A Passage of the ‘Barbarograeca’ Metaphrase of Niketas Choniates’ Chronike Diegesis. Retranslated or Revised?

DAVIS John

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The language of the ‘Barbarograeca’ version of the Chronike Diegesis of Niketas Choniates has been discussed on a number of occasions, chiefly in terms of its linguistic and stylistic level, and its relation to the vernacular of the late Byzantine period. However, two short passages of the Niketas-Metaphrase (hereafter N-M) invite us to observe a reviser at work and to speculate on the likelihood that, for some reason, the original metaphrase


was reworked at this point, or that, on account perhaps of damage, it invited (or presented with the opportunity) a subsequent copyist to experiment or improvise slightly with the material he found before him, thus leaving us with two closely related but nonetheless quite distinct versions. These two passages occur in the chapter on the reign of Alexios II Komnenos (1180-1183). The earliest of the manuscripts, Monacensis gr. 450 (second quarter of the fourteenth century), designated B since Bekker’s edition (Bonn, 1835), is the witness to the one version, while the other two manuscripts, Vindobonensis Suppl. gr. 166 (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), designated X by van Diemen, and Scorialensis Ψ-IV-17 (early sixteenth century), designated S, preserve the second. There is a further manuscript of N-M –Parisinus gr. 3142 – designated Y, but it does not preserve the part with these passages; evidence from other parts of N-M, however, indicates that Y belongs to the XS group, therefore making B the odd man out among the four manuscripts of N-M. In our discussion here, we shall refer to X and S collectively as i, implying that they descend from a common original which differed to some degree from the text witnessed by B.

In lieu of a detailed analysis of the relationship of all the N-M manuscripts to one another, it may be useful, firstly, to sketch briefly the way in which B and i relate to (and diverge from) one another in general, thus providing the likely context within which the present passage needs to be viewed, itself being only a part of a much larger whole. Firstly, the manuscript distribution of the divergences met with in the passage here, is

2. The first of the two passages is on fols 74-74v, while the second, presented here, is on fols 80-81 of ms. Monacensis gr. 450
3. For further details on this manuscript see NCH, I, pp. XXXIX-XXXIX. For a quick orientation through the manuscript tradition of the Chronike Diegesis see H. Hunger, Die hochsprachliche protane Literatur der Byzantiner, I, Munich 1971, 432-433.
4. NCH, I, pp. XXXIX XLI
5. NCH, I, pp. XLVI-XLVII
6. NCH, I, pp. XLI and XXXIX-XXXXIII
7. I am at present preparing a critical edition of the Nicetas-Metaphrase as part of my doctoral research under the supervision of Dr A. Angelou at the University of Ioannina. The introduction will contain a detailed analysis of the manuscripts and their relationship to one another.
consistent with the pattern described above for the N-M manuscripts. Below are enumerated the kinds of variation encountered in B and i (scribal error and orthographical idiosyncracies apart):

1) Variation of lexical items (N[icetae Chon. Hist.372,47-49]):
   πολλοίς μὲν τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐφόνευσεν B
   πολλοίς μὲν τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀπέκτειν ι

2) Simple alterations of word order (N356.26):
   μέχρι ταύτης ἐλθείν τῆς μεγαλοπόλεως B
   μέχρι ταύτης τῆς μεγαλοπόλεως ἐλθείν ι

3) B omits where i keeps items that correspond with N:
   τὸ γένος λαμπροῦ καὶ ἐπίσημοι (N390,93)
   ἐκ γένους λαμπροῦ B
   ἐκ γένους λαμπροῦ καὶ ἐπίσημοι ι

4) i omits or abbreviates where B keeps items that correspond with N:
   τὴν δοικίαν ἀρχὴν τῶν Θρακησίων (N400,77)
   τὴν τῶν Θρακησίων ἀρχὴν ι
   τὴν δοικίαν τῶν Θρακησίων ἀρχὴν B

5) Β adds an item that does not correspond with Ν or i:
   ὁ ταύτης τύραννος (N370,93)
   τῷ ταύτης τυράννῳ Γιλιέλμῳ B
   τῷ ταύτης τυράννῳ S

or
   ἐκτέλεσαν μὲ οὐσὶ μέλλοσαι χηρίων (N367,18)
   ἐκτέλεσαν μὲ οἱ ἐχθροὶ μου οὐσὶ μέλλοσαι χηρίων B
   ἐκτέλεσαν μὲ οὐσὶ μέλλοσαι χηρίων ι

6) i adds (in the form of expanding on a lexical item) where B corresponds with N:
   τὸ ἔθνος ὅλον ἀνασείσαντες (N369,58)
   τὸ ὅλον ἔθνος ἀνασείσαντες Β
   τὸ ὅλον ἔθνος ἀνασείσαντες καὶ ταράζοντες ι

A count of these variations for the bulk of N-M reveals that nos. 4 and 6 above are the least common types of variation. In other words, i appears to be less divergent from N in terms of lexical and phrasal amplification. It needs to be borne in mind therefore that, while both traditions of N-M must surely derive from the same original (so much of the text being identical in both branches), the version witnessed by B shows a tendency to more radical
departure from the phraseology of N. Yet in matters of accuracy and detail (placenames, grammatical features and scribal errors) the B text, in the vast majority of cases, is more reliable than the other manuscripts. It will become clear to what extent the passage here conforms to this pattern.

