

Γένος μὲν ἐξ ἑβραίων or the Jewish Origin of Romanos the Melodist: From *Overestimations* to *Underestimations* and Finding Bridges between the West and the East

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This study focuses on an analysis of a Jewish genus expression, found in a kontakion with a still doubtful paternity. This expression gave rise to an entire academic discussion, often with contradictory opinions, on the Jewish origin of Romanos. This study contributes to this debate by bringing forth new evidence from both West and East, which can make up a new tool for evaluating the expression itself.

Keywords: *Saint Romanos the Melodist, kontakia, Jewish, hymnography, Orient, West, origin, γένος μὲν ἐξ ἑβραίων*

It is not known whether Romanos, the Byzantine hymnographer of the sixth century, enchanted the scholarly world starting already with the 19th century, when his writings first began to be edited¹. Their reading gave rise, certainly, to the first scholarly observations regarding the Byzantine hymnographer. Questions emerged on various historical-philological-theological themes such as the time of his birth, the time of his arrival in the city of Constantinople, the historical context in relation to his work, the theological content of his kontakia, whether the hymnographer was an original author or a “second-hand” poet, etc. One of these subjects, which is still embraced today by the scholarly world and which has not received a consensus, is Romanos’ Jewish origin, originating from the expression γένος μὲν ἐξ ἑβραίων (β³; “one of the Hebrew race”)², contained in an encomiastic hymn, con-

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¹ For all the kontakia of Romanos the Melodist we used the critical edition of Paul Maas, Konstantin Athanasios Trypanis (eds.), *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica. Cantica genuina*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1963.

² See the text at: P. Maas, “Die Chronologie der Hymnes des Romanos”, in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 15 (1906), p. 30; Ἀλεξάνδρου Σ. Κορακίδη, Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς καταγωγῆς τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ τοῦ Μελωδοῦ, *Συστηματικὴ ἔρευνα τοῦ θέματος ἐκ τῶν πηγῶν καὶ ἐκθέσεις τῶν ἀντισημιτικῶν στοιχείων τῶν κοντακίων*, Ἀθῆναι 1971, p. 15-17; José Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de l’hymnographie byzantine*, These présentée devant l’Université de Paris IV 1974, p. 369-370 (in manuscript); idem, *Romanos le Mélode et la origines de la poésie religieuse a Byzance*, foreword by Paul Lemerle, Paris 1977, p. 167-168. The

sidered by some to be anonymous³, by others to be attributed to Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople⁴ or to Alexander Eumorphopoulos⁵.

What I propose in this study is to present an inventory of these scholarly dissensions from different points of view (Western vs. Eastern) and to see whether, beyond these discussions or academic disputes, there is some possibility of finding bridges for meeting between the East and the West.

1. The Jewish provenience of Romanos and the entire Western discussion

As I have already mentioned in the introduction of this study, a *kontakion*, originating in the post-Romanos period, points in a lapidary way to Romanos' Jewish origin: γένος μὲν ἐξ ἑβραίων ("one of the Hebrew race"). Obviously, such a historical element alters the whole *Synaxaria* reality, which indicates that Romanos was born in the city of Emesa (in western Syria), that he lived for a period in Beirut and hence came to the capital of the Byzantine Empire during the time of Emperor Anastasius, identified after the discovery of the *Miracles of St. Artemios* with Anastasius I (491-518)⁶. From this lapidary information, a real international discussion was born regarding the question: did the Byzantine hymnographer have Jewish origins?

Certainly there were few voices that more easily or because of a superficial interpretation accepted this short hymnographic information as true. The Italian editor Giuseppe Cammelli⁷, Silvio Giuseppe Mercati⁸,

kontakion of Germanus (only the *prooimion* and the first *stanza*) was originally published by Jean Baptiste Pitra in: *Analecta Sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi Parata*, tom. I, Paris, A. Jouby et Roger 1876, p. xxix-xxx, according to manuscript 437 of the Library of Holy Synod of Moscow and reunified by P. Maas, "Die Chronologie", p. 30-31, according to the version of Γ28 manuscript from the Monastery of the Great Lavra at Mount Athos.

