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BYZANTINE AUTHORS reflect the popular belief that God communicated with man through natural events, if only human understanding could discern the message. Several writers of the tenth century illustrate this attitude by presenting unusual natural events as a metaphor or as a predictive indicator of human events. Theophanes Continuatus, for example, describes the appearance of a remarkable star or comet at the birth and death of Constantine the Porphyrogennetos.¹ Similarly, at the beginning of his *History* Leo the Deacon notes the coincidence of disruptive events in both the natural and the political spheres. Astral portents, earthquakes, lightning, and torrential rain simultaneous with many wars and the abandonment of cities and whole regions motivated the popular inference that the Second Coming was imminent.² In the *Life of St. Basil the Younger*, the narrator Gregory notes that the sun appeared to drip blood when the rebel followers of Constantine Doukas (d. 913) entered Constantinople, predicting great slaughter.³

Although Christian Byzantium scorned pagan superstition


and the Church officially limited the use of magic and divination, 4 passages like these rest firmly upon beliefs shared with the ancient literary tradition inherited by Byzantium, for the fundamental texts of the classical past and of Christianity establish a clear link between the natural world and the intervention of divinity; in the Homeric epics, in the Hebrew Bible, and in the New Testament the presence and will of gods or of God is revealed through portentous natural events. 5

Both classical literature and divine scripture thus supported the authority of natural phenomena as signs of divine will and intention. A sign might be ambiguous, however, and might require the services of an acknowledged expert to be interpreted correctly. An intriguing passage of Anna Comnena’s Alexiad describes just such an incident. 6 When a huge comet crossed the sky for forty consecutive nights, terrified public speculation about its significance prompted Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) to request a scientific explanation of the phenomenon from “those adept in such matters,” in particular from his trusted advisor Basil the Eparch. Basil observed the phenomenon, unsuccessfully tried to account for it by undertaking scientific calculations, and finally fell asleep. In a dream so vivid that it seemed real, St. John the Evangelist appeared: “He said that this comet foretells the movement of the Franks. ‘Its disappearance in the East indicates that they will be destroyed in the selfsame place’.” Anna’s account demonstrates the Byzantine assumption that the significance of a particular portent might be accessible only to an expert.

In the absence of a learned astronomer or a saint, it was also possible to turn to an authoritative text. Niketas Choniates (ca. 1155 to 1215/6) describes an incident in which an interpretive

5 E.g. II. 11.54–55 (rain dripping with blood to signal disaster), Exod 19:16–19 (God’s presence indicated on Mt. Sinai in thunder, lightning, and earthquakes), and Acts 2:19–20 (blood, fire, solar and lunar portents as signs of the Second Coming).
6 Annae Comnenae Alexias 12.4.1–2 (pp.307–308 Kambylis/Reinsch).
text treating thunder and earthquakes successfully predicted human activities during a doctrinal dispute in the reign of Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180). After a huge clap of thunder sounded unseasonably and portentously, it gained such notoriety that the emperor turned to Elias, a specialist in omens who was attached to the army. He “opened and consulted a book that thoroughly treated the subject of thunder and earthquakes and examined the particulars pertaining to the exact time at which thunder occurred; he said that he reached this insight: ‘Wise men shall fall.’” Since Choniates introduces Elias by crediting him with “success beyond many” in his art, apparently in this case his interpretation of the portentous thunder prompted some significant solution to the doctrinal dispute that Choniates does not discuss.

Elias’ book belongs to a genre that purported to translate natural prodigies into predictions of specific human political and social events. Such texts derive ultimately from the Babylonian Enuma Anu Enlil and represent a vast medieval multi-lingual and multicultural literature that survives not only in Greek but also in Arabic, Persian, Latin, Hebrew, and Slavic. Through translation and cross referencing, the strands of these traditions became thoroughly interwoven during antiquity and the middle ages; unfortunately, the identification and publication of relevant texts has not advanced sufficiently to trace definitive relationships among them. A subset of texts within this body of pseudo-scientific literature treats thunder omens of the sort described by Choniates. Surviving among them surprisingly is a Latin brontologion translated from Gaelic (de Scotticho/Scotico sermone) and

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demonstrating a uniquely insular format of this genre, which derived from the Etruscan tradition exemplified by Nigidius Figulus’ sample preserved by John Lydus.\textsuperscript{9}

\textit{Alexios}

The tradition of a book of portents already translated into Greek in antiquity found a place in the translator’s preface to the so-called \textit{Apocalypse of Daniel}, a Greek translation from Arabic made in 1245 by the otherwise unknown “Alexios the Byzantine.”\textsuperscript{10} The title Alexios applied to his translation, \textit{Apocalypse of Daniel}, covers a type of predictive text validated by association with the biblical figure of the prophet Daniel.\textsuperscript{11} The text translated by Alexios is actually a compilation of forecasts based on astronomical and meteorological events represented in various versions by at least thirteen Greek manuscripts and termed more accurately the \textit{Prædictiones Danielis} by Lorenzo DiTommaso in his wide-ranging investigation of such texts; DiTommaso traces branches of this entirely eastern tradition in Syriac, Persian, and Arabic literature.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{11} The Book of Daniel contains the only example of apocalyptic literature in the Hebrew Bible (ch. 7–12), referred to and endorsed by Jesus in Matt 24:15.

