

The Hagiographic *Dossier* of Saint Pantoleon and the Spread of His Worshipping

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1. The research project: summary	2
2. The research project: goals and methods	4
3. First findings: “material dynamism” and “textual dynamism”	5
4. Perspectives	7
5. Bibliography	7

1. The research project: summary

I'm pursuing a Ph.D. in History – *curriculum* Hagiography: Sources and Methods for the History of the Saints' Worshipping – at the Humanities Department at the Università degli Studi di Roma "Tor Vergata" (Rome, Italy), and my research project deals with the hagiographic *dossier* of Saint Pantoleon.

Pantoleon (*Pantolèon* or *Panteleimon*¹ in Greek; *Pantaleo* in Latin) is a saint healer² from Nicomedia, as well as a IV-century martyr during the time of Emperor Maximianus (305-311). Pantoleon is celebrated on July 27³ and, as the big hagiographic *dossier* of the saint shows, he has been widely worshipped throughout the East and the West since the ancient times. The *dossier* consists of⁴: a Greek *Passio*, which came to us in several different re-elaborations⁵, including the "rewriting" by Symeon Metaphrastes⁶ (*BHG* 1412z-1414m); and a series of *laudationes*, again in Greek (*BHG* 1415-1418c). Within the Latin world, the *dossier* also comprises several translations from the Greek language⁷ (*BHL* 6429-6442), as well as pieces of news regarding his miracles and the transfer of the saint's relics in the West (*BHL* 6443-6448). Lastly, the *dossier* includes additional versions of Saint Pantoleon's legend in Armenian, Georgian, Coptic, and Arabic (*BHO*

¹ The origin of the name *Panteleimon* is narrated in the *Passio* of the saint: Little before his beheading, Pantoleon begs God's forgiveness for all his sins and for those of his executioners. A voice coming from the sky proclaims that, from that moment onward, his name would be *Panteleimon*, «he who has mercy on everyone» (*Passio Pant.* 26).

² As such, the narration of his *Passio* shows several similarities with the legends of the most famous saint healers like Cosmas and Damian; to know more cf. G. LUONGO, *La Passio S. Pantaleonis nella tradizione martirologica*, cit. *infra*, pp. 87-89.

³ Sometimes, Saint Pantoleon is worshipped on July 28 and other dates, probably to be linked to episodes of dedication and translation, see G. LUONGO, *San Pantaleone in Occidente*, cit. *infra*, pp. 27-30.

⁴ The relevant repertoires of hagiographical sources are: for the Greek texts, the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, edited by F. Halkin, in three volumes (Bruxelles 1957³), marked with the acronym *BHG*, and the *Novum Auctarium Bibliothecae Hagiographicae Graecae*, in *Subsidia Hagiographica* 67 (Bruxelles 1984); for the Latin texts, the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis* (Bruxelles 1989-1901), marked with the acronym *BHL*, and the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina, Novum Supplementum*, in *Subsidia Hagiografica* 70 (Bruxelles 1986); and for the texts in Oriental languages, the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Bruxelles 1910), marked with the acronym *BHO*.

⁵ Vasilij V. Latyšev worked on the critical edition of the *Passio antiquior* (B. LATYŠEV, *Hagiographica Graeca inedita*, in *Mémoires de l'Académie imp. de St-Pétersbourg*, VIII sér., XII/2 [1914], pp. 40-53).

⁶ Included in the volume 115 of the *Patrologia Graeca*, coll. 448B-477B.

⁷ The most popular one was edited in the XV century by B. MOMBRIUS, *Sanctuarium seu Vitae sanctorum*. Novam editionem curaverunt duo monachi Solesmenses, Paris 1910 [anastatic reprint Hildesheim-New York 1978], pp. 347-353.

835-837). But more texts must be researched beyond the now outdated *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis*.

It is important to note that this *dossier*, although very complex, generally appears homogeneous, as far as we know. The legend of Saint Pantoleon developed, after all, in a Greek environment, well after the narrated events actually took place⁸.