³ Α. Σ. Κορακίδης, Τὸ πρόβλημα, p. 15; J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de l'hymnographie*, p. 366; idem, *Romanos le Mélode et la origines de la poésie*, p. 165.

⁴ J.B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, p. xxv; Καριοφίλη Μητσάκη, *Βυζαντινὴ Ὑμνογραφία, τόμος α'.* Ἀπὸ τὴν Καινὴ Διαθήκη ἕως τὴν εἰκονομαχίαν, col. "Χριστιανικὴ γραμματολογία", 1, Πατριαρχικὸν Ἰδρυμα Πατερικῶν Μελετῶν, Θεσσαλονίκη 1971, p. 370; Ἰωάννη Γ. Κουρεμπιλέ, *Ἡ χριστολογία τοῦ Ρωμανοῦ τοῦ Μελωδοῦ καὶ ἡ σωτηριολογικὴ σημασία τῆς διατριβῆς ἐπὶ διδασκαλίαν, ὑποβληθεῖσα στὸ τμήμα Θεολογίας τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1998, p. 14 (in manuscript).

⁵ P. Maas, "Die Chronologie", p. 30; Marjorie Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist, vol. I: On the person of Christ*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press 1970, p. xiv, note 6.

⁶ For the texts of *Synaxaria* and their analysis see: J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de l'hymnographie*, p. 353-365; idem, *Romanos le Mélode et la origines de la poésie*, p. 159-165; K. Μητσάκη, *Βυζαντινὴ Ὑμνογραφία*, p. 358-370.

⁷ Giuseppe Cammelli, *Romano il Melode. Inni*, Testi christiani 2, Firenze, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina 1930, p. 19-20.

⁸ Silvio Giuseppe Mercati, "Romano il Melode", in: Giovanni Gentile, Calogero Tumminelli (eds.), *Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol. 30, Pubblicata sotto l'alto patronato di S.M. il re d'Italia, Istituto Giovanni Treccani, Rome 1936, p. 59.

Miguel Arranz⁹, Célestin Chevalier¹⁰, Eric Werner¹¹, Raffaele Cantarella¹², Egon Wellesz¹³, Jean Décarreaux¹⁴, the British editors Paul Maas and C.A. Trypanis¹⁵, the French editor J. Grosdidier de Matons¹⁶, Eva Catafygiotu Topping¹⁷, Marjorie Carpenter¹⁸, Roland J. Reichmuth¹⁹, Sergio Zincone²⁰, Sebastian Brock²¹, R.J. Schork²², William L. Petersen²³ are just a few researchers who adopted or tilted the balance to the view that Romanos was of Jewish origin. There were, of course, reservations about this point of view,

⁹ Miguel Arranz, "Romanos le Mélode", in: Marcel Viller et al. (eds.), *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire*, vol. 13: Raban Maur-Ryelandt, Paris, Beauchesne 1937, p. 898.

¹⁰ Célestin Chevalier, "Mariologie de Romanos (490-550 environ), le roi de Mélodes", in: *Recherches de science religieuse* 28 (1938), p. 49.

¹¹ Eric Werner, "Hebrew and Oriental Christian Metrical Hymns. A Comparison", in: *Hebrew College Annual* 23 (1950-1951), p. 428.

¹² Raffaele Cantarella, *Poeti Bizantini, volume secondo: Introduzione, traduzioni e commento*, Milano, Società Editrice Vita e Pensiero 1948, p. 106; idem, "Romano il Melòde", in: Pio Paschini (ed.), *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. 10: Pri-Sbi, Ente per l'Enciclopedia Cattolica e per il Libro Cattolico, Città del Vaticano, 1953, col. 1310.

¹³ Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Second Edition, revised and enlarged, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1962, p. 183.

¹⁴ Jean Décarreaux, "Romain le Mélode: Thrène de la Vierge sur la Passion du Seigneur", in: *La Vie Spirituelle* 98 (1958), p. 243.

¹⁵ P. Maas, C.A. Trypanis (eds.), *Sancti Romani*, p. xviii.

