

### **The Transmission of Early Christian Homilies from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages**

**Veranstalter:** Hartmut Leppin / Philip Michael Forness, Leibniz-Projekt „Polyphonie des spätantiken Christentums“; Forschungskolleg Humanwissenschaften Bad Homburg  
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Homilies represent one of the largest and yet least explored corpora of late antique literature. Advances in research over the last fifty years have demonstrated the importance of sermons for both intellectual and social histories of late antiquity. Yet the transmission of these works to the present and the reasons for their preservation remain little understood.

The survival of any sermon from late antiquity is the result of deliberate efforts and decisions of communities and individuals. In late antiquity, this entailed the recording and distribution of homilies in manuscripts for wider audiences. In the Middle Ages, communities recopied and reorganized homilies into new collections designed to meet their own interests. Across this entire time, homilies underwent translation into almost every literary culture of early and medieval Christianity. These diverse processes account for the survival of such texts and point to a common problem of the transmission of early Christian homilies.

A conference organized by the DFG-Leibniz Project „Polyphony of Late Antique Christianity“ of the Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main in cooperation with the Forschungskolleg Humanwissenschaften Bad Homburg focused on this problem. The participants addressed four of the largest single-author corpora of late antique homilies: John Chrysostom (340/350–407), Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430), Shenoute of Atripe (c. 348–465), and Jacob of Serugh (451–521). As much as these authors differed in terms of geographic origin, language, and theology, the extant homilies attributed to each of them present common challenges for scholarship.

The texts seem to have acquired a life of their own through their extensive use by later communities. Indeed, they were shaped as much by the communities that transmitted them as by those in which or for which they were composed.

The conference's first session focused on the sermons of John Chrysostom. EMILIO BONFIGLIO (Vienna) discussed the extant works of the bishop in Armenian. He illustrated three fundamental challenges of working with the Armenian *Corpus Chrysostomicum*: first, a predominance of nineteenth-century Venetian *editiones principes* that, while valuable, often changed the Armenian text to match the Greek; second, a large number of unedited manuscripts; and third, difficulties in detecting forgeries. He offered possible remedies to this situation: an integrated approach to Greco-Latin and Oriental Patristics as well as further collaborative work in the field.

SEVER VOICU (Vatican City) critically analyzed patterns of the circulation and use of homilies authored by or attributed to John Chrysostom during the fifth and sixth centuries. He especially emphasized non-Greek traditions of homilies attributed to Chrysostom. He identified possible inconsistencies between commonly accepted timeframes for translation processes and philological evidence in the case of Coptic translations while also pointing out weaknesses in exclusively philological dating in the case of the Armenian corpus.

The reception of Chrysostom's homilies into Slavonic was the topic of the contribution by ANETA DIMITROVA (Sofia). She examined an early-tenth-century collection of Chrysostom and Pseudo-Chrysostom homilies known as the *Zlatostruy*, which was produced in Preslav, the capital of the then Bulgarian kingdom. She pointed out the pivotal role of the church calendar on the selection process alongside the prevalence of homilies dealing with issues of virtue and sin. Despite the overall high quality of the Slavonic translation, this collection exhibits some challenges associated with a changed cultural context, the realia imbedded in Chrysostom's sermons, and philological mistakes.

ALEXANDROS TSAKOS (Bergen) shifted

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the focus to Chrysostom's treatment in Nubia. Having retraced both the pre-Justinianic evangelization of Upper Nubia and the multilingual discourses within different Nubian kingdoms, he adduced the use of the epithet „golden mouth“ as evidence for a certain level of familiarity with Chrysostom even in Old Nubian. He also emphasized the central role of his homilies in the early spread of religious texts as well as the possibility of indirect references based on a close examination of the extant manuscripts, i. e., concerning the possibility of continued liturgical use of Greek based on the Greek manuscripts' high quality.

The public lecture by WENDY MAYER (Adelaide) provided a broader framework by focusing on the possible meanings and different modes of transmission across different homiletical corpora. She first critically inquired into the implicit assumptions underlying philological work on homilies handed down to the present through a set of different communities. She then emphasized the role of these communities as crucial stakeholders in the transmission process and their impact on what to scholars might seem an unadulterated original composition. Given the influence of historical events on the demise and emergence of target languages for translation processes and the rather recent preoccupation of audiences with authenticity and textual integrity, she also recommended the study of any given homily's use, transmission, and edition alongside the pursuit of a philological reconstruction of the textual archetype.