In the case of the two versions presented here, a number of questions immediately come to mind. Firstly, perhaps the one version is merely a reworking of the other. Secondly, one may ask whether they both record separate attempts at translation, uninfluenced by one another, although this seems highly unlikely when one considers how the rest of N-M (242 folia in B) does not present other divergences of this extent, and the fact that both B and I have so many shared features, even within this particular passage. Then again, and less improbably, perhaps one of the versions represents a combination of the already existing metaphrase and a reworking from Chomates’ original, an hypothesis that presupposes our scribe/reviser, at least for this part of N-M, having two exemplars before him, a (draft?) metaphrase and the original Chronike Diegesis. There is a fourth possibility, that of the intrusion of interlinear or marginal corrections or alterations, which will be considered below.

By selecting a number of points from the passage appended to this article it should be possible to propose some answers to the questions posed above. Although just one of the two passages concerned is presented here (neither has been previously published), it is the longer of the two, and best illustrates points which can also be found in the other.

A careful reading and comparison of N (the original Chronike Diegesis) and BXS indicates that N-M does deserve perhaps to be characterized as a ‘translation’ of sorts, rather than as a paraphrase proper. If one can take the

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8 See H. Hunger, Anonyme Metaphrase zu Anna Komnene, Alexius XI XIII. Ein Beitrag zur Erschliessung der byzantinischen Umgangssprache, Vienna 1981, 7 n. 2. ‘Daß man diese Schriften nicht als Paraphrasen, sondern besser als Metaphrasen bezeichnet, hat A. Pignani zu Recht betont. ’Parafraasi o metafraii (a proposito della Statua Regia di Niceforo Blemmida)’* Atti Acc Pontan 24 (1976), 219-225’ I use the description ‘metaphrase’ chiefly in order to preserve the looseness of character of the text, as well as to use the more frequently encountered Byzantine word for this kind of text. It generally hovers between paraphrase and translation proper, without apparent consistency or clear
liberty of applying the dictum of modern translation theory, namely, that the golden rule of translation is to fulfill the criteria of accuracy and economy, to a text and linguistic undertaking of this sort (in the case of works such as Planudes’ translation into Greek of Latin works as, for example, Augustine’s treatise on the Trinity, Boethius’ *Consolatione philosophiae* or Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, as well as translations considered to have been undertaken by others, or even Galesiotes’ and Oinaiotes’ metaphrase of the *Βασιλικός άνδριας* of Nikephoros Blemmydes, this principle does indeed seem to have been applied), then clearly N-M falls lamentably short of satisfying such demands. Yet the looser designation of ‘paraphrase’, implying as it does a degree of explanation, although valid for many parts of the text, method. It has been variously described by others as ‘Barbarograeca’, ‘vulgärgriechische’, a ‘declassification’ of a high-style history, as well as a ‘metaphrase’.


13. That Maximos Holobolos also had translated some texts on logic by Boethius has been called into question by some scholars (see Wilson, op. cit., 224-5). A more recent study, however, accepts the Holobolos attribution: D. Z. Niketas (ed.), *BOETHIUS*’ *De topics differentiis und die byzantinische Rezeption dieses Werkes* (Boethius, *De topics differentiis* καί οί βυζαντινές μεταφράσεις τῶν Μανυνήλ Ολοβώλου καί Προχόρου Κυδώνον. Παράρτημα/Anhang: Eine Pachymeres-Weiterarbeitung der Holobolos-Übersetzung, The Academy of Athens, Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi. Philosophi Byzantini 5, Athens 1990.

can by no means be said to explain the general process that, with little consistency and less method, brought about the conversion of N to N-M. Failler, in his discussion of another "paraphrase", probably of the same century, described that text as 'more than a simple compendium, yet less than a true paraphrase'\textsuperscript{15}. In comparing these two versions of this particular passage of N-M, therefore, we are faced with the added variable factor of dealing with a text whose precise identity, or self-awareness in respect of its linguistic status and literary objectives, is far from clear. But it nevertheless does seem to be the case that –to the extent his understanding of the original allowed– our metaphrast was indeed attempting to translate Choniates’ work into a more easily understood idiom, keeping as closely as he was able to the thread and turn of phrase of the original, though as we shall see, not always successfully.

In just the first few lines one can discern a number of features that will be seen to recur throughout the passage examined here. In the words immediately preceding the section where N-M splits into two versions (this split occurs in mid-sentence, as is also the case with the first of the two passages, beginning on fol. 74, ms. Monacensis gr. 450) both B and i share the same misplacement of the word Basmouloi: the result is that the Basmouloi (in other words Latino-Romans of the city)\textsuperscript{16} are joined with the Rhomaioi in the first group of warships, thereby creating a racially based category of soldiers to fill the decks of the ships of the μεν clause, while Choniates places the Romans in the one part of the fleet without specifying