¹⁶ J. Grosdidier de Matons (ed.), *Romanos le Mélode. Hymnes I*, SC 99, p. 13; idem, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de l'hymnographie*, p. 390-391; idem, *Romanos le Mélode et la origines de la poésie*, p. 180; idem, "Aux origines de l'hymnographie byzantine, Romanos le Mélode et le Kontakion", in: H. Becker, R. Kaczynski (eds.), *Liturgie und Dichtung. Ein interdisziplinäres Kompendium*, I, Historische Präsentation, Erzabtei St. Ottilien, Eos Verlag 1983, p. 447.

¹⁷ Eva Catafygiotu Topping, "Romanos: Ikon of a Poet", in: *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 12 (1966), p. 93; idem, "St. Romanos the Melodos: Prince of Byzantine Poets", in: *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 24 (1979), 1, p. 66.

¹⁸ M. Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos*, vol. I, p. xiv.

¹⁹ Roland Joseph Reichmuth, *Typology of the Genuine Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist*, Phd degree, Minnesota, University of Minnesota 1975, p. 1, 28, note 2 in manuscript.

²⁰ Sergio Zincone, "Romano il Melode", in: Angelo Di Berardino (ed.), *Dizionario patristico e di antichità cristiane*, vol. 2: GZ, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, Rome, Casa Editrice Marietti 1983, p. 3031.

²¹ Sebastian Brock, "Two Syriac Verse Homilies on the Ninding Isaac", in: *Le Muséon* 99 (1986), p. 92; idem, "From Ephrem to Romanos", in: *Studia Patristica* 20 (1989), p. 150.

²² R. Joe Schork, *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida 1995, p. 5.

²³ William L. Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus as Sources of Romanos the Melodist*, CCSO 475 (Subsidia 74), Louvain, Peeters Publishers 1985, p. 3; idem, "A New Testimony to a Judaic-Christian Gospel Fragment from a Hymn of Romanos the Melodist", in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996), p. 106.

imposed with much ease, if we think of the Elpidio Mioni's demonstrations²⁴. It should be noted that the only difference between researchers is the nuance by which they argue their own views on the Jewish origin of the great Byzantine hymnographer, although in most situations, the researchers prefer to insert the opinion of Romanos' Jewish origin without any specific argumentation. During the last four decades, the situation of the possible Hebrew origin of Romanos has not changed²⁵.

Certainly the view of Romanos' Jewish paternity was proved by certain facts, such as the use by the Byzantine hymnographer of non-Attic linguistic forms or certain forms of the Jewish Christian tradition²⁶; by exhibiting a not too harsh attitude towards the Jews²⁷, and by pointing to the Jewish forms of names, and translating Hebrew words into Romanos' *kontakia*²⁸.

There are also many situations where handbooks, as well as some monographs or studies dedicated to Romanos' hymnography, do not mention this Jewish provenance at all²⁹ or indicate only briefly that the great Byzantine hymnographer was born in a bilingual (Greek-Syrian) region³⁰.

²⁴ Elpidio Mioni, *Romano il Melode. Saggio critico e dieci inni inediti*, Torino, G.B. Paravia 1937, p. 7-8.

²⁵ I give some examples in chronological order which I hope to be edifying in this perspective: L. William Countryman, "A sixth-century plea against religious violence: Romanos on Elijah", in: David E. Aune, Robin Darling Young (eds.), *Reading Religions in the Ancient World: Essays presented to Robert McQueen Grant on his 90th birthday*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 125, Leiden-Boston, Brill 2007, p. 289; Cyril Aslanov, "Romanos the Melodist and Palestinian *Piyyut*: Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Perspectives", in: Robert Bonfil et al. (eds.), *Jews in Byzantium. Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 14, Leiden-Boston, Brill 2012, p. 613; Ken Parry, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, Hoboken, Wiley Blackwell 2015, p. 135, etc.

²⁶ P. Maas, C.A. Trypanis (eds.), *Sancti Romani*, p. xviii-xix, note 6; R.J. Reichmuth, *Typology*, p. 28, note 2; W. L. Petersen, *The Diatessaron*, p. 3, note 13.

