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Empire in Crisis: Gothic Invasions and Roman Historiography

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Wiener Dexipp-Fragmenten (Dexippus Vindobonensis)

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Palaeographical and Codicological Remarks on the Vienna Dexippus Palimpsest*

The new historical text known as *Scythica Vindobonensia* or *Dexippus Vindobonensis*, convincingly identified as fragments from the *Skythika* by the third-century AD historian Dexippus of Athens, has survived on four parchment leaves which originally belonged to a mediaeval (Byzantine) manuscript of the eleventh century.¹ Each of the extant folios contains text on both sides, the recto and the verso. Each page contains a single column of 30 lines of the historical text. Hence eight manuscript pages of 240 lines in total have been preserved, while the number of characters in each line varies from 29 to 44 (Figs. 1–6²). Due to changes over the centuries outlined below, this text is nowadays invisible and hidden under the last eight pages of the *Codex (Vindobonensis) historicus graecus* 73 kept at the Austrian National Library in Vienna, fols. 192r, 192v, 193r, 193v, 194r, 194v, 195r, and 195v (Figs. 7–14).³

* The following remarks summarise the main palaeographical and codicological facts about the Vienna palimpsest of Dexippus in the *Codex hist. gr.* 73. They result from a Colloquium of specialists in Greek palaeography and the two editors of the *Scythica Vindobonensia* which took place on 7–8 May 2017 at the Austrian National Library and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Division of Byzantine Research) in Vienna, subsequent to the conference presented in this volume. The authors are listed in alphabetical order. The following description of the palimpsest brings up to date the description in Grusková 2010, 42–53, the very first publication on the discovery of the Vienna palimpsest of Dexippus.

¹ For a survey of the deciphering of the palimpsest, a preliminary transcription of six pages, and some first considerations on the text see Grusková / Martin / Kresten 2018 (2019); Martin / Grusková 2014a (fols. 192v+193r); Martin / Grusková 2014b (fols. 194v, 195r); Grusková / Martin 2014 (fol. 194r); Grusková / Martin 2015 (fol. 195v); Grusková / Martin 2017a (with an addendum ad fol. 192v, lin. 17); Grusková / Martin 2017b (with an addendum ad fol. 195v, lin. 6–10). The preliminary transcription is reprinted in Anhang I in this volume, pp. 543–548; for the images of the palimpsest see Anhang II, pp. 549–564; for a list of publications related to the *Scythica Vindobonensia* see Anhang III, pp. 565–570.

² For the Figures quoted in this contribution see Anhang II, pp. 551–564.

³ See Grusková 2010, 42–53, 179–181 (Abb. 7–9) (with further bibliography); Hunger 1961, 82–83.

The palimpsest in context

In the thirteenth century, the eleventh-century manuscript of Dexippus was washed off the parchment and the valuable writing material, made from animal skin, was reused for Christian texts. The four folios thus became a palimpsest. The Greek minuscule of two thirteenth-century anonymous scribes — one on fols. 192r–193r which contain a part of the *Descriptio constitutionis monasterii Studii* by Theodorus Studita (Figs. 7–9)⁴ and another on fols. 193v–194v which contain prayers (Figs. 10–12)⁵ — shows some characteristics of the late “zypriotisch-palästinensischer Stil” and can most probably be dated to the first half of the thirteenth century.⁶ The new texts were written parallel to and partly on top of the lines of the eleventh-century manuscript of Dexippus, thus covering the erased writing to a great extent. The four folios were subsequently bound together with seven other palimpsest leaves (fols. 185–191, *Synodicon of Orthodoxy*) as a kind of appendix into a tenth-century codex of the *Constitutiones Apostolorum* (fols. 1–184), a collection of ecclesiastical law.⁷ The original format and the mise-en-page of the eleventh-century manuscript of Dexippus were preserved, although several millimetres of the outer margins were cut off to fit the new dimensions of about 240 × 165 mm, as a damaged marginal note on fol. 194v (Fig. 4: [Δε]κίου [δ]ημη[γ]ορί[α] indicates). The exact place and time where and when the four folios were reused remain unknown. A more profound analysis of the upper texts, which considering their commonplace content would not be an easy task, might or might not give a clue. Nevertheless, the text of Dexippus could have been washed off the parchment and the two bifolios prepared for recycling even at a place different from the place of their reuse, since parchment folios from discarded manuscripts had commercial value and could be purchased.⁸ It is also uncertain whether this part was produced together with the first part of the appendix, the *Synodicon of Orthodoxy*,⁹ on fols. 185–191 which constitute a separate quire, since

⁴ Cf. the title on fol. 192r (Fig. 7): Τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Θεοδώρου τοῦ Στουδίτου περὶ τῆς τῶν ἐν βρώμασιν ποσότητος καὶ ποιότητος, with variations in comparison to Dmitrievskij 1895, 224–238 and PG 99, 1704–1720. Cf. Hunger 1961, 83; Grusková 2010, 45.

⁵ Cf. Hunger 1961, 83; Kotzabassi 2004, 112; Grusková 2010, 45.

⁶ Cf. Stefec 2013, 136–137: “Die obere Schrift der palimpsestierten Blätter weist zahlreiche Verbindungen zum zypriotisch-palästinensischen Raum auf; nicht ohne Bedeutung ist die Verwendung tiefschwarzer Tinte. Der Kopist bemüht sich etwas ungeschickt um einen formalen Duktus, der bei einzelnen Buchstabenformen an den «style epsilon» erinnert (vgl. die Pseudo-Ligaturen beim Epsilon, gespaltene Gamma, vergrößertes Beta), gibt diese Stilisierung jedoch stellenweise auf und verwendet ein Formular, das später in die «chypriote bouclée» eingeht”. Cf. Hunger 1961, 82, and the observations by G. De Gregorio in Grusková / De Gregorio (in preparation). For this style more generally, see Canart 1981, 47–48, 63–64.

⁷ The *Constitutiones Apostolorum* are on fols. 2r–184v. Fol. 1rv contains a fragment of the *Epistula Clementis ad Jacobum* written by the same scribe. Cf. Hunger 1961, 82–83.

⁸ See e.g. ACO, *Conc. Quinisextum*, can. 68; cf. De Gregorio 2000, 116–125 (esp. 124 n. 211); Crisci 2006, 35–51 (49); Tchernetska / Wilson 2011, 244, 260, 261 n. 6.

⁹ According to Jean Gouillard (1967, here 23–24), the Vienna *Synodicon* is “une copie d’intention ou d’ascendance liturgique et présentant des indices très ambigus de localisation.

the *Synodicon* seems to have been written by another anonymous thirteenth-century scribe who reused parchment from another manuscript.¹⁰

Perhaps not long after the appendix had been produced and added to the tenth-century codex of the *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, the book found its way into the private library of Theodosius Prinkips (Villehardouin), an educated monk who lived on the Black Mountain near Antioch, in Nikaia and Constantinople, frequently travelled to the East, and from 1278 to 1283 held the office of Patriarch of Antioch.¹¹ On fols. 194v and 195r, Theodosius inserted a curse against book thieves (Figs. 12–13).¹² † ὅστις ἂν ἀφέληται τὸ παρὸν βιβλίον τῶν (τὸν Cod.) Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων ἀπὸ τοῦ τόπου, ἔνθα κεῖται τὸ ταπεινὸν σῶμα ἐμοῦ Θεοδοσίου || τοῦ Πρίγκιπος, ἔστω ἀφορισμῶ<ι> ἄλύτω<ι> καθυποβεβλημένος ἀπὸ πατρός, υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος· καὶ ἡ μερὶς αὐτοῦ μετὰ Ἰούδα τοῦ προδότου.¹³ The second half of fol. 195r and the entire fol. 195v (Fig. 14) remained blank.

At the bottom of fol. 194v, below the lines of Theodosius, as well as in the outer margin of fol. 1r, there is a monogram “τῆς ἀμολύντου”, and on fol. 1r, below the text, there is a possession note of the thirteenth century.¹⁴ This evidence indicates that at that time the manuscript passed into the possession of the Bolax monastery, “τοῦ Βόλακος” (βόλακος Cod.), of the immaculate Mother of God, “τῆς ἀμολύντου παρθένου Θεοτόκου”.¹⁵ This monastery has been located in Asia Minor, in the area of Smyrna and Ephesus.¹⁶ Most probably the same person who wrote the above-mentioned possession note repeated “τῆς ἀμολύντου” in the lower margin of fols. 1r, 50v, 100v, and 150v using a cryptographic code employing Greek letters,¹⁷ and inserted also

Il cumule plusieurs recensions qu’il est impossible de démêler. ... la graphie uniformément phonétique et les variantes barbares suggèrent un milieu provincial inculte”.

¹⁰ These seven folios (185–191) originally belonged to an eleventh-century manuscript of a hagiographical collection. This manuscript was much bigger than the eleventh-century manuscript of Dexippus and its text was written in two columns by a scribe different from the scribe of Dexippus. Cf. Grusková 2010, 46–50, 180 (Abb. 8); Hunger 1961, 83.

¹¹ For Theodosius cf. PLP 7181 (IV 18); TIB 15, Bd. 1, 371; Konstantinides 1981–1982; see also the following note. See Georgius Pachymeres I 126, 174, 402, 436–438, 507; II 55f.

¹² Similar curses, written by the same hand, can be found also in the other manuscripts of Theodosius, a considerable number of which (14) survived; see Cuomo 2005; Cataldi Palau 2006; Konstantinides 1981–1982, 379–384 (with an image of the curse on fols. 194v–195r).