In his preface, Alexios treats the text as a legitimate extension of the canonical Book of Daniel, associates the original Greek text with Ptolemy’s Septuagint translators, and attributes the Arabic translation of the Apocalypse of Daniel/Praedictiones Danielis to the patronage of a second victorious general, the 7th-century Caliph Mu’awiya. Alexios claims that he obtained the Arabic text while a prisoner of the Arabs, recognized its importance for Byzantines, and translated the text back into Greek. He seems eager to impress the readers of his Greek translation with the venerable pedigree of the text he has translated, a pedigree that must have been current among the Arabs and conveyed to Alexios either orally or in some sort of written introduction accompanying the Arabic text. He harmonized this tradition with Christian traditions surrounding the Septuagint. He alludes to the legend of miraculous inspiration preserved in the 2nd-century (BCE) Letter of Aristeas, adjusting its details to suit his own purposes. According to Alexios, the original Hebrew text came into Greek at the behest of a victorious general, Ptolemy Philadelphos, who conquered and enslaved the Jews, then compelled seventy Hebrew scholars to translate their holy texts into Greek. This version of the Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis survived for nine centuries before a second victorious general, the Arab Caliph Mu’awiya, captured it and, like Ptolemy, caused a version of the text to be produced in his own language. Alexios thus associates the Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis with two successful generals and two major empires, while claiming greater longevity for the Greek version (900 years) than for the Arabic translation derived from it (600 years). Clearly, Alexios valued this text very highly; he describes the work not only as “marvelous” (θαυμαστή) but also as “authoritative” (ἐγκριτός). He apparently

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14 As Maria Mavroudi observes, Alexios’ explanation of how the Arabic version of this text came to be is not necessarily historical: A Byzantine Book 410 n.69.
expects that his own translation of the text back into Greek will provide a valuable resource for Byzantium.

Alexios’ preface contains few biographical clues beyond his assertion that he was a captive of the Arabs in the mid-13th century. Under Koranic law prisoners of war, both civilians and combatants, were enslaved in domestic or administrative service. Since exchange of prisoners was a regular part of warfare, it did not normally occasion comment either in Byzantine or in Arab sources. One can only speculate that such circumstances may indeed have brought the Arabic version of the *Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis* into the hands of its translator, the former slave Alexios, in Anatolia during the conflicts with Seljuks and Ayyubids. Alexios may have returned to Byzantine territory with the *Praedictiones* in the sort of Byzantine/Arab prisoner exchange that occurred in earlier centuries and continued through the Abbasid period of their rule in Anatolia (8th–13th centuries). Further speculation belongs to the category of historical fiction rather than scholarly discussion.

Alexios’ intellectual capabilities could have been useful to his Arab captors, for he was a cultured and somewhat sophisticated person, competent at some level of Arabic and clearly literate and even educated in Greek. His rather stilted Greek style is typical of the middle stylistic register appropriate for a didactic work like this translation and his preface, but it does not reach the learned level of a Constantinopolitan scholar. Alexios’ Greek resembles that in vernacular translations of official Arabic correspondence with Byzantium surviving from the 14th century, prepared in accordance with the diplomatic convention that required a Greek version of a document to accompany its Arabic.

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original. Dimitri Korobeinikov characterizes these translations as “a strange mixture of classical and modern Greek,” which is also a fair description of Alexios’ style in his preface and translation. The historical information that he includes is essentially accurate and betrays some acquaintance with Byzantine literary sources, for his phrase “Constans himself, rescued with difficulty, returned to the city of Constantinople in disgrace” (ὅ δὲ αὐτὸς Κώνστας μόλις διασωθεὶς ὑπέστρεψεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μετ’ αἰσχύνης) closely parallels the vocabulary and structure of the account of this event by George Kedrenos (late 11th–early 12th century) and his source Symeon the Logothete (mid-10th century): ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς μόλις διασωθεὶς ὑπέστρεψε μετ’ αἰσχύνης ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει. Alexios surely read this sentence and either remembered it with extraordinary accuracy or closely paraphrased a copy he had before him. A little more information about Alexios can be gleaned from his preface; he was probably a Christian or perhaps a Jew, for “He prays that his desire to bring this project to conclusion be granted him by God. Amen.” His distaste for the Arabs and their language is evident in his remark that he “chokes off the pedestrian language of the Arabs” (ἀγχων τὴν τῶν Ἀράβων πεζικὴν γλῶτταν).

The retranslator

Alexios belongs to a company of scholars who translated astronomical/astrological and other sorts of predictive omen texts from Arabic into Greek as early as 1000 CE. Pingree notes that the 13th-century Greek translations from Arabic are less grammatically and technically correct that those of preceding centuries, an assessment confirmed in the case of

17 Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae opera 756.15–16 Bonn; Leonis Grammatici chronographia 158.8–10 Bonn.
18 Pingree, From Astral Omen 67.
19 Pingree, From Astral Omen 74.
Alexios by an anonymous scholar who knew Alexios’ translation and sharply criticizes it in his own preface to his re-translation of the same text already translated by Alexios. Alexios and his anonymous re-translator are very unusual among Greek translators from Arabic because neither had a patron for his work; each decided to undertake his demanding project on his independent initiative. The re-translator offers the surprising information that he himself actually learned Arabic in order to provide a correct re-translation of the *Apocalypse*/*Praedictiones Danielis*.

This unpublished translator’s preface to his re-translation of the work survives only in a single 17th-century manuscript now in the Public Library of St. Petersburg (*Petropol Bприl. Publ. 575 fol. 46r–47r*). F. Sangin recognized the second translator’s preface in 1936 but edited and published only the segment related to Alexios and his translation. A critical edition of the preface follows, accompanied by an annotated English translation:

[Fol. 46r] Ἀρχὴ σὺν θεῷ ὡγίῳ τοῦ βροντολογίου

Γίνωσκε γνώσιν ὅτι ἡ παρούσα βίβλος ἔστιν ὁρασίς τοῦ προφήτου Δανιήλ, ὅπου ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὄγιος ἐν τοῖς χείλεσιν αὐτοῦ τῶν ποιητῶν ἔπληρόθησαν ἐν ἡμέραις Ἀλεξάνδρου βασιλέως Μακεδόνων· καὶ ἔγγραφεν ἐν στοιχείοις καὶ ἐξίσῳμενον ἐλληνιστικῷ, καὶ ἐδόθη υποδείξει τῷ κόσμῳ. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα εὐρόντες ταύτην τὴν βίβλον οἱ Ἀραβίτες μετέθηκαν αὐτὴν λόγου αὐτῆς καὶ ἐξίσασαν ταύτην καὶ ἐποίησαν τὴν ὄραβικήν· ἐν δὲ τῷ καυρῷ ἐκείνῳ τοῦ Ζυγνή ἐτους καλός


21 F. Sangin, *CCAG XII* (Brussels 1936) 153. I am grateful to Stratis Papaioannou for obtaining for me a copy of the second translator’s preface in manuscript form during a visit to the Public Library of St. Petersburg.

