

Abstract/Proposal

"From Homer to the Codex Sinaiticus: Evolution and Morphology of the Sigma in Greek Textuality"

Perhaps the most heavily adapted letter of the Greek alphabet, the sigma has had a multifaceted and complex textual history involving its many variations. In ancient epigraphy, the disigma – denoting the number nine hundred – was utilized throughout the classical world. When cataloging Homeric poetry at the library of Alexandria, grammarian Aristarchus of Samothrace utilized several variations of lunate and dotted sigmas as editorial signs in copying works. Heavily used in Byzantine texts, the majuscule lunate sigma replaced all others in biblical literature, becoming prominent in the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus. By the late middle ages, however, the sigma was simplified and eventually lost its significant variations, variations that nonetheless remained in the periphery of Greek scholarship and religious works in the Byzantine East. This paper surveys the transformation, various manifestations, and application of the sigma in Greek paleographical scholarship, critically examining the motivations for its simplification in late medieval codices. Manuscripts from the late antique and early medieval periods - including biblical and literary works - are examined, surveying the usage of the sigma both as an editorial symbol and as a style of letter.

Megan Andréa Garedakis

Graduate Student, Late Antique and Medieval History

San Francisco State University

San Francisco, CA, USA 94132