

Ancient Christianity on Stone

Edited by
CHRISTIANE ZIMMERMANN
and CILLIERS BREYTENBACH

Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris
ad Ethicam Religionemque pertinentia
XLVIII

Mohr Siebeck

SAPERE

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ad Ethicam RELigionemque pertinentia

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zu ethischen und religiösen Fragen

Herausgegeben von
Markus Hafner und Rainer Hirsch-Luipold

Band XLVIII



Ancient Christianity on Stone

Greek Inscriptions and the Early Church

Introduction, Texts, Translations, and
Interpretative Essays by

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In memory of Stephen Mitchell

SAPERE

The increasing globalization of the ancient world in Hellenistic and Roman times resulted in exchanges across linguistic and cultural boundaries which gave rise to a wealth of literature on philosophical, ethical, and religious questions, the relevance of which continues to be rediscovered time and again. The *SAPERE* series (*Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam Religionemque pertinentia*, “Writings of Later Antiquity on Ethical and Religious Issues”), established in 2001, pursues the task of making such Greek and Latin – as well as Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Coptic, and Arabic – texts accessible through an innovative combination of critical edition, translation, and interdisciplinary commentary in essay form.

The name *SAPERE* deliberately draws on the various connotations of the Latin verb. In addition to the intellectual dimension (which Kant underscored when he made *sapere aude*, ‘Have the courage to use your own reason’, the motto of the Enlightenment), the sensory dimension of “tasting” is also given its due: Source texts are prepared for scholarly discourse across various disciplines (philosophy and religious studies, philology and theology, history and archaeology, medicine and music ...), while at the same time introducing readers – who may be encountering them for the first time through *SAPERE* – to the “flavor” of these ancient texts.

SAPERE views the careful interdisciplinary analysis of the texts through essays from various scholarly perspectives as a contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage and seeks to highlight the ancient authors as interlocutors in contemporary debates.

Preface

In mid-December 2024, an unusual report appeared in leading German media outlets. *Der Spiegel* (11.12.24) announced that archaeologists had uncovered what is now considered the earliest Christian testimony north of the Alps. The find was an amulet, unearthed in 2018 during excavations near Frankfurt am Main. Discovered in the grave of a man aged between 35 and 45, the amulet contained a rolled-up inscription on a strip of silver foil. Yet it was only six years later that scholars were able to decipher the text.

The inscription began with an invocation to Titus and included a quotation from Philippians 2:10. On the basis of the archaeological context, the amulet has been dated to the third century AD. This makes it the earliest known evidence for the presence of Christianity north of the Alps in so early a period. The inscription thus represents a significant contribution to scholarship on the early spread of Christianity.

Since the foundation of the series *Early Christianity in Asia Minor* (ECAM) by Cilliers Breytenbach, the importance of inscriptions for the study of early Christianity has been increasingly recognised. This approach was subsequently extended with the establishment of *Early Christianity in Greece* (ECG). Both series re-examine the history of early Christianity at a regional level, paying particular attention to inscriptions that have hitherto received little or no scholarly notice.

When Rainer Hirsch-Luipold invited us to contribute to the SAPERE series, drawing on our work on early Christian inscriptions and the database *Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae* (ICG¹), it was immediately clear that a volume could not be based on the analysis of a single text alone. We therefore decided to involve the entire team that had contributed to the monograph series based on ICG, i.e. ECAM and ECG. Each team member selected inscriptions of particular interest. Together with Stephen Mitchell, we chose from this pool the inscriptions included in the present volume, and discussed with him and Klaus Hallof both the plan for the individual essays and the overarching concept of the book.

Contributors from different academic disciplines delivered their essays in time to be discussed at a workshop held on 29–30 April 2024 at the *Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften*. All contributions benefited

¹ <https://icg.uni-kiel.de>

greatly from detailed group discussion and the editorial feedback of SAPERE. We are grateful to all who participated, either in person or digitally, and especially to Klaus Hallof (IG) and Rainer Hirsch-Luipold (SAPERE) for their hospitality.

We owe particular thanks to the church historian Andreas Merkt, the epigraphist Sylvain Destephen, the classicist Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, and the ancient historian Hartmut Leppin, who responded to the wish expressed at the workshop and agreed to reflect on the significance of this florilegium of early Christian inscriptions from the perspectives of their respective disciplines.

We are also indebted to Kristin Schlegel (Kiel), who meticulously adapted the manuscript to conform as far as possible with SAPERE's formal requirements for abbreviations, notes and bibliography, and to Travis Niles (Bern), who refined the English of Summa's contributions and translated the essays by Leppin and Merkt. We further thank Julius Furthmüller (Tübingen) for keeping us in line with SAPERE's formal standards.

The publication of this book was supported by a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (project 518257140).

Yet the person whose work, advice, steady support, and tireless involvement were essential in establishing ICG, ECAM, ECG, and ultimately this volume, was absent from the workshop. On 30 January 2024, Stephen Mitchell passed away. With deep sorrow and immense gratitude, we dedicate these essays to the memory of our dear friend.

June 2026

*Cilliers Breytenbach
Christiane Zimmermann*

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¹ The illustrations can be viewed at <https://icg.uni-kiel.de>.

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A. Introduction

Introduction

Cilliers Breytenbach and Christiane Zimmermann

1. Introducing Inscriptions by Christians

To this day, depictions of the history of early Christianity have been shaped by writings from the New Testament and other texts, such as documents from the so-called Church Fathers (especially Eusebius) or the acts of the ecumenical councils etc. Scholars reconstruct the spread and institutional development of Christianity based on these sources. Well-known examples include the reconstruction of the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul through Asia Minor and Greece, as described in the so-called Acts of the Apostles. However, one crucial source for later developments remains largely neglected in these depictions: inscriptions originating from Christians. From the end of the second century on, the study of such inscriptions proves essential for portraying the history of early Christianity and for understanding Christian literary texts.¹ Inscriptions provide insights into the particular regional characteristics of early Christian communities, their leadership hierarchies, building activities, and also theological ideas. They highlight the diversity characterizing early Christian communities, which arose within specific regional and cultural conditions. Some of these inscriptions, such as the so-called Abercius inscription,² are well-known and have undergone thorough research. However, many others are gradually gaining recognition for their significance in illustrating the history of early Christianity.³

¹ Cf. BREYTENBACH 2026. For inscriptions that help to illustrate the texts of the New Testament or the persons named in them, see C. BREYTENBACH, “Das entstehende Christentum und griechische Epigraphik”, in: S. ALKIER / M. RYDRYCK (eds.), *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft heute: Zur Enzyklopädischen Selbstverständlichung einer theologischen Disziplin* (Paderborn 2026), part III.

² Cf. MITCHELL 2023b, 87–99; ICG 1597; BLANK 2023.

³ Cf. MITCHELL 1993; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018; HUTTNER 2013; HUTTNER 2025; MITCHELL 2023b; BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023; OGHEREAU 2023; PILHOFER 2018. These volumes trace what became of some of the churches already mentioned in the New Testament and which churches were added when and where (cf. the overview in BREYTENBACH 2026). In the meantime, the first thematic studies on individual topics that can be illuminated on the basis of the inscriptions are also available. These include, for example, the early Christian use of the Bible, especially the Psalms and the Book of Isaiah

This volume neither introduces Greek epigraphy in general nor delves into all inscriptions that can be regarded as of Christian origin.⁴ It focuses on selected Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor and Greece that were put up by Christians, to which we refer short hand as “Christian inscriptions”.⁵ The volume also does not aim to discuss well-known and frequently mentioned inscriptions. Instead, it presents a selection of particularly interesting Christian inscriptions from the second to the sixth centuries, showcasing both the individuality and diversity of these texts and their messages. Before they are presented in section B., a few preliminary remarks about understanding (Christian) inscriptions as historical sources are necessary.

2. Basic Characteristics of Inscriptions, their Edition, and Presentation in this Volume

What distinguishes inscriptions as historical sources? Inscriptions consist of carvings in stone made at a specific time and placed in a definite location. They primarily served as immovable memorials for a limited audience. Since many inscriptions can be dated and localized, they are important sources for local history.

We can categorize inscriptions, although these categories often have a fluid character. Epigraphy typically distinguishes between decrees, honorary inscriptions, dedicatory inscriptions, building inscriptions, and funerary inscriptions. We should differentiate graffiti and dipinti from inscriptions: while inscriptions were carved in stone or highlighted in colour in a mosaic, graffiti were scratched into an object, and dipinti were painted with colour or ink on a (wall) surface.

We cannot interpret the text of an inscription without considering its material context. The carriers of the inscriptions typically consist of basalt, limestone, sandstone, or marble. It is crucial to know where, on what, and in what local context an inscription was found. Does it come from a building or a cemetery? Was it part of a tomb? Each contribution to the selected

(BREITENBACH 2023), Christian asceticism (ZIMMERMANN C. 2015a) the role of women in early Christianity (ZIMMERMANN C. 2015b, ead. 2014), and Christian imprecations (ZIMMERMANN C. 2021 and 2026).

⁴ Cf. KLAFFENBACH 1966; WOODHEAD 1967; ROBERT 1970; MCLEAN 2002; on Christian epigraphy, cf. KAUFMANN 1917; GROSSI-GONDI 1920; GUARDUCCI, *Epigrafia Greca IV*; BOFFO, *Iscrizioni Bibbia*.

⁵ With a few exceptions (e.g. ICG 1882, 3226, 3273, 3302, 4196, 4379), the Christian inscriptions of Asia Minor (up to the Amanus Mountains in the east) and Greece are Greek. For the Greek inscriptions of Rome and Italy, see FELLE 2018. The extensive (Latin) inscriptions of the West and the multilingual inscriptions of Syro-Palestine and Egypt deserve separate treatment.

inscriptions in this volume addresses this question at the beginning by providing an image (if available) and a description of the monument. These essential details, along with the monument's history of discovery, are typically thoroughly covered in the first publication of an inscription; in the present contributions, we summarize these aspects briefly with references to previous literature. The overwhelming majority of inscriptions attributed to Christians are funeral inscriptions and should be interpreted accordingly.⁶

The texts of the inscriptions originally appear in majuscule script, usually in *scriptio continua*, meaning without separation of words. In the contributions of this volume, we present them in an edited, readable version (i.e., according to the proposed epigraphic reading, considering upper/lower case, word spacing, and diacritical marks such as accents and punctuation). We preserve the original line division of the inscription, numbering every fifth line on the side in Arabic numerals, e.g., (5), (10), etc.

Over time, stones carrying the inscriptions often suffered damage or breakage, and many inscriptions survive only in fragments. A significant part of an epigrapher's work involves reconstructing missing parts of an inscription to render the text readable and understandable.⁷ To make the stone's condition and the epigrapher's work visible in the edition, we use a system of brackets and diacritical marks. This system was adopted from papyrologists at the Orientalist Congress in Leiden in September 1931 and has become binding for epigraphy since 1932, with only minor adjustments over time. According to this system the signals mean the following:

- []: Addition of missing letters by the editor
- [...]: Number of missing letters (in this case: three)
- [– – –]: An indeterminate number of missing letters
- (αβ): Resolution of abbreviations in the inscription by the editor; often used for the so-called *nomina sacra*
- <αβ>: Addition of letters omitted by the stonemason, corrected by the editor
- {αβ}: Deletion of evidently incorrect letters in the inscription by the editor
- αβ: Ambiguous letter fragments that can be read with some certainty
- [[αβ]]: Erasure of letters by the stonemason
- αβ_α: Letters overwritten by the stonemason, where traces of the earlier script remain legible
- ν vac.: Blank spots on the stone (ν = one letter, νν = two letters, vac. or vacat = several letters)
- |: Line break
- /: End of a metric unit.

⁶ On the context of funerary inscriptions, see ARDELEANU / CUBAS DÍAZ 2023; CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 127–138.

⁷ Holy names have been abbreviated since the 2nd century: $\overline{\Theta\Sigma} = \theta(\epsilon\acute{o})\varsigma$, $\overline{X\Sigma} = \chi(\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o})\varsigma$, $\overline{\Pi\beta} = \pi(\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\acute{\upsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron)\varsigma$, etc.

3. Identifying Inscriptions as Christian

No corpus of ancient Greek Christian inscriptions exists. This results from the fact that epigraphic corpus undertakings (*IG*, *TAM*, *ETAM*, *IK*, *RECAM*, etc.) tend to cover smaller geographical and topographical areas where Christian inscriptions also appear but usually in small numbers.⁸ To create a genuine corpus of Christian inscriptions, larger units and cross-regional collections would be necessary. In the last century, two approaches emerged to address this: The *Recueil des Inscriptions Grecques Chrétiennes*, planned by the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres since 1905, resulted in only one volume for Egypt and one for Asia Minor.⁹ The Corpus of Greek-Christian Inscriptions of Hellas led to a partial Volume I and a Volume X for Crete.¹⁰ For some Balkan countries, collections of their Christian inscriptions exist and Macedonia within its ancient borders received exemplary attention from Denis Feissel.¹¹ However, for wide parts of the ancient world, scholars must rely on regional corpora and journal articles. Nevertheless, the *Inscriptiones Graecae* (*IG*), contrary to an agreement made in 1902 between the relevant commissions of the Prussian Academy, have consistently included Christian inscriptions in volumes published since 1999.¹² This reflects a new understanding of Late Antiquity as a coexistence of “pagan” and “Christian” cultures that should not be artificially separated in the study of epigraphic sources from any period.

Scholars typically collect inscriptions found in a particular region along with all other inscriptions from that area in regional corpora,¹³ usually categorizing them based on the categories mentioned in section 2 and arranging them chronologically within these categories.

Epigraphy has the unique characteristic among the disciplines of ancient studies that the influx of new material remains constant. Each year, scholars discover or edit up to a thousand new Greek inscriptions. Two annual publications compile these new finds. The *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* (*SEG*) publishes new texts in full, with brief commentary, about five years

⁸ Just two examples: The island of Kos has only about 35 Christian inscriptions out of 3933; the Boeotian city of Tanagra has 12 Christian inscriptions out of 2032.

⁹ Egypt: *IChr. Egypte*; Asia Minor: *IChr. Asie Mineure* (covering Caria, Lycia, Pamphylia, Lydia, and part of the Aegean islands).

¹⁰ For Isthmia and Corinth: *IChr. Peloponnes* (only the first sections were published); for Crete: *IChr. Crete*.

¹¹ For Bulgaria: *IChr. Bulgarien*; BEŠEVLEV 1979; for Romania: *IChr. Romania*; for Macedonia: *IChr. Macédoine*.

¹² For two places, Athens and Corinth, the number was so large that separate fascicles were published: *IG* II/III²5; *IG* IV² 3.

¹³ Cf. e.g. *IG*, *IK*, *RECAM*, *TAM*.

after their initial publication.¹⁴ The *Bulletin épigraphique* (in the *Revue des études grecques*) reports more quickly but only summarizes newly edited inscriptions from the previous year. Until 2016, it featured its own section on Christian and Byzantine inscriptions, for which Feissel was responsible. His profound readings and insightful comments, crucial for understanding new texts, have been reprinted separately for the years 1987–2004.¹⁵

Occasionally, Christian inscriptions appear in their own sections within regional corpora. The most important inscriptions for studying early Christian history from these regional corpora¹⁶, as well as from individual publications, now exist in a digital database: *Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae* (ICG).¹⁷ Due to the significance of Asia Minor and Greece for the early spread of Christianity, the Greek inscriptions by and for Christians from these two regions were included in the ICG first. All inscriptions discussed in this volume are digitally accessible via the ICG database.¹⁸

But which criteria can help identify inscriptions as of Christian origin? The answer to this question is less straightforward than expected, as early Christians had no specific reason to identify themselves explicitly as “Christians” on sepulchral or building inscriptions or to mention Jesus Christ.¹⁹ The worship of one or more deities did not form part of the information typically provided about the deceased in funerary inscriptions; far more significant was mentioning family relationships and, if applicable, listing of the virtues of the deceased. More indications from the end of the second century AD onwards do allow scholars to identify inscriptions as Christian. This trend increases in the third and fourth centuries AD, and from the fifth century onwards, most people in the core areas of the Roman Empire were Christian anyway. Scholars thus consider the majority of inscriptions from this time likely to be created by Christians. For studying the spread of early Christianity from the second/third to the sixth centuries AD, certain criteria are important for identifying monuments that were erected by and for Christians. The following criteria can help identify inscriptions:²⁰

1. Sometimes, names on a tomb inscription signal a Christian individual or family – for instance, when the name of the deceased or their relatives

¹⁴ Continuously published since vol. 26 (reporting year 1976). The volumes are accessible as a database (<https://scholarlyeditions.brill.com/sego/>).

¹⁵ FEISSEL 2006; see also FEISSEL 1989.

¹⁶ For further details, see BREYTENBACH 2023.

¹⁷ <https://icg.uni-kiel.de>. For earlier collections, see BREYTENBACH / OGEREAU 2017.

¹⁸ Even if the ICG database is very helpful for quick consultation, it does not replace the underlying editions of the inscriptions, which contain illustrations, basic information about the place of discovery, dating and the editorial history of the texts. These are noted in ICG.

¹⁹ Cf. also LEPPIN 2024.

²⁰ Cf. the more detailed account in BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 8–13.

comes from biblical tradition (such as Peter, Mary, or John). Later, other names became common primarily among Christians, like Thecla, Anastasia/os, Kyriake/os, Anenkletos, Aphthonia/os, and Sophronia/os. Christians did not name their children Jesus or Jesus Christ. However, the occurrence of these names in reference to the Lord clearly indicates a Christian monument, though it appears relatively rarely. In some cases, an inscription also uses a *nomen sacrum*, a sacred abbreviation. For example, an acclamation from Athens (ICG 1917) begins with the *nomen sacrum*: $\overline{\text{IC}}$ (Iesous) and adds $\overline{\text{XC}}$ (Christos Soter – “Christ the Savior”).²¹

2. Inscriptions with crosses provide strong evidence of Christian origin. Crosses could be carved above or below the text, beside or even between the letters²², or placed within a decorative arrangement, such as in a circle. The inscription itself can begin or end with a cross or be arranged around a cross.²³ A cross can also appear in an arch, symbolizing the door to the altar, with the cross representing the crucified Christ.²⁴ On an Attic epitaph, crosses even flank a swastika.²⁵ Crosses often appear later, having been added to an inscription.²⁶ The crosses vary in form: Greek (+ +), Latin († †), Maltese (✠), and so on. Some are circled ($\oplus$), flanked by doves or stars or adorned with ivy leaves (*hederae* ☞).²⁷ A unique cross with splayed feet appears on limestone blocks near Lystra.²⁸

3. Other Christian symbols include staurograms (⌚), Christograms (⌚), and the letters *Alpha* and *Omega* (Α Ω).²⁹ These often appear alone or in combination with crosses or Christograms. Crosses and staurograms serve as the most frequent markers of a Christian inscription.

4. Specific Christian terminology remains rare. Although the term “Christians” (Χριστιανοί) was already used in the first century AD as an external description for Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26), it only appears on Christian gravestones from the fourth century AD onwards, but even then only

²¹ Cf. note 7.

²² ICG 121, 2165, 2176, 1918, 1919, 2094. Some of the earliest Christian funerary inscriptions from Cyprus (2nd–3rd c. AD) include the name of the deceased followed by the usual pagan funerary expression $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}/\eta\ \chi\acute{\alpha}\iota\rho\epsilon$ with X carved in shape of a cross or written $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}$. However, in most cases these elements cannot prove the Christian faith of the deceased, s. SUMMA 2019, 231–232 for further references.

²³ ICG 1912, 1933, 1990, 1993, 2172a.

²⁴ ICG 1880.

²⁵ ICG 2048.

²⁶ ICG 84, 113, 1132.

²⁷ ICG 2174, 2239, 2173, 1935, 1988.

²⁸ ICG 829, see B.I. BREYTENBACH, “The Resurrected Jesus, Jonah, and the Big Fish”, 51–53.

²⁹ ICG 304, 534, 1900, 1904, 1910, 1924, 1966, 2028, 2029, 2047, 2217.

very rarely.³⁰ Earlier exceptions come from inscriptions “from Christians for Christians” (Χριστιανοὶ Χριστιανοῖς) in the Upper Tembris Valley in Phrygia.³¹ By the fourth century, Christians frequently identified themselves as πιστοί (the faithful).³² In Late Antiquity, inscriptions also referred to individuals as “slave of Christ” (δοῦλος/ῆ Χριστοῦ) or “slave of the Lord” (κυρίου) or “slave of God” (θεοῦ).³³

5. Besides crosses and specific terms, other indications mark an inscription as Christian: some monuments explicitly mention that the deceased belonged to a church or specific Christian group.³⁴ Biblical quotes, allusions, and Christian titles such as bishop, presbyter, deacon, reader, or monk also identify a monument as Christian.³⁵

6. In the Greek East, Christian inscriptions rarely depict animals or human figures.³⁶ However, some animals – such as lambs, fish, peacocks, and doves³⁷ – may point to a Christian origin, especially when paired with other signs for Christian origin.

7. Certain terms, like κοιμητήριον (place of rest), πιστή / πιστός (faithful), ἀναπαύομαι (to rest), and specific formulas, often suggest Christian inscriptions. For example, the “Eumeneian formula” ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν (“he will be accountable to God”) or the formula δώσει λόγον θεῷ, which warns tomb violators of divine judgment³⁸, strongly suggest Christian origins.

8. Christian provenance becomes even more probable when the inscription’s original location is a church, a Christian cemetery, or another place used by believers.

4. Dating Christian Inscriptions

Dating inscriptions presents a notorious challenge. Since few Christian monuments carry explicit dates, and even fewer of those dates can be definitively linked to a specific year, epigraphers must rely on other methods

³⁰ ICG 922, 973, 974, 1142, 1225, 1284, 1289, 1477, 2079, 2121, 4917.

³¹ Cf. MITCHELL 2023b, 211–264, 340.

³² ICG 116–122, 211, 286, 371, 848, 1501, 2079.

³³ ICG 322, 476, 531, 736, 762, 872, 1087.

³⁴ ICG 115, 327, 619, 1271.

³⁵ See below 5.5.

³⁶ Depictions of people can be found in ICG 171, 1086, 1087, 1224, 1362, 1365, 4503; see also the personification in B.8. SUMMA, “The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex of ‘Eustolios’”, 151.

³⁷ On the dove as a metaphor, see also B.6. HUTTNER, “Grabinschrift der Palladion”, 128–131.

³⁸ Cf. MITCHELL 2023b, 110–5; on these formulae and other variants, see also BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 518–28.

to estimate an inscription's age. The commonly held view that crosses only appeared as Christian symbols after Emperor Constantine's time is contradicted by the identification of staurograms (✠) from the late second and crosses dating back to the third century.³⁹ The following points can help in dating inscriptions:

1. Prominent, datable figures like emperors and governors rarely appear in Christian inscriptions. However, after the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in AD 212 of Caracalla (211–217), who was adopted by Marcus Aurelius, the vast majority of new Roman citizens received the Aurelius *gentilicium* (family name). The presence of the family name "Aurelius" in inscriptions (e.g., ICG 748) suggests a date from the third century onward. The absence of this name (e.g., ICG 747, 774) might indicate that the inscription is even older.⁴⁰ The Flavius *gentilicium* became common starting in the fourth century, likely due to the first "Christian" emperor, C. Flavius Valerius Constantinus (306–337). Those who entered public service had the right to use the family name "Flavius."

2. Inscriptions that focus solely on the family relationships of the deceased tend to be older than those that mention Christian church membership or titles like bishop, deacon, or monk.

3. Certain key words or formulas can be linked to specific time periods. For instance, the closing formula *μνήμης χάριν* ("for the sake of memory") often suggests a date before AD 212. In some regions, such as Corinth, the term *κοιμητήριον* ("sleeping place") for tombs became significantly more common after the fifth century AD.

4. Groups of stylistically similar tombstones allow more confident dating than isolated pieces. For example, Mitchell demonstrated that certain inscriptions could be grouped based on their exterior or semantic similarities.⁴¹ Once a single text from such a group is dated, other inscriptions from the group can be similarly placed. This principle also applies to groups of inscriptions using certain phrases, such as those threatening tomb violators (see 5.4). Mitchell used the so-called "Eumeneian formula," already widespread among Christians before the mid-third century, as a dating criterion.⁴²

5. The origin, style, and decoration of the inscription's carrier stone can assist in dating inscriptions. If a monument from a specific masonry can be dated, other similar pieces from the same workshop likely come from the

³⁹ Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 15–8, ICG 747, 748, 829, 1551; see also SPIER 2007, 30–2, pl. 18–20; ROTH 2021.

⁴⁰ Cf. MITCHELL 2023b, 184.

⁴¹ MITCHELL 2023b, 16.

⁴² Cf. MITCHELL 2023b, 112–5, 126–130, 134, 143, 176; for further formulae see BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 14, 18, 20–3, 118, 149, 160, 194, 227–8, 246, 254–5, 262–3, 283, 514–528.

same period, for instance, the so-called “doorstones” from Temenothyrae in Phrygia.⁴³ A group of funerary inscriptions from southern Lycaonia that imitate the façade of a house, all come from the same stylistic period and can be placed in the third century.⁴⁴ A catalogue for dating early Byzantine inscriptions based on formulas and symbols is available in Wallner’s work.⁴⁵

6. Dating late antique Christian tomb inscriptions from Greece poses additional difficulties. These texts are brief and minimally decorated. Even the development of graphic variations in letters like Α, Ε, Η, Θ, Ο, Σ, and Ω in Attic and Corinthian inscriptions fails to provide reliable dates. It seems nearly impossible to establish “rules” for dating inscriptions based solely on letter types.⁴⁶ Observations about letter forms must be complemented by theological and ecclesiastical developments. Even then, the dating of Christian inscriptions from Athens, Attica, and Corinth remains uncertain.

7. Building inscriptions and inscriptions in churches align with the dates of their respective buildings. Standard archaeological methods for dating excavation layers apply here.⁴⁷

8. Dating by the year of the indiction is relatively common, but unfortunately, it’s a blunt tool. The indiction (*indictio*, meaning “announcement,” Greek ἰνδικτίων or ἐπινέμησις, meaning “imposition”) refers to an imperial edict that regularly ordered the recalculation of taxes. Since the year AD 313, this happened every 15 years. These 15 years were counted before starting again with year 1 of the new tax period. Emperor Justinian (527–565) even mandated the use of the indiction for all official datings. However, the indiction cycles themselves were not numbered consecutively. As a result, the seemingly precise designation “Year 9 of the indiction” actually corresponds to multiple years. For the fourth century, for instance, it could indicate the years 321, 336, 351, 366, 381, or 398; for the fifth century, the years 411, 426, 441, 456, 471, or 486, and so on. This method doesn’t provide much clarity in most inscriptions unless accompanied by additional dating details.

⁴³ Cf. MITCHELL 2023b, 180–8 on ICG 1371–1375, 1288.

⁴⁴ ICG 749, 755, 758–760; RAMSAY 1906.

⁴⁵ I.Mus. Yozgat, 61–5.

⁴⁶ SIRONEN 2020. Nevertheless, Sironen makes some observations on letter types that could allow the inscriptions from Athens and Corinth to be dated before or after the fifth century.

⁴⁷ Cf. HAENSCH 2019.

5. The Contribution of Inscriptions in Depicting the Local Histories of Early Christianities

In this collection, we present only a few particularly noteworthy examples of Christian inscriptions. To understand their specific features better, we need to provide some general remarks about the “ordinary” nature of Christian inscriptions, which can vary significantly depending on the region.⁴⁸ These inscriptions offer a range of information, particularly regarding early Christian communities. The earliest inscriptions available for analysis are typically used to illustrate these aspects.

In most cases, Christian inscriptions are funerary inscriptions. These usually provide very little information – typically just the name of the deceased, sometimes alongside their spouse. In certain regions, it was customary to identify individuals more precisely by including the name of their father. Occasionally, the individuals who commissioned the monument or other surviving relatives are also mentioned. From these epitaphs, scholars can gather details about naming traditions and family structures. In later periods, occupations and professional titles appear in inscriptions, revealing more about the social status of the deceased and their families. Occasionally, inscriptions mention specific roles the deceased or their family members held within the Christian community, such as reader, deacon (male or female), presbyter, or bishop. Christian virgins and ascetics also receive mention. These details help us understand the diverse organizational structures within early Christian communities.

In Asia Minor, it was common to highlight the virtues and specific accomplishments of the deceased on tombstones, following the principle *de mortuis nihil nisi bene* (“speak nothing but good of the dead”). The virtues named on these stones align with the general behavioural ideals of the time, although explicit mentions of charity reflect a specifically Christian virtue. Some inscriptions metaphorically or explicitly refer to persecution or martyrdom. Christian buildings, preserved from the fourth century onward, provide further insights. Building inscriptions from this period reveal the names of patrons and renovators of churches or other Christian structures, like almshouses,⁴⁹ although dedicatory inscriptions remain rare.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ In this section, we draw on previously published work by BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018; MITCHELL 2023b; BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023.

⁴⁹ Cf. PILHOFFER 2018, 144, 247–250.

⁵⁰ *Dedications (dedicationes)* document the offerings made to the gods as an act of piety, often in connection with petitions or thanksgiving. *Ex-votos (donaria)* or votive offerings are dedications made in fulfilment of a vow; cf. McLEAN 2002; HAENSCH 2019.

Overall, Christian inscriptions document a lengthy process of religious transformation. They show how individuals from communities rooted in the religious and mythical traditions of Hellenism and the Roman Empire fundamentally altered their naming practices, their approach to death and the afterlife, and their relationships with one another and local deities, integrating biblical and Christian values. In the following sections, we will explore some of the aspects that Christian inscriptions can reveal in greater detail.⁵¹

5.1 Names

Parents in antiquity, like today, used names to assign a certain identity to their children. A name could continue a family tradition, carry a meaning significant for the child's future, or honour a figure from mythology or history. Sons frequently inherited their father's or grandfather's names, while daughters often received their mother's or grandmother's names. In ancient inscriptions, adhering to the patriarchal system, the father's name usually followed on the child's name,⁵² especially in sepulchral inscriptions. The tradition of name-giving, visible in tombstones, reveals much about the origins of the families commemorated there. By analysing the names, scholars can estimate the social standing or educational background of early Christian families and track when they began to use distinctively Christian names, linking their children to biblical or Christian figures.

The linguistic origin of a name is also significant, as it tells us whether it was indigenous (especially in Asia Minor), Greek, Latin, biblical, or distinctly Christian.⁵³ With the help of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (LGPN) and studies of Roman and indigenous names, patterns emerge that help identify cultural preferences in specific regions.⁵⁴ Furthermore, gender-related trends also become clear: in Lycaonia, for example, daughters were

⁵¹ The statements about women, the reception of the Bible and the inclusion of Homeric motifs in Christian inscriptions are discussed in detail elsewhere: see ZIMMERMANN C. 2015; BREYTENBACH 2023; ZIMMERMANN C. 2019; C. BREYTENBACH, "Ammia, Virgin for Jesus Christ: A Note on ICG 1689d", in: K. MARCAR et al. (eds.), *Early Christian Communities of Asia Minor and the Greek East: Essays in Honour of Paul Trebilco* (Leiden 2026) 307–325; C. BREYTENBACH, "Early Christian Transformation of Burial Space: Stephen Mitchell's Christians of Phrygia within Context", forthcoming in: L. VANDEPUT et al. (eds.), *Content and Context* (Ankara: [2027]).

⁵² Cf. ICG 957, 668.

⁵³ Such differences are already noticeable when reading the New Testament. While the names of the persons mentioned in the Gospels reflect the onomastic landscape of the time in Palestine quite accurately (cf. ILAN 2002–2011), or most of Paul's co-workers have Roman names (cf. JUDGE 2005), Apphia (Phlm 2), for example, stands out because of her Anatolian name and Damaris (Acts 17:34) because of her Peloponnesian name.

⁵⁴ Cf. CORSTEN 2016.

much more likely to have indigenous names, while sons often bore Greek or Roman names, placing them in the tradition of Greek or Roman influence in Asia Minor. Many names had religious connotations (e.g., Athenodora, Athenaios, Diogenia, Diogenes, Olympiodoros), but names of Greek heroes or rulers, especially Alexander, were also popular.⁵⁵

Individuals who bore a family name (*gentilicium*)⁵⁶ before or after their first name followed Roman naming conventions (e.g., ICG 16, 47, 153, 247, 325, 404). Roman citizens often added a *cognomen* after their *praenomen* and *gentilicium* (e.g., Marcus Iulius Eugenius, ICG 371), leading to a blend of Roman and Greek names. These *tria nomina* marked the person as part of the upper class, including Christians like Marcus Iulius Eugenius's wife, Flavia Iulia Flaviane, and Aelius Calpurnius Aphthonius from Laodicea Combusta (ICG 182), or the various Septimii and Pomponii from Tyriaeum (ICG 159, 167) and Laodicea (ICG 1521).

The analysis of names occurring in Greek epitaphs put up by Christians region by region, indicate the social classes in which Christianity took root. In Lycaonia, for example, it spread among both indigenous families and Roman or Italian settlers in rural areas.⁵⁷ In the Roman colony of Lystra (mentioned in Acts 14:6–19), the Christian names found on monuments reflect the general population of the region, which included many descendants of the original Roman colonists. Christianity took hold among the rural population, where Augustus's veterans had intermarried with locals.⁵⁸ In contrast, in Iconium (Acts 14:1–5), Christianity had a stronger base among the Hellenized urban population, as indicated by the predominance of Greek names in both sexes.⁵⁹ The presence of the *gentilicium* Aelius in Iconium, for example, suggests that some Christians descended from families granted Roman citizenship under Emperor Hadrian (P. Aelius Hadrianus 117–138).⁶⁰ North of Iconium, in Laodicea and Gdanmaa, many Christians bore the family name Aelius,⁶¹ indicating that they likely descended from officials and freedmen who oversaw imperial estates under Hadrian. Athenodoros, a “house servant of God,” and his wife, Aelia Eutrape, likely lived on such an estate near Laodicea in the late second century (ICG 363). In Greece, particularly in Attica and Macedonia, Christian inscriptions tend to bear traditional Athenian or

⁵⁵ For evidence, see BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 419–423; BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 249–257; OGÉREAU 2023, 207–8.

⁵⁶ E.g., Aelius/Aelia; Aurelius/Aurelia; Flavius/Flavia; Iulius/Iulia. Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 424–431.

⁵⁷ ICG 755, 760, 787.

⁵⁸ Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 188–9.

⁵⁹ Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 164–5 and ICG 313, 319, 321, 323, 475, 1329.

⁶⁰ ICG 319, 321, 475, 1329.

⁶¹ ICG 153, 173, 247, 527.

Macedonian names, with relatively few Roman names. This suggests that Christianity took root primarily among the local populations.

While Christianity in the late second and third centuries thus followed local onomastic traditions,⁶² four fundamental trends can be recognised from the fourth century onwards, taking into account local variations: Firstly, the frequency of names derived from proper names of pagan gods decreased. However, the use of names with the element *theos* (“god”) (e.g. Theodora/os and Theodosia/os) increased, especially in Greece, and new formations can be recognised in this respect (Theodoule/os, Theodote/os and Theoktiste/os).⁶³ Secondly, with the exception of the name Jesus, the use of biblical names, including the names of apostles and martyrs, increased. Thirdly, especially in Greece, names that express virtues (Agathos, Agape, Anegkletos, Pistos) were given; some of these were used only in Christian contexts (Aphthonia/os; Agapomenos, Akakios). Finally, there are names that designate central Christian beliefs (Anastasia/os, Elpidia/os, Martyria/os, Kyriake/os).⁶⁴

There is no epigraphic evidence that a new Christian name was given at the time of baptism. It is also worth noting that the names Paul and Thekla are documented very frequently in Lycaonia, i.e. in the area of Paul’s so-called first and second missionary journeys and the locations of the so-called Acts of Thekla. In Athens and the Peloponnese, for example, there is a certain preference for the name of the apostle Andrew, whose veneration was later concentrated particularly in Patras on the Peloponnese.

In some cases, additional information about a person’s ethnic background or place of origin accompanies their name, particularly for migrants or Christians who died far from home.⁶⁵ A look at the toponyms and ethnonyms that were added to the name on burial inscriptions in Lycaonia and Phrygia, for example, reveals that many Christians had migrated from other parts of the empire, more so than in places like Athens, Attica, and Macedonia, likely due to greater migration into and within Asia Minor.

⁶² Cf. DESTEPHEN 2019.

⁶³ For evidence, see BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 408–10; BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 257; OGÉREAU 2023, 206–7.

⁶⁴ For evidence see BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2028, 411–3; BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 257–9, MITCHELL 2023b, 262–3.

⁶⁵ E.g. ICG 82, 151, 173, 354, 500, 502, 522, 550, 1524, 1943, 1948, 1971, 2058, 2059, 2094, 2198; a particular example is Roubes, ICG 1031 s. B.3. MITCHELL, “The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel”, 83–4.

5.2 Family Structures, Virtues, and Christian Ideals of Conduct

The genre of funerary inscriptions reveals more about specific family structures than literary texts of the time. These structures typically mirror those of pagan families but sometimes offer insights into the particularities of distinctively Christian families. Depending on the region, differences between urban and rural Christian family life can be observed.⁶⁶ Not all inscriptions mention the deceased's family members – some include only the name of the deceased, such as *ICG* 2973 from Corinth, which reads: “The illustrious Gratus found rest on the seventh day before the Ides of Augustus,” or *ICG* 2564, also from Corinth: “The tomb belongs to Maurikios, the furrier.” However, many tombstones depict married couples, reflecting the common responsibility for mutual burial within conjugal families. In some regions, however, interesting insights can also be gained into the broader composition of Christian families, with the so-called nuclear family (mother-father-child) dominating.⁶⁷ Extended family structures can be inferred, with mentions of grandparents, in-laws, adopted children, or nieces and nephews.⁶⁸ These formations resemble pagan family structures.

One notable feature in Phrygia is the frequent mention of unmarried aunts in Christian family inscriptions. For example, Aurelius Alexandros, the son of the deacon Timosios, erected a tomb for his wife and his two aunts, Valentille and Antonia (*ICG* 258).⁶⁹ This correlates with the rise of ascetic lifestyles in the region, which emphasized celibacy (see 5.6).⁷⁰ Christian families took care of unmarried or widowed aunts. Christian behaviour and life choices can therefore also be seen in the inscriptions.

Both pagan and Christian funerary inscriptions initially reflect conventional patterns, i.e. certain social conditions of the time. In accordance with the patriarchal social structure, male family members are generally named before female ones; many more men are mentioned than women. Above all, however, the inscriptions provide a clear indication of the fundamental awareness of the importance of the family as a central way of life. This also applies even if the deceased members of Christian families belonged to the clergy or were ascetics who had decided to separate themselves from the family and everyday life to a certain extent. They too were not buried by

⁶⁶ On rural living spaces, see THONEMANN 2022. For some observations on Christian women in the village, see ZIMMERMANN C. 2024.

⁶⁷ See SALLER / SHAW 1984; HÜBNER 2011, 82–3.

⁶⁸ Cf. on these phenomena BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 434–440.

⁶⁹ BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 437; see also *ICG* 167, 199, 439, 589, 591 and 752.

⁷⁰ Further information in BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 724–787.

the congregation, but by their families.⁷¹ It is only from the fifth century AD onwards that more inscriptions are found in which the Christian community as *familia dei* appears to replace the biological family and the terms “brother” and “sister” refer not to the biological family but to the metaphorical kinship relationships in this new family. For example, an inscription from near Laodicea Combusta (ICG 422.1–3) reads: “Aurelia Calpurnia, sister, and Pola, sister, and Mouna, sister, in memory.”⁷² “Brothers” and “sisters” are now the brothers and sisters in faith. Here too, the inscriptions reflect specific new Christian developments.

In keeping with the motto *de mortuis nihil nisi bene*, the funerary inscriptions almost exclusively feature conventional positive attributes of the deceased, blurring reality and ideal. Here, too, there are few differences between pagan and Christian families, but also between men and women. The character traits described are subject to the conventions of the time. Efficiency, virtue and blamelessness, but also prudence (decency), wisdom and kindness of the deceased are emphasised. Men are characterised above all by their moral and intellectual qualities, but also by their social functions and wealth. Women are particularly characterised by prudence, but also by wisdom or specifically feminine qualities such as beauty or motherly care. In addition, the labour of the deceased is emphasised, even if it is not always clear what the specific work consisted of. While men are primarily recognised for their importance to their city and beyond, women’s sphere of significance is almost exclusively the family.⁷³ It was also women who ensured that the Christian message was passed on within the family – if they did not sometimes even pass it on beyond the family as deacons or in other parish functions.

Specific Christian “virtues” can hardly be found in the inscriptions. However, “inner” beauty seems to have become increasingly important in Christianity⁷⁴ and faith and piety are also emphasised.⁷⁵ The fulfilment of the

⁷¹ See 5.5. However, this does not rule out the possibility that Christian groups also occasionally commemorated their deceased leaders. For example, the community of the “Sakkophoroi” (sack bearers) commemorated their leaders Eugenios and Severus in the 4th century, see ICG 372, B.5. ZIMMERMANN, “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?”, 111–6. A tombstone from Philomelion (ICG 619) erected by Besoulas, “the deacon of the catholic and apostolic holy church of God under the most holy bishop Gregoreios”, also shows a strong identification with the church as the place of Besoulas’ affiliation; family members do not appear here.

⁷² However, the Christian origin of this inscription cannot be clearly determined. See BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 460 and note 463.

⁷³ See also in detail ZIMMERMANN C. 2015.

⁷⁴ See B.6. HUTTNER, “Grabinschrift der Palladion”, 124–6.

⁷⁵ Cf. also 5.4 below.

commandment to love one's neighbour is reflected in the praise of Christian benefactors. Women also played a role in this. For example, an inscription from Lycaonia praises a woman who had fed the poor (ICG 81 from Gdanmaa "... Aurelia None, who is still exalted, diligent nourisher of the poor, blameless and wise"). The alms-house of Konon is inscribed in Korykos.⁷⁶ The poor sections of the population included widowed women with their children, whose living situation was generally precarious. 1 Tim 5:3–16 already tells of the increase in widowed women in the Christian communities, who apparently found financial support there. The ascetic communities were also particularly active in this respect.⁷⁷ Some of the early Christian inscriptions, such as the one mentioned above (ICG 81; see ICG 1498 too), tell us about wealthy Christians who were involved in caring for the poor with private funds in addition to providing for the community.⁷⁸

In Christian families, as reflected in funerary inscriptions, only subtle differences emerge compared to non-Christian families. These include the prominence of individuals who held Christian offices (see 5.5), who brought their families respect, much as pagan officials did. Additionally, inscriptions sometimes mention celibate or ascetic family members (see 5.6), reflecting Christian life choices. Furthermore, inscriptions honour family members' engagement in charitable work, distinguishing Christian families.

5.3 Occupation and Social Status

Starting from the fourth century AD, occupation appears regularly also in Christian tomb inscriptions in specific regions. Like names, professions provide valuable insights into the social standing of the deceased and their families. Sometimes, the iconography of the tombstones also gives clues about the professions of the deceased and their wealth. For example, depictions of animals and agricultural tools suggest an involvement in farming.

Here, too, the region of Lycaonia offers an interesting field of research: in the fourth century, Christians worked as leaders of house slaves on the estates in Claneus (ICG 563). Christian πρόοικοι are mentioned in Tyriaeum, Hadrianopolis and Claneus; they were probably estate managers (ICG 166, 473). Even if we can only attribute a handful of Lycaonian Christians to a particular estate, the majority were engaged in rural labour.

Tombstones from the region frequently display symbols that indicate farming, such as tools for tending vineyards, harvesting olives, or raising

⁷⁶ PILHOFFER 2018, 247–250.

⁷⁷ Cf. for example ICG 52 (Cathars) or 762 (Encratites). For ascetic communities, see 5.6 below.

⁷⁸ Cf. also PILHOFFER 2018, 144.

livestock. These were tasks typically carried out by men. Several monuments, especially those featuring a distaff or spindle, show that Christian women, like their pagan counterparts, worked with wool – washing, carding, and spinning it. While these images reflect local traditions more than individual professions, they suggest that spinning, weaving, and agricultural work such as growing fruit, pruning vines, harvesting olives and caring for livestock were common occupations among Christians in the region.⁷⁹

In the cities, Christian artisans also appear in inscriptions. For instance, a Lycaonian Christian named Paul worked as a simple craftsman (*ICG* 820), and three Christians served as carpenters in Perta (*ICG* 1530). A Christian gravedigger is mentioned (*ICG* 298), along with a mantle maker in Iconium (*ICG* 321) and a shoemaker near Misteia (*ICG* 839). The diversity of trades necessary for church construction is evident from inscriptions like that of Marcus Iulius Eugenius from Laodicea (*ICG* 371)⁸⁰, suggesting that Christians held various skilled positions.

In addition to these manual trades, inscriptions also document Christian teachers (*ICG* 654), rhetoricians (*ICG* 305), and physicians (*ICG* 269, 853). A notable case in Gdanmaa reveals that a woman served as an official physician (*ICG* 76).

In Phrygia, Apamea functioned as an important transportation hub, and several Christian inscriptions refer to merchants and individuals involved in transportation, like Eutropios from Bruzus (*ICG* 1445). Other occupations include butchers (*ICG* 980, 1268), shoemakers (*ICG* 972), and Christian veterans. Between AD 260 and 310, two Christian veterans from Hocalar, south of Acmonia, retired to a rural life (Aurelius Gaius and Aurelius Menophilus, *ICG* 998). One of them, the *beneficarius* Aurelius Zotikos, established the oldest known Christian church in Phrygia, fifteen kilometres north of Hocalar, dating to the late third century.⁸¹

Christians from the elite also appear in the records. In the late second or early third century, Quintus, the son of Heraklios, served as a prominent local leader near Iconium (*ICG* 474). His role likely included financial

⁷⁹ On some gravestones decorating the graves of married couples, the spindle and distaff are complemented by a branch hook and/or a shovel (*ICG* 209). On the graves of men, the pruning hook and shovel are typical symbols that symbolise forestry or agriculture (*ICG* 527, 642, 807, 812, 815). Oxen pulling a plough on the tombstone of Aurelius Scapon indicate that he tilled the land (*ICG* 208). Other Christians were active in the transport business (*ICG* 1379, 1445).

⁸⁰ See B.5. ZIMMERMANN, “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?”. Two inscriptions from the fourth century mention Christian *aurarii* who worked with or sold gold in Laodicea (*ICG* 387, 388). Various carpenters (*ICG* 642), shoemakers (*ICG* 839, 1530) and stonemasons (*ICG* 759, 820, 851, 1519) are mentioned.

⁸¹ MITCHELL 2023b, 191.

administration, as suggested by other sources from Roman Egypt. In Laodicea Combusta, Christians lived within a community influenced by the rural aristocracy, large Roman estates and military presence, Greek traditions and wealth, and also by people migrating from other parts of Lycaonia or Asia Minor.⁸²

There is clear evidence that cities were of strategic importance for the roads and thus for the provincial structures. On the Trans-Anatolian Road (*koine hodos*), for example, Laodicea controlled the passage from west to east and the gateway to the south, which led via Iconium.⁸³ It is therefore not surprising that members of the ruling class can also be found among the Christians of Laodicea. For example, Marcus Iulius Eugenius, born into a wealthy Christian family, married Flavia Iulia Flaviane, the daughter of a senator, and became a high-ranking provincial official in Pisidia.⁸⁴ Other Lycaonian Christians with notable social status included members of families that traced their Roman citizenship to Hadrian's era, such as Aelius Calpurnius Aphthonius from Laodicea (ICG 182) and Aelius Proclus from Iconium (ICG 325). Later on, more Christians participated in the Roman state administration. After the persecutions under Diocletian (AD 284–305) and Galerius (AD 293–311) and the death of Licinius in AD 324, the participation of the Christians of Lycaonia in the structures of the empire became the order of the day.⁸⁵

In Phrygia, Christians like Abercius (Avircius Marcellus), whose monument dates to the second half of the second century⁸⁶, enjoyed high social status as reflected in the style of his monument (ICG 1597). Another Christian, Aurelius Alexandros, served in the council of Eukarpia in AD 255/256 (ICG 1448), while Eutropios from Bruzus, described as a wise and distinguished man that came from a “senatorial background”, was wealthy

⁸² Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 243–4.

⁸³ From the fourth century onwards, several Christians served in various combat units. The *lanciarii* are most strongly represented in and around Laodicea Combusta; a unit was probably stationed there around AD 400. It is noteworthy that the inscriptions attesting to members of the military all come from towns strategically located on important transport routes (in particular Laodicea Combusta, Iconium, Laranda, Zazadin Hanı, Madenşehir, Sidamaria and Üstünler). This could be due to coincidence, but there is no such evidence from the more rural villages in the region.

⁸⁴ Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 574–9.

⁸⁵ They were associated with the emperor and shared the designations given to the ruling class. Common designations such as ὁ καθ' ὅσιν (devotissimus), λαμπρότατος (clarissimus) or γενναϊότατος (nobilissimus) document that Christians in Lycaonia shared recognition and loyalty to the Roman Empire from the fourth century onwards.

⁸⁶ He is mentioned in the preface to a treatise against the Montanists, which comes from Hierapolis and is quoted by Euseb (*Hist. eccl.* 5.16.3). He is probably identical with Ἀβέρκιος, whose tombstone was found south-southwest of the modern city of Sandıklı, in the large and fertile agricultural plain of Eukarpia, near Hierapolis (ICG 1597). See note 99.

and well-educated. The text on the *bomos*, which his wife Kyrilla erected in his memory in the first half of the third century, alludes to Ps 119:20.26 (ICG 1445). Another beautifully decorated gravestone from the upper Tembris valley emphasises the social status and education of the deceased.⁸⁷ Other gravestones from Eumeneia indicate that the deceased were influential members of bourgeois society.⁸⁸ In the small towns of the upper Tembris Valley, some wealthy farmers became magistrates and community leaders.⁸⁹

In comparison to Asia Minor, Christians in Macedonia and Attica occupied fewer high-status positions in the administration or the military. In Athens, Christians had little influence over the city's philosophical schools, which continued to shape its social and economic life until the fifth century. Most Christians attested epigraphically there belonged to the artisan class.⁹⁰ Christianity only gained more public significance when from Theodosius (379–395) onwards, Christian prefects were appointed in Illyricum, Christian proconsuls began to govern Achaëa, and the respective bishops gained more and more influence over the local administration.⁹¹

5.4 Preservation and Transformation of Traditions

The Christianization process did not lead to the abrupt abandonment of pagan traditions and conventions. Evidence of this can be seen in name-giving practices, the retention or incorporation of mythological traditions,⁹² and the continued use of formulaic and poetic language in epitaphs, which remained popular among both Christian and pagans, especially in Asia Minor.⁹³ The genre of epigrams dates back to the eighth century BC and consists of small poems that can convey various themes, including memorials for the deceased.⁹⁴ Using bound language – typically hexameters or elegiac distiches – those who commissioned inscriptions expressed their social status, education, and respect for traditional values. Evidence of this

⁸⁷ ICG 1267.13–16: “With his clever mind he built the monument, he inscribed the stele in memory of himself and erected it together with his wife Nonne.”

⁸⁸ Members of the city council (ICG 1029 and 1057), city *gerousia* (ICG 1050 and 1025) or one of the city's *phyles* (ICG 1035, 1050, 1055 and 1066).

⁸⁹ Cf. ICG 1265, 1270, 1977 and MITCHELL 2023b, 329.

⁹⁰ Cf. BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 296–7.

⁹¹ Cf. BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 71–4, 143–9.

⁹² See also B.8. SUMMA, “The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex of ‘Eustolios’”; in contrast, see B.12. HALLOF, “Maria auf Ikaria”.

⁹³ Cf. on the following THONEMANN 2014; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 480–514; ZIMMERMANN C. 2019. An impressive collection is offered by MERKELBACH / STAUBER 1998–2004 Vol. I–V (*Steinepigramme*)

⁹⁴ On the history of Greek epigrams, see BECKBY 1965, 1.12–67; ECKER 1990.

higher education is present among Christian patrons in Lycaonia: numerous epigrams name Christian officials, who often hailed from the social elite of Christian communities (see also 5.5). The authors of these poems, not limited to urban centres, often came from rural areas⁹⁵ and were familiar with Greek poetry, particularly the epics of Homer, applying those motifs and semantics to Christian texts. Educated Christians, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, wrote their own poems, which served as models for epigrams in other parts of Asia Minor.⁹⁶ Bishop Amphilochius of Iconium, Gregory's cousin, wrote a didactic poem on ideal Christian conduct in iambic form,⁹⁷ and other bishops also composed Christian-influenced poems, some of which appeared on inscriptions.⁹⁸ A well-known and early example is the funerary epigram composed by Bishop Abercius of Hierapolis from the late second century AD (ICG 1597) mentioned above.⁹⁹ Other inscribed poems, often simpler and less skilfully crafted, indicate varying levels of poetic ability. In some areas, village schoolmasters likely took on the task of composing tomb inscriptions in verse.¹⁰⁰

Believers in Christ participated in traditional educational programs, which included readings of Greek classics. Ideally, their inscriptions would eliminate references to pagan deities and integrate Christian content. Many expressions found in pagan epigrams were also adopted by early Christians, preserving their values in a new religious context. Christian tomb epigrams gradually became infused with Christian elements. For instance, the following epigram (ICG 92.1–10) features a solitary reference to the deceased's Christian identity, while the rest could just as easily apply to a pagan individual¹⁰¹:

Here lies a man of great name, he was renowned,
his name Sisinius, a famous man, an excellent man.
O God, distribute gifts of grace from heaven among men.
Officials and the council honoured (him) by praising him
with sweet words. He distinguished himself through all kinds of wisdom ...

⁹⁵ THONEMANN 2014.

⁹⁶ For example, ICG 372 from Laodicea Combusta in Lycaonia (see B.5. ZIMMERMANN, "Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?", III–6) shows strong semantic parallels to Gregory's epigrams: ZIMMERMANN C. 2019; MITCHELL 2024 has recently shown that two inscriptions from Amorium in Phrygia (ICG 1692 and 1806) may also be by the same author as ICG 372. See also B.7. SUMMA B 7, "The Mosaic Inscription of Bishop Spyridon in Tremithus/Tremithousa".

⁹⁷ *Iambi ad Seleucum*. Seleucus was the nephew of Amphilochios.

⁹⁸ Cf. also Bas. *Ad iuv*.

⁹⁹ See p. 3 with note 2. For a reconstruction of the entire text, see MITCHELL 2023b, 87–110.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. THONEMANN 2014, for this region in Lycaonia characterised by villages.

¹⁰¹ See ZIMMERMANN C. 2019, 132–3.

Some epigrams, like the one discussed in this volume for Eugenios and Severus¹⁰² or that of Gaius¹⁰³, demonstrate high poetic quality or specific text knowledge (see also *ICG* 4055).¹⁰⁴ However, many other Christian epigrams reveal limitations in the author's grammatical, semantic, and metric skills (see, for example, the inscription from Tavium discussed in this volume¹⁰⁵). Nevertheless, these texts provide insights into the education and language skills of "ordinary" Christians, which remain untraceable in other ancient Christian texts, such as those by the so-called Church Fathers. This evidence clearly demonstrates that inscriptions open a window into aspects of early Christianity otherwise inaccessible. The genre of sepulchral poetry reveals the deep roots of early Christians in their pagan backgrounds, from which many values and ideas could carry over into the new religious context.¹⁰⁶ However, gradually, Christians moved away from mentioning of pagan deities found in earlier epigrams, replacing them with theological concepts such as resurrection or names and titles of God and Christ, while also developing unique Christian terms that increasingly coloured the epigrams. For example, in addition to the attribute "faithful" (πιστός),¹⁰⁷ we see attributes like "gentle" (πᾶος), "mighty," and "steadfast" (κρατερός) – the latter referring to the persecutions faced by Christians.¹⁰⁸ Exclusively Christians identified themselves as "chosen by God" (ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ).¹⁰⁹ Members of specific ascetic groups even referred to themselves as ἅγιος (holy).¹¹⁰ Non-metric inscriptions from the Church of the Seven Sleepers in Ephesus further document other new Christian semantics.¹¹¹

In addition to specific Christian terms, quotes from and allusions to biblical texts frequently appear in both poetic and prose inscriptions. This reflects an awareness of a distinct Christian text tradition and its authority. For example, references to the Psalms and the Book of Isaiah appear commonly in Lycaonia, with allusions to Pauline phrases also found.¹¹²

¹⁰² *ICG* 372, see B.5. ZIMMERMANN, "Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?", 111–6.

¹⁰³ *ICG* 1031 – see B.3. MITCHELL, "The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel", 77–88.

¹⁰⁴ See B.9. CHRISTIAN, "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes".

¹⁰⁵ See B.6. HUTTNER, "Grabinschrift der Palladion".

¹⁰⁶ See B.9. CHRISTIAN, "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes".

¹⁰⁷ *ICG* 101, 116–122, 350, 396, 498.

¹⁰⁸ *ICG* 480, 481, 603 and *ICG* 28, 55, 103, 762; cf. also BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 497–9.

¹⁰⁹ *ICG* 603; cf. also BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 499.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ICG* 1031.3., see B.3. MITCHELL, "The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel".

¹¹¹ See also B.2. TREBILCO, "Epitaphs from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers".

¹¹² Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 677–692 BREYTENBACH 2023.

A similar preservation and transformation of existing phenomena can be observed in inscriptions that appear to contradict Christian values at first glance. Like their pagan neighbours, Christians included warnings against potential grave robbers in their tomb inscriptions, often threatening punishment¹¹³ or divine retribution, sometimes in the form of a curse. Such formulas aimed primarily to prevent unauthorized burials in a grave, but they could also deter grave robbery. In pagan contexts, these warnings might state, “[... whoever wr]ongs [this stele], may he bury his children before their time” (MAMA XI 232) or “may he leave his children orphans [and his wife a widow]” (MAMA VII 443), or invoke the wrath of a god, such as the underworld god Men, against the violator (e.g., “whoever wrongs this [tomb], may he find Men of the underworld angered”; STRUBBE, *Arai epitymbioi* no. 339–342, 344–345). Although Christian texts repeatedly discourage cursing,¹¹⁴ cursing is specifically used as an apotropaic means to protect of the grave.¹¹⁵

In Galatians, the apostle Paul already used curse formulas to keep trouble-makers away from his churches in Galatia (Gal 1:8–9) and thus protect the church as a place of God from harm. In 1 Corinthians, Paul finally banishes anyone “who does not love the Lord” (1 Cor 16:22) from the church. The power of the ban or curse is based on the idea that God hears this curse and punishes the cursed person or potential offender immediately after the offence has been committed.¹¹⁶ The early Christians, for whom the protection of graves was just as important as pagan families, adapted familiar pagan curses by implementing Christian semantics. For example, they echoed phrases from Paul (Rom 14:12), such as the threat that a wrongdoer would “give an account before God” (ICG 2583.5–6) or “before Jesus Christ” (see ICG 240.5–7) or even before the Trinity (ICG 619.9–14: “If someone intends to lay hands on this monument, they will have to give an account before the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”). Philomenes from Tanagra threatens a potential grave robber with “merciless destruction” and a post-mortem “unforgiving punishment ... under the immortal King” (ICG 4055.38–40)¹¹⁷. An encounter with the “uplifted arm” of God could also be threatening (ICG 1521.5–11: “If anyone inters another after my descendants or lays a wicked hand on this memorial, he shall have to reckon with the outstretched arm and the coming judgement”) or worse still, the fate of Judas (ICG 3358: “The one who opens

¹¹³ Cf. ICG 924, 966, 990, 1142, 1368, 1459, 1600 and HARTER-UIBOPUU / WIEDERGUT 2014.