22 The manuscript is rife with scribal errors; following Sangin’s practice and in order to achieve some economy of presentation, I have not included in the apparatus every instance of dittography, itacism, confusions between long and short vowels, or confusions among long vowels and diphthongs, but I have indicated Sangin’s corrections in the apparatus criticus. I am grateful to Alice-Mary Talbot for her perceptive corrections to my first version of the Greek text and its translation; any errors remaining are my own.
Αλέξιος καὶ ἐκ τοῦ προκείμενον ὡς ἐγενόνει ἔπεσε, πόθεν ἐπέ-
στρεφε τήνδε βιβλίον εἰς γράμματα ἐλληνικὰ ἦτοι ῥωμαϊκά·
dιότι οὐκ ἦστιν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ βιβλίῳ νόθον οὐδὲν ὁ τι ὀρθοῖ,
cάκω πλείστα ἐμόχθησα τοῦ μοιθείν τὰ γράμματα τῶν Ἀράβων
σαφῶς, καὶ ἦστω γνωστὸν πρὸς ύμᾶς. [46'] ὥσπερ οὗ με διέ-
λαθεν, ὅτι ὁ πάντων πλάστης θεὸς ὁ πλάσας τὰ ὀρᾶτα καὶ τὰ
ἀόρατα διὰ τούτο ἐπλάσε τὸν ἄνθρωπον θείω φυσίματι, εἰς
tὸ ἔρευναν τὰς ἐαυτοῦ δυνάμεις καὶ κρίσεις, καθὼς φησιν ὁ
Δαβίδ ὁ μελωδὸς· ἐθαυμαστόθη ἡ γνωσίς σου ἐξ ἐμοῦ. Ἰστεόν
ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦστιν ἐπίγειος θεὸς καὶ εἰκὼν τοῦ κτίσαντος
αὐτοῦ τὸ σῶμα, ἔχον διδακάμην κατηρημημένον ὡς ὀρ-
μούς τε', ὡς καὶ ὑποκρίτης γράφει· τρία δὲ εἶσιν κατ' οὐσίαν
ἀγνώριστα τοῖς ἄνθρωποις ἡ ἀόρισται· ἔφη, ἡγελός, ψυχή.
Τὸν δὲ θεόν, ἔφη ὁ σοφότατος Σολομὼν, εἶναι ἀκοινόντον
όνομα, μήτε ἀγγέλοις μήτε ἄνθρωποις ἀκουσθὲν ἢ ἐννοηθέν·
διπότι δὲ ἐν τῇ γραφῇ εἰρθήται· φύσει καὶ σχέσει· φύσει μὲν
καὶ ποιητής, σχέσει δὲ καὶ χάριτι ὡς καὶ οἱ δίκαιοι πολλάκις
ὡς θεοὶ λέγονται. Γίνοσκε γνώσιν ὅτι ἡ παροῦσα δέλτος ἁρ-
χεται ἀπὸ τὸν Ὀκτώβριον μήνα· οὕτως γὰρ ἐκτίθεσαν ταύτῃ
οἱ ποιηταὶ καὶ διδάσκαλοι, ὡς ἦστιν ἀρχὴ τοῦ θειοπόρου
Ὀκτώβριος Ὁνέμβρις καὶ Δεκέμβρις· χειμών, δὲ Ἱανουάρις,
Φεβρουάρις καὶ Μάρτις· χειμών, καὶ ἔτι μελέτησα διὰ τὸ ἐκχειρθά
τοις ποταμοῖς· ἔστω μηνάς γ'. Ἀπρίλις, Μάις, Ἰούνις· ἔστω
συν οὐνόμασαν διὰ τὸ ἀνοίξαν τὴν ἑαυτῆς δύναμιν ἐν τῷ
λιβάνῳ καὶ ἐν τοῖς δένδροις. [47'] Θέρος μηνάς γ. Ἰούλις,
Αὔγουστος καὶ Ἐπτέμβριος· σύνες δὲ ἐκλήθησαν διὰ τὸ
θερίζειν τοὺς καρποὺς καὶ ἦσαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἰς ἑργασίαν·
ἐπειράσθην γὰρ τούτῳ δηλώσας πρὸς ύμᾶς τὰ τοιαῦτα δὲ ῥάστε
γίνωσκον, ὅτι καὶ φονὴ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐν τῇ γῆς σημεῖον
ἄργεγγαλλον, ἐστὶ τῶν αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν παροῦσαν βιβλίον· καὶ
ἐὰν ἐνδείξεις καλῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ γένεσθαι μέλλῃ, ὄφειλομεν
ποιεῖν εὐχαριστίας καὶ ύμνοις εἰς θεόν· εὰν δὲ ἀπόδειξές
κακοῦ, μέλλομεν ἀπέχειν ἀπὸ ἐκθρας καὶ ἐτέρων κακῶν καὶ
ποιεῖν δήσεις ὑπὲρ τῶν ὁμορριθίν ήμῶν.

