PHILOTHEOS KOKKINOS’S HYPOMNĒMA ON SAINT
NIKODEMOS THE YOUNGER (BHГ 2307)

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ABSTRACT. Philotheos Kokkinos was one of the most prolific late-Byzantine
hagiographers, who eulogized saints of old, as well as contemporaneous holy figures.
He dedicated the first among his vitae of contemporaneous saints to the little-known
holy man Nikodemos the Younger from the Philokalles monastery in Thessalonike.
While superior of this monastery, Kokkinos gathered information about the holy
man’s life and arranged it into the form of a short vita titled hypomnēma (BHГ 2307).
This article analyzes the ways in which Kokkinos constructed an identity in narrative
form for Nikodemos, exploring elements of holy foolery, hesychast influences, the
miracle accounts weaved into the narrative, as well as its intended audience.

Keywords: Philotheos Kokkinos, late Byzantium, hagiography, hesychasm,
hypomnēma, narrative structure, Nikodemos the Younger, holy fool, miracles

Introduction†

Three decades after the relics of St Nikodemos the Younger had been
discovered in Thessalonike in the early 1310s, Philotheos Kokkinos described
the joy and pride of the locals in the vita he composed for the saint (hereafter
also referred to as the v. Nik):

the whole city of Thessalonike ... thought that the discovery of the holy
body of the divine Nikodemos was a stroke of good fortune and a source
of unceasing joy. And they took no greater pleasure in the nature and

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location and good order of the city or in the strength of its walls than in this 'holy man'. For each one believed the magnificence and godliness of the relics to be his own glory.²

This article investigates Kokkinos's hagiographical account in honor of this little-known late-Byzantine holy man. As abbot of the Philokalles monastery in Thessalonike where Nikodemos had lived as a monk and his relics had been discovered and preserved, Kokkinos was well positioned to try his pen and talent at reconstructing the life of the holy man. The ensuing hypomnēma is Kokkinos's first hagiographical composition for a contemporaneous holy figure and the only extant source on Nikodemos's life. This article explores the ways in which Kokkinos arranged the scanty biographical information on the holy man into narrative form, crafting a holy identity for his hero as a fool for Christ's sake and practicing hesychast. The article has a fourfold structure. First, it offers a short biographical sketch of the hagiographer, highlighting the socio-cultural context of his life and literary activity. Secondly, it presents the manuscript tradition of Kokkinos's text in honor of Nikodemos, as well as its modern editions and translations. Thirdly, it introduces the 'hagiographical genre' of hypomnēma. Finally, it offers a detailed analysis of the text, addressing, inter alia, the elements of holy foolery, hesychast influences, the miracle accounts weaved into the narrative, and its intended audience.

1. Philotheos Kokkinos – a brief curriculum vitae³

Philotheos Kokkinos hailed from Thessalonike, where he was born around the turn of the fourteenth century to a family of seemingly modest circumstances and alleged Jewish origin. He received a classical education under the "gentleman scholar" Thomas Magistros (ca. 1280–ca. 1347/8) and reportedly worked for him as a cook to offset the cost of his studies.⁴ Despite this modest background, Kokkinos had a distinguished ecclesiastical career. As a monk, he spent a considerable time on Mount Athos, enjoying the spiritual guidance of renowned holy men.


holy men such as Sabas the Younger (ca. 1283–1348) at Vatopedi and Germanos Maroules (ca. 1252–ca. 1336) near the Great Lavra, both of whom he would later eulogize in hagiographical works. In his forties, he served as abbot of the Philokalles monastery⁵ in Thessalonike (1340/1–1342) and subsequently as superior of the Great Lavra (1342–1345). By his late forties he was appointed metropolitan of Thracian Herakleia⁶ by Patriarch Isidore I Boucheir (1347–1350)—whose vita he would later write—and was elevated to the patriarchal throne after six years as metropolitan. However, after a brief tenure of less than a year and a half, he was deposed—following Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos’s forced abdication and John V Palaiologos’s rise to power—and reportedly stripped of his priestly office. After a decade of enforced leisure, mostly in Constantinople at the Monastery of Christ Akataleptos, Kokkinos was reinstated on the patriarchal throne in the autumn of 1364. As evidenced by the Register of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, he was actively involved in the political and religious life of Byzantium during his twelve-year tenure.⁷ Finally, Kokkinos was deposed a second time in 1376 and died of old age after a couple of years. Within two decades of his demise, he came to be celebrated as a saint, and today the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates his feast day on the eleventh of October.⁸

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⁶ On Thracian Herakleia, see Andreas Külzer, Ostthrakien (Europä) (Tabula Imperii Byzantini 12) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), 398–408.


Kokkinos’s life coincided with a turbulent period in the history of Byzantium. After a time of relative stability until the 1320s, the fourteenth century was riddled with political malaise. Prolonged civil wars were coupled by territorial contraction due to loss of territory to the Serbs and Ottoman Turks and increasing commercial dominance of Venice and Genoa. Byzantium also faced increasing impoverishment, lack of social cohesion and social upheavals in its cities, such as the Zealot revolt in Thessalonike. Moreover, the mid fourteenth-century brought the onset of the acrimonious hesychast debates. In spite of, or perhaps in response to, this socio-political, economic, and religious mayhem, late Byzantium nurtured a significant blossoming of arts and letters, including a revival in the composition of saints’ lives and miracle collections. Around eighty percent of the surviving late-Byzantine hagiographical texts comprise compositions about saints of old (metaphraseis or, as Talbot put it, “old wine in new bottles”), while the other twenty percent represent vitae and enkomia of new saints, especially leading figures of the hesychast movement such as Gregory Palamas. In line with contemporaneous trends, Kokkinos


eulogized holy men and women from the early Christian era, such as St Anysia of Thessalonike (BHG 146), St Demetrios the Myroblytos (BHG 547d), and St Febronios of Nisibis (BHG 659g), as well as five contemporaneous figures: Nikodemos the Younger (BHG 2307), Sabas the Younger (BHG 1606), Isidore I Bouchier (BHG 962), Germanos Maroules (BHG 2164), and Gregory Palamas (BHG 718). With the exception of Nikodemos, whose vita he composed during his hegumenate at Philokalles, Kokkinos was personally acquainted with all the contemporaneous figures he eulogized. They had been either his spiritual fathers (Sabas and Germanos) or friends and fellow combatants in the hesychast debates (Isidore and Palamas).

2. Manuscript tradition, critical editions, and translations

Kokkinos’s hypomnēma on Nikodemos survived in two manuscripts: the fourteenth-century codex Meteora, Monastery of Transfiguration 374, ff. 3r–8r (hereafter M) and the early sixteenth-century Mount Athos, St Panteleimon Monastery 571 (Lambros 6078), ff. 248r–257r (hereafter P). In both codices, colophons spell out the termini ante quem for their production. Thus, on f. 178v of M a certain monk Athanasios Glabas wrote that he finished copying the book in May 1359, with the support of his spiritual son, hieromonk Meletios. In the case of P, a certain copyist Demetrios, son of deacon/priest (παπᾶς) Chalkias, noted on f. 259v that he completed the book on April 17, 1522, having had the (financial?) support of a certain Georgios grammatikos. Both M and P seem to belong to the same family, since they transmit almost the same content, although placed in a slightly different order. It might even be the case that P is the apographon of M. For instance, if Kokkinos’s hypomnēma comes in first position in M, in P is copied close to the end of the codex. Their content, including the story of Barlaam and Joasaph (BHG 224), excerpts from the Apophthegmata Patrum, and stichēra for novice monks, suggests that M and P had been likely copied and used in a monastic milieu; for instance, the scribe of P added the formula eulogēson despota.