¹¹⁴ ZIMMERMANN C. 2021, 364–5.

¹¹⁵ Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 514–533; ZIMMERMANN C. 2021; MITCHELL 2023a.

¹¹⁶ ZIMMERMANN C. 2021, 363.

¹¹⁷ See B.9. CHRISTIAN, “Das ‘Testament’ des Philomenes”.

[the grave] will be subject to anathema: maranatha! He will receive the lot of the betrayer Judas, and will be counted among those who proclaimed: ‘take him, crucify him!’”; see also *ICG* 3401). The last curse references Judas’s death following his betrayal of Jesus (Matt 27:5; Acts 1:18) and quotes the cry for crucifixion from John 19:15.¹¹⁸ This last formula indicates familiarity with the events surrounding Judas and the crucifixion, revealing increasing anti-Judaic tendencies within early Christianity, which often blamed the Jews for Jesus’s death. The diversity of Christian formulas against grave robbers demonstrates efforts to protect graves from unauthorized access, whether by increasing the number of divine figures invoked or amplifying the severity of the anticipated punishment. Notably, these inscriptions do not mention the expectation of resurrection, which might also have motivated the need for grave protection. Such threats against grave robbers touch upon magical notions, which also emerge in miracle stories and in inscriptions on Christian amulets, aiming to produce apotropaic effects.¹¹⁹ Although the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus preserve a corpus of 86 epigrams with grave robber threats,¹²⁰ the actual prevalence of such practices in early Christian society emerges solely through the analysis of Christian inscriptions.

Another aspect of the transformation of existing phenomena in Christian contexts appears in inscriptions, indicating that city rivalries persisted into the Christian era.¹²¹ The status of local Christian saints became a new object of competition.

5.5 *The Clergy*

Christian inscriptions provide particularly valuable insights into the development of ecclesiastical offices and structures. Attendance lists from early synods reveal numerous bishops in Asia Minor and Greece beginning in the fourth century AD. However, Christian inscriptions significantly expand our knowledge of bishops and other church officials.¹²² Tomb inscriptions allow us to learn more about early clerics, including their ecclesiastical careers, and the organization of local congregations. One inscription from the late sixth century documents the career of a presbyter named Daniel, who served first as a reader, then as a deacon, and finally as a presbyter (*ICG* 3389).¹²³ Inscriptions also reveal the roles of women in church offices. Women could hold

¹¹⁸ Cf. *ICG* 1943, 2103 and BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 322–3, 351–2.

¹¹⁹ Cf. FRENCHKOWSKI 2016.

¹²⁰ PG 38.100–130.

¹²¹ See B.14. HARRISON. “The Protocols of Honour at Ephesus”.

¹²² On the clergy in late antique Asia Minor, see HÜBNER 2005.

¹²³ See B.13. OGEREAU, “The Clerical Career of the Presbyter Daniel at Philippi”.

the office of deaconess or canoness. However, inscriptions do not support strict rules regarding celibacy for church members, as early church orders might suggest. Clergy members were for example initially buried by their spouses or family members, but starting in the fifth and sixth centuries (and in some areas even earlier), inscriptions show that as members of the Christian family, clergy members – both male and female – buried one another. Sometimes as brotherhoods, but also within monastic communities.¹²⁴ The following sections explore some aspects related to different Christian offices as gleaned from inscriptions.¹²⁵

5.5.1 Bishops

Early Christian writings indicate the necessity of leadership structures in the first communities, leading to the appointment of “overseers” (ἐπίσκοποι), which is what the term “bishop” means.¹²⁶ The earliest documented bishops appear in inscriptions from the late second or early third century AD in Asia Minor, specifically in Isauropolis, southeast of Lystra,¹²⁷ an area of Paul’s missionary work (Acts 14). The indigenous names of these bishops (Indakos, *ICG* 794; Mammias, *ICG* 812; Sisamoas, *ICG* 813) and those of their relatives demonstrate that these bishops originated from local rural populations. The inscriptions express the respect that the community had for these holy, eloquent, virtuous, and just bishops, although one must also account for the use of stereotypical attributes (see 5.2 and 5.4). While the previously mentioned bishops had individual graves and were likely not (or no longer) married, other tombstones suggest that even into the fourth century, some were married men.¹²⁸ Epigraphic evidence confirms that some bishops came from larger towns and oversaw their surrounding territories. By the early third century, the bishop of Iconium played a supra-regional role. Bishops from Phrygia also appear in inscriptions even before participating in councils (Nicaea AD 325; Serdica AD 343).¹²⁹

5.5.2 Presbyters

The Acts of the Apostles, written at the end of the first century, recount that Barnabas and Paul introduced the foundational organizational structure for

¹²⁴ See *ICG* 86, 292, 297, 586, 762.

¹²⁵ In addition to the offices listed here, there were others such as canonesses, subdeacons or archdeacons, chorepiscopi, etc.

¹²⁶ Cf. for example 1 Tim 3:1–7.

¹²⁷ A bishop is not documented for Lystra until AD 381 (Constantinople), a presbyter Diofantos epigraphically in the 6th century AD (*ICG* 742).

¹²⁸ *ICG* 58, 137, 371. Some of these later bishops have Greek or Latin names, with biblical names appearing later in Derbe (Michael, *ICG* 659) and Athens (Clematius, *ICG* 2038).

¹²⁹ *ICG* 1371–1372.

congregational leadership with presbyters in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (in Pisidia) (Acts 14:21–23). Although the epigraphic evidence for presbyters in Antioch and Lystra emerges later, one inscription that documents a presbyter named “Paul” buried southeast of Lystra, likely dates back to the late second or early third century (*ICG* 759). The indigenous name of Paul’s son, Koulas, along with that of his wife, Nanas, indicates that this Paul came from a local community and that his presumably Christian parents named him after the apostle. The third century saw an increase in evidence for presbyters in Lycaonia, with both indigenous¹³⁰ and Greek¹³¹ names emerging. Balabius (*ICG* 222) and ... xenus Iulianus (*ICG* 245) likely represent the earliest presbyters at Laodicea Combusta. Balabius had an indigenous name and married Iulia Anatole, merging into the sphere of Roman influence. For the fourth century, Christian presbyters are documented in almost every town in Lycaonia, e.g., Tas, Aurelius Sophronis, and Auxianon (*ICG* 213, 242, 273).¹³²

In Phrygia, one of the earliest inscriptions even names a presbyteress, Ammion (*ICG* 1372), although her precise function remains unclear.¹³³ Male presbyters appear in this region by the mid- third century.¹³⁴

In Greece, evidence for presbyters also emerges in inscriptions from the third century.¹³⁵ The only known presbyter from around Athens comes from the fifth century; this presbyter, Andreas, son of John, belonged to at least the third generation of believers (*ICG* 2136).

Were presbyters, as the term suggests, older men? The eleventh canon of the synod of Neo Caesarea (315–319) stipulated that a presbyter should not be ordained before the age of 30, and records from the fourth century confirm that not all presbyters were older men (*ICG* 236, 584). Early Christians believed that God authorized the role of presbyters. For instance, Pateras of Kana was “presbyter by the authority of the Father and the Son” (*ICG* 136), while Menneas from Iconium, son of Lucius, was a presbyter “by the grace of God” (*ICG* 329), and Zeudas served as presbyter “in Christ Jesus” (*ICG* 1504).

¹³⁰ Sadas (*ICG* 816), Azios (*ICG* 910), Doumetaos (*ICG* 292), Attas (*ICG* 289). Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 606–7.

¹³¹ Euagrios (*ICG* 281), Auxanon (*ICG* 279).

¹³² BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 605–618.

¹³³ MITCHELL 2023b, 182–3 and 540.

¹³⁴ *ICG* 1577, 1612.

¹³⁵ Cf. for example *ICG* 3131 (Thessalonica), *ICG* 3075, 3076 (Beroea), *ICG* 3254 (Philippi). These include a presbyter and physician (*ICG* 3258), as well as a protopresbyter (*ICG* 3259), both called ‘Paul’, and Daniel, who as the successor to Bisaltios presided over the presbyters (*ICG* 3389, cf. 4140). Presbyter Andrew was buried in the atrium of the basilica in Dium (unpublished; see OGEREAU 2023, 268) and presbyter Peter (*ICG* 4147) from Pharicopolis served the church for 40 years.

While believers elected presbyters, who were later appointed by the bishop, the community viewed them as chosen by God as worthy individuals (see *ICG* 23). The ordination of presbyters constituted an official act, accompanied by prayer.

Were presbyters married? The family relationships of the presbyters were consistent with prevailing family norms. Grave inscriptions spanning the late second to the mid-fifth/sixth centuries repeatedly confirm that presbyters were married. However, some remained unmarried,¹³⁶ while others were eunuchs or Encratites (*ICG* 375, 439; see also 5.6). Later inscriptions show presbyters buried together in a single grave¹³⁷ or interred by other clergy members.¹³⁸

Presbyters generally hailed from the leading social classes within local populations, though this structure manifested differently in rural versus urban settings. In some cases, members of a single family,¹³⁹ even from several generations,¹⁴⁰ were presbyters. Children noted their father's role as presbyter, indicating the family's social prestige.¹⁴¹ The involvement of presbyters' daughters and wives in burial arrangements further signifies their elite background.¹⁴² The social status of presbyters often correlated with their families', evident in the varying quality of tombstones and inscriptions – from opulently decorated marble slabs¹⁴³ to simple sandstone markers, and from metric poems reminiscent of Homeric style¹⁴⁴ to straightforward phrases. In any case, mentioning the presbyter's role elevated the family's standing within the community.

Although presbyters were elected by local Christian communities and appointed by bishops, fulfilling roles in local congregations, they identified as officials of the wider church,¹⁴⁵ and some acted as itinerant preachers.¹⁴⁶ Besides their liturgical duties, presbyters participated in caring for the elderly, widows, and the poor,¹⁴⁷ as well as mediating disputes within the congregation.¹⁴⁸ They also helped to erect grave stones.¹⁴⁹

¹³⁶ *ICG* 292, 3075, 3076.

¹³⁷ *ICG* 123, 235.

¹³⁸ *ICG* 289, 292.

¹³⁹ *ICG* 289.

¹⁴⁰ *ICG* 136, 253, 423, 511, 515.

¹⁴¹ *ICG* 30, 60, 73, 112, 153, 520, 525, 593.

¹⁴² *ICG* 16, 136, 170, 274, 520.

¹⁴³ *ICG* 30, 316, 544, 759, 1537, 1544.

¹⁴⁴ *ICG* 232, 276.

¹⁴⁵ *ICG* 115, 316, 1271.

¹⁴⁶ *ICG* 832.

¹⁴⁷ *ICG* 52, 791.

¹⁴⁸ *ICG* 270, 348.

¹⁴⁹ *ICG* 68, 71, 515.

Until the third century AD, the term “priest” (ἱερεύς) remained avoided in early Christianity, due to its association with Jewish and pagan cults. As laws against pagan cults emerged, Christians increasingly adopted the term “priest” into their own ecclesiastical vocabulary, replacing titles like bishop or presbyter (see, for example, “priest of the Trinity,” *ICG* 498).¹⁵⁰

5.5.3 Deacons and Deaconesses

In Lycaonia and the surrounding regions, numerous inscriptions reference deacons (διάκων or διάκονος) and deaconesses (διάκονος or διακόνισσα). The number of female church officials in this context is particularly noteworthy. In Phrygia, however, deacons appear in inscriptions only from the fourth century onwards.¹⁵¹

The earliest deacons in Lycaonia probably appear as early as the end of the second century, but certainly at the beginning of the third century AD.¹⁵² Throughout the third century, the number of inscriptions mentioning deacons increased, not only in major cities¹⁵³ but also in villages. They remained documented well into the fifth century. Some deacons appear to have been unmarried or died as widowers.¹⁵⁴ Others were married, had children, and received burial from their wives, children, or other family members.¹⁵⁵ While deacons were encouraged to remain unmarried following ordination, synods in the fourth century accepted the marriage of deacons who had already taken office while married. However, the church forbade a second marriage, as already indicated in 1 Tim 3:12.

In the families of deacons, a concentration of church offices often appears. Six out of fifty deacons from Lycaonia had parents or siblings who were also deacons,¹⁵⁶ or fathers and brothers who served as presbyters.¹⁵⁷

What roles did the deacons fulfil? One inscription from Iconium (*ICG* 286) refers to a “serving deacon” (διάκονος λειτουργ[ός]), likely indicating his responsibilities during the Eucharist. He would have played a significant role in distributing communion to the Christian congregation. Another verse inscription from an Encratic group in Dineksaray, dedicated to siblings Nestor and Mammeis (*ICG* 762), mentions the involvement of Deacon Nestor in charitable work; he also served as a teacher and judge within the group.

¹⁵⁰ BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 618–621.

¹⁵¹ *ICG* 1160.

¹⁵² *ICG* 192, 278, 761, 815.

¹⁵³ Laodicea Combusta (*ICG* 365) and Iconium (*ICG* 278, 286, 292, 317).

¹⁵⁴ *ICG* 761, 815.

¹⁵⁵ *ICG* 51, 56, 91, 156, 191–192, 201, 317, 355, 495, 557.

¹⁵⁶ *ICG* 173, 586.

¹⁵⁷ *ICG* 277, 723.

While only male presbyters and bishops appear in the inscriptions from Lycaonia, we know that deaconesses existed alongside a few women serving as canonesses.¹⁵⁸ These positions were thus accessible to women. Inscriptions reveal that from the end of the second to the fifth century, Lycaonia had relatively many deaconesses.¹⁵⁹ These inscriptions indicate that the deaconesses came from thoroughly Christian families. Often there were other church officials in their families¹⁶⁰ or they exhibited typical Christian names. Some inscriptions praise the exemplary lives of deaconesses,¹⁶¹ though they often lack details about their specific roles and activities compared to male deacons. The inscriptions indicate that deaconesses, while subordinate to male clergy, probably served as authorities in their own right, particularly concerning the female members of Christian congregations. It is therefore not surprising that mainly women from the Christian upper class were appointed to this office.¹⁶²

Unlike many other Christian women, deaconesses less frequently bore indigenous names. At least seven to nine deaconesses in Lycaonia had Latin names or relatives with Latin names.¹⁶³ The local standing of deaconesses often appears considerable, as seen in a church in Aezanoi, Phrygia, established in AD 518 to honour the most blessed deaconess Epiphania (ICG 1312). In Stobi an inscription mentions that a deaconess named Matrone funded a mosaic floor.¹⁶⁴

Despite increasing pressure from church authorities for deaconesses to lead celibate lives, many deaconesses in northern Lycaonia, like their male counterparts, were married or widowed¹⁶⁵ and had children.¹⁶⁶ This suggests that the regulations set forth by church orders were not uniformly enforced. However, just as with deacons, some deaconesses were never married.¹⁶⁷

5.5.4 Readers

Readers (ἀναγνώσται) appear as Christian officials from the second century onward,¹⁶⁸ playing a significant role in disseminating scriptural knowledge among early Christians. This office likely developed from the Jewish קורא

¹⁵⁸ Cf. HÜBNER 2005; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 667–8.

¹⁵⁹ ICG 146, 148, 167, 193, 229, 345, 412, 439, 473, 474, 511, 518, 586, 595, 748, 857, 1241.

¹⁶⁰ ICG 412, 439.

¹⁶¹ ICG 482.

¹⁶² ICG 473, 474, 624, 1115.

¹⁶³ Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 657.

¹⁶⁴ ICG 3320.

¹⁶⁵ ICG 146, 167, 345, 474.

¹⁶⁶ ICG 174, 193, 473, 474, 586.

¹⁶⁷ ICG 1241, 2057, 2068.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. HÜBNER 2005; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 663–4; BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 310–1.

(*hazzān*) or ὑπηρέτης, whose responsibilities included teaching reading skills. Appointed by the bishop, Christian readers belonged to the clergy and were tasked with reading texts from the Old Testament, the Gospels and Paul's letters during worship services, as well as serving as secretaries and messengers. Like the subdeacons, deaconesses and psalmists, they were seen as assistants to the deacons and ranked below the subdeacons, followed by the psalmists, virgins, widows and lay people. Two inscriptions from the fourth century AD give an indication of the young age of the readers: two sons who worked as readers were buried by their fathers (ICG 80, 561). Furthermore, none of the readers known from Lycaonia were buried by a wife, although they were permitted to marry once. In Athens and Attica, with one exception, there is also no evidence for married readers.¹⁶⁹

From the third or fourth century onwards, more than thirty Christian readers from Asia Minor are known, six of them through inscriptions from Lycaonia. All but one are attested in the northern part of Lycaonia, and five of them also came from well-Christianised families and communities with larger numbers of clergy, which indicates the strong development and growing structure of Christian communities in this region.¹⁷⁰ In Phrygia, on the other hand, there is no evidence of readers yet.

The fact that reading and the teaching of Christian content were particularly important for Athenian Christianity is not only shown by the fact that many more readers are documented here than, e.g. in Lycaonia. On the contrary, the number of readers documented in Athens and Attica clearly exceeds that of all other offices.¹⁷¹ It is also noteworthy that the readers predominantly had typical Greek names. In the Greek-speaking area, Christianity had not initially developed its own school system and reverted to elementary classical education. The high proportion of Greek names among the readers is therefore not surprising.

5.6 Asceticism and Other Christian Ways of Life

Christian inscriptions often reflect the influence of asceticism within early Christian communities. Ascetic practices aimed to achieve a higher spiritual state and often involved renouncing worldly pleasures, leading to a different lifestyle compared to mainstream society. Many inscriptions from this era reference individuals who adopted ascetic practices, emphasizing their commitment to faith and virtue.

¹⁶⁹ But cf. ICG 2133 from Athens on a married reader.

¹⁷⁰ ICG 80, 86, 177, 193, 561, 902.

¹⁷¹ ICG 1851b, 1927, 1949, 2017, 2082, 2092, 2096, 2133, 2173b, 2193, 4082.

Inscriptions reveal that some Christians embraced celibacy, choosing a lifestyle focused on spiritual rather than familial obligations. This ascetic ideal resonated particularly with the emerging Christian identity, which often stressed the value of spiritual purity and devotion over material concerns.

For example, inscriptions mention figures such as hermits and monks who withdrew from society to lead lives of prayer and contemplation. These individuals, often referred to in their inscriptions, serve as examples of the ascetic ideal. The inscriptions commemorate their dedication and the communal recognition of their spiritual contributions, showcasing the respect and veneration that ascetics received within early Christian communities.

In contrast, while many early Christians pursued ascetic ideals, the inscriptions also reveal a complex relationship between asceticism and community life. Some ascetics chose to live within communities that balanced communal living with individual spiritual practices. In these settings, ascetics often took on roles that benefited the community, such as teaching or serving the poor.

Overall, the presence of ascetic figures in inscriptions illustrates the diversity of early Christian life, where various approaches to faith coexisted, allowing for both individual expression and communal solidarity.

Some inscriptions reveal how Christian teachings influenced the lives of believers. Evidence occasionally shows wealthy Christians who dedicated themselves to caring for the poor, such as Aurelia None and Glykere from the Lycaonian Gdanmaa (ICG 81 and 1498).¹⁷² They are described as “nurturers of the poor.” This individual care complements the support provided by church communities and ascetic groups to the weakest members of society. An inscription from Laodicea Pontica highlights this commitment: “God has welcomed their souls ... remembering the piety they exhibited in accordance with proper conduct. For filling the poor with good things and honouring friends ...” (ICG 4731).¹⁷³

Traces of specific ascetic groups appear even before the rise of monastic communities.¹⁷⁴ While literary sources mostly document these groups, inscriptions from Lycaonia, especially from the third to fourth centuries AD, indicate various male and female Christians who leaned toward a strongly ascetic lifestyle and formed different groups. This trend reflects a broader Christian tendency in the early centuries, observable throughout Asia Minor

¹⁷² Cf. 5.2 above and BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 540–6.

¹⁷³ See also B.4. OEHLER, “Himmelscher Lohn für tugendhaftes Leben”. Cf. also ICG 76 for the official physician Auguste.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. on the following BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 724–787; ZIMMERMANN C. 2015.

and beyond, rooted in certain statements from early Christian writings.¹⁷⁵ Highlights of a “virgin” lifestyle on inscriptions do not necessarily indicate a consciously chosen Christian asceticism, but this possibility certainly exists.¹⁷⁶ However, Lycaonia has records of group names that mirror ascetic principles as a fundamental attitude. The number of these ascetic inscriptions from Lycaonia is relatively high, with 27 examples, which is significant for both Asia Minor and the documented existence of radical ascetic groups,¹⁷⁷ thus making them historically relevant.

The correspondence between Basil the Great and Amphilochius, a bishop from Iconium, documents discussions regarding the treatment of these groups. The apparent large number of ascetics in Lycaonia and the organization of groups seemed so threatening that representatives of the so-called “orthodox” church felt compelled to intervene in the fourth century AD.¹⁷⁸ The emergence of radical ascetic groups posed a particular challenge for the “orthodox” church, prompting Amphilochius to offer sharp criticisms and interventions with key figures in the “orthodox” church and at the imperial court. The Lycaonian inscriptions make these ascetics individually accessible within the jurisdiction of Bishop Amphilochius.

Ascetics primarily aimed to put their understanding of Christian life into practice, which they believed brought them closer to the Kingdom of God. They expressed this understanding through their group designations: while the “Apotactites” saw themselves as “separated,” the “Encratics” lived in a particularly “abstinent” manner, and the “Saccophoroi”¹⁷⁹ emphasized demonstrating this outwardly through their worn clothing. The “Cathari,” also called “Novatians,” considered themselves particularly “pure.” The Cathari/Novatians referred to themselves in inscriptions as their own “church,” indicating their size and differentiating themselves through specific language from the “orthodox” or “catholic and apostolic” church. This may suggest that the groups of Encratics, Saccophoroi, and Apotactites functioned as subgroups of the dominant Cathari/Novatians in the third and fourth centuries.¹⁸⁰ This interpretation aligns with insights from ancient literary sources and is further supported by iconographic similarities between Encratics and Cathari inscriptions.¹⁸¹ However, the inscriptions do not

¹⁷⁵ Cf. for example Luke 20:34–36 and Matt 22:30. Participation in the future kingdom of God is already prefigured by a corresponding ascetic way of life in the here and now.

¹⁷⁶ See B.6. HUTTNER, “Grabinschrift der Palladion”.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. also ICG 1688 and 1689 from Phrygia.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Bas. Ep. 188 and 199.

¹⁷⁹ See B.5. ZIMMERMANN, “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?,” 111–6.

¹⁸⁰ MITCHELL 1993, 103.

¹⁸¹ The encratic double inscriptions ICG 199, 439 and the Novatian inscription ICG 554 are strikingly similar, each consisting of two inscription fields arranged side by side.

explicitly express mutual dependence. Unlike the Encratites, Saccophoroi, and Apotactites, the Novatians repeatedly managed to achieve a special status regarding their evaluation by the “orthodox” church, likely due to their group size and particular relationships.

The reasons behind the particularly high number of ascetic groups documented by inscriptions in Lycaonia remain unresolved. Notably, many women in these groups could assume responsible roles. For example, a tombstone from Lycaonia praises the work of a Christian named Nestor, described as “the strong helper of moderately wealthy widows,” along with his sister Mammeis, who apparently oversaw the financial administration of this ascetic group.¹⁸² A concrete model of Lycaonian asceticism among women likely exists in the figure of Thekla from Iconium. According to the Acts of Thekla (*Acta Pauli Thecl.*), preserved in the Acts of Paul, Thekla decided to live an ascetic life after hearing Paul preach and became a Christian preacher herself. The significance of Thekla for Lycaonia primarily shows through the frequent naming of daughters after Thekla by local Christians in inscriptions.¹⁸³

Based on the early Christian textual traditions likely influencing them, ascetics sought a life pleasing to Christ, which in some ways anticipated the future Kingdom of God. This mindset likely received reinforcement from local traditions and external teachings. Inscriptions make many more of these ascetics individually identifiable than do literary or archaeological¹⁸⁴ traditions alone.

The emergence of monastic groups is also evident in inscriptions. In Greece, scholars can identify monastic communities in places like Athens and Megara based on inscriptions, although these date only from the sixth century AD.¹⁸⁵

5.7 Theology

Christian funerary inscriptions occasionally reflect faith-related statements, though they appear relatively rarely and late compared to the overall number. Grave inscriptions do not serve theological reflection, but they relate directly to death and provide insights into how individuals understood it.

¹⁸² ICG 762.5 On the function of the οἰκονόμος Mammeis, see BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 542.

¹⁸³ Cf. for example ICG 29, 66, 85, 94, 147, 246, 255, 296; see in detail BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 117–125. On Thekla as a “role model” in Lycaonia, see BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 447–8.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. also SARADI 2006, 330 and 372.

¹⁸⁵ BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 305–6.

Many bereaved expressed their sorrow over the death of a wife and mother, a husband and father, parents, or children within their respective inscriptions.¹⁸⁶ The traditional notion of “Hades,” also present in New Testament writings, remains recognizable; it describes a sunless and joyless realm¹⁸⁷ that robs loved ones from the living¹⁸⁸ and holds them in the earth.¹⁸⁹ Trust in “God, who trampled on Hades,” who “shattered its power and cast it into Tartarus,”¹⁹⁰ and who separates the living from the dead during the (final) judgment¹⁹¹ allows for a re-evaluation of burial and the grave. The state of death now appears as “sleeping” (κοιμάομαι), and the grave is referred to as a “sleeping place” (κοιμητήριον). The believers laid to rest in sleep are not left alone; they already enjoy divine protection. They rest in peace,¹⁹² in the bosom of Abraham.¹⁹³ Believers pray for God’s assistance¹⁹⁴ and affirm His protection.¹⁹⁵ The grave is prepared for the time until resurrection,¹⁹⁶ and the departed inhabit it until then,¹⁹⁷ as they believe in the resurrection of the body.¹⁹⁸ An inscription from the fourth century from Ancyra states: “My name is Sophokleia, slave of the living God. Here I sleep until the resurrection” (ICG 3709). Theodoulos from North Galatia had the following inscribed on his gravestone: “I pray to you, God, that you raise me up and place me among your chosen ones!” (ICG 2367). Believers identify themselves as those who have died “in the Saviour Christ” and who also rest under His protection.¹⁹⁹

Inscriptions do not offer uniform answers regarding when and in what form the resurrection occurs. By the third century AD, the originally Pauline expectation of the dead being awakened with the sound of trumpets and judged by God “on the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52) has been passed on,²⁰⁰ and his idea that those who had fallen asleep would receive heavenly glory in the future (Rom 8:17) was presumed. Thus, it can be stated that two deceased priests had already “acquired heavenly glory.”²⁰¹ In Phrygia

¹⁸⁶ ICG 103, 151, 349, 749.

¹⁸⁷ ICG 103, 149, 958.

¹⁸⁸ ICG 749.

¹⁸⁹ ICG 28, 177, 352, 476, 495, 606, 4498.

¹⁹⁰ ICG 1428, 1897.

¹⁹¹ ICG 312, 320, 383.

¹⁹² ICG 726, 864, 2197.

¹⁹³ ICG 270.

¹⁹⁴ ICG 34, 73, 77, 185, 225, 1494.

¹⁹⁵ ICG 245.

¹⁹⁶ ICG 4476.

¹⁹⁷ ICG 1380, 2588, 3137.

¹⁹⁸ ICG 1966, 4344.

¹⁹⁹ ICG 1935, 2100.

²⁰⁰ ICG 518, 2105.

²⁰¹ ICG 480, 481.

and Athens, the widespread idea – also found in pagan thought – that the soul leaves the body at death and ascends to God appears.²⁰² The grave transforms into an “eternal house,”²⁰³ and peacocks on tombstones symbolize the (already attained?) paradise.²⁰⁴

Central theological statements emerge from the initially scarce and later more frequent references to God and Christ. Common designations for God or Christ appear, in later times with phrases related to Trinitarian concepts.²⁰⁵ Christ often appears as the Saviour (σωτήρ), while God frequently represents a ruling figure, possibly to refer to the grave as a direct domain of God’s power.²⁰⁶ This particularly manifests in formulas designed to ward off potential grave robbers, which call upon God as “Almighty.”²⁰⁷

Crucial theological ideas also become evident iconographically in symbols. The depiction of God and Christ as the beginning and endpoint of human existence finds iconographic expression in the repeated appearance of the *Alpha* and *Omega* signs on gravestones.²⁰⁸ The perception of the decisive act of salvation in the crucifixion as the event that redeems humanity is marked by various cross symbols and Christograms and staurograms (✝ and †) found on numerous gravestones.²⁰⁹ In Lycaonia and Phrygia, evidence also suggests the continuation of the belief in angels adopted from Judaism into Christianity.²¹⁰

Christians articulate their relationship with God and Christ (“slave of God,” “slave of Christ”), while also fundamentally identifying as “believers.”²¹¹ Although the texts rarely elaborate on the contents of faith, they repeatedly reflect on the deceased’s past and present personal relationship with God. Christians increasingly give their children names that express their closeness to God (Theodoulos; Timotheos). Officeholders frequently receive descriptions as “chosen by God”²¹² to emphasize their divinely granted authority even in death. However, ordinary believers also see themselves and their

²⁰² ICG 2031, 4497; see MITCHELL 2023b, 301–2, 329; BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 329–332.

²⁰³ ICG 1031, 1142, 2029, 2096.

²⁰⁴ ICG 1884, 1885, 1918, 2098, 2754, 3058, 4526.

²⁰⁵ ICG 382, 498.

²⁰⁶ BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 694–701.

²⁰⁷ ICG 278: “The God of the people of Israel. Here lie the bones of the prudent Paul the deacon. We invoke (you) by the Almighty God ...”.

²⁰⁸ See p. 8 above.

²⁰⁹ See p. 8 above.

²¹⁰ ICG 52, 1028; cf. B.3. MITCHELL, “The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel”.

²¹¹ See p. 9 above.

²¹² ICG 23, 214, 631, 371.

lives as dependent on God: grace, wisdom, as well as health and wealth come from God.²¹³ The timing of death can also trace back to God's decision.²¹⁴

In formulaic prayers for help from God or the Lord ("God, help!" / "Lord, help!")²¹⁵, as well as in the aforementioned formulas (see 5.4), trust in God's helping and punishing power becomes evident in the present²¹⁶ and also after death. The desire for the demonstration of divine justice appears on many inscriptions, not only Christian ones.²¹⁷ Locations for such prayers are therefore not limited to epitaphs. Prayers also appear as simple dedications on various church components. Various prayers, including those directed at the Christian God, have been scratched onto the prison in Corinth.²¹⁸ The hope for divine judgment appears especially in formulas.²¹⁹

Trust in God's helping power is also evident in numerous vows, which also begin formulaically with "for the vow" (ὕπὲρ εὐχῆς / *ex voto*).²²⁰ The monuments served as tokens of the vow or as visible signs requesting prayer for the person.²²¹

Many faith statements in the inscriptions align with the general theological development observed in the Nicaean tradition,²²² but they also reflect the very individual relationship of the believers and hint at the life situations in which they particularly needed God's help and hope.

5.8 Persecution

A strong literary tradition recounts the persecutions faced by some Christians, as seen in the letters of Ignatius, the martyrdom of Polycarp, and Eusebius.²²³ However, epigraphic evidence for martyrs remains relatively rare, as the perseverance of some persecuted individuals is often expressed metaphorically. Inscriptions frequently employ athletic metaphors,²²⁴ reminiscent of Paul's use of them in his letters (c.f. 1 Cor 9:24–26). Persecution is understood as a competition, with success rewarded with crowns and prizes. Demetrios thus referred to his son Rufus as an unforgettable victor (ἀ(ε)θλιος

²¹³ ICG 350.5–7, 495.5–6, 561.6.

²¹⁴ ICG 20.11–13.

²¹⁵ ICG 1, 19, 77, 185, 1346, 1899, 2804.

²¹⁶ See for example ICG 673 (prayer to God to remove poverty; chiselled into a cornice).

²¹⁷ For comparable pagan prayers, see PETZL, *Beichtinschriften*.

²¹⁸ E.g. ICG 2812, 2814, 2818–2819. BREYTENBACH 2016.

²¹⁹ In the context of the resurrection: ICG 518.6–9.

²²⁰ ICG 1846, 3105.

²²¹ ICG 499, 528.

²²² Cf. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018.

²²³ Cf. MITCHELL 2023b, 1–12.

²²⁴ ICG 608, 1492, 1495; see also ICG 371–372.

ICG 817). Bishop Marcus Iulius Eugenius states more clearly on his epitaph: “I stood firm against a multitude of tortures” (ICG 371.7).²²⁵ The inscriptions do not always clarify whether the persecutions directly led to death or merely constituted a life episode. Gennadios from Kongoussos might have caused his death by disregarding an imperial letter urging Christians to renounce their faith (ICG 604). Some believers are explicitly called martyrs.²²⁶ Others received the honorary title of martyr, as in the case of Paul from Isauropolis.²²⁷ Later, “martyria” arose over the graves of martyrs.²²⁸ The notion that martyrs laughed at their sufferings in the eschaton (ICG 4711) is particularly noteworthy.²²⁹

5.9 Churches, Liturgy, and Rituals

Archaeological remnants of Christian church buildings do not predate the fourth century. Inscriptions on church buildings (cf. the exceptional inscription ICG 371) and from churches can help locate church buildings that are no longer archaeologically verifiable. Additionally, inscriptions from churches provide information about prayers and Bible verses that were significant for early Christians.

From the literary documents we know that in the imperial and high imperial eras the Christians gathered in private houses,²³⁰ but there is little epigraphical or archaeological evidence to identify the remains of such houses.²³¹ The presence of a late third century reader (ἀναγνώστης) and an early fourth century bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) in two mosaic donor inscriptions of a *domus* in Messene on the western Peloponnese and the mosaic floor of a house in Megiddo in Palestine might be the first evidence.²³² Other important meeting places of the Christians were the graves of martyrs; Christians regularly remembered the deceased there. Mausoleums for Christian

²²⁵ See B.5. ZIMMERMANN. “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?”.

²²⁶ ICG 1128, 142, 319, 475, 660, 1963, 2157.

²²⁷ ICG 644, 1100, 2664, 4060.

²²⁸ ICG 644, 1378. Cf. B.2. TREBILCO, “Epitaphs from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers”, B.10. PILHOFER, “Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates”, and ICG 145, 277, 3079. See also OGEREAU 2023, 107–111, 157–8, 324.

²²⁹ See B.15. DELIGANNAKIS / PILHOFER. “Heavenly Laughter in a Funerary Poem”.

²³⁰ The house of Gaius in Corinth apparently offered enough space for the assembly of all Christians in Corinth, see Rom 16:23. Other houses offered space for at least smaller assemblies, cf. 1 Cor 16:15 (house of Stephanas).

²³¹ The so called house church of Dura Europos in Syria, which dates from AD 241, remains to this day a singular example. Cf. PEPPARD 2016.

²³² See TZIVIKIS 2022; TEPPER / DI SEGNI 2006. See also MITCHELL 2023b, 192 with note 366 on the church in Megiddo in Palestine, which he (and Feissel) date before the end of the 4th century.

martyrs were later expanded into churches, as epigraphic evidence from Hierapolis, Iconium, Laodicea Combusta and Madenşehir suggests.²³³ The Quadratus basilica in Corinth could also have been built on the site of a martyr's shrine. The Octagon at Kenchreae, the eastern harbour of Corinth, is possibly a memorial to a local important Christian leader too.²³⁴

The evidence for church buildings in Anatolia in the Constantinian period is extremely limited.²³⁵ However, inscriptions provide some clues. Inscriptions from Phrygia e.g. refer to a church erected around AD 300 and to others built before AD 320.²³⁶ The inscription by Bishop Marcus Iulius Eugenius describes the church he had built in Laodicea Combusta in detail on his epitaph around AD 340 (ICG 371).²³⁷ Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence of this church. There are significantly more remains of early churches in Greece than in modern-day Türkiye. Here too, inscriptions provide further information. The mosaic inscription of bishop Spyridon and the mosaic epigraphs concerning Eustolios reveal much about Christian building on Cyprus.²³⁸ In northern Greece an opulent mosaic inscription tells that by the middle of the fourth century, Christianity moved with the basilica of Paul into the city centre of Philippi.²³⁹ In Athens, no epigraphical evidence dovetails with the monumental expressions of the new religion, which archaeologists date from the mid-fifth century on.²⁴⁰ In minor urban centres of Attica, Eleusis, Porto Raphti, and Lavrion, however, extant epitaphs indicate Christian buildings.²⁴¹ The earliest churches at Corinth are probably the structures around the Quadratus, Kraneion, and Lechaëum basilicas from the second half of the fifth century. Inscriptions on graves in and around churches open up the possibility of exploring churches and burial grounds in their context. Stones from destroyed church buildings show that inscriptions were also placed in the church interior, giving a certain interpretation to a part of the building. An inscription on a lintel in Kesmez in eastern

²³³ See RITTI 2014; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 555, 558 on ICG 277, and 145 and 217 on ICG 678.

²³⁴ RIFE / ANDRIKOU 2021, 216–231.

²³⁵ NIEWÖHNER 2016; BUCHWALD / SAVAGE 2017. On the pre-Constantinian church in Nicomedia see Lact. *De mort. pers.* 12.2–3. On an early-Byzantine bishops palace in Parnasos, Cappadocia, see ARSLAN / NIEWÖHNER / YEGIN 2023.

²³⁶ See MITCHELL 2023b, 191–2 on ICG 4511 (Dioclea); 261 on ICG 1158, 1161, 1163–1164 and 1196; and 261 with note 551 on ICG 1202 and 4526.

²³⁷ Cf. B.5. ZIMMERMANN. “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?”.

²³⁸ See B.7. SUMMA, “The Mosaic Inscription of Bishop Spyridon in Tremithus/Tremithoussa”; B.8. SUMMA, “The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex of ‘Eustolios’”.

²³⁹ See OGÉREAU 2023, 105–111 on ICG 3247.

²⁴⁰ However, see BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 179 on ICG 1871 and the Tetraconch.

²⁴¹ See BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 187 and 270 on ICG 1846, 1848, 1853 and 2219 in Eleusis; 279–282 on ICG 1851 in Porto Raphti; and 173 on ICG 2114 in Lavrion.

Lycaonia e.g. was probably fixed above the entrance to the narthex of a fifth c. church. It quotes Ps 117:20 in its Greek version from the Septuagint: “This is the gate of the Lord; righteous ones shall enter in it”. The citation defines the church metaphorically as the space where God dwells.²⁴² There are also short individual prayers carved into the stones of church buildings.²⁴³

Inscriptions provide little information about liturgy and church rituals.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, there are occasionally illustrations that could indicate a possible reference to the Eucharist.²⁴⁵ If we combine the statements from the early church orders with epitaphs for Christian office-holders, we can at least hypothesise about the liturgical processes in the services of the local congregations. The same applies to Christian rituals such as baptism. Information about the baptismal rite can be found in the early church orders. From this information we can roughly deduce how the baptism might have taken place at the time the church was built. Inscriptions on baptismal fonts show in addition how the early Christians interpreted baptism theologically beyond the bestowal of the spirit. On a baptismal basin from a church in Pisidian Antioch Ps 28:3 is quoted in its Greek version. The verse from the Psalm indicates that the baptismal water has a life-saving effect, since “the voice of the Lord is upon the water.”²⁴⁶

Inscriptions also give us clues about Christian rituals outside the church buildings. Christian brotherhoods buried persons beyond their members.²⁴⁷ Inscription *ICG* 4055 from the fifth century²⁴⁸ shows that there were certain rites for dealing with the deceased: On Fridays, bread and wine were to be brought to the grave in Tanagra for the deceased, and lights were lit at night. The latter rite was adopted from the Greco-Roman cults and was controversial among church leaders.²⁴⁹ Finds from Corinth indicate that lamps may also have been used in contexts other than burial. In addition to crosses and Christograms, these oil lamps sometimes also feature short inscriptions with invocations of God, Christ or angels.²⁵⁰

²⁴² BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 688.

²⁴³ Cf. 5.7.

²⁴⁴ See HORNUNG 2024.

²⁴⁵ Cf. the chalice on *ICG* 143, 647, and 755.

²⁴⁶ *ICG* 1322a. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 691.

²⁴⁷ See MITCHELL 2023a.

²⁴⁸ See B.9. CHRISTIAN, “Das ‘Testament’ des Philomenes”.

²⁴⁹ See B.9. CHRISTIAN, “Das ‘Testament’ des Philomenes”, 165–6.

²⁵⁰ *ICG* 2971, 3006, 3579, 3580. Various Christian lamps are also preserved from the Octagon at Kenchreae, possibly used during mourning rites: RIFE 2021, 23–184, 77.

5.10 Conclusion

Christian inscriptions serve as invaluable sources for understanding the social, cultural, and religious dynamics of early Christian communities. They reflect a rich tapestry of individual identities, familial structures, and communal relationships, illustrating how early Christians navigated their faith within the broader context of the Roman Empire.

These inscriptions reveal the processes of transformation and adaptation that characterized early Christianity, showcasing the interplay between traditional pagan practices and emerging Christian values. Through their inscriptions, early Christians articulated their beliefs, commemorated their loved ones, and solidified their communal identities.

The ongoing study of Christian inscriptions continues to enrich our understanding of the early church, offering insights into the lives of individuals and communities that shaped the development of Christianity. As scholars uncover and interpret these texts, they shed light on the diverse experiences of faith, the complexities of social structures, and the enduring impact of early Christian thought.

Inscriptions from churches or from Christian material objects such as baptismal basins or lamps help to understand the theological interpretation that Christians gave to them.

6. A Short Description of the Essays in this Volume

The following section (B.) presents a selection of essays on particularly interesting Christian inscriptions from the second to the sixth centuries. Except for the last inscription, the provenance of which remains uncertain, all inscriptions come from Asia Minor or Greece. The essays appear in chronological order according to the approximate dates of the monuments. Each essay begins with a photo or drawing, the Greek text, and a translation of the inscription, along with a brief description of the treated monument(s).

Literature that are quoted several times and in several essays are cited in the general bibliography.

In “The Resurrected Jesus, Jonah, and the Big Fish,” *Cilliers Breytenbach* examines the so-called Jonah inscription from the late second or early third century, discovered on the northern slopes of the Taurus Mountains south of Konya (Iconium) in Lycaonia. A person named [--]sta erected a large marble block for Mithios and Paulus, his uncles, for memorial purposes. Below the decoration, it reads: “Huge fish and Jonah.” Above Jonah and the fish, a large human-like cross with a wreath signifies the resurrected Son of Man. The well-known narrative of Jonah and the huge fish, along with its reception in

Matt 12:39–40, applies the motif to the burial and resurrection of the Son of Man, forming the iconographic backdrop against which the inscription and the monument should be understood. This combination of the Jonah cycle and the resurrected Crucified on the gravestone illustrates that just as Jonah and Christ were in a transitory state, so too are the interred Mithios and Paul, waiting for the crucified and resurrected Christ to return and resurrect them.

Paul Trebilco presents “Epitaphs from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers” at Ephesus. Originally excavated between 1926 and 1929, the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers underwent re-examination in 2011 by Norbert Zimmermann. This led to Zimmermann re-dating 13 epitaphs found in the cemetery to the second quarter of the third century, making them the earliest Christian inscriptions from Ephesus. These epitaphs, which utilize three different formulas, demonstrate a degree of experimentation by the writers in seeking new Christian formulas. They also draw on the New Testament, clearly expressing Christian hope. Furthermore, these epitaphs indicate that the Christian community of the time did not prioritize rank and status, reflecting a certain level of social equality.

On January 14th, 2024, the late *Stephen Mitchell* completed the final edits on his essay “The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel: A Tale from Eumeneia in Phrygia.” This contribution discusses two poetic inscriptions from the late third and early fourth centuries, which originate from the same cemetery and are closely related. The longer inscription serves as the epitaph for Gaius, a lawyer, while the second grave monument introduces neighbours and clients of Gaius. Both inscriptions mention an unrelated figure named Roubes (Ruben, the historic name of the founder of one of the twelve tribes of Israel). These gravestones testify to Roubes’ standing as a Christian leader, likely a highly educated immigrant from the Near East, and illustrate the belief in angels. This belief finds confirmation in many texts both within and beyond Phrygia and can trace its roots back to the Pauline Letter to the Colossians. “The author of the Letter to the Colossians, as explained by Theodoret and confirmed by the reaction of the Orthodox Church at the Council of Laodicea, indicates that the concept of personalized angels – spiritual beings that extend the lives of the deceased and perpetuate their protective and supportive presence among the living – formed part of early Christian heritage from the Jews. No example of this belief is more eloquent than the angel of Roubes, a Christian holy man bearing the name of the founding father of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, who migrated later in life to become both a protector and inspiration for the burgeoning Christian community of mid-third-century Phrygia.”

In “Himmlischer Lohn für tugendhaftes Leben. Das Gedenken an Regulus und seine Töchter Olympion und Aquilina,” *Markus Öhler* discusses

the funerary inscription for Regulus and his two daughters Olympion and Aquilina from the third/fourth century. This epitaph from Pontus is unique in linking the reception of the deceased's souls by God with piety and virtuous behaviour. Charity for the poor appears first, followed by honourable behaviour toward friends, family protection, and hospitality – three other virtues highly esteemed in both non-Christian and Christian societies. Thus, the monument combines universally accepted values with a specifically Christian attitude.

Christiane Zimmermann examines two funerary inscriptions erected in the fourth century in Laodicea Combusta in Asia Minor: “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person? Ein Bischof und ein ‘Sackträger’”. Each commemorates a bishop named Eugenios. While Marcus Iulius Eugenius constructed a biographical monument for himself that recalls his significant deeds as a bishop in a detailed epitaph, the second inscription is dedicated to a Eugenios, who led the ascetic community known as the Sakkophoroi (sack bearers). His predecessor Severus is also mentioned. The epigram shows remarkable parallels with the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus. Are the two bishops named Eugenios the same person? This article presents the two inscriptions and explores this question.

Ulrich Huttner's essay “Grabinschrift der Palladion. Eine Jungfrau auf dem Weg in den Himmel”, illustrates how the monumental epitaph honours the young deceased Palladion, drawing partly on conventional Greek epigrammatic formulas and partly on Christian ideas. Linguistically, the text, attributed to the deceased's parents, relies on poetic models rooted in Homeric epic poetry. Here, too, remarkable parallels emerge with the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus. Although the inscription is unique for the site of Tavium, it connects with several other longer funerary inscriptions from Anatolia (Lycaonia, Phrygia, Pontus) that document literary educational standards in early Christian communities. These represent important stages in a process of religious acculturation.

Daniela Summa presents two significant pieces of evidence from the early Christian period from the island of Cyprus. The first, “The Mosaic Inscription of Bishop Spyridon in Tremithus/Tremithousa”, is a fourth to fifth-century building inscription on a mosaic embedded in the pavement of St Spyridon Church in Thrimitus/Thremitousa, commissioned either by the illustrious Bishop Spyridon or a later bishop of the same name. In an awkward iambic composition, Spyridon informs visitors that he sponsored the mosaic adorning the burial site of the holy bishops. This inscription may represent the oldest evidence of the Cypriot cult of local bishops, a strong phenomenon in Cyprus associated with achieving and reinforcing the independence of the Cypriot Church from the Patriarchate of Antioch.

In the second case, “The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex of ‘Eustolios,’” a series of fifth-century mosaic epigraphs excavated in a large complex on the acropolis of Kourion also falls into the category of building inscriptions, testifying that a prominent local named Eustolios financed the reconstruction of a civic bath complex at his expense. In this series of five texts, infused with classical *paideia*, Eustolios’ Christian faith and that of the building are indisputably declared. In the most striking inscription of the series, Eustolios compares himself to the past pagan god Phoebus, presenting himself as his successor in the role of protector of his city.

Timo Christian’s article “Das ‘Testament’ des Philomenes” examines a Christian epigram from the mid-fifth century, discovered in Tanagra, Boeotia. This inscribed poem stands out not only for its length of 40 hexameters and literary pretensions but also for its references to local Christian practices that straddle Greco-Roman survivals and adherence to ecclesiastical regulations. Philomenes, the owner of a burial ground whose exact location remains unknown, urges future owners to care for the burial site and the deceased, a request familiar from Greco-Roman tradition with numerous parallels. However, most instructions, such as the request to bring bread and wine to the church on behalf of the deceased, clearly express Christian sentiment. Some of these instructions trace back to official regulations from bishops or councils, while others originate solely from this poem, possibly reflecting individual or local peculiarities. The epigram thus provides important and unique insights into local Christian practices and beliefs, as well as the church’s influence in curtailing traditional elements. Regarding the poem’s literary qualities, it draws on not only Homeric works (as expected) but also Hesiod and, surprisingly, the epic poem *Posthomerica* by Quintus of Smyrna, a detail deserving further investigation.

In his contribution “Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates,” Philipp Pilhofer examines the inscription of Bishop Firminianus of Zenonopolis from AD 488, which illuminates various aspects of Christian life in late antiquity. First, the activity of Bishop Firminianus as a builder, represented by an inscription for the public, demonstrates that ancient Greek *euergetism* continued in Christian times. Naming the aqueduct after a (probably local) saint underscores the importance of saints in the self-representation of local communities and the role of bishops in promoting the veneration of saints. As the aqueduct feeds an external well, it becomes evident that saints could influence basic aspects of daily life, such as the general water supply. The mere mention of the city of Zenonopolis suggests that the birthplace of Emperor Zenon – a village in the Isaurian mountains – gained status as a city.

In “Puzzeln für Heilige. Ein christlicher Steckkalender aus Sikyon,” Klaus Hallof reconstructs eleven extant pieces of a Christian calendar from the

fifth century and fills in the missing parts as far as possible. The result is fascinating. On a rectangular slab of fine white marble, all 365 days of the Roman calendar were inscribed in twelve columns using a beautiful Greek script. Behind almost every day appears the name of a saint or martyr – probably totalling up to three hundred names. The puzzle included coloured plugs that fit into small holes drilled in front of each day number. The saints were martyrs from the well-known great persecutions of Christians in the third and fourth centuries AD, who were evidently known and commemorated on their specific days as indicated by the colours of the plugs, in the region of Sikyon and beyond. The overall picture holds great significance and surpasses all known contemporary early Christian martyrologies.

In a second contribution, “Maria auf Ikaria. Ein christliches Pseudo-Orakel auf dem Weg durch die Ägäis”, *Klaus Hallof* contextualizes a fake Christian pseudo-oracle inscribed on a marble slab from the island of Ikaria. It purports to be an oracle of the Greek god Apollo, predicting the appearance of Mary, the mother of God. The literary tradition indicates that the oracle belongs to the *θεοσοφία*, or “wisdom of God,” which aimed to prove that the wisdom of the one God had already revealed itself to pagans before Christ’s birth. Oracles emerged where the transformation of ancient temples into Christian worship places was manifest and warranted historical interpretation. This transformation likely occurred with the ancient temple of Artemis Tauropolis on Ikaria, which was converted into a large basilica dedicated to the Virgin Mary in early Christian times, as foretold by the oracle.

Julien Ogereau presents in “The Clerical Career of the Presbyter Daniel at Philippi” a notable inscription (from the 4th to 5th centuries) commemorating the clerical career of Presbyter Daniel, a native of Constantinople, at Philippi in eastern Macedonia. Discovered in a cemeterial church or chapel located in the eastern necropolis of Philippi, near the *extra muros* basilica, the exceptional funerary mosaic (2.86 × 2.04 m) recounts Daniel’s progression through the ecclesiastical ranks of lector, deacon, and presbyter under the supervision of three (previously unknown) bishops, namely Iakobos, Demetrios, and Bisaltios. The epitaph concludes with a heartfelt mention of Daniel’s wife Aspilia.

In the essay “The Protocols of Honor at Ephesus: Justinian and Bishop Hypatios”, *James R. Harrison* compares two Ephesian inscriptions from the early sixth century to understand the operation of ecclesiastical honour protocols in late antique Ephesus. The first inscription (ICG 4646) likely served as a letter from Emperor Justinian. It consists of several large fragments that were originally situated at the Church of St. Mary but later relocated. After discussing maximalist and minimalist restorations of the inscription, Harrison examines the ecclesial status assigned to the apostle of Ephesus,

John, compared to the martyr of Smyrna, Polycarp. This representation serves (ironically) as a telling example of the early Christian cultural capitulation to the hierarchical values of seating precedence for the Ephesian elites, expressed in competitive intercity ecclesial rivalry (SEG 34.1688a–d; *I.Ephesos* 6.2086a–b). The second inscription, traditionally regarded as a letter from Bishop Hypatios (ICG 4652 [1st half of 6th c. AD]), is perhaps more accurately understood as an ecclesiastical ruling or edict concerning the free burial of the poor, regardless of their beliefs. This socially revolutionary policy aimed to overcome the dishonour associated with unburied poor individuals and was justified by Hypatios' interpretation of two biblical texts (Mark 15:43–46; Phil 2:5–8). The article explores Hypatios' skilful theological and exegetical rhetoric as he extends free burial to all, delving into the depths of the social humiliation of the crucified Christ and its relevance for radical social re-ordering in Ephesus.

Georgios Deligiannakis and *Philipp Pilhofer* conclude the volume humorously with “Heavenly Laughter in a Funerary Poem.” This late antique funerary epigram likely originates from Egypt, thus falling outside the regional framework of this collection, which consists of inscriptions from Asia Minor and Greece. The presence of the verbs γελάω/γελώω and μειδιάω/μειδιόω in reference to Christian martyrs and Jesus makes this text exceptional. It appears that neither a smiling Christ nor laughing martyrs appear elsewhere in Christian epigraphy. Moreover, this represents the only instance in Christian literature where both Christ and the martyrs are specifically described as laughing or smiling upon meeting, likely in heaven. By re-examining this text and placing it in its historical context, the essay highlights the significance of this epigraphical document regarding our understanding of eschatological laughter within the broader context of the Graeco-Roman world and late antique Christianity.

In line with the tradition of *SAPERE*, the editors invited experts from four different academic traditions to respond to the collection of texts in B. in essays in section C.

Andreas Merkt, writing as a church historian, argues in “Plurality and Transformation: The Epigram Selection in the Light of Two Paradigms for Conceptualizing the ‘Early Church’ and ‘Ancient Christianity’” that the inscriptions collected in this volume confirm two key paradigms of modern church history: plurality and transformation. The inscriptions reveal the significant diversity in early Christian beliefs, practices, roles, and customs. Despite this diversity, they also highlight shared elements across regions, allowing early Christianity to be described as “one, albeit pluralistic, phenomenon”. Furthermore, Merkt challenges the idea of a sharp divide between Christian and pagan antiquity. Instead, he sees mutual influence

and a dynamic process of transformation between the two, with each constantly reshaping the other.

Hartmut Leppin made a major contribution to the history of pre-Constantine Christianity. Turning to the importance of inscriptions (“Christian Inscriptions from an Ancient Historical Perspective”), he demonstrates how understanding ancient “epigraphic habits” and expectations is essential for identifying specific Christian developments. However, he also discusses the challenge posed by the non-representative nature of inscriptions, which complicates generalisations about Christianity’s growth and characteristics. Inscriptions, however, offer unique insights compared to literary sources. They capture local and regional nuances and highlight contributions from otherwise overlooked groups, such as slaves, women, and members of so-called heresies. Inscriptions enrich the history of Christianity, revealing it as an integral part of general history.

Sylvain Destephen, who published extensively on inscriptions relating to early Christianity, explores in his essay “Inscribing in Early and Late Antique Christianity” the connections between inscriptions and other known developments in church history. Central Asia Minor, alongside Smyrna, provides the earliest Christian tomb inscriptions. In this region, Christians appear to have faced less persecution than in places like Smyrna or Ephesus. They made their faith visible on tombstones while continuing elite pagan conventions, such as epigrams, and adding faith-based elements. Under Constantine, Christianity’s public presence expanded, seen in church buildings and increasingly evident ecclesiastical structures on inscriptions. These texts reveal the roles of bishops, local martyrs, and saints.

Classical philologist *Heinz-Günther Nesselrath* highlights the importance of precise philological analysis in interpreting inscriptions (“Observations on the Language and Literary Style of Some Significant Christian Inscriptions”). Late Antique inscriptions reflect the distinction between written and spoken language, with written forms requiring education unavailable to all. The inscriptions in this volume, both prose and metric, show orthographic “errors” that often reveal influences of spoken language. These insights shed light on the linguistic and social contexts of the period.

B. Christian Inscriptions from Greece
and Asia Minor (2nd–6th c. AD) /
Christliche Inschriften aus Griechenland
und Kleinasien (2.–6. Jh. n. Chr.)

1. The Resurrected Jesus, Jonah, and the Big Fish

Cilliers Breytenbach

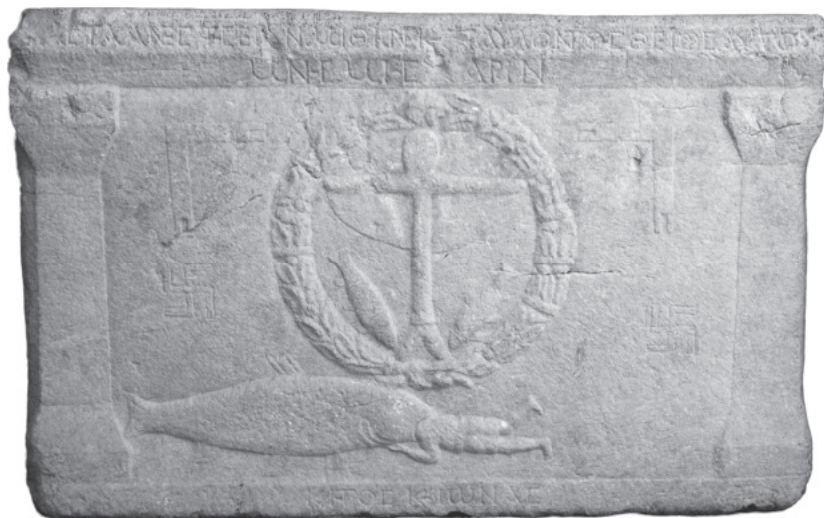


Fig. 1: ICG 829 Çukurcavak, Lycaonia, Asia Minor, early 3rd c. AD
(photo: Cilliers Breytenbach)

[--]στα ἀνέστησεν Μιθιον κὲ Παῦλον τοὺς θείους αὐτοῦ
μνή{σ}μης χάριν.
κῆτος κὲ Ιῶνας.