Abbreviations: Fr.: Fisher; Sgn.: Sangin, CCAg XII 153; Sull.: Denis
Sullivan; Tlb.: Alice-Mary Talbot; An. Sin.: Anastasios of SinaiViae
dux II, 6–7 [ed. Uthemann]

1 Γίνοσκε Fr. Γηνόσκον ΜS. | ἡ παροῦσα Fr. ὑπαροῦσα MS. 5
εξισώμενον Fr. εξισμον MS. 7 οὕτως Fr. αὕτως MS. | εξισασσαν Fr.
exiçam MS. 8 ζ Sull. λγ MS. | καλὸς Sgn. καλὸν MS. 9 ἐπέστρεψε

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Beginning of the Brontologion, with God the Holy

Know for a fact that the present book is the vision of the Prophet Daniel, when God the holy revealed upon Daniel’s lips some of the things that He made; they were fulfilled in the days of Alexander, king of the Macedonians. Both recorded in the letters of Hebrew and translated into equivalent Greek, the text also was given forth to the world as a teaching. Thereafter the Arabs found this book and changed it from its language, and they translated this into an equivalent Arabic text. But in that time, during the year 6753 (=1245 CE), noble Alexios encountered it, and from the existing Arabic version, as it had come to be, he turned this book into a Greek—that is, a Byzantine—text. Because Alexios failed to correct any of the translation errors in the Arabic text, I labored mightily to learn the written language of the Arabs with skill, and let it be known to

23 I.e., Daniel’s revelation explains the hidden meaning of natural occurrences.

24 Literally, “made equivalent in Greek.”

25 Literally, “made this equivalent (to the Greek) and made the Arabic (text).”

26 Literally, “because there is nothing bastardized in this text that (Alexios) corrected.” νόθος (“bastard, spurious”) apparently refers to parts of the Arabic translation that were erroneous and not legitimately or accurately descended from the original Greek text; the second translator complains that Alexios failed to recognize as “bastard” and to correct these Arabic sections.
you, [46v] just as it most assuredly did not escape my notice, that
God, the maker of all, who made things seen and unseen (Col 1:16),
for this reason made mankind by His divine breath (cf. Gen 2:7),
so that mankind could discover His powers and judgments; as
David the melode says, The knowledge of Thee is too wonderful for me
(Ps 138:6a [transl. Brenton]).\(^{27}\) Note that man is an earthly god\(^ {28}\)
and the likeness of the creator in his bodily form (cf. Gen 1:26).
Man has a year of twelve months arranged in a string of 365
days;\(^ {29}\) as also the expounder of Scripture writes,\(^ {30}\) Three things
are in their essence impossible for mankind to know and to determine: God,
an angel, a soul.\(^ {31}\) However,\(^ {32}\) the most wise Solomon said, “God” is an
“incommunicable name” (Wisd Sol 14:21 [Brenton]) heard and under-
stood neither by angels nor by men. In two ways God is specified in Scripture:
by His nature and by His relationship to mankind; creator by nature, but
also by relationship and grace, since also the just among men often are
described as gods (cf. Ps 81 [82]:6).

\(^{27}\) To its translator this brontologion evidently represents progress over the
Psalmist’s resources for discerning the messages God expresses in nature.

\(^{28}\) The phrase ἐπίγειος θεός occurs frequently in various recensions of the
enormously popular Alexander Romance of ps.-Callisthenes (3rd century CE); it
occurs also in ps.-Macarius in the 4th-century Apothegmata (PG 34 253.23) and
in later theological writings as well.

\(^{29}\) Cf. T. Gaisford, Eusebii Pamphili episcopi Caesariensis eclogae propheticae (Ox-
ford 1842) 153.3. Since this predictive text is arranged according to a seasonal
calendar of 365 days, its translator apparently chooses to refer to it as one of
the tools man possesses to discover and understand God’s workings on earth.

\(^{30}\) Alice-Mary Talbot suggested in a personal com-
munication that the MS.
reading ὑπποκράτης may be a corruption of Ἰπποκράτης, an otherwise un-
known biblical exegete.

\(^{31}\) Cf. ps.-Athanasius Liber de definitionibus PG 28 536A.9–10, an abridgement
of Anastasius of Sinai: K.-H. Uthemann, Anastasii Sinaitae viae dux (Turnhout

\(^{32}\) From this point to the end of the paragraph, the author quotes and
abridges Anastasius of Sinai Viae dux 2.2.6–7. His readings differ from
Uthemann’s text in two details that reflect Cantab.Add. 3049 (= Uthemann
witness C): εἶναι τὸν θεὸν Uthemann, τὸν θεὸν εἶναι C (18–19) and
ἀνθρώπων – ἄγγέλων Uthemann, transp. C (19). A colophon in C indicates
that Nikolaos, son of Papagregorios, completed this text in Klarentza (Pelo-
pennesos) on 4/26/1336; see P. E. Easterling, Scriptorium 16 (1962) 31–32.
Know for a fact that the present text begins from the month of October, for in this way the poets and teachers set this forth, that autumn governs October, November, and December, but winter is January, February, and March. “Winter” is so called because the rivers flow forth. Spring has three months, April, May, June; they termed these months “spring” because it opens up its own power in the frankincense and the trees. Summer has three months: July, August, and September; they were called by these names because they reaped the harvest of the fruits of the earth, and men went to labor (cf. Ps 103[104]:23).

I have tried to reveal to you such things indeed, so it is known that if a portent bringing news appears in heaven and on earth, it is possible to open and read out the present book; and if an indication of good is destined to come about in the world, we ought to render thanks and hymns of praise to God; but if a disclosure of evil, we must refrain from hatred and other evil actions and make entreaties because of our sins.