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{15} A. FAILLER, La tradition manuscrite de l’Histoire de Georges Pachymère (livres I-VI), \textit{REB} 37, 1979, 164.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{16} For the Basmouloi, or more commonly Gasmouloi, see G. MAKRIS, Die Gasmuine, \textit{Thesaurismata} 22, 1992, 44-96. On pp. 87-93 MAKRIS discusses the two forms of the word (beginning with γ- and β-). His conclusions on the occurrence of the two forms, however, do not allow us to make any secure inferences about the use of the form Basmouloi in our text (he suggests that the two forms probably existed side by side in Constantinople in late Byzantium, reflecting simply Frankish (for γασ-) and Venetian (βασ-) dialectical differences in the pronunciation of the word. The metaphrast may have been translating the word \textit{διαφορογενών}, a hapax legomenon (see NCH, II, p. 115) that is not closed, of course, to other, more likely, interpretations: \textit{διαφορογενεΐς Λατίνοι} must surely indicate an assortment of Latin westerners, such as Pisans, Genoans, Venetians, etc.}
the origins of those ready to fight on deck, and the διαφορογενεῖς Λατίνων in
the other part. This looks as if either the metaphrast has understood
διαφορογενεῖς as meaning something like διγενής ('of dual descent'), and
interpreted this as Basmouloi, or has chosen to reinforce the phrase ὅσον
άνδρείον καὶ μάχιμον (B) = ὅπερ κράτιστον μέρος καὶ μαχιμότατον N.
(That these forces of Basmouloi were considered to be crack fighters is
attested also in Gregoras I 113.) An explanation for the curious position of
the word in the text may be that Βασμούλοι was written somewhere in the
margin or interlinear spaces of a glossed text of N (or of the original N-M),
close to the διαψορογενών Λατίνων or κράτιστον ... μαχιμότατον, but
became misplaced in a later copying. The fact that the divergence between
the two texts occurs in mid-sentence may hold a clue to the reasons behind
the sudden break in their correspondence. One would have thought that if a
scribe, out of choice, were to set about recasting the words of the text he was
copying, then he would do so at a point that provided a more logical starting
place than mid-sentence.

In this same section i supplies a new verb, εἰσήξαν, whose subject is
presumably an impersonal 'they'. It looks as if i was not happy with leaving
the verb εἰσήρχοντο to apply for the rest of the sentence, although he then
failed to harmonise the new verb – and new plural subject– with the subject
(Alexios the protosevastos) of the verb ἔδωκε. Therefore i seems to be
attempting to produce simpler syntax at this point. Next (4), i reflects N more
transparantly (ἐπληροφορεῖτο ώς αὐτοῦ βοήσωσιν i = τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις αὐτοῖς
ὡς ἀνηξούσιοι N), yet at the same time B does not render the text less
correctly. In fact, in the case of the phrase τήν άπασαν ελπίδα είχεν αὐτοῦ
one could claim that ἦπερ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις αὐτοῖς ὡς ἀνηξούσιοι (N) was
translated even more vividly by the B version. Here, however, it is evident
that the exemplar (or exemplars) from which i and B were copying was such
that it was open to varying interpretation or remodelling. While B seems to
show more confidence than i, the latter appears to have some kind of window
onto N or, more likely, a (draft?) metaphrase of N. This passage, as well as
N-M as a whole, gives the impression that a text of some kind, with a
number of minor corrections or improvements marked on it, at this point was
heavily annotated, thus leading to a degree of confusion for future copyists.
—hence the mixed quality of both B and i, and the uneven degree to which one can detect N now in B and now in i. This remark finds further support in B/i 5-8, where B looks to be interested chiefly in the content of the passage, i in the form, and, particularly, in B/i 8, although i keeps ‘Kontostephanos’ (as in N) it does not look as finished as B. The gap, shared by both B and i at the end of 9 would suggest that indeed B and i are both copying from a text containing the Metaphrase rather than the original Chronike Diegesis.

A feature observed in the fourteenth-century ‘paraphrase’ of Pachymeres’ History, and which is also the case in much of N-M, was the rendering into direct speech of parts of the text that could—however remotely—be understood as reported speech. B and i use the opening clause εἶπόντος ὡς to introduce the words of Kontostephanos. The difference between the two versions of Kontostephanos’ words is marked. I is more overtly first person, inserting έμόνιο to give his words greater vividness: Οὐ δυνατόν εστίν έτερος τό έμόν κεφαλαττίκιον δέξασθαι. On the other hand, B’s οὐδένι ἄλλῳ ἁμαρτάνει ἡ τῶν στόλου ἀρχὴ clearly follows N more closely (στολαρχίας N = ἡ τῶν στόλου ἀρχῆ B; use of dative personal pronoun; προσηκούσης N = ἂμαρτάνει B), while i has completely rephrased the statement, picking up on the word he had used earlier κεφαλάς (5) with κεφαλαττίκιον. I thus begins to assume the profile of a lively though less faithful (or, to put it another way, freer) translation; yet in the next phrase, 8, the pendulum swings away from i: i is suddenly much closer to N (τὴν βούλησαν N = ἐν εἶχεν σκοπόν i; μετατιθῆκε N = μετέθηκε i), while B has almost wholly recast the entire phrase. This alternation of greater lexical faithfulness of now B and now i towards N can be seen throughout the entire passage.

5 presents a puzzling mixture of choices on the part of B and i: B omits to use a dative construction with παραδοῦναι τὸν στόλον, threbery failing to

17. Failér, op. cit., 171. Many of Failér’s conclusions about the language of the paraphrase of Pachymeres’ History can equally well be applied to N-M: transformation of long sentences, occurring frequently in the original, into shorter and simpler units; replacement of indirect speech by direct speech; omission of rare or archaising particles and pronouns; translation of rare or arcane words into more commonly understood terms.
give grammatical shape to the sentence; i, on the other hand, supplies an indirect object with the εις construction, but prefers to keep κεφαλάδας ἐμβαλεῖν (=ἐπιστήσαι τριηράρχας Ν) while omitting παραδοῦναι τὸν στόλον. It is possible, however, that i is merely reworking a text similar to B, recasting the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν στόλον as κεφαλάδας ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὰ κάτεργα in order to improve the syntax of the sentence. This may be seen therefore as evidence that i was perhaps revising a text similar to B. The confusion in Β at this point would seem to indicate, however, that Β cannot have been working from i.