²⁷ Nikolaos A. Livadaras, "A propos d'une nouvelle édition de Romanos le Mélode", in: *Αθήνα* 67 (1964), p. 21.

²⁸ E. C. Topping, "Romanos: Ikon of a Poet", p. 93.

²⁹ See, for example (in chronological order): Leena Mari Peltomaa, "Roles and Functions of Mary in the Hymnography of Romanos Melodos", in: *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010), p. 488; Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen, *Drama in the Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist: A Narratological Analysis of Four Kontakia*, PhD dissertation, Graduate School of Arts, Aarhus, Aarhus University 2013, p. 5-7, in manuscript; Christelle Mulard, *La pensée symbolique de Romanos le Mélode*, Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 16, Turnhout, Brepols Publishers 2016, p. 7-8.

³⁰ See: Johannes Koder, *Mit der Seele Augen sah er deines Lichtes Zeichen Herr*, Wien, Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1996, p. 7; Sarah Gador-White, "Self-construction: Auto-Ethopoeia in Romanos' *Kontakia*", in: *Melbourne Historical Journal* 39 (2011), p. 23.

2. Eastern region arguments on the origin of Romanos³¹

In the Greek region, although some opinions have easily harmonized with the Western *trend*³², most of the Greek authors speak about the Greek origin of the Byzantine hymnographer or conclude that proving Jewish paternity is almost impossible³³. For example, Sophronius Evstratiadis, without undertaking thorough and serious research on the subject in question, speaks easily about Romanos as a Christian Jew (Εβραῖος ἐκχριστιανισθείς) and considers the information contained in Germanus' kontakion as very important for proving his Jewish origin³⁴.

The Greek editor Nikolaos B. Tomadakis, and also P. Hristou³⁵, propose another interpretation for Germanus' expression. In their opinion, the term “ἐξ ἑβραίων” (“from Hebrews”) could be used instead of the form of Σῦρος (Syrian), since the Byzantines were not well aware of geographic names. In other words, if we look at Tomadakis' opinion, it is possible that the Patriarch Germanus may have considered that the inhabitants of Syria were, like the inhabitants of Palestine, Jews³⁶. Tomadakis' logic can be argued, as he himself does, by the fact that in his kontakia, Romanos calls the Persians Assyrians and the Ishmaelites Saracens³⁷. Then the same Greek editor thinks that for reasons of textual metric the author

³¹ Here we will clearly present the vision of the Greek theologians and philologists on this subject. Of course, neither Romanian specialized literature has overlooked it, but the information is insignificant and places itself on a bivalent presentation of the situation of the Romanos' origin. See: Alexandru Prelipcean, “*Cuvinte, dă-mi cuvinte*”. *De la viața “smeritului Roman” la teologia poetică a Melodului bizantin*, Sibiu, Astra Museum 2017, p. 42-44.

³² See for example (in chronological order): Δημητρίου Γ. Τσάμη, “Ρωμανός ο Μελωδός”, in: *Εκκλησιαστική γραμματολογία, Θεσσαλονίκη*, Εκδόσεις Π. Πουρναρά 1985, p. 201; [Anonymus], “Ρωμανός ο Μελωδός”, in: *Γενική Εγκυκλοπαιδεία Σύγχρονων γνώσεων. Ύδρια-Cambridge-Ηλίοις*, vol. 10: Περθ-Σαντάτ, Εκδόσεις Αθήνα, Τέσσερα Έψιλον 1992, p. 3466; etc.

³³ See, for example: Νικ. Β. Τωμαδάκης, “Ρωμανός. Ο Μελωδός”, in: Άθανάσιος Μαρτίνος (ed.), *Θρησκευτική και ήθική εγκυκλοπαιδεία*, vol. 10: Παπάς-Σατομπριάν, Αθήνα, Εκδόσεις Άθανάσιος Μαρτίνος 1960, col. 914; Θεοχάρη Ε. Δετοράκη, *Βυζαντινή θρησκευτική*, p. 46; idem, *Βυζαντινή Φιλολογία. Τα πρόσωπα και τα κείμενα*, vol. 2: από τον Ιουστινιανό έως τον Φώτιο (527-900), Ηρακλείο Κρήτης 2003, p. 131, etc.

