



EPIGRAMS IN CONTEXT:

GLIMPSES INTO MEDIEVAL SOUTHERN ITALIAN BOOK CULTURE

The Project

The Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams (DBBE) is an ongoing project at Ghent University that makes available textual and contextual data of **metrical paratexts** found in Byzantine manuscripts.

The Database currently provides around **12.500 distinct occurrences** to the academic community, alongside contextual information that places these epigrams within a wider cultural and historical setting.

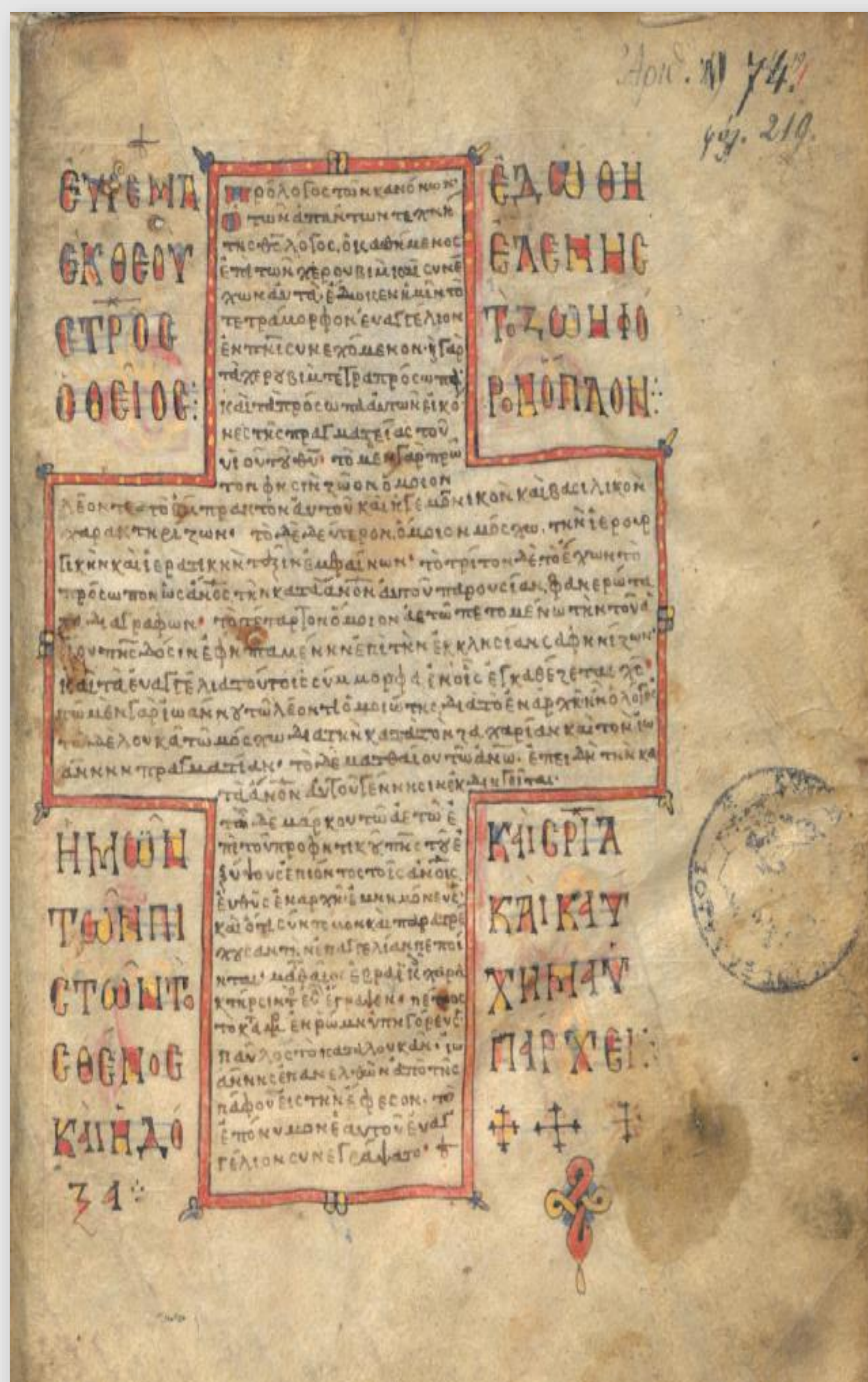
The project is **interdisciplinary**, bringing together philologists, linguists, and computer scientists to collaborate toward a common goal: uncovering the relationships between linguistic patterns and the historical development of the texts.