¹³ “Whoever takes away the present book of the Holy Apostles from the place where my, Theodosius’ the Prinkips, humble body lies, let an irrevocable excommunication be pronounced on him by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and let his fate be one with the fate of Judas, the betrayer.” The Greek text here has been normalised; cf. Kotzabassi 2004, 112. For the original see Figs. 12–13. Cf. also Hunger 1961, 83; Konstantinides 1981–1982, 382 Anm. 49; Cuomo 2005, 32; Grusková 2010, 45.

¹⁴ Fol. 1r: † ἡ βίβλ(ος) ἥδε τῆς μον(ῆς) τοῦ βόλακ(ος) (sic) τ(ῆς) ἀμολύντου παρθ(έν)ου(ου) θ(εοτό)κου. Cf. Hunger 1961, 83; Kotzabassi 2004, 112; Grusková 2010, 42.

¹⁵ It is the only known manuscript of this monastery, cf. Kotzabassi 2004, 112.

¹⁶ See the contribution of Peter Schreiner in this volume, p. 173 (with further bibliography); cf. also Schreiner 1977/1978; Kotzabassi 2004, 109–112; Hunger 1961, 83.

¹⁷ For the cryptography in Greek manuscripts see Gardthausen 1879, 234–7 (this passage in the first edition is much clearer than the corresponding part of the second edition of 1912).

v' (= 50) in the upper margin of fols. 50v, 100v, and 150v. The fact, that the last v' is written on fol. 193v (Fig. 10), thus numbering this folio as “200”, leads to the assumption that at the time of these insertions the appendix contained another seven folios preceding fol. 193.¹⁸ However, in the surviving texts no omission has been identified so far. Hence if there was a loss, the missing folios must have contained a different text and must have disappeared before the current folio numbers were inserted.

In the sixteenth century, the manuscript was purchased in Constantinople by Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, the well-known ambassador of the Habsburg monarchs to the Ottoman Empire (1554–1562), as the sixteenth-century note — written most probably by his secretary — on fol. 195v, the last (otherwise blank) page attests: *Auger(ius) de Busbecke comparavit Constantinop(oli)* (Fig. 14). Busbecq brought the manuscript to Vienna and donated it to the Imperial Library, now the Austrian National Library, where it later received the shelf mark “Codex historicus graecus 73”.¹⁹

The manuscript of Dexippus

Being erased and covered by another script, the fragments of Dexippus became invisible to the naked eye for more than seven hundred years (see Figs. 7–14). Under natural light, only a few faded traces of the original writing are discernible on folios 192–195 of the Vienna Codex hist. gr. 73. But nowadays special techniques are available to read erased texts in palimpsests. Although initial results in the process of recovering the text of Dexippus were achieved by using an ultraviolet lamp and photograph,²⁰ substantial progress has only been made by applying state-of-the-art spectral imaging and a variety of image processing techniques.²¹ However, the visibility of individual characters has ranged from rather obvious to invisible.

The four Dexippus folios constitute two bifolios:²² “192rv”+“193rv” and “194rv”+“195rv”.²³ As usual in palimpsests, the current sequence of the bifolios and folios and their juxtaposition are not indicative of their order and position in the eleventh-century manuscript of the *Skythika*.²⁴ The original order has been reconstructed on the

¹⁸ Furthermore, at the bottom of the lower margin of fol. 193v there is a note — written by a hand different from the hand of the possession note — indicating that the manuscript “contains 205 leaves in total” (cf. Kotzabassi 2004, 112), which would mean that from the folios following originally after fol. 193v two have survived (194+195), but three have been lost. However, since the prayer of fol. 193v continues immediately on fol. 194r and the curse of Theodosius follows, there is no sign of such omission in the texts, hence “non liquet”.

¹⁹ Cf. Bick 1912; Unterkircher 1968, 71–72, 119–121. On some pages, there are Latin marginal notes by Sebastian Tegnagel (Fig. 7).

²⁰ See Grusková 2010, 50, 52–53, 181 (Abb. 9).

²¹ See Anhang II, pp. 549–556, and Grusková / Martin / Kresten 2018 (2019).

²² A bifolio is a sheet folded in half to create two folios, i.e. leaves, or four pages.

²³ The quotes indicate that these folio numbers are not of the manuscript of Dexippus.

²⁴ Cf. e.g. the palimpsested manuscripts in the Vienna Codex phil. gr. 158, Codex phil. gr. 286, and Codex iur. gr. 18 described in Grusková 2010.

basis of textual analysis and physical (codicological) properties; see Anhang I of this volume, pp. 543–548. Given what we know of mediaeval Greek manuscripts, we may assume that the quires in the manuscript of Dexippus were quaternions consisting of four bifolios. Such quires started usually with a flesh side of the parchment (F), while the second and the third page were hair sides (H), the fourth and the fifth page were flesh sides, and so on; the last page was again a flesh-side page and faced the first page of the following quaternion (the so-called “lex Gregory”).²⁵ Furthermore, since the historical text on fol. “192v” continues immediately on fol. “193r”, there is no doubt that in the original eleventh-century manuscript fols. “192rv+193rv” formed the middle bifolio of a quire.²⁶ These folios were arranged in accordance with the “lex Gregory”, i.e. H/F+F/H, which may therefore be assumed also for the other parts of this manuscript. Fols. (pages) “194v” and “195r” are the flesh sides of the parchment, but the text of fol. “194v” does not continue on fol. “195r”, hence they did not form the middle bifolio of a quire. Since the Thracian town attacked by Cniva on fol. “195rv” has been convincingly identified as Philippopolis which on fol. “194rv” is referred to as being already captured, fol. “195rv” (F/H) must have originally preceded fol. “194rv” (H/F). Accordingly, in the assumed original quaternion these two folios, “195rv” and “194rv”, must have formed (a) the first and the eighth folio (i.e. the first bifolio of the quire)²⁷ or (b) the third and the sixth folio (i.e. the third bifolio of the quire). The content seems to favor (a).²⁸

The text is written in an elegant, fluent Greek minuscule (Figs. 1–6). The copy appears to be the work of a single professional scribe whom we cannot now identify. The script is slightly inclined to the right, generously spaced, and hangs from the blind-ruled lines. It is of a good style, with variations in the shape and size of some letters (e.g. epsilon) or between the majuscule and the minuscule forms (e.g. gamma, eta, theta, and kappa; beta is always minuscule, except when used as an initial letter). In general, the script shows a tendency to rounded forms of a “Perlschrift” type, see particularly fols. “195r” and “194v” (Figs. 1 and 4). Fols. “192v” and “193r” (Figs. 5 and 6) display more cursive elements, but still seem to be written by the same scribe whose movements became faster (perhaps towards the later parts of the manuscript) resulting in a more relaxed, more informal and more flowing script. Accents and mostly rounded, only rarely square breathing marks are written systematically. The *iota mutum* is not written. The scribe uses common abbreviations and contractions (e.g. -ης, -ος, -εν, -ων, -ν), occasionally writing superposed letters; an abbreviation of ἀνθρώπων (as a *nomen sacrum*) occurs once. There are very few mistakes of orthography (some of them concern wrong breathings or accents). The ruling pattern is partly visible and might correspond to Leroy / Sautel 32B1.²⁹

²⁵ Cf. Gregory 1885, 261–268, here 264–265 (1886, 27–32, here 29–30).

²⁶ Cf. Martin / Grusková 2014a, 104, 116.

²⁷ There are no visible quire signatures, but a part of the margins was cut off (see above).

²⁸ Cf. Grusková / Martin 2015, 46–48.

²⁹ The written area measures e.g. 164 × 119 mm on fol. “195r”, 172 × 123 mm on fol. “193r”.

As the leaves have no subscription, the dating has to be based on palaeographical comparison with dated manuscripts. Though Auct. T 2.2 (Oxford, Bodleian Library) written in 1067 is relatively similar,³⁰ a closer parallel to the script can be seen in Barocci 196 (Oxford, Bodleian Library) of 1042 (the name of the scribe is not known)³¹ or in Parisinus gr. 1068 (BnF) of 1044 (with a more cursive ductus, cf. e.g. fols. 217v–218r).³² Further parallels may be seen in Parisinus gr. 223 (BnF) of 1045 (cf. particularly the scholion at the end of the catena to Paul’s *Letters* on fol. 273v)³³ and in Parisinus Coislin 28 (BnF) of 1056 (cf. in particular the marginal commentary, e.g. on fol. 269v).³⁴ Hence the most plausible date for the production of the manuscript of Dexippus seems to be the middle or second half of the eleventh century.³⁵

As punctuation marks dots in the three positions common in Byzantine manuscripts, commas, and occasionally semicolons were used. One needs to be aware that (1) the punctuation in Greek manuscripts is often not consistent, and (2) it is far from being identical with the system employed in modern editions.³⁶

The palimpsest contains several proper names of persons and places. In general, the spelling of names in Greek manuscripts is very often garbled and presents a range of variations. Taking into account this fact and the eight centuries of transmission which had passed between the composition of the *Skythika* in the third century AD and the production of the Vienna manuscript in the eleventh century, the names transmitted in the palimpsest ought to be treated with due caution.