The personality of the re-translator is visible in broad outline even though the manuscript witness is corrupt and the structure of the re-translator’s argument is at times loose and associative rather than logical. He was an educated Byzantine acquainted not only with the Bible but also with less familiar writers like the 7th-century theologians Anastasios of Sinai and ps.-Athenasios of Alexandria, whose works he quotes and abridges to illustrate the nature of God. The quotation of Anastasios of Sinai’s Viae dux provides the only clue to the re-translator’s date, for it represents a branch of the textual tradition first attested in the mid-14th


34 The author relates “spring” (ἔαρ) to the root ἔαω, “allow/let.”

35 The author relates “summer” (θέρος) to θερίζω, “do summer work/reap.”
century.\textsuperscript{36} 1350 is thus a rough \textit{terminus post quem} for the retranslation of the \textit{Apocalypse/Praedictiones}; the 17\textsuperscript{th}-century date of \textit{Petrop.Bibl.Publ.} 575 provides an approximate \textit{terminus ante quem}.

In his preface, the re-translator emerges as an energetic scholar sufficiently confident in his intellectual and linguistic abilities to conclude that Alexios had unwittingly translated a flawed Arabic version that did not reflect the divinely inspired \textit{Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis} translated into Greek by the Septuagint translators. In effect, the re-translator claimed such superior expertise in the interpretation of natural omens that he could detect spurious content in Alexios’ Greek text. Resolving to correct this situation, the re-translator then mastered Arabic to a fairly advanced level of competence and mustered the resources to obtain a teacher of Arabic and to locate an Arabic text of the \textit{Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis}.\textsuperscript{37} He may have worked in Constantinople, an international environment where Greeks might encounter Arabic-speaking scholars, travelers, diplomats, missionaries, and traders,\textsuperscript{38} and where imperial, patriarchal, and private libraries could have offered him access to Alexios’ translation and preface as well as to the Arabic version. A second possible venue for the re-translator is Trebizond, where the astronomer and translator Gregory Chioniades had worked.\textsuperscript{39} After the death of Chioniades ca. 1320, the 14\textsuperscript{th}-century astronomer George Chrysokkokes claims that he found in Trebizond

\textsuperscript{36} Cf. n.32 above.

\textsuperscript{37} Since the re-translator does not use Alexios’ title for the work but rather titles it “Brontologion,” I assume that he found this title in the Arabic manuscript he used for his translation. This manuscript has not been identified.


both an Arabic instructor and the original Arabic texts translated into Greek by Chioniades.

There is evidence that the re-translator knew the translator’s preface provided by Alexios, although he did not replicate it. Both translators describe the contents of the work they translated in very similar terms. Alexios begins by referring to the legendary activities of the translators of the Septuagint and explains that other works were translated by them as well: \[\text{ἐν τούτοις ἄπασιν ἣν καὶ ἡ βίβλος ἢδε Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ὀπτασίαν ὑπάρχουσα βίβλος ("Among all these texts was also this book consisting of the vision of the prophet Daniel")}. The re-translator begins his preface by adapting Alexios’ phraseology: \[\text{ἡ παροῦσα βίβλος ἐστὶν ὀρασίς τοῦ προφήτου Δανιὴλ ("the present book is the vision of the Prophet Daniel")}. Alexios then explains how the original Greek translation passed into Arabic under the sponsorship of the victorious general Mu’awiya who defeated the Emperor Constans; the re-translator summarizes Alexios’ rather detailed digression briskly: \[\text{µετὰ δὲ ταύτα εὑρόντες ταύτην τὴν βίβλον οἱ Αραβίτες μετέθηκαν αὐτὴν λόγου αὐτῆς καὶ ἐξίσασαν ταύτην καὶ ἐποίησαν τὴν ἀραβικήν ("Thereafter the Arabs found this book and changed it from its language, and they translated this into an equivalent Arabic text")}. Both translators next record the particulars of the medieval Greek translation from Arabic, specifying the date of the translation and name of the translator in nearly the same words: Alexios observes, \[\text{ἐν δὲ τῷ ζυγν ἔτει ἐντυχὼν τήνδε Ἀλέξιος τις ἀπὸ Βυζάντιου ("chancing upon this in the year 6753 [= 1245 CE] a certain Alexios of Byzantium [i.e. Constantinople]") and continues to explain his personal circumstance, to commend his own translation skills, and to express his distaste for the Arabic language. The re-translator closely replicates Alexios’ phraseology as he dates the translation and names the translator: \[\text{ἐν δὲ τῷ καὶ ἐκείνῳ τῷ ζυγν ἔτους καλὸς Ἀλέξιος ("But in that time,}

during the year 6753, noble Alexios”) before expressing his low opinion of Alexios’ version and identifying its inaccuracy as the motivation for his own translation.

Alexios and the anonymous re-translator were very different scholars whose translations of the Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis represent quite different stylistic levels. Although both observe the rules of classical Greek grammar, each translation gives a distinctive ‘voice’ to the contents of the predictive text. This distinction is evident even from the two short examples of their translations published by Sangin (CCAG XII 153–154). The translations begin with the month of October:

Alexios’ version: Εάν τῷ παρόντι μηνὶ τῷ Ὀκτωβρίῳ ἐκλείψῃ ὁ Ἡλίος, ἐνδείξεἱ ποιεῖ ὅτι ἄρχοντες τῆς στρατείας μετὰ στρατιωτῶν κατὰ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτῶν μούρτον ποιήσωσι, ἀλλὰ τραπέζησονται ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ χαωθήσονται· καὶ ἄκρις φαινῆται καὶ ἀνομβρία τριμηναῖος καὶ εἰς τὰς χώρας τῶν Αράβων καὶ Ἰδουαμαίας ἐπιδρομή ἐσονται καὶ θόρυβος κοσμικὸς ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ. If in the current month of October the sun suffers eclipse, it makes a sign that the commanders of the army with the soldiers might make mutiny against the rule of the king over them, but they will be defeated by him and thrown into chaos. A plague of locusts may also occur and a drought of three months duration and there


42 τριμηναῖος Sgn. τριμήνον MS.
will be attacks against the lands of the Arabs and Idumeans and also universal disorder in this same time.