The rich historical, literary, and topographic-archeological documentation of the worshipping of Saint Pantoleon gives evidence of the popular role he played since ancient times: that of a saint thaumaturge⁹. In an argumentative comparison between the new festivities of the saints and the old pagan cults, Theodoret of Cyrillus talks about Saint Pantoleon's *panegyris*, even though the name of the saint (in the form of *Panteleimon*) only appears in some codices of the textual tradition of his *Graecarum affectionum curatio* (8, 69).

Moreover, in his *De Aedificiis* (I, 9), Procopius of Caesarea tells us that, in the Byzantine capital, Justinian renovated an ancient *martyrion* of Pantoleon and the hospice for the poor patients next to it; emperor Justinian also renovated the Palestinian monastery of Saint Pantoleon in the desert around the Jordan River. An epigraphic testimony from the V-VI century also tells us about the presence of the saint's relics in Africa, where the worshipping of Pantoleon is recorded by some later terracotta tiles showcasing his effigy and, at times, his name in its Western form *s(an)c(tu)s Pantaleo*. The transfer of Saint Pantoleon's relics to Lyon likely dates to the IX century; two following transfers to the Abbey of Saint Pantoleon in Cologne likely date to the second half of the X century. In Italy, the saint's relics are preserved in Rome, Brindisi, Crema, Genoa, Venice, Benevento and Lucca. The most famous relic is the saint's blood mixed with milk, now preserved in Ravello, among other places¹⁰. According to the legend, it was brought to Ravello from Constantinople by Amalfitan merchants probably between the XI and XIII centuries, when there were other transfers of his relics in the area.

Moreover, the iconographic representations of the saint, many of which – especially the oldest – don't feature him as a doctor, are very important. In some other cases, such as in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome, specific medical instruments are depicted. Nevertheless, the representations of Saint Pantoleon mostly deal with the scenes of his *Passio*, from the miracles he performed to the tortures he endured¹¹.

⁸ Cf. G. LUONGO, *San Pantaleone in Occidente*, cit. *infra*, pp. 22-23.

⁹ It should be remembered that the sanctity model represented by Pantoleon, as a doctor, is characterized by the fact that he exercised his profession for free.

¹⁰ The relic of Saint Pantoleon's blood mixed with milk comes from the legend, which is explained in the *Passio*, that when the saint died, milk gushed from his body instead of blood (*Passio Pant.* 27).

¹¹ Cf. *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, Freiburg [et alibi] 1968-1976, s.v.

2. The research project: goals and methods

My research project consists of a careful study of the whole hagiographic *dossier* of Saint Pantoleon, covering not only the different versions of the *Passio* included there, but also the panegyrics composed in his honor and the texts dealing with the transfer of his relics and with the miracles he performed.

The core of my study will be the critical edition of the unedited Greek texts, i. e. the different versions of the *Passio* (*BHG* 1413-1413h) and an anonymous *laudatio* (*BHG* 1418c). I will also side the longer texts with a study of the brief Greek texts of the *Synaxarion*, in its various families, and of the hymnography. At the same time, I will compare the Greek text of the *Passio* with the several existing Latin translations and, especially, with a Coptic version, which could be very useful to understand what might be the most ancient version of the text¹².

Additionally, I will keep in mind that the *dossier* of Pantoleon is partly intertwined with that of another saint from Nicomedia, Hermolaus (*BHG* 2173; *BHL* 3858). Hermolaus, in fact, would have converted Pantoleon, and his martyrdom, which occurred with that of two other saints of Nicomedia, Hermippus and Hermocrates, is narrated within the *Passio* of Saint Pantoleon. Therefore, I commit myself to delve into the figure of Hermolaus at the same time, by analyzing his smaller hagiographic *dossier*, in comparison with the much larger *dossier* of Pantoleon¹³.

Lastly, I will analyze the history of another little-known saint, who seems to be somewhat connected to the more-famous Saint Pantoleon: Saint Olympios, martyr of Tkow, in Egypt¹⁴.

