophy in letters, as stressed already by Demetrius just before his description of the epistle that we mentioned above: Εἰ γὰρ τις ἐν ἐπιστολῇ σοφίσματα γράφοι καὶ φυσιολογίας, γράφει μὲν, οὐ μὴν ἐπιστολὴν γράφει, «If someone were to write sophisms and issues of natural science, he would write for sure, but not a letter»⁵⁹.

This rule was received by an author who was very appreciated by the Byzantines, such as Synesius of Cyrene. His above-mentioned distrust for the epistle (which is not ἐγγέμισθος) is in fact precisely related to his concern for not discussing philosophical issues in a simple letter⁶⁰. It doesn't seem, however, that Grigor Magistros had this rule in mind, since he wrote at least one letter devoted to natural science (Letter 60, about the functioning of the stomach) and one explicitly dedicated to philosophy (Letter 26). His only concern seems to be the compliance to the rule of συντομία, «brevity»⁶¹, as we can infer from a last example:

Չայս զիր ստորի կարճատատ հատանել պարտ վարկայ անտաղտուկ լսելեաց, զի մի՛ յագեցիս: Եանե ոչ ի սպառնալեացն յագեալ ին, զի մի՛ կարատեալ տրտմեցիս:

I thought it better to cut this letter short and not tedious for the ears, lest you'd be too much satiated. At the same time, I am not satisfied by threats, lest you'd suffer for missing them⁶².

It is curious to note here that Grigor, while claiming to «cut short», does not refrain from using a sort of hendiadys (զիր ստորի, literally «writing of letter») and a carefully devised parallelism in his phrase construction. Such rhetoric devices of course pertain to the feature D of letter-writing, that is χάρις, «grace».

D. ΧΑΡΙΣ («GRACEFULNESS») AND ERUDITE ALLUSIONS

A collection of the ways in which Byzantines made their letters «graceful» would probably be rather the subject of a copious monograph than of a short section within this contribution. For the purpose of this

⁵⁹ DEMETRIUS, *De elocutione*, 231 [ed. CHIRON cit., p. 65].

⁶⁰ As correctly highlighted by Antonio Garzya in his edition of the text, see ed. GARZYA cit., p. 332 n. 5.

⁶¹ Or rather «concision», as already stressed by M.M. WAGNER, *A Chapter in Byzantine Epistolography: the Letters of Theodoret of Cynus*, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 4 (1948), pp. 119-181: 136-138.

⁶² GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 26, 43-44 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ut'k'* cit., p. 292].

The fact that here Palamedes holds Telemachus like the victim of a sacrifice recalls another version of the myth, present in Pseudo-Apollodorus (*Epitome*, III, 7) where Palamedes does not place the child in front of the plough, but rather threatens to kill him directly with his sword. The direct source of Grigor's quotation remains unknown for now, as Gohar Muradyan demonstrates⁶⁹.

An even more elaborate allusion can perhaps be found in Letter 26, where Grigor writes rather obscurely that a man without wisdom

Միայն իբրև զկապիկս կամ եթէ անձայնագոյն, հի՛ղան իբրո՞ւ զանդրի
անզգայ ի զգայարանացն կոփեալ:

Is only like the monkeys even if without voice; how [can it be] like
a statue without perception sculpted by those who have discernment⁷⁰?

One can understand the general meaning, but not the details of Grigor's logic. Monkeys, however, enjoy a somewhat prominent position in Byzantine letter-writing. Synesius of Cyrene writes: Τὰς πιθήκους γὰρ φασιν, ἐπειδὴν τέκωσιν, ὥσπερ ἀγάλμασιν ἐνατενίζειν τοῖς βρέφεσιν, «They say that monkeys, when they give birth, stare at their children like they were statues»⁷¹.

This theme becomes recurrent through all the middle ages⁷² and is employed by Synesius for displaying how much monkeys love their offspring. It is possible, however, that Grigor was aware of this or of a similar saying, and that he reworked it in order to demonstrate the foolishness of monkeys, since he who has no wisdom:

Is only like the monkeys even if [their offspring is still] without voice,
how [can they consider it] like a statue, an object without perception
sculpted by people with discernment?

Even though this interpretation requires some integrations, a practice not uncommon given Grigor's elliptic style, the passage seems to make more sense in this fashion.

To conclude this section let us now return to epic and mythology by examining how much a Byzantine author could play with citations. To this end, we can borrow a letter by John Mauropous (11th century) already

⁶⁹ G. MURADYAN, *Greek Authors and Subject Matters in the Letters of Grigor Magistros*, in *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s. 35 (2013), pp. 29–77: 57.