There are some corrections which seem to have been inserted by the scribe himself, providing evidence that he was working carefully, checking the text he had copied. E.g., on fol. “194v”, l. 9 (Fig. 4), the scribe saw a problem in the toponym αἰῑῑῑ he copied from his model as well as in the following χῑῑῑῑ βεῑῑῑῑῑ. In an attempt to improve the corrupted reading, he inserted “iota” or “rho” *supra lineam* between “alpha” and “mu” of αἰῑῑῑ, and τ with (probably) an abbreviation stroke *supra lineam* between χῑῑῑῑ and βεῑῑῑῑῑ, which could be (tentatively) deciphered as τ(ῑῑ)ῑ, i.e. τ(ῑῑ)ῑ βεῑῑῑῑῑ. The person who copied the text proves to have been not only a well-skilled scribe, but also a scholar who produced the new copy with care and interest.

The content of the *Scythica Vindobonensia* alias *Dexippus Vindobonensis* on the six pages which have been deciphered so far is very diverse: it includes speeches, narrative of campaign preparations and a stratagem. The fragments are of substantial

³⁰ Wilson 1973, I, 20; II, plates 31–32; Lake / Lake 1934, 12, No. 58, plates 106–107.

³¹ Cf. Lake / Lake II, 12, No. 56, plates 103–104.

³² Cf. Lake / Lake IV, 13, No. 156, plate 266; RGK II, Nr. 524, Taf. 306; see the images under <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10724000k.image>.

³³ Cf. Lake / Lake IV, 13, No. 157, plate 267; see the images under <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55006070n.image>.

³⁴ Cf. Lake / Lake IV, 15, No. 164, plate 280; see the images under <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10038000b.image>.

³⁵ For this script see also the observations by Giuseppe De Gregorio in Grusková / De Gregorio (in preparation).

³⁶ I.e. the same punctuation symbols have different values.

length, with no recognizable start or end of any section of the narrative. There are no signs of an excerptor's interference. Hence we can conclude with confidence that the Vienna leaves originate from a full copy of the historical work in question.

For the moment, we have to admit our inability to throw much light on the place of production of the Vienna manuscript of Dexippus. The script itself provides little information; however, the evidence conducive to a more specific localisation finds a southern Italian origin more than unlikely. An Eastern region of the mediaeval Greek language area seems to be a reasonable supposition. Even if a single copying activity does not mean circulation of Dexippus at that time, it definitely implies the existence of another manuscript of the *Skythika*, which served as the model. It is a legitimate assumption that the Vienna manuscript could have been produced in Constantinople or its environs, since that is where the need for a new copy of the historical work in question could have arisen, i.e. in the erudite environment of the capital, and where, simultaneously, the potential owner of a new copy was most likely to find a manuscript exemplar for transcription (Vorlage).³⁷ Still, one should not forget that scholars used to travel and so did valuable manuscripts alongside their owners.

The deciphering of texts hidden in palimpsests relies on an in-depth palaeographical analysis supported by a careful philological scrutiny. The easily legible parts of the writing provide information needed to decipher the less visible and concealed characters. Repeated examinations and attempts are required. There are several factors which determine success: the physical damage to the parchment, the thoroughness with which the writing has been removed, how well it is legible, how far it is covered by the new text, if there is an ambiguity in identification of individual letters (e.g. the minuscule kappa, beta, and mu), etc. In some places, uncertainty remains and more than one alternative is possible. In the passages where the text is still uncertain — while the uncertain letters are always indicated by dots beneath — future changes of the wording and hence the meaning cannot be excluded.

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³⁷ The excerpts from Dexippus' *Skythika* which were included into the so-called *Excerpta Constantiniana* presuppose the availability of a manuscript of the work in Constantinople in the tenth century; cf. the contributions of András Németh and Peter Schreiner in this volume.

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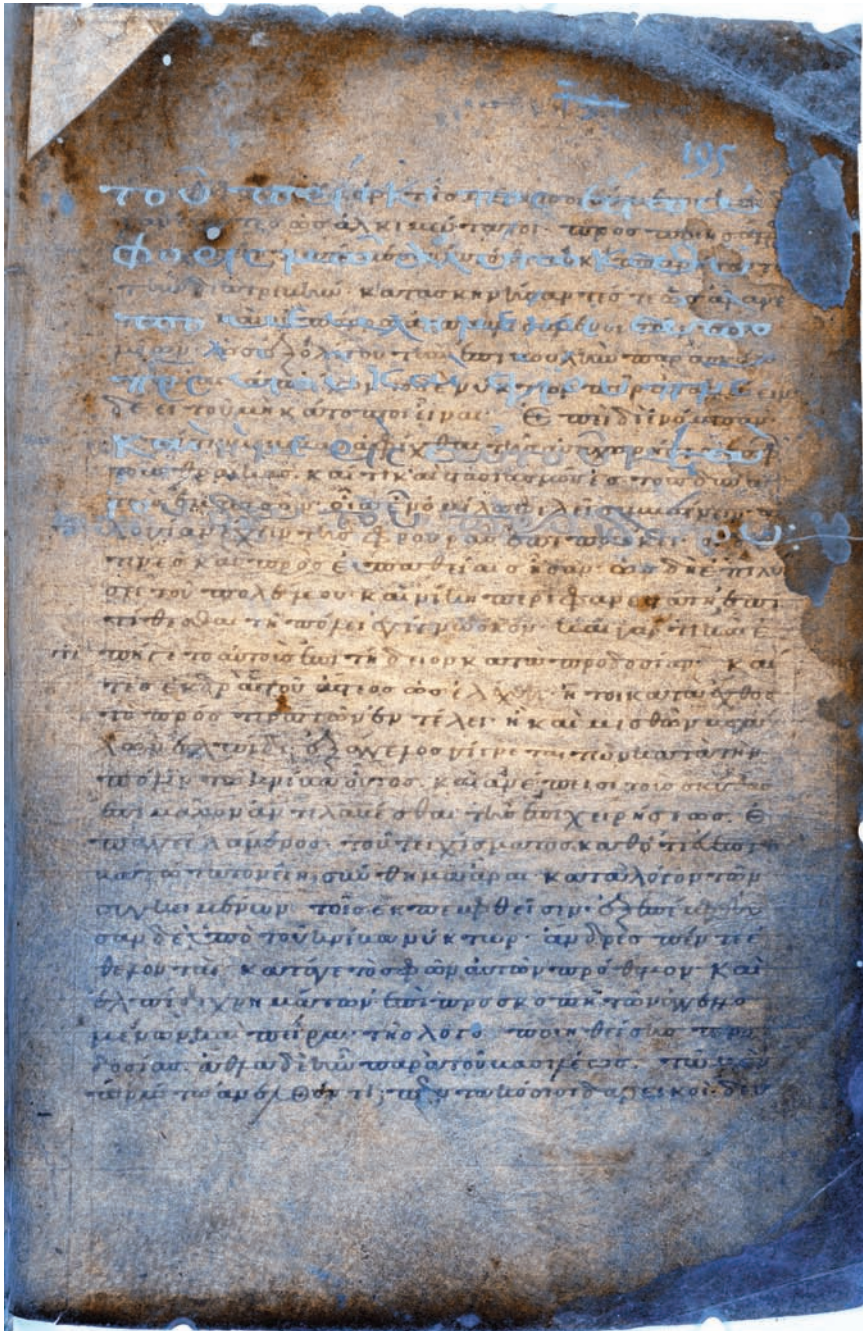


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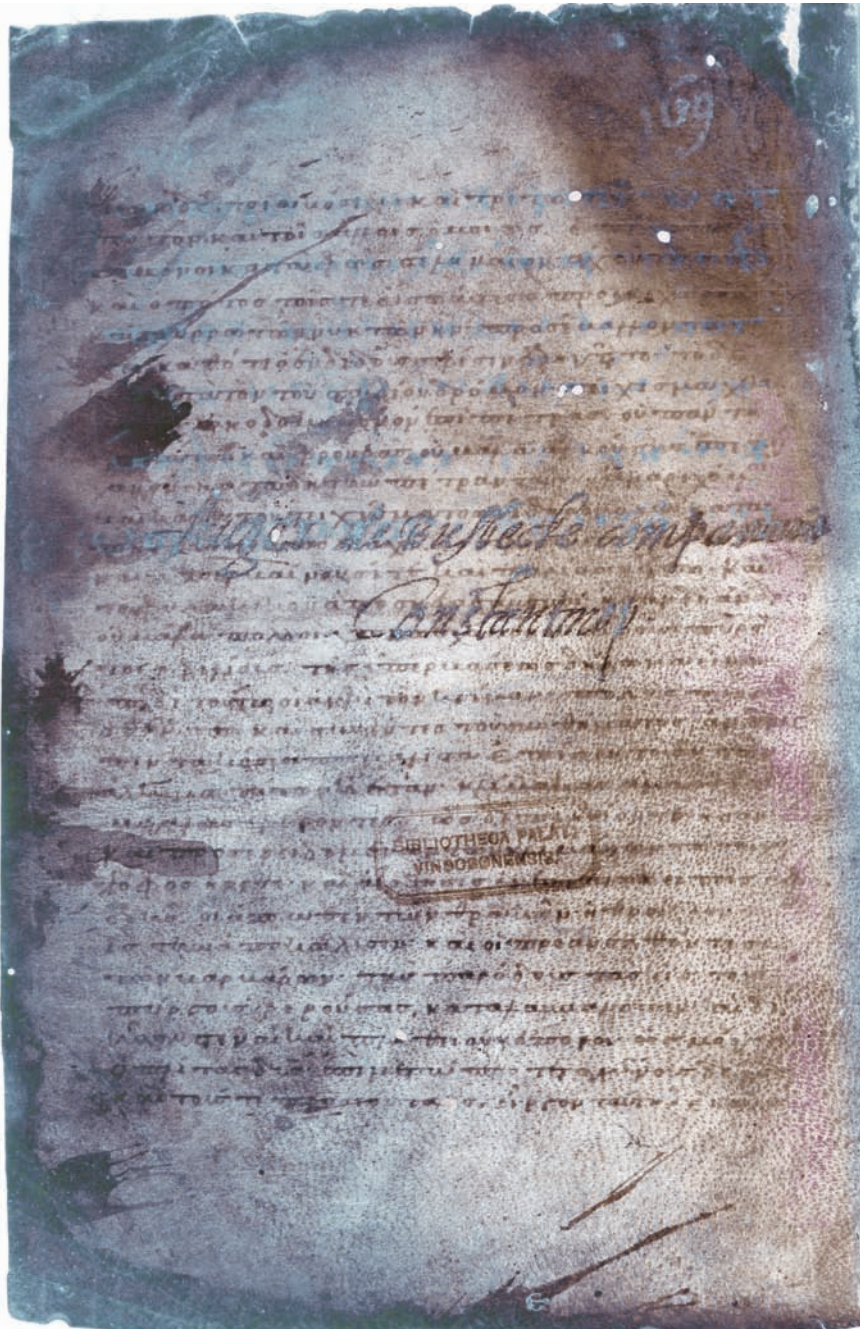