We have one panegyric and one fragmentary *Passio* about Saint Olympios, both of them in Coptic and published by L.-Th. Lefort in 1950¹⁵. This saint directly concerns my research because, as Lefort revealed, the story of his martyrdom is almost identical to the Coptic *Passio* of Saint Pantoleon (*BHO* 837)¹⁶ and to his Greek metaphrastic version (*BHG* 1414). Both Pantoleon and Olympios are Christian doctors from Nicomedia. They perform the same miracles, meet the same

¹² Cf. *infra*, n. 16.

¹³ It is however important to remember the presence of Hermolaus' relics from Constantinople, such as that of his arm, which was transferred to the West and is now conserved in the parish church of Calci, and whose Greek epigraphs caused new debate, cf. F. D'AUTO, *Le ambiguità di un reliquiario. Il «braccio di s. Ermolao» nella pieve di Calci (Pisa)*, in *Erga/Logoi* 1 (2013), nr. 2, pp. 31-72 (with previous bibliography).

¹⁴ Cf. J.-M. SAUGET, *Olimpio*, in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, IX, Roma 1967, pp. 1162-1164.

¹⁵ L.-Th. LEFORT, *Un martyr inconnu, S. Olympios*, in *Le Muséon* 63 (1950), pp. 1-23; Saint Olympios is not mentioned in the previous *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis*, dated 1910.

¹⁶ Edited in G. QUISPÉL – J. ZANDEE, *Some Coptic Fragments from the Martyrdom of Saint Pantoleon*, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 16 (1962), pp. 42-52.

people and endure the same tortures. Only the epilogue differentiates the two saints: While Pantoleon dies in Nicomedia, Olympios is exiled to Egypt – sent to Arrianus, Antioch's governor – and martyred in Tkow. (A bishop from Tkow named Moses, in fact, pronounced the aforementioned panegyric.)

Lefort, however, never commented on whether Olympios' panegyric and *Passio* were authentic, and why they seemed to replicate the texts about Pantoleon. From the panegyric, however, it is possible to hypothesize that Olympios was actually worshipped locally: There exists, in fact, a place near Tkow where his relics can be found.

It's also interesting to note that the feast days of both Pantoleon and Olympios are very close to each other: Olympios is worshipped on July 23, while Pantoleon is worshipped just four days after, on July 27, according to the Greek calendar. In the Coptic calendar, however, Pantoleon is worshipped on July 13 and October 12.

Once I have exhaustively examined Saint Pantoleon's hagiographic *dossier*, I commit myself to identifying and highlighting its historical implications, and to delineating a history of his worshipping, especially in relation to its spread in the Mediterranean area (Byzantine empire, Italy, Middle East and Northern Africa) – also on the basis of the saint's calendar celebrations of epigraphic, iconographic, sigillographic, archaeological, toponymic, and prosopographic testimonies – from Late Antiquity until the end of the Middle Ages.

3. First findings: “material dynamism” and “textual dynamism”

In the first months of my research, I consulted all the catalogues of libraries where Greek manuscripts are kept¹⁷. Since the inventory of the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (1412z-1418c) is far from complete, this analysis work was essential to identify the Greek manuscripts containing the Greek texts about Pantoleon – about his *Passio* and his worshipping. I paid particular attention to those codices containing the texts I want to edit, but I also identified the manuscripts of the texts that have already been published. In fact, the publication of these texts is mostly prepared using only one codex, even if a lot of manuscripts exist¹⁸.

Thanks to this research I discovered around 50 manuscripts that, according to the *incipit* of the *Passiones* there contained, I began ordering without changing the partition of the *Passiones*

¹⁷ My analysis began with J.-M. OLIVIER, *Répertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits grecs de Marcel Richard*, Brepols-Turnhout 1995.

¹⁸ I will have to study these texts as well because the information found in catalogues are not always accurate and reliable, especially in older catalogues. So, we can't exclude that one of these manuscripts actually has a different text from that indicated by the catalogue.

presented in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*.