⁷⁰ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 26, 34 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ut'k' cit.*, p. 291].

⁷¹ SYNESIUS CYRENENSIS, *Epistulae*, I, 15–16 [ed. GARZYA cit., p. 66].

⁷² As noted by Garzya in note 3 to the passage quoted above.

analysed by Papaioannou⁷³, which is worth quoting in full, together with Papaioannou's translation:

Παῦρα μὲν ὁ Λάκων ὁ σός, ἀλλά σοί γε μάλα λιγέως· πείθομαι γάρ, οὕτως εὔνου σου τυγχάνων ἀκροατοῦ. πῶς δὲ οὐκ ἔμελλον, ὅς σε πάντων ἀξίως τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς προετίμησα; τοιγαροῦν σφύζοιό μοι καὶ πᾶσιν οἷς μέλει τηλικούτου καλοῦ καὶ μηκέτι προφέροις τὴν βραχυλογίαν ὡς μέμην, ἐπεὶ οὐ πολύμυθος ἐγώ τις, ὡς οἶσθα, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ πολύδωρος, οἰκειότερον κρίνων, μικρὰ τὸν μικρὸν καὶ τὸν ὀλίγον ὀλίγα καὶ στέλλειν καὶ ἐπιστέλλειν, ἵν' ἢ πάντοθεν σύμφωνον τὸ πρᾶγμα πρὸς ἑαυτό, καὶ τὸ ὅλον τοῖς μέρεσιν ἐμπρέπη δι' ὁμοιότητα. μαρτυρεῖ σοι γοῦν τὰ παρόντα τὸ ἦθος τοῦ φίλου, ὁπότεν οὐκ ὤκνησεν οὐδὲ πρὸς σέ νῦν τοιαῦτα κατ' ἄμφω μικρολογεῖσθαι, τὸν ὁμοίως καὶ λέγειν καὶ δωρεῖσθαι πολύν⁷⁴.

I, your Laconian man, speak with brevity but, for you, I speak in a penetrating, sweet voice – I feel confident in doing so, because I find you a well-disposed listener. How could it be otherwise? I preferred you above all others on earth – and you are worthy of this. May you remain as such for me and for those who care for such a fine man. Please do not accuse my brevity of speech. As you know, it is appropriate that the man of small stature and few means sends small and few gifts and writes brief and few letters. In this way, everything will be in agreement with itself and the whole will shine forth because of its similarity to its parts. This present letter, therefore, bears witness to the character of me, your friend, since I did not hesitate to be small in word and gift even toward you who are great in both word and gift-giving⁷⁵.

As Ekstratios Papaioannou remarks, Mauropus is making here a learned use of a quotation from the *Iliad*, in which Menelaus (the Laconian) is described as a man who is not πολύμυθος⁷⁶. This is functional to the compliance with the rule of «brevity» (the very word βραχυλογίαν appears in the text) expressed in the previous section, which is here graciously declared by the author. Not content with this, however, Mauropus further elaborates on the Homeric adjective, creating for his purpose the rhyming πολύδωρος: he effectively «uses the quotation in a somewhat playful and creative fashion»⁷⁷.

⁷³ In PAPAIOANNOU, *Letter-Writing* cit., pp. 188–189.

⁷⁴ IOANNES MAUROPOUS, *Epistulae*, 42 [IOANNIS MAUROPODIS EUCHAITORUM METROPOLITAE *Epistulae*, edidit, Anglice vertit ed adnotavit A. KARPOZIOS, Thessalonica 1990 (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 34; Series Thessalonicensis), p. 137].

⁷⁵ PAPAIOANNOU, *Letter-Writing* cit., p. 188.

⁷⁶ Cf. HOM. *Il.* III, 213–215: ἦτοι μὲν Μενέλαος ἐπιτροχάδην ἀγόρευε, | παῦρα μὲν ἀλλά μάλα λιγέως, ἐπεὶ οὐ πολύμυθος | οὐδ' ἀφαρμυροεπής· ἢ καὶ γένει ὕστερος ἦεν.

⁷⁷ PAPAIOANNOU, *Letter-Writing* cit., pp. 194–195.