...-sta put up (the memorial) for Mithios and Paul, his uncles
in memory.
Mighty fish and Jonah.

According to the Konya Archeological Museum, the rectangular block from high quality white limestone ($0.95 \times 1.49 \times 0.55$) now in the archaeological museum (inv. 1986.1), was found at Çukurkavak, 10 km south of Apa at the Çarşamba River. Dresken-Weiland first published a photo of the block with the inscription centred on the entablature (line one on the upper fascia, line two on the single upper moulding) and line three on the ledge below.¹ Two lateral pilasters support the entablature, framing a picture field with a wreath in the centre. Within the wreath there is an anthropomorphic figure in the form of a cross: splayed “feet”, a “head” above the cross bar, and a curved connecting line between the lateral ends of the cross, which looks like a garment. On each side of the vertical cross bar, a fish looks downward to the “feet” of the figure. Left and right of the top of the wreath an angle can be seen, underneath each one a swastika. Below the wreath on the left side there is a big river fish that swallows or spews out a figure in a tunic.

On palaeographic grounds and because of the formula ἀνέστησεν ... μνήμης χάριν, Feissel suggested the third to fourth centuries as date.² In the light of contemporaneous blocks (albeit with different decoration, see in ICG 758–759, 749) with similar crosses (ICG 747, 748, 753–755) from the area around Lystra and earlier Christian sarcophagi from Konya (ICG 319, 321, 1329) the early third century is likely.

The monument found at Çukurkavak, 10 km south of Apa, where the road from ancient Lystra probably crossed the Çarşamba River in Lycaonia (central Asia Minor),³ conveys its actual message not through the inscription only, but also through its unique iconographic representation of a large fish and an even larger cross, which almost completely dominate the front of the stone. A person with the probably indigenous name [--]sta erected for memory’s sake a huge rectangular block to mark the grave of a man with the unique name Mithios and of another man called Paul. They were --sta’s uncles. A large wreath fills the picture field below the first two lines. Below the wreath, a figure clad in a tunic is half-swallowed or regurgitated by a big fish. The inscription ends with an ecphrasis, identifying the fish and the man being swallowed or regurgitated: “mighty fish and Jonah.”⁴

The wreath around a huge cross could be merely decorative, but it could also signify victory. The figure-like cross within the garland is similar to crosses with splayed feet from nearby Ceşme and Akören close to Lystra (ICG 747, 748, 753, 754, see also 755; see Fig. 1–5 below). Crosses with splayed feet are a distinctive and unusual feature of the gravestones of this region

¹ J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, “Ein frühchristliches Jonas-Relief in Konya”, in: *Festschrift für Bernard Andreae*. (Rome 1995) 405–412. Republished by B.H. McLEAN, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Konya Archaeological Museum* (London 2002) 74–75, no. 212 with an English translation.

² D. FEISSEL, *Chroniques d’épigraphie Byzantine*. 1987–2004 (Paris 2004) 125.

³ See map 5 in BREITENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 167.

⁴ κῆτος designates a huge fish. The following interpretation re-uses and revises the text in BREITENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 183–7.

and best explained as being an early local iconographic tradition which did not develop beyond this region. Because of the lack of the Aurelian family name on some and the use of it on other monuments with the same localised iconography, all these monuments, including the Jonah monument, can be dated around AD 212.

However, the crosses from Ceşme and Akören are schematic one-stroke figures on plain *tabulae ansatae*; the cross artistically carved out of the Jonah monument is more figure-like than these representations, who also display fish. Whilst the splayed foot of the cross of the Jonah monument fits the local pattern, the fish on it are looking down and not upwards and the round head-like top of the cross is remarkably different.

The ecphrasis “mighty fish and Jonah” told the ancient onlookers and tells the modern interpreter that the widely used motif of Jonah and the whale forms the iconographic backdrop of the monument. In early Judaism, the narrative of Jonah rescued by the fish was an example illustrating God’s ability to save from a perilous situation, similar to Daniel’s surviving the lions’ den and the three young men rescued from the fire. As 3 Macc 6:8 puts it: “When Jonah was washed away in the belly of the big fish raised in the depths, you watched over him, O Father, and restored him to all his relations unscathed.” According to Josephus, the word is that Jonah “was swallowed down by a large fish and after three days and as many nights, he was cast out upon the Black Sea shore, alive and with unmutilated body.” (Josephus, *AJ* 9.213). The Christian author of the text of the inscription, however, most probably obtained the motif via Matt 12:39–40. The First Evangelist compares Jonah in the belly of the big fish to the Son of Man who will be in the heart of the earth for three days, applying the motif to the burial and resurrection of the Son of Man: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40). The context clearly presupposes the early Christian kerygma of Christ’s resurrection after three days (1 Cor 15:3–4). This is quite different from Luke 11:29b, where the sign of Jonah is for the men of Nineveh. Matthew’s take on the text from the sayings source Q echoes through the works of early Christian authors like Justin (*Dial.* 107), Tertullian (*Resurr.* 58.8–10), Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 5.31.1), and *Const. Apost.* 5.7.12. They express the belief that like Jonah, whose body was not digested by the sea monster, the believer will, by the power of God, come out of the grave unscathed. The so-called third epistle to the Corinthians from the third century clearly applies the Jonah episode to the resurrection of the believers: “You know how Jonah the son of Amathius, when he would not preach to them of Nineveh, was swallowed by a big fish; and after three days and three nights God heard the prayer of Jonah out of the lowest Hades, and no part of him was consumed,

not even a hair or an eyelash.” (3 Cor 3:29–32 = *P.Bodm.* 10.40). From the late first century to the third and fourth centuries, the core of the Jonah narrative, his deliverance from drowning by the fish and his being spewed out alive after three days, was clearly used to illustrate the burial and resurrection of Christ and to confirm Christian hope in the resurrection of the body (see Ireneaus, *Adv. haer.* 5.5.2). When the fish or sea monster swallowed Jonah, not only was he rescued from drowning, he also for three days entered into an intermediate state like Jesus. He played an exemplary role: “As our Master, therefore, did not at once depart, taking flight [to heaven], but awaited the time of His resurrection prescribed by the Father, which had been also shown forth through Jonas, and rising again after three days was taken up [to heaven]; so ought we also to await the time of our resurrection prescribed by God and foretold by the prophets, and so, rising, be taken up, as many as the Lord shall account worthy of this [privilege].” (Ireneaus, *Adv. haer.* 5.5.2. Trans. ANF 1.560–1).

There are several examples of the Christian reception of the Jonah narrative among the Christian catacombs in Rome and beyond.⁵ The story of Jonah and the big fish or sea monster was also a popular motif on early Christian sarcophagi and gems.⁶ Two examples from the early third century catacombs will suffice: The crypt of Luciana and the arch of the entrance of the family tomb in the catacombs of Priscilla in Rome are decorated with Jonah and the sea monster.⁷

Let us return to the Jonah monument, which expresses Christian hope in an afterlife. The use of the Jonah cycle on the gravestone from Çukurkavak shows us that Mithios and Paul are like the Son of Man, Jesus Christ: the earth in which the two uncles were buried is compared to the belly of the big fish. They are considered to be in a transitory state, awaiting the return of the crucified Christ to resurrect the buried dead. God will resurrect those, who have believed in Christ Jesus, just as Christ himself was resurrected.

Being in the same picture field, the big fish and Jonah directly under the wreath and the figure-like cross have to be interpreted together within the frame of the Christian understanding of the Jonah narrative. The nexus between Jonah and the fish, the tombstone and the resurrection, impels us to direct our attention from the Jonah motif as backdrop to the cross in the wreath at the centre of the stone. The fish is to the left of the wreath, the figure rather being spawn out directly under the feet of the cross than being

⁵ See the references in BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 186.

⁶ See J. SPIER, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems* (Wiesbaden 2007) 66–8, pl. 49–51.

⁷ L. WILPERT, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms. Tafelband* (Rome 1903) pl. 26.2 and 109.2–3.



Fig. 2: ICG 754 (photo: MAMA VIII 89)



Fig. 3: ICG 753 (photo: MAMA VIII 88)

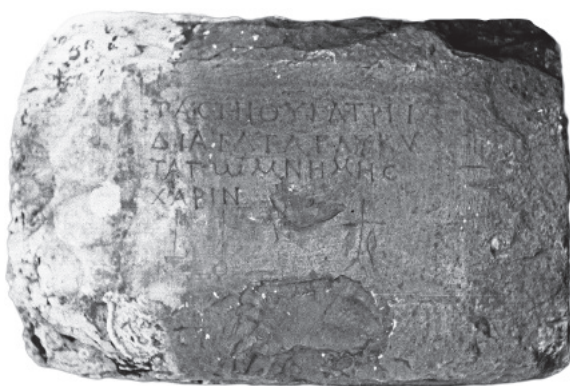


Fig. 4: ICG 747 (photo: Calder Archives, 3286/6/4/2/10)



Fig. 5: ICG 748 (photo: MAMA VIII 64)

swallowed. The round head and the feet of the cross clearly increase the possibility of viewing it as an anthropomorphic cross,⁸ a figure standing with outstretched arms as if giving a blessing. The drape below the outstretched arms enhances this interpretation. From Matthew's Gospel, we know that the risen Lord blessed the women (Matt 28:9) and that the eleven disciples (28:19–20), like the fish on the tombstone, knelt at his feet. Literary evidence regarding early Christianity in southern Lycaonia is scant, but literary traditions from elsewhere record several instances where the risen or returning Christ is depicted as a cross (*Apoc. Petri*. 1.6; *Ev. Petri*. 39–42; *Orac. Sib.* 5.256–257; *Ep. Apos.* 16). As the *Oracula Sibyllina* puts it, “He will stretch out his hands and measure the entire world” (8.302). Even though Mithios and Paul were buried just as Jonah was swallowed by the huge fish, they will be resurrected as the Crucified rose from the grave. The message of Christianity that Christ died and was risen for everyone, including the non-Jews, caused a redefinition of sepulchral space. In the light of Christian tradition, graves became κοιμητήρια (dormitories), transitory resting places between life and paradise.

In Lycaonia the religious traditions of ancient Israel, interpreted in the light of the Christian gospel proclaimed there by Paul, were used to redefine burial and sepulchral space. This is however, not the only example of the early *Interpretatio Christiana* of the Greek Old Testament in the early third century. In the light of the lack of a strong Jewish community in Apamea in Phrygia, Stephen Mitchell recently attributed the depiction of Noah's Ark on the reverse of six municipal coins from Apamea to the strong Christian community. The coins are dated between AD 193 and 253. From the end of the second to the middle of the third century, believers succeeded in integrating the narrative from Gen 7–8 into the city's mythology. “It was Christians not Jews who were a driving force for cultural and religious change at Apamea.”⁹ Analogous to the case of the Jonah monument, early Christian literary tradition substantiates this thesis. As is well known, the author of Epistle of Peter takes up the Noah narrative and calls the salvation of the eight persons through the water an antitype for baptism (1 Pet 3:20). Referring to Isaiah 54:8–9 in his Dialogue with Trypho, Justin wrote that “the mystery of the salvation of mankind has taken place through the cleansing flood.” For him, the eight people in the ark are “a symbol of the eighth day, on which our Christ appeared as risen from the dead.” (*Dial.* 138.1). This use of the Noah narrative in the light of 1 Pet 3:20 is a clear analogy to the reception of the narrative of Jonah and the great fish by means of the word of Jonah and the Son of Man from Matt 12:39–40 on the

⁸ Justin explicitly notes the similarity between a cross and the upright human figure (*Ap.* 55.4).

⁹ MITCHELL, 2023b, 122.

Jonah and Son of Man monument from Lycaonia. The iconographic reception of Noah's Ark and Jonah and the big fish on the coins and the monument can serve as two clear examples of the early *Interpretatio Christiana* of the Greek Old Testament in the late second and third centuries in Lycaonia and Phrygia. They are among the first examples of the pictorial reception of the Greek Old Testament in the light of the Christ event.¹⁰

Apart from illustrating how the belief of emerging Christianity in the resurrection was expressed by pointing to a narrative from their Greek Bible, more can be gleaned from this monument. Like the two tombstones of white marble from Akören (ICG 758–759) and another stone from Çeşme (749), this even larger, professionally decorated tombstone provides evidence that some of the Christians north and south of the Çarşamba, had considerable financial means and belonged to the elite among the inhabitants of the region.

¹⁰ For later examples see BREYTENBACH 2023, 303–27.

2. Epitaphs from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers

Paul Trebilco

This study will discuss thirteen epitaphs from the earliest phase of the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers in Ephesus. They are to be dated to the second quarter of the third century AD and so are the earliest Christian inscriptions from Ephesus. They attest to experimentation in seeking to find new and “Christian” forms of epitaphs, and also give us some information about the life of Christians in Ephesus at this time.

One inscription is fragmentary, but the remaining twelve inscriptions can be categorised in three groups. The thirteen epitaphs are the following.¹

1. The Epitaphs

The first epitaph (ICG 4744) is fragmentary and reads:

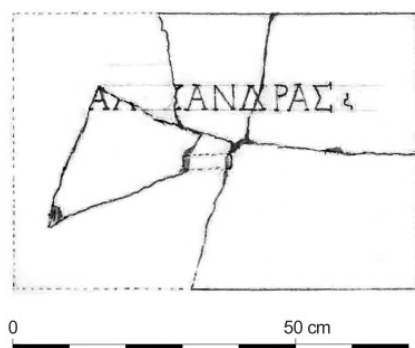


Fig. 6: ICG 4744 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD
(I.Ephesos 7.2.4203, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

Ἀλ[ε]ξάνδρας “Alexandra”²

¹ The images of the inscriptions are reproduced with the permission of the Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut (Austrian Archaeological Institute), to whom I am very grateful.

² I.Ephesos 7.2.4203; ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 395, no.1; MILTNER in PRASCHNIKER / MILTNER / GERSTINGER 1937, 201 no. 3.

1.1 First Group: The χαῖρε-formula

Five inscriptions are of a very simple form, which consists of χαῖρε (“farewell”) followed by the name of the deceased.³ These read:

1.1.a



Fig. 7: ICG 4745 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD (*I.Ephesos* 7.2.4213, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

χαῖ[ρε]	“Farewell
Γληγ[όριε]	Glegorios”.

1.1.b

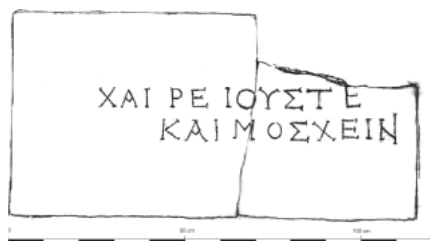


Fig. 8: ICG 4746 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD (*I.Ephesos* 7.2.4215, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

χαῖρε Ἰοῦστε	“Farewell Iustus
καὶ Μοσχέιν	and Moschi(o)n”.

³ *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4210, 4213, 4215–7; ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 395–7, nos. 2–6; ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 655; MILTNER in PRASCHNIKER / MILTNER / GERSTINGER 1937, 203–4, nos. 13, 15, 16, 17, 10.

1.1.c

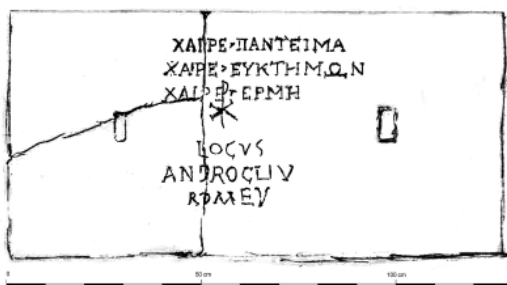


Fig. 9: ICG 4747 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD
(I.Ephesos 7.2.4216, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

1.1–3	χαῖρε Πάντειμα	“Farewell Pantima;
	χαῖρε Εὐκτήμων	Farewell Euktemon;
	χαῖρε Ἑρμῇ	Farewell Hermes”.

1.1.d

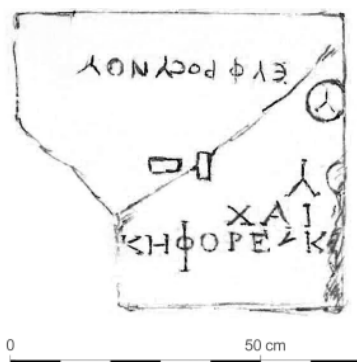


Fig. 10: ICG 4748 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD
(I.Ephesos 7.2.4217.2, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

χαῖ[ρε]	“Farewell
[Νι]κηφόρε καὶ -]	Nikephoros and”.

1.1.e ICG 4749 [no photo/drawing] (I.Ephesos 7.2.4210):

χαῖρε [Κ]αικιλλιανῇ [κα]ὶ [Τρ]οφίμῃ	“Farewell Kaikilliane and Trophime”.
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1.2 Second Group: The χαῖρε ... ἐν θεῷ -formula

There are five other inscriptions in which the simple greeting formula χαῖρε has been extended by the addition of ἐν θεῷ.⁴ They read:

1.2.a

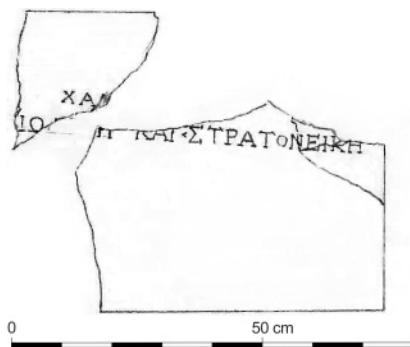


Fig. II: ICG 4750 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD (I.Ephesos 7.2.4201, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

χαῖ[ρε ἐν θεῷ]	“Farewell in God
Ἰω[άνν]η καὶ Στρατονείκη	Ioannes and Stratonike”.

⁴ I.Ephesos 7.2.4201–2, 4204–5, 4223; ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 397–8, nos. 7–11; ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 655; MILTNER in PRASCHNIKER / MILTNER / GERSTINGER 1937, 201–4, nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 23. There may be two others in this group, found elsewhere in the complex; see ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 399 note 120.

1.2.b



Fig. 12: ICG 4751 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD
(I.Ephesos 7.2.4202, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

χαῖρε
Ἀνθουσα
ἐν θεῷ

“Farewell
Anthousa
in God”.

1.2.c



Fig. 13: ICG 4752 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD
(I.Ephesos 7.2.4204, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

[χ]αῖρε [Αὐρη]-
[λί]α Πλα[υτεί]-
[νη] ἐν [θεῷ]

“Farewell Aure-
lia Plautei-
ne in God”.

1.2.d



Fig. 14: ICG 4753 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD (I.Ephesos 7.2.4205, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

χαῖρε	“Farewell
Στρατονείκη	Stratonike
καὶ Διονύσι ἐν θεῶ	and Dionysios in God”.

1.2.e



Fig. 15: ICG 4754 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD (I.Ephesos 7.2.4223, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

χαῖρε	“Farewell
Ἐρανᾶτε ἐν θεῶ	Eranatos in God”.

1.3 Third Group: The *μνησθῆ ὁ θεός*-formula

There are two examples of the third group of inscriptions:⁵

1.3.a

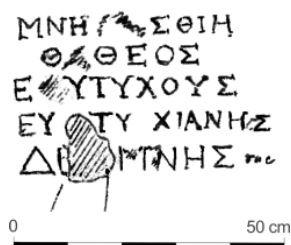


Fig. 16: ICG 4755 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD
(*I.Ephesos* 7.2.4219, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

μνησθῆ	“May God
ὁ θεός	remember
Εὐτύχους,	Eutyches,
Εὐτυχιανῆς,	Eutychiane,
Δόμνης	Domna”.

⁵ *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4219–20; ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 399–400, nos. 12–13; ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 656; MILTNER in PRASCHNIKER / MILTNER / GERSTINGER 1937, 201–4, no. 19, 20.

1.3.b

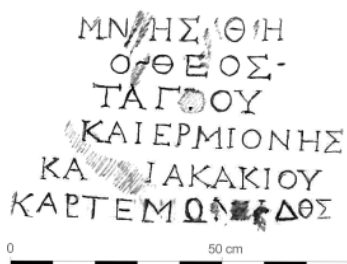


Fig. 17: ICG 4756 Ephesus, Ionia, Asia Minor, ca. the second quarter of the 3rd c. AD (I.Ephesos 7.2.4220, drawing: OeAW-OeAI/N. Zimmermann)

μνησθῇ	“May God
ὁ θεός	remember
τάγου	Tagos
καὶ Ἑρμιόνης	and Hermione
καὶ Ἀκακίου	and Akakios
καὶ Ἀρτεμωνίδος	and Artemonis”.

The inscriptions were originally discovered in what has been called the Cave of the Seven Sleepers by Miltner in 1926–1929.⁶ Zimmermann has reconsidered the inscriptions. Five are still *in situ*; others were stored at the Depot for Ephesian inscriptions of the Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. The inscriptions were found in graves in the Church Complex of the Cemetery, in the grotto chamber of the Cemetery, in rubble in parts of the Crypt Complex or the Church Complex, or were carved into the rock in the back wall of niches in the Apsidal Hall of the Cemetery. One inscription (1.1.e above, ICG 4749) was in white letters on a blue painting, *in situ* in the lunette field of the upper arcosol in the niche V of the burial hall of the Cemetery. Letter height of the inscriptions varied from 3.3–5 cm. The preserved stones varied considerably in size. The smallest was 19 cm high and 13 cm wide and the largest was 63 cm high and 128 cm wide. The thickness of the stones varied from 2–5 cm. Details of the find site of each inscription and of the actual stones is given in ICG.⁷

2. Dating

The Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers where these epitaphs were found is a burial complex located on the eastern slope of Panayırdağ in Ephesus, outside the city of Ephesus. It was originally excavated by Miltner in 1926–1929

⁶ See MILTNER in PRASCHNIKER / MILTNER / GERSTINGER 1937, 91–2.

⁷ Details in ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 393–400.

and dated by him to the mid-fifth century.⁸ Zimmermann has now shown that the first phase of the Cemetery, which includes these 13 inscriptions, is to be dated to the second quarter of the third century, making this the earliest known archaeological evidence for Christians in Ephesus.⁹

The Legend of the Seven Sleepers, which is set around 446¹⁰ in the time of Theodosius II (402–450), concerns seven youths who fall asleep in the Decian persecution of 250, but wake up in Theodosius' time.¹¹ I will comment on the significance of the redating of the inscriptions in relation to the Legend further below.

The Cemetery Complex was built by digging into the rock and by using stone and bricks to create burial chambers and buildings.¹² The Cemetery Complex consisted of a "Crypt Complex" and an upper building which has been called the "Church Complex". In all there were around 250 graves in the Cemetery, some of which were collective graves.¹³

In 2011, Zimmermann re-examined the dating of the whole complex.¹⁴ This was because Ladstätter had argued that the wall paintings and mosaics of Terrace House 2 in Ephesus had been destroyed by an earthquake in the third quarter of the third century AD, and hence that these wall paintings and

⁸ See MILTNER in PRASCHNIKER / MILTNER / GERSTINGER 1937, 91–2. Since the 1970s, the complex has been dated to the time of Theodosius I (379–395 AD); see W. JOBST, "Zur Bestattungskirche der Sieben Schläfer in Ephesos", *JÖAI* 50 (1972–75) Beiblatt [171–180] 178–180 (last quarter of the 4th century); C. FOSS, *Ephesus After Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge 1979) 85; R. PILLINGER, "Die christlichen Denkmäler von Ephesos. Eine Bestandsaufnahme als Rück- und Vorschau", *MiChA* 2 (1996) [39–70] 50.

⁹ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2019, 265; P. TALLOEN, "Asia Minor", in: D. K. PETTEGREW / W. R. CARAHER / T. W. DAVIS (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Archaeology* (Oxford 2019) [495–513] 497–8.

¹⁰ Date from ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 365.

¹¹ The earliest version of the Legend that is associated with Ephesus is found in the work of the Syrian bishop, Jacob of Serugh (ca. 450–521), perhaps written around 500 AD. Date from Y. PIATNITSKY, "The Cult of 'The Seven Sleepers of Ephesos' in Byzantine and Postbyzantine Painting", in: H. FRIESINGER / F. KRINZINGER (eds.), *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposiums Wien 1995* (Wien 1999) [361–366] 361. The other early source is Gregory of Tours, in *De Gloria martyrum* 94 written around 590 AD; date in P. W. VAN DER HORST, "Pious Long-Sleepers in Greek, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity," in: *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden 2014) [248–266] 263. The actual association of the Legend of the Seven Sleepers with this Ephesian Cemetery is first reported in sixth century literary sources.

¹² ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 367.

¹³ ZIMMERMANN N. 2019, 259.

¹⁴ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 365–407; see also ZIMMERMANN N. 2019, 257–271; N. ZIMMERMANN, "Die wieder erwachten Sieben Schläfer in Ephesos. Zu einem neu entdeckten Bild im Sieben-Schläfer-Zömeterium", in: S. DE BLAAUW / E. ENSS / P. LINSCHIED (eds.), *Contextus: Festschrift für Sabine Schrenk* (Münster 2020) [244–256] 247–8.

mosaics are to be dated before this, rather than to a much later period as was originally thought.¹⁵ In light of this, Zimmermann re-examined the dating of the whole Cemetery.¹⁶ He argued that the mosaics in the Cemetery are very similar to those in Terrace House 2, which led to dating the mosaics in the Cemetery to the third century.¹⁷ The closest parallel to the paintings in the Cemetery is also found in the second quarter of the third century in Terrace House 2.¹⁸ Further, there are no Christian symbols in the mosaics or the early wall paintings in the Cemetery, which would be very unusual for the mid-fifth century,¹⁹ but entirely understandable if the complex was built in the mid-third century. Thus we can date the original construction of the Cemetery Complex to the mid-third century, probably to the second quarter of that century, given the occurrence of the name Aurelia in one of the epitaphs.²⁰

3. The Inscriptions

Miltner had found 34 grave inscriptions in the whole complex.²¹ Some are clearly from the fifth-sixth century. However, Zimmermann has identified a group of inscriptions that are distinguishable from the others because of their uniform traditional letter forms and the formulae they use.²² They are written in Greek majuscules: “which are still free of all characteristics typical of late antiquity such as irregular or untidy execution. In addition, the inscriptions still consistently use the capital letters (Ε, Ω and Σ) for *Epsilon*, *Omega* and *Sigma*, as is characteristic of imperial inscriptions, and not the lower case letters (ε, ω, ς) as was common from the fourth century onwards”.²³ Hence, on the basis of letter form, they are most likely to be dated to the third

¹⁵ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 366. On the redating of Terrace House 2 see S. LADSTÄTTER, “Die Chronologie des Hanghauses 2”, in: F. KRINZINGER (ed.), *Das Hanghaus 2 in Ephesos. Studien zu Baugeschichte und Chronologie* (Wien 2002) 9–40.

¹⁶ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 372–380 also noted problems with the original dating; see also R. PILLINGER, “Kleiner Führer durch das Sieben Schläfer-Coemeterium in Ephesos”, *MiChA* 7 (2001) [26–34] 28.

¹⁷ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 384; see also V. SCHEIBELREITER-GAIL, *Die Mosaiken Westkleinasiens. Tessellate des 2. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. bis Anfang des 7. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Wien 2011) 113. P. NIEWÖHNER, “Church Building in Anatolia During the Reign of Constantine and His Dynasty”, in: BRANDT / CASTIGLIA 2016, [295–308] 295 accepts the third century date.

¹⁸ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 392; see also ZIMMERMANN N. 2014b, 731.

¹⁹ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 373.

²⁰ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2014b, 731; see also N. ZIMMERMANN / S. LADSTÄTTER, *Wall Painting in Ephesos from the Hellenistic to the Byzantine Period* (Istanbul 2011) 203.

²¹ See MILTNER in PRASCHNIKER / MILTNER / GERSTINGER 1937, 201–5.

²² ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 393; ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 655.

²³ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 393–5; see also ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 655.

century.²⁴ They make up around a third of the inscriptions found at the site and can also be identified as coming from the earliest building phase of the Cemetery. Their third century dating does not depend on arguments relating to the letter form and formula of the inscriptions alone, since, as noted above, the evidence from mosaics and paintings also argues for a date from the second quarter of the third century. That these inscriptions date to this time makes them the earliest known Christian inscriptions from Ephesus and the city's only pre-Constantinian Christian inscriptions.²⁵

Zimmermann identifies the 13 inscriptions given above as belonging to this group of third century inscriptions.²⁶

3.1 *First Group: The χαῖρε-formula (ICG 4745–4749)*

As noted above, five inscriptions are of a very simple form, which consists of χαῖρε (“farewell”) followed by the name of the deceased. This wording of χαῖρε with the person's name is common on epitaphs,²⁷ and Zimmermann describes it as a “traditional form”.²⁸

3.2 *Second Group: The χαῖρε ... ἐν θεῷ-formula (ICG 4750–4754)*

In five other inscriptions the simple greeting formula χαῖρε has been extended by the addition of ἐν θεῷ, so that the deceased is now said to be “ἐν θεῷ”. Although it might be possible to see these as Jewish inscriptions, or even as addressed to one pagan god, in the context of the whole complex, where a Church is later added, these are clearly Christian inscriptions.²⁹

What do we make of this formula, which is found five times? Zimmermann writes: “In comparison to the first group with the traditional form, it is noticeable that now through the addition of ἐν θεῷ the former greeting, which could be understood by the visitor or by a chance passer-by as a last farewell and served the commemoration of the deceased, now changes its meaning

²⁴ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 395; ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 655–6.

²⁵ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2016, 752. As MITCHELL 2017, 279 note 38 notes: “pre-Constantinian Christian inscriptions are very rare in western Asia Minor”; see also MITCHELL 1993, 38. MITCHELL 2017, 279 note 38, citing Zimmermann's 2011 article, accepts that these inscriptions from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers are indeed third-century Christian inscriptions. SEG 61.912 reports on ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, including giving the third century date. Similarly, SEG 64.1036 reports on ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, giving the third century date.

²⁶ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 395–400. Twelve are given above.

²⁷ See McLEAN 2002, 269, with examples from elsewhere.

²⁸ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 400.

²⁹ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 399 and note 121; see also ZIMMERMANN N. 2016, 752.

and becomes a prayer for the salvation of the buried ones. ... In this context, the χαῖρε takes on a different colouring, which could probably best be rendered in the sense of the Latin *gaudete*,³⁰ or “rejoice”.

This formula has not been found elsewhere in Asia Minor.³¹ It may have a Biblical origin and go back to Phil 4:4: “Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἐρῶ, χαίρετε”, or χαῖρετε ἐν κυρίῳ in particular.³² The theme of eschatological hope, found in Phil 4:4–7, is also inherent in the tomb inscriptions.³³ Clearly, we cannot know if Phil 4:4 is behind this formula, but it is certainly possible. Other Biblical passages could also have inspired the formula, since ἐν θεῷ as a phrase is found in John 3:21; Rom 2:17; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1 and Jude 1.³⁴ In these inscriptions, with the small addition of ἐν θεῷ, a quite new meaning has been developed from what had been a traditional formula.³⁵

3.3 Third Group: The μνησθῆ ὁ θεός-formula (ICG 4755–4756)

The two inscriptions with the μνησθῆ ὁ θεός-formula are inscribed directly into the rock face of the backwalls of grave niches on the north side of the apsidal hall of the Crypt Complex. Although μνησθῆ is used in inscriptions like these two by pagans, Jews and Christians,³⁶ these two inscriptions address one God and, given that a Christian Church is later built at the Cemetery, seem to be clearly Christian.³⁷ Rather than having the greeting-formula χαῖρε in some form, this is a prayer or invocation addressed directly to God, and can be translated “May God remember [the deceased]”.³⁸

Similar (but not identical) wording is found in Luke 23:42,³⁹ when one of the criminals who is on a cross alongside Jesus says: “καὶ ἔλεγεν· Ἰησοῦ, μνήσθητί μου ὅταν ἔλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν σου (Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’)”. This is answered by Jesus: “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43),

³⁰ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 399.

³¹ ZIMMERMANN N. 2019, 264.

³² See ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 656, where he writes that “Diese Assoziation ist zumindest denkbar”. In ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 399 he writes that “Es ist möglich ...”.

³³ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 656.

³⁴ Note also that 1 John 4:15 has “ἐν τῷ θεῷ” and the Johannine Epistles regularly have ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

³⁵ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 399; see also ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 656.

³⁶ See A. REHM, “ΜΝΗΣΘΗ”, *Phil* 94 (1941) [1–30] 16. REHM 1941, 1–30 gives a full discussion of the use of μνησθῆ in inscriptions.

³⁷ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 400; ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 656.

³⁸ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 399.

³⁹ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 400. The actual wording of μνησθῆ ὁ θεός in the epitaphs seems more suited to an epitaph than the grammatical form of Luke 23:42, but the epitaphs clearly seem to be inspired by the passage in Luke.

and so it is an appropriate passage, with its connotations of (present) eschatological hope, to refer to in the context of a tomb.⁴⁰ The request the criminal made of Jesus as he was dying was found in a wide range of Christian epitaphs in late antiquity up to the Byzantine period.⁴¹ Zimmermann suggests these two inscriptions probably provide the oldest instances of this formula anywhere.⁴²

These two inscriptions, which as we have noted were inscribed directly into the rock face, were found under plaster and paint, which had formerly concealed them. Since they had been covered over in this way, the inscriptions were probably repeated on a grave cover or in front of the grave, as the decoration of the area progressed. This suggests that the bodies buried in these graves had been interred before the paintings were completed, and so these inscriptions are again confirmed as very early inscriptions in the Cemetery.⁴³

4. Experimenting to Find New Formulae

It is interesting that these grave inscriptions can be classified into these three groups. The traditional form, χαῖρε with the name of the deceased, is extended with ἐν θεῷ, and the different form μνησθῆ ὁ θεός is also found.⁴⁴ Recall too that these are the earliest Christian inscriptions in Ephesus, and that third century inscriptions in Asia Minor are rare, and only found elsewhere in reasonably circumscribed areas, with pre-Constantinian Christian inscriptions in Asia Minor only being found in Phrygia and in areas of Lycaonia.⁴⁵ Of course, these areas are not proximate to Ionia.

⁴⁰ See ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 400. There are other possibilities with regard to Biblical allusions. For example, Exod 2:24 reads: “καὶ ἐμνήσθη ὁ θεὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ”. However, Luke 23:42 seems the most likely source for the formula.

⁴¹ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 400.

⁴² ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 400; ZIMMERMANN N. 2019, 264.

⁴³ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 400.

⁴⁴ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 401. Note that Zimmermann thinks what can be seen as the most complex formula – μνησθῆ ὁ θεός – is the earliest, but they could well have been developed within a short time period. McLEAN 2002, 262–266 points to the strong regional variations in grave formula.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of Phrygian Christian inscriptions, the earliest of which are to be dated between ca. 180–200 AD, with many dated in the third century, see MITCHELL 2023b, 84–329; on the inscriptions from ca. 180–200 see 326. For a discussion of Lycaonian Christian inscriptions, some from the third century, see BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 800–806 and the references to earlier sections in the book given there. On third century Christian inscriptions see also S. DESTEPHEN, “La christianisation de l’Asie Mineure jusqu’à Constantin: le témoignage de l’épigraphie”, in: H. INGLEBERT / S. DESTEPHEN / B. DUMÉZIL (eds.), *Le problème de la christianisation du monde antique* (Paris 2010) [159–194] 163; McLEAN 2002, 279–283.

Against this background, it is significant that in these mid-third century Christian inscriptions in Ephesus we find three different formulae being used in a small group of inscriptions (although undoubtedly there were many more inscriptions originally in the complex). This suggested to Zimmermann that those who wrote these inscriptions were:

struggling here for a new way of expression, which has not yet found a fixed or standardised form, which again fits well with the early dating. The impression arises that these inscriptions reflect a first search for a Christian form for grave inscriptions, whereby the traditional form appears side by side with new, so to speak experimental attempts.⁴⁶

Accordingly, these inscriptions testify to several important points. We see that the authors are almost certainly drawing on the New Testament (we have suggested Phil 4:4 or Phil 4:4–7 and Luke 23:42–43) when they seek for suitable language and expressions for these epitaphs. This is the place to which they turn. Secondly, as Zimmermann notes, they are experimenting, and make two attempts to develop a new formula. In the highly formulaic world of epitaphs, they do not just settle on one form. Thirdly, they also extend a standard formula, in a clearly Christian direction, by adding *ἐν θεῷ τοῦ χαίρει*. Starting from the familiar and common, they add a Christian dimension. Fourthly, their belief in resurrection, and the certainty of their hope, is clear in the expressions chosen.

We can ask why Christians in Ephesus began experimenting with the form of epitaphs, moving beyond traditional conventions, at this point in time? I have noted that the inscriptions can be dated to the second quarter of the third century, and so some connection with the Decian persecution of 250 is entirely possible. The Legend of the Seven Sleepers, which is associated with this Cemetery in literary sources from the sixth century, but is known from an earlier period, focuses on seven people who were victims of the Decian persecution in 250, but then woke up to a largely Christian city after a long sleep around 446, in the time of Theodosius II. We can ask, where did the legend come from? We now know that the cemetery housed third century Christian burials which are by far the earliest known Christian burials in Ephesus. The legend is thus in harmony with the material evidence, in that the earliest graves are indeed dated to the right period for the Legend. We can suggest that the Christian community in Ephesus may well have associated

⁴⁶ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 401; see also ZIMMERMANN N. 2014a, 656. These inscriptions can also probably be regarded as examples of “in-group language”, since their full meaning would only really be understandable to insiders. On “in-group language” in early Christian inscriptions see A. E. FELLE, “Examples of ‘In-Group’ Epigraphic Language: The Very First Inscriptions by Christians”, *Journal of Epigraphic Studies* 3 (2020) 131–147.

these third century epitaphs, and the people they memorialise, with the Decian persecution. Some of them may have been considered to be Decian martyrs.⁴⁷ Further, it may well have been the case that the Decian persecution was the *impetus* for the experimentation that led to these different groups of inscriptions. The persecution meant that some members of the community had been martyred, and the community now wished to honour and memorialise them in a new way that had not been done previously. This would explain the phenomenon that the inscriptions reveal.

In addition, as noted above, these epitaphs come from the earliest building phase of the Cemetery Complex. Perhaps the complex was constructed precisely for the burial of these people; their deaths (perhaps in the persecution) may have been the impetus for *both* the construction of this Cemetery Complex, *and* for the experimentation that led to these new epitaphs.

5. Other Insights from these Epitaphs

All the names given in these inscriptions are single names, with the usual Roman system of the *tria* or *duo nomina* not being found.⁴⁸ Zimmermann notes that the same is the case with the earliest Christian inscriptions in Rome,⁴⁹ and suggests that this again indicates the Christian provenance of these inscriptions in Ephesus.⁵⁰ He writes:

The renunciation of the biographical and social location associated with the *Tria-* or *Duonomina* has been recognized in research as a characteristic of the early Christian grave inscriptions in Rome, which deliberately unites the deceased, not as people of rank and standing, but as people who are differentiated from one another only by their individual names, in the hope of resurrection.⁵¹

We can tentatively suggest that this points to a certain amount of “social levelling” and to a disregard of rank and status, although if there were no elite members of the community, then this “levelling” would be across a smaller range than if there had been elite members. But it would be highly unusual for all these people to have only one name, and so the use of only one name in

⁴⁷ The whole design of the Cemetery Complex seems to indicate that these graves are in a quite special position and ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 403 suggests that they may well have been the graves of martyrs.

⁴⁸ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 401. There is one exception – Aurelia Plauteine in ICG 4752, no. 9 above.

⁴⁹ Cilliers Breytenbach notes in personal communication that this is not the case in Lycaonia and Phrygia, which is very interesting in itself.

⁵⁰ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 401.

⁵¹ ZIMMERMANN N. 2011, 401, with further references in note 130.

these epitaphs is very significant. We can suggest that this practice grows out of their Christian faith and is an important corollary of it. Mitchell helpfully comments about the Christian use of a single name:

Late Roman attitudes to status were certainly influenced by Christian ideas, including the view that all men were equal before god. Being human was a great leveler. There was no room in this ideology for the elaborately graded social hierarchy of traditional Roman thought. This approach finds expression in late Roman epitaphs, which ceased to distinguish individuals by rank or title or even patronymic, but simply call them by a single (Christian) name and refer to them as slaves of God.⁵²

It is very revealing to find this phenomenon of single names in Ephesus in these third century inscriptions.

6. Conclusions

Based on the evidence provided by mosaics and paintings we can be confident that the complex that has become known as the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers dates back to the second quarter of the third century AD. A group of 13 inscriptions from the Cemetery are also to be dated to the third century (from the second quarter of that century or a little later) and are the earliest known Christian inscriptions in Ephesus. These inscriptions point to a degree of experimentation in seeking to find new and “Christian” forms. In this experimentation, the writers of the inscriptions looked to the New Testament; they also clearly expressed their belief in resurrection. That individuals are only given one name in these earliest epitaphs suggests that the community was not concerned for rank and status, and that this social levelling grew out of and expressed their Christian faith.

⁵² S. MITCHELL, *A History of the Later Roman Empire, AD 284–641*, 2nd ed. (Chichester 2015) 199. Note Leppin’s view that (generally earlier) epitaphs often show a desire to express the status of the buried person and their family; see H. LEPPIN, “Frühchristliche Gräber und soziale Anerkennung”, *ZThK* 121 (2024) 19–47.

3. The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel: A Tale from Eumeneia in Phrygia

Stephen Mitchell †

The two inscriptions discussed in this contribution were found in the adjacent villages of Emircik and Haydan in the upper Maeander valley in central Turkey. This region, which spanned the territories of the Phrygian cities of Eumeneia and Apamea, has yielded the greatest frequency of pre-Constantinian Christian funerary inscriptions from anywhere in the Roman world. The third and early fourth century funerary monuments from Eumeneian territory are usually rectangular altars with well-cut Greek texts on the front face, which named the dedicator and the intended occupants of the tomb, indicated their relationships to one another, and in some cases added further information about their profession or their social and political status, e.g. that they were members of the city council or held clerical office. Out of a total of sixty-eight, forty-six of these inscriptions are identifiable as Christian, nineteen as pagan, while three are too uncertain to be assigned according to a religious category.¹ No certain or probable Jewish inscriptions have been recorded at Eumeneia. Some of the texts described the occupants' moral qualities, and most of them ended with a sentence designed to protect the grave from interference. This could take the form of the threat of a monetary fine payable to the local or the imperial treasury, one of the pagan curses, which were widely used in second and third-century Phrygia, or the so-called Eumeneian formula, *ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν*, in one of its variant forms, which warned that anyone interfering with the grave would have to reckon with God.² In two cases where a monetary fine was combined with the Christian formula, the latter was explicitly stated to be a more potent deterrent than the fine.³ Nine of the inscriptions are exactly dated: two pagan

¹ 59 previously published 3rd or early 4th century inscriptions from Eumeneia were listed by P. Thonemann in an appendix to *MAMA XI*, as P 136–95, alongside nine new texts, of which *MAMA XI* 36–42 and 44 are Christian, and 43 is pagan.

² I do not accept the arguments of P. TREBILCO, “The Christian and Jewish Eumeneian Formula”, *Mediterraneo Antico* 5 (2002) 63–97, that the formula was probably widely used by Jews as well as Christians, and that many supposed Christian texts may well be Jewish; see MITCHELL 2023b, 110–5, and MITCHELL 2023a, 315–8.

³ ICG 1029 and 1036.

examples respectively to 229/30 and 231/2,⁴ and seven Christian texts from 246 (*ICG* 1364), 248/9 (*ICG* 1048), 253/4, 257/8 (*ICG* 1038), 260/1 (*ICG* 1064), 263/4 (*ICG* 1060) and probably 282/3 AD (*ICG* 1063). These figures show that Christian numbers rose sharply in the second and third quarters of the third century. If the undated examples were distributed in a similar chronological pattern, it seems that Christians (or at least the class of Christians who were commemorated by burial inscriptions) probably outnumbered pagans in the middle of the third century by a ratio of at least two to one.

There is a similar picture at Apamea, where at least nineteen texts with Christian formulas protecting the burial have been recorded. Most of the occupants and dedicators of the graves had the praenomen Aurelius or Aurelia, indicating that their families had acquired Roman citizenship after 212, and several are precisely dated according to the Sullan era, with dated examples from 249/50, 253/4 and 258/9 AD.⁵

These abundant mid-third century Christian funerary texts from south-west Phrygia provide the context for a detailed analysis of two Eumeneian inscriptions which offer unusual insights into the Christian community. The longer of these, the epitaph of Gaius, a lawyer, (*ICG* 1031) was first recorded in 1883 by two pioneering epigraphical explorers of inner Asia Minor, Pierre Paris and W.M. Ramsay.⁶ Modern editions of the text depend principally on copies made in 1924, when it was still in the village of Emircik,⁷ and in 1976, when it had been removed to the antiquities depot at Denizli.⁸ The most notable analysis in print, based on the copy made in 1924 by Buckler, Calder and Cox, is by Louis Robert. Robert decisively endorsed their judgement that the inscription was Christian, refuting the suggestions based on earlier copies, that it might be the work of a philosophically inclined pagan or represent an assimilation of Greek philosophical thoughts with Jewish ideas.⁹ The second grave monument, which was first published by Robert, introduces another local family, likely neighbours and clients of the lawyer Gaius (*ICG* 1028).¹⁰ Both inscriptions name an unrelated third party to the burial who strongly influenced both families, identified as Roubes (Ruben), the historic name

⁴ MAMA XI P 139 and 144.

⁵ *ICG* 964, 981, 980. *ICG* 960, which contains a different Christian formula, dates to 247/8.

⁶ P. PARIS, "Inscriptions d'Euménie", *BCH* 8 (1884) 239–40; RAMSAY, *Phrygia* 1.2, 386 no. 232.

⁷ BUCKLER/CALDER/COX 1926, 61–4 no. 183.

⁸ SHEPPARD 1979, 169–80. Sheppard's text is reproduced in *Steinepigramme* III 16/06/01, and RITTI 2008, 248–51 no. 157.

⁹ ROBERT 1960, 414–29, summarizing earlier views. U. Huttner lists further bibliography in the entry for *ICG* 1031.

¹⁰ ROBERT 1960, 429–35; SHEPPARD 1979, 175–6; RITTI 2008, 240–3 no. 153; further literature at *ICG* 1028.

of the founder of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, an important clue that he was not a local man but an immigrant from the Near East. The two monuments, recovered from neighbouring Turkish villages, must have stood close to one another in the same cemetery, and are now preserved in the important epigraphic collection at Pamukkale Museum, the most important regional collection of material from the upper Maeander valley.

The epitaph of Gaius (ICG 1031) was carved on a substantial rectangular *bomos* 1.17 metres high and 43 centimetres wide. On the shaft below the pediment there is a bulky garland and a *tabula ansata*, cut in high relief. Similar features are also found on a group of funerary altars, set up for Christian clients, and copied in villages on the territory of ancient Dionysopolis, Eumeneia's western neighbour, which date respectively to 253–4, 255–6, 258–9, and 273–4.¹¹ The Gaius epitaph was almost certainly produced in the same workshop as these texts, and can reasonably be placed in the decade



Fig. 18: ICG 1031 Eumeneia, Phrygia, Asia Minor, mid-3rd c. AD (photo: *AnSt* 29 (1979) 178, pl. XXII [a]; Courtesy of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara)

¹¹ ICG 1069, 1070, 1071 and 1072.

250–60, exactly the period to which most of the dated texts from Apamea and Eumeneia belong.¹²

Three of the four sides of the altar carry verse inscriptions, which were composed by Gaius himself.

A [οὐνόμασιν σεμνοῖσιν] ισόψηφος δυσι τοῦτ[ο] Γάιος ὡς ἅγιος, ὡς ἀγ[α]- θὸς προλέγω. (<i>leaf</i>) 5 ζωὸς ἔων τοῦτον τύμ- βον τίς ἔτευξεν ἑαυτῷ; / Μούσαις ἀσκηθεῖς, Γάιος πραγματικός, / [ῆ]δ' ἀλόχῳ φιλήτῃ Τατίῃ 10 τέκεσιν τε ποθητοῖς, / ὄφρα τὸν αἰδίδιον τοῦ- τον ἔ[χ]ωσι δόμον, / σὺν Ρουβῇ μεγάλῳ Θ[εο]ῦ Χρ(ιστοῦ) θεράποντι. (<i>leaf</i>)	15 πᾶσι γὰρ εἰς Ἄιδης καὶ τέ- λος ἐστὶν ἴσον. / ἔστιν τις μέγας ὢν ἐν κτή- μασιν· οὐ πλέον οὗτος, / ταῦτὸ μέτρον γαίης πρὸς 20 τάφον ἐκδέχεται. / σπεύδετε, τὴν ψυχὴν εὐφραίνετε πάντοτε, θνη[τοί], / ὡς ἡδὺς βίωτος, καὶ μέτρον ἐστὶ ζοῆς. / 25 ταῦτα, φίλοι. μετὰ ταῦτα τί γὰρ πλέον; οὐκέτι ταῦτα· / στήλῃ ταῦτα λαλεῖ καὶ λί- θος, οὐ γὰρ ἐγώ. /
B [οὐ]κ ἔσχον πλοῦτον πολὺν εἰς βίον, οὐ πολὺν χρῆμα, / γράμμασι δ' ἠσκήθην ἐκπο- νέσας μετρίοις· / 5 ἐξ ὧν τοῖσι [φί]λοισιν ἐπή[ρ]- κεον ὡς δύνάμεις μοι, / σπουδῇν ἦν εἶχον πᾶσι χαριζόμενος. / τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν μοι τερπνὸν 10 ἐπαρκεῖν εἴ τις ἔχρηζε, / ὡς ἄλλων ὄλβος τέρψιν ἄγει κραδίη. / μηδεὶς δ' ἐν πλούτῳ τυφω- θεὶς γαῦρα [φ]ρονεῖτω, /	C θύραι μὲν ἔνθα καὶ πρὸς Αἴδαν ὁδοὶ / ἀνεξόδευτοι δ' εἰσὶν ἐς φάος τρίβοι· / 5 οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι πάντοτ' εἰς ἀ[νά]στασιν / [πρ]οδε[ικνύ]ουσι(?), τῷ[υ]- το θυγα[μέων] θεός [-----] [-----] [-----] [-----] ποιμ[έν]α το[-----] [---] ἀ[νάστα]σις (?)

A 1 *rest.* Buckler; A 14: the second *siglum* could be XP or XY; C 7: restored by Buckler and Calder; [τ]όδ' ἐ[κφράζ]ουσι would be an alternative; C 8 θυγα[μέων], Sheppard. C 12 and 14, Buckler and Calder.

The first line, half of a hexameter verse, is missing and must have been inscribed on the damaged pediment. Below it, carefully spaced and centred above a garland, is the surviving part of the elegiac couplet that began the text: [οὐνόμασιν σεμνοῖσιν]¹³ | ισόψηφος δυσι τοῦτ[ο] | Γάιος ὡς ἅγιος ὡς ἀγα|θὸς προλέγω. Gaius proclaimed his

¹² RAMSAY, *Phrygia* 1.2, 388 suggested an earlier date under Caracalla or Severus Alexander; ROBERT 1960, 415 simply assigned it to the third century.

¹³ This brilliant but conjectural restoration in BUCKLER / CALDER / COX 1926, 61–4 no. 183 was probably by Buckler and has been unanimously accepted.

name in its literal form, Γάιος and then declared its equivalence the adjectives ἅγιος and ἀγαθός whose letters had the same numerical value, 284 (Α = 1; Γ = 3; Ι = 10; Ο = 70; Σ = 200; Θ = 9). Gaius surely knew that the Christian name for God, θεός, also gave the same total (Θ = 9; Ε = 5; Ο = 70; Σ = 200). The riddle of an isopsephism, playing on a word's numerical value, was a distinctive trait among early Christians and Jews in the Greek-speaking world.¹⁴ Gaius advertised his piety by this device, but also indicated a temperament marked by a penchant for teasing word and number games.¹⁵ Προλέγω, the verb chosen to conclude this initial presentation, has a formal ring appropriate to a proclamation, and probably matched his public *persona* as a lawyer.¹⁶ It also concluded the first section of the inscription, end-stopped by a leaf punctuation mark and separated from the next section of the epitaph by a garland.

Gaius declared himself to be a πραγματικός, a lawyer or attorney,¹⁷ but named his proudest skill, as a writer of verses, before his profession.¹⁸ This pride was not misplaced, since the verses are technically almost flawless. On the front and the right-hand side of the stone were two poems in elegiac distichs (the first ending with an hexameter).¹⁹ On the left-hand side of the stone there was another fourteen-line poem, consisting of seven almost impeccable iambic trimeters. The carving of the poem is as scrupulous as the versification. Each verse forms two lines of carved text, and the stone-cutter, working to the poet's instructions, has placed an indent before the second half of each verse. There are no stone-cutting or spelling errors. Syllabic division at the line ends is reduced to a minimum and done with equal care: ἐκπο|νέσας, ἐπηρ|κεον, τυφω|θείς, κτή|μασιν, λί|θος. The final inscription on the left side of the stone was in iambic trimeters. There were originally seven lines of verse making fourteen lines of carved text, although only the first four verses survive intact. Again, the second half of each verse was indented, and only once was a word divided between two inscribed lines.²⁰ It is worth laying out the text in verse form:

¹⁴ P. PERDRIZET, "Isopsephia", *REG* 17 (1904) 350–60. The first Christian text identified in Asia Minor, a graffito cut in 179 on the column of a basement stoa in Smyrna, contains an isopsephism; see R. BAGNALL, "Christianity in the Smyrna Graffiti", *EC* 9 (2018) 215–8; R. BAGNALL, et al. *Graffiti from the Basilica in the Agora at Smyrna* (New York 2016) 40.

¹⁵ R. AST / J. LOUGOVAYA, "The Art of Isopsephism in the Greco-Roman World", in: A. JÖRDENS (ed.), *Ägyptische Magie und ihre Umwelt* (Wiesbaden 2015) 82–98.

¹⁶ See LSJ s.v. II. 2 (of proclamations).

¹⁷ ROBERT 1960, 415–6: "homme de loi et d'affaires"; 416 notes 1–2 for parallels and explanations.

¹⁸ Τίς not τις, introducing a rhetorical question, as seen by A. WILHELM, "Griechische Grabinschriften aus Kleinasien", *SPAW.PH* 27 (1932) 810–1; compare ROBERT 1960, 421.

¹⁹ At the end of the sixth couplet of poem B ἐστὶ ζοῆς is scanned with a short syllable before *zeta*.

²⁰ Line 4: τοῦ|το δυνά[μειων] Θεός.

[οὐνόμασιν σεμνοῖσιν] ἰσόψηφος δυσὶ τοῦτ[ο]
 Γάιος ὡς ἅγιος, ὡς ἀγ[α]θὸς προλέγω.
 ζῶς ἐὼν τοῦτον τύμβον τίς ἔτευξεν ἑαυτῷ;
 Μούσαις ἀσκηθεῖς, Γάιος πραγματικός,
 [ἦ]δ' ἀλόχῳ φιλή Τατίῃ τέκεσίν τε ποθητοῖς,
 ὄφρα τὸν αἰδίων τοῦτον ἔ[χ]ωσι δόμον,
 σὺν Ῥουβῇ μέγαλοιο Θ[εο]ῦ Χρ[ιστοῦ] θεράποντι.
 [οὐ]κ ἔσχον πλοῦτον πολὺν εἰς βίον, οὐ πολὺ χρῆμα,
 γράμμασι δ' ἠσκήθην ἐκπονέσας μετρίως·
 ἐξ ὧν τοῖσι [φ]ίλοισιν ἐπή[ρ]κεον ὡς δυνάμεις μοι,
 σπουδὴν ἦν εἶχον πᾶσι χαριζόμενος.
 τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν μοι τερπνὸν ἐπαρκεῖν εἴ τις ἔχρηζε,
 ὡς ἄλλων ὄλβος τέρψιν ἄγει κραδίη.
 μηδεὶς δ' ἐν πλούτῳ τυφωθεὶς γαῦρα [φ]ρονεῖτω,
 πᾶσι γὰρ εἷς Ἄιδης καὶ τέλος ἐστὶν ἴσον.
 ἔστιν τις μέγας ὢν ἐν κτήμασιν· οὐ πλέον οὗτος·
 ταὐτὸ μέτρον γαίης πρὸς τάφον ἐκδέχεται.
 σπεύδετε, τὴν ψυχὴν εὐφραίνετε πάντοτε, θνη[τοί],
 ὡς ἡδὺς βίος, καὶ μέτρον ἐστὶ ζοῆς.
 ταῦτα, φίλοι. μετὰ ταῦτα τί γὰρ πλέον; οὐκέτι ταῦτα·
 στήλλη ταῦτα λαλεῖ καὶ λίθος, οὐ γὰρ ἐγώ.
 θύραι μὲν ἔνθα καὶ πρὸς Αἶδαν ὁδοὶ
 ἀνεξόδευτοι δ' εἰσὶν ἐς φάος τρίβοι·
 οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι πάντοτ' εἰς ἀ[νά]στασιν
 [πρ]οδε[ικνύ]ουσι (?), το[ῦ]το δυνά[μεων] θεός
 [-----]
 [-----] ποιμ[ένα]
 το[-----] ἀ[νάστα]σις (?)

Equal in numbers to two solemn words,
I, Gaius, declare this, as a holy and as a virtuous man.
Who, while still alive, made this tomb for himself?
Trained in the arts of the Muses, Gaius the lawyer made it,
also for his beloved wife Tatia, and his adored children,
so that they might have this eternal home,
accompanied by Roubes, the servant of the great God Christ.
I did not have much wealth for my life, or many possessions,
but I received a perfect training in writing verse.
From this, as far as in my power, I met the needs of my friends,
graciously bestowing my talent for the benefit of all of them.
For, just as wealth stirs joy in the hearts of others,
it was my joy to help anyone who was in need.
Let no one, blinded in his wealth, think haughty thoughts,
for all must enter Hades and their end is equal.
One man is great in his possessions – he does not have more.
The same measure of land receives him for burial.
Make haste, mortals, gladden your soul always,
as life is sweet and there is a measure to life.
That's it, friends. What is there after that? These things are no more.
The monument and the stone say these things, not I.
Here are the gates and the roads to Hades,
the paths cannot be trodden back to the light.
And yet the righteous every time until the resurrection
announce (?) this, 'This is the God of Hosts'

...

... Shepherd

... resurrection (?)