In 10 both Β and i misinterpret N: αὐνὴ...τι is rendered as a single person rather than as a collective pronoun, therefore suddenly introducing an unspecified character who is supposedly related to another unspecified character; one can only guess which of the names in the previous sentences the metaphrast had in mind.

Syntactical weakness is evident in Β in other places. 12-14 are grammatically incomplete, since we wait in vain for a main verb (with ὅς as its subject) that is expected after the string of participles (ἵδον, δοὺς, ἀναγινώσκω). This confusion on the part of Β is all the more mystifying since N does not seem obscure here. If one wishes to seek the logic behind this omission (the metaphrast is, after all, working on the basis of the original text and endeavouring –at times with more and at times with less success– to recreate meaning), and if one does not wish to attribute the absence of a main verb simply to scribal error (this possibility cannot be discounted, of course), then it may be because Β was expecting the main verb to appear further down in the sentence; however, no such verb that could have ὅς as its subject materialises, and the entire sentence remains hanging in the air. The conclusion to be drawn on the method of the Β text here is that he either did not take the trouble to revise his work, or that the passage in question gives evidence again of having been copied from a draft or annotated metaphrase, that did not indicate clearly which part of the text should be copied.18 I does

18. Nevertheless, the metaphrast seems at this point to have understood Choniates better than his modern translator into English. H. J. Magoulas, Ο City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates. Detroit 1984, 139, fails to recognise the genitive absolute in
not share this error (δούς Β = ἐδωκε i, ἀναγνώς Β = ἐξείπεν i), and even shows resourcefulness by rendering γράμματα as χρυσοβουλλον (since the grammata confer privileges on Andronikos).

In the next section, 15-17, there are no major differences of interpretation, but i is far more free in its rendering, while B keeps closer to N and its literal formulation: μεγαλοφώνως ο Άνδρόνικος εξεβόησεν (B) is considerably closer to ἀπέφυγον φάσαν πρὸς ὅργην (N) than is the παρρησία εἴπε ταῦτα (i). The same applies throughout Andronikos’ speech to the mission from Alexios; both versions differ radically, B generally keeping closer to the lexical items of N, though, in the last phrase, 22, only i has retained the simile with στάχυς.

In 23-24 i goes to the trouble of giving the name of the megal doux with the family name Kontostephanos, rather than with his first name Andronikos, so as to avoid confusion with the rebel Andronikos. This may be seen to contrast with 10 above where the precise characters intended are not clear, although in that case the confusion arose out of the metaphrast’s preference to interpret τί...σνγγενικόν καὶ οίκίδιον (N) as a single individual. In 23-24, therefore, the metaphrast is not simply working through his text word by word and line by line, but is generally taking pains to understand the relationship between its various elements, whether they be characters or events. Further, i 24 sees the interesting addition of προστίθεται καὶ αὐτῷ αὐτή, clearly a supplementary gloss for μεταχωρεῖ ές Άνδρόνικον, since the metaphrast perhaps felt that ἀπέφυγε ταῦτα — the verb he uses at the beginning of the sentence — does not render sufficiently the full meaning of μεταχωρεῖ. Again, here, i may be copying indiscriminately, while perhaps B has used judgment and decided to be content with ἀπέφυγε τὸν Άνδρόνικον.

B and i 29-32 show striking differences that may very likely be due to the difficulty of N at this point. Characteristically both branches of N-M avoid the elaborate literary and biblical allusions of Choniates (31), but nonetheless struggle to incorporate some of their sense, albeit in drastically
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abridged form, into the main narrative. The phrase καί ὑποστρεφόμενοι, εἴπησαν διά τοῦ, looks suspiciously like a marginal or interlinear note that has crept into the main body of the i text\textsuperscript{19}. In fact, our surviving versions testify to a degree of differentiation that becomes more easily explained if we take a supposition of this kind into account.

32 provides evidence for a subject that will not be developed here, but can be mentioned in passing: it is still unclear from which version precisely of the original Chronike Diegesis the metaphrast was working\textsuperscript{20}. Van Dieten proposes a hybrid text of the history as the exemplar used by the metaphrast, most probably a manuscript closely related to W (Vindobonensis Hist. gr. 105). W is a manuscript of the late fourteenth and mid-fifteenth century, and since it post-dates the oldest manuscripts of N-M cannot itself have constituted a source for the Metaphrase, although it may well of course be a copy of such a source. The participle δράσοντα in the phrase κακώς τοὺς ἐπὶ κόλπων φέροντας δράσοντα (N33), however, is preserved only in W as δράκοντα\textsuperscript{21}, the same word used by i, though omitted entirely by B. One cannot insist on the reliability of this reading, however, since it may just be due to scribal error; however, it is tempting to see N’s ὀφείλει as lying behind the appearance of the word in i.

In 32, i expands by adding καί τῶν λόγιον αὐτὸν (not in N or B). Again this looks as if it may have crept in from the margin, where it properly belonged to 30. I, paraphrasing, also preserves the second half of N32, which was entirely omitted by B, thus indicating again the greater accuracy and completeness of i during the first part of the passage discussed here. (This is

\textsuperscript{19.} For an interesting discussion of medieval Greek school books, and the method of glossing ancient Greek texts in the interlinear spaces (termed ψυχαγωγίαι), see A. SKARVELI-NIKOLOPOULOU, Τὰ μαθηματά τῶν ελληνικῶν σχολείων τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας, Athens 1993, (published by the Σύλλογος προς οἰκονομία Θεσσαλίων Βιβλίων), 293f.