The coexistence of erudition, creativity, and humour⁷⁸ in order to produce *χάρις* is not alien to the style of Grigor Magistros. In Letter 61, he addresses Sargis, a learned man from the monastery of Sevan, informing that he has received a message from the former king of Armenia, Gagik II:

Եկն եհաս առ մեզ յղեալն ի մերոյ նախուստն ելոյ արքայէ, գոր առաքեալ առ քեզ, սրբագանդ եւ գերակատար բոլոր ճեմարանի Արամեան ազգին եւ քրիստոսական կրանիւք եւ կուսական բրաբիոնի սաղարթացեալ, որ եւ ինձ յոյժ ըղձալի եւ յոյս բարեաց: Այլ մեր յոյժ յերկիւղի եղեալ տապ տազնապի տարակուսանաց հասանէր, յորժամ գառնէս համբաւոյ հրոսակք նախընթացից ազդեցին մեզ, ոչ ուղղախաստելով զԳորոնս Գորիհոն մեզ ծանուցին: Ջոր մեր յերկիւղի կասկածանաց եղեալ նախնոյն այն կապտողի եւ յերուզակի, ասեմ՝ զհա՞րդ կրկին մասնեաց Տէր գտունս Մամիկոնեան ի ձեռս նորա:

The message sent by he who was once our king has come to me. I mean the message he had sent to you, perfect and most sacred champion of philosophy of the whole Armenian nation, flourishing with the religion of Christ and with the gift of virginity, you who are most dear to me and source of hope for the better. However, the utmost agitation out of anxiety and fear came to me alongside with that. This is because when the militia men⁷⁹ informed me, as I was going towards them, about the man who carried the news, they told us [his name] by incorrectly pronouncing «Gdrihon» instead of «Gobron». For this reason, caught by terror for that ancient thief and felon, I say: «Why did the Lord give the land of the Mamikonean in the hands of that man once again?»⁸⁰.

While Gobron is a rather inoffensive and unusual name, Gdrihon (or rather Gdihon) is the name of an ancient Armenian prince who in the works of the historian Łazar P'arpec'i is portrayed as the arch-enemy of the

⁷⁸ Humour in Byzantine letters has been studied by F. BERNARD, *Humor in Byzantine Letters of the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries: Some Preliminary Remarks*, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 69 (2015), pp. 179-195. Notwithstanding the difficulties expressed by the same author (*ibid.*, pp. 180-181), the topic deserves more attention than it has received in past. The same can be said for humour in Grigor Magistros' letters, which has not been studied at all to this date, but is clearly present, as will be evident from the passage below.

⁷⁹ The Armenian word, *հրոսակք*, literally means «bandits», but here some sort of local militia is probably intended. It should be remembered that in the Byzantine empire the soldiers charged with evacuating the local population in case of invasion were called *ἔξπληρότορες*, from Latin *expoliatores*, literally «spoilers», see NICEPHORUS PHOCAS, *Le Traité sur la guérilla (de Velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963-969)*, texte établi par G. DAGRON - H. MIHĂESCU, Paris 1986, II, 1; G. T. DENNIS, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, Washington, D.C. 1985, pp. 152-153.

⁸⁰ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 61, 1-3 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ut'k' cit.*, p. 350].

hero Vahan Mamikonean⁸¹. Since Grigor Magistros was at that time the Byzantine *doux* of Vaspurakan and Tarawn, and Tarawn used to be the domain of the Mamikonean house⁸², the allusion is clearly explained: the Armenian noblemen, hearing the name of the letter-carrier mispronounced by the guards, fears that the ancient Gdihon has been revived to renovate his assault against the Mamikonean – and against Grigor himself. The fact that the allusion here is taken from the heritage of classical Armenian literature, and not from the Greek mythology which represented the background for Byzantine authors, doesn't make it any less «gracious». Moreover, an element from Greek mythology appears in the humorous conclusion of the episode:

Մինչ յայսմ էար գարհուրման, վառեալ վահանաւք եւ սպառագիինեալ
անարի նիգակաւք, պատահախտի յուզական շիկորակն որակեալ, ուշ եղեալ
առ նախընթացն Ամլածին եւ ի մերն Պարթեւ ազնականութեան կարատեալ:
Իսկ յայսմ եղեալ հանդիսի, տեսի զԳդրիհոն եղեալ սա Գորթոն, եւ ի Դիոնիսեալ
զմայլեալ, ասորորակ կայծակացեալ հրադիմական կարմրութեամբ:

As we were at such point of awe, covered with shields and armed with gigantic lances, dyed in that crimson red that agitates pain, we were mounting the guard to the Precursor born of a barren woman while looking forward for the help of our Part'ew. But just as we were ready for such a challenge, I saw that Gdrihion become this Gobron, a man filled with Dionysos, with his face red as the colour of burning fire⁸³.

