

Συρμαιογραφεῖν

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The meaning of this verb (and the related adjective *συρμαιογράφος*) has been much discussed in connection with the palaeographically and culturally important question of the origin of the Greek minuscule script¹). However the formation of the words and the context in which they occur have not received the attention they deserve. These two points are in fact closely connected.

The verb occurs twice, the adjective once in related texts of the first half of the ninth century:

St. Theodoros Studites, oratio xi (laudatio S. Platonis Hegumeni), 16 (Migne, *PG* 99.820 A) *ποία γὰρ χεὶρ τῆς ἐκείνου δεξιᾶς μουσικώτερον ἐσυρμαιογράφησεν, ἢ τίς ἐπιπονώτερον τῆς ἐκείνου προθυμίας ἐσπουδαιογράφησεν; . . . πῶς ἂν τις ἐξαριθμήσειεν τοὺς τὰ ἐκείνου πονήματα εἰτ' οὖν βιβλιδάρια ἔχοντας, ἐκ διαφορῶν θείων Πατέρων ἀνθολογηθέντα . . .; ταῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς δὲ μοναῖς πόθεν ἄλλοθεν ἢ τῶν δέλτων εὐπορία ἢ οὐχὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐκείνου ἀγίων χειρῶν καὶ πόνων; ἃς οἱ μετιόντες καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν φωτιζόμεθα καὶ τὴν γραφίδα θαυμάζομεν ὅποια τι καὶ ἡλίκη.*

Id., epist. ad Naucratium (A. Mai-J. Cozza, *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca*, vol. 8, pars 1, no. 61, p. 50) *ἐργόχειρον ἔλειπέν μοι τοῦ γράφειν, δ' ἔχω εἰς πολλὴν παρηγορίαν καὶ βοήθειαν ψυχῆς· διὸ φρόντιζέ μοι ἀπαρτὶ ἐργόχειρα οἷα θέλεις συρμαιογράφα· μόνον μὴ ζημοῖς με εἰς τὰς τιμάς.*

Anon., *vita Nicolai Studitae* (Migne, *PG* 105.876 A–B) *καὶ γοῦν πρὸς τῇ ἐμπράκτῳ πολιτείᾳ τε καὶ διαγωγῇ, οὐδὲ τῆς ἐκ τῶν ἔργων κοινωνίας τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐπίσης ἀπελιμπάνετο· ἀλλ' ἦν τοῖς χειρσὶ κοπιῶν, καὶ δέλτους ἄριστα συρμεογραφῶν, εἰ καὶ τις ἄλλος, οἶμαι, τῇ ὠκύτητι χειρῶν, τὸν Ἀσαήλ ἐκείνον ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν ποδῶν ἐξισούμενος. καὶ μαρτυροῦσιν αἱ τε βίβλοι καὶ τὰ ἐκείνου πονήματα.*

No other instances are recorded and it is reasonable to regard the words as peculiar to the Studite monasteries (though to describe

¹) The most important contributors are T. W. Allen, "The Origin of the Greek Minuscule Hand", *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xl, 1920, 1–12; P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin* (Paris, 1971), 116–17; O. Kresten, "Litterae longariae quae graece syrmeta dicuntur, Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung", *Scriptorium*, xxiv, 1970, 305–17; id., "Einige zusätzliche Überlegungen zu *συρμαιογραφεῖν*", *Byz. Ztschr.* lxxiii, 1970, 278–82. Kresten in his first article gives an excellent history of the discussion. The bibliography on the origin of minuscule is enormous, but need not be gone into here, especially as fresh evidence is likely to be forthcoming from Sinai.

them as technical terms of the Studite scriptoria might be to go too far)²).

It is universally assumed that the first part of the compound is *σύρμα*, nomen rei actae from *σύρειν*. However this leaves the *-αι* totally unaccounted for: the word ought to be **συρματογραφείν*. One might at first sight suppose that it is derived from *συρμαία*, but the only meaning of that word is "emetic plant", which gives no acceptable sense for the compounds. Another approach is therefore required.