It would be hard to identify a Greek inscription from Asia Minor which has been composed and designed with more attention to detail.²¹ The text on the front face contains the essential information about the persons to be buried in the tomb, which was built by Gaius for himself, his wife Tatia, rendered in the Ionic poetic form Τατίη, and their children. The latter are not named, very likely because Gaius did not consider his family to be complete when he wrote the epitaph. There might be more sons and daughters to follow, or elder children might leave the household to get married, and would be buried elsewhere. Not only he himself, but also his wife and children were alive when the tomb was constructed as their eternal dwelling place (τὸν αἰδίων δόμον). Then comes the isolated hexameter with the information which shows that this burial was not merely exceptional but extraordinary, since it was designed also for Roubes, servant of the great God Christ: σὺν Ρουβῇ μέγαλοιο Θεοῦ Χρ(ιστοῦ) θεράποντι. The line break comes after μέγαλοιο, the weak caesura of the hexameter. The first word of the next line employs the convention, which was already by AD 200 used in New Testament manuscripts, of using the abbreviated *nomen sacrum*, ΘΥ for ΘΕΟΥ, which is placed with deliberate blank spacing on either side. The next symbol, also followed by a deliberate blank, has been damaged. Buckler and Calder established the reading of ΘΥ and noted that the traces of XP, “the usual monogram”, on the stone were clear, although the outlines were blurred.²² Sheppard’s published photograph shows ΘΥ, with *ypsilon* above *theta*, but the following monogram is indistinct. Philipp Pilhofer, who examined the stone in 2023, judges the reading XP to be relatively probable.²³ XP for Χριστός is found in three other third-century inscriptions from the region: the epitaph of the Eumeneian bishop Glykon Χρ(ιστοῦ) ἐπίσκοπος,²⁴ the imprecation ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν Χρ(ιστόν) that concludes the epitaph of Aur. Menophilos, an Eumeneian counsellor,²⁵ and the gravestone at Apamea of the shoemaker Aurelius Valens, the community’s bishop, which begins with the prominent line ΖΩ. ΕΠΙ Δ

²¹ See G. AGOSTI, “*Eisthesis*, divisione dei versi, percezione dei *cola* negli epigrammi epigrafici in età tardoantica”, *Segno e testo* 8 (2010) 67–98 (FEISSEL, *BE* 2013, 499).

²² BUCKLER / CALDER / COX 1926, 63 (ROBERT 1960, 422 note 1): “Θεοῦ is represented by its monogram, the two upper strokes of the *ypsilon* being distinct on the squeeze; immediately after it stood the usual monogram of Χριστοῦ, the lines of which are blurred but still recognizable”.

²³ SHEPPARD 1979, pl. XXII a) and b). Despite Sheppard’s remark that the traces are not reconcilable with the usual monogram of a *rho* superimposed on a *chi*, Philipp Pilhofer’s observation, supporting Buckler, tips the balance in favour of Χρ(ιστοῦ), against Χ(ριστο)ῦ, which I preferred in my discussion in MITCHELL 2023b, 166.

²⁴ ICG 1049: Αὐρ. Γλυκων[ίδης] | Εὐμενεὺς Χρ(ιστοῦ) ἐπίσκοπος, not Χρ(ιστιανός), as in the editio princeps by BUCKLER / CALDER / COX 1926, 70 no. 200.

²⁵ ICG 1062.

XP X XPEI, best resolved to read ζῶ(ν) ἐπ(ίσκοπος) δ(ούλος) Χρ(ιστοῦ) Χ(ριστιανοί) Χρ(εισ)τιανοίς.²⁶ Gaius's skill as a versifier and the care with which the inscription has been carved leave no room for doubt that Χριστοῦ, which fits sense and metre perfectly, must be understood at this point in this scrupulously prepared inscription. Burial, normally confined to close family members, was thereby extended to an unrelated outsider. Robert observed that this is the natural interpretation of the text, but did not note that Roubes in fact has a more significant role to play. Since Gaius commissioned and set up the tomb when his own family members were still alive, it was the death of Roubes that led him to compose the epitaph.²⁷

Who was Roubes? In the Old Testament Πουβην was the eldest of the sons of Jacob and thus founding father of the first of the twelve Tribes of Israel.²⁸ The name is attested in the Hellenistic and Roman periods in the Greek forms Πουβης, Πουβην, Πωβη and Πωβηλ at Joppa and Jerusalem, and in Syrian Antioch.²⁹ Semitic names of Hebrew origin were exceptionally rare in pre-Constantinian Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor, although during late antiquity Hebrew names in indeclinable forms (Σαμουήλ, Ἰακώβ, and others) occur with some frequency in Greek-Jewish epitaphs, thanks to the growing influence of the Greek Bible, both Old and New Testament, among Christians and Jews.³⁰ All the names that occur in the twenty-five funerary texts belonging to Ἰουδαῖοι at Hierapolis (Pamukkale), are Graeco-Roman, and this was evidently the norm for the Jewish settlements established by Antiochus III in Lydia and Phrygia at the end of the third century BC.³¹ Occasional exceptions to the pattern, such as a verse inscription from Phrygian Apollonia which names a woman from Antioch called Debbora, married to a man

²⁶ ICG 972. See also Χρ(ιστὸς) Ἰη(σοῦ)ς in a late-third-century epitaph by the 'poet of Çeşmeli Sebil', ICG 1497, THONEMANN 2014, 191–232 at 210.

²⁷ ROBERT 1960, 435: "il ne semble pas qu'on puisse interpreter autrement l'építaphe de Gaius qu'en admittant que Roubès partageait ce tombeau, tout au moins que Roubès était enterré tout près de là", with note 4, "à vrai dire il me semble que l'interprétation stricte est la plus naturelle."

²⁸ Gen 35:22, 37:21–22; etc.

²⁹ ROBERT 1960, 422–3.

³⁰ M. H. WILLIAMS, "Semitic Name Use by Jews in Roman Asia Minor", in: ead., *Jews in a Graeco-Roman Environment* (Stuttgart 2013) 363–88.

³¹ See E. MIRANDA, "Le iscrizioni giudaiche di Hierapolis di Frigia", *EpAn* 31 (1999) 109–56. Against the normal pattern, she suggests reading the Hebrew name Ioudas in *EpAn* 1999, 114 no. 1 = SEG 49.1814, but Ἰκεσίου τοῦ Ἰουδαίου Θεώνος is a better restoration than Ἰκεσίου τοῦ [καὶ] Ἰουδα τοῦ Θεώνος in SEG 49.1814. She also suggested that the last element in the nomenclature of M. Αὐρ. Ἀλέξανδρος Θεόφιλος ἐπικλὴν Ἀφέλιος, was a Greek rendering of the Semitic (*H*)*afila*, but W. AMELING, *IJO II* (Tübingen 2004) 206, followed by LGPN Vc 79 s.v. Ἀφέλιος, indicates its derivation from the Greek ἀφελής, 'straightforward' (of character).

from Pamphylian Sillyum, clearly identified immigrants to Asia Minor, in this case from northern Syria.³² I have argued elsewhere that other supposed Hebrew names occurring in third-century Asia Minor, including *Μαθιος*/*Μαθος*, *Ἡλων*, and *Αφιλλα* in Phrygia, were indigenous regional forms, with no Jewish or Christian associations.³³ The only name of Hebrew origin that was current among indigenous Asia Minor Christians was *Μαριάμη*, which occurs on a number of modest Christian epitaphs from Lycaonia and east Phrygia.³⁴ Robert's suggestion that Roubes might originally have been a Jew from one of the neighbouring cities of Phrygia, who had converted to Christianity, is untenable;³⁵ he must be an immigrant from Palestine or from some other part of the Semitic Levant.

Gaius presents himself as a sympathetic and engaging figure. His literary skills were far above the level reached by most writers of verse epitaphs away from the metropolitan centers of government and learning, and he also composed on behalf of his friends. The very capable funerary inscription for Gellia, a woman of Smyrna married to a man of Eumeneia, partly in Doric dialect and carved on an altar that appears to have been made in the same workshop as Gaius's own epitaph, was perhaps his work.³⁶ Robert points out that he could have been the author of the short poem that concluded another Eumeneian Christian burial.³⁷ If so, he relied on his learning as well as his talent, as these verses replicate two of the ethical *sententiae* of Menander, *Gnomai* 283 and 291, which harmonized well with the popular moral philosophy also found in his own epitaph.³⁸ He composed with metrical precision and care for the meaning which he wished to convey. He did not rely on Homer for epic colour, exotic vocabulary and an air of learning which could disguise technical deficiencies,³⁹ but the seven elegiac couplets on the right-hand side of the gravestone relayed an ethical message conveyed in everyday, largely prosaic language and directly addressed to his friends. He

³² MAMA IV 102; SEG 30.1507 and 1903; MITCHELL 1993, 8–9 note 60.

³³ S. MITCHELL, "Names and religious categories among the Jews of Asia Minor from the 3rd to the 6th centuries CE", *ARELG* 26 (2024) 31–49.

³⁴ ICG 154 (Laodicea Catacecaumene), ICG 593 (Axylon), ICG 784 (Carşamba valley), ICG 1528 (Perta). See LGPN Vc 266 s.v. *Μαριάμη* and *Μαρίόμη*.

³⁵ ROBERT 1960, 423: "Il me paraît que nous avons ici un contacte entre des chrétiens d'Euméneia et une de ces communautés juives florissantes en Phrygie. Roubès pouvait être un converti venu de la synagogue."

³⁶ ICG 1033. Note the use of ὄφρα in this poem as well as in his own epitaph to introduce a final clause.

³⁷ ROBERT 1960, 426 note 2 and 427 note 2.

³⁸ ICG 1056; RAMSAY, *Phrygia* 1.2, 514–7; for the ethical sentiments see ROBERT 1960, 425–7.

³⁹ As does the very different work of the poets of the Axylon, analysed by THONEMANN 2014, 191–225.

was not wealthy in cash or possessions, but a poet, a skill he could share with them, and being helpful to his friends gave him the satisfaction that others might derive from possessing riches. No one should be led astray to haughty ideas by their wealth, for death comes alike to everyone. A man, however rich, occupies a grave no larger than anyone else. Mortals everywhere should take delight in their lives, for that is the extent of their existence. That is life, and there is nothing to follow it. These sentiments are his own, but reflected mainstream ethical ideas in his community.⁴⁰ Very similar thoughts were put to the priest Pionius, on the eve of his martyrdom at Smyrna in 250, as he answered the well-meaning entreaties of friends, not to sacrifice his life but to save himself for better things: “Be persuaded by us, Pionius, because we love you, and you deserve to live for many reasons, because of your character and goodness. It is good to live and see the light of day, and many other things.” He replied to them, “I too say that it is good to live, but we yearn for that greater thing, that is also the light, but the true light. And these things are indeed all good, but we are not fleeing from them as though longing for death or hating the works of God, but esteem them less because of the pre-eminence of these other great matters that bear upon us.”⁴¹ The final couplet stating that it was the stone and the stele that speaks, not the man himself, fits the context of a gravestone addressed to future readers, and was not a way of disowning these sentiments in favour of a more austere Christian message.⁴² The iambic poem on the other face of the stone provides the religious perspective of a Christian. The road to Hades allows only one direction of traffic, but the righteous, until the time of their resurrection, declare the power of the God of hosts. The sense is incomplete, but the language referring to resurrection fits precisely with the repeated allusions in other inscriptions from Eumeneia and elsewhere in third-century Asia Minor to God’s final judgement.⁴³

Gaius’ sentiments were down to earth and reflected every day, educated wisdom, although they are raised from banality by their context, but his self-presentation was far from that. His claim to holiness and goodness was not

⁴⁰ Compare ICG 1571 (MITCHELL 2023b, 132–3), which might be another composition by Gaius.

⁴¹ *M. Pion.* 5.3–5: Πείσθητι ἡμῖν, Πιόνιε, ὅτι σε φιλοῦμεν καὶ διὰ πολλὰ ἄξιος εἰ ζῆν, ἥθους τε ἔνεκα καὶ ἐπιεικείας· καλὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ φῶς τοῦτο βλέπειν, καὶ ἄλλα τινὰ πλείονα. (4) Ὁ δὲ πρὸς αὐτοῦς· Κἀγὼ λέγω ὅτι καλὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ζῆν, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνο κρείσσον ὃ ἡμεῖς ἐπιποθοῦμεν· καὶ τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἀληθινόν. (5) Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἅπαντα καλά· καὶ οὐχ ὡς θανατιῶντες ἢ μισοῦντες τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ φεύγομεν, ἀλλ’ ἐτέρων μεγάλων ὑπερβολῇ τούτων καταφρονοῦμεν ἐνεδρεύοντων ἡμᾶς.

⁴² ROBERT 1960, 425–7; compare RAMSAY, *Phrygia* 1.2, 517 with similar observations on the compatibility of conventional ethical thinking about the pleasures of life with Christian doctrine.

⁴³ Examples at MITCHELL 2023b, 154–5.

simply conventional. The adjective *ἀγαθός* does not call for detailed comment as it need not imply more than the uprightness, respectability and virtuousness that was expected of all men and women of standing, but it was not usual for ordinary Christians to apply the grand word *ἅγιος* to themselves. The term is applied to saints, and to the church itself. In the sixth century, Montanist gravestones used the adjective to characterise notably devout persons,⁴⁴ and a Montanist apostle, seemingly a missionary, described his role as ‘calling (men) to sainthood’ (*καλέσας εἰς τὴν ἀγιосύνην*).⁴⁵ *Ἀγιότης* is not one of the attributes assigned to either men or women among the abundant third and fourth-century Christian epitaphs of Lycaonia,⁴⁶ but a lengthy fourth-century verse inscription from the Upper Tembris valley set up by a Novatian Christian family describes the pious daughter Ammia as *ἁγία*.⁴⁷ Gaius proclaimed his own faith and piety in an unusually emphatic form.

This piety was clearly connected to that of his Christian companion. While Gaius himself was a well-grounded and cultivated professional lawyer, Roubes, we should assume, was his inspirational role model. How had they met and what, apart from religion, had brought them together? To become a recognised lawyer Gaius required lengthy legal training, and the only place in the eastern provinces where this was available in the third century was at the Roman colony of Berytus (Beirut) in Syria.⁴⁸ Gaius would have spent several years there as a young man, not only obtaining a legal training but learning Latin, the language of his profession. This location would have provided him with opportunities to meet a charismatic Christian teacher in a Hebrew or Jewish environment, and we can at least hypothetically reconstruct some of the circumstances. Gaius’s epitaph was set up around 260 at the time of his mentor’s death. Roubes’ evident authority and influence presumably owed something to the wisdom of age, and we might put his birth around 190. Gaius, who was still living with the rest of his family, was probably at least twenty years his junior. There were many Christians in Eumeneia by 210, as there were in the neighbouring cities of Hierapolis, where Claudius Apollinarius, its bishop, had designated the burial place of Philip the apostle as a place of cult between 170 and 180, and Apamea, which began to mint

⁴⁴ So the sixth century gravestone from Sebaste (*ICG* 1363): [†] ἐνταῦθα κῆται | [ὁ] ἅγιος Παυλῖνος | [κτ]ίστης καὶ κοινωνὸς | [ἔχων] τὴν χάριν | [Θ(εο)ῦ] ἔτη πε’ | [ὁ ἅγ]ιος Τρόφιμος | μάρτυς. (Here lies St Paulinus, founder and Koinonos; he has the grace of God. 85 years. – St Trophimos, martyr). See MITCHELL 2023b, 410–2.

⁴⁵ S. MITCHELL, “An Apostle to Ankara from the New Jerusalem: Montanists and Jews in Late Roman Asia Minor”, *SCI* 24 (2005) 207–23; *I.Ancyra* 2.411.

⁴⁶ BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 441–7.

⁴⁷ *ICG* 1689.

⁴⁸ F. MILLAR, “The Greek East and Roman Law: the dossier of M. Cn. Licinius Rufinus”, *JRS* 89 (1999) 90–108 = MILLAR 2004, 435–64, esp. 459–64.

coins depicting the Old Testament story of Noah and the Flood before 200. The statistics indicate that Christians were almost certainly in a majority at Eumeneia by 250. The talented intellectual Gaius, born between 210 and 220, is likely to have been an early adopter of the new religion, perhaps already born into a Christian family or a convert before he left Phrygia for his legal studies in Berytus. There he met and fell under the spell of Roubes, the Christian teacher. Roubes, in turn, was surely attracted to his clever, youthful disciple, who could bring a report of the rapidly growing Christian communities in southern Phrygia. I assume that he was persuaded by Gaius, after he had completed his legal studies in the 230s or 240s, to accompany him on the return journey to Asia Minor, continue his preaching, and spend his later years as Gaius's house-guest and as an admired role model and inspiration for Eumeneia's Christians.

This reconstruction of the intersecting lives of Gaius and Roubes is of course an imaginative fiction, but it is consistent with the information that can be gleaned from the inscription, and can be supported by a close contemporary parallel. Exactly at the same period in the second quarter of the third century another talented young man from Asia Minor made a similar journey for the same purpose and with similar results. Theodorus, one of two brothers from an east Anatolian land-owning family based in Pontus, later to become the first bishop of the provincial metropolis Neocaesarea, gave a detailed and circumstantial account of his own Christian education in a speech of thanks addressed to his inspirational teacher, Origen. He described how after the death of his father, when he was fourteen, he came under Christian influence and began to consider conversion. His mother ensured that he took lessons in Greek rhetoric, and providentially, also began to receive instruction in Latin and the elements of Roman law. Further study could either be pursued in Rome itself or at Berytus in Syria, and by coincidence at the critical time a message reached Neocaesarea from the Roman governor resident at Caesarea in Palestine, asking for Theodorus's brother-in-law to join his administrative staff as a legal advisor (νομικός). Theodorus' sister soon afterwards received a pass to use the imperial transport system and follow her husband, and her brother was assigned to escort her. This coincidence led him to choose Berytus, where he began his own taxing legal studies.⁴⁹ The new location and his nascent interest in Christianity brought him into contact with the most important theologian of the

⁴⁹ H. CROUZEL (ed.), *Grégoire le thaumaturge. Remerciement à Origène suivi de la lettre d'Origène à Grégoire* (SC 148, 1969) V 48–72. See S. MITCHELL, "The Life and Lives of Gregory Thaumaturgus", in J. W. DRIJVERS / J. W. WATT (eds.), *Portraits of Spiritual Authority. Religious power in early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient* (Leiden 1999), [99–138] 99–108; MILLAR 2004, 461–4.

third century, Origen, who had been obliged to leave his native Alexandria and move to Caesarea around 234, where he lived and taught students until his death around 253/4. We can estimate that Origen was born around 185, and Theodorus soon after 210. The latter studied for eight years at Berytus, interspersed with attendance at the Christian circle around Origen, beginning in the 230s, before he returned to Pontus where he answered the call to become Neocaesarea's first bishop. By now he had adopted a new name, Gregorius, 'awakened' or 're-awakened', and he was known in subsequent cult and legend as Gregory the Wonder-worker.⁵⁰

Gregory expressed his debt to Origen in a *Panegyric* of his teacher. Gaius as a young man had also travelled to Berytus to acquire his legal training, and I conjecture that he met and attended the preaching and teaching of the otherwise unknown Roubes. The two men returned to Phrygia, where Roubes joined Gaius's household. If a date around 260 of the inscription set up by Gaius, is approximately correct, Roubes and Origen, as well as Gaius and Theodorus / Gregory would have been almost exact contemporaries. Although the latter pair were attached to different Christian mentors, it is hard to imagine that they did not encounter one another in Palestine. It is a matter of speculation whether any close friendship would have emerged from the acquaintance, but there is room for considerable doubt. Gregory, who took a bishop's office and issued the first body of attested canon law to regulate the conduct of Christians in Pontus when they were threatened and compromised by intercourse with Gothic barbarian raiders, seems to have been an altogether different character from the genial 'man of the world' Gaius, popular and at ease among the conservative and prosperous farmers and traders of Eumeneia, who he impressed with his easy mastery of worldly poetry. According to the extensive, although largely fictitious *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* by Gregory of Nyssa, Theodorus/Gregorius faced the greater challenge, and had to convert many of his Pontic fellow countrymen to the new religion. Gaius slipped comfortably back into a south Phrygian community that had largely already been converted.

The second inscription (ICG 1028, see p. 90–1) which illuminates both community relations and the influence of the charismatic Roubes marked the grave (ἡρώων) of Aur. Zotikos Lykidas, found at the village of Haydan near Eumeneia.⁵¹ This was a smaller altar-shaped monument (72 × 38 × 35; irregular letters) with a text on the front and right side of the shaft.

After the death of Roubes, the owner of another grave used a variation of the Eumeneian formula to call upon his angel to provide protection for the

⁵⁰ R. LANE FOX, *Pagans and Christians* (London 1985) 479–507.

⁵¹ ICG 1028.

tomb that he built. The tomb's maker, Aurelius Zotikos Lykidas,⁵² had been involved in a dispute with his brother and called God to witness the righteousness of his cause: Commenting on the adverb *νωθρῶς* Robert plausibly infers that Amianos was the elder brother but had negligently, perhaps even obstructively refused to undertake the responsibility of providing for the burial of their two unmarried sisters. Robert conjectured that these Christian sisters might have been consecrated virgins, but one would expect such holiness, amounting to an unusual and special status, to have been mentioned, and we can say no more than that they were young women who had outlived their parents but predeceased their brothers.⁵³ Robert also suggested pagan and New Testament religious parallels for the metaphorical usage of calling God to witness the action of Lykidas, but the language used to describe the production of a witness, *μάρτυρα τὸν θεὸν δίδω*, and the use of the verb *ἐντέλλομαι*, which denoted the issue of a formal notice or instructions, were also appropriate to contemporary legal procedures. A fraternal argument that was worthy of mention on a funerary text, is unlikely to have been a trivial matter, and the dispute seems to have gone to arbitration. In this case, we can make a shrewd guess that Gaius the lawyer had been involved in the adjudication.

⁵² Zotikos was the commonest male name at Eumeneia both among pagans and Christians. Aur. Zotikos Lykidas was thus distinguished from Aur. Zotikos son of Zotikos (ICG 127), Aur. Zotikos son of Praxias (ICG 1029), and Aur. Zotikos (ICG 1125) at Eumeneia, from Ael. Pancharios also known as Zotikos (ICG 981) and Aur. Zotikos (ICG 1125) at Apamea and many other from further afield in Phrygia.

⁵³ ROBERT 1960, 432.



Fig. 19: ICG 1028 Eumeneia, Phrygia, Asia Minor, mid-3rd c. AD
 (photo: *AnSt* 29 (1979) 177, pl. XXI [b]; Courtesy of the British Institute
 of Archaeology at Ankara)

Front

Αὐρ. [Ζ]ωτι[κ]ὸ[ς]		I, Aur. Zotikos
Λυκίδας μάρ-		Lykidas, as my
τυρα τὸν		witness
θεὸν δίδω		give God
ὅτι κατεσ-	5	that I constructed
κεύασα τὸ ἡ-		the
ρῶον, νω-		tomb, when with apathic
θρῶς ἔχον-		indifference conducted
τος Ἀμιανοῦ		himself
τοῦ ἀδε<λ>φοῦ	10	Amianos,
μου, ἀπὸ τῶν		my brother,
ἐμῶν καμάτων		by my own efforts,
καὶ ἐντέλλομε		and I issue instructions
Φρονίμη<ν> καὶ Μά-		that Phronime and Maxima,
ξιμαν τὰς ἀδελ-	15	my sisters,

Right side

φάς μου τεθῆνε		should be placed here
μ<ό>νας. εἴ τις δὲ		alone. If anyone
ἕτερον θήσει, ἔσ-		places anyone else,
τε αὐτῷ πρὸς		he shall reckon
τὸν θεὸν καὶ	20	with God and
τὸν ἄγγελον		the angel of
τὸν Ρουβῆ-		Rou-
δος.		bes.

After the dispute had been resolved in his favour, Lykidas completed the tomb and appealed for protection to the angel of Gaius's mentor Roubes. This is an indisputable reference to Roubes, the servant of the great God Christ, and it can hardly be doubted that the two gravestones on which he was mentioned stood in the same cemetery. They testify to the standing of Roubes as a Christian leader, and to the belief in angels, which is attested by many texts in and beyond Phrygia,⁵⁴ and can be traced back at least to the time of Paul's mission. The key texts which clarify practices in southern Phrygia are the obscure injunction against angel worship in the Pauline Letter to the Colossians, addressed to the people of the Lycos valley:

μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύετω θέλων
ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ θρησκείᾳ τῶν
ἀγγέλων, ἃ ἐώρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκῇ
φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοὸς τῆς σαρκὸς
αὐτοῦ, καὶ οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφάλην.

Let no one pass judgement against you with a show of humility and angel worship, 'pacing around' what he has witnessed, wilfully puffed up by his high opinion of things of the flesh, and not having his thoughts under control.⁵⁵

The allusion to angel worshippers is obscure and the description of their conduct is hard to translate, but historically the most relevant and important observation is that of the fifth century commentary of Theodoret, who explained that Paul was contesting the authority of champions of the Jewish law, who were still influential in the fourth and fifth centuries:

οἱ τῷ νόμῳ συνηγοροῦντες καὶ τοὺς
ἀγγέλους σέβειν αὐτοῖς εἰσηγοῦντο,
διὰ τούτων λέγοντες δεδόσθαι τὸν
νόμον. ἔμεινε δὲ τοῦτο πάθος ἐν τῇ
Φρυγίᾳ καὶ Πισιδίᾳ μέχρι πολλοῦ. οὗ
δὴ χάριν καὶ συνελθοῦσα σύνοδος ἐν
Λαοδικείᾳ τῆς Φρυγίας νόμῳ κεκώλυκε
τὸ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις προσεύχεσθαι· καὶ
μέχρι δὲ τοῦ νῦν εὐκτήρια τοῦ ἁγίου
Μιχαὴλ παρ' ἐκείνοις καὶ τοῖς ὁμοίοις
ἐκείνων ἔστιν ἰδεῖν

Those who advocate the (Jewish) law also instructed them to worship angels, stating that the law is given to them by these. This ailment has for a long time been present in Phrygia and Pisidia, and on this account a synod met at Laodicea in Phrygia and has forbidden by a law the practice of addressing prayers to angels. Until now it is possible to see places of worship dedicated to St Michael among them and their neighbours.⁵⁶

The Council of Laodicea, which met at an uncertain date between c. 340 and 380, contained several canons designed to prevent Christians from

⁵⁴ See MITCHELL 1993, 46 and index s.v. angels; N. BELAYCHE, "Angeloi in Religious Practices of the Roman Imperial East", *Hen.* 32 (2010) 45–65; R. H. CLINE, *Ancient Angels. Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire* (Leiden 2011); and the comprehensive discussion of HORSLEY / LUXFORD 2016, 141–83, a study not confined to pagan examples.

⁵⁵ Col 2:18.

⁵⁶ Theodoret., *Comm. in ep. ad Col.* 2.18 (PG 82, 613). See further MITCHELL 2023b, 524–5.

perpetuating Jewish practices and fraternizing with Jewish worshippers.⁵⁷ Canon 35 explicitly anathematized the practice invoked on the grave monument of Lykidas:

λε'. Περὶ τοῦ μὴ λατρεύειν ἀγγέλοις.
 "Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ Χριστιανοὺς ἐγκαταλιπεῖν
 τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
 αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀγγέλους ὀνομάζειν καὶ
 συνάξεις ποιεῖν, ἅπερ ἀπηγόρευται. Εἴ
 τις οὖν εὐρεθῇ ταύτῃ τῇ κεκρυμμένῃ
 εἰδωλολατρεῖα σχολάζων, ἔστω
 ἀνάθεμα, ὅτι ἐγκατέλιπεν τὸν κύριον
 ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ
 θεοῦ καὶ εἰδωλολατρεῖα προσήλθεν

35. Interdict concerning the worship of
 angels. That Christians should not forsake
 the glory of God and his Church, and call
 angels by name, and gather assemblies,
 which is forbidden. If anyone is found out
 spending time in this form of concealed
 idol worship, let him be anathema, because
 he has forsaken our Lord Jesus Christ, the
 son of God, and proceeded in the worship
 of idols.

The second prohibition has not been satisfactorily explained, but it surely refers to the practice attested by the Lykidas tombstone, invoking an angel which bore the name of a deceased person, a spirit that lived on and retained spiritual power after a person's death. The nearest explicit parallels for this belief are the collection of about seventy funerary steles recorded on the island of Thera, dating to the third or fourth centuries, usually inscribed with the simple formula ἀγγελος followed by a name in the genitive. The religious associations of the Thera angels have been disputed, but there are decisive indications that these were Christian burials, although they may have been influenced by Jewish notions and practices.⁵⁸ An angel also plays the role of protecting the tomb on an inscription from another Cycladic island, Melos, painted on the wall of a catacomb, probably around the middle of the fourth century, for a single religious household consisting of three priests, a deacon, two dedicated virgins and the women's mother:

καὶ ἐπὶ γέμῃ τὸ θήκιον τοῦτο, ἐνορκίζω
 ὑμᾶς τὸν ὧδε ἐφεστῶτα ἄγγελον μὴ
 τίς ποτε τολμῇ ἐνθάδε τινὰ καταθέσθαι.
 Ἰησοῦ Χριστὲ βοήθει τῷ γράψαντι
 πανοικί

Since this tomb is groaning, I adjure you by
 the angel that stands guard here, let no one
 dare to place anyone else here. Jesus Christ
 assist the writer and the whole household.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ U. HUTTNER, *Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley* (Leiden 2013) 291–301.

⁵⁸ The alternatives are discussed by Cline, and by Horsley and Luxford. H. Grégoire argued that the Thera angels were Christian; M. Guarducci that they were gnostic: G. KIOURTZIAN, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades, de la fin du IIIe au VIIe siècle après J.C.* (Paris 2000) 247–82 classifies them as Christian, supporting the judgement of FEISSEL 1977, 209–14.

⁵⁹ ICG 4832. The devout household for whom this tomb was reserved resembles and might have been nearly contemporary with the family-based monastic community created by the elder Macrina, sister of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, in Pontus. FEISSEL 1977, 212–4 comments on the resemblance of the Melos and Eumeneia examples, and has

In their recent discussion Horsley and Luxford cautiously but surely rightly infer that “we may not be far from the idea that the angel is the soul of the deceased”⁶⁰. It would be arbitrary to think of a direct connection between the Melos and the Eumeneia texts. Rather, the idea of a guardian angel being invoked to protect the grave had certainly arisen independently in two distinct, devout communities, which drew on shared ideas about the nature and role of angels.⁶¹

The author of the Letter to the Colossians, as expounded by Theodoret and confirmed in the reaction of the Orthodox Church at the Council of Laodicea, indicates that the concept of personalised angels, spiritual beings that extended the lives of the deceased and could perpetuate their protective and supportive presence among the living, was part of the early Christian heritage from the Jews. No example of this belief is more eloquent than the angel of a Christian holy man, Roubes, bearing the name of the founding father of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, who had migrated in the later years of his life to be both a protector and inspiration to the burgeoning Christian community of mid third-century Phrygia. Not only Roubes and his Christian followers in Eumeneia, but also Origen and his Pontic follower Gregory had a fully developed concept of angels in their theological understanding. In the Panegyric of Origen, Gregory articulated his belief both that Christ, the Word of God, could be addressed as the *μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος*, the ‘Angel of Great Council’, and that he himself had been guided in spiritual matters since his youth by a personal angel.⁶² Origen dealt extensively with angels in his writings, distinguishing grades in a notional angelic hierarchy which ranged from personal angels, like that of Gregory, to Christ himself, who as the Angel of Great Council, who revealed the entirety of God’s message to all mankind, and appears to have served in Gregory’s understanding as the messenger who guided truly wise Christians, such as Origen himself.⁶³

also argued for the “role tutélaire des anges” at Thera. But if so, they must simply have been protecting their own graves, and it is better here to adopt Horsley and Luxford’s view that they were simply the souls of the dead, without emphasizing their tutelary function.

⁶⁰ HORSLEY / LUXFORD 2016, 160–9.

⁶¹ HORSLEY / LUXFORD 2016, 160–9 hypothesize that the belief and practice was brought from Thera to Eumeneia. There is no other indication of such a connection, and the angels at Thera do not, according to their own analysis, play the role of protectors of other persons’ graves.

⁶² Greg. Thaum. *Pan. In Orig.* 4 (ed. H. CROUZEL, *Grégoire le thaumaturge. Remerciement à Origène suivi de la lettre d’Origène à Grégoire* [Paris 1969]).

⁶³ The theological basis and textual evidence for this crude summary is inevitably complex. J. W. TRIGG, “The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen’s Theology”, *JThS* 42 (1991) 35–51.

Gaius provided no explicit account of what Roubes had done to inspire his own morality or pious actions except by describing him as a servant of the great God Christ.⁶⁴ Gregory, however, wrote a remarkable and lengthy farewell speech of thanks to Origen before he left to become bishop in his Pontic homeland, in an elaborate sophistic style, following all the prescriptions of Greek rhetoric. This provides by far the most detailed account of Origen as a teacher, and presented the relationship between master and pupil with eloquent metaphors, Biblical analogies, most notably the love that grew between David and Jonathan, and the depth of passion that was inspired by Origen's instruction.

οἷος οὖν τις σπινθήρ ἐνσκήψας μέσῃ τῇ
 ψυχῇ ἡμῶν ἀνήπτετό τε καὶ ἐξεκαίετο
 ὃ τε πρὸς τὸν ἀπάντων ὑπὸ κάλλους
 ἀρρήτου ἐπακτικώτατον αὐτὸν
 Λόγον τὸν ἱερὸν τὸν ἐρασμιωτάτον
 καὶ ὁ πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδε τὸν
 αὐτοῦ φίλον καὶ προήγορον ἔρω· ὃ
 μάλιστα τετρωμένος ἀπάντων τῶν
 δοκούντων ἡμῖν προσήκειν πραγμάτων
 ἢ μαθημάτων τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ
 αὐτῶν τῶν καλῶν μου νόμων ἀμελεῖν
 ἐπειθόμην· πατρίδος τε καὶ οἰκείων
 τῶν τε παρόντων ἐνταῦθα καὶ οἷς
 ἀπεδημήσαμεν· ἐν δέ μοι φίλον ἦν καὶ
 ἀγαπώμενον φιλοσοφία καὶ ὁ ταύτης
 καθηγεμῶν ὁ θεὸς ἄνθρωπος.

And thus, like some spark lighting upon our inmost soul, love was kindled and burst into flame within us – a love at once to the Holy Word, the most lovely object of all, who attracts all irresistibly toward Himself by His unutterable beauty, and to this man, His friend and advocate. And being most mightily affected by this love, I was persuaded to give up all those matters or objects of study which seemed to be most suitable for us, and even my fine Roman laws themselves, and my fatherland and friends, both those who were present with me then, and those from whom I had parted. For me there was only one dear and desirable object, philosophy, and that master of philosophy, this inspired man.⁶⁵

It would be extraordinary if we were able to match this eloquence with similar expressions of homage from Gaius to Roubes in verse rather than Gregory's prose address, but we know at least that the feeling between the two men was so strong that Roubes accompanied his pupil to settle in distant Phrygia.

⁶⁴ Μεγάλοιο Θ[εο]ῦ Χρ(ιστοῦ) θεράποντι. This seems to be a poetic equivalent of the θεοῦ δούλος, which was already used to denote pious Christians in the third and early fourth centuries, and became widespread in later centuries. For an interesting example from around 300, see M. ALKAN / J. NOLLÉ, "Heliodoros, or the fate of a Christian Councilman of Perinthos during the Great Persecution", *Gephyra* 14 (2017) 115–28, which refers to the local Christian community at Bithynian Cius collectively as δούλους τοῦ Θεοῦ, and to the dead Heliodorus as having served God as a slave, δεδουλώσθε τῷ θεῷ.

⁶⁵ Greg. Thaum. *Pan. In Orig.* 6; translation adapted from Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. 6 (1886); on Origen's teaching style, see J.W. TRIGG, "Marvelous *oikonomia*: Reflections on Origen's Understanding of Divine and Human Pedagogy in the Address Ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus", *J ECS* 9 (2001) 27–52, and F. CELIA, "Studying the Scriptures at the School of Caesarea: the testimony of Gregory of Neocaesarea's *oratio panegyrica*", in: B. BITTON-ASHKELONY et al. (eds.), *Origeniana Duodecima* (Leuven 2019) 285–295.

4. Himmlischer Lohn für tugendhaftes Leben. Das Gedenken an Regulus und seine Töchter Olympion und Aquilina

Markus Öhler

ΤΟΝ ΠΑΣΧΕ ΕΟΦΙΗ ΚΑΙΑ
 ΡΕΤΗ ΚΕΚΟΜΗΜΕΝΟΝ
 ΑΝΔΡΑ· ΡΗΓΛΟΝ ΑΜΑ
 ΔΥΕΙΝ ΤΕ ΚΝΟΙΣ ΕΝΘΑ
 ΔΕ ΓΑΙΑ ΜΦΕΚΑΛΥΨΕ
 ΟΥΝΟΜΑΤΑ ΔΕ ΤΕ ΚΕ
 ΩΝ Ο ΛΥΜΠΙΝΑ ΚΥΛΙΝΑ
 ΤΣΩ ΘΕΟΣ ΓΕΝΕΤΗ ΨΥ
 ΑΓΑΥΤΟΣ ΑΝΤΕΛΑΒΕΤ
 ΙΜΗ ΜΗΕΝΟC ΕΥΣΕΒΗΙ
 ΡΓΑΣΑΝΤΟ ΚΑΤΑΚΟCΗ
 ΑΝΘΩ ΠΤΩΧΟΥC ΕΝ ΠΛΗΑ
 ΑΓΑΘΩ ΦΙΛΟΥC ΤΕΤΙΜΗ
 CΑΝ· CΤΟΡΓΗ ΔΕ ΠΟΛΛΗ ΚΑΙΑ
 ΜΙΜΩCΥΝ ΓΕΝΕΙΗ ΕΦΥΛΑ
 ΞΑΝΚΑΙ ΠΑCΙΒΡΟΤΟΙC ΦΙΛΟ
 ΞΕΝΙΗΝ ΑCΜΕΝΩC ΕΠΟ
 ΘΗΣΑΝ ΤΟΝ ΠΟΘΙΝΟΝ ΚΑΙ
 ΑCΥΝΚΡΙΤΟΝ ΕΥΜΒΙΟΝ ΑΜΑ
 ΤΟΙC ΓΛΥΚΥΤΑΤΟΙC ΤΕ ΚΝΟΙC
 ΕΛΕΙΝ ΑΚΥΛΙΑ ΜΗ ΜΟΝΕΥΩ
 ΤΟΝ ΠΡΟCΚΥΝΤΟΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΑ
 ΛΥΚΥΤΑΤΟΙC ΑΔΕΛΦ
 ΚΑΙ ΑΚΥΛΙΝΟC Μ
 ΩΝ ΕΝΤΑCΙΝ ΕΥ
 ΚΑΙ ΙΗΕΙΟΝ ΦΙΛΟΝΙΟΙ
 ΑΝΟC ΜΗ ΜΟΝΕΥΩ

Fig. 20: ICG 4731 Laodikeia Pontika, Paphlagonien, Kleinasien, spätes 3. – frühes 4. Jh. n. Chr. (Zeichnung: *Studia Pontica* III 20)

- 1 τὸν πάσης σοφίης καὶ ἀ-
ρετῆς κεκοσμημένον
ἄνδρα· Ῥῆγλον ἅμα
δυσεῖν τέκνοις ἐνθά-
5 δε γαί' ἀμφεκάλυψε·
οὐνόματα δὲ τεκέ-
ων Ὀλύμπι<ο>ν Ἀκυλῖνά
τ[ε], ὧν θεὸς γενέτης ψυ-
[χ]ᾶς αὐτὸς ἀντελάβετ[ο]
10 μμνημένος εὐσεβίης, ἥ[ν]
[εἰ]ργάσαντο κατὰ κόσμ[ον]
ἀνθ' ὧν πτωχοὺς ἐνέπλησα[ν]
ἀγαθῶν, φίλους τ' ἐτίμη-
σαν, στοργῇ δὲ πολλῇ καὶ ἀ-
15 μιμήτῳ συγγενείῃ ἐφύλα-
ξαν καὶ πᾶσι βροτοῖς φιλο-
ξενίην ἀσμένως ἐπό-
θησαν(?¹). τὸν ποθινὸν καὶ
ἀσύγκριτον σύμβιον ἅμα
20 τοῖς γλυκυτάτοις τέκνοις
ἐλεῖνῃ Ἀκυλλία μνημονεύ·
τὸν προσκυνητὸν πατέρα [ἄμ]-
[α γ]λυκυτάτοις ἀδελφ[οῖς ...]
[...] καὶ Ἀκυλῖνος μ[νημονεύ?]-
25 [ομεν· τὸ?]ν ἐν πᾶσιν εὐ[στορ]-
[γο]ν καὶ [γ]νή[σ]ιον φίλον
Ἰο[υλι]-
ανὸς μνημονεύ.
- 1 Den mit aller Weisheit und
Tugend geschmückten
Mann Regulus, zusammen
mit zwei Kindern,
5 hat die Erde hier umfassen.
Die Namen aber der
Kinder (sind) Olympion und
Aquilina.
Deren Seelen hat Gott, der
Erzeuger,
selbst aufgenommen,
10 eingedenk der Frömmigkeit, die sie
anstandsgemäß übten.
Dafür, dass sie die Armen erfüllten
mit guten Dingen, die Freunde
ehrten und mit viel und
15 unvergleichlicher Zuneigung die
Familie
schützten und allen Sterblichen
bereitwillig Gastfreundschaft
gewährten(?). Des vermissten und
unvergleichlichen Gatten zugleich
20 mit den süßesten Kindern
gedenke ich, die unglückliche
Aquilina.
Des verehrten Vaters
zugleich mit den süßesten
Geschwistern gedenken wir (?)...
... und Aquilinus ...
25 Des in allem geschätzten
und aufrechten Freundes
gedenke ich, Iulianus.

¹ Was mit ἐπόθησαν, wörtlich „sie sehnten sich“, genau gemeint ist, bleibt unklar, wenn-
gleich der Sinn der Aussage offensichtlich ist. Eine Verbindung von εὐξενία und ποθέω(?)
findet sich in ICG 1267 (oberes Tembristal, 300–450 n. Chr.).

Die Inschrift, herausgegeben von H. Grégoire, stammt aus der Gegend um das pontische Laodikeia (heute Lâdik, ca. 70 km südlich von Amisos [Samsun]), einem Teil der Phazimonitis um Neoklaudiopolis in der Landschaft Paphlagonien. Die Stadt ist lediglich als Münzprägestätte unter Mithradates VI. (gest. 63 v. Chr.) bekannt, war also nicht sehr bedeutend. Der ursprüngliche Kontext sowie der gegenwärtige Aufenthaltsort sind unbekannt, die Maße des Kalksteins, der einen Spitzgiebel trug, betragen 2,13 m (Höhe) und 0,69 m (Breite). Die Inschrift kann mit den Herausgebern der *Studia Pontica* in das späte 3. oder frühe 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr. datiert werden.² Insgesamt sind aus Pontus nur wenige christliche Inschriften überliefert.³

Der Text der Grabinschrift ist in Pseudo-Hexametern verfasst, hat also einen literarischen Anspruch und ist nicht formelhaft gestaltet. In dem Epitaph wird dreier Personen gedacht: Regulus (griech. Rheglos) sowie seiner Töchter Olympi(o)n und Aquilina. Errichtet wurde die Inschrift von der Witwe Aquillia, einem Aquilinus und einem Freund namens Iulianus. Ob Regulus und seine beiden Kinder zeitnah verstarben oder anlässlich des Todes von einem der drei eine neue Inschrift erstellt wurde, muss unbestimmt bleiben. Über die soziale Stellung lässt sich immerhin annehmen, dass es sich um eine nicht unvermögende und durchaus gebildete Familie handelte. Sie konnte es sich leisten, das Grab mit einem relativ großen Epitaph zu versehen, dessen Text zugleich persönlich sowie in Aufnahme klassischer Formulierungen gestaltet wurde.

Über die drei Personen wird Einiges für die Nachwelt festgehalten, wobei zu beachten ist: Ein Epitaph sagt nicht nur etwas über die Verstorbenen und deren Taten aus, sondern auch über die Hinterbliebenen und deren Werte. Sie sind öffentliche Zeugnisse über das, was die Ersteller:innen der Inschrift für wichtig und bedeutsam hielten. Dies konnte religiös ausgerichtet sein, die Trauer artikulieren oder die Stellung und das lobenswerte Leben des/der Verstorbenen beschreiben, oftmals – wie im vorliegenden Fall – in einer Mischung von mehreren Elementen. Im Blick auf christliche Inschriften ist zudem wichtig, dass eine eindeutige Kennzeichnung als Christ oder mittels christlicher Symbole eher selten vorkam (auch hier nicht), da die Grabinschrift die gesamte Umgebungsgesellschaft, Christen wie Nicht-Christen, im Blick hatte.

Der Paterfamilias Regulus zeichnete sich laut der Inschrift durch Weisheit und Tugend aus. Beides sind Zuschreibungen, die in christlichen wie nicht-

² *Studia Pontica III. Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines du Pont et l'Arménie* (ed. J.G.C. ANDERSON, F. CUMONT, H. GRÉGOIRE) Fascicule I (Bruxelles 1910) Nr. 20. Vgl. BELKE 2017, 65. DRESKEN-WEILAND 2012, 241–243 favorisiert aufgrund der erwähnten Armenfürsorge eher das 4./5. Jahrhundert n. Chr., siehe dazu aber unten.

³ Vgl. BELKE 2017, 64f.

christlichen Inschriften sehr häufig vorkommen, um die verstorbene Person zu ehren.⁴ Weisheit und Tugend sind der Schmuck des Regulus.⁵

Die beiden Töchter und ihr Vater sind „von der Erde umfassen“. Die Trauer der Witwe am Ende des Epitaphs wird sowohl durch die blumige Beschreibung des Ehemanns und der Kinder artikuliert wie durch ihre Selbstdarstellung als „bemitleidenswert“ (ἐλεεινή). Zum Abschluss wird schließlich noch einmal die Trauer eines Freundes namens Iulianus, wohl von Regulus, erkennbar, was der zuvor angesprochenen Ehre für die Freunde entspricht.

In der Grabinschrift für Regulus, Olympion und Aquilina ist besonders wichtig, dass Gott, der Erzeuger, ihre Seelen aufgenommen hat (θεὸς γενέτης ψυ[χ]ᾶς αὐτὸς ἀντελάβετ[ο]).⁷ Auffällig ist hier zunächst, dass von θεός die Rede ist, ohne dass klar würde, welcher Gott genauerhin gemeint sein könnte.⁸ Das deutet bereits auf eine christliche – oder auch jüdische – Herkunft der Inschrift hin. Gott wird zudem als „Erzeuger“ (γενέτης) bezeichnet. In Inschriften wird das Wort manchmal verwendet, um Vater oder Mutter anzugeben⁹, in der biblischen Überlieferung wird es u. a. auf Zeugung durch Gott bezogen (z. B. in Dtn 32,18; Ps 2,7). Bei Philo von Alexandrien findet sich der Gedanke öfter: Es wird als Geheimwissen bezeichnet, dass der ungezeugte Gott auch der Erzeuger von allem ist (ὁ ἀγέννητος θεὸς καὶ τὰ σύμπαντα γεννῶν; *Cher.* 43 f.).¹⁰ In 1 Joh 5,1 wird über diejenigen, die glauben, dass Jesus der Christus ist, gesagt, dass sie aus Gott gezeugt sind (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται) und den lieben, der sie gezeugt hat (τὸν γεννήσαντα; vgl. auch 2,29; 4,7). Die Aussage findet sich schließlich auch in anderen christlichen Inschriften des 3./4. Jh.¹¹, ihre Verwendung in unserer Inschrift nimmt diese Überzeugung also auf.

⁴ Vgl. zur Weisheit etwa *ICG* 89 (Laodikeia Katakekaumene, 5.–6. Jh. n. Chr.); 372 (Laodikeia Katakekaumene, 350–380 n. Chr.); 762 (in der Nähe von Lystra, 200–350 n. Chr.), zur Tugend u. a. *ICG* 1269 und 1270 (Oberes Tembristal, 200–400 n. Chr.).

⁵ Vgl. *Studia Pontica* III 32: τμῆς κεκοσ[μηνή]ον πάσης (Therma von Phazimonites, o. Dat.).

⁶ Vgl. z. B. *ICG* 137 (Kanna, 300–500 n. Chr.); 894 (Isaura Nova, 200–250 n. Chr.); 4462 (Apamea, 200–300 n. Chr.).

⁷ Vgl. dazu die Formulierung *receptus ad Deum* auf dem Prosenes-Sarkophag (*CIL* VI 8498, Rom, 217 n. Chr.). Mit der Vorsilbe ἀντ- wird angedeutet, dass die Aufnahme der Seelen Antwort auf ihr Verhalten ist.

⁸ Die meisten christlichen Inschriften aus Kleinasien verweisen auf Gott, nicht auf Christus.

⁹ Z. B. *IG* X 3,3 195 (Kallatis, 4. Jh. n. Chr.); *IG* XII,4,4 3913 (Patmos, 3. Jh. n. Chr.); *SEG* 36,1099 (Sardis, 5.–6. Jh. n. Chr.); vgl. auch Joh 9,1.

¹⁰ Vgl. auch Phil. Al. *All.* 3.219 (Gott erzeugt Glück in der Seele der Menschen; vgl. *Somn.* 1.173); *Post.* 135 (Tugendhaftigkeit wird von Gott gezeugt). Auch Epiktet formuliert ähnlich, wenn er Gott dankt, „der du mich gezeugt hast“ (ὁ με σὺ ἐγέννησας; *Diss.* 4.10.16).

¹¹ *ICG* 1159 (Oberes Tembristal, 200–350 n. Chr.): ὁ πάντων γεν[έ]της; vgl. auch *ICG* 1689 (Oberes Tembristal, 275–400 n. Chr.).

Dies gilt auch für die Aussage, wonach Gott die Seelen der Verstorbenen aufgenommen hat. Der Glaube, dass mit dem Tod die Seele wieder zu den Göttern zurückkehrt, findet sich zwar auch in paganen Inschriften,¹² in unserem Epitaph wird dies aber als eine Rettungstat verstanden. Sie wurde mit dem Verhalten der Verstorbenen begründet (ἀνθ' ὧν): Gott gedachte nämlich ihrer εὐσέβεια, ihrer „Gottesfurcht“ bzw. „Frömmigkeit“. Dies ist seit jeher eine der wichtigsten Tugenden der griechischen Welt,¹³ in frühchristlichen Texten begegnet sie ab dem frühen 2. Jh.¹⁴ Die εὐσέβεια ist keine ausschließlich spirituelle Angelegenheit, sondern zugleich ein tugendhaftes Verhalten, das sich schlicht und einfach gehört.¹⁵

In vier Handlungsfeldern taten sich der Vater und die beiden Töchter in einer Weise hervor, die ihnen die Aufnahme Gottes sicherte:

An erster Stelle wird die Fürsorge für die Armen genannt. Sie war für die frühchristliche Bewegung ein wesentlicher Identitätsfaktor und ist ein weiteres deutliches Kennzeichen für den christlichen Charakter der Inschrift. Von πτωχοί ist ausschließlich in christlichen Inschriften die Rede. Die Versorgung der ökonomisch Schwächsten gehörte in der griechisch-römischen Welt nicht zu den Ansprüchen an ein ehrenhaftes Verhalten, in der jüdisch-christlichen Tradition hatte sie hingegen hohe Bedeutung. So spielt die Formulierung ἐνέπλησαν ἀγαθῶν in unserer Inschrift wahrscheinlich auf Lk 1,53 an: Dort wird Gott gelobt als derjenige, der die „Hungernden mit Gütern füllte“ (πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν, vgl. Spr 12,14) und die Besitzenden leer wegschickte. Auch in der *Didache*, einer frühchristlichen Gemeindeordnung vom Ende des 1. Jh. n. Chr., wird die Versorgung von Armen gefordert: Wenn kein Prophet zu versorgen ist, sollen Teile des wirtschaftlichen Ertrags „den Armen gegeben“ werden (δότε τοῖς πτωχοῖς; *Did.* 13.3). Entsprechendes findet sich in Lukasevangelium und Apostelgeschichte

¹² Vgl. IG XIV 2241 (Sabini, 1.–2. Jh. n. Chr.): „doch sein unsterbliches Herz fuhr auf zu den Seligen, denn die Seele ist ewig“ (τὸ δ' ἀθάνατ[ον] ἐς μακάρων ἀνόρο[υσ]ε κέαρ· ψυχὴ γὰρ αἰεῖ<ω>[ς]); christlich(?) in ICG 402 (Laodikeia Katakekaumene, 200–225 n. Chr.): „Die Seele aber ging zum Land der Frommen.“ (ψυχὴ δὲ ὤχετο ἐς εὐσεβῶν χώραν); sicher christlich in ICG 2031 (Athen, 4./5. Jh. n. Chr.): „in den Äther flog die Seele und ist mit denen zusammen, mit denen sie vorher zusammen war“ (εἰς αἰθέρα/ψυχὴ διέπτη καὶ σύνεστιν, οἷς τὸ πρὶν). Vgl. dazu u. a. auch BREYTENBACH / TZAVELLA 2023, 329–332.

¹³ BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 808: „Religious dispositions attributed to Christians such as ‚piety‘ (εὐσέβεια) were usually the same as in pagan families.“ In Laodikeia Pontika wird die εὐσέβεια eines Verstorbenen auch in einer weiteren Inschrift gelobt (*Studia Pontica* III 21; kaiserzeitlich).

¹⁴ Zentral ist der Begriff v. a. in den Pastoralbriefen (1 Tim 2,2 u. v. m.) und im 2. Petrusbrief (1,3 u. ö.).

¹⁵ Die Formulierung κατὰ κόσμον findet sich bereits bei Homer (z. B. *Il.* 10.472) in der Bedeutung „der Ordnung, dem Anstand u. den guten Sitten gemäß“; anders übersetzt DRESKEN-WEILAND 2012, 242: „in der Welt“.

(z. B. Lk 14,3; 18,22; Apg 2,45), in den Pastoralbriefen (1 Tim 3,3.8; 6,17), im Jakobusbrief (Jak 2,5–9.15 f.) oder im *Brief des Polykarp an die Philipper* (6,1). Auch wenn die Versorgung von Armen häufig auf die Gemeinde und ihre Funktionäre übertragen wurde (so schon 1 Tim 3,3.8; Apg 4,35) bis hin zu Armenanstalten¹⁶, spielte die individuelle Freigiebigkeit eine wichtige Rolle, gerade auch für die Selbstdarstellung.¹⁷ Auch in Inschriften wird sie erwähnt, so etwa in einer Grabinschrift aus der Nähe von Lystra (200–250 n. Chr.): In ihr wird über einen verstorbenen Presbyter berichtet, er hätte als „Beistand für Witwen, Waisen und Arme“ gewirkt (χηρῶν ὀρφανῶ[ν ... ταλαι]πύρων ἄρωγός; ICG 791).¹⁸ Für unsere Inschrift ist hervorzuheben, dass es nicht nur der Vater Regulus war, der sich durch Wohltätigkeit auszeichnete, sondern auch die beiden Töchter. Dass auch Frauen Arme versorgten, war im 3./4. Jh. nicht ungewöhnlich.¹⁹

Die anderen drei Verhaltensweisen, auch hier wieder auf den Vater und die beiden Töchter bezogen, sind hingegen nicht typisch christlich, sondern gehören in den weiten Bereich griechisch-römischer Ethik: Ehrung der Freunde, Zuneigung zu den Verwandten und Gastfreundschaft.²⁰ Sie sind alle von zwischenmenschlicher Art, während Eigenschaften wie Schönheit, wie sie z. B. bei Frauen häufig genannt werden²¹, nicht erwähnt werden. Es geht um das ethische Handeln, aus dem sich die postmortale Existenz der Seele bei Gott begründet.

Gastfreundschaft spielte allerdings auch in christlichen Texten eine wichtige Rolle.²² In Mt 10,11–14 wird jenen, die Verkündigern des nahen Himmelsreichs Gastfreundschaft gewähren, bleibender Friede zugesagt. Schon Paulus

¹⁶ Basileios von Ankyra, *Ep. syn.* 150.3, hält fest, dass für die Versorgung der Armen jene besser geeignet sind, die deren Bedürfnisse kennen; vgl. insgesamt zu den πτωχοτροφεῖα und ξενοδοχεῖα BROWN 2002, 33–44; MÜLLER 2009.

¹⁷ Vgl. BROWN 2002, 74–112.

¹⁸ Vgl. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 535–547; vgl. auch ICG 52 (Laodikeia Katakekaumene, 4./5. Jh. n. Chr.): πένησιν ζῶν θάρσος; 81 (Gdanmaa/Ekdaumaua, 3./4. Jh. n. Chr.): φθωγῶν θρέφθη; 1355 (Kotiaeion, 200–350 n. Chr.): τὸν πτωχοῦς φιλέοντα; 1498 (Gdanmaa/Ekdaumaua, 200–350 n. Chr.): πτωγῶν θρέπτειραν.

¹⁹ In ICG 81 und 1498 werden jeweils Frauen als Ernährerinnen der Armen gepriesen.

²⁰ Vgl. ZIMMERMANN K. 2017, 497.

²¹ Vgl. z. B. ICG 1033 (2./3. Jh. n. Chr., Fulvia, Eumeneia): Darin formuliert Flavius Pollion über seine Frau Claudia Gellia (Z. 5–13: „Du allein aber übertrafst an Schönheit die ruhmreichen Geschlechter der Frauen. Dir aber gab Weisheit Gott, der im Himmel als König regiert, auf dass du in Liebe zu deinem Ehemann unsterblichen (Ruhm) erringst; du vereinst mit Schönheit Weisheit und Tugendhaftigkeit (in Vollendung).“ (ἀλλὰ σὺ μούνα | καλλοο[σ]ύνα προ[φέρεσκες] εὐκλέ[ι]α φύ[λ]α γυναικῶν | δῶκε δέ σοι σοφίην θεὸς οὐρανῷ ἐνβα[σιλεύων] |, ὅφρα τεὸν φιλέουσα πόσ[ιν κλέος] | ἄφθιτον ἔξεις | κίρναμέ[ν]η κάλ[λ] | λει σοφὴν ἀρετὴν τε τε[λείαν(?)]).