It's interesting to note that all these manuscripts are preserved in the most diverse library collections spanning all over the world: from the Vatican Library to the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (in Paris); to Jerusalem; to Greek libraries in Athens, Lesbos, Meteora, and Mount Athos; to Oxford, England; St. Petersburg, Russia; and several Italian cities (Milan, Venice, Brescia, and Genoa). The fact that all these manuscripts are "scattered" around the world allows us right away to understand the great movement capacity of the hagiographic texts and the means by which they move: The manuscripts. From the different centers of productions of these codices, in fact, the manuscripts travelled to all corners of the world.

Apart from this physical and material "dynamism," we should also keep in mind something else. When I started working on the different manuscripts, I noticed right away something interesting: Those codices that, according to the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, contained the same version of Saint Pantoleon's *Passio*, actually presented partially conflicting texts, so much so that it's possible to state that they're not narrating the same version of Pantoleon's martyrdom. Such discrepancies don't concern the quantity, the typology, and the order of the events narrated in the *Passio*. In fact, the events happening before and after the martyrdom and the tortures Pantoleon endured during the *passio* itself follow one another always consistently in the manuscripts I've analyzed so far. But there are many textual differences and sometimes the narration of a same event is longer or shorter. It's of course possible to identify certain affinities between the manuscripts, in terms of style and lexicon.

However, only by reading all of the manuscripts will I be probably able to identify a *stemma codicum* that might explain the disparities I've noticed so far¹⁹. Of course, it will be necessary to review the subdivision of the *BHG*. (The *BHG* is, in fact, an impressive work, but it is evident that, to compile it, the authors didn't read the entirety of the texts and used only their *incipit* and *explicit* to divide the different versions of the *Passiones*.)

Starting from these considerations, it will be possible to talk about a "dynamism" within the texts themselves, which is a peculiar feature of most hagiographic texts from the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages²⁰. Whoever deals with hagiographic sources often encounters adaptations of the original texts, simple variations, actual re-writings, and different redactions, often longer (as we've

¹⁹ To learn more about the problems of creating critical editions of hagiographic sources and of applying the method of critical analysis of classical texts developed by Karl Lachmann (1793-1851), see the volume edited by Francesco Scorza Barcellona and titled *L'edizione critica delle fonti agiografiche*, Roma 2004 (Sanctorum, 1).

²⁰ One of the greatest hagiographers ever, the Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye (1859-1941), states that the manuscripts of hagiographic texts are characterized by «un mouvement perpétuel qui rend très difficile à saisir non seulement l'état initial d'une texte, mais un moment donné de son évolution» (H. DELEHAYE, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, Bruxelles 1966², p. 260).

seen in Saint Pantoleon's *Passio*). Investigating these textual changes is a work that's far from being futile. Trying to decode the different redactions and variations of the texts makes it possible to insert it in the dynamism of its becoming, and to analyze the text more deeply in order to understand its functions, across time: What was in that text? What's no longer there? What's added in another text? When did the addition happen? Did the hagiographic model change through time²¹?

4. Perspectives

Since the 1960s, the cult of saints has become one of the most important fields of interest for scholars specializing in Medieval Studies. And the *Vitae* and *Passiones* of the Saints – previously considered nothing more than legends – have finally regained full dignity as legitimate historical sources.

Since then, the connection between the hagiographic sources and the history of society has become an essential point of view through which one can look at the lives of the saints. In fact, the hagiographic sources often provide fundamental elements to understand the society in which the saints lived, whether or not the narrated facts are truthful.

Unfortunately, the philological study of hagiographic sources hasn't been fully developed yet, so we don't have access to all the hagiographic sources in their entirety.

My project hopes to make a group of unedited texts available, with the goal of reducing the aforementioned shortage of critical editions. Only after accomplishing this step (making the hagiographic sources available through the critical editions), we'll have the chance to analyze these texts and understand the relationships between them and the society in which these texts were conceived.

5. Bibliography

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²¹ Cf. E. PAOLI, *Agiografia, filologia, storia*, in F. SCORZA BARCELLONA, *L'edizione critica delle fonti agiografiche*, Roma 2004 (Sanctorum, 1), pp. 51-65, especially p. 63.

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