Alexios’ version of the passage is direct but rather stilted and somewhat colorless because of his affection for passive verbs. His choice of vocabulary represents a colloquial level of style from the very beginning of the translation, for he favors the expression τῷ παρόντι μηνί ("in the current month"—i.e. “in this month”) to introduce the omens he translates. A search for the phrase in the TLG indicates that it occurs some twenty times in the Apocalypsis/Praedictiones but is relatively infrequent in previous texts, appearing in a fourth-century text of John Chrysostom and in the writings of the 12th/13th-century ecclesiastical author Neophytus Inclusus. This sporadic pattern in the literary canon suggests that τῷ παρόντι μηνί may be informal in tone and linguistic register. An additional colloquialism in this section of the translation is μοῦρτον or μοῦλτον/μοῦλτος (“mutiny/revolt”), a vernacular word derived from Latin tumultus\(^{43}\) that occurs in Byzantine texts of the ninth century and later, such as the Oneirokritikon of Achmet (9th century), Theophanes Continuatus (10th century), Kekaumenos (11th century), and the 14th-century Chronica byzantina breviora. In the final sentence of the translated omen, Alexios includes a phrase derived from the Septuagint, εἰς τὰς χώρας τῶν Ἀράβων καὶ Ἰδουμαίας; Idumea is the biblical land of Edom, which bordered Arabia. Invoking the Septuagint here is a nice literary touch, since the legendary Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint into Greek allegedly translated the Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis as well.

Version of the re-translator: Ἐὰν τῷ παρόντι μηνι ἀμαιρόσῃ\(^{44}\) καὶ κρατηθῇ ὁ Ἡλιος, ἔχε κανόνα\(^{45}\) τῆς ἀποδείξεως ὅτι τριστάτες μετὰ στρατιωτῶν σύνδεσμον ποιήσουσιν κατὰ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς βασιλεύς στρέψει αὐτοὺς καὶ ὑποτάξει· φανήσεται δὲ καὶ ἄκρις πολλή, καὶ τριμηναίοις\(^{46}\) ὑετῶς οὗ

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\(^{43}\) E. Trapp, Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität (Vienna 2001) s.v. μοῦλτον.

\(^{44}\) ἀμαιρόσῃ Sgn. ἀμαίροσεος MS.

\(^{45}\) κανόνα Sgn. κανόν MS.

\(^{46}\) τριμηναίοις Sgn. τριμηνην MS.

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φανήσεται, καὶ εἰς τὰς χώρας τῶν μερόπων ἐπιδρομὴ ἄλλοφύλων, φόβος καὶ στενοχωρία ἔσται.

If in the current month the sun becomes dim and is overpowered, take it as a rule from the sign that captains close to the king will form a conspiracy with the soldiers against his rule, and the same king will defeat and subdue them. And both a great plague of locusts will occur and rain will not occur in a three-month period, and there will be an attack by foreign people upon the lands of men, fear, and distress.

The re-translator has retained Alexios’ introductory phrase τῷ παρόντι μηνὶ, perhaps because it is a Greek expression equivalent to a phrase in the original Arabic text. He has eliminated Alexios’ colloquial μοῦρτον and rephrased its sense by designating the anti-royal uprising as a σύνδεσμον, the Septuagint’s term for a conspiracy.47 He has also elaborated the opening of the omen and established an authoritative tone and the connotation of a firm and set principle by inserting a formulaic phrase used in the Basilics and Chrysostom, ἔχε … κανόνα … ὅτι (“take it as a rule that”).48 The re-translator further elevated the vocabulary of his version by eliminating Alexios’ pedestrian ἀρχοντες τῆς στρατείας and substituting τριστάτες, a word especially used in the Septuagint and in ecclesiastical and theological texts.49 This gives his version of the passage a slightly negative connotation and a tone consistent with the Septuagint, where the term is associated with a foreign ruler, the Egyptian Pharoah50 and with

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47 E.g. 4 Ki 11:14, etc.
48 Basilica 10.2.24, 10.36.3; ps.-Chrysostom In sanctum pascha 17 (ed. Floëri/Nautin).
49 Hesychios offers this definition (ed. Cunningham/Hansen): τριστάται· οἱ παρὰ χεῖρα τοῦ βασιλέως, ἑχοντες ἄνα τρεῖς λόγχας (“those at the right hand of the king with command over three companies of fighters”). This definition is repeated verbatim by Photios, the Etymologicum Magnum, and the Suda and is closely paraphrased by the Lexica Segueriana. The TLG supplies 124 occurrences of the word, predominately from the Septuagint, hymns, monastic acta, and prayers; it also occurs occasionally in secular scholia and authors (e.g. Prodromos, Manuel Philes).
50 Exod 14:7, 15:4; also Odae 1:4.
idolatrous rulers of Israel. The re-translator also sets the grammatical level of his version at a sophisticated level. Alexios’ simple sentence of subject and predicate adjective καὶ ἀνομβρία τριμήναιος becomes an active sentence τριμήναιος ὑπὸ τοῦ φανήσεται with an archaizing dative construction to designate time (τριμήναιος “in a three month period”) displacing Alexios’ adjective τριμήναιος. The re-translator evidently knew Alexios’ version well and consciously set his own version at a higher stylistic level. He also corrected what he identified as an error made by Alexios in his translation. He banished the Arabians and Idumeans imported by Alexios from a Syriac version of the Septuagint and restructured the sentence to describe a generic attack by foreign people upon inhabited lands, thus making the omen applicable in a variety of contexts.