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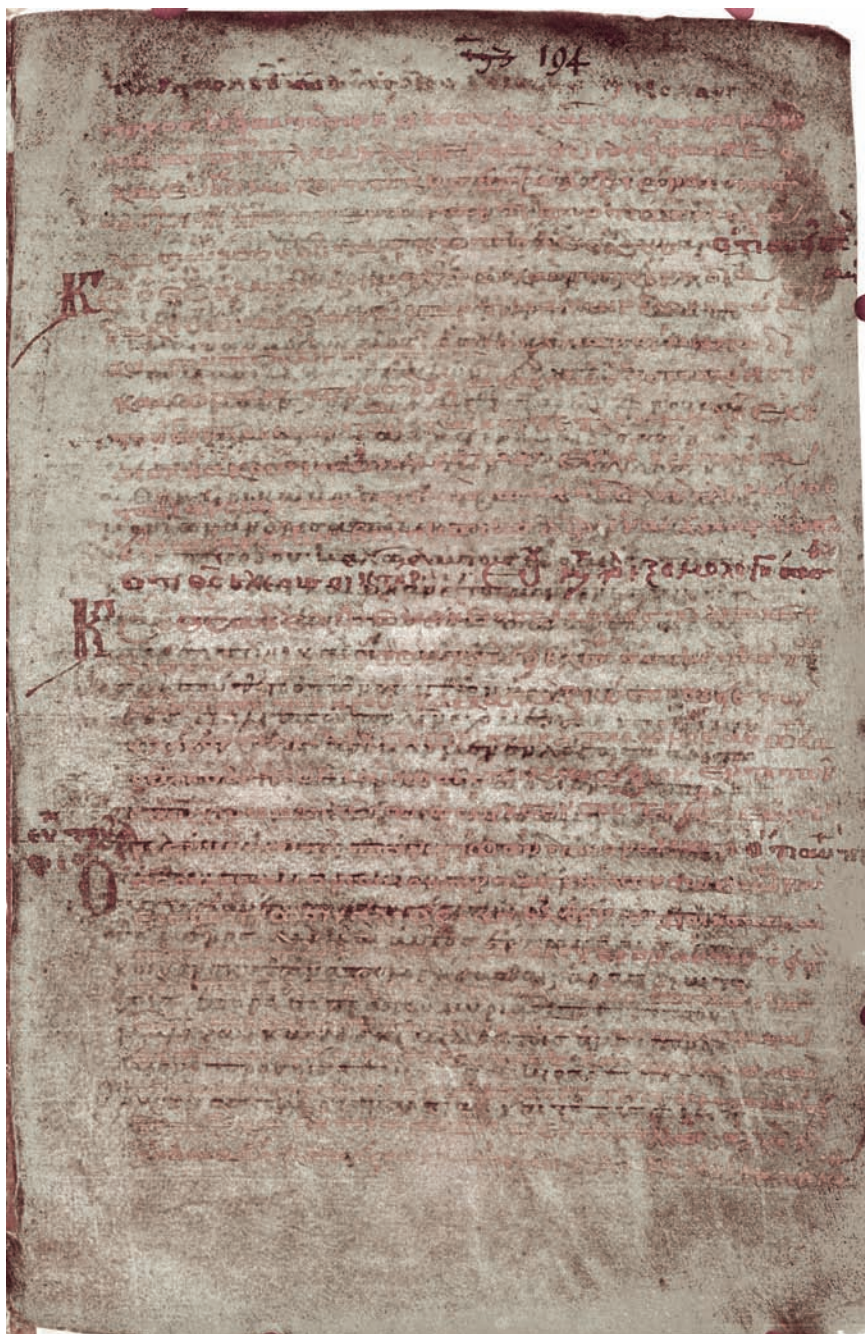


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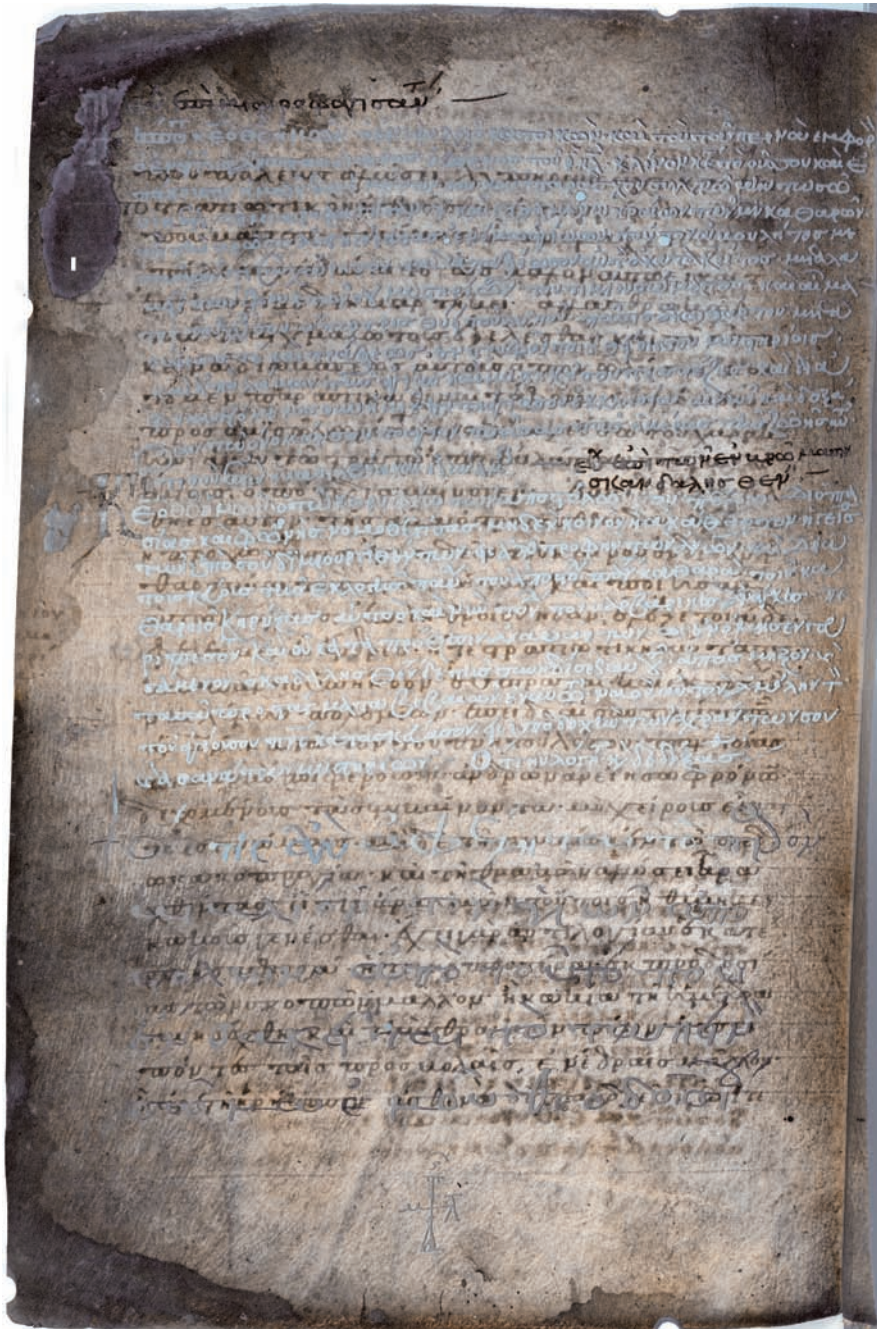