\textsuperscript{20.} NCH, I, pp. LXXXVI-LXXXVIII.

\textsuperscript{21.} NCH, I, critical apparatus, p. 248, line 75. Most readings of the manuscripts containing N-M are not included in the critical apparatus of the Chronike Diegesis for reasons outlined by van Dieten himself (see pp. CIII-CIV). Thus van Dieten draws almost exclusively on B for readings from the Paraphrase, only using the other manuscripts (XYS) at those points where there are lacunae in B.
visually evident if one simply compares the amount of text in B and i from sections 1 to 40, after which the proportions are reversed).

33 again shows i expanding and clarifying, though not necessarily supplying information that cannot be gathered from elsewhere in the text itself: ‘The two sons of Andronikos, John and Manuel, were released from prison by the citizens’. There is probably no need to seek the introduction of a new piece of information elsewhere. The latter agent noun could quite easily have been implied simply as a matter of inference from the context; in other words the explanation for the appearance of παρα των πολιτων most probably lies in the grammatically driven desire to supply an agent for the passive verb ἔβαλλονται. I then omits part of 33, while in 34 B and i show a pair of words for ἔγκλειονται (i.e. δεσμοθείναι, φυλαξίζονται) and προσβάλλειν ἡμέραν (i.e. εὑρηκέτει καὶ ἀνέδεχτο B, ἀνέδεχτο καὶ ἡγάπη i), again suggesting that we may be dealing here with interlinear or marginal notes that were later worked into a full text. 35 shows differences that reveal the uneven quality of both versions. B makes no alteration whatsoever to the meaning of the text at this point, but i seems to have taken the first part of the previous period as belonging to the next, thus creating confusion in the syntax, with two objects (συγγενείς and πρωτοσεβαστόν), untidily subsumed under the singular relative pronoun αὐτόν at the end of the sentence. Whereas i during the first sections of this extract read somewhat more cohesively than B, from this point onwards it appears that B starts to regain the generally better wrought character it displays throughout N-M as a whole.

Again, 36 indicates that i is attempting to improve on the original metaphorase, perhaps using Choniates as a basis for this improvement, but also using imagination: the phrase μετά σιδήρων ... καὶ προσοχῆς is invention on the part of i, revealing that this is not a retranslation as such of N, but an attempt to make the text easier to understand, sometimes with the help of N, but also simply on the basis of the original N-M as this is in general preserved for us in B.

37-41 presents a broad range of lexical variations, again suggestive of the existence of alternatives noted in the interlinear spaces or margin of the scribes’ exemplar (παλινστρόφου φοράς N, μεταστροφή Β, καταστροφής i;
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αὐθάδης καὶ λίαν ὑπέραυχος Ν, ἐπηρμένος καὶ μεγάλα καυχώμενος Β, ἀλαζών Β; περιβουργεύμενος Ν, περιτριγυρίζομενος Β, προσκυνούμενος καὶ τιμώμενος ι; ἀνέστιος Ν, άοικος Β; ἐνεκάτωτο Ν, ἐθλίβετο ι; ἔφυτο Ν, ἰγνομένοιον αὐτὸν Β, ἰγνόμοιον αὐτῷ ι. I, interestingly, translates ἐπιπληκτόντων (N) as κοιντοίντες, a word not used elsewhere in N-M 22. B adds a (banal) comment of his own in 41 (τοιαύτα γάρ εἰσὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα), although yet again this looks like a marginal note, written at some stage by a reader or copyist of N-M, that perhaps became confused with the main text.

A legitimate question with regard to the two versions we have before us might be to what extent the one or the other version shows signs of being δημωδέστερον, that is, of using vocabulary or grammatical forms that are more obviously closer to the spoken language of the time. The answer is aptly illustrated in 42-51: neither can claim to be a more thoroughly vernacular reworking of the original. While B less adventurously translates ἱππῳ βραχυτάτῳ ἐπικαθήμενος Ν as ἐπὶ ἱππῳ λίαν σμικρῷ τοῖτων καθίσαντες, i renders it as ἐν ἀλόγῳ ἀπόφῳ καθίσαντες αὐτῶν, using ἐν as a preposition of movement, preferring ἀλόγῳ to ἱππῷ and interpreting βραχυτάτῳ as ἀπόφῳ. (It may well be, however, that i in fact reworked B at this point: ἀπόφῳ can also be seen as a free rendering of σμικρῷ rather than βραχυτάτῳ. Moreover, the apparent scribal error in 49 –ποιεὶ Β for ποιεῖ Ν— may explain the use of the word ἀβύσσους by i to describe the imperial treasury.) Yet further down it is B that uses καλάμιον (καλάμιον i), and βάλκαν (i σανδάλιον), forms which to a greater or lesser extent are more ‘vernacular’ in B than in i. Both B and i seem to be aiming at the same level with their rendering of the long conditional sentence in 46-48. The...

22. The entry for κουντώ in E. Kriaras, Λεξικό της μεσαιωνικής ελληνικής δημωδούς γραμματείας, Thessalonica 1968–, makes no reference to an occurrence of the word in N-M since its source for N-M is the critical apparatus of Bekker’s edition (Bonn, 1835) of the Chronike Diegesis. Bekker’s edition did not use any of the other manuscripts containing the Niketas-Metaphrase. Kriaras therefore continues a tradition established by Ducange, who, in the seventeenth century, had included among his sources ms Monacensis gr. 450 (then in the Augsburg library) for his Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis, Lyon 1688 (reprinted Graz, 1958).
distribution therefore of distinctly vernacular language appears not to be
guided by consistent linguistic preference, but more by chance, thus depriving
us of the opportunity of characterising the one or the other text as a more
radically popular recasting of the original Chronike Diegesis.