In the first passage St. Theodoros' rhetorical questions about his uncle and predecessor, St. Platon, form a studied contrast, with corresponding elements and an elegant *variatio* in their order: *ποία χεῖρ* corresponds to *τίς, τῆς ἐκείνου δεξιᾶς* to *τῆς ἐκείνου προθυμίας*, *μουσικώτερον* to *ἐπιπονώτερον*, and *ἐσυρμαιογράφησεν* to *ἐσπουδαιογράφησεν*. *σπουδαιογραφείν* is found only here and one may suppose it to have been formed for the occasion by analogy with *σπουδαιολογεῖν*. One may then continue and suppose *συρμαιο-* to come from the analogy of *σπουδαιο-*, *συρμαιογράφος* to be a later Rückbildung, and the Vita to have imitated the first passage³).

If this is so, it follows that the verb was coined for this or a very similar passage, and that the contrast with *σπουδαιογραφείν* is essential to the meaning⁴). The latter may in itself mean either *γράφειν σπουδαῖα* or *γράφειν τι σπουδαίως*⁵), but it is more natural in the context to take the former meaning as the primary one, with reference to St. Platon's copying of patristic texts. *συρμαιογραφείν* must then refer to the writing of texts which are not "serious", and in

²) On the Studite monasteries and their scriptoria see Kresten, *Scriptorium*, l. c., n. 34, and *Byz. Ztschr.* l. c., n. 2.

³) I assume that the formation is due to St. Theodoros: in the absence of critical editions of these texts the possibility that the analogy is due to a copyist cannot be totally excluded, but would be more likely if only one passage were involved. The spelling *συρμεόγραφος* (no difference of course in pronunciation) is unimportant. For the derivative nature of the Vita see Kresten, *Byz. Ztschr.* l. c., 281–2. For coinages by St. Theodoros see in general P. Speck, *Theodoros Studites: Jamben auf verschiedene Gegenstände* (Berlin, 1968), 96.

⁴) I cannot accept the conclusion of A. Diller, *Byz. Ztschr.*, 49, 1956, 335 n. 19, that from the rhetorical cast of the sentence it is doubtful if the two verbs mean anything definite.

⁵) Strictly speaking one ought to say that *σπουδαιογραφείν* means *σπουδαιογράφον εἶναι* and that **σπουδαιογράφος* may mean either *ὃς γράφει σπουδαῖα* or *ὃς γράφει τι σπουδαίως*. But the difference is slight and whether St. Theodoros would have been conscious of the middle step seems doubtful.

a Byzantine monastic context this can mean only "non-religious", "secular". To relate this to any possible sense of *σύγμα* and *σύρειν* is difficult, and it seems necessary to make it refer primarily to the manner of writing rather than the content, unlike *σπουδαυογραφεῖν*, to which however it is still opposed. This is undoubtedly awkward, but not I think impossibly so; I can certainly see no alternative.

For the exact meaning one can then choose between the various proposals which remain feasible after the critique of Kresten and Lemerle: either "to write with strokes stretched above and below the line" (Kresten) or "to write with frequent ligatures so that the line of writing is stretched out" (Combefis and Allen). Either of these must of course refer to minuscule writing, not uncial.

The element of uncertainty remains rather high, but if these conclusions are anything near the truth one important result must follow: in St. Theodoros' time minuscule was not used for serious, i. e. religious texts. It would not be at all surprising for conservative Byzantines not to use the new script (wherever derived, by whom, and for what purpose) for their sacred texts. But this is not a state of affairs which can have persisted for long: the earliest dated minuscule manuscript remains the Uspensky Gospels, copied in 835 by no other than Nicolas Studites.

The Oscan-Umbrian Third Person Plural

Secondary Verbal Ending *-ns*

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In this paper it is suggested that the problematic Oscan-Umbrian third person plural secondary verbal ending *-ns* derives from **-nis*, a contamination of the ancient third person plural secondary ending in **-N* (= *m* or *n*) and the third person singular secondary suffix **-is*.

One of the persistent enigmas of comparative Italic linguistics is the origin of the Oscan-Umbrian third person plural secondary verbal ending *-ns*. Through the years this morpheme has engendered a great deal of speculation concerning its appearance in these dialects. For example, Von Planta (1897: 281) argues: "Daß die in Frage stehende Erscheinung daraus zu erklären ist, daß das ursprüngliche *-t* zu *-d*, das urspr. *-nt* zu *-ns* wurde, während aus