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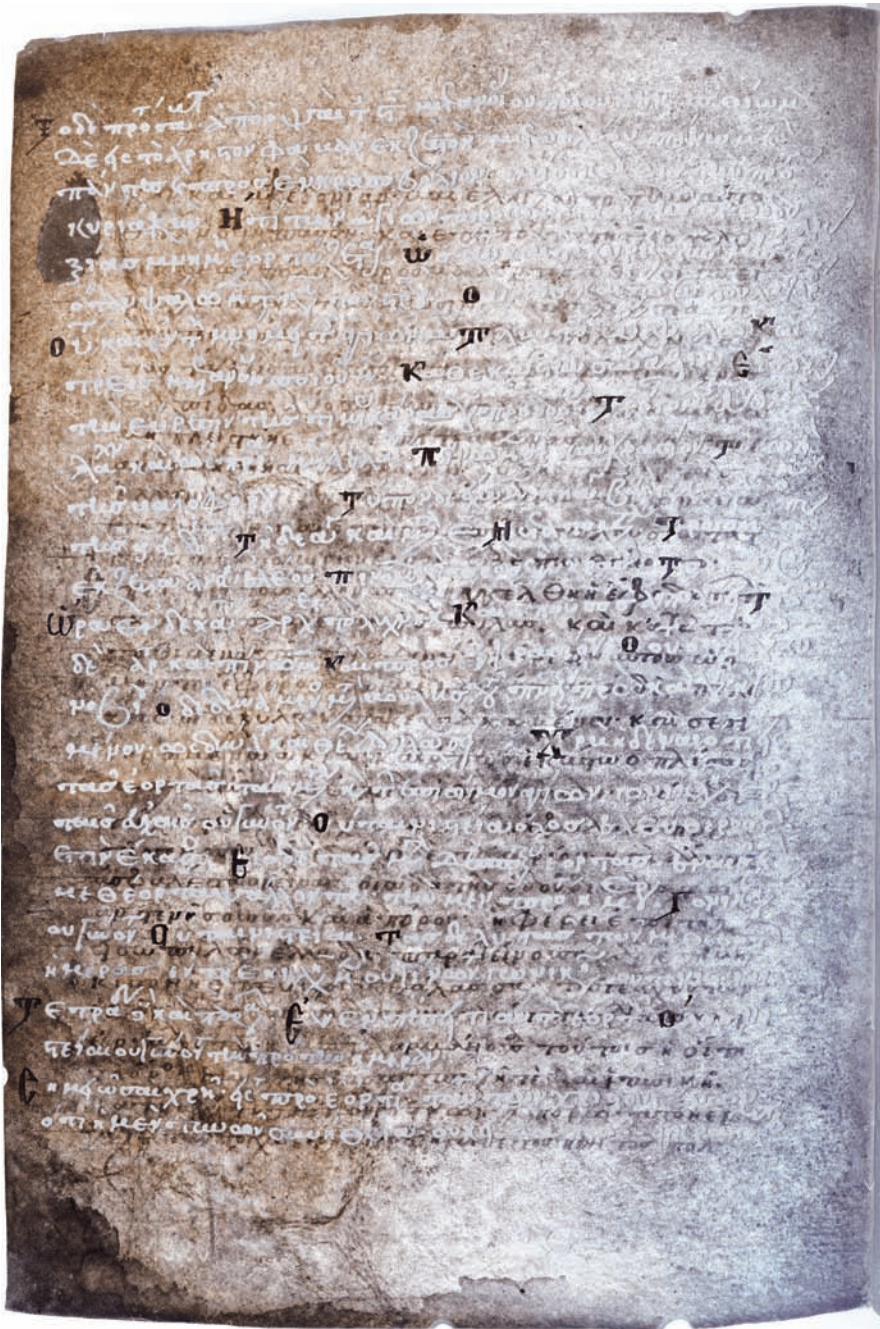


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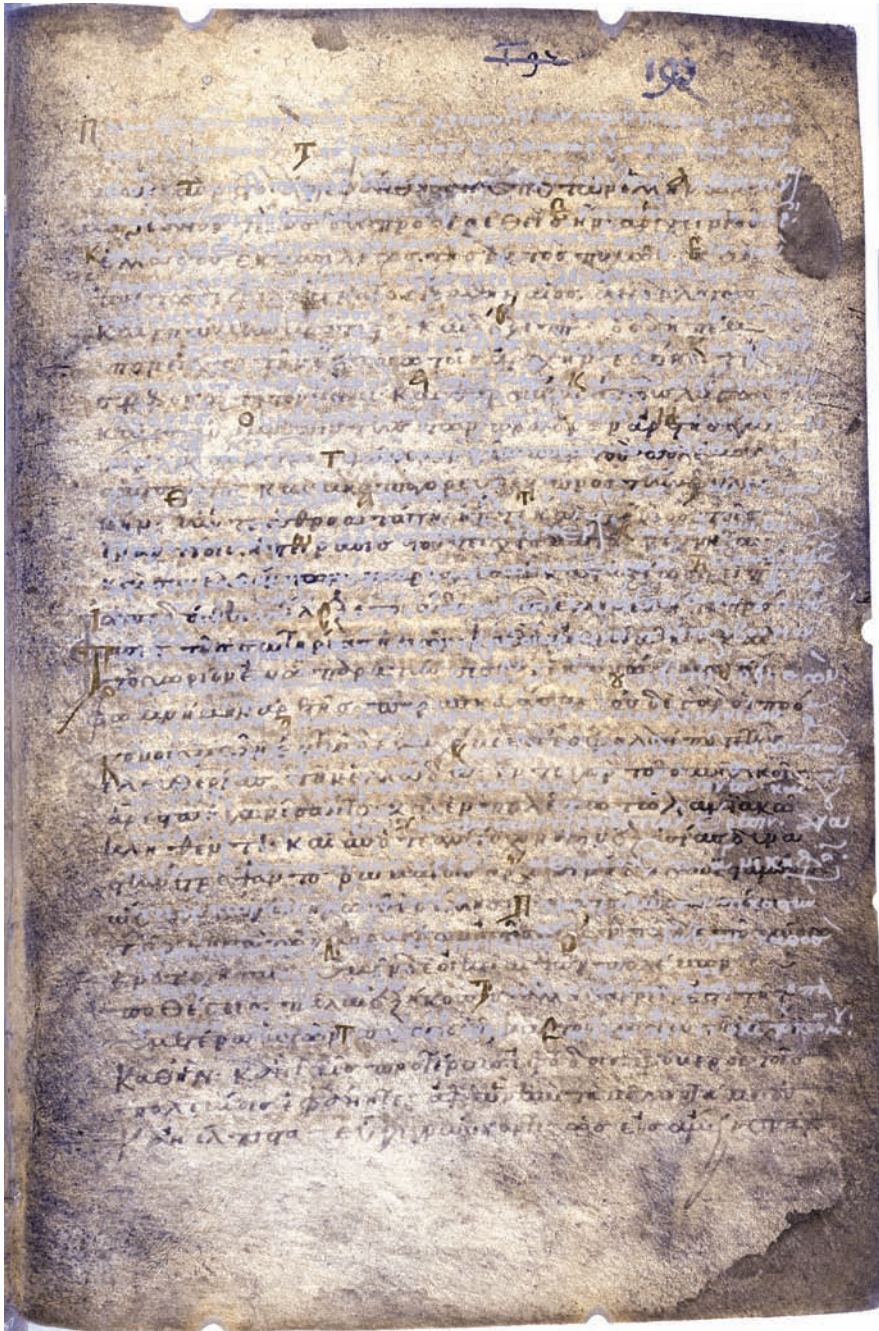


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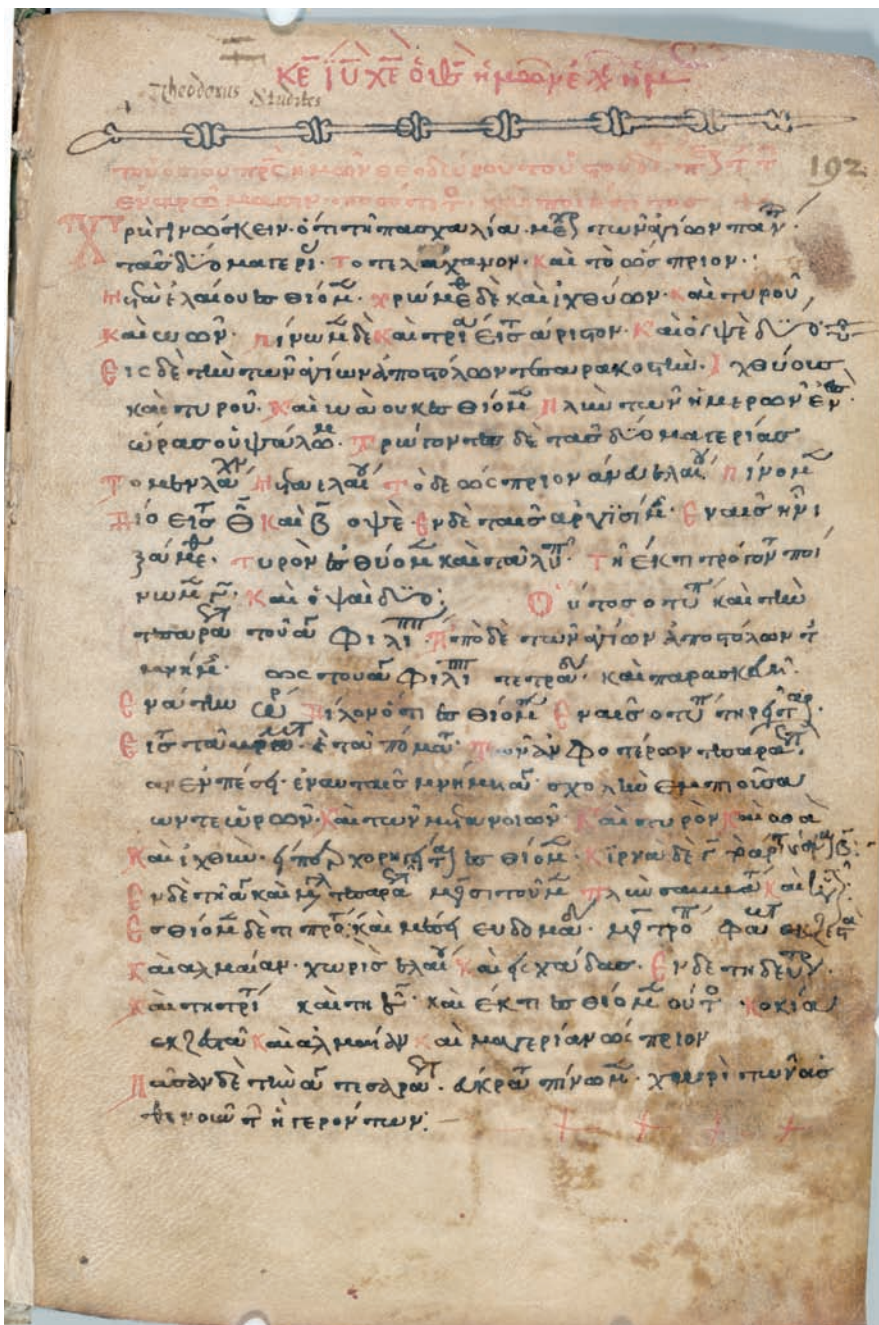