²² Vgl. dazu sowie zur griechisch-römischen Hochschätzung von Gastfreundschaft HILTBUNNER / GORCE / WEHR 1972.

hatte dazu aufgefordert, die φιλοξενία zu pflegen (Röm 12,13), die er auch selbst in Anspruch nahm. In Hebr 13,2 wird die Aufnahme von Fremden damit motiviert, dass auf diese Weise bereits Engel beherbergt wurden.²³ Die Schwierigkeiten, die sich aus der Gastfreundschaft manchmal ergaben, werden in 1 Petr 4,9 daran erkennbar, dass sie „ohne Murren“ geschehen soll und führen in der *Didache* zu konkreten Regeln für die Aufnahme von Wanderlehrern (*Did.* 11–13). Ausdrücklich zur Gastfreundschaft fordert der 1. *Clemensbrief* wiederholt auf (u. a. in 10,7; 11,1; 12,1 und 3; vgl. Hermas, *mand.* 8.1.10; *sim.* 9.27.2). Dionysios v. Korinth lobte die Gastfreundschaft des römischen Bischofs (Eus. Caes. *HE* 4.23.10) und Aristides führte sie als Tugend aller Christen an (*fr.* 15.7): „Wenn sie einen Fremden erblicken, führen sie ihn unter ihr Dach und freuen sich über ihn wie über einen wirklichen Bruder.“²⁴

Inschriften wie diese zum Gedenken an Regulus, Olympion und Aquilina sind einerseits darauf ausgerichtet, die persönliche Beziehung zu den Verstorbenen zu artikulieren, und zwar sowohl für die Familie als auch für eine lokale Öffentlichkeit. Indem aber andererseits vor allem Tugenden der Verstorbenen hervorgehoben werden, die auch in der Umgebungsgesellschaft als wichtig angesehen werden, wollen die Verfasser und Verfasserinnen zwei Ziele erreichen: Auf diese Weise können sie zum einen als Noch-Lebende zeigen, dass sie ehrenhafte Vorfahren und Verwandte haben und an deren Ehrstatus partizipieren. Zum anderen legen sie der Öffentlichkeit dar, was sie selbst als ehrenhaftes Verhalten verstehen. Dabei wird in der vorliegenden Inschrift die spezifisch christliche Armenfürsorge kombiniert mit Tugenden, die seit Jahrhunderten als erstrebenswert galten und auch im Christentum hoch angesehen waren. Der Umstand, dass die Versorgung von Mittellosen besonders hervorgehoben wird, lässt aber erkennen, dass dies in der Umgebungsgesellschaft, die offenbar teilweise christlich geprägt war, als besonders lobenswert galt. Zugleich ist aber wichtig, dass die Tugenden, die Regulus und seine Töchter insgesamt an den Tag gelegt hatten, in christlichen wie nicht-christlichen Kreisen als erstrebenswert angesehen wurden.²⁵

²³ Man denke dazu neben Gen 18 auch an die Legende von Philemon und Baukis in Ovids *Metamorphosen* (8.611–724).

²⁴ Auch die Aberkiosinschrift (ICG 1597; Hierapolis, 175–200 n. Chr.) verweist indirekt auf die Gastfreundschaft; vgl. auch ICG 60 (Gdanmaa / Ekdaumaa, 200–350 n. Chr.); ICG 1267 (Oberes Tembristal, 300–450 n. Chr.); ICG 4100 (Plataia, 4./5. Jh. n. Chr.).

²⁵ Vgl. dazu LEPPIN 2024, 19–23, 29.

5. Zwei Inschriften – eine Person? Ein Bischof und ein „Sackträger“

Christiane Zimmermann

1. Marcus Iulius Eugenius: Opfer von Verfolgung, Bischof und Kirchenerbauer



Fig. 21: ICG 371 Laodicea Combusta, Lykaonien, Kleinasien, ca. 340 n. Chr. (Photo: MAMA I 170)

Die auf einem Marmorsarkophag eingemeißelte Inschrift war bei ihrer Erstaufnahme durch W.M. Calder in den Jahren 1908 bzw. 1909 fast komplett,¹ wenngleich in zwei Teile gebrochen, der Text ist dadurch fast vollständig gesichert.² Der Text ist teilweise über den Rand des Inschriftenfelds hinausgeschrieben, einige Zeilen befinden sich unter dem Inschriftenfeld. Der Sarkophag (Höhe 132 cm; Breite 263 cm; Tiefe 126 cm [oben], 138 cm [unten]) bildete möglicherweise den Teil eines Grabmonuments. Ein Teil der 1908 aufgenommenen Inschrift befand sich im Jahr 2012 auf einem öffentlich zugänglichen Areal in der Mitte des heutigen Ladik / Halıcı (antikes Laodicea Combusta).

¹ W.M. CALDER, „A Journey round the Proseilemmene“, *Klio* 10 (1910) [232–242] 233–234.

² S. ebd. 233; CALDER 1920 und MAMA I 170; M. GUARDUCCI, *Epigrafia greca* IV (Rom 1978) 394–398.

- Μ. Ἰού. Εὐ[γέ]νιος Κυρίλλου Κέλερος Κουησέως βουλ(ευτοῦ)
 στρατευσ[ά]μενος ἐν τῇ κατὰ Πισιδίαν ἡγεμονικῇ τάξι
 καὶ γήμα[ς] θυγατέρα Γαίου Νεστοριανοῦ συνκλητικοῦ
 Φλ. Ἰ[ο]υλ. Φ[λ]αουιανὴν καὶ μετ' ἐπιτε[μ]ίας στρατευσάμενον
 5 ἐν δὲ τῷ μεταξὺ χρόνῳ κελεύσεως [φ]οιτησάσης ἐπὶ Μαξιμίνου
 τοὺς Χρ[ε]ιστιανοὺς θύειν καὶ μὴ ἀπα[λ]λάσσεσθαι τῆς
 στρατεί[α]ς πλείστας δὲ ὅσας βασάνου[ς] ὑπομείνας
 ἐπὶ Διογένους ἡγεμόνος σπουδάσας [τ]ε ἀπαλλαγῆναι
 τῆς στρατείας τὴν τῶν Χρειστιανῶν πίστιν φυλάσσω
 10 χρόνον τ[ε] βραχὺν διατρεΐψας ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέων πόλει
 καὶ βουλήσῃ τοῦ παντοκράτορος θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος
 κατασταθ[εῖ]ς καὶ εἴκοσι πέντε ὅλοις ἔτεσιν τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν
 μετὰ πολ[λ]ῆς ἐπιτειμίας διοι[κ]ήσας καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
 ἀνοικοδο[μ]ήσας ἀπὸ θεμελίων καὶ σύνπαντα τὸν περὶ αὐτὴν
 15 κόσμον τρυτ' ἐστὶν στοῶν τε καὶ τ[ετ]ραστόων καὶ
 ζωγραφιῶ[ν] καὶ κεντήσεων κὲ ὕδρειον καὶ προπύλου καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς
 λιθοξοικοῖς ἔργοις καὶ πᾶ[σι ἀπ]αξαπλῶς κατασκευά[σας λειψόμε]νός
 τε τὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων
 βίον ἐποίησα ἐμαυτῷ πέ[λτα τ]ε καὶ σορὸν ἐν ᾗ τὰ προ[γεγραμμένα]
 ταῦτα ἐποίησα ἐπιγρ<α>φῖνε
 [εἰς κό]σμον τῆς τε ἐκ[κλησίας κ]ὲ τοῦ γένους μου.

Z. 4: lies στρατευσάμενος; Z. 18: lies ἐπιγραφῆναι

Marcus Iulius Eugenius, Sohn des Kyrillos Keler, des Rats Herrn aus

Kouëssos:

Ich leistete Dienst in der Statthalterabteilung von Pisidien
und heiratete die Tochter des Senators Caius Nestorianus,
Flavia Iulia Flaviane. Würdevoll leistete ich meinen Dienst,

- 5 als in der Zwischenzeit der Befehl während der Regierung des
Maximinus eintraf,
dass die Christen opfern müssten und sich nicht entfernen dürften
vom

Dienst: Da hielt ich einer Unmenge von Foltern stand
unter dem Statthalter Diogenes und bemühte mich, mich zu entfernen
vom Dienst, und bewahrte den Glauben der Christen

- 10 und für kurze Zeit hielt ich mich in der Stadt der Laodicener auf
und wurde durch den Ratschluss des allmächtigen Gottes als Bischof
eingesetzt und verwaltete 25 volle Jahre das Bischofsamt
mit großer Würde, und das gesamte Kirchengebäude
errichtete ich neu von den Grundmauern an und auch seine gesamte
15 Ausstattung, das heißt die Säulenreihen, den auf vier Seiten von Säulen
eingerahmten Hof und
die Malereien und Mosaiken und das Wasserbecken und das Eingangs-
tor, und mit allen
Arbeiten in Stein und überhaupt mit allem habe ich (den Bau) versehen,
und als ich dabei war, der Menschen Leben zu verlassen,
errichtete ich mir selbst die Grabanlage und den Sarkophag, auf dem
ich das oben Geschriebene einschreiben ließ,
zur Zierde der Kirche und meines Geschlechts.

1.1 Gattung und christliche Merkmale der Inschrift

Bei der im Folgenden vorgestellten Inschrift handelt es sich um eine christliche Sarkophaginschrift.³ Sie enthält mehrere Hinweise auf das christliche Bekenntnis des Verstorbenen: Er wurde aufgrund seines Glaubens verfolgt, wurde Bischof und erbaute eine Kirche. In ihrer ausführlichen und vielfältigen Darstellung unterscheidet sich diese Inschrift deutlich von den zahllosen Grabinschriften der Region, die häufig nicht mehr als den Namen des Verstorbenen enthielten, in aller Regel nach der Form „hier liegt ...“.⁴ Hier dagegen liegt uns eine Art Kurzbiographie des Verstorbenen vor, die eine genauere Betrachtung verdient.

1.2 Marcus Iulius Eugenius: Mitglied der lokalen Elite in Laodicea Combusta

In biographischer Abfolge erzählt der Verstorbene Marcus Iulius Eugenius selbst von seiner Herkunft aus gehobenem Hause, seiner Tätigkeit für den Statthalter in Pisidien, seiner Verfolgung aufgrund seines christlichen Glaubens und seiner Karriere als Bischof in Laodicea Combusta, wohin er nach der Vertreibung kam. Seine besondere Leistung in seiner Bischofszeit war die (Wieder)-Errichtung eines Kirchengebäudes, das in großer Detailgenauigkeit beschrieben wird. Mit seinem Grabmal setzt Marcus Iulius Eugenius der Kirche, aber auch seiner Familie, sowie vor allem sich selbst ein Denkmal. Aufgrund der Angabe der Verfolgung unter Maximinus (Daia) und der Zeitangabe seines Bischofsamtes lässt sich diese Inschrift auf ca. 340 n. Chr. datieren. Damit ist sie eine der wenigen datierbaren christlichen Inschriften aus der Region Lykaonien in Zentralkleinasien.

Der Inhalt der Inschrift lässt sich in zwei Teile gliedern: Im ersten berichtet Marcus Iulius Eugenius von seiner Herkunft und seiner politischen Karriere in Pisidien, im zweiten von seiner klerikalen Karriere in Laodicea. Marcus Iulius Eugenius war der Sohn eines Decurios (βουλευτής) und mit der Tochter eines Senators⁵ verheiratet. Seiner Familie war das römische Bürgerrecht verliehen worden (daher sein Gentilizname Iulius), sein dritter (griechischer) Name, Eugenius, bedeutet „von guter Herkunft“. Der Vater des Marcus Iulius Eugenius verfügte offenbar über genügend Finanzmittel, um

³ Die folgende Darstellung basiert auf BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 574–589. Vgl. auch S. DESTEPHEN, *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire III: Prosopographie du Diocèse d'Asie (325–641)* (Paris 2004) 281–283, mit weiterer Literatur.

⁴ W. WISCHMEYER, „M. Iulius Eugenius. Eine Fallstudie zum Thema ‚Christen und Gesellschaft im 3. und 4. Jahrhundert‘“, *ZNW* 81 (1990) [225–246] 230–231, zählt weitere Besonderheiten auf.

⁵ Vgl. dazu auch WISCHMEYER 1992, 59.

das Amt des Decurios übertragen zu bekommen,⁶ vermutlich gehörte ihm ein Landgut in der Gegend von Laodicea.⁷ Die Eheschließung mit der Tochter eines Senators dürfte den familiären Erwartungen entsprochen und die finanzielle Situation des Eugenius noch gestärkt haben. Flavia Iulia Flaviana trug ebenfalls das Gentiliz der Iulier, vermutlich war sie ebenfalls im Grab bestattet, wird allerdings nicht weiter erwähnt.

In der Regierungszeit des Maximinus Daia (305–313 n. Chr.) war Eugenius in der Verwaltung des Statthalters von Pisidien tätig. Dies zeigt, dass es auch für Christen in dieser Zeit möglich war, höhere Ämter zu bekleiden. Als Maximinus Daia den Befehl erteilte, dass auch die Christen zum paganen Opfer verpflichtet waren und den Dienst nicht quittieren durften,⁸ verließ Marcus Iulius Eugenius seinen Posten dennoch unter Missachtung der kaiserlichen Vorschriften. Die Inschrift erwähnt Verfolgung und Leid, Marcus Iulius Eugenius entkommt jedoch nach Laodicea, vermutlich seine Heimatstadt.

In der Gemeinde von Laodicea gelangte Marcus Iulius Eugenius offenbar sehr schnell zu Ansehen angesichts seiner christlichen Überzeugung und seiner in der Verfolgung bewiesenen Standhaftigkeit. Vermutlich auch auf Grund seiner Herkunft und seiner Erfahrung in der Verwaltung und vielleicht auch dank seiner Selbstdarstellung wurde Marcus Iulius Eugenius nach sehr kurzer Zeit Bischof und blieb für 25 Jahre im Amt. Die Formulierung, dies sei dem Ratschluss des „allmächtigen Gottes“ zu verdanken (Z. 11), lässt sich als theologische Autorisierungsstrategie des Bischofs verstehen, der sein Bischofsamt damit auf den Willen Gottes zurückführt. Da sich die Verfolgungen unter Maximinus Daia auf die Jahre 311–313 n. Chr. datieren lassen und Marcus Iulius Eugenius 25 Jahre im Amt war, lässt sich sein Tod und damit auch die Inschrift ziemlich genau auf ca. 340 n. Chr. datieren.

Der zweite Teil der Inschrift gilt der Hauptleistung des Marcus Iulius Eugenius, der (Wieder-)Errichtung des Kirchengebäudes in Laodicea,⁹ die

⁶ Es ist allerdings nicht sicher entscheidbar, ob sich der Titel *βουλευτής* in der Inschrift auf Kyrillos Keler oder auf Marcus Iulius Eugenius bezieht.

⁷ Zur wachsenden Anzahl römischer Landgüter in dieser Zeit s. WISCHMEYER 1992, 57.

⁸ Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.14.9 berichtet von der wachsenden Zahl paganer Priester und Hohepriester unter Maximinus Daia. Vgl. dazu A. FILIPPINI, „Fossili e contraddizioni dell'era constantiniana: i dignitari del culto imperiale nella Tarda Antichità e il loro ruolo nelle 'riforme religiose' di Massimino Daia e Giuliano“, in: A. KOLB/M. VITALE (Hg.), *Kaiserkult in den Provinzen des römischen Reiches. Organisation, Kommunikation und Repräsentation* (Berlin 2016) 409–475.

⁹ Das in der Übersetzung mit „neu errichten“ wiedergegebene Verb *ἀνοικοδομέω* kann sich auf eine Ersterrichtung beziehen, das Präfix *ἀν-* macht es jedoch wahrscheinlich, dass es um eine Wiedererrichtung einer Kirche geht, die möglicherweise während der Christenverfolgungen zerstört wurde. Im Jahr 303 n. Chr. hatte Diokletian den Befehl gegeben, alle Kirchengebäude zu zerstören. S. dazu S. MITCHELL, „Maximinus and the Christians in A. D. 312: A New Latin Inscription“, *JRS* 78 (1988) [105–124] 111.

er vermutlich aus eigenen finanziellen Mitteln bestritt. Die von Eugenius errichtete Kirche besaß Säulenreihen, einen von Säulen gerahmten Hof, war mit Gemälden und Mosaiken sowie Steinarbeiten dekoriert. Zum Gebäude gehörte ein Atrium, ein Wasserbecken¹⁰ und ein Eingangstor. Die differenzierte Beschreibung zeigt, dass Marcus Iulius Eugenius diese Ausstattung für außergewöhnlich und der besonderen Erwähnung wert hielt. Die in der Inschrift gegebene Beschreibung des Kirchengebäudes ist insofern besonders wichtig, als aus Lykaonien kein vor 340 n. Chr. errichtetes Kirchengebäude erhalten ist.¹¹ Vergleichbar mit dem von Marcus Iulius Eugenius finanzierten Kirchengebäude in Laodicea Combusta ist jedoch möglicherweise die im Jahr 2011 entdeckte Kirche in Laodicea am Lykos, die in der Zeit Konstantins errichtet wurde.¹²

Die Darstellung des Marcus Iulius Eugenius gilt in allererster Linie der Hervorhebung seiner eigenen Leistungen. Damit ähnelt die Inschrift stark der Selbstdarstellung paganer Wohltäter der Zeit, die öffentliche Gebäude errichten ließen und diese Wohltaten auf ihren Grabinschriften ebenfalls deutlich hervorhoben. Einige wenige weitere christliche Inschriften aus der Region gehen in eine ähnliche Richtung.¹³ Sie zeigen uns, dass besonders Christen und Christinnen, die der Oberschicht angehörten, sich in ihnen vertrauter Weise um Anerkennung und Ansehen innerhalb ihrer sozialen Schicht bemühten und deutlich machten, dass sie sich, auch wenn ihr Interesse verstärkt den christlichen Glaubensgeschwistern galt, in nichts von ihrer Herkunftsschicht unterschieden. Von der selbstbewussten Präsentation bischöflicher Bauaktivitäten legt auch die Inschrift des Bischofs Firminianus von Zenonopolis Zeugnis ab, der seiner Kirche ein Aquädukt stiftete.¹⁴ In anderer Weise vergleichbar ist die berühmte Inschrift des Bischofs Aberkios aus Hierapolis in der phrygischen Pentapolis aus dem 2. Jh. n. Chr., in der dieser von seinen Reisen im Auftrag Jesu Christi erzählt. Auch Aberkios

¹⁰ Zum Wasserbecken vgl. auch die Inschrift des Bischofs Firminianus von Zenonopolis, s. B.10. PILHOFFER, „Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates“. Zur Diskussion um die Funktion des Beckens in der Kirche des Marcus Iulius Eugenius vgl. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 580–581.

¹¹ Zum archäologisch höchst schmalen Befund von Kirchengebäuden in ganz Anatolien in Konstantinischer Zeit s. NIEWÖHNER 2016; R. HAENSCH, „Der Kirchenbau in der Dioecesis Asiana. Ein Vergleich mit dem Kirchenbau in den Patriarchaten Antiocheia und Jerusalem und dem in Italien“, in: AMELING 2017, 331–392. MITCHELL 2023b erwähnt eine Kirche aus Zentral-Phrygien, die ins Ende des 3. Jh. datieren könnte (191 f.) sowie eine weitere aus dem oberen Tembris-Tal aus dem frühen 4. Jh. (261 f.); vgl. auch ebd. 347–354.

¹² S. C. ŞİMŞEK, *Church of Laodikeia: Christianity in the Lykos Valley* (Denizli 2015); NIEWÖHNER 2016, 299.

¹³ Vgl. etwa ICG 182 und 762.

¹⁴ Vgl. dazu B.10. PILHOFFER, „Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates“. Zu weiteren bischöflichen Bauaktivitäten vgl. WISCHMEYER 1992, 60–61.

entwickelt auf der Inschrift eine Art Biographie, die allerdings seine Verkündigungsarbeit und seine Aufnahme in den verschiedensten christlichen Gemeinden in den Blick nimmt, die er anhand der gemeinsam gefeierten Eucharistie darstellt.¹⁵

2. Eugenios, der „Sackträger“

Bemerkenswerterweise ist aus Laodicea Combusta eine weitere Inschrift erhalten, ein Epigramm, das ebenfalls von einem Eugenios spricht. Man hat verschiedentlich angenommen, es könne sich bei Marcus Iulius Eugenius und diesem Eugenios um dieselbe Person handeln.¹⁶ Beide Inschriften stammten dann von einem (größeren) Grabmonument.



Fig. 22: ICG 372 aus Laodicea Combusta, Lykaonien, Kleinasien, ca. 370 n. Chr.
(Photo: ©British Institute at Ankara-PHI5976)

¹⁵ Vgl. dazu A. BLANK, *Die Grabinschrift des Aberkios. Ein Kommentar* (Regensburg 2023). Vgl. auch ICG 1597. Für einen Überblick zu den Bischöfen im Osten des Reiches anhand der Inschriften s. D. FEISSEL, „L’évêque, titres et fonctions d’après les inscriptions grecques jusqu’au VII^e siècle“, *Actes du XI^e congrès international d’archéologie chrétienne* (Rom 1989) 801–828.

¹⁶ MITCHELL 1993, 102–103. NIEWÖHNER 2016, 296.

- τὸν Χ(ριστο)ῦ σοφίης ὑποφήτορα τὸν σοφὸν ἄνδρα
 οὐρανίου Γενέτου κύδιμον ἀθλοφόρον
 [Σ]εβῆρον πόλεων πανεπίσκοπον ἡγητῆρα
 [λ]αοῦ σακκοφόρου μνήμα κέκευθε τόδε
 5 [λεί]ψανον Εὐγενίου τε θε(ο)υδέος ὃν κατέλιψεν
 [ποιμ]νῆς πνευματικῆς ἄξιον ἡνίοχον
 [- -] καὶ ζῶοντες ἐαῖς πα[- - -]
 [- - -] ἀσκητὸν μνήμ[- - -]
 [- - - - -] π[- - - - -]
 10 [- - - - -]

Z. 7–8: Für die beiden fragmentarischen Zeilen existieren verschiedene Ergänzungsvorschläge. Wilhelm¹⁷ ergänzt [οὔτοι] καὶ ζῶοντες ἐαῖς πα[λάμαισιν ἔτευξαν] / [αὐτοῖς] ἀσκητὸν μνή[μα τόδ' ἄέναον] – „Diese machten zu ihren Lebzeiten mit ihren eigenen Händen für sich dieses sorgfältig hergestellte ewige Denkmal“.

¹⁷ WILHELM 1932, 834–847.

- Der Weisheit Christi Lehrer, den weisen Mann,
 des himmlischen Vaters ruhmvollen Preisträger,
 den Severus, den All-Überblicker der Städte, den Anführer
 des sacktragenden Volkes¹⁸ birgt dieses Grabmal, und die
 5 Überreste des gottesfürchtigen Eugenios, den er zurückließ
 als würdigen Lenker der geistigen Herde
 ... und zu Lebzeiten mit ihren ...
 ... sorgfältig hergestelltes Denkmal ...

Die Inschrift wurde 1911 von W. Ramsay in Ladik (antikes Laodicea Combusta) gefunden und fotografiert, sodann von Calder publiziert.¹⁹ Sie befindet sich heute im Archäologischen Museum in Konya.²⁰ Nach Calder könnte der Text noch mindestens 10 weitere Zeilen umfasst haben,²¹ dies ist allerdings unsicher.²² Die Zeilen sind in das Inschriftenfeld eines Kalksteinblocks (Höhe 45 cm; Breite 125 cm; Dicke 30 cm) eingemeißelt, wobei die ersten beiden Zeilen – dem Versmaß folgend – über den Rand des Inschriftenfelds hinausgeschrieben sind. Die Buchstaben sind klar und deutlich geschrieben. Verschiedene Ligaturen.

¹⁸ Mit dieser Übersetzung weiche ich von der in BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 249–250 Fn. 887 vorgelegten ab und folge dem Verständnis von CALDER 1920, und anderen, die den Genitiv [λ]αοῦ σακκοφόρου von ἡγητῆρα abhängig lesen.

¹⁹ CALDER 1920, 47–50; MAMA I 171. Vgl. auch *Steinepigramme* III 14/06/04.

²⁰ B. McLEAN, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Konya Archaeological Museum* (2002) 76–77 Nr. 296.

²¹ MAMA I 171.

²² WILHELM 1932, 847.

2.1 Christliche Merkmale der Inschrift

Auch diese Inschrift ist eine Grabinschrift, allerdings für zwei Männer, Severus und Eugenios.²³ Auch hier ist den Lesern und Leserinnen sofort deutlich, dass es sich um eine christliche Inschrift handelt („Weisheit Christi“). Severus und Eugenios wurden gemeinsam bestattet. Sie scheinen ebenfalls christliche Führungspersönlichkeiten gewesen zu sein, die aufeinander folgten. Severus, der zunächst genannt wird und dessen christliche Weisheit eingangs betont wird, könnte wie auch Marcus Iulius Eugenius ein Bischof gewesen sein, allerdings ist das griechische Wort (πανεπίσκοπος) hier nicht eindeutig. Es bedeutet wörtlich „allesüberblickend“ und wurde in der biblischen Tradition u. a. für Gott verwendet.²⁴ Die Verbindung der Lexeme πανεπίσκοπος, ποιμνή sowie πνευματική in der Inschrift lässt jedoch auch an eine Anlehnung des in Apg 20,28 Formulierten denken. Dort ermahnt der lukanische Paulus die Ältesten der Gemeinde in Ephesus in einer durch die Situation der persönlichen Bedrohung gefärbten Rede: „So habt nun acht auf euch selbst und auf die ganze Herde (ποιμνιον), in der euch der Heilige Geist (πνεῦμα) eingesetzt hat zu Aufsehern (ἐπίσκοποι), zu weiden die Gemeinde Gottes, die er durch sein eigenes Blut erworben hat“. Möglicherweise war auch Severus Opfer von Verfolgungen, zumindest wird er „ruhmvoller Preisträger“ genannt, was darauf metaphorisch anspielen könnte.²⁵

Der „gottesfürchtige“ Eugenios wird als Severus' Nachfolger bezeichnet, als „würdiger Lenker der geistigen Herde“. Mit „Lenker“ (ἡνίοχος) wird eine sonst ebenfalls für Gott verwendete Metapher auf Eugenios appliziert.²⁶ Anderer-

²³ Zur Diskussion der Inschrift vgl. u. a. H. GRÉGOIRE, „Épigraphie chrétienne“, *Byz.* 1 (1924) 695–716; FRANCHI DE' CAVALIERI 1928, 127–133; WILHELM 1932, 834–847; G. BLOND, „L' hérésie encratite vers la fin du 4e siècle“, *RSR* 32 (1944) 157–210; MITCHELL 1993, 102–103; S. HÜBNER, *Der Klerus in der Gesellschaft des spätantiken Kleinasiens* (Stuttgart 2005) 194–196; FILIPPINI 2017, 422–424, 454–455; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 504–505, 582–589, 745–747.

²⁴ Vgl. *Orac. Sib.* 1.152 und 5.352; *Gr. Naz. Carm. dogm.* 1.1.35.1 (PG 37, 517); ZIMMERMANN C. 2019, 139 Anm. 106. Vgl. auch die Verwendung des Verbs επισκέπτομαι für Gott in Lk 1,68 und 78; 7,16; Apg 15,14. Eine vergleichbare Metapher findet sich auch in der Vita des Bischofs Aberkios, die z. T. auf der oben erwähnten Aberkios-Inschrift aus Hierapolis (JCG 1597) erhalten ist. Aberkios wird dort als „Schüler des heiligen/reinen Hirten“ bezeichnet, „der die Schafherden weidet ... und der große Augen hat, die überallhin blicken“ (s. S. *Abercii vita*, ed. Th. NISSEN [Leipzig 1912] 53–54 cap. 77). Allerdings findet sich ein vergleichbares Attribut, πανδερχής, auch für pagane Götter auf Inschriften der römischen Zeit, s. etwa die Beschreibung des Gottes Aether auf einer Inschrift aus Oinoanda (s. R. MERKELBACH / J. STAUBER, „Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros“, *EpAn* 27 [1996] [1–54] 41 Nr. 25) oder die Beschreibung der Isis auf einer Inschrift aus Kios (*I.Kios* 21).

²⁵ Vgl. dazu 1 Petr 5,2–4; 1 Kor 9,24–27.

²⁶ Vgl. Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 11.7; *Gr. Naz. Anth. Pal.* 8.143.

seits ist die der Formulierung nahestehende Bezeichnung der Bischöfe als „Hirten“ in dieser Zeit ebenfalls bereits etabliert.²⁷

Severus und Eugenios waren also ebenfalls christliche Führungspersönlichkeiten, vermutlich also Bischöfe. Besonders auffällig ist neben der Bezeichnung ihrer Gemeinde als „geistige Herde“ deren Bezeichnung als „sacktragendes Volk“ (λαὸς σακκοφόρος). Bei dieser Gruppe der Sakkophoroi, die auch literarisch belegt ist,²⁸ handelte es sich um eine christliche asketische Gemeinschaft, die ihre Bedürfnislosigkeit oder auch ihre Bußbereitschaft offenbar durch sehr einfache Kleidung auch nach außen hin demonstrierte.²⁹ Möglicherweise war sie mit einer weiteren, größeren Asketengruppe verbunden, den sog. Novatianern. Neben diesen beiden Gruppen sind aus Lykaonien durch Inschriften noch weitere Asketengruppen bekannt wie etwa die Enkrat(it)en³⁰ und die Apotaktiten, die sich in ihren asketischen Praktiken zum Teil unterschieden, zum Teil jedoch auch ähnelten.³¹ Severus und Eugenios waren also offenbar Führer einer asketischen Gruppe in Laodicea Combusta.

2.2 Gattung und sprachliche Qualität der Inschrift

Das hier vorliegende Grabgedicht, das Severus und Eugenios gemeinsam ehrt, besteht aus fünf elegischen Distichen.³² Nur das kurze Epsilon in Severus' Namen fällt aus dem metrischen Rahmen. Die Wortwahl dieser Inschrift ist auffällig. Sie weist neben üblichen Homerismen bemerkenswerte semantische Parallelen zu Gedichten Gregors von Nazianz auf.³³ Zwei weitere Bischofsinschriften aus dem benachbarten Phrygien scheinen vom selben

²⁷ Vgl. PGL s.v. ποιμήν; Greg. Naz. *Carm. dogm.* 2.1.12.81 (PG 37, 1172); 2.1.23.23 (PG 37, 1284).

²⁸ Bas. *Ep.* 199.47; Epiphan. *Panar.* proem. 1.5.6.

²⁹ Vgl. dazu BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 745–747.

³⁰ Zur Differenzierung von Enkraten und Enkratiten vgl. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 739.

³¹ Vgl. dazu BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 724–770. Vgl. auch FILIPPINI 2017, 421–425.

³² Griechische Grabgedichte aus Kleinasien sind gesammelt bei R. MERKELBACH / J. STAUBER (Hg.), *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten (SGO) Bd. 3: Der „Ferne Osten“ und das Landesinnere bis zum Tauros* (München / Leipzig 2001). In Lykaonien gibt es auch unter den christlichen Grabinschriften eine bemerkenswerte Anzahl von Grabgedichten, s. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 480–514.

³³ Vgl. dazu ZIMMERMANN C. 2019, 139–141. Neben den dort aufgeführten Parallelen ist die Entwicklung einer eigenen poetischen Ämter-Semantik bemerkenswert. S. dazu BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 500–502. Vgl. dazu nun auch J. P. SANCHEZ-HERNANDEZ, „Α κοσμήτωρ in Cappadocia. A note on *Anthologia Palatina* 8.149“, *Mnemosyne* 78 [2025]) 1101–1108, der hinter dem in der *Anthologia Palatina* 8.149 von Gregor in Aufnahme einer homerischen Formel gepriesenen κοσμήτωρ λαοῦ einen jungen Presbyter erkennt.

Dichter zu stammen,³⁴ was die Frage aufwirft, wie man sich den Kontext derartiger „Bischofsdichtung“ genauer vorzustellen hat. Gregor von Nazianz schrieb nach seinem Rücktritt als Bischof von Konstantinopel (381 n. Chr.) eine in Iamben gefasste Kritik an s. E. schlechten, da dem Weltlichen zu sehr zugeneigten Bischöfen.³⁵ Dieser Kritik ist jedoch zugleich auch das nach Gregor anzustrebende Bischofsideal zu entnehmen. Weisheit und Gottesfurcht sowie das würdig ausgeführte Hirtenamt des Severus und des Eugenios entsprechen diesen Vorstellungen³⁶ und wurden vom Dichter des Epigramms – möglicherweise in Kenntnis der Dichtungen und Einstellungen Gregors – entsprechend gepriesen.

3. Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?

Wenn Marcus Iulius Eugenius und der hier genannte Eugenios ein und dieselbe Person gewesen sein sollten,³⁷ ließe sich die Geschichte des Marcus Iulius Eugenius weiterschreiben: Marcus Iulius Eugenius wäre dann nicht Mitglied der sog. „orthodoxen“ Kirche gewesen, sondern Bischof einer Asketengruppe. Verwunderlich ist nur, dass er selbst auf seiner eigenen Inschrift davon nichts erwähnt, und auch andere Gründe lassen die Identität der beiden Eugenioi nicht unbedingt wahrscheinlich erscheinen. So wird etwa auf der Severus – Eugenios – Inschrift keine Frau des Eugenios erwähnt. Auch auf das Kirchengebäude wird kein Bezug genommen. Daher ist eher anzunehmen, dass die beiden Eugenioi unterschiedliche Personen waren³⁸:

Marcus Iulius Eugenius aus der lokalen Elite Lykaoniens war Anfang des 4. Jh. n. Chr. Bischof von Laodicea Combusta und errichtete eine eindrucksvolle Kirche, die er im Detail auf seiner Inschrift beschreibt. Die Inschrift zeigt, dass Marcus Iulius Eugenius auch in seinem Bischofsamt den Erwartungen seiner sozialen Schicht treu geblieben ist. Er stellt das Amt als Konsequenz seiner vorausgehenden Erfahrungen dar und unterstreicht seine finanzielle Wohltätigkeit, die im Kirchenbau erkennbar wird.

³⁴ ICG 1692 und 1806. S. MITCHELL, „Bishops at Amorium and Laodicea Catacecaumene in the fourth century: three funerary epigrams and a font“, in: J. ALIQUOT / S. DESTEPHEN / A. LANIADO / C. SALIOU (Hg.), *Mélanges Denis Feissel* (Paris 2024) 383–404.

³⁵ Vgl. B. MEIER, *Gregor von Nazianz, Über die Bischöfe* (carmen 2,1,12). *Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Paderborn/München 1989). Vgl. bereits die 2. Rede Gregors, die dieser in seiner Zeit als Priester in Konstantinopel verfasst hatte, *or.* 2.8.

³⁶ Vgl. dazu u. a. Greg. Naz. *or.* 2.95–99.117. Zum Hirten-Amt vgl. ebd. 9. Vgl. auch G. COLPANI, *Poems on bishops by Gregory of Nazianzus and Ephrem the Syrian* (Berlin 2025).

³⁷ Vgl. dazu grundlegend die Diskussion bei CALDER 1920.

³⁸ Vgl. dazu bereits FRANCHI DE' CAVALIERI 1928, 133–141. S. auch FILIPPINI 2017.

Eugenios, der „Sackträger“, lebte vermutlich etwas später und war offenbar als Nachfolger des Severus geistlich verantwortlich für mehrere dieser „Sackträger“, die in einer asketischen Gemeinschaft in und um Laodicea lebten.³⁹ Da die Gruppe der „Sackträger“, vermutlich auch aufgrund der Intervention des orthodoxen Bischofs Amphilochius aus dem nahegelegenen Iconium im Jahr 420 n. Chr. verboten wurde,⁴⁰ datiert diese Inschrift vermutlich in die 2. Hälfte des 4. Jh. n. Chr. Die Andeutung, dass Severus Verfolgungen erlitt, muss nicht mit allgemeinen Christenverfolgungen wie der unter Maximinus Daia in Zusammenhang stehen, sondern könnte auch durch die Ablehnung dieser asketischen Gruppe durch die sog. „orthodoxe“ Kirche begründet sein. Wie nah das Zusammenleben in derartigen Gemeinschaften bereits mönchischen Lebensweisen war, zeigt sich neben der asketischen Lebensform auch darin, dass Eugenios, der „Sackträger“ seine Grabstätte nicht mit seiner Frau, sondern mit einem anderen Kleriker teilte, wie es in Lyakonien in dieser Zeit mehrfach belegt ist.⁴¹

4. Schlussbetrachtung

Die beiden Inschriften führen nur einen kleinen Ausschnitt der Vielfalt christlicher Lebensformen, die aus dem 4. Jh. bekannt sind, vor Augen. Beide Inschriften stammen aus derselben kleinasiatischen Stadt, Laodicea Combusta, und erweisen sich gerade in der Zusammenschau als besonders auskunftstark. Sie zeigen, dass sich dem Christentum Mitglieder aller sozialer Schichten anschlossen. Zudem spiegeln sie die unterschiedliche Rolle wider, die der christliche Glaube in der Lebenspraxis einzelner Christen spielte.

Zum einen sehen wir einen erfolgreichen Beamten aus der Oberschicht (Marcus Iulius Eugenius), dessen Qualifikationen ihn nach dem Ende seiner ersten Karriere beim Statthalter in Pisidien ins Bischofsamt bringen, in dem er sich – ganz nach Art paganer Wohltäter – als Kirchen(wieder)erbauer hervortut. Seine Berufung ins Bischofsamt begründet er mit dem Ratschluss Gottes; letztlich macht die Inschrift jedoch deutlich, dass Eugenius sie auch auf seine eigenen hervorragenden Qualifikationen zurückzuführt. Seine Leistung sieht er in der Wiedererrichtung einer Kirche, deren reiche Ausstattung er explizit hervorhebt.

³⁹ Zu den Asketengruppen s. P. THONEMANN, „Amphilochius of Iconium and Lycaonian Asceticism“, *JRS* 101 (2011) 185–205; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 724–787; vgl. auch MITCHELL 2023b, 544–560.

⁴⁰ Zu Amphilochius von Iconium s. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 772–782.

⁴¹ Vgl. etwa ICG 123 und 292.

Die zweite Inschrift führt uns die Anerkennung zweier Gemeindeleiter einer Asketengruppe, Severus und Eugenios, vor Augen. Neben einer an traditionelle Konventionen angelehnten Selbstdarstellung eines Angehörigen der Oberschicht, die auf wohltätige Leistung abhebt, stehen hier zwei verstorbene Führungspersönlichkeiten einer Gruppe, die sich bewusst der Armut verschrieb. Die Qualität des Grabgedichts für Severus und Eugenios zeigt jedoch, dass die beiden Verstorbenen für würdig befunden wurden (oder sich selbst für würdig hielten), mit poetischen Versen hohen Anspruchs geehrt zu werden, die Worte verwenden, die aus biblischen Texten für Gott und Christus vertraut waren und der Dichtung des Gregor von Nazianz nahe stehen. Im Blick dieses Gedichts stehen entsprechend nicht die materialen Leistungen der Verstorbenen, sondern deren Qualitäten als christliche Lehrer und geistige Führer der asketischen Gruppe. Die Tatsache einer gemeinsamen Bestattung der beiden Kleriker verweist zugleich auf die Umsetzung des geschwisterlichen Lebensideals des Christentums auch im Tod.

6. Grabinschrift der Palladion. Eine Jungfrau auf dem Weg in den Himmel

Ulrich Huttner

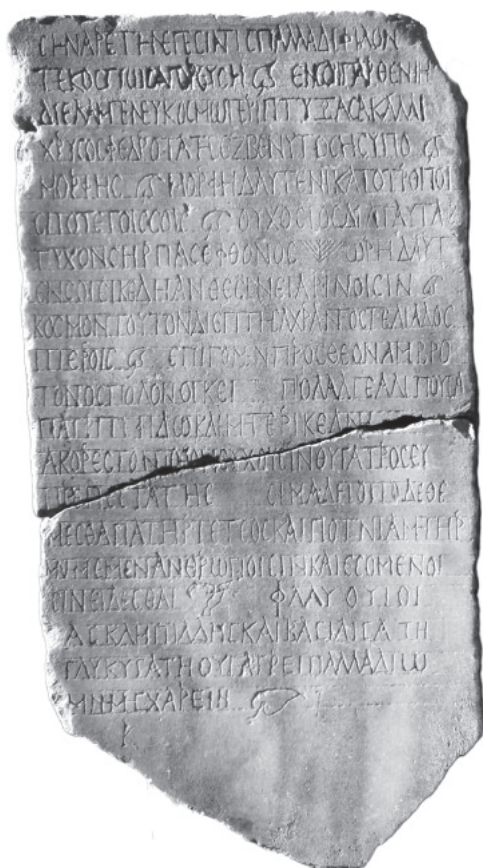


Fig. 23: ICG 4730 Tavium, Galatien, Kleinasien,
4./5. Jh. n. Chr.¹ (Photo: Christian Wallner)

¹ Christian Wallner danke ich für weiterführende Hinweise, für die Erlaubnis, die Inschrift abzubilden, sowie für weitere Unterstützung. Für Korrekturen danke ich überdies

Σὴν ἀρετὴν ἔπεσιν τις Παλλάδι φίλον τέκος πῶς ἀγορεύσῃ; (<i>Hedera</i>) Ἐν σοὶ παρθενίῃ διέλαμπεν εὐκόσμῳ περιπτύξασα κάλλι. Χρυσὸς φεδροτάτης ἐζβένυτο σῆς ὑπὸ (<i>Hedera</i>) μορφῆς. (<i>Hedera</i>) Μορφὴ δ' αὖτ' ἐνικᾶτο τρόποι- 5 ς ποτὲ τοῖς σοῖς. (<i>Hedera</i>) Οὐχ ὅσιος διὰ ταῦτα τυχὸν σ' ἤρπασε φθόνος. (<i>Palmzweig</i>) Ὡρῇ δ' αὖτ' ἐν σοὶ εἰκέ<λ>η ἄνθεσιν εἰαρινοῖσιν. (<i>Hedera</i>) Κόσμον τοῦτον διέπτῃς ἄχραντος πελιάδος πτεροῖς (<i>Hedera</i>) ἐπιγομέν<η> πρὸς θεὸν ἄμβρο- 10 τον, ὃς πόλον ο<ί>κεῖ, (<i>Spatium</i>) πόλ' ἄλγεα λιποῦσα πατρί τε φί<λ>ω καὶ μητέρι κεδνῇ ἀκόρεστον πόθον ἐ{υ}χουσιν θυγατρὸς εὐ- πρεπεστάτης. (<i>Spatium</i>) Σῆμα δὴ τοὶ τόδ' ἐθέ- 15 μεσθα πατὴρ τε τεὸς καὶ πότνια μήτηρ, μνημ' ἔμεν ἀνθρώποισιν καὶ ἐσομένοι- σιν εἰδέσθαι. (<i>Vogel</i>) Φλά{υ}ουῖοι Ἀσκληπι<ά>δης καὶ Βασίλισα τῇ γλυκυτάτῃ θυγατρὶ Παλλαδίῳ μνήμης χάρειν. (<i>Hedera</i>) 20
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EDITION: WALLNER 2017. Vgl. AE 2017, Nr. 1532; BE 2018, Nr. 449; SEG 67,987.

Erklärung der Klammern:

Die spitzen Klammern deuten auf Verschreibungen auf dem Stein hin: Z. 8: Δ statt Λ; Z. 10: H fehlt. Z. 11: Γ statt Ι; Z. 12: Δ statt Λ; Z. 18: Λ statt Α. Geschweifte Klammer in Z. 13: Statt ἔχουσιν steht irrtümlich εὔχουσιν; Z. 17: Φλάουιοι für Φλάουιοι.

Weitere orthographische Besonderheiten: Z. 4: φεδροτάτης für φαιδροτάτης.

Wie könnte man wohl, Palladion, liebes Kind, deine Tugend in Worten
 beschreiben? In dir glänzte die Jungfräulichkeit,
 die (dich) in wohlgeordneter Schönheit umfasste.
 Gold wurde von deiner strahlenden
 Gestalt verdunkelt; die Gestalt wiederum wurde von deiner Gesittung 5
 übertroffen. Daher war die schicksalhafte Missgunst,
 die dich raubte, unheilig. Dein Alter indes
 entsprach den Blumen des Frühlings.
 In Reinheit durchfliegst du auf den Flügeln der Taube diese Welt
 und gelangtest zum unsterblichen Gott, 10
 der den Himmel bewohnt; viele Schmerzen hinterließst
 du dem lieben Vater und der besorgten Mutter,
 die sich unaufhörlich nach der wunderschönen Tochter
 sehnen. Dieses Mal errichteten dir
 dein Vater und die Mutter, die Herrin, 15
 zum Gedenken für die Menschen, um es auch in Zukunft
 anzublicken. Die Flavier
 Asklepiades und Basilisa für die
 liebste Tochter Palladion,
 zum Gedenken. 20

Die Inschrift zierte eine große (knapp 80 cm lange) Marmorplatte, die heute im Museum der Provinzhauptstadt Yozgat (östlich des antiken Tavium) aufbewahrt wird und 2017 von dem österreichischen Althistoriker und Epigraphiker Christian Wallner mustergültig ediert wurde. Die folgenden Beobachtungen und Kommentare zu der Inschrift verdanken dieser Edition viel.

Der Text fügt sich akkurat in die vom Steinmetz vorgeritzten Zeilen und ist durchsetzt von einigen vignettenartigen Bildern. Die Verteilung des Textes auf die zur Verfügung stehende Fläche bereitete dem Steinmetz Schwierigkeiten, teils sind die Buchstaben, auch durch Ligaturen, eng zusammengedrängt, teils weit auseinandergezogen. Stellenweise haben sich orthographische Fehler eingeschlichen. Der Großteil des Textes ist – auch in Anlehnung an homerische Muster – metrisch rhythmisiert, ohne dass sich ein konsequentes Versmaß erkennen ließe. Derartige Epigrammimitationen sind im spätantiken Kleinasien, und zwar gerade in Inneranatolien (Phrygien, Lykaonien, Galatien), keine Seltenheit.²

² Vgl. THONEMANN 2014 mit seiner ansprechenden Theorie, „Dorfschullehrer“ („village schoolmasters“, 192) seien die Autoren der Texte gewesen; auch WALLNER 2017, 32 mit Anm. 7; BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 484; ZIMMERMANN C. 2019, 133.

1. Der sozialhistorische Kontext: eine wohlhabende Familie

Das Epitaph für Palladion zählt wegen seiner eindringlichen Jenseits-metaphorik zu den instruktivsten Neufunden unter den frühchristlichen Grabinschriften Kleasiens. Tavium, gut 200 km östlich von Ankara gelegen, war einer der Bischofssitze der Provinz Galatia (bzw. Galatia I), als Asklepiades und Basilisa viel zu früh ihre Tochter verloren.³ Die Stadt ist zwar reich an spätantiken bzw. frühbyzantinischen Grabinschriften,⁴ keiner der Texte ist aber so ausführlich und anspruchsvoll formuliert wie der für Palladion.

Die letzten vier Zeilen der Inschrift fallen aus dem metrischen Muster heraus, in konventioneller Diktion informieren sie über Grabherren und Bestattete, um mit der während der Kaiserzeit weithin gebräuchlichen Formel *μνήμης χάριν* („zum Gedenken“) abzuschließen. Signifikant ist das Gentiliz der Familie: Vater und Mutter werden als Flavier gekennzeichnet, tragen also einen Namen, der – abgeleitet vom Gentiliz des konstantinischen Kaiserhauses – vom fortgeschrittenen 4. bis zum 6. Jh. gerade in Kleasien typisch war für überregional vernetzte Eliten, insbesondere für Funktions-träger (auch Militärs) in kaiserlichen Diensten.⁵ Im städtischen Kontext von Tavium zählten Asklepiades und Basilisa zweifellos zur Oberschicht. Dem entsprechen die Bildungstraditionen, die in den vielen literarischen – oft homerischen – Anklängen des Grabgedichts zum Tragen kommen.

³ Zur geographischen Situation vgl. WALLNER, *I.Mus. Yozgat*, 10–13; WALLNER 2022, 257–260. Zur administrativen Situation und zur Teilung der Provinz Galatia Ende des 4. Jhs. S. MITCHELL, *Anatolia. Land, men, and gods in Asia Minor*, vol. 2: *The rise of the church* (Oxford 1993) 160.

⁴ Vgl. WALLNER, *I.Mus. Yozgat*, 60–86; auch WALLNER 2019; F. YILMAZ, „New Christian epitaphs from Yozgat“, *Philia* 5 (2019) 149–165; WALLNER 2020; WALLNER 2022, 261–264.

⁵ Allgemein A. MÓCSY, „Der Name Flavius als Rangbezeichnung in der Spätantike“, in: *Akte des IV. Internationalen Kongresses für griechische und lateinische Epigraphik*, Wien 17–22.9.1962 (Wien 1964) 257–263; J. G. KEENAN, „The names Flavius and Aurelius as status designations in later Roman Egypt“, *ZPE* 11 (1973) [33–63] 37–40; A. CAMERON, „Flavius: a nicety of protocol“, *Latomus* 47 (1988) 26–33; dazu S. MITCHELL, „Ethnicity, acculturation and empire in Roman and late Roman Asia Minor“, in: S. MITCHELL/G. GREATREX (Hg.), *Ethnicity and culture in late antiquity* (London 2000) [117–150] 137. Vergleichbare Beobachtungen in anderen Regionen bestätigen die historische Einordnung des Flavier-Gentilizes: Z. B. J. G. KEENAN, „The names Flavius and Aurelius as status designations in later Roman Egypt“, *ZPE* 13 (1974) [283–304] 301f.; G. VERGONE, *Le epigrafi lapidarie del Museo Paleocristiano di Monastero (Aquileia)* (Trieste 2007) 70 (mit weiterführender Literatur). – Zwei weitere Beispiele aus der Region: WALLNER, *I.Mus. Yozgat*, 46f. Nr. I 15; C. WALLNER, „Inschriften aus Sarıkaya (Basilika Therna/Kappadokien)“, *Philia* 9 (2023) [185–197] 189–191 Nr. 3. Generell zum Namenssystem: A. BREYTENBACH/ZIMMERMANN „Introduction“ 5.1.

Der Vater trägt einen theophoren Namen, der sich, auch in der Spätantike, großer Beliebtheit erfreute.⁶ Seltener ist der Name seiner Gattin, Basilis(s)a, abgeleitet vom griechischen Königstitel.⁷ Mittlerweile (2019) publizierte Wallner den Grabstein eines Presbyters aus Tavium, der den Namen Basil(e)i(o)s trägt (5./6. Jh.).⁸ Hier deuten sich also lokaltypische Namenstraditionen an. In Lykaonien lässt sich zeigen, dass der Name Basilissa im christlichen Milieu des 4./5. Jhs. außerordentlichen Zuspruch genoss;⁹ eine Frau dieses Namens findet sich auch unter den Adressaten des Gregor von Nazianz.¹⁰

Der Name der Tochter, Palladion, mag in Anatolien sehr selten sein;¹¹ indes ist er weniger exzeptionell, als es zunächst den Anschein hat: Die maskuline Form (Palladios) kommt in manchen Regionen Kleinasiens durchaus hin und wieder vor;¹² wichtiger aber sind die zahlreichen Namens-träger, die im Umfeld des Kaisers Ämter und Funktionen bekleiden.¹³ Im Namen der Palladion spiegelt sich also ähnlich wie im Flaviergentiliz ein elitärer Anspruch der Familie. Ob sich die Eltern der in der Göttin Pallas Athene wurzelnden Namenstradition tatsächlich bewusst waren, wie Wallner

⁶ Zur Popularität des Namens Asklepiades in Galatien LGPNV C, 68; auch A. COŞKUN, „Histoire par les noms in ancient Galatia“ in: R. PARKER (Hg.), *Personal names in ancient Anatolia* (Oxford 2013) [79–106] 89. Zu von Asklepios abgeleiteten Namen unter den frühen Christen in Lykaonien und Phrygien BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 420 mit Anm. 198.

⁷ Vgl. LGPNV C, 86.

⁸ WALLNER 2019, 143 f. Nr. 6. Der Name Basilissa vielleicht auch auf dem Grabstein (ICG 2523).

⁹ BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 414.

¹⁰ Greg. Naz. Ep. 244. Vgl. auch AG 8.154 (Epigramm des Greg. Naz. auf Georgios, den Bruder einer Frau namens Basilissa).

¹¹ WALLNER 2017, 40 nennt die beiden Belege aus LGPN V (A, 353 und B, 338). Allerdings beachte man etwaige Variationsmöglichkeiten. Greg. Naz. nannte etwa seine Schwester sowohl Gorgonia (z. B. or. 8.6) als auch Gorgonion (AG 8.101–103). Möglicherweise lässt sich die Form „Gorgonion“ mit den Erfordernissen des Versmaßes begründen. Bas. Ep. 137 berichtet von einer Verwandten namens Palladia. Auch dieser Namen ist allerdings selten. Vgl. z. B. LGPN V C, 342 (zwei Belege).

¹² BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 136 mit Anm. 65. Palladios von Helenopolis stammte aus Galatien (*Hist. Laus.* 35.5).

¹³ Vgl. etwa den Index in R. VON HAEHLING, *Die Religionszugehörigkeit der hohen Amtsträger des Römischen Reiches seit Constantins I. Alleinherrschaft bis zum Ende der Theodosianischen Dynastie* (Bonn 1978) 656 (mit sechs Belegen).

voraussetzt,¹⁴ sei dahingestellt. Dem Wortsinn nach handelt es sich um ein Diminutivum, im Sinne von „kleine Pallas“.¹⁵

2. Schönheit und Tugend

Weder die Gestaltung noch der Text des Grabsteins geben eindeutige Indizien, um Asklepiades, Basilisa und Palladion einem christlichen Bekenntnis zuzuordnen: Es fehlen eindeutige Symbole (z. B. Christogramm oder Kreuz) ebenso wie ein klarer Hinweis auf Jesus Christus. Gott im Himmel wird zwar als definitives Ziel der Palladion benannt, aber er wird nicht weiter spezifiziert. Handelt es sich also tatsächlich um den Christengott? Umso wichtiger ist es, durch inhaltliche Analyse des Epigramms die Begriffs-, Werte- und Vorstellungswelt des Textes zu erschließen und damit die einschlägigen christlichen Traditionen zu vergleichen. Das Ergebnis sei vorweggenommen: Es handelt sich tatsächlich um eine christliche Inschrift.

Dass einleitend die ἀρετή der Palladion akzentuiert wird, entspricht alter Epigrammtradition: Die ἀρετή der Verstorbenen zählt zum Standard-repertoire der zuständigen Dichter: Mochte sie sich zunächst auf männliche Qualitäten beziehen, etwa die Tapferkeit im Krieg,¹⁶ zierte sie mit der Zeit auch das Andenken von Frauen.¹⁷ Auch für die Spitzenstellung – „deine ἀρετή“ ganz am Beginn des Epigramms – gibt es frühe Vorbilder unter den Grabgedichten.¹⁸

¹⁴ Demgemäß übersetzt WALLNER 2017, 31 Παλλάδι φίλον τέκος mit „der Pallas liebes Kind“. Der Kasus von Παλλάδι kann jedoch nicht als Dativ, sondern muss als Vokativ gedeutet werden (vgl. etwa I. KAJANTO, *Onomastic studies in the early Christian inscriptions of Rome and Carthage* [Helsinki 1963] 42 f. und 46 f.). Vgl. den lateinischen Vokativ von „Palladius“: *IG España Portugal* Nr. 350: *Pall[a]di vivas* ... (Mosaikinschrift östlich von Porto, 5. Jh.); Greg. Tor. *Hist.* 8.2 (... *conversus ad Palladium rex ait*: „Nec tibi, o Palladi episcopo, nimum sunt gratiae referendae ...“). – Auch AE 2017, Nr. 1532 deutet Παλλάδι als Vokativ.

¹⁵ Vgl. die Erklärungen von F. BECHTEL, *Die Attischen Frauennamen, nach ihrem Systeme dargestellt* (Göttingen 1902) 79 f. zur analogen Namensform Athenion. Bechtel verweist hier auch auf Lucr. 4.1161, wo *Palladium* als Kosenamen belegt ist. Zu den weiblichen Diminutivnamen vgl. auch O. MASSON, „Quelques noms grecs récents en -μάτιος (type Κλημάτιος)“, *Arctos* 21 (1987) [73–77] 73 f.

¹⁶ Vgl. die Beispiele in CLAIRMONT, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 52 mit Anm. 94; dazu allgemein E. SCHWARTZ, *Ethik der Griechen* (Stuttgart 1951) 19–25.

¹⁷ Vgl. C. C. TSAGALIS, *Inscribing sorrow. Fourth-century Attic funerary epigrams* (Berlin / New York 2008) 93 f., 144 f. Als Beispiel das Epigramm für Phanagora aus Athen (4. Jh. v. Chr.): *IG II/III*² 5450. Dazu der Kommentar von PIRCHER 1979, 25.

¹⁸ *IG II/III*² 11659 = CLAIRMONT, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 126 Nr. 49 (4. Jh. v. Chr.): Σῆς ἀρετῆς μνημεῖα ...

Unbeschreiblich sei die ἀρετή der Palladion, und dennoch lässt sie sich konkretisieren, und damit erhält das Epigramm einen ersten Anstoß in Richtung einer christlichen Wertewelt. Denn wesentliche Komponente der ἀρετή ist Palladions παρθενίη, ihre Jungfräulichkeit. Die Jungfräulichkeit mache letztlich die – innere – Schönheit der Palladion aus, ihr Strahlen sei unübersehbar. Hier formuliert der Dichter den Kontrast zwischen innerer und äußerer Schönheit bzw. zwischen innerer und äußerer Qualität der Palladion: Ihre Gestalt (μορφή) überstrahlt das blitzende Gold,¹⁹ aber die Gestalt Palladions wird ihrerseits übertroffen von ihrer Gesittung (τρόποι), und damit ist gerade ihre Jungfräulichkeit gemeint.

Auch mit der Gegenüberstellung von innen und außen greift der Dichter einen alten epigrammatischen Topos auf:²⁰ Die substanzielle Schönheit der τρόποι bildet den Wesenskern, die akzidentielle Schönheit der Gestalt ist zwar zu loben, sei aber jener untergeordnet. Letztlich macht sich hier noch das aristokratische Ideal bemerkbar, dass einem schönen Körper eine edle Gesinnung entspreche,²¹ überhöht durch die vor allem im philosophischen Diskurs begründete Verlagerung persönlicher Qualitäten in das Umfeld von Ethos, Willen und Intellekt.²² Zugleich spielt der Text mit metaphorisch begründeten Analogien: dem Glanz des Goldes, dem Glanz der Gestalt und dem Glanz der Jungfräulichkeit – auch hier finden sich literarische Traditionen in der Epigrammdichtung.²³

Die christliche Dichtung verlor durchaus aner kennenswerte Worte über die körperliche Schönheit junger Frauen,²⁴ so etwa Gregor von Nazianz in einem Epigramm auf die verstorbene Livia.²⁵ Als allerdings 356/7 seine Schwester Gorgonia verstarb, stellte er in seiner Grabrede von vorneherein

¹⁹ Zur Würdigung der Schönheit bzw. äußeren Gestalt (μορφή) von Frauen in griechischen Grabepigrammen vgl. PIRCHER 1979, 46–49.

²⁰ Vgl. CLAIRMONT, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 52f.

²¹ Vgl. W. JAEGER, *Paideia. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (1973, Ndr. Berlin / New York 1989) 23–37. Bündig formuliert im Elogium für L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (*CIL* I² 7; *ILS* 1; 3. Jh. v. Chr.): *forma virtutei parisuma* („die Gestalt der Tapferkeit / Tugend ganz ähnlich“). Dazu die Überlegungen von P. KRUSCHWITZ, *Carmina Saturnia epigraphica. Einleitung, Text und Kommentar zu den saturnischen Versinschriften* (Stuttgart 2002) 48–57 (auch zu etwaigen griechischen Mustern).

²² Vgl. A. DIHLE, *Die Vorstellung vom Willen in der Antike* (Göttingen 1985) 31–78.