In his version of the second omen each scholar displays a formulaic style that he has already established in the first omen. Both use ἐὰν τῷ παρόντι μηνί to introduce the omen, then each turns to an individual construction familiar from his version of the first omen.

Alexios’ version: Ἐὰν τῷ παρόντι μηνί ἐκλειψις Σελήνης γένηται, ἐνδείξειν ποιεῖ ὅτι εἰς τὰ μέρη τῆς δύσεως φόβος καὶ στένωσις γένηται καὶ θνητὰς λίαν· εἰς τὸ μέρος δὲ Βαβυλῶνους ὑπὸ τοῦ χιονώδης καὶ ἡ σπορᾶ βλαβήσεται ἐκ ψύχους καὶ ὁ βασίλευς Βαβυλῶνος σκυθρωπάσῃ καὶ θορυβηθῇ ἐνανά στασιν καὶ θνῆσιν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνατολικῶν ἀρχόντων. If in this month an eclipse of the moon comes to pass, it makes a sign that fear and privation may come to pass into the territories of the West and death to a great degree. Rain mixed with snow may come to pass into the territory of Babylon and the sown seed will be damaged as a result of the cold and the king of Babylon may be vexed and thrown into disorder because of his enemies. Therein will arise both the death of men and of reptiles

and of fish and <there will be> ocular pain and discharges and wounds among men; also among the rulers of West and East quarrels and hostilities will spring up and one of the rulers may make war against the kingdom of the West and will claim the capital for his own.

Version of the re-translator: Ἐὰν τῷ παρόντι μηνὶ ἀμαυρώσῃ καὶ κρατηθῇ η  Σελήνη, ἔχε κανόνα τῆς ἀποδείξεως, ὅτι εἰς [fol. 48v] τὸ μέρος τῆς δύσεως φόβος καὶ στενοχωρία καὶ θάνατος πολὺς γίνεται καὶ εἰς τὰ μέρη τῆς Βαβυλῶνος ὑπότι καὶ χιόν λεπτὸς πολὺς ὦστε καὶ τὴν σποράν βλάψαι φθάσει καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῆς αὐτῆς Βαβυλῶνος, δι’ ο λογισμοῦ πολλοί καὶ ἔννοιαι ἐπέλθωσι διὰ τὸ ἐπαναστῆναι ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἱχθυῖα πολλοί, καὶ θάνατος ἄνθρωπων καὶ θνήσις ἐρπτεῶν καὶ ἱχθυῶν γενήσεται, ὁμοίως καὶ ὀρθάλμων ὀδύναι καὶ τραύσματα ἐπὶ τὰς σάρκας τῶν ἄνθρωπων γενήσεται καὶ μετὰ τῶν ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ δύσει ἁχθρα ὧς ὀχλήσις γενήσεται καὶ ἄνθρωπος μέγας ἀποστασίαν ποιήσει καὶ γυρεύσει τὴν βασιλείαν τῆς δύσεως.

If in this month the moon becomes dim and is overpowered, take it as a rule from the sign that into the territory of the West fear and hardship and much death are coming to pass as well as rain and much light snow into the territories of Babylon so that first harm will befall the sown seed because of the cold and also the kingdom of <this> same Babylon, wherefore many interpretations and notions may suddenly come to be; because of their rising in contention, many enemies <may suddenly come to be>, the death of men and the perishing of reptiles and fish will come to pass at the same time as diseases of the eyes and wounds upon the flesh of men will come to pass, and after hostilities of those in East and West also disturbance will come to pass and a great man will cause a falling away and will encircle the Kingdom of the West.

52 ἔχε κανόνα Sgn. ἔχεκα κανόνα MS.
53 βλάψαι Sgn. βλάψει MS. The classical verb φθάσει ("be first") completed by an infinitive rather than a participle is a late Greek usage; using the verb here to express priority of action elevates the tone of the text. I find the impersonal construction awkward.
54 δι’ ο λογισμοῦ Sgn. διὰ λογησμοῦ MS.
55 ἔννοιαι ἐπέλθωσι Sgn. ἔννιαι ἐπέλθουσι MS.

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Alexios sets his formula for translating an omen by repeating ἔνδειξιν ποιεῖ ὅτι, a circumlocution for the classical verb ἔνδεικνυμι with ὅτι that is attractive because it enables the translator to avoid using a classical form of a -μι verb. The retranslator sets his distinctive formula for translating an omen by repeating his authoritative phrase ἔχε κανόνα τῆς ἀποδείξεως, ὅτι. Both translators continue with a string of clauses in simple parataxis, which probably echoes the structure of the original Arabic text. The retranslator imports a sophisticated tone into his version by altering this simple pattern with two subordinate clauses, a result clause (ὥστε καὶ τὴν σπορὰν βλάψαι φθάσει ἐκ τοῦ ψύχους καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῆς αὐτῆς Βαβυλῶνος) and a relative clause explaining further repercussions of crop failure caused by unseasonable cold. Consistent with the religious concerns he expressed in his preface, the retranslator suggests that religious controversy will lead to dissention and disease (δι᾽ ὃ λογισµοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ ἔννοιαι ἐπέλθωσι διὰ τὸ ἐπαναστῆναι ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν ἐχθροὶ πολλοί, καὶ θάνατος ὄνθρωπον), an implication missing in Alexios’ version. Perhaps this is an example of the content correction that Alexios failed to make, as the retranslator complained in his preface. The retranslator may be making a similar content correction in the closing line of the omen, where he chooses ἀποστασία (“revolt, apostasy”) to represent the activities of a leader in a time of trouble between East and West. Again, Alexios’ version does not touch upon religious matters. The translations also disagree about the final outcome of this episode. Alexios sees the loss of a capital or palace (τὸ βασίλειον), while the retranslator mentions an attack on the kingdom of the West (τὴν βασιλείαν τῆς δύσεως). Without access to the original Arabic of the omen, it is not possible to assess the accuracy of these two versions.