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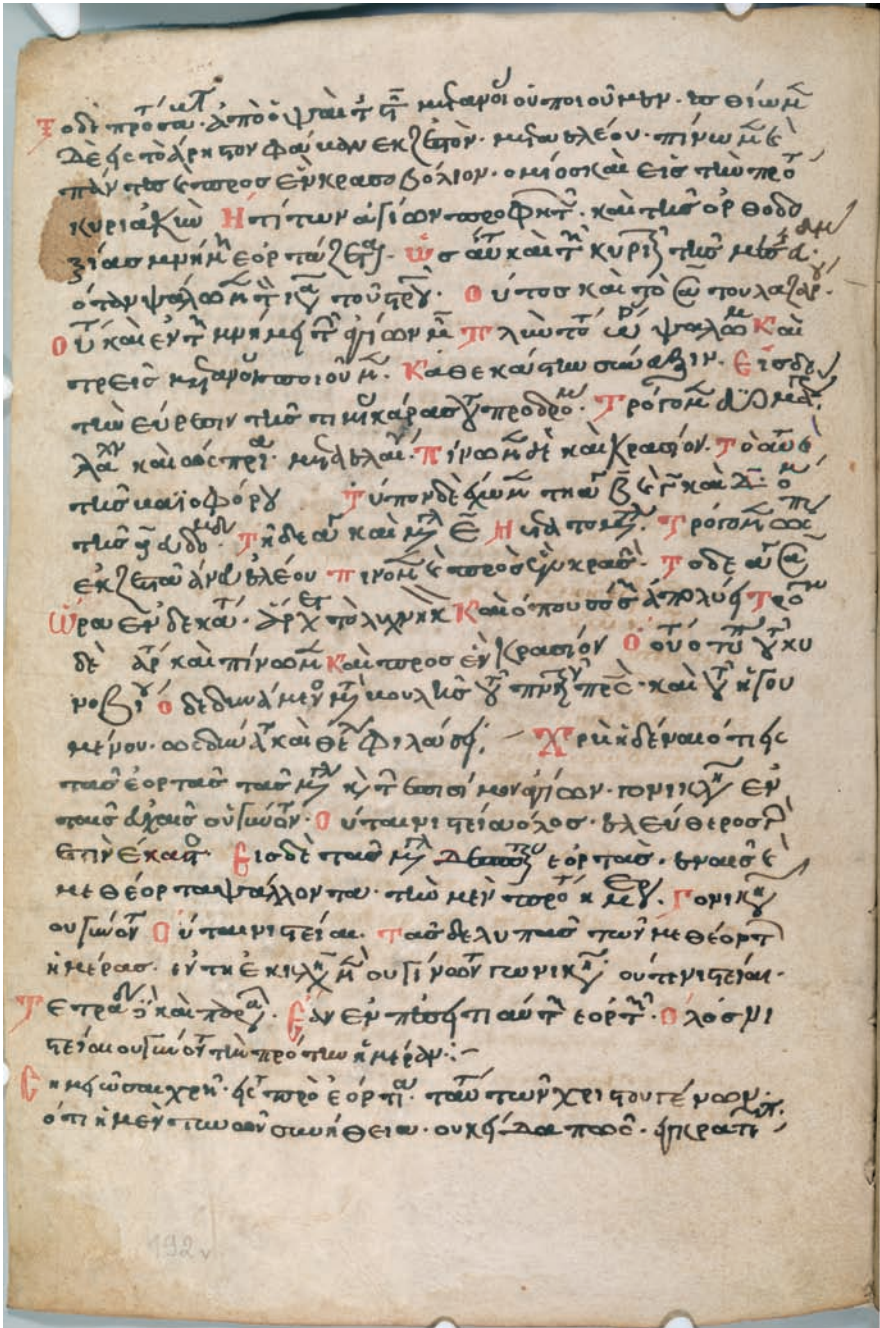


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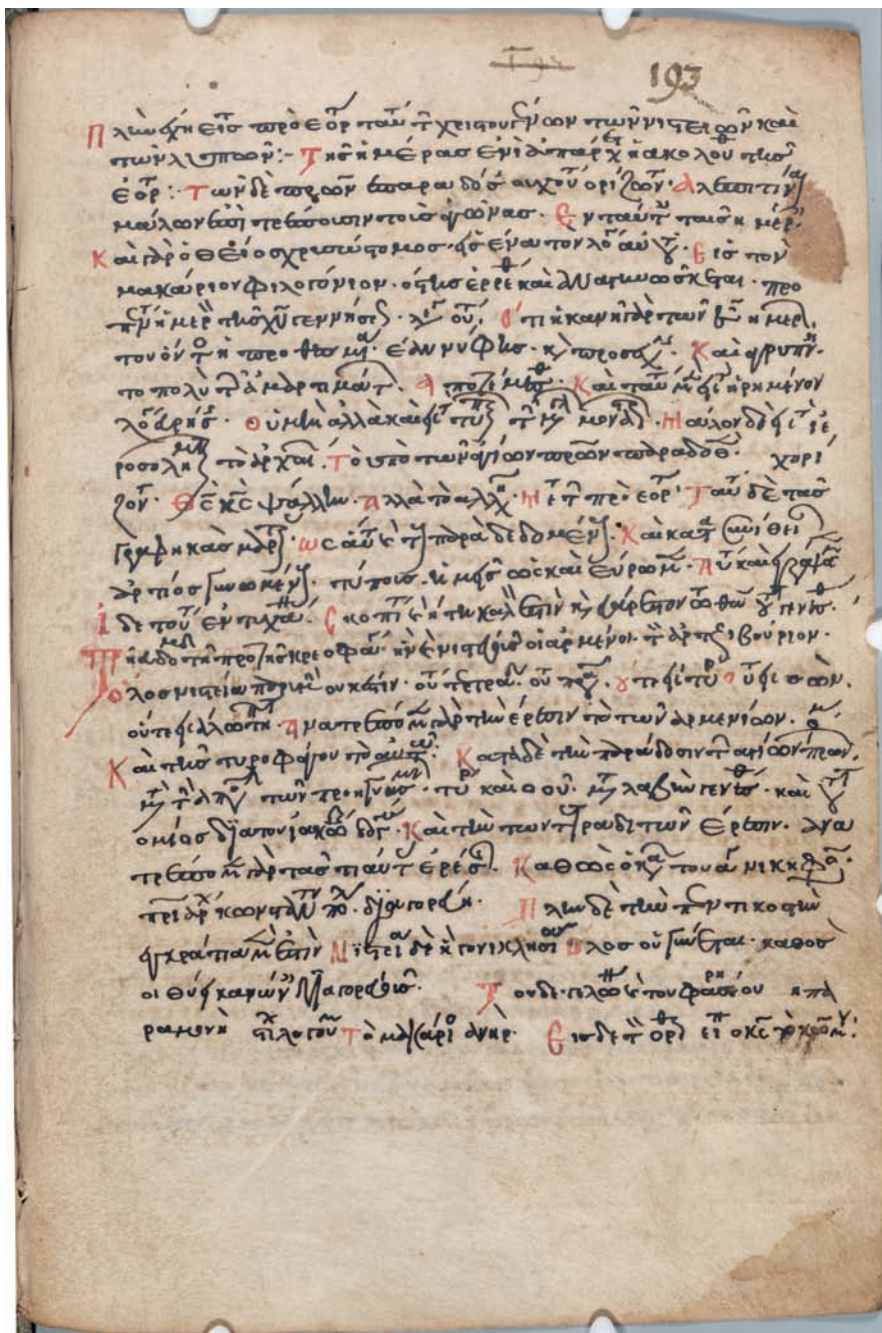