²³ Vgl. T. CHRISTIAN, *Gebildete Steine. Zur Rezeption literarischer Techniken in den Versinschriften seit dem Hellenismus* (Göttingen / Bristol 2015) 290–292.

²⁴ Vgl. etwa *ICG* 103 (4. Jh.?) mit dem Kommentar von THONEMANN 2014, 199.

²⁵ *AG* 8.119.3 f.:

Νῦν δέ σε μοῖρ' ἐδάμασσαν ἄωριον, εἰσέτι καλὴν,
εἰσέτι κουριδίους ἄνθεσι λαμπομένην.

„Jetzt bezwang dich das Geschick vor der Zeit, noch immer schön,
noch immer glänzend in jugendlicher Blüte.“

klar, dass es ihm bei der Würdigung der Toten in erster Linie um ihre seelischen Qualitäten, konkret um ihre „Gesittung“ (τρός) gehe.²⁶

3. Jungfräulichkeit und Reinheit

Eine Kernqualität der Palladion besteht, wie gesagt, in ihrer Jungfräulichkeit (παρθενίη), mag diese auch daher rühren, dass sie zu jung für eine Heirat gewesen war.²⁷ Der Jungfräulichkeit verdankte Palladion ihre Reinheit, die im Epigramm durch das Adjektiv ἄχραντος („un-befleckt“) Ausdruck findet. Im nahen Lykaonien fanden sich zahlreiche christliche Inschriften, in denen die sexuelle Enthaltsamkeit weiblicher Gemeindeangehöriger gewürdigt wurde.²⁸ Inzwischen wurde aus Tavium ein spätantiker Grabstein bekannt, der die verstorbene Theodora als „reine Jungfrau“ (παρθένος ἁγνή) würdigt.²⁹ Jungfräuliche Reinheit zählt spätestens mit der Verbreitung radikaler Askesekonzepte im 2. Jh. zu den erstrebenswertesten Zielen junger Christinnen.³⁰ Immer wieder und in unterschiedlichen Nuancen, etwa in der Theklavita, bei Methodius von Olympos oder bei Basileios von Ancyra, wurde der enge Zusammenhang zwischen der Jungfräulichkeit der Person einerseits und der auf diese Weise garantierten Gottesnähe, der Auferstehung nach dem Tod oder generell der Unsterblichkeit andererseits akzentuiert.³¹ Gregor von Nyssa widmete der Thematik einen ausführlichen Traktat, in dem er auch die Himmelfahrt der Seele thematisiert, und zwar auf den Taubenflügeln des Geistes.³²

²⁶ Greg. Naz. or. 8.7. Prägnant 8.10: „Indes kannte sie (Gorgonia) zahlreiche und vielfältige Versionen äußerlichen Frauenschmucks, keinen aber hielt sie für wertvoller als ihre Gesittung und den in ihr geborgenen Glanz.“ – Ἀλλὰ πολλοὺς μὲν ᾗδει καὶ παντοίους γυναικῶν κόσμους τοὺς ἔξωθεν, τιμώτερον δὲ οὐδένα τοῦ ἐαυτῆς τρόπου καὶ τῆς ἔνδον ἀποκειμένης λαμπρότητος.

²⁷ Man wird bei Frauen in Kleinasien mit einem Heiratsalter von etwa 15–18 Jahren rechnen. Weiterführend P. THONEMANN, *The lives of ancient villages. Rural society in Roman Anatolia* (Cambridge 2022) 161–166.

²⁸ Vgl. ZIMMERMANN C. 2018, 125–131; auch BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018, 766–770.

²⁹ WALLNER 2020, 186–188 Nr. I.29.

³⁰ Vgl. P. BROWN, *The body and society. Men, women, and sexual renunciation in early Christianity* (New York 2008) 3–209; D. WEISSER, *Quis maritus salvetur? Untersuchungen zur Radikalisierung des Jungfräulichkeitsideals im 4. Jahrhundert* (Berlin / Boston 2016); ergänzend WECKWERTH 2022, 239–289. Auch G. KIOURTZIAN, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades. De la fin du III^e au VI^e siècle après J.-C.* (Paris 2000) 91 im Kommentar zu einer Grabinschrift aus Melos (Nr. 24), die zwei παρθενεύσασαι verzeichnet.

³¹ Weiterführend VAN EIJK 1972, 212–214, 220–227. Vgl. auch Athenag. Leg. 33 (freundlicher Hinweis C. Breytenbach).

³² Vgl. zu *De virginitate* die Edition von J. P. CAVARNOS, in: W. JAEGER / J. P. CAVARNOS / V. W. CALLAHAN (Hg.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* VIII 1 (Leiden 1986) 215–343. Kap. 11

Nach einer Erklärung verlangt die Formulierung in der Grabinschrift aus Tavium: Denn der Dichter bedient sich nicht gängiger und im biblischen Wortschatz dicht dokumentierter Vokabeln wie ἅγιος oder ἄγνός,³³ um Palladion zu würdigen, sondern er charakterisiert sie als ἄχραντος. – Ein vermutlich aus Klaros stammender Orakeltext der hohen Kaiserzeit, der sich in Ephesos erhalten hat, bezeichnet die ephesische Artemis als παρθένος, als ἄγνή und als ἄχραντος und steckt damit ein Wortfeld ab, das sich auf die Christin Palladion übertragen ließe.³⁴ Wichtiger aber sind christliche Muster.³⁵ Denn es zeigt sich, dass gerade die kappadokischen Kirchenväter, möglicherweise in Orientierung an neuplatonischem Wortgebrauch, eine große Vorliebe für die Vokabel ἄχραντος an den Tag legen.³⁶ In einer Predigt über die Jungfräulichkeit, die Basileios zugeschrieben wird, macht der Kleriker gleich eingangs darauf aufmerksam, dass die ἄχραντος παρθενία ein höheres Gut sei als jede noch so ehrwürdige Ehe.³⁷ Seiner Enttäuschung über eine Christin, die sich von der sexuellen Entsagung verabschiedete, gibt Basileios in einem Brief Ausdruck, in dem er beklagt, sie sei aus dem „unbefleckten Brautgemach (ἄχραντον ... νυμφῶνα) des wahren Königs entflohen“.³⁸ Zugleich avanciert die Vokabel zum Attribut der Jungfrau Maria.

(ebd. 294) zur Himmelfahrt der Seele (... τὸ τῷ εἶδει τῆς καταπτάσης περιστερὰς ἑαυτὸν ὁμοῖωσαι, ... / „... sich der Gestalt der fliegenden Taube angleichen ...“). Weiterführend zu dem Werk R. STAATS, „Basilius als lebende Mönchsregel in Gregors von Nyssa ‚De virginitate‘“, VC 39 (1985) 228–255 (244 f. zur Himmelfahrt der Seele); auch VAN EIJK 1972, 230–234; S. LEUNBERGER-WENGER, *Ethik und christliche Identität bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Tübingen 2008) 324–334.

³³ Weiterführend zu dieser Terminologie WECKWERTH 2022, 4 f., 18 f. Vgl. auch B.3. MITCHELL, „The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel“.

³⁴ *Steinepigramme* I 03/02/01; vgl. auch C. OESTERHELD, *Göttliche Botschaften für zweifelnde Menschen. Pragmatik und Orientierungsleistung der Apollon-Orakel von Klaros und Didyma in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (Göttingen 2008) 572 Nr. 11.

³⁵ In frühchristlichen Epitaphien findet sich der Terminus selten, etwa *Steinepigramme* II 08/08/13 (Hadrianoi am Olympos), wo der bestattete Lektor und Psalmensänger als ἄχραντο[ς] bezeichnet wird.

³⁶ Wichtig hier die Bestandsaufnahme von C. HAMMANN, *Katharsis in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike. Vorstellungen von Reinigung und Reinheit in Medizin, platonischer Philosophie und christlicher Theologie des 2. bis 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Göttingen 2020) 852, der sich allerdings auf Gregor von Nyssa beschränkt (dazu 824, 833 zu Porphyrios und Iamblich). WALLNER 2017, 36 weist auf Ps.-Bas. *Hom. Virg.* 4.2 hin. Zu Greg. Naz. ergab die Recherche in TLG etwa 10 Belege; zu Basileios etwa 15.

³⁷ Ps.-Bas. *Hom. Virg.* 1.4: Καλὸν γὰρ ὁ σεμνὸς γάμος, ὡς ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἀρμοζόμενος· κρεῖσσον δὲ ἡ ἄχραντος παρθενία ... („Die ehrwürdige Ehe ist etwas Schönes, da sie ja von Gott eingerichtet wurde. Besser aber ist die unbefleckte Jungfräulichkeit ...“). Editionstext in D. AMAND / M. C. MOONS, „Une curieuse homélie grecque inédite sur la virginité adressée aux pères de famille“, *Revue Bénédictine* 63 (1953) [18–69, 211–238] 35, 37. Dies., 234–238, halten es für wahrscheinlich, dass der Predigttext vor der Zeit des Basileios entstand.

³⁸ Bas. *Ep.* 46: ... καὶ τὸν μὲν ἄχραντον τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ βασιλέως ἀποδράσα νυμφῶνα ...

In einem langen Gedicht zum Lob der Jungfräulichkeit weist Gregor von Nazianz der Mutter Jesu folgende Attribute zu: ἀγνή, παρθενική, ἄδετος, θεουδής, ἄχραντος („rein, jungfräulich, frei, gottesfürchtig, unbefleckt“).³⁹

Es ist schwer zu sagen, wie verbreitet der Marienkult war, als Palladion in Tavium zu Grabe getragen wurde. Wichtige Impulse erhielt er erst im 5. und 6. Jh.,⁴⁰ möglicherweise lange nach Palladions Tod. Immerhin sind gerade im früh- und mittelbyzantinischen Galatien, auch in Tavium, eine Reihe von Belegen zu registrieren.⁴¹ In der Regierung Iustinians wurde ganz Ankyra unter den Schutz der Theotokos gestellt, wie eine Architravinschrift bezeugt.⁴² Vermutlich in nachiustinianische Zeit gehört eine Inschrift aus der Region westlich von Ikonion, die einen Kirchenbau für die Gottesmutter belegt: Diese wird im Text explizit als πανάχραντος („gänzlich unbefleckt“) bezeichnet.⁴³ Trotz der chronologischen Unsicherheiten, die eine Rekonstruktion ideengeschichtlicher Abhängigkeiten schwierig machen, spricht viel dafür, dass die Familie der Palladion in der Mutter Jesu ein Vorbild jungfräulicher Lebensweise erkannte.

4. Auf Taubenflügeln: die Begegnung mit Gott – literarische Muster

Die reine Jungfrau Palladion schwingt sich auf den „Flügeln der Taube“ (πελιάδος πτεροῖς) empor, durchfliegt die Welt und gelangt so zu Gott im Himmel. Zum einen macht sich hier die im neuplatonischen und frühchristlichen Denken verbreitete Vorstellung bemerkbar, dass die Reinheit des Menschen diesem die Begegnung mit Gott erlaube.⁴⁴ Zum anderen deutet sich die Dichotomie zwischen Körper und Seele an, wie sie in vielen Grabepigrammen ausformuliert wird, auch in christlichen: Der Körper bleibe auf

³⁹ Greg. Naz. *Carm. mor.* 1 Vers 197 f. (PG 37, 537).

⁴⁰ Weiterführend C. TIERSCH, „Von der Vielfalt zur Einfachheit. Zur Entstehung des Marienkults in Constantinopel Anfang des 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. als Transformation religiöser Alltagsfrömmigkeit“, in: P. EICH / E. FABER (Hg.), *Religiöser Alltag in der Spätantike* (Stuttgart 2013) 97–116; M. MEIER, „The ‚Justinianic Plague‘ – an ‚Inconsequential Pandemic‘? A Reply“, *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 55 (2020) [172–199] 187 f.; S. MITCHELLS Kommentar zu *I.Ancyra* 323. B.12. HALLOF, „Maria auf Ikaria“.

⁴¹ NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints* 498–525 (GAL/01/04; 02/04; 04/03; 05/03).

⁴² Vgl. ICG 3981: [+ Ἡ πόλις + | [τῆς Ἀγίας] Θεοτόκου + | [+ Ἀγκ]υρα. + (Ergänzungen von S. MITCHELL, *I.Ancyra* 323).

⁴³ W.M. RAMSAY / G.L. BELL, *The Thousand and One Churches* (Philadelphia ²2008) 531: οὗτος ὁ ναὸς ... τῆς παννυμίτου καὶ παναχράντου ... Θε[ο]τόκου ... („Das ist die Kirche der allseits gefeierten und gänzlich unbefleckten Gottesmutter“). Vgl. auch NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints* 207 Anm. 1.

⁴⁴ Weiterführend WECKWERTH 2022, 182–190. Vgl. o. S. zu Greg. Nyss. *De virg.* 11.

der Erde zurück, und die Seele fliege in den Himmel.⁴⁵ Gregor von Nazianz greift diese Dichotomie in einem der Epigramme auf, die er zu Ehren seiner verstorbenen Mutter Nonne verfasste.⁴⁶ Allerdings ist zu beachten, dass im Zusammenhang mit dem Taubenflug vom Körper der Palladion nicht explizit die Rede ist. Es wird also nicht gesagt, dass jener Flug erst nach dem Tod des Mädchens anzusetzen ist. Dadurch eröffnen sich weitere Interpretationsspielräume.

Im frühen Christentum entwickelte sich, anknüpfend an einschlägige Bibelstellen, vor allem an die Botenrolle der Taube in Noahs Sintflut sowie an den Vergleich des Heiligen Geistes mit einer Taube bei der Taufe Jesu,⁴⁷ eine weit verbreitete Symbolik, die in schematischen Abbildungen auf Grabmonumenten ihren Niederschlag findet.⁴⁸ Allerdings ist es nicht einfach, jene Symbolik im konkreten Fall zu spezifizieren, also festzulegen, ob die (Abbildung der) Taube für den Heiligen Geist, die Seele, die Kirche oder den christlichen Frieden steht. In den frühchristlichen Grabinschriften Roms werden besonders friedfertige Frauen zuweilen als „Tauben“ (*palumbae*) bezeichnet.⁴⁹ Palladion wird ihrerseits zur Taube, um kraft ihrer Schwingen

⁴⁵ Zahlreiche Beispiele in LATTIMORE 1942, 28–43 u. 304–306 (christlich); dazu I. PERES, *Griechische Grabinschriften und neutestamentliche Eschatologie* (Tübingen 2003) 81–88; M. OBRYK, *Unsterblichkeitsglaube in den griechischen Versinschriften* (Berlin 2012) 157–174; A. WYPUSTEK, *Images of eternal beauty in funerary verse inscriptions of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods* (Leiden / Boston 2013) 29–155; zu den christlichen Inschriften vgl. CARLETTI 2008, 223; A. MERKT in: J. DRESKEN-WEILAND / A. ANGERS-TORFER / A. MERKT, *Himmel, Paradies, Schalom. Tod und Jenseits in antiken christlichen und jüdischen Grabinschriften* (Regensburg 2012) 54 f.; C. BREYTENBACH / E. TZAVELLA, *Early Christianity in Athens, Attica, and adjacent areas: from Paul to Justinian I (1st–6th cent. AD)* (Leiden / Boston 2023) 329–332. In philosophischer Tradition H. MÜLLER / G. STAAB, „Dion – Ein pergamenischer Politiker im Himmel“, *Chiron* 47 (2017) [339–365] 361–364.

⁴⁶ AG 8.33:

Ψυχὴ μὲν πτερόεσσα πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἦλυθε Νόννης,
σῶμα δ' ἄρ' ἐκ νηοῦ Μάρτυσι παρθέμεθα.

„Im Flug gelangte die Seele der Nonne zum Himmel,
ihren Körper setzten wir bei den Märtyrern vor der Kirche bei.“

⁴⁷ Gen 8,11; Mt 3,16; Mk 1,10; Lk 3,22; Joh 1,32. Der biblische Begriff für die „Tauben“ ist περιστέρα. Πέλεια ist homerisch. Weiterführend zu den beiden Bezeichnungen W. G. ARNOTT, *Birds in the ancient world from A to Z* (London / New York 2007) 170 f., 177–179.

⁴⁸ Vgl. J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Bild, Grab und Wort. Untersuchungen zu Jenseitsvorstellungen von Christen des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg 2010) 33–36; P. EMBERGER, „Tauben“, *RAC* 31 (2022) [952–976] 973–975. Vgl. auch M. GUARDUCCI, *Epigrafia Greca IV* (Rom 1978) 307: Taube als Friedenssymbol auf frühchristlichen Gräbern; P. COX MILLER, *In the eye of the animal. Zoological imagination in ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia 2018) 33–38 (u. a. zum spirituellen „Flug“ zu Gott).

⁴⁹ Vgl. zu ICUR IV 9558 CARLETTI 2008, 174. Die Standardformulierung lautet *palumba sine felle* („Tauben ohne Galle / Gehässigkeit“).

zu Gott zu gelangen, und möglicherweise lehnt sich die poetische Metapher konkret an literarische Vorgaben der kappadokischen Kirchenväter an:

Manchmal packte Gregor von Nazianz der Überdruß, die Nichtigkeit des Lebens machte ihm zu schaffen, Fluchtgedanken und Sehnsucht nach Askese begleiteten ihn. In solchen Situationen bot ihm die Dichtung ein Ventil:

Ich wünschte eine Taube mit langen Flügeln zu sein, oder eine Schwalbe,
um dem Leben der Sterblichen zu entfliehen, oder um eine einsame Gegend
zu bewohnen zusammen mit wilden Tieren (denn die sind
zuverlässiger als Menschen), und mein tägliches Leben zu führen
ohne Trauer, ohne Schmerz, ohne Sorge. Allein das möchte ich den wilden Tieren
voraus haben, die kluge sich zum Himmel aufschwingende Kenntnis von der
Göttlichkeit,
so dass ich in einem friedlichen Leben das Licht auf immer gewinne. ...⁵⁰

Gregor wirft hier nicht einen Blick ins Jenseits, sondern malt sich einen Sehnsuchtsort aus, an dem er ein ruhiges Leben und die Nähe Gottes genießen darf. Dieser Ort ist so entlegen, dass er ihn nur mit Hilfe von Vogelflügeln erreichen kann. Das Fortbewegungsmittel (Flügel), die Richtung (von der Erde zum Himmel) und das Ziel (Gott) sind dieselben wie im Epigramm der Palladion, wenn auch das Szenario im Detail mit Unterschieden aufwartet. Eine Abhängigkeit der Inschrift von Tavium von der Dichtung Gregors kann selbstverständlich nicht postuliert werden, die Rezeptionswege sind viel zu unsicher.⁵¹ Dennoch verdichten sich die Indizien, dass sich im Umfeld der kappadokischen Bischöfe eine literarische Aura herausbildete, der sich gerade die Eliten wie Flavius Asklepiades kaum entziehen konnten.⁵² Tavium ge-

⁵⁰ Greg. Naz. *Carm. de se ipso* 32 (PG 37, 1300–1305), hier nur die ersten 7 Verse. Neu-edition mit nützlichem Kommentar in C. SIMELIDIS, *Selected poems of Gregory of Nazianzus*, I.2.17; II.1.10, 19, 32: *a critical edition with introduction and commentary* (Göttingen 2009) 113–115, 218–246.

Ἡθελον ἢ πέλεια τανύπτερος ἢ ἐχελιδὼν
ἔμμεναι, ὥς κε φύγοιμι βροτῶν βίον, ἢ τιν' ἔρημον
ναιετάειν θήρεσσιν ὁμέστιος (οἱ γὰρ ἔασιν
πιστότεροι μερόπων) καὶ ἡμάτιον βίον ἔλκειν
νηπενθῆ, νήποινον, ἀκηδέα· ἐν τόδ' ἄθληρον
μοῦνον ἔχειν, θεότητος ἴδριν νόον, οὐρανοφοίτην,
ὥς κε γαληνιώωντι βίῳ φάος αἰὲν ἀγείρω.

Vgl. zu diesen Versen analoge Gedanken in Ps 54,7–8 LXX (ebenfalls mit dem Wunsch nach Taubenflügeln; allerdings geht es um die Flucht aus konkreter Gefahr), zitiert von Aug. *Ep.* 95.3.

⁵¹ Kopien der Schriften Gregors kursierten während des 5. Jhs. nachweislich in Syrien und beim Konzil von Chalkedon. Weiterführend A. TUILIER/G. BADY/J. BERNARDI (Hg.), *Saint Grégoire de Naziance. Œuvres poétiques I 1: Poèmes personnels II, I, 1–II* (Paris 2004) LXXVIII–LXXXI.

⁵² Vergleichbare Rezeptionsmechanismen deutet ZIMMERMANN C. 2019, 141–143 für Lykaonien an, wo allerdings Amphilochius von Ikonion als Zwischeninstanz eine wichtige Rolle gespielt haben dürfte.

hörte zwar zur galatischen Provinz, Kappadokien lag indes vor der Haustür,⁵³ und der Weg nach Caesarea war nicht weit (heute knapp 200 km).

5. Die Trauer der Eltern

Palladion mag den Weg zu Gott gefunden haben, dennoch ist die Trauer der Eltern geradezu grenzenlos. Der Schmerz von Asklepiades und Basilisa über den Verlust ihrer viel zu früh verstorbenen Tochter entspricht zum einen antiker Konvention, widerspricht aber zugleich der unverbrüchlichen Hoffnung der Christen auf ein Jenseits bei Gott. Dieses Dilemma begleitet das frühe Christentum auf Schritt und Tritt.⁵⁴ Palladions Epitaph durchsetzen Formeln der Trauer, wie sie in der Epigrammtradition gang und gäbe sind: Es sei der $\phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$, der Palladion aus dem Leben gerissen habe;⁵⁵ das Mädchen sei blütengleich im Frühling ihres Lebens dahingegangen;⁵⁶ den armen Eltern habe sie nichts weiter hinterlassen als Kummer und Leid.⁵⁷ Dass diese dann ein Grabmal zur ewigen Erinnerung an die Verstorbene setzen, entspricht selbstverständlich ebenfalls traditionellem Gedankengut.⁵⁸

6. Vignetten im Text

Die graphische Gestaltung des Inschriftenfeldes wurde bereits erwähnt. Die Blättchen, die hie und da als Wort- oder Satztrenner zu finden sind, erinnern an sog. „Hederae“ („Efeu“), wie sie in der lateinischen Inschriftenkultur der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike oft auftauchen.⁵⁹ An zwei Stellen wird allerdings

⁵³ Vgl. zum galatisch-kappadokischen Grenzgebiet nahe Tavium S. MÉTIVIER, *La Cappadoce (IV^e–VI^e siècle). Une histoire provinciale de l'Empire romain d'Orient* (Paris 2005) 60–62.

⁵⁴ Vgl. A. HOFFMANN / U. HUTTNER / T. NAUMANN / H.-U. WEIDEMANN, „Trauer“, *RAC* 32 (2024) 891–916.

⁵⁵ Vgl. *IG* II² 12403 (kaiserzeitlich):

$\acute{o} \phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}κ \beta\acute{\iota}\omicron\tau\omicron\iota\omicron \Pi\alpha\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\nu\iota\omicron\nu \eta\rho\pi\alpha\sigma\epsilon\nu \acute{\alpha}\varphi\nu\omega \dots$

„Die Missgunst riss jählings Panathenion aus dem Leben ...“.

⁵⁶ Dazu LATTIMORE 1942, 195–198. Vgl. etwa *CIL* V 1666 (Aquileia) über ein Mädchen, das *e flore iuventae* („aus der Blüte der Jugend“) fortgerissen worden sei.

⁵⁷ Vgl. z. B. *Steinepigramme* II 10/04/01 (aus Abonuteichos, ca. 3. Jh.), über die jung verstorbene Demarete: ... $\mu\eta\tau\rho\acute{\iota} \acute{\epsilon}\mu\eta \lambda\iota\pi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha \delta\acute{\alpha}\kappa\rho\upsilon\alpha \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota} \kappa\acute{\eta}\delta\epsilon\alpha \lambda\upsilon\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha} \dots$ („... meiner Mutter hinterließ ich Tränen und trauriges Leid ...“). Weiterführend zu dieser und ähnlichen Wendungen in griechischen Grabepigrammen PIRCHER 1979, 55 u. 57 f. Anm. 25.

⁵⁸ Vgl. LATTIMORE 1942, 243–246.

⁵⁹ Vgl. I. CALABI LIMENTANI, *Epigrafia latina* (Milano 41991) 131; F. GROSSI GONDI, *Trattato di epigrafia cristiana latina e greca del mondo Romano occidentale* (Rom 1920, Ndr. 1968) 47.

die Monotonie der „Hederae“ unterbrochen, nämlich in Z. 7 (zwischen $\phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ und $\text{“}\Omega\rho\eta\text{”}$), wo ein stilisierter Palmzweig, und in Z. 17 (am Ende des metrischen Textes, vor $\Phi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\omicron\upsilon\iota\omicron\iota$), wo ein nicht weniger stilisierter Vogel eingezeichnet ist. Derart symbolbeladene Abbildungen sind in frühchristlichen Inschriften keine Seltenheit.⁶⁰ Palmzweige mögen die – im Martyriumdiskurs besonders präsente – Sieges- und Überwindungsidee symbolisieren. Dass der Vogel im Falle der Palladion als Taube zu identifizieren ist, die ihr den Weg zu Gott eröffnet, liegt nahe.⁶¹ So ist es der Jungfrau ein Leichtes, ihren Bestimmungsort im Himmel zu erreichen.

⁶⁰ Davon überzeugt eine Durchsicht bebildeter Handbücher. Z. B. C. M. KAUFMANN, *Handbuch altchristlicher Epigraphik* (Freiburg 1917); CARLETTI 2008.

⁶¹ So auch WALLNER 2017, 39.

7. The Mosaic Inscription of Bishop Spyridon in Tremithus/Tremithousa¹

Daniela Summa

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*Fig. 24: ICG 4732, Tremithus/Tremithousa, Cyprus, 4th–5th c. AD
(photo: D. MICHAELIDES, *Cypriot Mosaics*, Nicosia ²1992)*

¹ This is an augmented version of D. SUMMA, “The Christian Epigraphy of Cyprus: A Preliminary Study”, in: S. MITCHELL / P. PILHOFER, *Early Christianity in Asia Minor and Cyprus* (Leiden / Boston 2019) [226–251] 234–6. I am grateful to Christiane Zimmermann, Cilliers Breytenbach, Timo Christian, Klaus Hallof, Ulrich Huttner and Philipp Pilhofer for helpful advice and to Travis R. Niles for improving the English text.

ψηφί[δι γρα]πτῇ ποικίλῃ ται τὴν χροάν
 τόπον κοσμήσαι ἁγίων ἐπισκόπων
 Καρταιρίου χερσὶν προσέταξεν ἀγαθῆς *hedera*
 μνήμης Σφυρίδων μεταίχων ἁγίας
 ἴσος ὁμοίῳ δυνάμει πνευματικῇ. +

With an inscribed and multicoloured mosaic
 to adorn this place of the holy bishops
 the virtuous hands of (mosaicist) Karterios instructed
 Sp(h)yridon, sharing saintly memory,
 equal to his peer in spiritual power.²

Editorial notes: V.1 the letters in brackets have been restored in the mosaic after its discovery; χροάν· “color” or less likely metaphoric “skin, surface” (of the floor). V.2 τόπον “place”, meaning the whole church or the burial place within the church. Understand τε instead of ται (V.1), Καρτερίου, ἀγαθαῖς (V.3), and μετέχων (V.4).

² The exegesis of the text is much discussed. Here, we propose our interpretation. The translation above follows the layout of the original text. Our reading is: “Sp(h)yridon, sharing saintly memory, equal to his peer in spiritual power, instructed the virtuous hands of (mosaicist) Karterios, to adorn this place of the holy bishops with an inscribed and multicoloured mosaic.”

The mosaic inscription was uncovered within the polychrome floor mosaic of the early Christian basilica under the Church of Agios Spyridon in the mid 1960s during excavations conducted by A. Papageorgiou for the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. The inscription made of white tesserae in a black *tabula ansata* (h. 0,60. l. 2,31. Lett. h. 0,09) is reportedly still *in situ*; however, it has been inaccessible since 1974 because the site is located in a buffer zone; i.e., the zone administered by the United Nations that follows the line dividing the island in two political entities.

As what is perhaps the oldest evidence of the Cypriot cult of local bishops, a strong phenomenon in Cyprus connected to the achievement and reinforcement of the independence of the Cypriot Church from the Patriarchate of Antioch, this inscription³ bears great significance for the history of the early Cypriot Church.

The commission for the text, composed in an awkward iambic meter, together with the multicoloured floor mosaic of the basilica dedicated to the holy bishops, was given to an artist named Karterios by a bishop named Sp(h)yridon. As in the case of Eustolios' dossier in the next chapter, this document belongs to the genre of building inscriptions.

The mosaic has been dated by the first editor Papageorgiou to the late fourth century on the basis of the identification of Sp(h)yridon with the famous fourth century bishop St Spyridon, who participated in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325). However, according to the onomastic tradition of the city, he could have been an homonymous bishop who later became bishop of Tremithus.⁴ We tend to the latter interpretation on account of the expressions ἴσος ὁμοίῳ δυνάμει πνευματικῇ ("equal to his peer in spiritual power") and ἅγιοι ἐπίσκοποι ("holy bishops"). The latter most likely refer to the defunct titular bishops of the episcopal see of Tremithus buried there starting with the first St Spyridon.⁵ Furthermore, with the words

³ Selected editions and studies: A. PAPAGEORGIOU, "Ἐρευνα εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Ἁγίου Σπυρίδωνος ἐν Τρεμετουσιᾷ", *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 30 (1966) [17–33] 24–8 pl. VIII 1–2; S. PELEKANIDIS / P. ATZAKA, *Σύνταγμα των παλαιοχριστιανικῶν ψηφιδωτῶν δαπέδων της Ελλάδος: Νησιωτικὴ Ἑλλάς* (Thessaloniki 1974) 142–143 no. 135 pl. 126 β; MICHAELIDES ²1992, 72 fig. 38; O. MASSON, "Kypriaka, XIX", *BCH* 119 (1995) [405–413] 411–3 fig. 3; *IG XV* 2, 374 with previous bibliography. See M. DONDERER, *Die Mosaizisten der Antike und ihre wirtschaftliche und soziale Stellung: Eine Quellenstudie* (Erlangen 1989) 66 no. A 19 pl. 15; D. NICOLAOU, "Ἡ κυπριακὴ ἐπιγραφικὴ κατὰ τὸν 4ο–7ο μ.Χ αἰῶνα", in: MICHAELIDES 2013 [245–272] 260–1 fig. 26; L. MUSSO, "The Northern Face of Cyprus: The Mosaics in Their Relation to Eastern Mediterranean Production", in: L. SUMMERER / H. KABA (eds.), *The Northern Face of Cyprus: New Studies in Cypriot Archaeology and Art History* (Istanbul 2016) [81–115] 86–7 pl. 12; EFTHYMIADIS 2018, 108–110 fig. 4; DELIGIANNAKIS 2018, 344–5; G. DELIGIANNAKIS, *A Cultural History of Late Roman Cyprus* (Nicosia 2022) 124–8.

⁴ As D. PALLAS, *Les monuments paléochrétiens en Grèce de 1959 à 1973* (Vatican City 1977) 287–8 has already suggested, followed by FEISSEL / MASSON, *BE* 1994, 614.

⁵ See below, note 15.

ἄγιοι ἐπίσκοποι, the mosaic seems to offer early evidence for the cult of local bishops, which makes it one of the most significant evidences for the history of Christianity in Cyprus.⁶ The Cypriot patriotic practice of venerating local bishops,⁷ such as Spyridon, patron of the Basilica of Tremithus, Barnabas, the patron of the island, or the fourth century bishop of Salamis / Konstantia, Epiphanius, was one of the most effective arguments that the Cypriot Church used since the fifth century in order to achieve and consolidate its claim to autocephaly. In fact, as it is well known, the Cypriot Church was the first in the *orbis Christianus* to become independent from the see of Antioch at the Council of Ephesus (431), and maintained this status by promoting local cults, hagiographies and discoveries of holy relics.⁸ Of the last, the most successful and widely renowned among scholars is the discovery of the relics of the apostle Barnabas in the late fifth century by Bishop Anthemios, which proved the apostolic origin of the Cypriot Church to Antioch.⁹

Concerning the bishop Spyridon, we detect from the fifth century onwards a flourishing of hagiographical notices devoted to him from the ecclesiastic historians Rufinus, Sokrates, Sozomenos, and Gelasios,¹⁰ who depict his identity as a shepherd and a performer of miracles, bishop of Tremithus as of 325¹¹ and prominent participant in the council of Nicaea (325) and Serdica

⁶ Most recently EFTHYMIADIS 2018, 109–10; DELIGIANNAKIS 2018, 345, with further bibliography.

⁷ See RAPP 2014, 31.

⁸ Concerning the early history of the Cypriot Church, see A. H. M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1964) 1.376–377, 2.873; V. VON FALKENHAUSEN, “Bishops and Monks in the Hagiography of Cyprus”, in N. PATTERSON ŠEVČENKO / C. F. MOSS (eds.), *Medieval Cyprus: Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki* (Princeton 1999) 21–33; M. KANTIREA, “Gouverneurs, évêques et notables de Chypre au Bas-Empire”, in: S. BENOIST / C. HOËT-VAN CAUWENBERGHE (eds.), *La vie des autres: Histoire, prosopographie, biographie dans l’Empire romain* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq 2013) [113–127] 123–4; RAPP 2014; DELIGIANNAKIS 2018, 344–5. The crucial role of Cyprus and its Church in the eastern Mediterranean has been highlighted by G. BOWERSOCK, *The International Role of Late Antique Cyprus* (Nicosia 2000); G. DELIGIANNAKIS, “The Last Pagans of Cyprus: Prolegomena to a History of Transition from Polytheism to Christianity”, in: HORSTER / NICOLAOU / ROGGE 2018, 23–44.

⁹ On the invention see RAPP 2014, 33; J. P. HUFFMAN, “The Donation of Zeno: St Barnabas and the Origins of the Cypriot Archbishop’s Regalia Privileges”, *JEH* 66 (2015) 235–260.

¹⁰ Rufinus, *HE* 10.5; Sokrates, *HE* 1.12.1–7; Sozomenos, *HE* 1.11.1–11; Gelasios, *HE* 2.10.1–11.7, all collected by VAN DEN VEN 1953, 34*–41*.

¹¹ Sokrates, *HE* 1.12.1 (= Suda σ 976 s.v. Σπυρίδων); Sozomenos, *HE* 1.11.1; see DELEHAYE 1907, 239–241. The earliest attestation of Spyridon’s life comes from Athanasios, *Apol. Sec.* 50.2, (around y. 348), who informs us that he was bishop of Tremithus between 325 and 346, see VAN DEN VEN 13*–14*, 115*.

(343).¹² In the seventh c. AD, the cult of Spyridon was well established as one of the earliest and most successful cults of saints of the Cypriot Church, as a further *Life of Spyridon* composed by Theodoros, the bishop of Paphos, confirms.¹³ Namely, in an addition to chapter 20,¹⁴ Theodoros reports that on the December 14 of the year AD 655, Spyridon's birthday, the Cypriot bishops and other eminent guests convened in the church of Agios Spyridon in Thremithus, which was also the saint's burial place,¹⁵ to celebrate the feast day of St Spyridon and to hear him reading his newly composed *Life of Spyridon* publicly. Theodoros reported also that when narrating a miracle performed by Spyridon, namely that merely the prayer of the saint caused an idol in Alexandria to collapse, some of the listeners became sceptical, because that specific miracle was not included in an ancient and authoritative biography of Spyridon that had been composed in iambic verses. The audience first became convinced of the authenticity of the miracle when their attention was drawn to a painting of that very scene on a wall in the church.¹⁶ The Suda, a Byzantine Lexicon, records the existence of this ancient biography and mentions as the earliest biography of Spyridon an iambic poem attributed to his disciple Triphyllios, bishop of Ledra.¹⁷ The poem is preserved in scanty fragments, in which Paul Maas was able to detect 'neglected' iambic trimeters, which appear already to have the physiognomy of the Byzantine dodecane syllable.¹⁸ The awkward iambic meter of the mosaic inscription could

¹² Sokrates, *HE* 1.8.12; Suda σ 976. His name is in the conciliar lists of Nicaea; see H. GELZER / H. HILGENFELD / O. CUNTZ, *Patrum Nicaenorum nomina. Latine Graece Coptice Syriace Arabice Armeniace. Adiecta est tabula geographica* (Leipzig 1898; Neudruck mit Nachwort von Christoph Marksches. Stuttgart / Leipzig 1995) 71. For this reference, I am grateful to Ulrich Huttner and Philipp Pilhofer. Spyridon's presence at the Council of Serdica is reported by Athanasios, *Apol. Sec.* 50.2.

¹³ Edited by VAN DEN VEN 1953, 1–103. Cf. DELEHAYE 1907, 239–241; RAPP 2014, 405–7, recently Y. R. KIM, "Cypriot Autocephaly, Reconsidered", in: L. NASRALLAH / A. LUIJENDIJK / C. BAKIRTZIS 2020, [153–167] 156–7; S. EFTHYMIADIS, "The cult of Saints in Late Antique Cyprus and the Apostolicity of its Churches", in: NASRALLAH / LUIJENDIJK / BAKIRTZIS 2020 [211–223] 213 and 221; M. SOLOMIDOU–IERONYMIDOU / G. PHILOTHEOU "The Representation and Memory of Saints Paul, Barnabas, Epiphanius, and Others on Wall Paintings of Byzantine and Medieval Cyprus", in: NASRALLAH / LUIJENDIJK / BAKIRTZIS 2020 [225–235] 231, according to whom Saint Spyridon, along with Epiphanius, is depicted in almost every church of Cyprus. Recently, a full edition, with Spanish translation, of a lost *Life of Spyridon* composed by Leontios of Neapolis and dating to the 7th c. has been provided by CAVALLERO et al. 2014.

¹⁴ VAN DEN VEN 1953, 81*, 110*–111*.

¹⁵ As Theodoros writes, VAN DEN VEN 1953, 88 l. 14–89 l. 4.

¹⁶ VAN DEN VEN 1953, 76*–77*.

¹⁷ Suda τ 1032; see VAN DEN VEN 1953, 44*. Theodoros does not believe that the iambic biography was composed by Triphyllios, VAN DEN VEN 1953, 77 l. 12–78 l. 15.

¹⁸ On this text, see VAN DEN VEN 1953, 44*–55*; regarding the text and results of Maas's examination, see 115*–120*. In the same Basilica of St Spyridon, a 7th c. inscription composed

be an attempt to establish a link with the quite contemporary (or supposedly contemporary) iambic biography. Whether or not the characteristics of the mosaic insinuate that it is more ancient than it actually is, it would be preferable to date the inscription to the fifth rather than to the fourth century. In conclusion, according not only to the previously refereed opinions, but also to our own, the mosaic of the episcopal Basilica was commissioned to the mosaicist Karterios by a bishop of Tremithus traditionally named after his famous predecessor, St Spyridon.¹⁹ The inscription highlights bishop Spyridon as a benefactor of his community and documents the veneration of the saintly bishops of Cyprus in one of the earliest preserved evidences.

in dodecasyllabic meter has been found (*IG XV 2, 375 = ICG 4742*), called by P. MAAS, “Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber”, *Byz. Zeitsch.* 12 (1903) 278–323 “byzantinischer jambischer Trimeter”. On this meter, see the recent study A. RHOBY, “Vom jambischen Trimeter zum byzantinischen Zwölfsilber: Beobachtung zur Metrik des spätantiken und byzantinischen Epigramms”, *WSt* 124 (2011) 117–142; CAVALLERO et al. 2014, 21–3.

¹⁹ Also in the case of Epiphanius, see EFTHYMIADES 2018, 110.

8. The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex of ‘Eustolios’

Daniela Summa

The dossier of ‘Eustolios’ offers an eminent piece of evidence for the co-existence of Classical tradition and Early Christianity within a civic context. In the most popular inscription of the series, the public benefactor Eustolios presents himself as being comparable to the former pagan god Phoebus (Apollo) in the duty of protector of his city.

The series of mosaic inscriptions was unearthed in a large complex known as ‘House’ or ‘Annex of Eustolios’ (after the name of its donor, see inscription no. 2) during excavations conducted in the years 1934–1935 and 1948–1950 by the archaeologists of Pennsylvania University on the acropolis of the ancient city of Kourion, located on the southwestern coast of Cyprus.¹ The complex, built on the foundations of an earlier building, presents the architectural shape of a richly decorated peristyle Roman villa, consisting of more than 30 rooms with annexed thermal baths in the upper level of the area. In the best-preserved parts of the complex five mosaic inscriptions are still visible in more or less fragmentary conditions.² As will become clear below, the epigraphic evidence is related to the function of the building and of the respective inscribed spaces, which include the entrance, reception halls, and bathhouse. The mosaic inscriptions support the assumption that the complex was used at this time as a public bath establishment and meeting place.

¹ On the excavations see J.-F. DANIEL, “The Palace”, *UMB* 7,2 (1938) 4–10; idem, “Kourion. Past Achievements and Future Plans”, *UMB* 13,3 (1948) 7–15; D. J. FALES, “Kourion – The Amusement Area”, *UMB* 14,4 (1950) 27–35; G. MC-FADDEN, “Archaeological News: Cyprus, 1950–1951” *AJA* 56,2 (1952) [128–131] 128–9; CHRISTOU 2007, 19–22; The inscriptions found in the ‘house of Eustolios’ have been fully published by MITFORD 1971 in his corpus of the inscriptions of Kourion: *I.Kourion* 201–205.

² A sixth mosaic inscription (*I.Kourion* 206 [ICG 4738]), disintegrated soon after the excavation, was transmitted in too fragmentary a state for attempting an interpretation (– – – I | – – – IE | – – OEOK | – – O – EK | – – CM), unless the word Θεός lies hidden at l. 3.

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Fig. 25: Map of the Complex 'of Eustolios' after MITFORD, *I.Kourion*, plan 4 (Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus). The inscribed mosaics are indicated in the map with the letters A–F (= corresponding to *I.Kourion* 201–206, ICG 4733–4738, Kourion, Cyprus, early 5th c. AD).

1. Complex of Eustolios: Vestibule Leading to the Forecourt to a Central Peristyle. *In situ*.

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Fig. 26: *I.Kourion* 201 [ICG 4733] (photo: D. Summa, 2023; Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus)

εἴσα[γε]	Enter
ἐπ' ἀγαθ[ῶ]	to the good fortune
εὐτυχῶς	with good luck
τῷ οἴκῳ.	to the house.

Editorial notes: Text made of black tesserae within a gray red and brown colored wreath, fragmentary at the right side and below, diam. 0,505. Letters h. 0,05–0,08 (ΓΨ). Underlined letters were visible after excavation and have now been lost.

Selected editions and studies: MITFORD, *I.Kourion* 201 with ph.; PELEKANIDIS / ATZAKA 1974, 143–4 no. 136 with ph. pl. 128β; CHRISTOU 2007, 26 with ph. See MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 234–7; NASRALLAH 2020, 7.

In the vestibule, a first mosaic inscription welcomes the visitor into the complex with two classical, almost synonymic expressions, ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ and εὐτυχῶς, that are only apparently redundant: the first wish is meant for the wellbeing of the visitor “enter to your good fortune”, the second for the wellbeing of the house. Since the next inscription (*I.Kourion* 204 [ICG 4736], see 2.) refers to the whole city of Kourion, the interpretation of the complex as a public building has been reasonably considered the most probable. Consequently, we understand here the last word οἶκος as “public house”. Furthermore, several inscribed fragments of public documents in honour of functionaries and distinguished citizens of the second–third c. AD have been uncovered in the topsoil and filling of several rooms and baths of the

complex,³ which presumably originate from a previous civic complex, as also the adjacency of the Eustolios complex to the ancient theatre of the city suggests. Neither the text based on the traditional welcome-formula of the pagan buildings nor the geometric decoration pictured on the floor mosaic around the inscription evince Christian faith at the entrance of the house.⁴ In fact, the only preserved Cypriot texts with a similar form are two non-Christian inscriptions, the first from the city of Amathus (2nd c. AD),⁵ the second from the nearby sanctuary of Apollo Hylates, patron of Kourion. The latter is a stele modestly inscribed in a late phase of the sanctuary (3rd c. AD) and located at its entrance with welcoming, blessing, and farewell inscriptions.⁶ Since it survived in the sanctuary almost completely intact the stele could have still been visible to the Kourion inhabitants at the time of Eustolios, especially considering that the commissioner of the complex acknowledges the local Apollo in the following inscription.

³ The inscriptions *I.Kourion* 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 118, 146, 174, 200.

⁴ Mosaics welcoming the visitor with inscribed Psalms or Biblical quotations in religious buildings are well documented in early Christian Cyprus similarly as in the neighbouring Syria. From the vicinity, see in the Episcopal Basilica of Kourion at the south of the central entrance Εὐχασθαι (sc. -ε) καὶ ἀπόδοτε] / Κυρίῳ τῷ Θε(ε)ῷ ἡ[μῶν] / ("Vow and pay unto the Lord our God", Ps 75:12 LXX). Φωνὴ ἀγαλιάσεως κ[αὶ σω]/τηρίας ἐν σκηνῆς (sc. -αῖς) δικα[ίω]ν ("The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous", Ps 117:15 LXX) + Εἰρήνῃ ἡ ἰσωδ[ος] (sc. -εἰσ-) / [σο]υ, ὦ βλέπο[ν Ἀμήν] ("Come in peace, beholder, Amen", 1 Kgdm 16:4) (I. NICOLAOU, "The Inscriptions", in: MEGAW 2007 [367–399] 385–6 with translations). In the so called Basilica B of Akrotiri–Katalymata ton Plakoton close to the main entrance was found a floor mosaic with *Introitus* Psalm 117:20 Αὐτὴ ἡ πύλη τοῦ κυρίου, δίδκειο (sc. -αῖοι) εἰσελεύσονται (sc. -αι) ἐν αὐτῇ ("This (is the) gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter", E. PROCOPIOU, "New Evidence of the Early Byzantine Ecclesiastical Architecture of Cyprus", in: M. HORSTER / D. NICOLAOU / S. ROGGE (eds.), *Church Building in Cyprus (Fourth to Seventh Centuries): A Mirror of Intercultural Contacts in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Münster 2018) [73–98] 88–89 with figg. 12–13 = ICG 4740). The latter quotation is also pictured on tombs in Yeroskipou, see D. MICHAELIDES, "Ayioi Pente at Yeroskipou. A New Early Christian Site in Cyprus", *Musiva et Septilia* 1 (2004) 185–198; idem, "The Significance of the Basilica at Agioi Pente of Yeroskipou", in: C. A. STEWART / T. W. DAVIS / A. WEYL CARR (eds.), *Cyprus and the Balance of Empires: Art and Archaeology from Justinian I to the Coeur de Lion* (Boston 2014) [1–16] 6–14 (= ICG 4741). Cf. FEISSEL, *BE* 2008, 92 and 2009, 649.

⁵ MITFORD 1950, 72 no. 40 with fig. 42, εἴσαγε μετὰ ὑγίας, εὐθάλι καὶ (sc. καὶ) εὐτύχι<α> (κέ<ν>) εὐτυχί<α>? J. and L. ROBERT, *BE* 1951, 236); *I. Amathonte* 1193, in print. Although the text is problematic, the well-wishing meaning is clear: "enter to good health, with flourishing and good luck".

⁶ Decorated as well with a wreath and with a miniature of the temple in relief (*I.Kourion* 112). On the front is the inscription welcoming into the sanctuary (καλῶς ἔρχῃ), on the lateral side the blessing of Apollo ([εἰλε]ως ὑμεῖν [Ἀπ]όλλων), on the backside, visible when exiting, the farewell (καλῶς ὑπάγεις).

2. Central Part of the East Hall, which shall have Functioned as Reception Space. *In situ*.

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Fig. 27: I.Kourion 204 [ICG 4736] (photo: D. Summa, 2023; Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus)

[Κουριάς] τὸ πάρ[οιθε ἐν ὄλβ]ῳ παντὶ πέλοντας
 [νῦν ἐν δύνῃ ἰδ]ῶν ἐκ ποδὸς Εὐστόλιος ∴
 [οὐ πατρίης χώ]ρης ἐπελήσατο, ἀλλ' ἄρα καὶ τῆς
 [ἐμνήσθη φιλί]ως λουτρὰ χαρισάμενος·
 5 [ἦ ῥ' αὐτὸς δὴ] δίζετο Κούριον, ὥς ποτε Φοῖβος,
 [γαίην δὲ] βρυχί[η]ν θῆκεν ὑπηνεμίην.

Having seen that the citizens of Kourion, who were once considerably wealthy,
 suffered now in abject misery, promptly Eustolios
 did not forget his homeland, but remembered it with love, presenting
 the baths to the city.

- 5 He indeed was taking care of Kourion, as once Phoebus (Apollo) did,
 and restored calm in the earthquake-stricken land.⁷

⁷ SOREN / JAMES 1988, 20 and similarly CHRISTOU 2007 – based on Mitford's text – translate as follows: "Eustolios, having seen that the Kourians, although previously very wealthy, were in abject misery, did not forget the city of his ancestors, but first having presented the baths to our city, he was then taking care of Kourion as once did Phoebus (Apollo) and built this cool refuge from the wind", interpreting thus that the baths were constructed some years before the rest of the complex. Mitford's supplements are given also by MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 248, who reports in note the divergent supplements proposed by Boskos and Peek. Nasrallah follows Boskos's supplements in the text, however printing Mitford's translation.

Editorial notes: Text made with black tesserae in a white rectangle, fragmentary at the left side, h. c. 0,478, l. 1,615. Letters h. 0,053–0,07 (ΓΨ). The reconstruction of the text is much discussed. We give here *exempli gratia* the supplements proposed principally by Peek and report the different suggestions in the apparatus as follows: 1 ὁ[λβω]! Boskos; 2 ἐν δύνι Boskos; δῖν (= δεία) Peek; [δυστήνους ἐσιδ]ῶν Mitford; 3 πατέρων χ[ω]ρης Mitf., Boskos; 4 [ἡμετέρας πόλε]ως Mitf.; 5 [αὐτὸς δὴ τότε] Boskos, [αὐτὸς δὴ τοτ' ἐ]δίξετο Mitf.; 6 [ἦρχετο, καὶ] ψυχρὴν Mitf., too long; [ἐποίει καὶ] Christou.

Textual commentary: V. 2 the meaning of ἐκ ποδὸς is problematic and mostly not included in the translations: it has been interpreted by Mitford “abroad, out of the country”; we suggest rather “promptly, expeditiously” (see Latin *expedite*), less probably “closely, from close up”. V. 5 δῖξετο, interpreted by all scholars necessarily as “took care”, nevertheless remains puzzling, since the verb means “seek for, seek after, desire”. V. 6 βρυχίην “thunderous” or “overflowed”, both possible meanings referring to the earthquake and tsunami that caused the substantial destruction of the coastal city of Kourion.

Although the text can be completed only by conjecture,⁸ there are, fortunately, some key words in the preserved part, which allow us to reconstruct the general sense. A prominent man named Eustolios sponsored the construction, or more probably the reconstruction,⁹ of the bathing establishment and of the annexed complex and donated them to the city of Kourion, which had fallen into poverty no doubt after several earthquakes that were devastating for the island, of which the last one documented occurred around 360/370.¹⁰ With this and presumably further benefactions suggested by the preterit δῖξετο (“was taking care”), Eustolios is shown to have undertaken great efforts for his city, as the pagan god Apollo once did. We understand in this context the local Apollo Hylates, patron of the city of Kourion, whose sanctuary was located just 3.5 km northwest from the Acropolis and from the complex of ‘Eustolios’. The text is imbued with classical *paideia* by the use of the metron (three elegiac distichs), the poetic vocabulary (δίζημαι, πέλομαι, Φοῖβος, Homeric *patina*,¹¹ no augment in preterit forms) and the mythological reference. Although displaying classical culture as a status symbol of the élites, and also

⁸ Selected editions and studies: MITFORD, *I.Kourion* 204 with ph.; PELEKANIDIS / ATZAKA 1974, 143–4 no.136 with ph. pl.128δ; W. PEEK, “Metrische Mosaik-Inschrift aus Kurion”, *ZPE* 23 (1976) 97–8. See MITFORD 1950, 47 no.1; BOSKOS 1997, 2.126–7 (E52) with ph.; NICOLAOU 2001, 13–7 with ph.; HAUBEN 2004, 274–281; CHRISTOU 2007, 30; MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 238–254; SUMMA 2019, 241–2 with fig. 9.9; NASRALLAH 2020, 9–10; DELIGIANNAKIS 2022, 42–4.

⁹ On a possibly earlier bathhouse, see *I.Kourion* 100 and discussion by MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 235.

¹⁰ SOREN 1987; SOREN / JAMES 1988; PAPAGEORGIOU 1993, 27–31; J. DAVIS, “Earthquakes and the Crises of Faith: Social Transformation in Late Antique Cyprus”, *BurH* 46 (2010) 5–16 with a useful bibliographic overview.

¹¹ On ‘Homeric language’ in late antique epigrams, see G. AGOSTI, “Les langues de l’épigramme épigraphique grecque: regard sur l’identité culturelle chrétienne dans l’Antiquité

used by more or less literate Christians, was not at all exceptional in Early Christian times,¹² the peculiarity of the epigram consists in the phrase "as Phoebus once did". Establishing a comparison between the past deeds of Apollo and the present deeds of Eustolios, the benefactor aims to immortalize his name in the mosaic as successor of the extinct pagan god in the function of protector of the city.¹³ Far from a refusal of the memory of Apollo, it proves that the pagan tutelary God belongs to the collective memory of the Kourians, mythology thus remaining a part of the tradition of the city. Since no traces of conflict nor violent tones toward the old religion are perceived, this epigram is considered one of the most relevant pieces of evidence documenting a tolerant or even peaceful atmosphere in early Christian Cyprus.¹⁴

Furthermore, the epigram provides confirmation that the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates was no longer in use at that time. Indeed, the last repair works in the pavement of the sanctuary point to a final construction phase in the first half of the fourth c. AD,¹⁵ before the catastrophic earthquakes of the second half of the same century that destroyed the city. For this further reason, it seems reasonable to date the completion of the Eustolios complex rather to the beginning of the fifth century¹⁶ than to the late fourth century.

tardive", in: E. SANTIN / L. FOSCHIA (eds.), *L'épigramme dans tous ses états: épigraphiques, littéraires, historiques* (Lyon 2016) 276–295.

¹² See A. KALDELLIS, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge 2008); concerning epigrams see G. AGOSTI, "Cultura greca negli epigrammi epigrafici di età tardoantica", *Incontri triestini di filologia classica* 6 (2006–2007) 3–18 esp. 4–5 on building inscriptions. On mosaics: "Nei ricchi pavimenti musivi del IV, V e VI secolo, ad esempio, la scelta di temi mitologici e letterari non è, come troppo spesso ancora si ripete, un indizio di opposizione al cristianesimo, o comunque di revival del paganesimo letterario: essa testimonia invece la volontà dei committenti di far sfoggio della propria cultura, cioè di dimostrare di appartenere all'élite dell'impero"; G. AGOSTI, "Literariness and Levels of Style in Epigraphical Poetry of Late Antiquity", *Ramus* 37 (2008) 191–213; AGOSTI 2020, 217–231.

¹³ G. DELIGIANNAKIS, "Christian Attitudes towards Pagan Statuary: The Case of Anastasios of Rhodes", *Byz.* 78 (2008) [142–158] 149–150 and 2022, 42 provides as a close parallel an early Christian epigram from Rhodes, where the notable Anastasios is proclaimed "οἰκιστής" (founder) of the Rhodians and "New Heracles" (ICG 4743); see the discussion about his document in G. AGOSTI, "Paideia classica e Fede religiosa", *Cahiers du Centre Glotz* 21 (2010) 344–5.

¹⁴ On the possibly peaceful coexistence of pagans and Christians, see A. PAPAGEORGIOU / N. BAKIRTZIS, "Hagiographic Narratives and Archaeological Realities: Revisiting the Beginnings of Christianity in Cyprus", in: NASRALLAH / LUIJENDIJK / BAKIRTZIS 2020, 55–74, with previous bibliography; MICHAELIDES 2020, 100; DELIGIANNAKIS 2022, 45.

¹⁵ SOREN 1987, 42–3, 52; SOREN / JAMES 1988, 3–7, 167.

¹⁶ Thus MICHAELIDES 1992, 81; HAUBEN 2004; MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017; DELIGIANNAKIS 2022, 42.

3. Southern Part of the East Hall. *In situ*.

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Fig. 28: *I.Kourion* 202 [ICG 4734] (photo: D. Summa, 2023; Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus)

ἀντὶ λίθων μεγάλων, ἀντὶ στερεοῖο σιδήρου ::
 χαλκοῦ τε ξανθοῖο καὶ αὐτοῦ ἀντ' ἀδάμαντος
 <ο>ἶδε δόμοι ζώσαντο πολύλλιτα σήματα Χριστοῦ.

Instead of great stones, instead of solid iron
 and gleaming bronze and even adamant
 this house encloses the much-venerated signs of Christ.

Editorial notes: Text made of brown tesserae within a rectangle of white tesserae, h. 0,355–0,358, l. 2,02. Letters h. 0,075 (ΛΨ). V.3 ΕΙΔΕ in mosaic; εἶδε itacistic form instead of οἶδε; πολύλλιτα (= hom. πολύλλιστος), a Callimachean word, occurs often

in Nonnus (see AGOSTI 2020, 225) and in a quite contemporary poem from Syria (IGLS II 297 = *Steinepigramme* 20/21/01 [addendum in *Steinepigramme* V, p. 14], new edition in FEISSEL 2002, 201–220). For the term in early Christian writers, see also NASRALLAH 2020, 13–14.

The only fully-preserved inscription¹⁷ is also a metrical composition of three dactylic hexameters in Homeric vocabulary and style (gen. in -οῖο, no augment). Already in the Homeric epics, stone and iron were used as a metaphor of stability and strength of body and soul, such as in *Il.* 4.510, where Apollo encourages the Trojans against the Argives: “Do not retire from the Argives! Their skin is neither stone nor iron” (οὐ σφι λίθος χρώς οὐδὲ σίδηρος); in *Od.* 19.494, the faithful wet-nurse of Odysseus, Eurykleia, speaks after recognizing him: “I will be like hard stone and iron” (ἔξω δ’ ὥς ὅτε τις στερεὴ λίθος ἢ σίδηρος); meanwhile, bronze occurs as appropriate material for ornaments or parts of buildings and durable arms (*Il.* 3.292, 4.540, *Od.* 4.72, 5.244 et al.). In a sort of *klimax* construction (bronze is more resistant to corrosion than iron), the strongest material of all is named last; adamant, that is, steel. The selection of the materials stone, iron, bronze, and steel, which does not include delicate gold, silver or ivory, by undoubtedly presupposing a former great wealth of Kourion,¹⁸ as already remembered in epigram *I.Kourion* 204 (ICG 4736, see 2.), seems first of all intended to highlight the fortitude and sustainability of those magnificent pagan buildings in Kourion, including their content, furniture, and arms, which now lay in ruins next to or even at the same place of the Eustolios complex prior to its construction.