DBBE Book Culture Sub-project

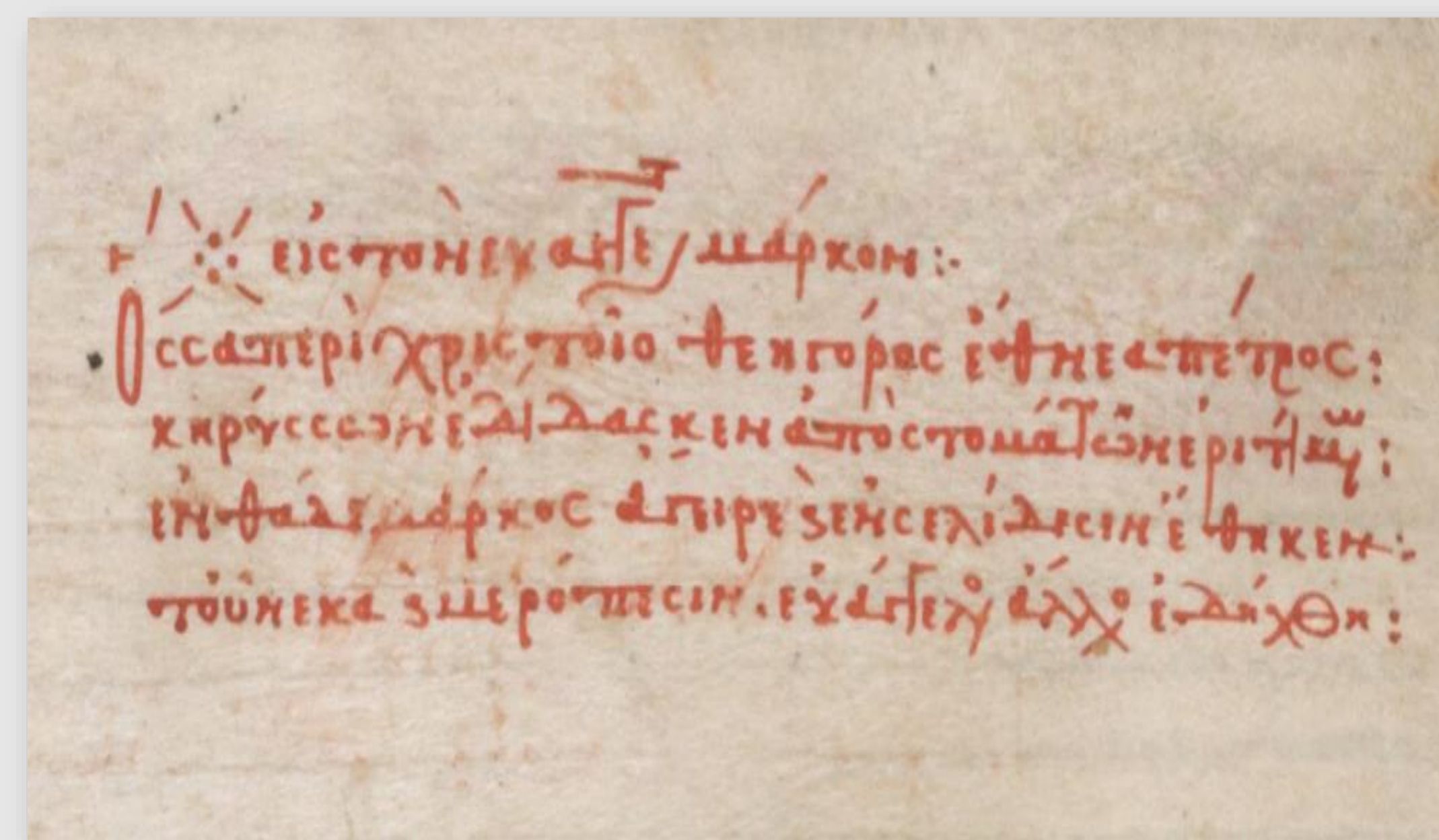
- Socio-cultural entanglement of book epigrams
- Metrical paratexts: closely related to the process of **book production and consumption**
- **New Testament manuscripts** produced in **Southern Italy** (10th-13th ce.)
- **Research questions:**
 - How do book epigrams express the scribe's self-representation?
 - How do book epigrams in biblical manuscripts compare to those in non-biblical manuscripts?
 - Which regional specificities do book epigrams reveal?
 - What do book epigrams reveal about attitudes of scribes and readers towards the main text?



Chicago - University Library, Joseph Regenstein Library 947, f. 151v



Athens - Ethnike Bibliotheke tes Hellados 74, f. 1r



Durham - Duke University Library 1, f. 47v

Self-Representation

The artist responsible for the decoration of the manuscript mentions the physical labor he put into his work. Individuals involved in book production often used book epigrams to pray for Christ to redeem their sins or to grant salvation.

Regional Specificities

The first verse of the epigram in the picture above, «Εὔρεμα ἐκ Θεοῦ ἐδώθη Ἐλένης», appears only in four Southern-Italian manuscripts. Formulas featured in book epigrams can sometimes be linked to specific regional contexts.

Dialogue with the author

The epigram above shows how the scribe found a way to align his spiritual journey with the holy figures he venerated in the texts. Author-related epigrams can reveal how users of biblical manuscripts engaged with the authority of the main text and expressed their spiritual identity.

Contact

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