

## MIRACULOUS HEALING ΘΑΥΜΑΤΟΥΡΓΙΚΗ ΘΕΡΑΠΕΙΑ

### Miraculous renal healing in the church of the Life-Giving Spring in Constantinople Compendium (1812) from the original by Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (1256–1335)

Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (1256–1335) was a priest in Hagia Sofia and a scholar considered as the last Greek ecclesiastical historian. Apart from “Ecclesiasticae Historiae”, dedicated to the emperor Andronikos-II Palaeologos (1282–1328), he wrote poems, liturgical hymns and “synaxaria” of the Orthodox Church. His book of the miracles in the church of the Life-Giving Spring in Constantinople was published in a compendium translation in vulgar Greek (1812). Initiated by the ex-Bishop of Stages (Meteyora) Paisios (1784–1808), this translation aimed to offer contemporary Greeks a book more comprehensible and thus more beneficial than the original. Our aim was to analyse the forms of miraculous healing applied and the renal ailments healed in this compendium. Miraculous healings (54 among 63 miracles) included prayers, visions and the spring-water. Drinking was applied in 43, washes in 11 and mud compresses in 8 cases. Renal ailments were present in 11 cases: bladder stones with dysuria, hematuria, pyuria or urine retention in 9 and hydrops in 2. Emperor Justinian (527–565) was healed from an obstructive bladder stone. Help was sought after doctors’ treatments failed. In two cases, water drinking was applied despite medical advice and side effects of drug-therapy were healed in two other. In the compendium edition of the book of Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos on the miracles of the Life-Giving Spring in Constantinople, healing of renal disorders was very frequent (20%). This publication implies a close relationship of Greek scholars, during the Hellenic Enlightenment (1750–1821), with Palaeologian Byzantine Humanism.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (1256–1335) was a native of Constantinople. He lived during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos-II Palaeologos (1282–1328). He was a priest of the Great Church, Hagia Sophia, and later in life became a monk. He was a scholar, trained in the florid, rhetorical style of the Paleologian Renaissance historiography, which flourished in the 13th and 14th centuries.<sup>1</sup> He taught rhetoric and theology and was considered the last Greek ecclesiastical historian.

Andronikos II was born in Nicaea and was proclaimed co-emperor in 1261, when his father Michael VIII Paleologos recovered Constantinople from the Latin Empire and

transformed the Empire of Nicaea into a restored Byzantine Empire. Andronikos II (fig. 1), who was crowned sole emperor in 1282, managed, during his reign, to mitigate the problems in the west using diplomacy. However, the Empire faced great economic difficulties and the Turks conquered most of its Western Anatolian territories. Andronikos II also repudiated his father’s unpopular Church union with the Vatican but managed to resolve the related schism within the Orthodox clergy only in 1310.<sup>2</sup>

Nikiphoros Xanthopoulos has written many books. His 18-volume “Ecclesiasticae Historiae” was dedicated to emperor Andronikos-II Palaeologos. He also wrote poems, liturgical hymns and “synaxaria” of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The volume and thematic variety of his work was

ARCHIVES OF HELLENIC MEDICINE 2020, 37(Suppl 2):267–270  
ΑΡΧΕΙΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΗΣ 2020, 37(Συμπλ 2):267–270

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Θαυματουργικές θεραπείες νεφρικών παθήσεων στην εκκλησία της Ζωοδόχου Πηγής στην Κωνσταντινούπολη. Εγκόλπιο (1812) από το πλήρες κείμενο του Νικηφόρου-Κάλλιστου Ξανθόπουλου (1256–1335)

Περίληψη στο τέλος του άρθρου

#### Key words

Life-Giving Spring  
Miraculous renal healing  
Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos  
Zoothohos Pege



**Figure 1.** Andronikos II Palaiologos, Byzantine emperor (1282–1328). From the History of George Pachymeres, cod. Monac. gr. 442, fol. 6v, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