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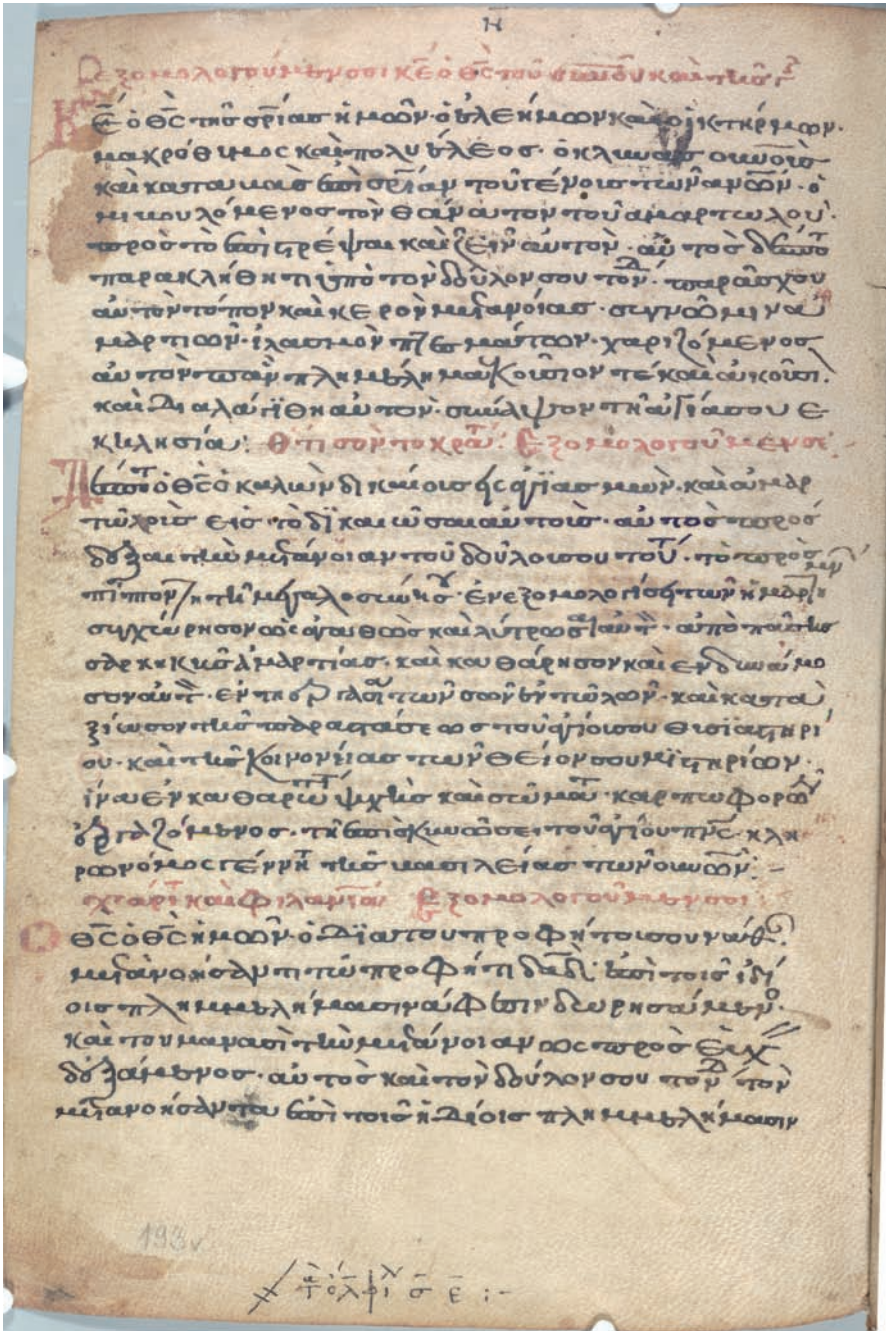


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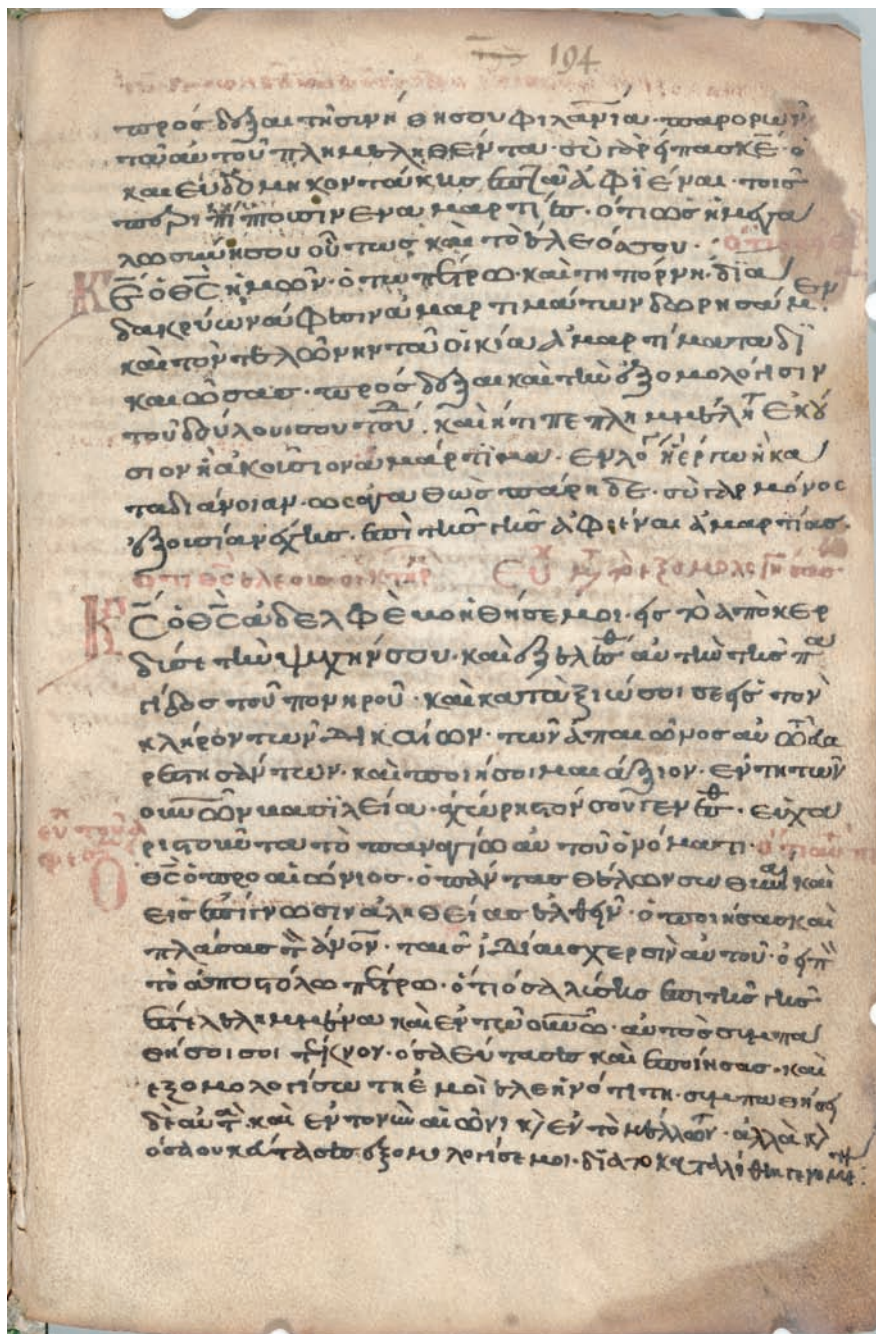