In 50-51 B is certainly more complete than i, but syntactically
unsatisfactory. Perhaps with N's neut. acc. ὀπλιτικόν in mind, B proceeds to
use the neutor acc. participle ὑπάρχων and adj. πλέον for the masc. acc.
στρατάνοι of B's previous clause. I (perhaps for reasons of national pride?)
altogether omits Choniates' comment on the braver Latin forces.

The last section (55-59) demonstrates very clearly the fact that the B
and the i-texts are interdependent, yet at the same time appear to have
turned to N for guidance. The use of the genitive absolute in I would seem to
suggest that the subject of πέμψας is different. This was presumably not
intended, and was simply the undesired result of the i reviser 'improving' on
the original N-M by introducing a supposedly literary grammatical form. The
word συγκροτοῦσι (B57) implies a plural subject, not provided by Choniates,
and kept as singular in i. In 58, however, i omits καί ἀλλήλους ἐς συνασπισμόν παραθήξαντος N (=οθὲν καὶ ὁμογενομοιομοιοῦντες B).

The picture that emerges of the two versions is decidedly mixed and
uneven. I on a number of occasions appears to begin sentences with every
intention of improving the material he finds before him, but frequently loses
momentum, or declines into extemporisation that does not correspond
precisely with either B or N. At other moments, however, i corresponds
more closely to N than B. The nature of the divergences between the two
traditions suggests, as already mentioned, that they in fact both derive from a
single original metaphrase that may have been annotated with interlinear or
marginal changes or corrections for which there was no clear indication for
subsequent copyists as to which of these changes should be included or left
out. An alternative interpretation is that the original metaphrase was written
in the interlinear spacing of a Niketastext, thus explaining why B and i on
separate occasions seem independently to bear witness to the Niketastext.
The mere logistics, however, of such a source for the surviving witnesses to
N-M would seem to rule out this hypothesis, implying as it does that here
there is a third set of notes or text. One may surmise that the B and the i
versions represent two separate copyings (or descendents of those copyings) from an original metaphrase that was itself altered or corrected in some parts, specifically in the passages discussed here. Our subsequent surviving texts of N-M are, partly, two attempts at imposing order and coherence on an assortment of text and interlinear or marginal glosses. Both versions share the same stylistic level, with a number of interesting though mutually balancing variations, but it is tempting to see them as the work of two separate individuals (alterations such as καλάμιν/καλάμιον, and –from elsewhere in N-M– a consistent preference for εἰς in B and πρὸς in i, while perhaps the result of a copyist’s preference, may rather indicate a differing idiolect). This stylistic level is not only dictated by the target idiom (I hesitate to use the word ‘language’) of the translated text, but also conceals (and frequently betrays) much about the literary and linguistic ability of the metaphrast, which, in the case of passages where Choniates uses highly rhetorical or florid language and complex allusions or similes (drawn invariably from Biblical or classical sources) is not sufficient to capture the spirit or tone of Choniates, if indeed the reference is understood at all. At those points where the narrative describes actions and events, such as the imperial delegation sent to the rebel Andronikos, and exchanges of dialogue, then the metaphrast comes into his own, and is able to produce a text that often succeeds in holding the reader’s attention and even entertain for its immediacy and refreshingly simple style.

To answer the question posed in the title of this article, it would seem that both versions may well have been born of the same original metaphorase, but that one (i or its predecessor) revised, and, to a limited extent, retranslated N, guided, however, by a text similar to B. It remains a matter for conjecture (and will probably still remain so after an exhaustive collation of all the N-M manuscripts) what kind of exemplar the two branches of the N-M tradition descend from: it may well have been a single metaphorase that existed in an ante and post correctionem form, each of which resulted in the two subsequent branches of the N-M text. Perhaps the one version represents an experiment, carried out at random on these few folios of the Niketas-Metaphrase.
To close, we may once again draw attention to the famous marginal note found on fol. 2V of ms. Vindobonensis Hist. gr. 53\footnote{The manuscript is of the early fourteenth century, but the note discussed here is written in a later hand. See NCH, I, p. xx7i.} οὐκ οἴδα τί φής ἐνθάδε, Χωνειάτα, σοφόν τὸ σαφές συγγράφων εἶναι λέγεις, εἴτε γρυφώδη (sic) καὶ βασαθρωδὴ γράφεις. The motives behind the production of a translation of the Chronike Diegesis constitute the subject of an investigation that goes beyond the scope of this study. It cannot be denied, however, that the metaphrase as a whole, as well as this particular passage, represents an attempt to make the text σαφές, thereby removing it from the almost metaphysical realm of γρίφος or ἀσάφεια (‘obscurity’), and placing it fairly and squarely within the reach of all moderately educated readers, διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀκροατῶν ἀπόθευσιν\footnote{NICETAS CHONIATES, Orationes et Epistulae, ed. J.-L. VAN DIETEN, Berlin 1972, 170. It is worth comparing H.-G. BECK’s introductory remarks in Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur, Munich 1971, 6, where he states that the translation of various historical works in the later Byzantine period into a simpler idiom was indicative of the desire of Byzantines ‘not to allow any linguistic barrier to come between them and their own historical self-awareness’, with a discussion of the rhetorical phenomenon of ἀσάφεια and the Byzantine theoretical justification for obscurity in G. L. KUSTAS, Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric, Analecta Vlatadon 17, Thessalonica 1973, chapter 3, 63-100, and chapter 6, esp. 193-194, where he discusses the device of ‘emphasis’ (as well as Pollux’ and Siceliotes’ use of the term γρίφος). These two opposing phenomena appear to have coexisted, if not even nurtured one another, throughout the last centuries of Byzantium.}.
The text that follows gives both versions of the Niketas Metaphrasteis and for ease of reference and comparison the corresponding text of Niketas Choniatakis Historia as edited by van Dussen in CTHB 11.