The term “house” occurs again here with the poetic δόμοι. However, one cannot exclude in this part of the complex the other meaning of δόμοι, “room, hall”, in the sense of a gathering hall for people (e.g. Homer, *Od.* 8.57, 22.204). As previously mentioned, the final words σήματα Χριστοῦ could refer – among other Christian symbols such as cruciform elements

¹⁷ Selected editions and studies: MITFORD 1950, 47 no. 1; MITFORD, *I.Kourion* 202 with ph.; GUARDUCCI 1978, with fig. 122; PELEKANIDIS / ATZAKA 1974, 143–4 no. 136 with ph. pl. 128γ; CHRISTOU 2007, 27 with ph. See MICHAELIDES ²1992, 85 with fig. 46. NICOLAOU 2001, 13–7 with ph.; HAUBEN 2004, 274–281; MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 233–254; NASRALLAH 2020, 12–4; DELIGIANNAKIS 2022, 42.

¹⁸ Thus MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 245–6; reasonably, DELIGIANNAKIS 2022, 42 sees here a “contrast between materiality and spirituality”. A useful example mentioning the precious materials of a wealthy hall can be found in Homer, *Od.* 4.72–74, in which Telemachos is a guest in the house of Menelaos and admires the great wealth of his hall full of shining bronze, gold, amber, silver, and ivory, in his eyes equal only to the courtyard of Zeus (... φράζεο, Νεστορίδῃ, τῷ ἐμῷ κεχαρισμένῃ θυμῷ, / χαλκοῦ τε στεροπὴν κατὰ δώματα ἡχήμεντα / χρυσοῦ τ’ ἡλέκτρον τε καὶ ἀργύρου ἢ δ’ ἐλέφαντος. Ζηνὸς που τοιῆδε γ’ Ὀλυμπίου ἐνδοθεν αὐλή ...; “... Son of Nestor, dear to this heart of mine, you see the flashing of bronze throughout these echoing halls, and the flashing of gold, of electrum, of silver, and of ivory? Of such sort must be the court of Olympian Zeus within ...”).

that were presumably part of the furnishing – to the animals represented in the floor mosaic above the inscription, fishes and specific species of birds. In fact, similar or even identical birds, such as the pigeon, dove, partridge, and pheasant, are pictured on mosaics in the supposedly contemporary Episcopal Basilica located on the northwest of the Eustolios complex.¹⁹ This text is an indisputable declaration of Christian faith, highlighted by the rhetorical figure of the antithesis, which opposes the materiality of the pagan buildings and their belongings to the spirituality of Christian life. The explicit mention of Christ makes evident that Christian religion dominated at that time uncontested, thus giving a further confirmation of the belonging of the complex to an established period of Early Christianity in Cyprus.²⁰

4. Southern Part of the East Hall Stretching to Cliff. *In situ*.

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Fig. 29: *I.Kourion* 203 [ICG 4735] (photo: D. Summa, 2023; Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus)

¹⁹ Mentioned above in note 4 and below p. 153. MICHAELIDES 1992, 82–3, recognized the guinea hen in the Eustolios Annex, which is also represented in the closeby early Christian Basilica; see also MEGAW 2007, 240–1, and most recently MICHAELIDES 2020, 103–4, with previous bibliography. The latter identified the workshop that produced Eustolios floor mosaics with high probability as the same who realized the mosaics of the basilica of Agia Trias at Gialousa.

²⁰ On the now superseded discussion whether the mosaics of the complex mirror the transition from Paganism to Christianity in late antique Cyprus, see HAUBEN 2004, 271–281; MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 241–2; DELIGIANNAKIS 2022, 42 with former bibliography.

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Fig. 30: Overview of the space with the inscriptions at the cliff. Bottom, left: *I.Kourion* 204 [ICG 4736], see 2.; top, right: *I.Kourion* 202 [ICG 4734], see 3., and *I.Kourion* 203 [ICG 4735], see 4. (photo: D. Summa, 2023; Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus)

ἐξέδρην θάλαμόν τε θυώ[δεα τοῦτο]ν [ᾠδ]ελφαὶ
Αἰδῶς <Σ>ωφροσύνη τε καὶ – – – – κομέουσιν ::

The sisters Reverence, Moderation and – – – foster
the exedra and the fragrant thalamos.

Editorial notes:²¹ Text made of brown tesserae within a rectangle with white tesserae, fragmentary in the middle, h. 0,23, l. 1,935. Letters h. 0,08–0,082 (ΓΨ). Underlined letters were visible after excavation but have now been lost. V.2 beg. ΑΙΔΨΓΨ– in mosaic; in the lacuna first Εὐσεβή, successively Εὐνομή suppl. Mitford, SOREN / JAMES 1988, 21; Εὐσεβή Christou, Nasrallah, Michaelides.

The personification of three virtues Αἰδῶς (“Reverence”), Σωφροσύνη (“Moderation”), and a third lost in the lacuna look after this space, which includes a thalamos, namely the inner part of the house generally consisting of the women’s apartment, and a semi-circular seating hall (exedra) located on the cliff with panoramic view over the sea. Here as well, we observe the influence of classical paideia: the metrical text is composed of two hexameters in epic style, language, and mythological references. The two preserved virtues Αἰδῶς and Σωφροσύνη are well-known traditional virtues

²¹ Selected editions and studies: MITFORD, *I.Kourion* 203 with ph.; GUARDUCCI 1978, 420–1 with fig. 123. See MITFORD 1950, 47 no. 1; PELEKANIDIS / ATZAKA 1974, 143–4 no. 136; NICOLAOU 2001, 13–7 with ph.; CHRISTOU 2007, 30; MICHAELIDES 2020, 103.

and not exclusively Christian. The third name lost in the lacuna has been supplemented as Εὐνομίη (“Obedience to the Laws”) or Εὐσεβίη (“Piety”), of whom the latter would be more suitable in this presumably female context.²² The adjective θυώδεα in connection with a space may have sounded familiar to literate Cypriots, since it distinguishes the renowned sanctuary of Aphrodite Paphia fragrant of incense and myrrh (*Od.* 8.362–366; *Homeric Hymn* 5.58–66).²³ On account of the expression “fragrant thalamos”, related primarily to women, it is generally and, in our view, correctly assumed that this wing was the space reserved for women. In fact, differently than the inscription *I.Kourion* 202 (*ICG* 4734, see 3.) characterized by the strong, almost martial character of the recorded materials, this text mentioning the sweet-smelling inner hall and the sister virtues is undoubtedly filled with feminine elements. Furthermore, the virtue Σωφροσύνη occurs in early Christian epigrams, especially concerning women.²⁴ Likewise, the verb κομέω “to take care, foster”, is used not exclusively but frequently for women as agents (for ex. Homer, *Od.* 11.250, 17.319, 24.212).

²² So CHRISTOU 2007, 30; NASRALLAH 2020, 11–2; MICHAELIDES 2020.

²³ M. RISTORTO / S. REYES, “Reflecting upon Cyprus as a Sacred Place in Homeric Hymn 6”, in: K. CARVOUNIS / A. GAVRIELATOS / G. KARLA / A. PAPATHOMAS, *Cyprus in Texts from Graeco–Roman Antiquity* (Leiden / Boston 2023) [67–87] 70–1. The formula ‘fragrant thalamos’ occurs also referring to Helen in Homer, *Od.* 4.121; to Metaneira in *Hymn. ad Dem.* 244, 288.

²⁴ See examples in C. ZIMMERMANN, “Christian Verse Inscriptions”, in: BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN 2018 [480–513] 493.

5. North Room: Baths, Frigidarium. *In situ*.

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Fig. 31: Baths on the upper level with the mosaic inscription *I.Kourion* 205 [ICG 4737] (photo: D. Summa, 2023; Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus)

Fig. 32: *I.Kourion* 205 [ICG 4737] (photo: Th. Galanopoulos, 2015; Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus)

Κτίσις

Foundation

Editorial notes:²⁵ Inscription made of black tesserae within circular white space, diam. 0,92. Letters h. 0,037–0,06 (C).

²⁵ Selected editions and studies: MITFORD, *I.Kourion* 205 with ph.; PELEKANIDIS / ATZAKA 1974, 143–4 no.136 with ph. pl.129; A. H. S. MEGAW, "Excavations at the Episcopal Basilica of Kourion in Cyprus in 1974 and 1975: A Preliminary Report", *DOP* 30 (1976) 345–371, 13–4 with ph. pl. VII 9; MICHAELIDES ²1992, 86 with fig. 47. See D. MICHAELIDES, "A Catalogue of the Hellenistic, Roman and Early Christian Mosaics of Cyprus with Representations of Human Figures", *RDAC* 1987 [239–252] 241 no. E 2; MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, 233–254; SUMMA 2019, 242–3 c. ph. 9.10; NASRALLAH 2020, 8–9.

In the central part of the frigidarium dominates an unusual personification of ΚΤΙΣΙΣ,²⁶ the power of Foundation represented as a black-haired woman holding a metal rod in her hand, which measures 29.3 cm, approximatively the length of a Roman foot. This is the only preserved human figure of the complex, although it is possible that the three personified virtues of inscription *I.Kourion* 203 (ICG 4735, see 4.) were pictured as well in a lost mosaic.²⁷ The word κτίσις – not differently than κτίζω, κτίστης built on the same stem – has the double meaning of “Creation” and “Foundation/Power of Foundation”, in this last case referring to sponsors of constructions. The latter meaning is highlighted here by the metal rod in the hand of Ktisis, although it is possible that the Christian commissioner intended to maintain the semantic ambivalence of the term.²⁸ Not differently than Kourion, other Cypriot cities as well suffered heavily because of the devastating earthquakes of the fourth century and were restored or fully reconstructed from the foundations thank to the benefaction of wealthy individuals mostly belonging to the ecclesiastic milieu. Those prominent people, who financed public works in Late Antiquity, were often honoured with the title of κτίστης or φιλοκτίστης (“founder”, “fond of building”). The greatest documented benefactor in Cyprus, a notable named Eustorgi(o)s, was acclaimed in the inscriptions φιλοκτίστης and raiser of all the island for having sponsored extensive constructions at least in Paphos and Salamis.²⁹ The personification of Ktisis is here an eloquent sign that Eustolios belonged to the category of κτίσται/φιλοκτίσται.

In conclusion, we know from the epigraphic and archaeologic evidence that presumably around the beginning of the fifth century, the benefactor Eustolios occasioned the reconstruction of a large complex with a bathhouse on the acropolis of his hometown Kourion, which had fallen into misery after the devastating earthquakes of the 360–370s that destroyed both the Agora and the Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates. Christian piety, classical culture, and

²⁶ Unique in Cyprus, occurs in the Near East, see MICHAELIDES 1992, 86. On the similarities with the mosaic production of the Syro-Palestinian coast and especially Antioch, see MICHAELIDES 2020, 94–6, on Eustolios 102 with further bibliography. For personifications of abstract concepts, cf. MICHAELIDES 2020, 102–3.

²⁷ Thus MICHAELIDES 2020, 103. Figural decorations are extremely rare in early Christian mosaics of Cyprus. A further exception is the Chrysopolitissa in Paphos; see MICHAELIDES 2020, 99–100.

²⁸ Both options are in the translation of CHRISTOU 2007, 31 “The founding spirit or Creation”; NASRALLAH 2020, 8 “foundation or creation”; MICHAELIDES 2020, 102 “Building power or creation”.

²⁹ Evidence for the late antique Φιλοκτίστης is collected by C. BEGASS, “Φιλοκτίστης. Ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Euergetismus”, *Chiron* 44 (2014) 165–189, who does not, however, include Cyprus in this survey; see SUMMA 2019, 232–241, on Eustorgios 238–241.

great wealth are the characteristics emerging from the inscriptions about the identity of the otherwise unknown Eustolios. A further feature remains speculative: because the clergymen in early Christian Cyprus had replaced the notables in power and sponsoring, it is tempting to think that the benefactor Eustolios could have been connected to the church milieu.³⁰ It is in fact remarkable that in the little and partially rebuilt city of Kourion, during the first half of the fifth c. AD as well a huge Basilica for the first bishops of Kourion was constructed over earlier buildings on the western part of the acropolis, which is considered the third largest in Cyprus after those of Paphos and Salamis. According to the excavators, the Episcopal Basilica was completed, if not totally built, on the initiative of bishop Zeno, who was among the illustrious participants to the Council of Ephesus (431), where the Cypriot bishops achieved independence from Antioch for the first time.³¹ In the additional light of the similarities between the mosaic decoration of the complex and of the Episcopal Basilica (note 19), we cannot exclude the possibility that the civic complex of Eustolios was a parallel or quite contemporary re-building project of the civic area of Kourion related through Eustolios to the initiative of the Christian Church of Kourion.³²

³⁰ In this direction MAVROGIANNIS 2016–2017, who wonders if the Complex of Eustolios was a property of the Church and if Eustolios played a role in the disputes about the independence of the Church of Cyprus pp.234–5, 249–250. On the power of the clergymen in late antique Cyprus see M. KANTIREA, "Gouverneurs, évêques et notables de Chypre au Bas-Empire", in: S. BENOIST / C. HOËT-VAN CAUWENBERGHE (eds.), *La vie des autres: Histoire, prosopographie, biographie dans l'Empire romain* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq 2013) [113–127] 120–1.

³¹ After suggestion of PALLAS 1977, 281; CHRISTOU 2007, 34; MEGAW 2007 p.XXIII. On the independence of the Cypriot Church, see essential bibliography at p.136 and note 8.

³² As well a larger aqueduct for the city of Kourion was built in the 5th century, PAPAGEORGIOU 1993, 33.

9. Das „Testament“ des Philomenes

Timo Christian

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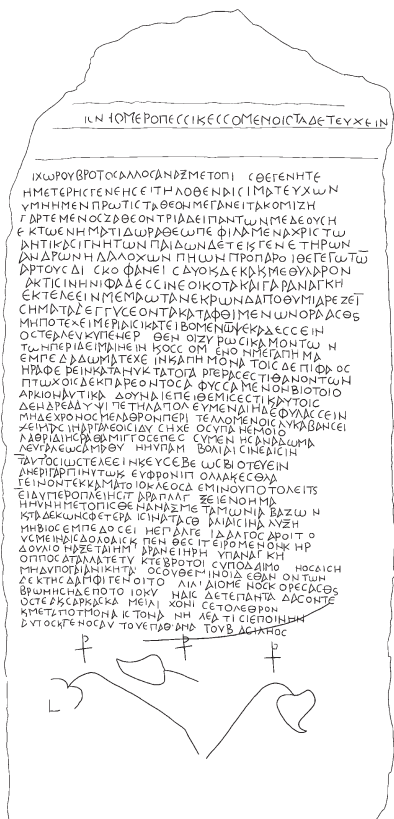


Fig. 33: ICG 4055, Tanagra, Böotien, Griechenland, Mitte des 5. Jh. n. Chr. (Photo: Klaus Hallof; Umzeichnung: Jaime Curbera)

Aufbewahrungsort: Schimatári Museum (inv. ΜΣ 2326 = ΜΣ 2464). Stele aus grauem Marmor mit dreieckigem Giebel und abgeschlagenen Akroteren. Höhe 1,46 m, Breite ca. 60 cm, Dicke 18 cm. Höhe der Buchstaben ca. 1,2–1,6 cm. Die Oberfläche ist von Rissen durchzogen, von denen einige schon bei der Beschriftung vorhanden waren, da die Inschrift sie ausspart.

[Φι]λομένης μερόπεσσι κ(αὶ) ἐσσομένοις τάδε τεύχειν·
 [ἦ]ν χώρου βροτὸς ἄλλος ἄναξ μετόπισθε γένητε
 ἡμετέρης γενεῆς ἐκ τηλόθεν, αἴσιμα τεύχων
 ὕμνῃ μὲν πρώτιστα Θεὸν μέγαν, εἵτα κομίζῃ
 παρ τέμενος ζάθεον Τριάδει πάντων μεδεούσῃ 5
 ἔκτω ἐν ἡματι δῶρα Θεῷ πεφιλαμένα Χριστῷ
 ἀντὶ κασιγνήτων, παίδων δέ τε κ(αὶ) γενετήρων,
 ἀνδρῶν ἢ δ' ἀλόχων, πηῶν προπάροιθε γεγώτω(ν),
 ἄρτους δισκοφανεῖς δυοκ(αί)δεκα κ(αὶ) μέθυ λαρόν
 ἀκτίσιν ἢ νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα· καὶ γὰρ ἀνάγκη 10
 ἐκτελέειν μεμαῶτα, νεκρῶν δ' ἀποθύμια ῥέξει(ν)·
 σήματα δ' ἐγγὺς ἐόντα καταφθιμένων ὀράσθ(αι),
 μή ποτε χειμερίαισι κατειβομένω(ν) ψεκάδεσσειν
 ὅστέα λεύκ' ὑπένερθεν οἰζύρ' ὥσι καμόντων·
 τῶν πέρι δειμαίνειν κ(αὶ) ὀσσομένον μέγα πῆμα 15
 ἔμπεδα δώματ' ἔχειν κ(αὶ) ἀπήμονα· τοῖς δ' ἐπὶ φάος
 ἦρα φέρειν κατὰ νύκτα· τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων.
 πτωχοῖς δ' ἐκ παρεόντος ἀφυσσάμενον βιότοιο
 ἄρκιον αὐτίκα δοῦναι, ἐπεὶ θέμις ἐστὶ κ(αὶ) αὐτοῖς.
 δένδρεα δ' ὑψιπέτηλα πολεῦμεναι ἢ δὲ φυλάσσειν, 20
 μηδὲ χρόνος μέλαθρον περιτελλομένοις λυκάβανσει
 χεῖμασιν ἀργαλέοισι δυσηχέος ὑπ' ἀνέμοιο
 λαθριδίης ραθάμιγγος ἐπεσσυμένης ἀνὰ δῶμα
 ___λευγαλέως ἀμαθύνῃ ὑπ' ἀμβολίαισιν ἐαῖσιν.
 ταῦτ' ὁσίως τελέειν κ(αὶ) εὐσεβέως βιοτεύειν· 25
 ἀνέρι γὰρ πινυτῷ κ(αὶ) εὐφροني πολλὰ κ(αὶ) ἐσθλὰ
 ___γείνοντ' ἐκ καμάτοιο, κλέος δέ μιν οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖτ(αι).

Orthographische Besonderheiten: 2 γένητε = γένηται, 5 Τριάδει = Τριάδι, 13 ψεκάδεσσειν = ψεκάδεσσιν, 21 λυκάβανσει = λυκάβανσι

Philomenes trägt auch den künftigen Menschen Folgendes auf:

Wenn später irgendjemand Herr des Grundstücks wird, von meiner Familie weit entfernt, so tut er recht darin, zuerst den großen Gott in Hymnen zu preisen, dann (5) zum hochheiligen Bezirk der allbeherrschenden Trinität am sechsten Tag die von Gott Christus geliebten Gaben zu bringen, für die verstorbenen Brüder und Schwestern, Kinder und Eltern, Ehemänner, Ehefrauen und Angehörigen, zwölf scheibenförmige Brote und lieblichen Wein, Sonnenstrahlen oder Schneeflocken gleich. Das muss er (10) bereitwillig ausführen und, was den Toten willkommen ist, vollziehen. Er soll auf die nahegelegenen Gräber der Toten achten, dass nicht ihre weißen Knochen darunter elend sind, wenn die Entschlafenen von Winterregen durchnässt werden. (15) Davor soll er sich fürchten und, ahnend das große Unheil, ihre Häuser fest und unversehrt bewahren. Er soll ihnen zuliebe nachts ein Licht bringen, denn das ist die Ehrengabe der Toten. Den Armen soll er, aus dem vorhandenen Vorrat schöpfend, sogleich genug geben; denn es ist rechtens, auch ihnen (zu helfen). (20) Um die hochbelaubten Bäume soll er sich kümmern und darauf achten, dass nicht die Zeit das Gebäude im Lauf der Jahre in beschwerlichen Wintern, wenn der Wind schlimm pfeift und der Tropfen unbemerkt das Haus angreift, elend vernichte aufgrund seiner eigenen Versäumnisse!

(25) Das (alles) soll er fromm vollbringen, und er soll gottesfürchtig leben. Denn ein kluger und vernünftiger Mann erreicht viel Edles durch Anstrengung, und sein Ruhm wird niemals untergehen.

εἰ δ' ὑπεροπλείησι παραπλάγξειε νόημα
 ἢ νῦν ἢ μετόπισθεν ἄναξ μεταμώνια βάζων
 κ(αὶ) τὰδ' ἐκὼν σφετέραισιν ἀτασθαλίαισιν ἀλύξει, 30
 μὴ βίος ἔμπεδος εἴη, ἐπ' ἄλγעי δ' ἄλγος ἄροιτο,
 ὑσμείναις δ' ὀλοαῖς κ(αὶ) πένθεσι τειρόμενον κῆρ
 δούλιον ἄξεται ἡμαρ ἀνειρηρῇ ὑπ' ἀνάγκη
 ὀππόσα τ' ἄλλα τέτυκτε βροτοῖς ὑπὸ δαίμονος αἴσῃ,
 μῆδ' ὑπὸ γαῖαν ἵκηται, ὃς οὐ θέμιν οἶδε θανόντων, 35
 δέκτης δ' ἀμφὶ γένοιτο λιλαιόμενος κορέσασθ(αι)
 βρώμης ἥδ' ἐ πότοιο, κύναις δέ τε πάντα δάσοντε
 ὅστέα κ(αὶ) σάρκας, κ(αὶ) ἀμείλιχον ἴσετ' ὄλεθρον·
 κ(αὶ) μετὰ πότμον ἄϊστον ἀνηλέα τίσιε ποινὴν
 αὐτὸς κ(αὶ) γένος αὐτοῦ ἐπ' ἀθανάτου βασιλῆος. 40



28 ὑπεροπλείησι = ὑπεροπλήησι, 32 ὑσμείναις = ὑσμίναις, 33 ἀνειρηρῇ = ἀνηρηρῇ,
 34 τέτυκτε = τέτυκται, 37 κύναις = κύνες, δάσοντε = δάσονται, 38 ἴσετ(αι) = εἴσετ(αι),
 39 τίσιε = τίσειε.

Wenn aber jetzt oder später ein Herr im Übermut sein Denken auf Abwege führt und leer daherredet, (30) und dies(e Anordnungen) vorsätzlich in seinem Unverstand missachtet, dann möge sein Leben nicht fest sein, möge er Schmerz auf Schmerz erleiden; und ihn wird, durch vernichtende Schlachten und Kummer in seinem Herzen aufgerieben, der Tag der Sklaverei verschleppen unter schmerzvollem Zwang – und alles andere (soll er erleiden), was den Menschen noch bereitet ist durch das Los der Schicksalsgottheit. (35) Nicht soll er unter die Erde kommen, der nicht das Recht der Toten kennt, und ringsum soll er zum Bettler werden, begierig, sich zu sättigen an Speise und Trank, und Hunde werden alles (an ihm) fressen, Knochen und Fleisch, und er wird eine gnadenlose Vernichtung erleiden. Und möge er nach einem schmachvollen Tod eine erbarmungslose Strafe büßen, (40) er selbst und sein Geschlecht, unter dem unsterblichen König.

1. Einleitung

In der Nähe der Stadt Tanagra in Böotien stehen bis heute Reste eines mittelalterlichen Turms, dessen Mauerwerk teils aus wiederverwendeten antiken Steinen errichtet wurde. Einen dieser Steine, auf dem Reste einer Inschrift erkennbar waren, ließ der Archäologe Nikolaos Platon herausnehmen und ins nahegelegene Museum von Schimatári bringen. Zum Vorschein kam damals, im Herbst des Jahres 1936, ein in jeder Hinsicht ungewöhnlicher Text: ein christliches Epigramm, bestehend aus vierzig Hexametern im homerisch-epischen Stil, mit detaillierten Instruktionen zur Grabpflege und zum Totengedenken.¹ Die Bedeutung der Inschrift für die Geschichte des Frühchristentums wurde bald erkannt,² der Text mehrfach kommentiert; dennoch ist das Epigramm eher unbekannt geblieben. Dabei verdient es nicht nur als Quelle für frühchristliche Praktiken zwischen paganer Tradition und christlicher Neuerung, sondern auch als literarisches Dokument besondere Beachtung.³

2. Schreibweise, Layout und Datierung der Inschrift

Der Text besteht aus vier Abschnitten, die auch visuell voneinander getrennt sind. Der erste, einleitende Vers steht auf dem Giebel und ist vom Haupttext durch eine Zierleiste (*Kymation*) abgesetzt. Die restlichen Abschnitte werden durch *Paragraphoi* markiert, die sich in Form kurzer Querstriche zwischen den Zeilen bzw. Versen 24/5 und 27/8 befinden. Die *Paragraphoi* gliedern den langen Haupttext und erleichtern so die Lektüre; man findet sie häufiger in Dichtungen auf Papyri als auf Stein.

Bisweilen werden Wörter durch Zeichen abgekürzt: regelmäßig findet sich K für $\kappa(\alpha\acute{\iota})$, gelegentlich wird die Endung $-\alpha\acute{\iota}$ durch S abgekürzt (z. B. Vers 12 $\acute{\omicron}\rho\acute{\alpha}\alpha\sigma\theta(\alpha\acute{\iota}) = \text{OPAAC}\Theta\text{S}$). Solche Abkürzungen sind zwar auch in Inschriften nicht selten, aber die hier verwendeten Typen sind eher aus literarischen Papyri bekannt, ebenso wie der Gebrauch des Apostrophs in Vers 25 (TAYT'). All dies spricht dafür, dass der Auftraggeber seiner Inschrift

¹ Siehe PLATON 1937 (*editio princeps*). Weitere Editionen und Kommentare: CALDER 1948; R. L. P. MILBURN, „An Early Christian Epitaph from Tanagra“, *JThS* 1 (1950) 176–186; MUSURILLO 1950; GUARDUCCI, *Epigrafia greca* IV, 339–344; *IG* VII² 3, 1991.

² Vgl. CALDER 1948, 9: „Mr. Platon's discovery, apart from its high interest in other respects, will take rank with the epitaphs of Avircius and of Pectorius among major inscriptional sources for the early history of the Eucharist“.

³ Für weitere inhaltliche Detailfragen (auf die ich hier aus Platzgründen nicht eingehen kann) s. die in Anm. 1 genannten Publikationen.

bewusst das Aussehen eines Buchepigramms gegeben hat, um so seinen literarischen Anspruch auch optisch kundzutun.

Das Layout der Inschrift und die Buchstabenformen datieren das Epigramm an den Anfang, eher noch in die Mitte des 5. Jh. n. Chr. Wie archäologische Funde zeigen, war Tanagra in den Jahren 400–600 n. Chr. ein bedeutendes regionales Zentrum, geprägt von Bevölkerungswachstum und ökonomischer Aktivität. Bereits im 4., vor allem aber im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert erhielt die Stadt zudem mehrere christliche Gebäude (Basiliken und vielleicht ein Baptisterium).⁴ Das ambitionierte Epigramm fügt sich gut in diese Entwicklung ein.

3. Orthographie und Metrik

Die Inschrift weist zahlreiche orthographische Besonderheiten auf, die auf den Wandel der Aussprache der Vokale zurückzuführen sind:⁵ ε und αι wechseln ab, da beide nun als kurzes, offenes E gesprochen werden; ebenso ει und ι, die beide als I gesprochen werden. Ebenfalls verloren gegangen war der Unterschied in der Aussprache langer und kurzer Vokale, was häufig zu prosodischen Fehlern führte, da die antike Metrik auf dem Unterschied langer und kurzer Silben aufgebaut war. Unser Epigramm zeigt gelegentlich Fehler bei den Dichrona α, ι, und υ, also den Vokalen, die einst sowohl kurz als auch lang gesprochen werden konnten. So wird das erste Iota in ἀκτίσιν (Vers 10) kurz gemessen, obwohl es sich – wie der Zirkumflex zeigt – hier um einen ursprünglich langen Vokal handelt.

An anderer Stelle entspricht die abweichende Orthographie der Metrik: τέτυκτε (Vers 34) steht für τέτυκται, doch der Verfasser misst die letzte Silbe kurz und macht dies vielleicht durch Schreibweise mit dem (traditionell) kurzen Vokal ε deutlich. Das Gedicht illustriert somit die Schwierigkeiten, ein traditionelles Versmaß einzuhalten, dessen Regeln der zeitgenössischen Sprache nicht mehr entsprechen – was dem Verfasser dieser Inschrift dennoch vergleichsweise gut gelungen ist.

⁴ Vgl. A. K. VIONIS, „Understanding Settlements in Byzantine Greece. New Data and Approaches for Boeotia, Sixth to Thirteenth Century“, *DOP* 71 (2017) [127–174] 135 f.; M. MIKEDAKI, *Tabula Imperii Romani. J 34 – Athens. Boeotia* (Athen 2019) 87–89.

⁵ Vgl. G. HORROCKS, *Greek. A History of the Language and Its Speakers* (Chichester 2010) 160–163.

4. Epische Sprache und Formen

Griechische Dichtung, und besonders hexametrische Dichtung, bedient sich traditionell der Kunstsprache der homerischen Epen. So finden sich in unserem Epigramm typische Formen wie der Genetiv Singular auf -οιο (βιότοιο, καμάτοιο), der Dativ Plural auf -εσσι (μερόπεσσι, νιφάδεσσι) und der äolische Infinitiv auf -μεναι (πολεύμεναι).

Der Verfasser des Epigramms beherrscht die Dichtersprache gut, wenn auch nicht völlig souverän. So gebraucht er das Verb πολεύω in Vers 20 in unüblicher Bedeutung, und in Vers 11 wird das Adjektiv ἀποθύμιος, das bei Homer „abscheulich“ oder „verhasst“ bedeutet, offenbar im gegenteiligen Sinn („angenehm“, „willkommen“) verwendet.⁶

5. Inhaltsübersicht

Worum geht es in diesem Text? Philomenes, der aktuelle oder kürzlich verstorbene Eigentümer (ἄναξ) des „Grundstücks“ – gemeint ist der Grabbezirk eines Familiengrabes –, erteilt Instruktionen für den Fall, dass der Grabbezirk einmal auf jemanden übergehen wird, der nicht zu seiner Familie gehört (Verse 2–24, zweiter Abschnitt). Solange der Bezirk in der Hand der Familie bleibt, ist eine solche Ermahnung unnötig; doch ein externer Eigentümer weiß weder, was genau zu tun ist, noch hat er einen Anreiz, dies für fremde Personen zu tun.⁷ Philomenes leitet ihn daher zunächst genau an. Er soll:

- a) Gott in Hymnen preisen
- b) freitags für die verstorbenen Familienmitglieder Brot und Wein zur Kirche bringen
- c) die Gräber des Grabbezirks instand halten und die Toten vor Nässe schützen
- d) nachts Lichter an die Gräber bringen
- e) Almosen an die Armen verteilen
- f) die Bäume des Grabbezirks pflegen

⁶ Manche Interpreten sehen dagegen einen Bezug auf θυμιάμα „Räucherwerk“ und denken an Weihrauchopfer für die Toten.

⁷ Mit der Beschränkung auf Mitglieder der *extended family* in dieser Inschrift kontrastiert z. B. die christliche Bestattungspraxis im südlichen Phrygien des 3. Jh., wo auch Nicht-Verwandten Plätze in Grabanlagen gewährt wurden (S. MITCHELL, „Burials, Brotherhoods, and Christian Communities in Asia Minor“, *EC* 14 (2023) [311–339] 325–327). Andererseits wurden auch Grabbezirke mit Fokus auf das Familiengedenken in der christlichen Spätantike weiterhin errichtet: S. ARDELEANU / J. C. CUBAS DÍAZ, „Reconsidering Late Antique Funerary Habits. Trends, Debates and Perspectives“, in: ARDELEANU / CUBAS DÍAZ 2023 [1–64] 31 (mit Lit.).

g) ein (nicht näher spezifiziertes) Gebäude vor den Unbilden des Wetters schützen.

Solche Anordnungen für das Totengedenken und die postume Grabpflege sind uns vor allem aus den „Grabstiftungen“ bekannt, einer Gruppe von meist inschriftlich überlieferten Prosatexten, in denen ein Stifter andere Personen mit Erträgen aus einem Grundstück begünstigt unter der Bedingung, dass sie mit einem Teil dieser Erträge für das (meist auf ebendiesem Grundstück liegende) Grab des Stifters sorgen.⁸ Bisweilen erfolgt die Stiftung zu Lebzeiten, oft aber auch testamentarisch. Von den zahlreichen Vergleichstexten seien hier nur zwei erwähnt: Zum einen die pagane Stiftung eines Titus Flavius Praxias aus Akmonia, der im Jahre 84/85 n. Chr. verfügt hat, dass aus den Erträgen seiner Stiftung für zwölf Denare Rosen zum Grab gebracht werden sollen (d. h. das alljährliche Totengedenkfest der Rosalia gefeiert werden soll);⁹ außerdem sollen die Begünstigten darauf achten, dass weder das Grab noch die es umgebenden Pflanzungen und Gebäude beschädigt oder veräußert werden (*IGR* IV 661, Z. 6–8, 8–12).¹⁰ Zum anderen ein auf Papyrus erhaltener Brief von ca. 567 n. Chr., in dem erwähnt wird, dass eine christliche Witwe einem Kloster Ländereien geschenkt hat, damit die Mönche für ihr Seelenheil und das ihrer Familie Opfergaben darbringen und ein Liebesmahl abhalten (*P.cair.masp.* 1.67003, Z. 23 f.).¹¹

Trotz der inhaltlichen Gemeinsamkeiten sticht doch ins Auge, dass Philomenes keine Erträge nennt, aus denen der künftige ἄναξ die Aufwendungen bestreiten soll – daher steht „Testament“ im Titel dieses Beitrags in Anführungszeichen. Um die Motivation des künftigen ἄναξ dennoch anzuspornen, stellt er ihm allgemein Glück und Ruhm für frommes Handeln in Aussicht (Verse 25–27, dritter Abschnitt). Vor allem aber stößt er einen schrecklichen Katalog von Verwünschungen aus, sollte sich der ἄναξ nicht an die Bestimmungen halten. Dann soll er erleiden (Verse 28–40, vierter Abschnitt):

- a) ein unsicheres Leben und viele Schmerzen
- b) Krieg, Sklaverei und alle anderen Übel, die Menschen widerfahren
- c) kein Begräbnis

⁸ Zu den Grabstiftungen s. B. LAUM, *Stiftungen in der griechischen und römischen Antike. Ein Beitrag zur antiken Kulturgeschichte* (Leipzig 1914); E. CHAMPLIN, *Final Judgements. Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills*, 200 B. C. – A. D. 250 (Berkeley 1991) 163–168.

⁹ ἀπὸ τῆς προσόδου ταύτης ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον τοῦ Πραξίου ἀ[πο]φέρεσθαι (...) ῥόδα δηναρίων δέκα δύο.

¹⁰ προνοεῖν δὲ (...) καὶ ὅπως μηδὲν τοῦ μνημείου τούτου ἢ τῶν περὶ α[ὐ]τὸ φυτειῶν ἢ οἰκοδομῶν ἐλασσωθῇ ἢ ἐξαλλοτριωθῇ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον.

¹¹ δωρησαμένης ἡμῖν τὰ γῆδια, εἰς προσφορὰν καὶ ἀγάπην, ὑπὲρ ἰλασμο(ῦ) ψυχῆς αὐτῆς καὶ τῶν τέκνων μετὰ καὶ το(ῦ) αὐτῶν πατρός.

- d) das Umherziehen als Bettler
- e) Hunde sollen seinen Leichnam fressen
- f) unbarmherzige Bestrafung beim jüngsten Gericht.

Wie Christiane Zimmermann und Cilliers Breytenbach in der Einleitung zu diesem Band herausgestellt haben (s. A. 5.4), waren Grabflüche auch in christlichen Inschriften durchaus verbreitet, wenn auch Philomenes' Flüche von den sonst üblichen Formeln stärker abweichen. Bemerkenswert ist, dass der ἄναξ nach dem Talionsprinzip oft gerade den Schaden erleiden soll, den er selbst anderen durch Missachtung der Bestimmungen zugefügt hat: Da er z. B. die „Häuser“ (d. h. die Grabkammern) nicht „fest“ erhalten hat (ἐμπεδα δώματ' ἔχειν, Vers 16), soll sein eigenes Leben nicht „fest“ sein (μὴ βίος ἐμπεδος εἴη, Vers 31). Und da er den Toten die Gaben von Brot und Wein und den Armen die Almosen verweigert hat, soll er selbst als Bettler nach Speise und Trank verlangen. Nach einem Tod ohne Begräbnis erwartet ihn schließlich ewige Verdammnis „unter dem unsterblichen König“, d. h. am Tag des jüngsten Gerichts; mit diesem Verweis auf das „Ende der Zeiten“ endet passenderweise auch das Gedicht. Dann folgen mit drei Staurogrammen und drei Efeublättern noch übliche epigraphische Zeichen, von denen letztere auch auf paganen Inschriften sehr häufig begegnen. Eine symbolische Aussage mag in diesem Fall dennoch intendiert sein: Da sich jeweils ein Efeublatt zu einem Staurogramm zu strecken scheint, und Efeu als immergrüne Pflanze für das ewige Leben stehen kann, könnte so angedeutet werden, dass dieses durch den Kreuzestod Jesu ermöglicht wird. Diese Deutung wird dadurch unterstützt, dass das mittlere Staurogramm unmittelbar beim Wort „unsterblich“ (ἀθανάτου) steht.

6. Standort und Anlage des Grabbezirks

Die Stele war wohl einst im oder am Grabbezirk des Philomenes aufgestellt, die Buchstaben wahrscheinlich farbig hinterlegt, um die Lesbarkeit der Botschaft zu erhöhen. Der Leser, der damals vor dem Stein stand, konnte die erwähnten Örtlichkeiten, Gebäude und Strukturen ohne Schwierigkeiten in seiner Umgebung identifizieren – er musste sich nur umsehen. Für uns, die wir den Aufstellungskontext nicht kennen, wirft die Inschrift dagegen Fragen auf:

Wo befand sich der Grabbezirk? Die Bäume, die sich außer den Gräbern auf ihm befinden (Vers 20), lassen auf einen Grabgarten schließen, der wohl von einer Einfassungsmauer begrenzt wurde. Lag er an einer der Ausfallstraßen Tanagras, oder gehörte er zu einem Landgut? Befand er sich in

der Nähe einer Kirche, außerhalb oder innerhalb der Stadtmauern? In Abwesenheit archäologischer Belege kann hierüber nur die Inschrift selbst Auskunft geben. Diese spricht von einem „hochheiligen Bezirk“ (τέμενος ἁγιον, Vers 5), womit ein Grundstück mit Kirche oder das Kirchengebäude selbst gemeint sein kann. Es ist z. B. denkbar, dass diese Kirche und der Grabbezirk zu einer Nekropole gehörten, doch lässt sich dies dem Epigramm nicht explizit entnehmen.¹²

Schwierig ist auch die Feststellung dessen, was sich außer Gräbern und Bäumen noch im Grabbezirk befand. Bei den in Vers 16 erwähnten „Häusern“ (δῶματα) dürfte es sich nur um ein Synonym für die Gräber handeln. Das Gebäude (μέλαθρον Vers 21) wiederum, das vor Wind und Wetter geschützt werden soll, kann kaum ein Mausoleum sein, das die genannten Gräber enthielt, da deren Schutz bereits gefordert wurde und eine nochmalige Nennung überflüssig wäre (PLATON 1937, 664).¹³ Ob es sich um die in Vers 5 genannte Kirche oder ein weiteres Bauwerk im Grabbezirk handelt, ist unklar.

7. Frühchristliche Bräuche und das Fortleben der griechisch-römischen Traditionen

Besonderes Interesse verdient die Inschrift, weil Philomenes' Instruktionen Hinweise auf christliche Bräuche geben, die offenbar in der ersten Hälfte des 5. Jahrhunderts in Tanagra ausgeübt wurden. Wir erfahren somit etwas über die gelebte Praxis vor Ort, die aus literarischen Quellen oft nicht erschlossen werden kann.¹⁴ Wie Christen vor Ort traditionelle Bräuche weiterhin pflegten, diese aber gegebenenfalls unter dem Eindruck christlicher Lehren und Vorstellungen anpassten, lässt sich an drei Beispielen zeigen:

7.1 *Lichter am Grab*

So wird dem künftigen ἄναξ aufgetragen, Lichter (Öllampen oder Kerzen) an den Gräbern aufzustellen. Diese Praxis war in der griechisch-römischen Welt üblich und ist gerade in Inschriften der römischen Kaiserzeit häufiger

¹² Zur Topographie von christlichen Gräbern und Graberfeldern in Attika s. C. BREYTENBACH / E. TZAVELLA, *Early Christianity in Athens, Attica, and Adjacent Areas. From Paul to Justinian I (1st–6th cent. AD)* (Leiden 2022) 199–205, z. B. 200 zu extramuralen Kirchen auf pagan-christlichen Graberfeldern bei Athen; doch auch andere Möglichkeiten sind denkbar.

¹³ Nicht auszuschließen ist aber, dass sich im Grabbezirk ein Mausoleum und zugleich weitere Gräber *sub divo* befanden (vgl. eine Grabanlage in Viminacium (Moesia): J. VALEVA, „Architecture and Decoration of Late Antique Tombs in the Diocese of Thracia and Eastern Illyricum“, in: ARDELEANU / CUBAS DÍAZ 2023 [325–363] 343 f. und Abb. 10).

¹⁴ S. oben: A. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN, „Introduction“ 5.

bezeugt. Die Toten in ihren dunklen Gräbern bedürfen des Lichts, das zudem böse Geister fernhält; als Symbol des Lebens soll es dem Toten eine Art Weiterexistenz ermöglichen.¹⁵ Das Anzünden von Kerzen insbesondere bei Tageslicht wurde von einigen christlichen Autoren teils als heidnisch gebrandmarkt, teils verteidigt.¹⁶ Schließlich verbietet zu Beginn des 4. Jh. das Konzil von Elvira, während des Tages (*per diem*) Kerzen an den Grabstätten zu entzünden (*canon* 34). Die frühere Forschung hat diese Angaben damit in Verbindung gebracht, dass in unserem Epigramm die Aufstellung von Lichtern in der Nacht (*κατὰ νύκτα*, Vers 17) gefordert wird, und darin eine Rücksichtnahme auf christliche Kritik gesehen; doch ist es fraglich, ob die Beschlüsse von Elvira in Tanagra Einfluss hatten oder überhaupt bekannt waren. Hieronymus betont in seiner Entgegnung auf Vigilantius, dass „wir Kerzen nicht bei hellem Licht entzünden“; vermutlich war das Aufstellen von Grablichtern bei Nacht gängige Praxis, die von den tanagraischen Christen nicht als „pagan“ empfunden wurde.

7.2 Speise und Trank für die Toten

Eine besonders ausführliche Bestimmung liegt in den Versen 4–11 vor: Jeden Freitag¹⁷ sollen zwölf runde Brote und Wein in die Kirche gebracht und dort der Trinität offeriert werden, zugunsten der verstorbenen Familienmitglieder. Diese Praxis setzt den griechisch-römischen Brauch des Totenmahls fort:¹⁸ Zu bestimmten Tagen traf sich die Familie des Verstorbenen am Grab und veranstaltete ein Picknick zu seinem Gedenken. Auch der Tote erhielt seinen

¹⁵ F. CUMONT, „Cierges et lampes sur les tombeaux“, in: (o. Hg.), *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati* V (Vatikanstadt 1946) 41–47.

¹⁶ Z. B. von Vigilantius (zitiert von Hier. C. Vig. 4 [CCSL 79C]): „Wir sehen, wie unter dem Vorwand der Religion nahezu der Brauch der Heiden in die Kirchen eingeführt wurde: während die Sonne noch scheint, Massen an Kerzen anzuzünden“ [*prope ritum gentilium videmus sub praetextu religionis introductum in ecclesiis, sole adhuc fulgente, moles cereorum accendi*]. Hieronymus verteidigt im Anschluss das Anzünden von Kerzen bei Tageslicht als Ausdruck der Freude (C. Vig. 7, 24f.).

¹⁷ Im Osten des Römischen Reichs setzte sich mit der Verbreitung des Christentums die von den Juden übernommene Gewohnheit durch, die Wochentage nicht nach den Planetengöttern (*dies Lunae, dies Martis* etc.) zu nennen, sondern durchzuzählen. Der Freitag als sechster Tag wurde auch „Vorbereitung“ (*παρασκευή*) genannt, wie er im modernen Griechisch heute noch heißt.

¹⁸ Für Details s. z. B. W. SPICKERMANN, „(Kultur)geschichte des Todes in Griechenland und Rom: Bestattungsriten, Totengedenken, Trauerrituale“, in: M. HAFNER / R. POROD (Hg.), *Über Trauer und den richtigen Umgang mit ihr. Lukian, De luctu* (Tübingen 2022) 135–148; S. SCHRUMPF, *Bestattung und Bestattungswesen im Römischen Reich. Ablauf, soziale Dimension und ökonomische Bedeutung der Totenfürsorge im Lateinischen Westen* (Bonn 2006) 100–116; MACMULLEN 2009; R. MACMULLEN, „The End of Ancestor Worship. Affect and Class“, *Historia* 63 (2014) 487–513.

Anteil, z. B. in dem man Wein über seinem Grab ausschüttete oder in eine Röhre goss, die für ebendiesen Zweck angelegt war und die Flüssigkeit zum Haupt des Toten leitete.¹⁹ Die Stimmung dieser Gelage war fröhlich und ausgelassen; man feierte oft bis in die Nacht, sang und tanzte. Die frühen Christen haben diesen Brauch auch an den Märtyrergräbern praktiziert, was vielerorts archäologisch nachgewiesen ist, z. B. durch Tische über den Gräbern, durch gemauerte Klinen oder Reste von Koch- und Essgeschirr.²⁰ Befanden sich die Gräber in der Kirche, versammelte man sich dort; Grabeskirchen waren gewissermaßen „riesige Speisesäle“.²¹

Manchem Bischof war diese Praxis ein Dorn im Auge: zu offensichtlich war die Kontinuität zu Riten, die sie als pagan betrachteten, und das ungezügelter Benehmen schien ihnen unmoralisch.²² „Ich weiß“, sagt Augustinus, „dass es viele gibt, die, wenn sie in größter Genussucht über den Toten trinken, (weniger deren, vielmehr) ihr eigenes Begräbnis begehen – da sie doch die Speisen für Leichname bereitstellen – und ihre Gefräßigkeit und Trunksucht der Gottesverehrung zuschreiben!“²³ Im Jahr 407 wurde den Bischöfen im Westen erlaubt, Totenmähler oder Ahnenverehrung an den Grabstätten zu unterbinden.²⁴ Das Abhalten von Liebesmählern in der Kirche wurde auf Konzilen eingeschränkt oder verboten – man zielte damit auch auf die Mähler für die Toten und Märtyrer.²⁵

Doch war der Brauch zu verbreitet und eingewurzelt, sodass statt Verboten auch nur Mäßigung empfohlen wurde. Man könne die Gläubigen, sagte wieder Augustinus, „von dieser Hässlichkeit und Schändlichkeit leichter abbringen, wenn (...) die Opfergaben für die Seelen der Entschlafenen, von denen man glauben muss, dass sie wirklich etwas bewirken, direkt über

¹⁹ So bedauert der Steinmetz Habinnas, eine Figur in Petrons *Cena Trimalchionis*, dass er bei einem Totenmahl die Hälfte des Weins über die Gebeine ausgießen musste (*Sat.* 65,11: *coacti sumus dimidias potiones supra ossacula eius effundere*).

²⁰ N. ZIMMERMANN, „Mahl VI (Räume und Bilder)“, *RAC* 23 (2010) 1111–1113.

²¹ MACMULLEN 2009, 83 (*gigantic dining rooms*).

²² Belege in REBILLARD 2009, 226 f.; R. M. JENSEN, „Dining with the Dead: From the *Mensa* to the *Altar* in Christian Late Antiquity“, in: L. BRINK / D. GREEN (Hg.), *Commemorating the Dead. Texts and Artifacts in Context. Studies of Roman, Jewish, and Christian Burials* (Berlin 2008) [107–143] 122 f.

²³ *De mor.* 1.75 (CSEL 90, p. 80): *Noui multos esse qui cum luxuriosissime super mortuos bibant et epulas cadaueribus exhibentes super sepultos seipsos sepeliant et uoracitates ebrietatesque suas deputent religioni*. Ähnlich Tert. *Test. an.* 4.

²⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.19.3: *Non liceat omnino in honorem sacrilegi ritus funestioribus locis exercere convivia vel quicquam sollemnitatis agitare. Episcopis quoque locorum haec ipsa prohibendi ecclesiasticae manus tribuimus facultatem*.

²⁵ „Das Volk soll, soweit möglich, von Mählern in der Kirche abgehalten werden“ (*canon* 29 des *Breviarium Hipponense*, CCSL 149 ed. MUNIER, p. 41); bereits *canon* 28 des Konzils von Laodikeia (zwischen 340 und 380 n. Chr.) und *canon* 29 des Konzils von Karthago (387) hatten Liebesmähler in der Kirche verboten.

den Grabmälern wenigstens nicht aufwendig sind, und sie allen, die darum bitten, ohne Arroganz und bereitwillig gegeben, nicht verkauft werden. Wenn aber jemand aus religiöser Empfindung Geld darbringen möchte, soll er es sogleich für die Armen verwenden. So wird es nicht den Anschein haben, dass sie das Andenken an ihre Verwandten vernachlässigen – was einen nicht geringen Herzschmerz verursachen kann – und man wird nur das in der Kirche feiern, was fromm und ehrenhaft gefeiert wird.“²⁶

Augustinus gestattet somit Totenmähler am Grab, solange sie maßvoll zelebriert werden und die Bedürftigen daran beteiligt werden. In der Kirche sollen sie nicht stattfinden; dort werden lediglich eucharistische Gedächtnisfeiern begangen. Den Bischöfen wäre es lieber gewesen, wenn sich ihre Herde mit diesen Gedenkfeiern begnügt hätte; doch die Totenmähler wurden auch im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert weiterhin abgehalten, und noch im 7. Jahrhundert gibt es Hinweise auf diese Praxis.²⁷

Wieder handelt es sich allerdings um eine Diskussion, die primär im Westen geführt wurde; es fehlen Zeugnisse dafür, dass im östlichen Teil des Reichs in ähnlicher Weise gegen die Totenmähler polemisiert oder vorgegangen wurde. Doch selbst wenn es in Tanagra keine Bedenken gegen die *refrigeria* gegeben hat, zeigen Philomenes' ausführliche Bestimmungen eine christliche Überformung der Tradition. Dass als Gaben nur Brot und Wein genannt werden, findet in Grabstiftungen römischer Zeit eine Parallele, in denen bisweilen nur von *panis et vinum* die Rede ist, die zum Totengedenken gestellt werden sollen. Jedoch werden Brote und Wein hier nicht den Toten, sondern der Trinität offeriert. Sie ist das indirekte Objekt zu „er soll bringen“ (κομίζει), während die Toten nur in einer adverbialen Bestimmung erscheinen: die Gaben werden „zu ihren Gunsten“ bzw. „in ihrem Interesse“ (ἀντί + Gen.) dargebracht. Und insofern Brot und Wein als die „von Gott Christus geliebten Gaben“ bezeichnet werden, wird ein eucharistischer Bezug hergestellt.

Die poetische Umschreibung des Ortes, an den die Gaben gebracht werden sollen, als „hochheiliger Bezirk“ lässt eine genaue Lokalisierung der Mahlfeier nicht zu: während „Bezirk“ eher für den Grabbezirk spricht, deutet das Attribut „hochheilig“ eher auf eine Kirche. Platon war der Meinung, dass es sich um eine eucharistische Gedenkfeier in der Kirche handelte; ihm folgte die

²⁶ Ep. 22.1.6 *mihi uidetur facilius illis dissuaderi posse istam foeditatem ac turpitudinem, si (...) oblationes pro spiritibus dormientium, quas uere aliquid adiuuare credendum est, super ipsas memorias non sint sumptuosae, atque omnibus petentibus sine typho et cum alacritate praebeantur neque uendantur; sed si quis pro religione aliquid pecuniae offerre uoluerit, in praesenti pauperibus eroget. Ita nec deserere uidebuntur memorias suorum, quod potest gignere non leuem cordis dolorem, et id celebrabitur in ecclesia quod pie honesteque celebratur.*

²⁷ E. REBILLARD, *Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca 2009) 152; R. J. A. WILSON, „Funerary Feasting in Early Byzantine Sicily: New Evidence from Kaukana“, *AJA* 115 (2011) 263–302.

Mehrheit der Interpreten.²⁸ In diesem Fall wurden die Opfergaben gestiftet und in der Messe die Namen der Stifter und derjenigen, für welche die Gaben gegeben wurden (d. h. die verstorbenen Verwandten), vorgelesen.²⁹ Was von der Feier übrigblieb, wurde den Armen gegeben.³⁰ Guarducci geht dagegen von einem Liebesmahl am Grab aus, evtl. mit eucharistischen Elementen.³¹ Chalkia nimmt wiederum an, dass Brot und Wein als Opfergaben für die Toten in die Kirche (bzw. ins Atrium der Kirche) gebracht wurden, um dort gesegnet und anschließend verzehrt zu werden, in einem Mahl ohne eucharistische Elemente.³²

Während der Brauch, Kerzen am Grab aufzustellen, offenbar von den Christen in Tanagra einfach weiter praktiziert wurde, wurde das traditionelle Totenmahl an christliche Riten und Vorstellungen angepasst – obwohl manches unklar bleibt. Sonst nicht belegt ist die wöchentliche Wiederkehr dieser Gedenkfeiern oder die Zwölfzahl der Brote, und auch der Freitags-termin begegnet nur hier. Waren dies individuelle Präferenzen, ein lokaler Brauch oder eine Praxis, die auch andernorts ausgeübt, aber nicht schriftlich festgehalten wurde?

7.3 Schutz der Gräber vor Nässe

Eine weitere, sonst nicht belegte Anordnung besagt, dass die Gräber vor Nässe geschützt werden sollen, damit die Knochen nicht elend sind. Üblich sind Bestimmungen, dass die Totenruhe nicht gestört werden soll und vor allem, dass kein weiterer Leichnam im Grab bestattet werden darf. Auch hatte bereits Titus Flavius Praxias in seiner Stiftung den Erhalt der Gräber gefordert. Der Schutz der Knochen verweist auf die Vorstellung, dass die Gebeine der Toten noch eine Art von Leben haben und daher Wohltaten, aber auch Misshandlungen empfinden können. So wird die christliche Grabstätte als „Schlafstätte“ (κοιμητήριον) bezeichnet, in der die Gebeine bis zur Auferstehung ausruhen. Dass hier eine Kontinuität traditioneller Vorstellungen vorliegt, ist z. B. an den Trankopfern über dem Grab zu erkennen. Für die

²⁸ PLATON 1937, 660 f.

²⁹ Belege in REBILLARD 2009, 228 f. Rebillard erwägt im Anschluss, ob es auch eucharistische Totengedenkfeiern am Grab gab, hält die Belege aber für unklar („The evidence is not very convincing, and the most we can say is that the practice was not of great concern“).

³⁰ Vgl. MUSURILLO 1950, 569. Die Almosenpraxis wird im Gedicht als eigener Punkt genannt, jedoch erst an späterer Stelle, als ob es sich um eine unabhängige Bestimmung handelt.

³¹ GUARDUCCI, *Epigrafia greca* IV, 342.

³² E. CHALKIA, *Le mense paleocristiane. Tipologia e funzioni delle mense secondarie nel culto paleocristiano* (Vatikanstadt 1991) 125–127.

Christen ist die Sorge für den Leichnam vielleicht noch wichtiger, da sie an die Auferstehung im Fleische glauben. So bittet auf einem Grabstein aus Como die Tote darum, dass ihr Grabmal unversehrt bleiben solle, „damit ich ohne Hindernis ins Leben zurückkehren kann, wenn derjenige kommt, der richten wird die Lebenden und die Toten“³³. Dem Schutz der Knochen vor Nässe liegt wohl derselbe Zweck zugrunde.

8. Literarische Vorbilder

Das Epigramm ist auch aufgrund seiner literarischen Gestaltung beachtenswert. Einige auffällige Punkte seien hier genannt:

Der Verfasser hat sich zunächst der Epen Homers bedient. Vor allem die Ilias (in geringerem Maße die Odyssee) war den Verfassern und den Lesern von Versinschriften aus dem Schulunterricht gut bekannt; Verwendung homerischer Wendungen und Ausdrücke lag daher nahe, und Homer war der Autor, der in Inschriften am häufigsten zitiert wird. Beliebt war z. B. der Halbvers „das ist die Ehrengabe der Toten“ (τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων, Vers 16), der in Grabinschriften immer wieder begegnet.³⁴ Gelehrter ist die Verwendung eines ungewöhnlichen Substantivs für „Bettler“ (δέκτης, Vers 36), das bei Homer nur einmal vorkommt. Solche Hapaxlegomena waren in ihrer Bedeutung oft umstritten, und der Verfasser zeigt hier, dass er das Wort richtig verwenden kann. Aus unserer Sicht misslungen scheint dagegen die Verwendung des homerischen Hapaxlegomenon ἀποθύμιος in Vers 10, das hier konträr zur homerischen Bedeutung gebraucht wird. Ob sich unser Epigrammdichter hier vertan hat, oder ob er einer abweichenden Erklärung des Wortes folgt, die uns nicht erhalten ist, muss offenbleiben. Eine geschickte und sicherlich intendierte Andeutung verbirgt sich dagegen im Gebrauch der Wendung „in seinem Unverstand“ (σφετέραισιν ἀτασθαλίαισιν, Vers 30). Diese Formulierung begegnet bei Homer zweimal an Stellen, an denen jemand gegen göttliche Gebote verstößt und danach zu Tode kommt. Indem sie in unserem Gedicht dem ἄναξ zugeschrieben wird, der die Bestimmungen missachtet, deutet sich darin schon der gewaltsame Tod an, den er deshalb erleiden wird. Der Verfasser rechnet damit, dass ein gebildeter Leser diese Anspielung erkennt.

³³ CIL V 5415: *ut possim sine impedimento in vita redire cum venerit qui iudicaturus est vivos et mortuos.*

³⁴ Für Beispiele aus Kleinasien s. G. STAAB, *Gebrochener Glanz. Klassische Tradition und Alltagswelt im Spiegel neuer und alter Grabepigramme des griechischen Ostens* (Berlin 2018) 68–70.