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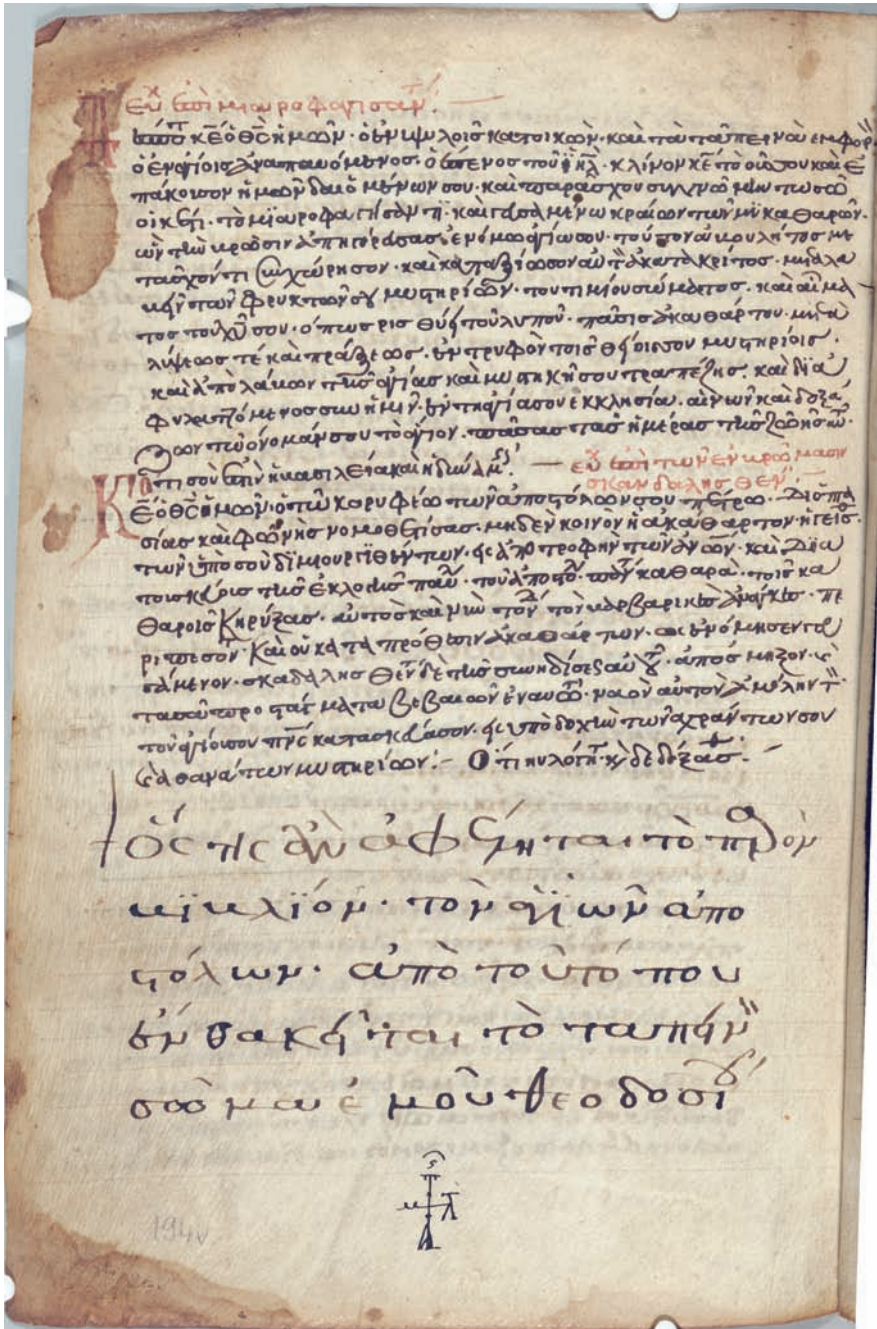


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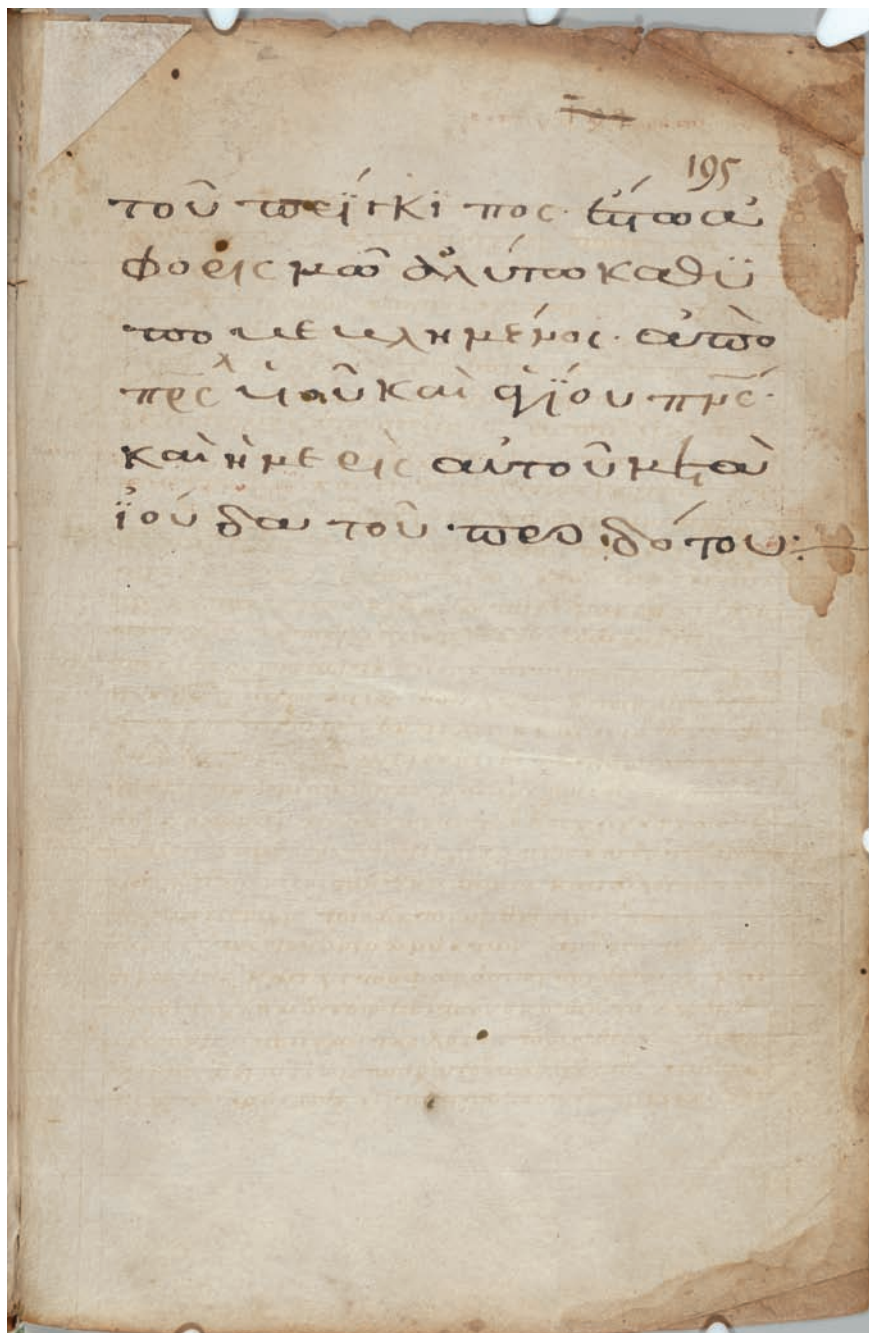


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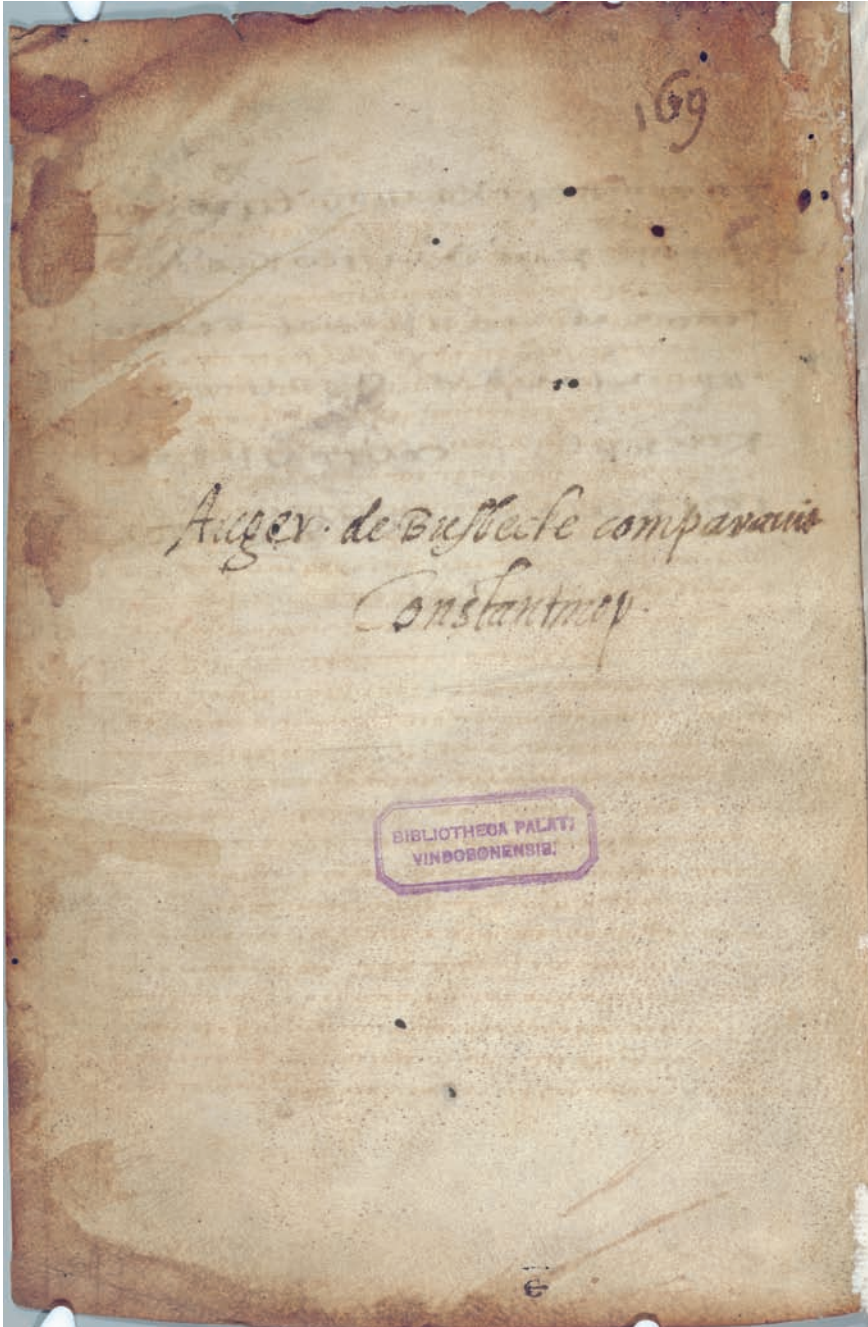


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