N = Niketas Choniatakis Historia ed van Dussen CTHB 11 (Helsinki 1975) 247 31 250 36 (=Beekker [Bonn] 321 325)
B = Mon gr 450 (first half of 14th c) fols 80 81
1 = Vindobonensis Suppl gr 166 (14th/15th c) fols 54r 57 (14th c) and Scolarilensis IV 17 (early 16th c) fols 121v 123v

The first paragraph (corresponding to N 246 30 247 30) is given simply to indicate the closer agreement between B and X5 outside the above passages.

The division of the passage into numbered sections seeks to present the text in easily manageable units for analysis and discussion. Gaps in the passages are inserted merely in order to keep them roughly parallel to one another. While they do not imply lacunae in the manuscripts, they do suggest that the metaporphor is deliberately asking questions. Occasionally double square brackets are used to mark off sections that have no equivalent in the other versions.

The paragraph division in the Metaphrasteis passages is that of the manuscripts.
10 Συνήν δὲ τῷ Κοντοστεφάνο τῷ μετα τοιούτου νηνίασι οὐκ ἔσχαθον
11 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
12 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
13 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
14 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
15 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
16 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
17 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
18 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
19 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
20 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
21 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
22 Μετὰ βραχύ δὲ καὶ πρέσβις απὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐγέρθη Νικήτας, ὡς καὶ εἰς διὸν τῷ τρόχῳ ἐκθέμενος τὸν πρωτοσεβαστόν νηνίασι
25 καὶ τούτῳ τὸ ἐργάζεται ἐπί μὲν ἡμᾶς ἄπαν τὸν ἀποστάτην, 26 τοὺς δὲ πρωτοσεβαστοὺς θεραπεύειν τέλος, πάσας τὰς ἐπιθέσεις ἀπεγνώσασθαι καὶ καταδεικνύειν τὸ πρὸς τὸν ἀποστάτην. 27 οὕτω γὰρ λωρίδας σύνισκε τὸν Ἀνδρόνικον προσαμαρθομένους ἐκκεντρίζει, 28 ἀλλ' ἀνέγνωτα πρὸς τὸν ἀποστάτην ἑαυτοῦ ἀποστάτην ἔφαντο τέλεον, ἐπιθυμόντας τὴν τέλην τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐργασίας τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ τὸν ἀποστάτην τοῦτον τιλευτάνει. 29 οὐκέτι γὰρ οὕτως κρυφίως ἀποτίθεντο πρὸς τὸν Ἀνδρόνικον, ἀλλὰ φανερῶς τοὺς πρωτοσεβαστούς ὑπερθύμησαν καὶ ἐξουδετεροῦσαν, διεπεραιοῦσαν εἰς τὴν Χαλκηδόνα, καὶ ἀπευδεκυνοῦσαν πρὸς Ἀνδρόνικον. 30 εὐθυγχάρισαν καὶ εὐπληρωθήσαν τὸ γένος καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦτον, ἐπιθυμοῦσαν καὶ ἡγάπαν τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, 31 καὶ τὸ τῆς γλώττης αὐτοῦ γλυκερόν, δροσιζόμενοι ἐπὶ τῶν εὐθυγχάριων ὑπὸ τῶν εὐθυγχάριων ἀνθρώπων ώς ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀείζους ἀνθρώπους, ἐπιθυμοῦσαν. 32 οὐκέτι γὰρ οὕτως κρυφίως ἀποτίθεντο πρὸς τὸν Ἀνδρόνικον, ἀλλὰ φανερῶς τοὺς πρωτοσεβαστούς ὑπερθύμησαν καὶ ἐξουδετεροῦσαν, διεπεραιοῦσαν εἰς τὴν Χαλκηδόνα, καὶ ἀπευδεκυνοῦσαν πρὸς Ἀνδρόνικον. 33 ἔστι δὲ καὶ τίνες οἱ κατὰ μόνην, ὁ προμείλητος αὐτοῦ, τὸν ἀποστάτην, ἐπιθυμοῦσαν τὸν ἁμαρτάνον, καὶ τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦτον καταδείκνυσαν καὶ ἐπαινοῦσαν. 34 οὕτως αὐτοῖς ἐφηλημένη ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦτον ἐπιδίωκεν. 35 οἵτινες δὲ καὶ τίνες ἐπὶ τὸν ἀποστάτην, ἐπανερχόμενοι τὸ γένος καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν αὐτοῦ, ἐπιθυμοῦσαν καὶ ἡγάπαν τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἐπιθυμοῦσαν καὶ ἡγάπαν τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν.
35 και αυτος δι ο πρωτοσεβαστος κατα τα ανακτορα συλληφθης και φρουρα διαφθεις. Γερμανων ακατωδον των επετουμονιστων αξεσουων ασφαλεος, εντος των μαχης αθραιως και παρα μεσω νυκτος εξαγεται τοις δι κατα το παλατι ανακτορον οικημασι δεδωκα δι η επετουμιστων τον Μιχαηλ, κατα της ατης και παλιον και ολικουν οσιφειτης φρουρας.