There is fragmentary evidence of a third translation of the Praedictiones related to Alexios’ particular version but representing a different tradition of interpreting a portent. This third tradition survives only as a thunder oracle preserved in a 15th-century manuscript now in Berlin (Berol. phil. 1577 fol. 71). The manuscript contains Mazaris’ Journey to Hades (fol. 1–42) as well
as astrological and magical texts that include eighteen omens from the *Apocalypse/Predictiones Danielis* (fol. 69–72). Among them, the thunder oracle adopts the phraseology familiar from Alexios’ translation of the omens (*Εὰν τῷ παρόντι μηνὶ … ἐνδείξιν ποιεῖ ὅτι*) but follows a different formula for interpretation that resembles an insular tradition originating in the West during the 11th and 12th centuries. In this mode of interpretation, a natural phenomenon like thunder is chronologically connected to the hour of the day, the day of the week, or the day of the month when it occurs.\(^{56}\) The Berlin brontologion connects the day of the month when thunder occurs with its interpretation. To illustrate this format unusual in Byzantine texts interpreting omens, I cite the opening section of omen 13 (fol. 71):\(^{57}\)

> Ἐκ τῶν ἀποκάλυψεων τοῦ προφήτου Δανιήλ ἰγ’. Περὶ βροντισμοῦ ἔγαν
> Ἐὰν ἐν τῷ παρόντι μηνὶ βροντισμὸς ἔγαν γένηται, ἐνδείξιν ποιεῖ, ὅτι ἐὰν εἰς τὴν α’ ἡ εἰς τὴν δ’ ἡμέραν τοῦ παρόντος μηνὸς βροντήσῃ, ὅτι ἄνθρωπος μέγας θανεῖται ἡ ἀφανισθῇ. εἰ δὲ εἰς τὴν ε’ ἡμέραν τοῦ παρόντος μηνὸς ἡ εἰς τὴν ε’ ἡ ἐς τὴν ζ’ ἡμέραν τοῦ παρόντος μηνὸς γένηται, ὅτι οἱ τριστάται καὶ οἱ σατράπαι τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ ἅµα συντριβήσονται· ὅπωρα δὲ σῖτος καὶ κριθὴ καὶ ὀσπρὶον πολὺ γένηται ἡ καὶ τὰ κλήματα τῆς ἀµιπέλου εὐτυχήσουσιν. εἰ δὲ εἰς τὴν η’ αὐτοῦ βροντήσῃ, ἡ ὅπωρα ἐν τοῖς δένδροις πληγήσεται. εἰ δὲ εἰς τὴν θ’ αὐτοῦ βροντήσῃ, οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἰς ταραχὰς καὶ πάθος ἔσονται.

From the Apocalypse of the Prophet Daniel 13. Concerning a great amount of thunder

If in the current month a great amount of thunder occurs, it makes a sign: if on the first or fourth day of the current month it thunders, that a great man will die or may disappear. But if on the fifth day of the current month or the sixth or seventh thunder occurs, that the captains close to the king and the satraps at the same time together will be crushed; in autumn, moreover, grain and barley and legumes may become abundant or the branches of the grape vines will also flourish. But if on the eighth day of the


\(^{57}\) F. Boll, *CCAG VII* (Brussels 1908) 173.
month it thunders, the fruit on the trees will be violently stricken. But if on the ninth day of the month it thunders, mankind will be in disorder and distress.

Although the Berlin fragment is unique in Greek in its use of chronological indicators, it also resembles the Greek translations of the _Praedictiones_. Both types combine predicting political disturbances like the loss of a leader, a palace revolt, a foreign attack, warfare, or general disorder with forecasting natural events like good or poor crops, a plague of locusts, or death and disease among humans and animals.

In conclusion, this sample of the only published and available predictions contained in the _Apocalypse/Praedictiones Danielis_ reflects in form and content the prognoses in the earliest surviving ancestor of the genre, the second millennium BCE Babylonian _Enuma Anu Enlil_.

A 7th-century BCE Neo-Assyrian tablet preserves this useful comparative text:

If a fog rolls in in Nisan, the population density of the land will become high … If a fog rolls in in Ajjar, (there will be) an attack by the enemy against the land.

The same pattern emerges in both the Greek and the Babylonian traditions. A natural event is dated in terms of the month of its occurrence, followed by a prediction of its significance for the social or political life of man, and both traditions rest upon the same assumption: heaven reveals the fate of man in extraordinary signs from nature.

The extraordinary longevity and appeal of this ancient genre is evident in the strenuous efforts of Alexios the prisoner of war and of two other Byzantine translators to make a text revealing the will of heaven available to Greek speakers. However flawed Alexios’ 13th-century version may have been, it survived in Byzantium for a century or more before the time of the anonymous re-translator. He produced a second translation because he considered Alexios’ version an intolerably inadequate vehicle.

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58 E. Gehlken, _Weather Omens of Enuma Anu Enlil: Thunderstorms, Wind and Rain_ (Leiden 2012) 1–7 and 188.

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to carry essential truth. This second translation of an omen text survived into our own age of science and technology only because a 17th-century scribe of minimal ability but great energy copied it. We owe him our grudging thanks.\footnote{I am grateful to the editor and anonymous readers of \textit{GRBS} for frank, perceptive, and helpful suggestions leading to a greatly improved revision of this article. They benefited the final version immeasurably.}

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