"master, give the blessing") after the title of Kokkinos’s composition (which features the term hypomnēma, unfortunately illegible in M),\(^{15}\) which suggests that the text was read during liturgical services or in the monastic refectory.

Kokkinos's hypomnēma was first printed in 1911 by Manuel Gedeon, who specified that the published text was a transcription (μετεγράφη) of \(P\).\(^{16}\) Seven decades later, in 1981, Demetrios Tsames published a somewhat improved edition of the text, based also solely on \(P\),\(^{17}\) which he subsequently collated with \(M\) and published the critical edition in 1985.\(^{18}\) However, its virtues notwithstanding, Tsames’s edition is in need of further amendments, which I propose in a forthcoming article. For instance, the title is not omitted in \(M\), as Tsames claimed, but is rather illegible, as mentioned already.\(^{19}\) Moreover, in several cases the paragraph division fails to take into account the otherwise helpful punctuation of the manuscripts (especially of \(M\)). This further posed difficulties (e.g., the transition from the first to the second paragraph) for Alice-Mary Talbot’s translation of the text into English.\(^{20}\) My translation into Romanian is forthcoming.

3. Hypomnēma

Before proceeding to the analysis of the text, a few words are in order about the type of hagiographical composition Kokkinos chose for eulogizing Nikodemos. Hypomnēma (literally, "memorial") is a relatively rare form of hagiographical composition. In fact, as Kazhdan pointed out in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, this term designates various kinds of compositions, such as a type of petition to the emperor, documents from the patriarchal chancellery, and "a form of panegyric of a saint."\(^{21}\) For instance, it was used in the Metaphrastic Mēnologion

\(^{15}\) Ms Panteleimon 571, f. 248r: Φιλοθέου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως υπόμνημα εἰς τὸν άσιον πατέρα ἡμῶν Νικόδημον τὸν νέον τὸν ἐν τῇ σεβασμίᾳ μονῇ τῷ Σωτῆρι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ ἀληθινῷ θεῷ τῇ τοῦ Φιλοκάλλους οὐλόγισαν δάσπατα. (Hypomnēma by Philotheos, Patriarch of Constantinople, on our holy father Nikodemos the Younger from the venerable monastery of Philokalles of our Savior Jesus Christ, the truthful God; master, give the blessing).

\(^{16}\) Manuel Gedeon, "Φιλοθέου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως υπόμνημα εἰς τὸν άσιον πατέρα ἡμῶν Νικόδημον τὸν νέον, τὸν ἐν τῇ σεβασμίᾳ μονῇ τῷ Σωτῆρι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ ἀληθινῷ θεῷ τῇ τοῦ Φιλοκάλλους," in Αρχεῖον εκκλησιαστικῆς ιστορίας, tome I, vol. 2. (Constantinople, 1911), 151, text at 175–185.


\(^{18}\) Tsames, Θεσσαλονίκης Ἀγίων, 83–93.

\(^{19}\) I thank Dr Charlton Karanasios for sending me black and white digital reproductions of \(M\), ff. 3r–8r. I am also grateful to Archimandrite Niphon Kapsales and Dr Nikolaos Vryzidis for their permission and support respectively to acquire a colour photo of f. 3r.