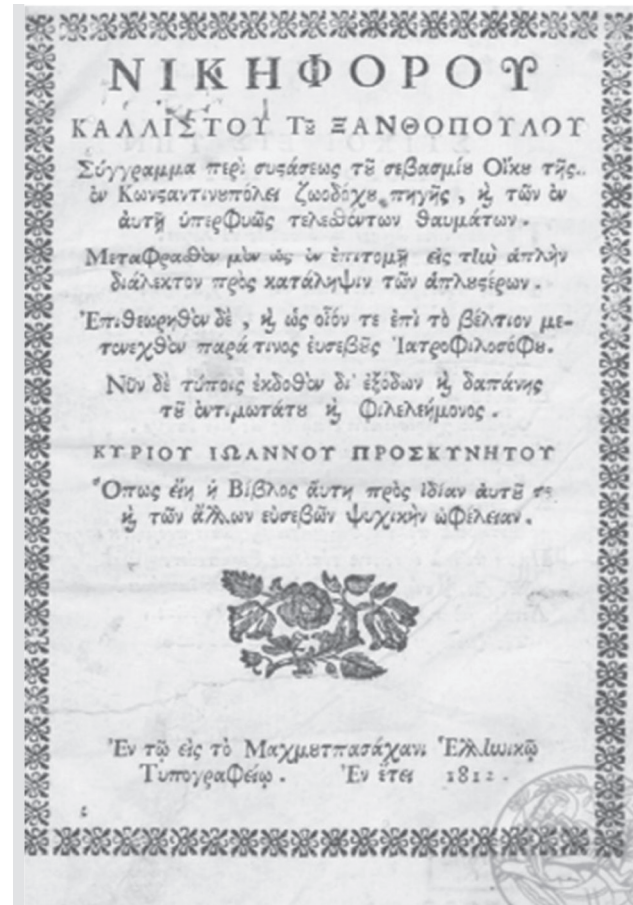
impressive.<sup>3</sup> However, it has not yet been published in printed form because it was prohibited by the Pope and the Vatican due to dogmatic differences in the 16th century.<sup>4</sup>

His book about the miracles in the church of the Life-Giving Spring in Constantinople was published in a compendium translation in vulgar Greek (1812, fig. 2). Initiated by the ex-Bishop of Stages (Metoeira) Paisios (1784–1808), this translation aimed to offer contemporary Greeks a book more comprehensible and thus more beneficial than the original.

The aim of the study presented was to analyse the forms of miraculous healing applied and the renal ailments healed in this compendium.

## 2. RESULTS

The compendium edition of Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos' book on the miracles of the Life-Giving Spring in Constantinople included 54 miraculous healings among the 63 miracles described. Healing was accomplished with the help of prayers or visions and also, in most cases, by using the spring-water. Drinking was applied in 43, washes in 11 and mud compresses in 8 cases.



**Figure 2.** The title page of Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos' book (1256–1335) on the miracles in the church of the Life-Giving Spring in Constantinople in compendium translation in vulgar Greek, published in 1812.

Renal ailments were present in 11 cases: bladder stones with dysuria, haematuria, pyuria or urine retention in 9 and hydrops in 2. Emperor Justinian (527–565) was healed from an obstructive bladder stone. In all cases, help was sought after doctors' treatments had failed or after a previous miraculous healing experience.

Interestingly, in two cases water drinking was applied despite medical advice for the opposite and, in two others, side effects of the doctor's drug-therapy were healed. Even if incorrect, the above statements reveal the limits and errors of the then traditional medicine.

## 3. DISCUSSION

The epithet Life-Giving Spring was given to Maria because she revealed the sacred spring in Constantinople, to a soldier who later became the Byzantine Emperor Leo I (457–474). Leo I built the historic Church of Maria of the

Life -Giving Spring over the sacred fount. Since then, the Spring has witnessed numerous reported miracles and miraculous healings.

In the compendium edition of Nikiphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos' book on the miracles of the Life -Giving Spring in Constantinople, the healing of renal disorders was often reported (20%). The most frequent kidney ailments healed were lithiasis and urinary tract infections. This publication implies a close relationship of Greek scholars, during the Hellenic Enlightenment (1750–1821), with Palaeologian Byzantine Humanism.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Collections on miraculous healing are often found in Byzantine bibliography. They have an obvious resemblance to the collections of clinical cases in the medical works of antiquity, for example those of Hippocrates.<sup>5</sup> These collections of miracles may be seen as case studies and help to draw some conclusions about epidemiology<sup>6</sup> and therapeutic practices during the period they refer to.<sup>6,7</sup> The book presented here allows us to hypothesise that renal disorders were not rare in Byzantium and that their treatment, even for the rich and powerful, entailed considerable difficulties.

#### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

**Θαυματουργικές θεραπείες νεφρικών παθήσεων στην εκκλησία της Ζωοδόχου Πηγής στην Κωνσταντινούπολη. Εγκόλπιο (1812) από το πλήρες κείμενο του Νικηφόρου-Κάλλιστου Ξανθόπουλου (1256–1335)**

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*Αρχεία Ελληνικής Ιατρικής 2020, 37(Συμπλ 2):267–270*

Ο Νικηφόρος Κάλλιστος Ξανθόπουλος (1256–1335) υπήρξε ιερέας στην Αγία Σοφία και μελετητής. Θεωρείται ο τελευταίος Έλληνας εκκλησιαστικός ιστορικός. Εκτός από το έργο του «*Ecclesiasticae Historiae* (Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία)», το οποίο ήταν αφιερωμένο στον αυτοκράτορα Ανδρόνικο-ΙΙ Παλαιολόγο (1282–1328), έγραψε ποιήματα, λειτουργικούς ύμνους και «συναξάρια» της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας. Το βιβλίο του για τα θαύματα στην εκκλησία της Ζωοδόχου Πηγής στην Κωνσταντινούπολη δημοσιεύθηκε σε μία συνοπτική μετάφραση στην απλή ελληνική γλώσσα (1812). Η μετάφραση αυτή, που ξεκίνησε ο πρώην Επίσκοπος Σταγών (Μετέωρα) Παΐσιος (1784–1808), είχε στόχο να προσφέρει στους σύγχρονους Έλληνες ένα βιβλίο πιο κατανοητό και επομένως πιο χρήσιμο από το πρωτότυπο. Στόχος μας ήταν να αναλύσουμε τις μορφές θαυματουργής θεραπείας που εφαρμόστηκαν και τις νεφρικές παθήσεις που θεραπεύτηκαν, όπως καταγράφονται σε αυτή τη σύνοψη. Οι θαυματουργές θεραπείες (54 μεταξύ 63 θαυμάτων) περιελάμβαναν προσευχές, οράματα και το νερό της πηγής. Πόση του νερού εφαρμόστηκε σε 43 περιπτώσεις, πλύσεις σε 11 και επιθέματα λάσπης σε 8 περιπτώσεις. Νεφρικές παθήσεις παρουσιάζονταν σε 11 περιπτώσεις: Λίθοι της ουροδόχου κύστης με δυσουρία, αιματουρία, πυουρία ή κατακράτηση ούρων σε 9 και εξίδρωμα σε 2. Ο αυτοκράτορας Ιουστινιανός (527–565) θεραπεύτηκε εκεί από λιθιασική απόφραξη της ουροδόχου κύστης. Ζητήθηκε βοήθεια αφού οι θεραπείες των ιατρών απέτυχαν. Σε δύο περιπτώσεις, η πόση νερού εφαρμόστηκε παρά τις ιατρικές συμβουλές και οι παρενέργειες της φαρμακευτικής αγωγής θεραπεύτηκαν σε δύο άλλες. Στη συνοπτική έκδοση του συγγράμματος του Νικηφόρου Καλλίστου Ξανθόπουλου σχετικά με τα θαύματα της Ζωοδόχου Πηγής στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, η θεραπεία των νεφρικών παθήσεων ήταν ένα συχνό φαινόμενο (20%). Η παρούσα έκδοση υποδηλώνει τη στενή σχέση Ελλήνων μελετητών, κατά τη διάρκεια του Ελληνικού Διαφωτισμού (1750–1821), με τον Βυζαντινό Ανθρωπισμό της εποχής των Παλαιολόγων.

**Λέξεις ευρητηρίου:** Ζωοδόχος Πηγή, Θαυματουργικές νεφρικές θεραπείες, Νικηφόρος Κάλλιστος Ξανθόπουλος

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