Dabei hat er sich nicht nur auf Homer beschränkt, sondern auch Werke anderer Autoren miteinbezogen. Besonders überraschend ist die Verwendung des kaiserzeitlichen Epikers Quintus von Smyrna, der ein Epos *Posthomerica* verfasst hat, das die Ereignisse zwischen dem Ende der Ilias und dem Beginn der Odyssee erzählt. Quintusrezeption ist bisher nur von wenigen antiken Autoren bekannt, und in Inschriften wird er sonst nur sporadisch benutzt. Der Verfasser unseres Epigramms hat ihn dagegen ausgiebig rezipiert, wie an drei Beispielen illustriert werden soll: So stammt Vers 15 „davor soll er sich fürchten und, ahnend das große Unheil“ (τῶν πέρι δειμαίνειν κ(αὶ) ὀσσόμενον μέγα πῆμα) beinahe wörtlich aus den *Posthomerica* (14.280 τοῦ πέρι δειμαίνουσα καὶ ὀσσομένη μέγα πῆμα). Das Versende „in seinem Herzen aufgerieben“ (τειρόμενον κῆρ, Vers 32) ist sonst nur bei Quintus belegt (*Posthom.* 7.174). Und das Adjektiv „schlimmtönend“ (δυσσηχής) wird von Homer nur in Bezug auf Krieg und Tod gebraucht; unser Epigrammdichter bezieht es auf den Wind (δυσσηχέος ὑπ’ ἀνέμοιο, Vers 22), wie außer ihm sonst nur Quintus von Smyrna (*Posthom.* 10.70 ἔξ ἀνέμοιο δυσσηχέος; 14.482 Ἄνεμοι ... δυσσηχέες).³⁵

Dass unser Verfasser Quintus’ Werk offenbar so gut kannte, ist an sich schon erstaunlich, zumal man wohl davon ausgehen muss, dass auch die Leser der Inschrift diese Quintuszitate und -anspielungen erkennen sollten. Doch warum benutzt er gerade Quintus? Vielleicht wollte er einfach seine umfassende Bildung zur Schau stellen, die sich nicht in Kenntnis des „Schulautors“ Homer erschöpfte. Oder war Quintus auch als Verfasser christlicher Dichtung in Erscheinung getreten und daher für einen christlichen Dichter als Vorbild besonders naheliegend?³⁶ Nicht auszuschließen ist ferner, dass die Parallelen auf ein gemeinsames, heute verlorenes Vorbild zurückgehen.³⁷ In jedem Fall wirft das Epigramm ein faszinierendes Schlaglicht auf literarische Bildung im spätantiken Bötien.

Wenn wir bedenken, dass der Hexameter nicht nur das Versmaß des antiken Epos, sondern auch des Lehrgedichts war, gerät noch ein weiterer Autor

³⁵ Für eine detaillierte Behandlung dieses Aspekts s. T. CHRISTIAN, „Zur Rezeption der *Posthomerica* des Quintus von Smyrna in einer Versinschrift aus Tanagra (IG VII² 3, 1991 = ICG 4055)“, *ZPE* 233 (2025) 65–78.

³⁶ Der Verfasser der christlichen *Visio Dorothei* bezieht sich auf einen „Dichter Quintus“ (Κόνιτος ποιητής), womit vermutlich Quintus von Smyrna gemeint ist; zwar sind beide kaum dieselbe Person, aber Dorotheos dürfte ein Sohn oder Nachfolger des Quintus sein. Dass Quintus selbst christlich gedichtet hat, folgt daraus natürlich nicht. Vgl. M. BAUMBACH / S. BÄR, „An Introduction to Quintus Smyrnaeus’ *Posthomerica*“, in: M. BAUMBACH et al. (Hg.), *Quintus Smyrnaeus. Transforming Homer in Second Sophistic Epic* (Berlin 2007) [1–26] 4–7.

³⁷ Allerdings spricht m.E. vieles für eine direkte Benutzung der *Posthomerica* durch unseren Epigrammatiker.

als mögliches Vorbild in den Blick: Die zahlreichen detaillierten Anweisungen im ersten Teil des Gedichts, welche neben ethisch richtigem Verhalten z. B. auch die Pflege der Bäume betreffen, erinnern an Hesiods Lehrgedicht „Werke und Tage“ (ἔργα καὶ ἡμέραι, lat. *opera et dies*), in dem Hesiod seinem Bruder Perses Ratschläge zu Ethik und Landwirtschaft erteilt, und dabei u. a. auf die Beschwerden der Witterung eingeht. Es ist jedoch bezeichnend, dass die deutlichsten Anklänge an Hesiod nicht direkt aus seinem Werk entlehnt, sondern wiederum den *Posthomeric*a entnommen wurden! So erinnert die Aussage, dass einem klugen Mann „aus Mühsal“ (ἐκ καμάτοιο) viel Gutes entsteht, worauf Ruhm (κλέος) folgt, zwar an gnomische Äußerungen Hesiods, z. B. dass „die Götter vor den Erfolg den Schweiß gesetzt haben“ (*Op.* 289 τῆς δ' ἀρετῆς ἰδρῶτα θεοὶ προπάροιθεν ἔθηκαν), oder dass „auf (durch Arbeit erworbenen) Reichtum Erfolg und Ruhm folgt“ (*Op.* 313 πλούτῳ δ' ἀρετὴ καὶ κῦδος ὀπηδεῖ). Die Formulierung knüpft aber deutlich an eine Gnome des Quintus an: „Spät wird uns aus Mühsal großer Ruhm erwachsen“ (*Posthom.* 12.290 Ὅψε δ' ἄρ' ἐκ καμάτοιο μέγα κλέος ἔσσεται ἡμῖν). Quintus bezieht sich auf Hesiod, und der Verfasser unseres Epigramms übernimmt diesen Bezug von ihm.

Dennoch wäre zu erwägen, ob der Verfasser nicht auch auf das ursprüngliche Vorbild Hesiod verweisen wollte: Hesiod galt in der gesamten Antike als Autorität auf dem Gebiet der Ethik und der Landwirtschaft; ein Rekurs auf diesen Dichter verliehe Philomenes' Bestimmungen besonderes Gewicht. Und schließlich könnte die Rezeption des Dichters aus dem böotischen Askra in einer Inschrift aus Tanagra Ausdruck eines gewissen Lokalpatriotismus sein.

9. Schluss

Ein solch anspruchsvolles Gedicht könne, so die Meinung mancher Interpreten, nur vom Bischof von Tanagra selbst verfasst sein. Dieser sei daher nicht nur für den Grabbezirk, sondern auch für den Erhalt der in Vers 5 genannten Bischofskirche zuständig. Jedoch waren nicht alle Bischöfe gebildet, und es gibt im Gedicht keine Hinweise darauf, dass Philomenes Bischof war oder überhaupt dem Klerus angehörte; eher gehörte er wohl zur Gruppe der reichen und gebildeten Laien, für die traditionelle Bildung und christliches Bekenntnis keinen Widerspruch bildeten. Das deutlichste Beispiel hierfür ist der Dichter Nonnos aus Panopolis, der Mitte des 5. Jh. sowohl eine Paraphrase des Johannesevangeliums als auch die *Dionysiaka*, ein mythologisches Epos über Dionysos, verfasste. Man sollte daher im Miteinander von „paganer“ Form und christlichem Inhalt im Epigramm weder einen Gegensatz noch

einen Synkretismus erkennen. Philomenes präsentiert sich in seinem „Testament“ als Christ, der sich zu Gott Christus und der Trinität bekennt und der zugleich – in den Anweisungen für das Andenken an seine Familie und den Erhalt ihrer Gräber sowie im Katalog der Verwünschungen gegen den, der seine Wünsche missachtet – Praktiken pflegt und Vorstellungen hegt, die einigen christlichen Autoren seiner Zeit pagan erscheinen mochten, ohne dass sie ihm selbst so vorgekommen wären. Aus unserer heutigen Perspektive zeigt sich dagegen, wie Traditionen weitergeführt oder christlich adaptiert werden und so in einem neuen Umfeld überdauern – wie die antiken Steine, verbaut im mittelalterlichen Turm von Tanagra.³⁸

³⁸ Für wichtige Hinweise und Denkanstöße danke ich den Teilnehmern an Kolloquien in Berlin und Erlangen; mein besonderer Dank gilt Charlotte Köckert.

10. Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates¹

Philipp Pilhofer

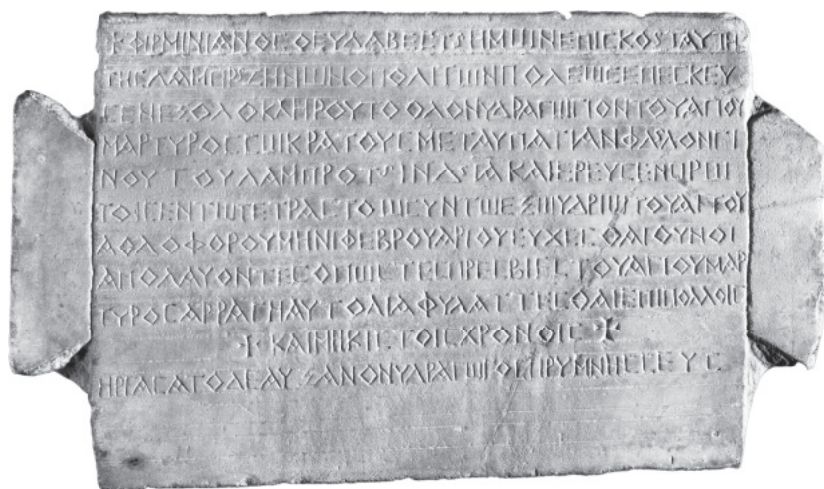


Fig. 34: ICG 4708, Zenonopolis, Isaurien, Kleinasien, 488 n. Chr.
(Photo: Nationalmuseum Warschau [Inv.-Nr.198825])

¹ Ich bin Stephen Mitchell (†) und Patrick Hommel (Weißenfels), die diese Inschrift ausführlich mit mir diskutiert haben, zu herzlichem Dank verpflichtet. Zudem danke ich Turgut Saner (Istanbul) für die großzügigen Einblicke in seine Forschungsarbeit, Paweł Nowakowski für die Einladung nach Warschau sowie nicht zuletzt Aleksandra Sulikowska-Belczowska vom Nationalmuseum Warschau, die mir die Druckerlaubnis für die Photographie erteilt hat.

- + Φιρμινιανὸς ὁ εὐλαβέστ(ατος) ἡμῶν ἐπίσκο(πος) ταύτης
 τῆς λαμπρ(ᾶς) Ζηνωνοπολιτῶν πόλεως ἐπεσκεύ<α->
 σεν ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου τὸ ὅλον ὑδραγωγίον τοῦ ἁγίου
 μάρτυρος Σωκράτους μετὰ ὑπατίαν Φλ(αοῦ) Λονγί-
 5 νου τοῦ λαμπρο(άτου), ἰνδ(ικτίωνος) ια. καὶ ἔρρευσεν πρώ-
 τοις ἐν τῷ τετραστόῳ σὺν τῷ ἔξω ὑδρίῳ τοῦ αὐτοῦ
 ἀθλοφόρου μηνὶ Φεβρουαρίου. εὐχεσθαι οὖν οἱ
 ἀπολαύοντες, ὅπως τῆς πρεσβείας τοῦ ἁγίου μάρ-
 τυρος ἀρραγῇ αὐτὸ διαφυλάττεσθαι ἐπὶ πολλοῖς
 10 + καὶ μηκίστοις χρόνοις. +
 ἡργάσατο δὲ Αὐξάνων ὑδραγωγὸς Πρυμνησσεύς.

Relevante Lesarten: 4. Lies ὑπατεῖαν. 5. Lies ἔρρευσεν. 6. Lies ὑδρεῖω – alle bisherigen Editionen lasen das *hapax legomenon* ἐξωῦδρῳ; das eigenständige *Iota* ist aber klar erkennbar und die rechte Haste des folgenden Omega ist an der Bruchkante ausreichend sicher sichtbar.² 7. Lies Φεβρουαρίῳ sowie εὐχεσθε. 8. Lies ταῖς πρεσβείαις. 9. Lies αὐτὰ. 10. Lies Αὐξάνων.

² Diese neue Lesung führt dazu, dass der Eintrag in E. TRAPP (Hg.), *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität, besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts*. 2 Bände in 3 Teilbänden (Wien 1994–2017) 547 s. v. ἐξωῦδρον, τό ersatzlos gestrichen werden kann.

Firminianus³, unser frommster Bischof dieser
 glänzenden Stadt der Zenonopoliten,⁴ hat
 den gesamten Aquädukt des Heiligen
 Märtyrers Sokrates vollständig wiedererrichtet nach dem Konsulat des
*clarissimus*⁵
 Flavius Longinus⁶ im elften Jahr der Indiktion. Und es strömte
 erstmalig im Monat Februar [das Wasser]⁷ in dem Atrium⁸ mit dem äußeren
 Prachtbrunnen⁹
 desselben Siegbekränzten (= Sokrates).¹⁰ Betet nun dafür,

³ Der Name des Bischofs ist offensichtlich lateinischer Herkunft und wird daher hier latinisiert wiedergegeben. In der Zeit der Inschrift, dem späten 5. Jahrhundert, ist es aber durchaus plausibel, dass der Namensträger weder römischer oder allgemein westlicher Herkunft war, und zugleich fraglich, ob er überhaupt Latein konnte.

⁴ Es kann als gesichert gelten, dass hier das isaurische Zenonopolis gemeint ist (und nicht das lydische oder das ägyptische). Dafür spricht einerseits die Herkunft der Marmorplatte aus der Region Konya und andererseits ist, wie schon Louis Robert bemerkte, das isaurische Bistum Zenonopolis das einzige dieses Namens, dessen Bischof in den literarischen Quellen zuverlässig nachweisbar ist.

⁵ Das griechische *λαμπρότατος* bezeichnet hier einen Ehrentitel, der daher anders als das *εὐλαβέστατος* in Z. 1 nicht ins Deutsche übersetzt wird: Der Inhaber gehörte zu den *virī clarissimi*. Zu weiterführenden Informationen s. R. W. MATHISEN, „Imperial Honorifics and Senatorial Status in Late Roman Legal Documents,“ in: R. W. MATHISEN (Hg.), *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2001) 179–207.

⁶ Für diesen Namen gilt das in Anm. 3 festgestellte in noch höherem Maße: Gerade Longinus ist ein im isaurischen Gebirge höchst verbreiteter Name; möglicherweise ist Longinus sogar mit einem indigenen Namen homophon (vgl. PILHOFER 2018, 178 f. mit Anm. 400 und 407).

⁷ Nach LSJ, 1568, s. v. *ῥέω* A, „with dat. of that which flows.“

⁸ Ein *τετράστοον* kann nach LSJ s. v. eine Halle mit vier Säulenreihen bezeichnen (die es im isaurischen Gebirge aber nicht gegeben haben dürfte ...) oder, nach dem LBG, einen auf vier Seiten von Säulengalerien eingerahmten Hof (Peristylanlage / Atrium).

⁹ Zum Bedeutungsspektrum des in Kleinasien nicht seltenen Wortes *ὕδρειον* vgl. KERSCHBAUM 2021, 69–72. Sie weist zwar darauf hin, „dass *ὕδρειον* nicht synonym zu einem *νυμφαῖον* verwendet werden darf“, bietet dann aber Beispiele, in denen genau das der Fall ist; etwa in Side, wo das Wort ein „400 m³ fassende[s] Becken“ samt einer „dreistöckigen Fassadenstruktur“ bezeichnet (71, Anm. 104; Quellen sind *L.Side*, Nr. TεΡ. 1 und 4 = BEAN – MITFORD, *Rough Cilicia* II, Nr. 19 und 21).

¹⁰ Das Martyrium wird als Agon gedacht, der Märtyrer also als (von Gott) bekränzter Sieger; dazu s. schon die Blumenkohl-Ohren des Pionios (*M. Pion.* 22.3 mit R. MERKEL-BACH, „Die ruhmvollen Blumenkohl-Ohren des Pionios von Smyrna“, *ZPE* 76 (1989) 17). Der christliche Bezug auf Gott wird deutlich verbalisiert in ICG 372, Z. 1 f.: τὸν ... οὐρανίου Γενέτου κύδιμον ἀθλοφόρον (vgl. B.5. ZIMMERMANN, „Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?“, 111–116). Vergleichbares Vokabular ist in hagiographischen Märtyrertexten gängig, aber auch in christlichen Inschriften, vgl. ICG 539, 817, 2381 und, in weiblicher Form, 4283.

ihr Nutznießer,¹¹ dass das [alles] durch die Fürsprache¹² des heiligen Märtyrers unversehrt bleibe für viele
+ und lange Jahre. +

[Die Arbeiten] durchgeführt hat Auxanon aus Prymnessos,¹³ der Aquädukt-Baumeister.¹⁴

Bislang existieren mindestens vier eigenständige Lesungen der Inschrift (Delehay, Wiegand, Kubińska, Łajtar) und zahlreiche weitere Abdrucke, Übersetzungen und Besprechungen.¹⁵ Der Inschriftenträger ist eine 3 cm dicke weiße Marmorplatte, die heute aus drei Fragmenten zusammengesetzt ist und 55,5 cm in der Breite und 40 cm in der Höhe misst.¹⁶ Die Inschrift ist auf einer *tabula ansata* angebracht, in (für diese späte Zeit und abgelegene Ortschaft) sehr gleichmäßigen Buchstaben und auf vorgezogenen Linien. Für eine ausführliche Zusammenstellung der Literatur sowie eine Diskussion vieler Parallelstellen zum Vokabular hat Adam Łajtar gesorgt.¹⁷

Der Stein befindet sich seit 1947 im Magazin des Nationalmuseums Warschau (Inv.-Nr. 198825). Wiegand hatte ihn 1909 auf dem Basar in Konstantinopel gesehen und abgeklatscht, er soll „aus dem isaurischen Zenonopolis“ über Konya nach Istanbul

¹¹ Für das Bedeutungsspektrum von ἀπολαύω bzw. ἀπόλαυσις vgl. ŁAJTAR / TWARDECKI in *I.Mus. Varsovie*, S. 98 f.

¹² Eine enge Parallele bietet die Inschrift *I.Anemurium Mosaic*, S. 61–66, Nr. 11, Z. 1f.: *πρεσβίαις τῶν ἀγ(ω)ν ἀποστόλων / ἐνεδυναμόθη* Eine literarische Parallele steht am Ende von Eusebs Jesajakommentar (GCS Eusebius IX [ed. ZIEGLER], 411, LA zu Z. 7); zu dieser und weiteren Parallelen vgl. Russell in *I.Anemurium Mosaic* S. 62 mit Anm. 159 sowie natürlich PGL s.v. *πρεσβεία*. Laut NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*, 547 ist die vorliegende Inschrift die älteste sicher datierbare inschriftliche Anrufung von Heiligen als Interzessoren.

¹³ Unweit von Prymnessos in Phrygien befanden sich die kaiserlichen Marmor-Steinbrüche von Dokimeion. Möglicherweise führte dies dazu, dass derlei Bauhandwerk es in der Region zu besonderer Blüte gebracht hat. Zu Prymnessos generell s. K. BELKE / N. MERSICH, *Phrygien und Pisidien. Mit 161 Abbildungen auf Tafeln, einer Abbildung im Text und zwei Karten*. TIB 7 (Wien 1990) 364 f.; zu den Steinbrüchen und von dort belieferten Bauwerken vgl. P. NIEWÖHNER, „Phrygian Marble and Stonemasonry as Markers of Regional Distinctiveness in Late Antiquity“, in: P. THONEMANN (Hg.), *Roman Phrygia. Culture and Society* (Cambridge 2013) 215–248 (mit Literaturhinweisen).

¹⁴ Anders als in ICG 1946 aus Athen (S. 6. Jh.), wo zwischen einem ὑδραγωγός und einem ἀρχιτέκτων τῶν ὑδάτων unterschieden wird, ist im vorliegenden Fall davon auszugehen, dass Auxanon ein das gesamte Bauwerk umfassendes Amt innehatte.

¹⁵ Die Erstedition aufgrund eines Abklatsches bot H. DELEHAYE, „L’aqueduc de S. Socrate à Zénonopolis“, *AnBoll* 30 (1911) 316–320, Wiegand hatte die Inschrift schon 1909 entdeckt (WIEGAND 1911, Nr. 7); eine ausführliche Edition samt Kommentar bietet J. KUBIŃSKA, „L’évêque Firminianos de Zénonopolis et son aqueduc“, *EtCl* LXII (1994) 169–175 (= *SEG* 44, 1222). Maßgeblich ist die letzte Edition *I.Mus Varsovie*, S. 95–99 (= Nr. 28) (ed. ŁAJTAR / TWARDECKI 2003). Eine nicht ganz korrekte deutsche Übersetzung bietet bereits SCHULTZE 1926, 261 f.

¹⁶ Zur Rückseite ist nichts bekannt. Möglich ist, dass die Platte zum (neuzeitlichen) Transport und Verkauf aus einem größeren Block herausgeschnitten wurde.

¹⁷ *I.Mus Varsovie*, S. 95–99. Bei Łajtar noch nicht erwähnt wird NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*, S. 544–547, ISA/02/01 (sowie Eintrag E01040 in der CSLA-Datenbank: <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/> [zuletzt besucht am 26. 4. 2023]).

gekommen sein (WIEGAND 1911, 296 f.). Ab 1911 war er Teil der bemerkenswerten Sammlung des *Lyceum Hosianum* im ostpreußischen Braunsberg (heute Braniewo).¹⁸

Die Inschrift gibt drei Hinweise zur Datierung: Das elfte Jahr der Indiktion (Z. 5),¹⁹ das Postkonsulat des Flavius Longinus (Z. 4 f.)²⁰ und den Monat Februar (Z. 7). Flavius Longinus war nach seiner Gefangenschaft bei Illous im Jahr 486 *consul* und dann noch einmal im Jahr 490; zumindest in Papyri wird in den Jahren dazwischen durchgehend auf sein Postkonsulat verwiesen.²¹ Das elfte Jahr einer Indiktion fällt in den in Frage kommenden Jahrzehnten auf 472/73, 487/88 und 502/3. In Kombination mit dem Postkonsulat bleibt als einzige Option das Indiktionsjahr vom 1. September 487 bis 31. August 488.²² Das erste Wasser dürfte also im Februar 488 geflossen sein.

Diese Inschrift wurde vor allem aus zwei Gründen für den vorliegenden Band ausgewählt. Einerseits lässt sich hier die zunehmende Etablierung des spätantiken Christentums in einer höchst entlegenen Region zeigen, die mit der Transformation kultureller Praktiken wie etwa des griechischen Euergetismus einhergeht. Andererseits verweist der bischöflich betriebene Ausbau eines Märtyrerschreins auf die wichtige Rolle lokaler Heiliger für die örtliche christliche Identitätsbildung, die aber eben nicht völlig separat geschieht, sondern eingebettet ist in die bestehende Umwelt. Daneben lässt sich hier epigraphisches Handwerkszeug gut zeigen, wie etwa eine monatsgenaue Datierung durch die Kombination unterschiedlicher Kriterien.

¹⁸ In Braunsberg hatte das Stück die Inventarnummer 1127 (s. den dortigen Katalog: W. WEIBRODT, „Griechische und lateinische Inschriften in der antik-archäologischen Sammlung der Königlichen Akademie zu Braunsberg“, in: *Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen an der Königlichen Akademie zu Braunsberg im Sommersemester 1913* [Braunsberg 1913] 15 f., Nr. 13). Zur Sammlungsgeschichte s. B. FAENSEN, „Das ‚Antik-Archäologische Kabinett‘ am ‚Lyceum Hosianum‘ in Braunsberg (Braniewo). Aus der Geschichte der Altertumssammlung und des Lehrstuhls für Klassische Philologie einer Katholischen Hochschule im Erm-land“, *Pegasus* 2 (2000) 61–87.

¹⁹ Die Indiktionen sind Steuerperioden, die mit dem 1. September 312 zu zählen beginnen. Eine Indiktion besteht aus 15 Steuerjahren, sodass die Zählung nach 15 immer neu anfängt: Eine feste Datierung ist also nur in Kombination mit anderen Eigenschaften einer Inschrift möglich.

²⁰ Bei Flavius Longinus dürfte es sich um den Bruder des Kaisers Zenon handeln, der (wie fast alle Isaurier) in der Geschichtsschreibung einen sehr schlechten Ruf hat: ἀνόητος καὶ βαρὺς καὶ ἀκόλαστος ὢν (Theophanes Homologetes, *Chron.* 5983, ed. DE BOOR). Zu diesem Longinus s. BEGASS 2018, 181f., Nr. 139 und J. R. MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire. Volume II. A.D. 395–527* (Cambridge 1980) 689 f., s. n. „Fl. Longinus 6“.

²¹ Zu Quellenangaben vgl. BAGNALL et al. 1987, 507–513. Generell zum Postkonsulat in der Spätantike s. BAGNALL et al. 1987, 77–84. In den Zeitraum 484–488 fällt der Aufstand von Verina und Illous (s. die letzte Seite des Beitrags).

²² Eine Tabelle der Indiktionsjahre bietet z. B. BAGNALL et al. 1987, 95; explizit bezogen auf diese Inschrift dort S. 686.

1. Wasserleitungen und Christentum

Planung, Bau und die kontinuierliche Wartung von Wasserleitungen war ein teuer und hochkomplexer Prozess mit zahlreichen beteiligten Personen.²³ Das Zusammenkommen von hohen Kosten, meist geringer Sichtbarkeit (die wenigsten Wasserleitungen verliefen auf den berühmten Aquäduktbrücken) und wenig werbewirksamer Lage (z. T. weit) außerhalb der Städte machte die Investitionen für Euergeten eher unattraktiv, weshalb sogar oft zu einer Mischfinanzierung gegriffen wurde.²⁴ Trotzdem wurden gerade in der Spätantike Stifter im Bereich der Wasserversorgung durchaus großzügig geehrt.²⁵

Die Beteiligung von Bischöfen am Bau von Wasserleitungen ist in der Spätantike in Kleinasien dennoch oft zu beobachten. Eine besonders spannende Parallele bietet die Grabinschrift des Bischofs Marcus Iulius Eugenius im lykaonisch-pisidischen Laodikeia Katakekaumene (1. Hälfte 4. Jh.). Bedeutsam ist die Parallele deshalb, weil Eugenius in fast identischem Vokabular (τετράστοον, ὕδρεϊον) noch ausführlicher darlegt, was alles zu seiner Kirche gehörte.²⁶ Noch 566/67 wurde der Aquädukt von Olba im Lamostal mit Beteiligung des örtlichen Bischofs repariert, die Datierung erfolgt über die Erwähnung des 15. Indiktions-Jahres und des Kaisers Justin II., in dessen Regierungszeit nur ein 15. Indiktions-Jahr fiel.²⁷ Ein ebenfalls im Wasserleitungsbau tätiger Bischof ist Theodor von Pompeiopolis im 5./6. Jh., der seinen Namen auf verschiedenen Bleirohren hinterließ.²⁸ Es kann

²³ Vgl. KERSCHBAUM 2021, 79–93, 100–103.

²⁴ Zu den zögerlichen Euergeten jetzt zusammenfassend KERSCHBAUM 2021, 278–281; zur Mischfinanzierung 298–304. In der Kalykadnos-Region sind dennoch viele Aquädukte aus nicht-staatlicher Hand finanziert worden. Neben dem vorliegenden Beispiel trifft dies vermutlich auf Olba zu, wo die entsprechende Inschrift direkt an der Aquäduktbrücke untergebracht werden konnte, gut sichtbar von der querenden Straße aus (HEBERDEY – WILHELM, *Kilikien*, Nr. 169). Auf staatliche Finanzierung (zumindest einer Reparatur) deutet die Inschrift am „Konon-Aquädukt“ bei Elaiussa Sebaste (H. HUNGER, „Die Bauinschrift am Aquädukt von Elaiussa-Sebaste. Eine Rekapitulation“, *Tyche* 1 [1986] 132–137).

²⁵ Zum Lob der Wasserversorgung in der Spätantike allgemein sowie insbesondere von deren Donatoren vgl. C. MAREK, „Der Dank der Stadt an einen comes in Amisos unter Theodosius II.“, *Chiron* 30 (2000) [367–388] 374–379.

²⁶ ICG 371, Z. 14f.: στοῶν τε καὶ τετραστόων καὶ ζωγραφῶ[ν] καὶ κεντήσεων καὶ ὕδρεϊον καὶ προπύλου (Übersetzung ICG: „[im Zusammenhang mit] den Hallen, dem auf vier Seiten von Säulengalerien eingerahmten Hof, den Malereien und Mosaiken, dem Brunnen und der Vorhalle“). Eugenius ist außerdem ein instruktives Beispiel, das verdeutlicht, wie weit ein christlicher Würdenträger in die Gesellschaft des 3./4. Jahrhunderts eingebunden sein konnte: W. WISCHMEYER, „M. Iulius Eugenius. Eine Fallstudie zum Thema ‚Christen und Gesellschaft im 3. und 4. Jahrhundert‘“, *ZNW* 81 (1990) 225–246. Zur Inschrift insgesamt s. den Beitrag B.5. ZIMMERMANN, „Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?“

²⁷ ICG 4709. Die Lesung ist allerdings etwas unsicher.

²⁸ ICG 4710. Hier wird die 4. Indiktion genannt, mangels weiterer Kriterien kann die Inschrift aber nur grob datiert werden.

also festgehalten werden, dass Bau, Wiedererrichtung und Reparatur von Wasserleitungen in der Spätantike nicht selten auch von Bischöfen übernommen wurden und Firminianus von Zenonopolis sich insofern in bester Gesellschaft befindet.²⁹

In der vorliegenden Inschrift kommt zusätzlich der Aspekt der Förderung eines lokalen Märtyrers hinzu. Dass Bischöfe sich für die örtlichen Märtyrerkulte einsetzten, gerade auch im baulichen Bereich, ist vielfältig belegt.³⁰ Auf diese Weise bot sich die gern ergriffene Gelegenheit, sich in bestem Licht erscheinen zu lassen und zugleich der Gemeinde ein leuchtendes Vorbild in Erinnerung zu rufen. Auch nach Heiligen benannte Aquädukte sind in Kleinasien daher keine Seltenheit. Prokop erwähnt, dass unter Justinian ein Aquädukt für die Stadt Trapezunt gebaut wurde, der als Aquädukt des (lokal bekannten) Märtyrers Eugenios bezeichnet wurde.³¹ Die inschriftlich belegte Leitung des Theodot in Ankyra wird ebenfalls mit einem Märtyrer in Verbindung gebracht.³² Besonders eindrucksvoll ist der Aquädukt des Heiligen Konon, von dem zwischen seinem Beginn am Lamos und dem Ende in Korykos sieben Aquäduktbrücken erhalten sind.³³

Eine besondere Parallele ist Ayatekla: Das alte Heiligtum der Thekla bei Seleukeia am Kalykadnos hat in der Spätantike Züge einer Stadt angenommen. Es ist von einem eigenen Aquädukt versorgt worden, der sicherlich sehr viel größer war als der des Sokrates.³⁴ Dass allerdings der Aquädukt in Ayatekla auch nach ihr benannt war, ist zwar höchst plausibel, aber nicht belegt.

²⁹ Auf eindrucksvolle Belege aus Zypern hat mich dankenswerterweise Daniela Summa (Berlin) hingewiesen: Hier sind insgesamt zehn Inschriften von den Aquäduktbrücken nach Konstantia/Salamis erhalten. Sie belegen den Bau der Leitung in den Jahren von 619 bis 631 u. a. durch die Erzbischöfe Plutarch und Arkadios; vgl. dazu J.-P. SODINI, „Les inscriptions de l’aqueduc de Kythrea à Salamine de Chypre“, in: A. E. LAIOU (Hg.), *ΕΥΨΥΧΙΑ. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler* (Paris 1998) 619–638 (dort sind acht Inschriften besprochen, weitere zwei konnte Summa hinzufügen).

³⁰ S. DESTEPHEN, „Martyrs locaux et cultes civiques en Asie Mineure“, in: J.-P. CAILLET / S. DESTEPHEN / B. DUMÉZIL / H. INGLEBERT (Hg.), *Des dieux civiques aux saints patrons (IV^e–VII^e siècle)* (Paris 2015) [59–116] 67–76.

³¹ Proc. Caes. *De aed.* 3.7 erwähnt die Wasserleitung; darauf hat schon SCHULTZE 1926, 262 verwiesen. Zum Märtyrer s. BHG 608–613.

³² Die Wasserleitung wird in der Inschrift ICG 3986 (Z. 6) erwähnt, der Bezug zum Märtyrer Theodot (BHG 1782) wird im Kommentar zu *I.Ancyra* II, Nr. 334 hergestellt: s. S. 84.

³³ Dazu s. PILHOFER 2018, 243–245 (mit Abbildungen).

³⁴ Zur gesamten Stätte vgl. P. PILHOFER, „A Very Pleasant Spot to Walk and Spend Time: Thekla’s Cave at Seleucia“, *EC* 14,3 (2023) 267–290. Zum Aquädukt s. HILD/HELLENKEMPER 1990, 442; eine Abbildung des vor hundert Jahren noch eindrucksvollen Zustandes bietet MAMA III, Abbildung 30 auf Tafel II.

2. Der bauliche Kontext

In der Literatur wird einhellig davon ausgegangen, dass der bauliche Kontext der Firminianus-Inschrift eine Kirche wäre, in deren säulenganggesäumten Atrium sich ein Brunnen befände. Da aber auch völlig profane Aquädukte Heiligen-Namen tragen konnten und die Inschrift selbst nicht von einer Kirche berichtet, ist es ebenso gut denkbar, dass mit τετράστοον eine Peristylanlage bezeichnet wird, die z. B. zur Residenz des Bischofs Firminianus gehört haben könnte.³⁵ Angesichts der Inszenierung des Bischofs als öffentlicher Wohltäter sowie der engen Parallele der genannten Eugenius-Inschrift (die explizit eine Kirche nennt)³⁶ ist es dennoch wahrscheinlicher, dass das Atrium einer Kirche gemeint ist.

Sowohl mit der neuen Lesung in Z. 6, τῷ ἔξω ὕδρῳ, als auch mit der alten Lesung τῷ ἔξω ὕδρῳ besteht die Frage, wie sich der Brunnen zum Atrium verhält: Liegt er *außerhalb [der Kirche] im Atrium* oder aber *außen am Atrium*? Da die Inschrift formuliert, dass das Wasser *im* Atrium strömte, ist wohl eher von ersterem auszugehen. Im spätantik-frühbyzantinischen Kirchenbau ist ein solcher Hof – auch mit einem Brunnen! – durchaus gängig.³⁷

3. Der Märtyrer Sokrates

Der genannte siegreiche Märtyrer, Sokrates, ist aller Wahrscheinlichkeit eine lokale Größe.³⁸ Es gibt zwar eine ganze Reihe von Märtyrern mit dem Namen Sokrates, deren Identifikationen mit dem Sokrates der Inschrift mal mehr, mal weniger Plausibilität beanspruchen können; eine einleuchtende Verbindung besteht aber höchstens zu einem von diesen.

Märtyrer des Namens Sokrates aus Kleinasien sind nur als Teil von Märtyrergruppen bekannt. Zumindest in Frage kämen der Sokrates, wohl aus dem Pontos, der in Ankyra hingerichtet wurde (BHG 1780), sowie der

³⁵ Ich danke Jon Cubas Díaz (Göttingen/Rostock) für diesen telefonischen Hinweis (30. April 2023).

³⁶ ICG 371, Z. 13 f.: πᾶσαν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἀνοικοδο[μ]ήσας (Übersetzung ICG: „ich errichtete das gesamte Kirchengebäude neu“).

³⁷ Vgl. auch *Vita et Miracula Theclae* 2.12.24–26 (ed. DAGRON): Ἐδόκουν δὲ ἐν τῇ τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐλῇ καθεύδειν τῇ καὶ τὴν φιάλῃν καὶ τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῇ βλύζον ὕδωρ ἐχούσῃ καὶ τὴν πλάτανον ὑφ’ ἧ καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ῥεῖ (Übersetzung B. SCHRÖDER, „Text und Übersetzung“, in: B. KOLLMANN / B. SCHRÖDER (Hg.), *Vita et miracula sanctae Theclae* (Freiburg 2021) [75–353] 239: „Es erschien mir aber, als schliefe ich in dem Vorhof der Kirche, in dem sich die Brunnenschale mit dem sich darin ergießenden Wasser befindet sowie die Platane, zu deren Füßen das Wasser fließt.“).

³⁸ Es gab nicht nur Märtyrer mit dem Namen Sokrates, sondern z. B. auch Platon von Ankyra (BHG 1550). Der Name Platon tritt in der Spätantike in und um Ankyra gehäuft auf.

Soldatenmartyrer Sokrates, der mit Theodor, dessen Mutter Philippa sowie dem Soldaten Dionysius in Perge das Martyrium durchlitten haben soll (BHG 1747).

Eher nicht in Frage kommen Märtyrer dieses Namens, die in größerer Entfernung belegt sind. Im *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* wird bspw. ein Heiliger Sokrates in Britannien erwähnt sowie einer in Mauretanien.³⁹ Hinzu kommt ein Sokrates in Tiberiopolis, das meistens mit Strumica im heutigen Nordmazedonien identifiziert wird (BHG 1199). Allerdings könnte dabei, wie anscheinend noch nicht bemerkt wurde, auch eine Verwechslung mit dem pisidischen Tiberiopolis (= Pappa) vorliegen, das geographisch und kulturell schon sehr nah an Zenonopolis gelegen wäre.

Bei diesen Debatten ist allerdings immer wieder darauf hinzuweisen, dass es für die antiken Märtyrerverehrer sehr häufig offenkundig unproblematisch war, diese Identitätsfrage offen zu lassen oder zumindest nicht bis ins letzte Detail zu klären.⁴⁰

³⁹ S. NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*, 546.

⁴⁰ Auf einen anderen Märtyrer bezogen habe ich diese Problematik bereits diskutiert: PILHOFER 2018, 230 f.

4. Zenonopolis im Rauhen Kilikien



Fig. 35: Die heutige Situation: 1 Zenonopolis; 2 Nekropole; 3 Kirche; 4 Festung
(Photo: Vorlage Turgut Saner 29.08.2008; Graphik: Birgit Pilhofer)

Das isaurische Zenonopolis liegt auf etwa 1700 m Höhe im Gebiet zwischen den beiden Armen des Kalykadnos im Tal des Küçükusu in der Nähe des heutigen Ortes Büyükkarapınar.⁴¹ Die Lage ist etwas abseits des Verkehrsweges von Anemourion über Eirenopolis und Germanikopolis nach Isaura; diese Region im Herzen des Tauros hat Hochgebirgscharakter.

Diese Inschrift ist der erste Beleg für das isaurische Zenonopolis. Es ist davon auszugehen, dass es sich um den Geburtsort des Kaisers Zenon (Regierungszeit 474–475 und 476–491), Rousoumblada, handelt. Rousoumblada dürfte zuvor ein völlig unbedeutendes und unbekanntes Gebirgsdorf gewesen sein, das nun, als sein berühmtester Spross an die Macht kam, zur Stadt erhoben wurde.⁴² Faktisch „an der Macht“ war Zenon schon vor seiner

⁴¹ Unweit davon wiederum liegt der Ort Elmayurdu („Apfel-Wohnstätte“), der früher den alten griechischen Namen bewahrte: İznebol. Zu den antiken Verkehrswegen dort vgl. PILHOFER 2018, 22–25.

⁴² Die Größe eines Ortes spielt dafür keine Rolle, enge Parallelen sind z.B. Euchaita (C. MANGO / I. ŠEVČENKO, „Three Inscriptions of the Reigns of Anastasius I and

Regierungszeit, da er ab Januar 474 bereits Mitkaiser seines eigenen minderjährigen Sohnes, des Kaisers Leon II. (18. Januar bis 17. November 474), war.⁴³ Als sich im Januar 475 der Usurpator Basiliskos gegen Zenon erhob, floh dieser in seine isaurische Heimat über Olba nach Sbide und verschanzte sich dort in den Bergen, ganz in der Nähe seines Herkunftsortes.⁴⁴ Die bei Zenonopolis archäologisch greifbaren Überreste von Befestigungsanlagen („4“ auf der Abbildung Fig. 35) könnten dabei auch eine Rolle gespielt haben, sie werden aber in den Quellen nicht erwähnt.⁴⁵ Erst im August 476 kehrte Zenon als Kaiser nach Konstantinopel zurück. Wenn die Erhebung von Zenonopolis zur Stadt nicht ohnehin schon geschehen war, so hätte es nach 476 mit der (vermutlich) erwiesenen Loyalität einen weiteren Grund gegeben.

Ganz allgemein ging mit der Stadtgründung die Einrichtung eines Bistums einher. Dies war eine alte Praxis, die unter Zenon zudem zu geltendem (staatlichen) Recht wurde.⁴⁶ Der erste bekannte Bischof dieses Bistums ist nur in dieser Inschrift belegt: Firminianus. Die Liste der Bischöfe setzt sich bis weit in byzantinische Zeit hinein fort, die Vertreter der Stadt auf den großen Konzilien sind namentlich bekannt.⁴⁷

Archäologischerseits ist über den Ort nicht viel bekannt (s. Fig. 35).⁴⁸ In den schönen alten Häusern von Büyükkarapınar sind allerorten Spolien verbaut, in der Nähe befinden sich Überreste einer Nekropole; in den Plantagen dazwischen sollen sich nach örtlicher Überlieferung – so hörte es Turgut Saner⁴⁹ – vor nicht allzu langer Zeit die Überreste einer alten Stadt befunden

Constantine V.“, *ByZ* 65 (1972) [379–393] 379–382) oder Germia (P. NIEWÖHNER / G. DIKILITAŞ / E. ERKUL / S. GIESE / J. GORECKI / W. PROCHASKA / D. SARI / H. STÜMPPEL / A. VARDAR / A. WALDNER / A. V. WALSER / H. WOITH, „Bronze Age höyükü, Iron Age Hill-top Forts, Roman Poleis and Byzantine Pilgrimage in Germia and its Vicinity. 'Connectivity' and a lack of 'definite places' on the central Anatolian high plateau“, *AnSt* 63 (2013) 97–136).

⁴³ In diese Zeit fällt höchstwahrscheinlich die Gründung des isaurischen Leontopolis: P. PILHOFER, „Leontopolis: Kaiserstadt ohne Bischof? Lokalisierung und Geschichte einer isaurischen Märtyrer-Kultstätte“, *ZAC* 25,3 (2021) [479–506] 482–484.

⁴⁴ Theophanes Homologetes, *Chron.* 5967 (ed. DE BOOR).

⁴⁵ Vorsichtig äußern sich in dieser Hinsicht auch SANER / BAYÜLGEN 2019, 124 f.

⁴⁶ *Codex Iustinianus* I 3,35 (s. vorher schon Kanon 17 des Konzils von Chalkedon).

⁴⁷ Für die einzelnen Nachweise vgl. HILD / HELLENKEMPER 1990, 463.

⁴⁸ Vgl. BEAN – MITFORD, *Rough Cilicia* II, 211 f. Insbesondere zu den Gräbern s. O. DOĞANAY, *Ermeneke ve yakın çevresindeki antik yerleşim birimleri. Coğrafya – Tarih – Kalıntılar* (Konya 2005) 162–167 (mit je zwei Abbildungen auf den Tafeln [„Levha“] 123–126) und Y. ER SCARBOROUGH, *The Funerary Monuments of Rough Cilicia and Isauria* (Oxford 2017) 57. Hild und Hellenkemper waren im Gebiet zwischen den Kalykadnosarmen nicht selbst vor Ort, daher sind ihre Angaben zur Lage der Orte und zur Fundsituation in dieser Region mit Vorsicht zu genießen (wie ich aus eigener Erfahrung weiß); aber die historischen Quellen sowie die Forschungsliteratur zu Zenonopolis haben sie vorbildlich gesammelt: HILD / HELLENKEMPER 1990, 463 f.

⁴⁹ Ich danke für die freundliche Mitteilung per eMail am 28. 4. 2023.

haben. Oberhalb, auf etwa 1800 m, befinden sich Reste einer Kirche.⁵⁰ Von dieser hoch über dem Ort gelegenen, knapp 20 m langen dreischiffigen Basilika steht nur noch ein steinerner Bogen. Die erhaltenen Architekturteile werden von Saner und Gözde Demir mit denjenigen von Alahan und Ayatekla verglichen. Saner und Demir identifizieren diese Kirche mit derjenigen des Heiligen Sokrates. Diese Zuordnung lässt sich zwar nicht beweisen, hat aber angesichts der wirklich sehr prominenten und das gesamte Tal überblickenden Lage des Gebäudes einiges für sich. Wenn man nicht von einem wirklich großen Aquädukt ausgehen möchte, wäre die Wasserleitung dann von Festungsberg herab verlaufen (also von dem Gebiet um „4“ zu „3“ in Fig. 35).

Wiederum oberhalb der Kirche sind auf ca. 1900 m Höhe Reste einer kleinen Befestigungsanlage, die allerdings sehr schwer zu datieren sind, dokumentiert worden.⁵¹ Laut der freundlichen Auskunft von Osman Doğanay (Aksaray) hat das Museum Karaman 2022 Grabungen vor Ort begonnen – damit scheint die von Delehaye vor gut 100 Jahren geäußerte Hoffnung auf eine Grabung in Erfüllung zu gehen.

5. Die Inschrift in ihrem historischen Kontext

Neben der Erhebung von Zenonopolis zur Stadt sind verschiedene Ereignisse anzuführen, die zum Hintergrund der Inschrift gehören. Zenon hatte im Jahr 484 durch Enteignungen seiner Gegner in Konstantinopel gewonnene Mittel an die isaurischen Städte geschenkt, zusätzlich veranlasste er jährliche Zahlungen von 1400 Goldpfund in die Region.⁵² Zwar ist der Zusammenhang mit den Zahlungen nur eine Vermutung, archäologisch gesichert ist aber, dass sich in der gesamten Region in dieser Zeit ein Bauboom vollzog, der von Kirchen bis zu Zivilbauten reichte.⁵³ Auch häufig angeführt wird zudem Zenons Sieg 488 als Grund der Anbringung der Inschrift im selben Jahr: Zenons Truppen beendeten eine weitere Usurpation, während der sich diesmal seine Herausforderer (v.a. seine Schwiegermutter Verina

⁵⁰ Ausführlichere Informationen bieten T. SANER / G. DEMİR, „Braniewo yazıtı ve Zenonopolis kalıntıları“, in: K. DURAK / N. NECİPOĞLU / T. UYAR (Hg.), *Türkiye’de bizans çalışmaları yeni araştırmalar, farklı eğilimler* (İstanbul 2021) 301–315 auf Grundlage von zwei Surveys 2008 und 2009. Sie berichten auch von einer Raubgrabung im Jahre 2008, die, so wird man vermuten müssen, durch den Survey 2008 motiviert war.

⁵¹ SANER / BAYÜLGEN 2019.

⁵² Die Enteignungen: Ioannes Antiochenos, *Fr.* 306.3–5 (ed. ROBERTO) (δωρεῖται ταῖς Ἰσαύρων πόλεσιν); die Zahlungen: *Fr.* 308.38f. (ed. ROBERTO) (ὁ καὶ χιλίας χρυσίου λίτρας).

⁵³ PILHOFER 2018, 190–198.

und der Isaurer Illous) aus Antiocheia am Orontes nach Isaurien zurückgezogen hatten, allerdings etwas weiter im Norden in Papirion.⁵⁴ Da das Wasser laut der Inschrift schon im Februar 488 floss, dürfte zumindest der abschließende Sieg zu spät gekommen sein, als dass er mit dem Aquädukt zu tun haben könnte.

Mit diesen historischen Kontexten im Hinterkopf sei der Blick abschließend auf die Marmorplatte selbst gelenkt: Hervorzuheben ist das erlesene Beschreibmaterial. Es gibt zwar noch kein Corpus der kilikisch-isaurischen Inschriften, aber es dürften nicht viele Inschriften aus der Spätantike erhalten sein, deren Träger vergleichbar wertvoll ist.⁵⁵

Betrachtet man diese Lage nun insgesamt, ist es sehr erstaunlich, dass die Inschrift lediglich davon berichtet, der Bauherr Bischof Firminianus habe eine Wasserleitung *wiedererrichtet*: Gab es im Gebirgsdorf Rousoumblada bereits vorher Wasserleitungen? Und wenn nun das Dorf zur Stadt erhoben wurde – was üblicherweise mit größeren Bauprojekten einherging – und insgesamt viel Geld in die Region investiert wird, dann wird lediglich eine solche alte dörfliche Wasserleitung renoviert? Betont wird in jedem Fall die *Vollständigkeit* des Baus,⁵⁶ ἐπεσκεύασεν ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου τὸ ὅλον ὑδραγωγίον (Z. 2 f.: „den gesamten Aquädukt vollständig wiederhergestellt“);⁵⁷ aber laut dem Text der Inschrift geht es eben nur um eine Wasserleitung, den Brunnen könnte man ggf. noch hinzurechnen, das Atrium aber schon nicht mehr.

6. Zusammenfassende Interpretation

Zusammenfassend sei die folgende These gewagt, die die erzielten Einsichten miteinander in Einklang zu bringen versucht: Zenon wird seinen Geburtsort recht früh, wahrscheinlich gleich zu Beginn seiner Amtszeit, zur Stadt erhoben haben. Damit einher ging ein Bauprogramm, zu dem die Errichtung einer Kirche für den örtlichen Märtyrer Sokrates an prominentem Platz gehörte. Die Kirche war im säulenganggesäumten Atrium mit einem Brunnen ausgestattet, der wiederum von einer eigenen Wasserleitung versorgt wurde.

⁵⁴ Zu diesen Zusammenhängen s. BEGASS 2018, 298–300.

⁵⁵ In den spätantiken *Vita et Miracula Theclae* wird von einer goldenen Mosaikinschrift berichtet (2.10.3–8 ed. DAGRON), die allerdings nicht erhalten ist.

⁵⁶ Die bereits erwähnte Eugenius-Inschrift (ICG 371; s.o. Anm. 26) betont ebenso die Vollständigkeit des Werkes, allerdings sind dort ausdrücklich das Gebäude und die Ausstattung gemeint.

⁵⁷ Victor Schultze ist in seiner Übersetzung optimistischer, er schreibt von einer Neuerichtung (SCHULTZE 1926, 261 f.). Das Verb ἐπισκευάζω bezeichnet in Bauinschriften sehr zuverlässig Renovierungen; ggf. aber nicht immer (ein solcher Fall könnte *I.Stratonikeia* Nr. 310, Z. 43–45, sein).

Wahrscheinlich in den ersten Jahren der Usurpation der Verina und des Illous (484–488), möglicherweise auf ihrem Zug von Antiocheia nach Papirion, ist die Geburtsstadt des verhassten Kaisers überfallen worden, dabei wurde zumindest die Wasserleitung zerstört. Sehr bald jedoch sind die Aufständischen in der Festung Papirion eingeschlossen gewesen. Der findige Bischof Firminianus kann also weit vor 488 – dem Verrat des Festungsinhabers Indakos und dem folgenden Sieg Zenons – mit der Reparatur des Aquädukts begonnen haben. Sollte diese These zutreffen, erhielt der fromme Wunsch im dritten Satz der Inschrift einen ganz anderen Nachdruck: „Betet nun dafür, ihr Nutznießer, dass das [alles] durch die Fürsprache des heiligen Märtyrers unversehrt bleibe für viele und lange Jahre.“ – εὐχέσθε οὖν οἱ ἀπολαύοντες ὅπως ταῖς πρεσβείαις τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος ἀρραγῇ αὐτὸ διαφυλάττεσθαι ἐπὶ πολλοῖς καὶ μηκίστοις χρόνοις.

Auf dass also die Leitung diesmal länger halte als nur wenige Jahre!

Klaus Hallof

Es wurden aber bisher nur elf wohl wichtige und überraschende, aber eben nur kleine Teile gefunden. Immerhin haben sie sukzessive ein Gesamtbild entstehen lassen, von dessen Werden im Folgenden die Rede ist.

1. Antike Steckkalender

Eins der Worte, die man auf dem Gymnasium im Griechischunterricht in der Regel nicht lernt oder gleich wieder vergisst, ist eines der „kleinen *verba* auf -μι“: *παράπηγνυμι*. Es bedeutet: „daneben stecken, beistecken“. Für den Epigraphiker ist es allerdings eine Pflichtvokabel. Denn vom Verb abgeleitet ist der antike Terminus für Steckkalender: *Parápegma* (*παράπηγμα*),² und solche *Parapégmata* sind epigraphisch vor allem aus späthellenistischer und römischer Kaiserzeit überliefert. Insbesondere die Funde von zwei *Parapegmata*–Inschriften aus Milet³ im Jahre 1903 haben die ganze verworrene literarische Überlieferung zu den *παράπηγματα* überhaupt erst verständlich gemacht. Äußerlich erkennt man einen Steckkalender an den zahlreichen Bohrlöchern, die man am Rand oder über einem meist in Kolumnen angeordneten Text sieht. In diese Löcher konnte man kleine Stifte stecken.

Ursprünglich dienten solche *Parapegmata* zur Ausgleiche unterschiedlicher Kalendarien, von denen eines dem Text, ein anderes den zur Zählung der Tage benutzten Steckern zugrunde lag: etwa ein astronomisch-meteorologischer Grundtext mit Angaben zu Stern- und Wetterphänomenen, und eine Serie von Steckern, die etwa den Sonnenkalender, verschiedene Feste, die Amtsperiode eines Magistrats usw. markierten. In jüngerer Zeit und einige Kalenderreformen später dienten die Stecker allerdings nur noch zur Kenntlichmachung des laufenden Tages. Rehm bezeichnet dies als „uneigentliches *Parapegma*“, von denen er 16 antike Beispiele vornehmlich aus der Kaiserzeit aufführt. Dabei handelt es sich vornehmlich um Monats- oder Wochentags-*Parapegmata*. Einen vollständigen derartigen Jahreskalender auf Stein kennt Rehm nicht, und er meinte auch, einen solchen „immerwährenden Kalender“ kaum erwarten zu dürfen, zumal für die spätantike Zeit. Hier sollte er sich irren. Wobei gesagt werden muss, dass die Widerlegung dieser Annahme von ganz unerwarteter Seite und auf überraschende Weise erfolgte: durch einen christlichen Steckkalender aus Sikyon.

² Grundlegend hierzu sind die Arbeit von A. REHM, *Parapegmastudien* (München 1941), und sein Artikel „*Parapegma*“, *RE* XVIII 2 (1949) 1295–1366.

³ Jetzt Berliner Antikensammlung, Inv. Milet 84 und 456; H. DIELS und A. REHM, „*Parapegmenfragmente aus Milet*“, *SPAW* (1904) 92–111. Neu behandelt von I. BULTRIGHINI, in: R. FÄRBER/R. GAUTSCHY (Hg.), *Zeit in den Kulturen des Altertums. Antike Chronologie im Spiegel der Quellen* (Köln 2020) 405–418.

2. Fund- und Editionsgeschichte

Die ersten der seiner Annahme widersprechenden Belege hätte Rehm sogar kennen können, wenn die Erstedition durch den griechischen Archäologen A. Philadelphus im Jahre 1926 von vier Fragmenten (*a–d*) einer griechischen Inschrift aus der antiken Stadt Sikyon das Richtige nicht völlig verfehlt hätte.⁴ Denn der Ausgräber spricht in seinem Bericht im *Archaiologikon Deltion* von vier Stücken einer „byzantinischen Inschrift mit verschiedenen Namen von Weihenden“. Nicht besser erging es einem fünften Stück (*g*), das mehr als sechzig Jahre später nur in einem Foto publiziert wurde (es galt als verloren, konnte aber 2022 wiedergefunden werden) und in dem man einen „Katalog von Namen, römischen und kleinasiatischen,“ erkannte.⁵

Als im Jahre 2012 Sebastian Prignitz für das Corpus der Inschriften der Argolis das Museum in Sikyon besuchen und die dort vorhandenen antiken Inschriften aufnehmen konnte, fand er nicht nur die vier Fragmente von 1926, sondern auch noch zwei neue (Fr. *e* und *f*), und konnte sogar zwei von ihnen (Fr. *a* + *b*) zusammenfügen. Von allen Inschriften hat er Abklatsche und Fotos angefertigt. Mit deren Hilfe konnte ich die Stücke endlich als das bestimmen, was sie sind: Fragmente eines frühchristlichen Steckkalenders. Die erstmals versuchte Rekonstruktion,⁶ die auch der Edition im Corpus der christlichen Inschriften von Korinth und Umgebung⁷ zugrundeliegt (*IG IV*² 3, 1825; danach *ICG* 2884), zeigt, dass die Fragmente sehr disparat verteilt sind und keine „cluster“ bilden. Eine solche Verteilung läßt, wie ich damals 2016 schrieb, auf weitere Funde hoffen.

Die Hoffnung sollte sich unerwartet bereits sechs Jahre später erfüllen. Im Jahre 2022 stieß Konstantinos Biliias bei der Aufnahme von archäologischen Artefakten im Depot des Museums von Sikyon auf drei weitere Fragmente (*h–j*), die er bereits zwei Jahre später mit ausführlichem Kommentar ediert hat.⁸

⁴ A. PHILADELPHUS, *Ανασκαφαὶ Σικυῶνος*, *ADelt* 10 (1926) [46–50] 48 Nr. 4–7 erwähnt die vier Fragmente *a–d* und bildet Frr. *a* und *b* im Foto ab.

⁵ K. KRYSTALLI-VOTSI, *Ανασκαφή Σικυῶνος*, *PAAH* 1987 (1991) [66–68] 68 mit Foto Taf. 56; besprochen von D. FEISSEL, *BE* 1993, 753 (danach *SEG* 41,271).

⁶ K. HALLOF, „Ein christlicher Steckkalender aus Sikyon“, *EC* 7 (2016) 237–246. Vgl. D. FEISSEL, *BE* 2016, 582.

⁷ *IG IV*²: *IG, Vol. IV: Inscriptiones Argolidis, ed. altera. Fasc. 3: Inscriptiones Corinthiae saeculorum IV. V. VI.* (ed. E. SIRONEN) (Berlin 2016).

⁸ BILIAS 2024.

3. Der zugrundeliegende Kalender

Die zehn Fragmente⁹ stammen von einer nur 2,5 cm dicken Platte aus sehr feinem weißem Marmor. Sie zeigen die erwähnten Löcher mit beige-schriebenen Tagesangaben und Namen von Heiligen im Genetiv (s. u.). Zugrunde liegt, daran besteht keinerlei Zweifel, der römische Kalender.¹⁰ Die besonderen Tage, die Kalenden, Iden und Nonen, sind in abgekürzter Form mit griechischen Siglen bezeichnet, für *ante* (*diem*) steht griechisch $\pi\rho\acute{o}$, und die Tageszahlen werden durch griechische Zahlenbuchstaben wiedergegeben, die durch darübergesetzte Striche als solche gekennzeichnet sind.

Jeder Monat hatte eine eigene Kolumne. Dass der Monatsname darüberstand, ist anzunehmen, aber (noch) nicht zu beweisen. