

## APPENDIX X

### *AP I, 37–89*

The first book of the Palatine Anthology devoted to Christian themes has understandably attracted the interest of many Byzantinists, especially those specialised in art history. However, the central core of this book, the group of epigrams found at *AP I, 37–89*, has not drawn much attention. To my knowledge, there is only one art-historical study of these epigrams, namely Salač 1951; some problems related to Byzantine theology are discussed by Bauer 1960–61; and a few cursory remarks on metre and style can be found in Baldwin 1996. The corpus of epigrams at *AP I, 37–89* appears to be a cohesive whole because they are all hexametric or elegiac distichs (with two exceptions). But if one examines the manuscript evidence closely, it becomes clear that a number of epigrams are later additions to the original corpus. In the following I shall explain why I think that nos. 50–51 and 78–89 are later additions to the corpus of epigrams, and I shall also try to establish the date of the original epigram cycle consisting of nos. 37–49 and 52–77. For a detailed analysis of this epigram cycle, see chapter 5, pp. 187–190.

The series of epigrams at *AP I, 37–89* consists of distichs. There are two exceptions: 51 (one verse) and 88 (three verses). No. 88 is a late antique book epigram on St. Dionysios the Areopagite, which can also be found in other manuscripts<sup>1</sup>. The monostich, no. 51, was taken from a poem by Gregory of Nazianzos (I. 1. 23, v. 9). These two epigrams clearly do not belong to the original corpus.

Nos. 49–51 are epigrams on the Raising of Lazarus. No. 49 belongs to the epigram cycle; nos. 50–51 do not. No. 51 is the monostich from a poem by Gregory of Nazianzos. No. 50 bears the lemma: “On the same. In Ephesus”. Seeing that none of the epigrams at *AP I, 37–89* bears a lemma stating its provenance, there can be no doubt that no. 50 is a later addition to the original corpus. And as Gregory of Kampsas is known to have copied verse inscriptions in Ephesus, it is reasonable to assume that it was Cephalas who added no. 50.

There are more additions to the original epigram cycle. The epigrams on the four evangelists, *AP I, 80–85*, do not belong to the corpus. Nos. 80 and 83–85 (on John, Matthew, Luke and Mark, respectively) can be found next to

---

<sup>1</sup> See STADTMÜLLER 1894–1906: ad locum.

miniatures portraying the evangelists in Par. Coisl. gr. 195 (s. X) and Laura A 12 (s. XI)<sup>2</sup>. Since epigrams on the evangelists do not appear in illuminated Gospel Books before the year 800, nos. 80 and 83–85 will have been written in the ninth century<sup>3</sup>. Nos. 81–82 are literary imitations of no. 80. These two epigrams also date from the ninth century, because they must have been composed after no. 80 had been written (c. 800 at the earliest) and before they entered the anthology of Cephalas (c. 890–900).

Nos. 78–79 (on St. Peter and St. Paul) and 86 (on St. Basil) are book epigrams. Since they do not describe images, they clearly do not belong to the original epigram cycle. These three epigrams cannot be dated.

Seeing that nos. 78–79 and 86 (book epigrams), nos. 80 and 83–85 (ninth-century epigrams on miniatures), nos. 81–82 (literary imitations of no. 80) and no. 88 (a three-line book epigram on St. Dionysios) are later additions to the corpus, it is reasonable to assume that the corpus ended where most of the additions start, namely at no. 77. If this is the case, nos. 87 and 89 are Cephalan additions as well. The former deals with St. Polycarp (no. 87), the latter with St. Polycarp and St. Nicholas (no. 89). The text of the second epigram reads: “Polycarp has Nicholas near him because the hands of both were ever most prompt to deeds of mercy”. Here the famous St. Nicholas plays second fiddle to St. Polycarp. The cult of St. Nicholas is relatively young. It manifested itself outside Lycia in the sixth century when Justinian built the church of St. Priscus and St. Nicholas in Constantinople. In this church, as in the two epigrams on St. Polycarp, the devotional status of St. Nicholas was secondary to that of St. Priscus. The cult of St. Nicholas gradually spread between c. 500 and 800. It was not until the ninth century that the local saint of Myra achieved great prominence. St. Nicholas suddenly ranked among the major Byzantine saints, was venerated throughout the empire and became a popular subject in Byzantine art<sup>4</sup>. It is reasonable to conjecture that the two epigrams dedicated to Polycarp and Nicholas date from before the year 800, when the cult of St. Nicholas had not yet reached its peak.

According to Salač<sup>5</sup>, the epigram cycle originates from two different sources: a collection of hexametric couplets and a collection of elegiac distichs. The

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix VIII, no. 76.

<sup>3</sup> The epigrams on the evangelists obtain their information from the prefaces to the Byzantine Gospel Book. As these prefaces “are not a feature of the earliest manuscripts, but appear only in the early ninth century”, the epigrams found in Byzantine Gospels cannot have been composed before the year 800: see NELSON 1980: 97.

<sup>4</sup> See G. ANRICH, *Hagios Nikolaos*. Leipzig 1913–17, II, 441–466 and N. PATTERSON ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art*. Turin 1983, 18–22.

<sup>5</sup> SALAČ 1951: 1–9. So also A. ARNULF, *Versus ad picturas. Studien zur Titulusdichtung als Quellengattung der Kunstgeschichte von der Antike bis zum Hochmittelalter*. Berlin 1997, 141–145.

reason why Salač divides the corpus into two is that he thinks that a series of inscriptions should be composed in the same metre. But is this presupposition justified? Firstly, as epigrams nos. 80 and 83–85 prove, Byzantine captions to miniatures can be composed in different metres: nos. 80 and 85 are written in elegiac distich, nos. 83 and 84 in hexameter. Secondly, as I explained in chapter 5, pp. 187–188, epigrams nos. 37–49 and 52–77 are not authentic verse inscriptions, but form a literary response to Byzantine art. Let us look at the evidence. The hexametric couplets are nos. 40–47, 49, 52 and 56; all these epigrams deal with the New Testament. The elegiac distichs are nos. 37–39, 53–55 and 57–77; these epigrams deal with the New Testament (37–39, 53–55 and 74–76) and the Old Testament (57–73 and 77). If Salač were right, we would have to suppose that the NT epigrams in elegiac were added to the NT epigrams in hexameter at some later stage. This would mean, for instance, that the elegiac distichs on Easter and the Crucifixion (nos. 53–55) were composed in order to fill the gap between the hexametric epigrams on Palm Sunday (no. 52) and the Anastasis (no. 56). This all sounds needlessly complicated. In fact, I cannot see any good reason, either metrical, lexicological, literary or art-historical, for carving up the epigram cycle into small fragments and for assuming that it had been pieced together from two different sources.

For the epigram cycle at *AP* I, 37–49 and 52–77, Cephalas made use of an old manuscript, which must have been damaged in certain places. At no. 48 the lemma reads: εἰς τὴν μεταμόρφωσιν (“on the Transfiguration”), and the text reads: Ἀδάμ ἦν ζο[φερ...] (“Adam was [in] mu[rky] ...”). There is evidently something wrong with the text, for Ἀδάμ ἦν does not fit into any dactylic metrical pattern (unless we assume that the poet measured the two alphas as long, but see no. 46. 1). The lemma, too, appears to be incorrect, for it is reasonable to assume that the epigram refers to an Anastasis (with “Adam” waiting to be rescued from “murky” Hades)<sup>6</sup>.

The epigram cycle (nos. 37–49 and 52–77) can be dated on the basis of the following three chronological clues:

(a) The epigram on the Anastasis (no. 56) dates from the late sixth or the early seventh century at the earliest. In chapter 5, pp. 181–182, I discussed the iconographic type of the Anastasis in connection with certain epigrams of Pisides. There I stated that these epigrams prove without doubt that the iconography of the Anastasis had already been introduced in Byzantine art in the first half of the seventh century. However, as the epigrams of Pisides constitute the earliest datable evidence for the Anastasis and as the oldest pictures of the Anastasis date from the early eighth century, it is reasonable to assume that this iconographic type was invented not very long before the time of Pisides.

<sup>6</sup> See WALTZ 1925: 318–319.

(b) The second verse of no. 49, ἀλαλέω μυκτῆρι παλίνσοον ἄσθμα κομίζων, imitates Nonnos, *Dionys.* 25, 530 and 535 (cf. 37, 295). Nonnian epic verses were extremely popular in late antiquity up to Pisides, on whose literary works (notably his *De Vita Humana*) Nonnos' poems exerted considerable influence<sup>7</sup>. After the time of Pisides, however, Nonnos passed into oblivion and his poetry was no longer imitated. The Byzantines appear to have 'rediscovered' Nonnos only after the year 900<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, unless our picture of the influence of Nonnos' poetry is incomplete due to missing literary evidence, it follows that epigram no. 49 must have been written before c. 630–640<sup>9</sup>.

(c) The literary quality of the epigrams is rather poor and the metre does not follow the Nonnian rules of versification. Hiatus is ubiquitous, especially after καὶ and at the caesura; elision and epic correption, also of verb and noun endings, are found in almost all verses; Hermann's Bridge is not observed in 39. 1, 42. 1 and 68. 1; there is no caesura in 39. 1, 42. 1 and 64. 1; masculine caesuras are almost as frequent as feminine ones; at the caesura and the line-end the Nonnian rules of accentuation are not observed; the number of contractions (also in the fifth foot: 42. 1 and 56. 1) is exceptionally high; and word-end after contracted fourth biceps (56. 1, 59. 1, 77. 1) also constitutes a serious metrical flaw<sup>10</sup>. In late antiquity the Nonnian rules of versification are generally adopted by the literati, but are quite often neglected by poets who do not strive to achieve the elegance of highbrow poetry. In the dark ages, after Pisides, the dactylic metre falls into disuse. In poetry written after the year 800 the dactylic hexameter and the elegiac are essentially artificial metres – classicizing forms of poetry which do not obey to any metrical rule, but are replete with Homeric gibberish. This leaves us with two options. The epigrams were either written by a less competent late antique author, or by one of the classicizing poets of the ninth century. It is not hard to choose between these two options. Although on the whole the verses are prosodically correct, with only a few venial slips (see, for instance, 59. 1), the epigrams do not show any tendency to classicize. The poet does not have any literary pretensions. He simply wants to

<sup>7</sup> See L. STERNBACH, in: *Analecta Graeco-latina philologis Vindobonae congregatis obtulerunt collegae Cracovienses et Leopolitani*. Krakow 1893, 38–54, and GONNELLI 1991: 118, 131 and commentary *ad locum*.

<sup>8</sup> See ŠEVČENKO 1987: 462.

<sup>9</sup> SALAČ 1951: 5–7 proposes to athetize this verse because it is impossible for a painter to show how Lazarus "recovered the breath in his dry nostrils". Byzantine epigrams, however, often describe things that are not visible to the eye; in fact, most of the times they do not describe, but elaborate on an iconographic theme.

<sup>10</sup> For a metrical study of late antique Christian poetry, see G. AGOSTI & F. GONNELLI, *Materiali per la storia dell' esametro nei poeti cristiani greci*, in: *Struttura e storia dell' esametro greco*, eds. M. FANTUZZI & R. PRETAGOSTINI. Rome 1995, I, 289–434.

describe what he sees and what he feels when he looks at images depicting New Testament and Old Testament scenes. He has no desire to show off. He writes the sort of dactylic poetry everybody else writes – not too sophisticated, not quite elegant and, in fact, with a lot of metrical errors, but still lofty enough to praise God Almighty for His wondrous deeds.

Taken in conjunction, the above data strongly suggest that the epigram cycle, *AP I*, 37–49 and 52–77, was composed around the year 600: the pictorial scene of the Anastasis (after the late sixth century), the borrowing of a Nonnian phrase (in the time of Pisides at the latest) and the poor literary quality, but non-classicizing style of the epigrams (before the dark ages). This means that the epigrams date from the very end of moribund late antiquity, or to put it otherwise, from the very beginnings of early medieval Byzantium.