36 ο πατριαρχης των ανακτορων και σωματων αποτιμης ανακτορων κατα της ανακτορου φερεται εντος των Βαραγγων φυλαττεται, και δεδωκα εντος των Βαραγγων φυλαττεται, και δεδωκα εντος των Βαραγγων φυλαττεται, δια μεσης της νυκτος εξαγεται τοις κατα το ιερον ανακτορον οικημασι δεδωκα ο πατριαρχης γεγονε, Μιχαηλ μετα της αυτης και παλιν και ασφαλετης φρουρας.

37 ο πρωτοσεβαστος κατα το παλατι ανακτορα συλληφθης και φρουρα διαφθεις. Εντος των μαχης αθραιως και παρα μεσω νυκτος εξαγεται, δια πατριαρχης της ατης και παλιον και ολικουν οσιφειτης φρουρας.

38 ο κατα της εκκλησιας αθραιως και θρασυς και επηρμενος και μεγαλος καυχωμενος και μεγας και επτεπεμβεταις ανακτορων επεκειναι περι της εκκλησιας ανακτορου φερεται εντος των μαχης αθραιως και παρα μεσω νυκτος εξαγεται, δια πατριαρχης της ατης και παλιον και ολικουν οσιφειτης φρουρας.

39 των πραγματων μεταστροφη και συντομωτερα του λογου μεταβολη.

40 ο πρωτοσεβαστος εθλιβετο μεν επι τουτων, έπασχε δε πλεον οτι ηνεμποδιζον αυτων ακολουθον και βοηθουντα και σωζοντα, η τον ακολουθον και βοηθουντα και σωζοντα.

41 ο πατριαρχης δε μη μεν οτι της αθροαν αυτου μεταβολης θεραπευε τουτον και παρηγορει και τοις φυλασσοντας τοις, η σιδηρανα μεταβολης τον θεραπευε τουτον και παρηγορει και τοις φυλασσοντας τοις.
καθάρευσυν παραβοήθησεν ύπαλλήλον ἐς τὸ πέραν ἀνάγκην πρὸς Ἀνδρόνικον. 44 ἔπειτα καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐξερχόμενον, κοινῶς ἥματος τῶν ἐν ἑπιφανείᾳ συναντούντων καὶ μετ᾽ Ἀνδρόνικον τὸν τοιούτων πρός τὸ πέραν κατασκεύασαν. 45 Καὶ τοιοῦτό μὲν τὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ παραρρησίας ἡμῖν νῦν ὑποτάσσεσθαι ἄλιαν εἰς τὸ πέραν ἐπείτα καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐξορύσσεται, καὶ καταφθάνοντες ἐκείνων ἐπεπίθηκε τῷ πέραν ἀνάγκην Ἀνδρόνικον. 46 Εἶχεν δὲ τὸν τῆς γῆςς ἐπὶ παραμένειν ὅποιον, τοὺς ὑποτασσομένους καὶ τοὺς δικεφαλοὺς πρὸς πόλεως ἑδονικός καὶ μὲ ἦν μαλακοῦς σχηματίζει καὶ βασίλευς 47 καὶ τῆς ἡμέρας ἔρχεται τῷ ἐπισκέψαται, 48 τῷ τῇ Ἀνδρόνικον τὴν ἀνακοίνωσεν καὶ τὴν πόλιν πάρον ἀπομείωσε, καὶ ἐπίκειτο ἀνακοίνωσεν ὅτι τοῦ τῶν κακῶν: 49 οὗτος γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄνθρωπος ἡμῖν ἑκάστως ἑκάστιν ἐπεξεργάζεται, 50 τοὺς ἔποιεῖ τοὺς οἵς ἐπίθετον ἑκάστῳ, καὶ τοὺς ἐκεῖνος οἵς ἐπεξεργάζεται, 51 οὗτος μὲν ἔτει οὕτω, μέχρι οὗ ἐπεί πρὸς τὰς ὑποκαταλήψεις καὶ ἐπί τας ἀρχαῖας τῆς Αἰγύπτου, 52 ἄλλω τοῦ μφόρου, ὡς ἀνεττάσσεται, 53 οὗ ποτὲ πρὸς ἄρχοντας ἐπέπεπλεσθείη. 54 Ἀνδρόνικος δ’ ἐπιφάνειαν ὑπεξελέγεται τοις ἀνήμεροι καὶ τὴν νεότατον ἀναπάγοντα. 55 ὡς καὶ κατὰ τὴν παροτικὴν ἐν ὑπογράφησιν στεῖχος ἀρχηγόν, δυσώδεις οὗτος ἐλεύθερος ἑκάστως πάντων τῶν παράκτων μετὰ τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει παρακτῶν, 56 καὶ οἱ συνυποκαταλήπτες, ἐκεῖνοι τοὺς πάντας κατὰ τοὺς κακούς καὶ ὀλίγοις ἐς ναομίσθην ὑπέβαλλε τοῦ πεπληρώσατος, 57 καὶ συναντήσας πάλιν κατὰ τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει παρακτῶν, 58 καὶ δὲ καὶ τὸν δήμον τῆς πόλεως ἑκάστους μετὰ τῶν παρακτῶν κατὰ τοὺς κακούς καὶ αὖτας καὶ ὀλίγοις ἐς συναντήσεις παραθέτειν, 59 ἐνεμοῦσας ὅμως καὶ ἐκεῖνος ἐς τὸ πέραν.