The second session of the conference shifted the focus to the homilies of Augustine of Hippo. SHARI BOODTS (Leuven) demonstrated the advantages of employing digital methods in retracing a large corpus's transmission history. Showing that systematization took place in several stages, she illustrated how during the Middle Ages inauthentic sermons outnumbered authentic ones and argued that discarding categories like „contamination“ or „corruption“ becomes necessary when studying the history of the reception of sermons. She also described her goal of creating a database permitting comparison not only of different sermons but also of groupings of associated texts and variants of the same homily.

CLEMENS WEIDMANN (Salzburg) continued the discussion on Augustine by examining a late antique homily collection pseudonymously attributed to Fulgentius of Ruspe. Based on its source material and lack of later preachers, this collection seems to date to the fifth- or sixth-century and reflects a North African origin. The collection is largely organized around the biblical text and the ecclesiastical festal calendar. It shares many similarities with another antique collection of Augustine's sermons, known as the *Collectio Campana*. The Pseudo-Fulgentius collection features a set of anonymous twelve prefaces as examples of how to begin a sermon. While Weidmann traced most of these anonymous prefaces back to known homilies of Augustine and other authors, he argued that one of these prefaces represents a previously unknown sermon of Augustine.

Concluding the second session, GERT PARTOENS (Leuven) discussed the transmission of a later collection of homilies known as the *Quinquaginta homiliae*. A set of manuscripts within this collection, which are from a limited geographical area that corresponds to modern-day Belgium and northern France, has presented challenges. Partoens demonstrated that these manuscripts share a „Vorlage“, whose folio leaves, containing three of the homilies, have been disordered. A text analysis of one of these homilies shows how these manuscripts bring together two separate, unrelated stages of the transmission of Augustine's homilies. The case study on this collection reveals the difficulty of developing a stemma of homilies as well as the potential of such studies to expose interactions between the communities that produced and used these collections.

The third session focused on the works of Shenoute of Atripe. DAVID BRASSE (Columbus, OH) discussed the transformation of Shenoute the Monk into Shenoute the Author. Shenoute's corpus primarily survives in two collections: *Canons* and *Discourses*. The end of *Canon 1*, an ostrakon in the Louvre, and an incipit list in Vienna demonstrate how Shenoute's works were canonized. A closer examination of volume 4 of *Discourses* reveals how Shenoute's works were assembled to create a corpus. Through these efforts,

Shenoute became an author much in the same way as other major late antique figures.

While Brakke focused on manuscripts of Shenoute's writings found in the White Monastery, ALIN SUCIU (Göttingen) discussed evidence for the circulation of his works outside this setting. Shenoute became an important figure in Egyptian monasticism in his lifetime and corresponded with leaders in Alexandria. Yet he is conspicuously absent from late antique sources regarding Egyptian monasticism. His genuine works saw circulation only within a restricted area around the White Monastery. Suciú argued that outside the White Monastery Shenoute primarily was known as a miracle worker rather than an author.

STEPHEN DAVIS (New Haven, CT) addressed the Arabic translation of Shenoute's sermon *Good is the Time for Launching a Boat to Sail*. The full Coptic text and an Arabic translation appear in MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Copt. 69 which dates to the fifteenth or sixteenth century and contains a rite for the Feast of the Desert of Apa Shenoute. This feast was celebrated within the monastic federation in which Shenoute once lived. The homily of Shenoute in this manuscript participated in the choreography of the rite and provided a vehicle for Shenoute's prophetic voice to participate in it.

CAROLINE SCHROEDER (Stockton, CA) demonstrated the use of corpus linguistics to analyze Shenoute's works. The Coptic Scriptorium project<sup>1</sup> features a richly annotated version of Shenoute's works linked to a comprehensive dictionary and enables users to visualize his works in various formats. The suite of tools offered by Coptic Scriptorium facilitates comparisons of the use of loan words in an individual homily versus a corpus, complex searches regarding specific parts of speech, and the linguistic analysis of different corpora to help determine authorship. Coptic Scriptorium represents a new frontier in the investigation of Shenoute's corpus.

The fourth session focused on Jacob of Serugh. PHILIP MICHAEL FORNESS (Frankfurt) examined the transmission of John Chrysostom's and Jacob's homilies in late antiquity. Twenty-eight Syriac

manuscripts from before the year 700 organize homilies according to the biblical text. These manuscripts exhibit efforts to optimize these collections for biblical exegesis, including biblical ordering, informative titles, and harmonizing the biblical text. Colophons reveal a picture of the communities who used and produced these manuscripts. While such collections are known otherwise, the manuscripts of Jacob's homilies reveal a pattern of organization distinct to the Syriac tradition.