³⁴ Λ. Σωφρόνιος, “Ρωμανός ο Μελωδός και ή Ακάθιστος”, in: *Ιρηγόριος ό Παλαμάς 1* (1917), p. 201.

³⁵ Π. Κ. Χρήστου, *Έλληνική Πατρολογία*, τόμος 5, Εκδ. Θεσσαλονίκη, Οίκος Κυρομάνος 2006, p. 601.

³⁶ Νικολάου Β. Τωμαδάκη, *Ρωμανού τοῦ Μελωδοῦ ὕμνοι*, έκδιδόμενοι ἐκ πατριακῶν κωδίκων, τόμος Ι, Αθήναι, Τυπογραφείον Μηνᾶ Μυρτίδου 1952, p. 1στ' (16); idem, *Η βυζαντινή ὕμνογραφία καὶ ποίησις ἤτοι εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν βυζαντινὴν φιλολογίαν*, τόμος δεύτερος, Θεσσαλονίκη, Έκδόσεις Π. Πουρναρά 1993, p. 90. See also: Κ. Μητσάκη, *Βυζαντινὴ Ὑμνογραφία*, p. 377.

³⁷ Ν. Β. Τωμαδάκη, *Ρωμανού τοῦ Μελωδοῦ ὕμνοι*, p. 1στ' (16); cf. Α. Σ. Κορακίδου, *Τὸ πρόβλημα*, p. 17.

replaced the ἑδραῖος with ἑβραῖος and hence the confusion about Romanos' provenance³⁸.

Another opinion, surprising even by its content, belongs to N.A. Livadaras. In his review of the critical edition of P. Maas and C.A. Trypanis, the Greek author suggests that the famous expression that gave rise to the Jewish problematics of Romanos cannot be considered as a trustworthy historical source for the life of the Byzantine hymnographer, and that it was probably composed according to the melody of another hymn dedicated to a different person³⁹.

In the Hellenic region, the subject of Romanos' Jewish origin was analyzed perhaps mostly by Alexander Korakidis. Thus, the small volume (47p.) with the title *The question of the origin of Romanos the Melodist. Systematic research of the theme from the perspective of sources and the exposure of the anti-Semitic elements of the kontakia*⁴⁰, treats this *thorny issue* from many interpretative angles. In the following I will briefly review this volume, emphasizing its central aspects.

From the very beginning, Korakidis considers the kontakion of Patriarch Germanus an *anonymous* one (ἄνώνυμον κοντάκιον) and thinks that until now it would have offered many researchers the opportunity to inquire about the credibility of the information provided⁴¹. On the other hand, starting from this anonymous hymn, the Greek researcher tries to present to the public both the elements referring to the poet's Jewish provenance and the question of Romanos' dignity, as well as the elements by which the great hymnographer attacks the position of the Jews by juxtaposing them with Christianity and the Church of Christ, understood as the New Israel and the New Zion⁴². These two aspects are reiterated in the analysis of Romanos' Semitism and the issue of the mass conversion of the Jews during the Justinian period. Regarding the Jewish provenance and Romanos' dignity, the Greek theologian is not quite convincing, given the reality that he summarizes the information of S. Evstratiadis and of some Western scholars (P. Maas and K. Krumbacher)⁴³. Unfortunately, the same thing also happens regarding Korakidis' opinions on Romanos' (anti)-Semitism and the mass conversion of the Jews to Christianity (developed in kontakion 53)⁴⁴.

³⁸ N. B. Τωμαδάκη, *Ἡ βυζαντινὴ ὑμνογραφία*, p. 90.

³⁹ N. A. Livadaras, "À propos d'une nouvelle", p. 21-22.

⁴⁰ Α. Σ. Κορακίδη, *Τὸ πρόβλημα*, Ἀθήναι 1971.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 18-24.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 25-30.