The much feared Gdrihion therefore reveals to be nothing else but a rather drunk, wine-loving («filled with Dionysos») letter-carrier, whose face still bears the marks of some recent refreshment. As Grigor himself remarks in the sentence that follows, the whole account is in the end comic (a *puñ* կատակալիւսն he writes), but this does not prevent him from adding more learned allusions: we learn that he was «guarding St. John the Baptist» (i.e. the Precursor), in which we should probably recognise the famous monastery dedicated to him in Tarawn, meaning that Grigor was there when he received the drunkard named Gobron. This is also the reason why

⁸¹ See for instance ŁAZAR P'ARPEC'I, *Patmut'wn Hayoc' ew t'ult' ar Vahan Mamikonean*, *axxatasirut'eamb* G. TĒR-MKRTČ'EAN – S. MALXASEAN, Tp'his 1904, p. 152. For an English translation of Łazar's work, see R.W. THOMSON, *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i*, Atlanta, GA 1991, pp. 211-212.

⁸² With which Grigor himself was personally acquainted: ALPI, *Messaggi attraverso il confine* cit., pp. 159-162.

⁸³ GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI MAGISTROS, *Epistulae*, 61, 5-6 [ed. MURADYAN, *Grigori Magistrosi T'ult'k' cit.*, pp. 350-351].

he hopes in the help of St. Grigor «Part'ew», the Illuminator of Armenia, of whom the Pahlawuni prince himself claimed to be the descendant⁸⁴: when Grigor the Illuminator converted Armenia to Christianity in the 4th century, he reportedly fought back the pagan spirits who threatened the foundation of the monastery of St. John the Baptist in Tarawn⁸⁵. The χάρις is finally completed by the change in context of the colour red, which is first associated with the lances held by Grigor, and then with the much less threatening face of Gobron, «filled with Dionysus».

CONCLUSION

From what has been exposed so far, it appears evident that Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros adopted specific features of Byzantine letter-writing. His dependence from a Greek model is not only a general tendency, but also a punctual and direct citation of features drawn from his model. However, Grigor shows that he is able to elaborate on the Byzantine paradigm, adapting it to his own context: he is not a slavish adept of Byzantine fashion and customs, but rather a conscious and active imitator. Myths and turns of phrase are not only drawn from the Greek world, but also from Armenian sources, which are therefore considered as equally respectable in the eyes of Grigor. Finally, since letters were prepared, sent and read within the context of a cultural elite, as it has been remarked above, we must conclude that Grigor Magistros' practice affected and influenced – at least to some extent – also the people with whom he was in contact: his attitude should therefore be considered a relevant phenomenon in the Armenian élite of the 11th century.

FEDERICO ALPI
Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII, Bologna
(federico.alpi3@unibo.it)

⁸⁴ See VAN LINT, *Die armenische Kultur* cit., p. 68.

⁸⁵ AGAT'ANGELOS, *Patmut'yun Hayoc'*, ašxatasirut'eamb S. KANAYEANC' – G. TĒR-MKRTČ'EAN, Tiflis 1909, pp. 423-424.

INDICE

F. ALPI, <i>Reuse of Byzantine Models in the Letters of Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni (990-1058)</i>	5
M.R. MARCHIONIBUS, <i>Santità e medicina al femminile in Italia meridionale e in Sicilia tra culto e iconografia</i>	23
M.D. LAUXTERMANN, <i>The Eugenic Recension of Stephanites and Ichneutes: Prologue and Paratexts</i>	55
A. LUZZI, <i>La silloge innografica del manoscritto italogreco Scorial. X.IV.8: descrizione analitica</i>	107
B. CROSTINI, <i>A New Manuscript of the Iliad from the Salento Region: Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, MS 922</i>	137
M.R. MENNA, <i>S. Benedetto «stilita» nelle pitture di Axt'ala</i>	167
C. HOFSTETTER, <i>Un nouveau témoin complet de l'Introduction arithmétique de Nicomaque de Gerasa</i>	177
R.S. STEFEC, <i>Die Grabrede des Konstantinos Lukites auf Kaiser Alexios II. Megas Komnenos. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte der byzantinischen Provinz</i>	193
S. KOTZABASSI, <i>Canon for the Miraculous Icon of the Blessed Virgin in Parakoila (Lesbos)</i>	251
Résumés degli articoli	273
Pubblicazioni ricevute	277
Norme per l'invio di contributi alla redazione e procedura di peer review	289