for the biographies of the Holy Apostles, e.g., Andrew (BHГ 101), James (BHГ 764), John (BHГ 919), Matthew (BHГ 1226), Timothy (BHГ 1848). Thus, the hypomnēma is a concise account of a saint's life, in which the rhetorical and literary embellishments are secondary to the act of conveying biographical information on the holy man commemorated. Kokkinos appears to have been familiar with this 'hagiographical genre,' since he quotes in his eleventh antirrhētikos from Symeon Metaphrastes's hypomnēma on John the Evangelist. As mentioned, the superscription of Kokkinos's work in P features the term hypomnēma, which the sixteenth-century scribe most likely copied from the antigraphon. Internal evidence also suggests that Kokkinos himself titled his composition hypomnēma; thus, in the preface, he employs the cognate verb hypomēmnēskō: "I will briefly mention a few of his [Nikodemos's] deeds." The term appears exclusively in the title, as Kokkinos refers to his text using interchangeably either logos (v. Nik. 1.1, 4.30, 9.1, 12.3), that is "account," "story," or diēgēma (v. Nik. 4.31, 11.9), that is "narrative." Keeping in line with the characteristics of this type of hagiographical composition, or rather constrained by the scarce information on the holy man, Kokkinos keeps his work concise, at approximately five folios in M and 2,700 words in the modern edition. The brevity of this text is not representative of Kokkinos's work in general. In fact, the hypomnēma on Nikodemos is the outlier
in terms of length among Kokkinos’s *vitae* of contemporaneous saints, which range from *ca.* 20,000 words (the *vita* of Germanos) up to 50,000 words (the *vitae* of Sabas and Palamas).

Its unusual brevity compared to Kokkinos’s other lengthy *vitae* may also be explained by the scarce information he confesses to have had at his disposal. Kokkinos took an interest in Nikodemos’s life during his hegoumenate at Philokalles, where his hero had entered as a monk towards the end of his life and died around 1307. As only three decades had passed since Nikodemos’s demise, Kokkinos most likely gathered some information from people who personally knew the saint, perhaps the monks under his supervision. He offers a glimpse into his working room by stating that:

> “I have composed the present narrative, different parts from different sources, and assembled them like mosaic pieces into the form and shape of a single unit, so to speak, since I have found no prior information on the saint.”

The *tesserae*, that is, the building blocks, for his account of Nikodemos’s life can be gleaned from the *v. Nik.*: the holy man hailed from the Macedonian city of Berrhoia; he reached maturity during the reign of Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282–1328) and became a vagrant ascetic; towards the end of his life, he arrived in Thessalonike where he joined the monastery of Philokalles as an obedient monk, yet spent a considerable amount of time outside the monastery in the company of harlots; he abstained from food and gave alms to prostitutes and the poor; around the age of forty he was murdered by a group of locals (i.e., ‘clients’ of the harlots); he was denied burial inside the monastery grounds and a few years later his uncorrupted body was discovered and reburied in the same location; his relics effected miracles and were placed in a church erected on the site with imperial support.

4. The hagiographer at work: weaving the *vita* of the saint

The ways in which Philotheos Kokkinos weaves this scarce biographical information into the narrative form of a *hypomnēma* merits closer investigation. He endeavors to reconstruct the *life* of Nikodemos along the aforementioned milestones and to flesh out a *vita* for the holy man, despite minimal documentation. Kokkinos thus divides the narrative into four roughly equal sections, adding a short preface and a final invocation of similar length:

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The hypomēma opens with a rhetorical question, in which Kokkinos posits (making a pun on his own name): "Who could pass over the story of the truly great ascetic Nikodemos and not relate his accomplishments to God-loving ears (philōtheoi akoai)?" Stressing that such an omission "would certainly cause immense harm to lovers of the good [things]," Kokkinos states his intention to "briefly mention a few of his deeds for those who knew him." Therefore, he embarks on this endeavour by casting aside his fear and hesitations—elements pertaining to the topos modestiae—for the spiritual purpose of encouraging his audience to emulate the holy man’s virtue.

Lacking information on the family, education and early life of his subject, Kokkinos resorts to hagiographical tropes, following long-established guidelines (i.e., the blueprint of the enkōmion and the basilikos logos) for eulogizing a holy man’s origin and childhood. Thus, he briefly commends Nikodemos’s family and native city of Berrhoia for its advantages and especially its fruit: "His birthplace ... is blessed in its natural location and position and many other advantages, but is adorned by none of these as much as its own fruit, I mean the wondrous Nikodemos. He came not from an undistinguished family, but from one of the most important in these parts." Kokkinos uses Emperor Andronikos II’s reign as a temporal marker to place Nikodemos’s floruit. Upon reaching maturity, Nikodemos spends the next twenty years as a wandering ascetic. Kokkinos describes the solitary life of his hero in generic terms and compares him to the Old Testament figures of Abraham...
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and Moses, writing in *homoioiteleuton* that he “chose the life of an expatriate, being oppressed, afflicted, ill-treated, wandering in desert places and mountains” (Hebrews 11:37-38).33

The lack of particulars about Nikodemos’s ascetic life offers Kokkinos a blank canvass for infusing his narrative with hesychast elements. He therefore weaves at this point generic passages with a strong hesychast flavor about his hero’s spiritual exercises, including fasting, vigils, mortification of the flesh and suppression of passions, which lead to extraordinary spiritual accomplishments. Kokkinos writes that Nikodemos was “well girded with strength by God,” “wisely surrounded himself with the cardinal virtues” and “came in the possession of the divine mysteries.”34 Without making any overt references to hesychasm, Kokkinos promotes it by fashioning Nikodemos as pursuing a hesychast lifestyle.35 The holy man thus undertook continuous meditation and contemplation of the divine, “approached the mountain of impassivity,” “mystically saw God through the perception of his soul,” and “constantly delighted in God’s beauty.”36 Such hesychast undertones are more conspicuous and extensive in Kokkinos’s later saints’ lives.37

After twenty years of solitary asceticism, Nikodemos embraced the cenobitic life in the monastery of Philokalies in Thessalonike out of a desire to practice obedience (*hypotagē*).38 Kokkinos stresses the holy man’s devotion to the rule of obedience and the extent of his submission to the superior of the monastery, which elicited the astonishment of his fellow monks.39 At the same time, however, Nikodemos began to spend time with harlots. Kokkinos does not offer a detailed picture of their encounters, apart from stating that the holy man “always engaged in conversations with prostitutes,” pretended “to participate in boisterous revelry” with them, offered them alms, and that he was found “reclining” in their midst prior to his death.40 This behavior earned him widespread criticism.

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35 Other late-Byzantine men of letters also include hesychast elements in their hagiographical works. For instance, Gregory Palamas inserts a lengthy section on hesychast experience and practice in his *Logos* on St Peter of Athos (*BHG* 1506), fashioning Peter as an international hesychast. See Mitrea, “Old wine in new bottles? Gregory Palamas’ *Logos* on Saint Peter of Athos (*BHG* 1506),” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40 (2016): 243–263.
and, as Kokkinos mentions, his superior even threw him out of the monastery on several occasions.\footnote{Philothemos Kokkinos, \textit{v. Nik.} 4.13-15.}

Nikodemos’s conduct, which masks a spiritual purpose under a façade of promiscuity and provocation, has been interpreted as a display of holy foolery.\footnote{Sergey Ivanov, \textit{Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond}, translated into English by Simon Franklin (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 223–225; Talbot, “Children, healing miracles, holy fools: highlights from the hagiographical works of Philotheos Kokkinos (1300–ca. 1379),” \textit{Bysantinska Sällskapet Bulletin} 24 (2005): 48–64, at 57–59.} However, Kokkinos does not attach any label to his hero’s actions or employ anywhere in the \textit{v. Nik.} terms denoting holy foolery, such as \textit{salos}, \textit{mōros}, or \textit{mōria}. He simply states that Nikodemos “chose to be considered and called \textit{anathema} (cf. Romans 9:3) by everyone for the sake of his fellow men.”\footnote{Philothemos Kokkinos, \textit{v. Nik.} 5.14-16. Talbot, “Nikodemos,” 227.} Moreover, Kokkinos provides a quite extensive excursus justifying the holy man’s behavior, as he would do to an even greater extent in the case of Sabas the Younger.\footnote{See, for instance, Philotheos Kokkinos, \textit{The Life of Sabas} 20.36-48, ed. Tsames, Θεσσαλονικητείς ἁγιοι, 198.} He thus explains that Nikodemos willingly submitted himself to the hardships that accompanied his actions, bearing them with “adamantine will” for the “glory that is to come.”\footnote{Philothemos Kokkinos, \textit{v. Nik.} 4.15-17. Talbot, “Nikodemos,” 226.} Moreover, Kokkinos infuses his narrative once again with hesychast elements, stressing that Nikodemos’s soul was “unified mystically with God” and, paraphrasing again the Apostle Paul (Romans 8:38-39), was not distracted by anything external, “\textit{neither things present, nor things to come, nor anything else at all in creation will be able to distract this soul from the love of its Beloved.}”\footnote{Philothemos Kokkinos, \textit{v. Nik.} 4.24-28. Talbot, “Nikodemos,” 226–227.} Kokkinos repeats several times that Nikodemos strove to suffer all the hardship in secret “so that he might thereby attain greater glory from God.”\footnote{Philothemos Kokkinos, \textit{v. Nik.} 2.13-14. Talbot, “Nikodemos,” 225; cf. \textit{v. Nik.} 7.3.} Sergey Ivanov describes Nikodemos as a “negligent and dissolute monk, whose provocative behaviour the author adjusted to the hagiographic canon,” and highlights Kokkinos’s frequent interventions in the narrative and his need to explain Nikodemos’s acts of holy foolery.\footnote{Ivanov, \textit{Holy Fools}, 224–225, 232.} Kokkinos also extols Nikodemos’s ability to abstain from food and be nourished by the life-giving prayer alone. For instance, he presents a case in which the holy man allegedly forewent nourishment for a week, while working in the fields of the monastery, in order to offer his food to the poor or to prostitutes “as payment, to keep them from defiling their beds.”\footnote{Philothemos Kokkinos, \textit{v. Nik.} 5.6-9. Talbot, “Nikodemos,” 227.} Kokkinos fashion this behavior as an effort of his hero to emulate “the divine Vitalios, whose lifestyle and character
he loved excessively.”50 The Life of St John the Merciful (BHG 886d), patriarch of Alexandria (610–619),51 narrates the story of a hermit from Gaza by this name, who went to Alexandria at the age of sixty to work as a day laborer. At the end of each day, he used his wages to save harlots from fornication, leading many to give up their depraved lifestyle and marry or become hermits. However, the apparent scandalous nature of his actions earned Vitalios insults and physical assaults, which ultimately contributed to his death. The striking similarity between the life course of these two holy men could indicate that Kokkinos drew on the story of Vitalios when composing the hypomēma on Nikodemos. As his audience was most likely familiar with the story of “the divine Vitalios,” Kokkinos artfully makes this synkrisis in order to foreshadow, as it were, the similar violent death of Nikodemos, as a consequence of his actions.52

Finally, Kokkinos presents the dramatic circumstances surrounding the holy man’s death. One day, while reclining in the midst of prostitutes, Nikodemos is fatally stabbed by their ‘clients,’ described by Kokkinos as the “devil’s slaves.”53 The hagiographer thus fashions his hero’s death as a result of the devil’s plot:

“But this ‘saintly conduct’ was intolerable to Satan who had malicious designs against Nikodemos from the very beginning, for the common enemy of our kind bore a severe grudge against him, and ground his teeth against him in insane fashion.”54

Barely breathing, Nikodemos is taken back to the monastery, but is denied entrance, likely due to the dishonorable circumstances of his stabbing. Shunned by his monastic community, Nikodemos professes his humility one last time—rendered by Kokkinos in narratized speech55—, reproaching himself for his unworthiness to enter the monastery, as well as the life to come.56 This can be interpreted as an indication of Kokkinos’s disapproval of Nikodemos’s lifestyle57. After receiving

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52 Kokkinos’s familiarity with the Life of St John the Merciful is also evidenced in his vita of Germanos Maroules (39.52-57), where he compares his hero to John the Merciful. Cf. Ivanov, Holy Fools, 223–224.
53 Philotheos Kokkinos, v. Nik. 6.6, 11-12.
55 Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, translated into English by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 170–171, defines “narratized speech” as the most distant type of discourse in terms of narrative mood, in which the character’s words are integrated into the narration.
the holy communion outside the gates, the holy man succumbs alone and his body is buried in an unspecified location, in the vicinity of the monastery. Kokkinos expresses his disapproval towards this dramatic episode, inserting several exclamations in his account, such as "o, what stupidity" or "alas." Moreover, he specifies the retribution that befell the murderers, who were captured by the "Latins," that is, the Catalan Company, and had their hands cut off. He also comments on the fairness of the murderers’ punishment, deeming it "a just action, even if they did not obtain a punishment worthy of their brazen deed."

After the account of Nikodemos’s death, Kokkinos touches briefly on the discovery of his relics by some passers-by who perceived their fragrance a few years later. Upon digging a trench, they found Nikodemos’s body, described in asyndeton as "intact, whole, complete, having suffered no corruption whatsoever." Returning to the passage I quoted at the beginning of this article, Kokkinos presents this discovery as "a stroke of good fortune" and a reason of joy and celebration for the whole city of Thessalonike. Then, Nikodemos’s relics receive a "proper burial with perfumed oils and linen winding cloths," performed by the archbishop of the city (most likely Metropolitan Jeremiah) with all the citizens.

Miraculous elements in Kokkinos’s hypomnēma

Having led a controversial lifestyle (often in the company of harlots), Nikodemos was most likely not in want of detractors. Consequently, Kokkinos dedicates close to a quarter of the hypomnēma to miracle accounts, for the purpose of legitimizing and defending his hero. This includes one healing and two punishment miracles, which depict the holy man as swift in helping his supporters and, conversely, punishing his opponents.

The first miracle presents a case of miraculous healing, in which a man is cured of paralysis after making supplications and shedding tears at Nikodemos’s shrine. However, while the miracle itself seems fairly common, Kokkinos’s account stands out through the detailed description of the beneficiary, a Serbian from Dalmatia by the name of George Karabides, “who once came over to the Romans as a deserter” and settled in Thessalonike. This level of detail could indicate that the man was known to Kokkinos’s audience and might have even been alive when he wrote the v. Nik. Additionally, Kokkinos might have selected this miracle in order to underline the role played by Serbians (whom Kokkinos calls Tribaloi) in promoting Nikodemos’s cult. It is surely not by chance that the saint features in a fresco in the katholikon of the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, rebuilt and painted under the patronage of the Serbian kral Stephen Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321).

The second miracle account features a high official who travels from Adrianople to Thessalonike in the imperial entourage, perhaps that of Michael IX Palaiologos. The man visits the saint’s shrine and asks about Nikodemos’s life, learning from those present about his conduct regarding prostitutes. However, instead of marveling at the holy man’s life and deeds, the traveler passes a negative moral judgment on the story, finding it “vulgar and base.” Consequently, when he kisses the saint’s coffin, his lips are stuck to it as punishment. Kokkinos captures the reaction of the onlookers, who are greatly terrified at the sight of this retribution and plead to the saint on behalf of the disbeliever, saving him from his penance. Kokkinos most likely referenced the intra-textual audience, namely, the onlookers, in order to serve as a role model for his audience and offer a cue about the reaction expected upon hearing the account of this miracle. When Kokkinos composed the hypomnéma, there might have still been detractors

67 Details regarding the age, origin, social status, and even name of beneficiaries were fairly common in late-Byzantine miracle accounts and collections of miracles. These details served the purpose of reinforcing the veracity of the miracle accounts, especially in the context of the canonization process of a holy figure, whose miracle-making powers they attested. See, for instance, the posthumous miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I, recorded by Theoktistos the Stoudite, as well as the dossier of Palamas’s miracles compiled by Kokkinos.
of the holy man and people who questioned his actions and sanctity. Therefore, the miracle might have served as a legitimizing device in support of Nikodemos’s sainthood, as well as in spreading his cult, since the punishment turned the skeptic into a “loud herald and true expounder of the miracle” and implicitly of the saint.71

The last miracle account in the v. Nik. presents the story of a woman who visits the saint’s shrine to seek his help in curing an unspecified affliction that had troubled her for years.72 However, instead of simply praying or touching the saint’s relics, she surreptitiously removes and appropriates one of his teeth. Interestingly, while in most miracle accounts the beneficiaries touch their afflicted body parts to a sarcophagus, Kokkinos writes that the woman does the reverse. She places the head of the saint on the afflicted part of her body, which suggests that the saint’s head could have been preserved in a different reliquary chest than his body. Kokkinos does not present the woman’s act as premeditated or motivated by a desire to acquire material rewards by selling the relic, as was often the case in instances of furta sacra.73 She might have appropriated the saint’s tooth simply to increase her chances of recovery. However, instead of a swift cure, the “wretched woman,” as Kokkinos calls her, is struck with madness and punished for the injury she brought to the saint’s body. Upon returning the holy relic to its rightful place with a tearful confession and remorse, the woman is absolved of her punishment. Kokkinos’s way of presenting both these punishment miracles (v. Nik. 9–10) underlines their instructive function. Nikodemos’s coffin “educated” (epaideue) the “uneducated lips” (apaideuta cheile) of the skeptic man, while the woman who stole his tooth received swiftly her “education” (paideia), or “was punished.”

Before the final invocation, Kokkinos briefly mentions that a church was built in honor of the saint with imperial donation on the site where his relics had been discovered.74 In the closing of the hypomnēma, Kokkinos invokes Nikodemos’s protection of the flock at Philokalles against “visible and invisible enemies.” Moreover, he asks the saint to guide his actions as superior of the monastery, so that “having led a quiet and tranquil life (1 Timothy 2:2), [he] may offer both them and [himself] as unblemished and untouched sacrifices to the all-holy Trinity.”75 This may hint at the setting and the time when Kokkinos delivered this hypomnēma, which was most likely in front of the monastic community at Philokalles, perhaps on the feast day of the saint (1340/1–1342).

74 Philotheos Kokkinos, v. Nik. 11.
Conclusion

This article has analyzed Philotheos Kokkinos's first hagiographical composition dedicated to a contemporaneous holy figure, namely Nikodemos the Younger, looking at Kokkinos's technique of arranging the bits and pieces of information about the holy man in the form of a hypomnēma. Despite the scarcity of biographical data, Kokkinos created a balanced structure for the short vita, allocating narrative space to: (1) his hero's early life and period of wandering asceticism; (2) his life in a cenobitic environment and activities as a holy fool; (3) violent death and discovery of his holiness; as well as (4) manifestations of his miracle-making powers, despite the controversy surrounding his later life. True to the literary conventions of this type of 'hagiographical genre,' Kokkinos's account is concise and unembellished with rhetorical ornaments, classical references or use of dialogue. However, as a gifted hagiographer, he succeeds to flesh out within these constraints a life and an identity for his hero, employing scriptural quotations and allusions, as well as synkrisēs with Biblical figures and other models, particularly the holy fool Vitalios. Moreover, Kokkinos infuses his narrative with hesychast undertones when extolling Nikodemos's virtues or justifying his actions, fashioning him as a practicing hesychast. Kokkinos's later vitae of contemporaneous holy men include more extensive hesychast elements and references, through which he sought to promote and vindicate the hesychast theology that has remained at the core of Christian Orthodoxy up to this day. Through his hypomnēma, Kokkinos composed an authoritative text that filled in a gap and honored, promoted and perhaps rekindled the local cult of Nikodemos the Younger. As he noted in the preface to the ν. Nik, Kokkínos envisaged this work as a spiritual exercise addressed to lovers of the good, i.e., the monastic community at Philokalles, and by extension the whole city of Thessalonike, to train and encourage them to emulate Nikodemos.

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