The second chapter analyzes the issue of Romanos' anti-Semitism, emphasizing themes such as the meaning of Romanos' attacks against the Jews (by briefly listing Romanos' expressions or epithets against the Jews)⁴⁵ and the views of the Messiah in the kontakia of the Byzantine hymnographer (by indicating the typological structures, by recognizing the reality that the Church is "the new Israel", by describing the new position of the Christian emperor and of the temple in Jerusalem)⁴⁶.

In my opinion, the climax of Korakidis' entire research is the first part of the final conclusions, where the Greek theologian clearly points out that in anonymous kontakion, there is no indication of Romanos' Jewish origin, but rather we could easily challenge it by various general and specific arguments⁴⁷.

Also, after a brief excursion into the Jewish question, noting in particular the lines drawn to him, K. Mitsakis, in the volume dedicated to Byzantine hymnography, came to declare with great emphasis: "Beyond all this, we believe that today we have come to the point where we must no longer consider Germanus' kontakion as a source unworthy of confidence, or that we must interpret the information that they provide us in a different way, therefore, freer and not literally"⁴⁸. In other words, if I read Mitsakis' view in the correct "key", the kontakion of Germanus must not be rejected a priori and we must not give credibility to Romanos' Jewish origin, based on this encomiastic hymn.

The last in this list of Greek researchers, who—even tangentially—spoke about Romanos' Jewish origin, is Odyseas Elytis. As far as his views are concerned, they seem to me to be contradictory literary artifice or, as Kourembeles reports in a lively response, "noisy light clamor".⁴⁹ Speaking about Romanos, he does not regard him as a Greek or want to have anything to do with the Old World⁵⁰. In addition, Romanos was "Syrian or, after Maas, a Jew [who] wrote in the usual line of his century"⁵¹, in which there is a hesitancy in using the Greek language or the linguistic stumbling of an alien⁵². Surprisingly, after certain philological analyses, the same Elytis regards Romanos as "the Greek-Syrian magician" (Ελληνοσύρος μάγος),⁵³ having therefore a dual "citizenship".

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 31-34.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 34-43.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 45-46.

⁴⁸ Κ. Μητσάκη, *Βυζαντινή Ὑμνογραφία*, p. 380.

⁴⁹ Ι. Γ. Κουρεμπελές, *Ῥωμανοῦ Μελωδοῦ θεολογική δόξα-σύγχρονη ιστορικοδογματική ἄποψη καὶ ποιητική θεολογία*, Θεσσαλονίκη, Ἐκδόσεις Π. Πουρναρά ²2010, p. 291.

⁵⁰ Ὅδυσσέας Ελύτης, *Ἐν Λευκῷ*, Αθήνα, Ἐκδόσεις Ἴρακος ³2011, p. 36.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

Instead of conclusions: finding bridges between the West and the East

As I have noted in the first part of this study, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, scholars were not concerned with the subject of Romanos' Jewish origin, since for the description of Romanos' *Bios* they only appealed to the *Synaxaria* sources, where it was clearly stated that the great hymnographer came from the Syrian region, more precisely from Emesa in Syria. The starting point of the unsettled situation today is 1906, when Paul Maas reunited the encomiastic kontakion dedicated to Romanos, by publishing two stanzas from this kontakion, where he mentions Romanos' origin as from the Hebrew race.

In connection with the theme proposed for research, I will provide some concluding ideas, which will also indicate those East-West bridges that have been drawn from this joint research:

- a) although there were (or still exist until this moment) voices that place Romanos in the Jewish circle, the general tendency is to present both situations (the Jewish provenance *versus* the Syriac), but without clearly indicating an affiliation to the two proposed directions until now in the bibliography dedicated to the great Romanos⁵⁴;
- b) In both places it was stated that the issue of Romanos' Jewish origin has not yet received a resolution universally accepted in the scholarly world⁵⁵, given that the only testimony about this origin remains the kontakion (possibly) of Patriarch Germanus;
- c) Opinion is equally divided in the Eastern. As I have noted above, except from the study of A. Korakidis, there is no research (= monograph, study) devoted exclusively to the theme of our title, namely Romanos' Jewish provenance, starting from the clue contained in one encomiastic kontakion. A. Korakidis sees everywhere Germanus' kontakion as an anonymous one, and his conclusion is very clear: there is no clue that would prove Romanos' Jewish affiliation.
- d) For this expression (γένος μὲν ἐξ ἑβραίων) recent contemporary research goes in two directions: 1) the Jewish form can point to anyone who had a non-Byzantine (= Greek) origin, or who was not