ANDY HILKENS (Ghent) surveyed Armenian homilies attributed to Jacob of Serugh, including fifteen homilies known in Syriac and ten homilies that only appear in Armenian. The earliest manuscripts date to the twelfth century with some dating to the reign of Gregory II Vkasaser (1066–1105). Jacob's homilies saw circulation in several different types of collections, including collections of select discourses, festal homilies, and books of sermons with introductions. The inclusion of Jacob's homilies in the *Menologium* of Gregory of Khlat (1350–1426) and an Armenian lectionary led to the wider dispersion of his works in the Armenian tradition.

TAMARA PATARIDZE (Louvain) examined the Georgian translation of Jacob's *Homily on the Nativity*. Arabic translations often served as intermediaries for the translation of Greek and Syriac works into Georgian. Manuscripts from Mount Sinai provide the earliest evidence for the circulation of Jacob's works in Arabic. His works were deliberately excised from several of these manuscripts. One manuscript (Sin. Ar. 457) was used as a base text for other Georgian translations and may have originally contained an Arabic translation of the *Homily on the Nativity*. In her view, this manuscript likely served as the base text for the Georgian translation.

TED ERHO (Munich) presented a joint paper by AARON BUTTS (Washington, D.C.) and himself on the homilies of Jacob of Serugh in Ethiopic translation and the Arabic translations that functioned as intermediaries. Of the nineteen Ethiopic homilies attributed to Jacob, twelve are authentic, one is spurious, and six await identification. The majority circulated in homilies designed for the Ethiopic litur-

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://copticcriptorium.org/> (30.01.2019)

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gical year created around the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries; only two homilies remain in liturgical collections today. Jacob's works were brought into the Ethiopian tradition as part of broader efforts to create homiliaries for the liturgical year.

The examination of the transmission of the four homiletical corpora led to the identification of several promising points of comparison for future analysis of the homilies that survive and the communities that chose to preserve them. First, the importance attached to the authenticity of sermons has influenced the scholarly attention given to certain sermons at the expense of others. Second, the widespread translation of the sermons of some authors contrasts the transmission of others almost exclusively in their original language. Third, the relatively limited circulation of some corpora puts into relief the wide circulation of others far from their places of origins.

#### **Conference Overview:**

##### *Session 1: John Chrysostom*

Emilio Bonfiglio (Vienna): John Chrysostom in Oriental Dress: The Armenian File

Sever Voicu (Vatican City): Homilies by and attributed to John Chrysostom: Circulation and Use in the 5th and 6th Centuries

Aneta Dimitrova (Sofia): Selection and Adaptation of John Chrysostom's Homilies in the Early Slavonic Tradition

Alexandros Tsakos (Bergen): From *Chrysostomus Nubianus* to *Corpus Chrysostomicum Nubianum*

##### *Public Lecture:*

Wendy Mayer (Adelaide): The Multiple Afterlives of Early Christian Homilies: Why and to whom does transmission matter?

##### *Session 2: Augustine of Hippo*

Shari Boodts (Leuven): Augustine's Sermons in the Middle Ages: An Overview of the Tradition and a Plan to Explore It

Clemens Weidmann (Salzburg): Pseudo-Fulgentius: An Underrated Witness for the Transmission of Augustine's Sermons

Gert Partoens (Leuven): Order Out of Chaos: On the Transmission of the *Quinquaginta homiliae* in Belgium and Northern France

##### *Session 3: Shenoute of Atripe*

David Brakke (Columbus, OH): The Organization of Shenoute's Discourses: The Making of an Author and his Works in Late Antiquity

Alin Suciu (Göttingen): The Circulation of Shenoute's Homilies outside the White Monastery

Stephen Davis (New Haven, CT): The Voice of a Saint from Beyond the Grave: Posthumous Performances of a Sermon by Shenoute

Caroline Schroeder (Stockton, CA): A Homily is a Homily is a Homily is a Corpus: Digital Approaches to Shenoute

##### *Session 4: Jacob of Serugh*

Philip Forness (Frankfurt): The Homilies of John Chrysostom and Jacob of Serugh in Syriac Manuscripts from Late Antiquity

Andy Hilken (Ghent): The Armenian Reception of the Homilies of Jacob of Serugh: The Manuscript Tradition

Tamara Pataridze (Louvain): Crossing Boundaries: Jacob of Serugh through the Homiliaries

Ted Erho (Munich) / Aaron Butts (Washington, D.C.): Homilies attributed to Jacob of Serugh in Ethiopic

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