⁵⁴ See, for example: Sarah Gador-White, *Theology and Poetry in Early Byzantium: The kontakia of Romanos the Melodist*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2017, p. 8; Benedict M. Guevin, "Dialogue between Death and the Devin in Saint Ephrem the Syrian and Saint Romanos the Melodist", in: *Studia Patristica* 92 (2017), p. 115; Thomas Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press 2017, p. 1-3; etc.

⁵⁵ See: K. Μητσάκη, *Βυζαντινή Ὑμνογραφία*, p. 377; Θ. Ε. Δετοράκη, *Βυζαντινή θρησκευτική*, p. 46; L. Van Rompay, "Romanos le Mélode", p. 284.

Greek-speaking, or could even be a synonym for *Syrian*, without indicating for sure its Jewish origin⁵⁶; 2) the expression contained in the encomiastic hymn dedicated to Romanos provides extremely vague information, is highly unspecific, late, and unreliable⁵⁷;

- e) The scholars of the Eastern region are constantly appealing to Western literature, which they know and indicate in the critical apparatus. It is perhaps the first sign of the East-West link for studying this issue within the chapter devoted to Romanos' life.
- f) As regards this issue an objection arises: to what degree could Romanos have a Jewish origin, as long as in many situations he seems to have an attitude contrary to them? Was Romanos' attitude regarding the Jews really extremely virulent, since it is recognized that the most common word used by the Byzantine hymnographer in his polemic with the Jews is ἄνομος ("lawless")?⁵⁸ The descriptions the Byzantine poet addressed to the Jews, such as ἄνομος, ἀγνώμονες ("unjustly")⁵⁹, or φονευταί ("murderers")⁶⁰, are used against the Jews as a nation or against the Jewish religion, which opposed Christianity, imposed so fiercely in those times by Emperor Justinian? Is Romanos innovative in his anti-Jewish hymnography or does he respect and place himself on the common line of hymnography developed to him? pinions are divided, but it is clear that such questions, developed and argued in studies from both backgrounds, have approached the West and vice versa, have corrected overstatements, and exacerbated underestimations. In fact, in the entire spectrum of research on Romanos' Jewish origins, scholars recall the εἰς τοὺς νεοφωτίστους ("On Baptism") kontakion as a possible source of argument for this Jewish descent.
- g) The fact that this Jewish provenance began to be recognized gave rise to both research areas for Romanos' anti-Nestorian dimension, in which Jews were accused. Why shouldn't this reality be perceived as another bridge between East and West through the common development of Romanos' Christology and its implications?⁶¹

⁵⁶ N. B. Τωμαδάκη, *Ρωμανοῦ τοῦ Μελωδοῦ ὕμνοι*, p. 1στ' (16); R. J. Schork, *Sacred Song*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Th. Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ See for example the kontakia: 3ιβ¹, 20στ¹, 21θ¹, 24α³, 24ιγ², 28ζ¹, 39δ⁴.

⁵⁹ See: 16πρΠ¹⁻², 16ε¹, 20στ¹, 28ζ^{1.6-7}, etc.

⁶⁰ See: 3ιβ¹¹.

⁶¹ See, in this way, the doctoral Thesis of Ioannis G. Kourembeles, *Ἡ χριστολογία τοῦ Ρωμανοῦ τοῦ Μελωδοῦ...*, Thessaloniki 1998, in manuscript, which develops and argues precisely these approaches and divisions between the West and the Orient in regarding the Christology of the great Byzantine hymnographer.

Personally, I don't think that this issue of Romanos' Jewish provenance has been resolved. And I do not think it will ever be resolved as long as it is only argued by one source, and that a dubious one. It is certain that it will still inspire more approaches and connections between different scholarly areas, eager to find the solution to this dilemma and to complete the *puzzle* dedicated to Romanos' *Bios* with an answer. Why shouldn't we be able to state it, irrefutably.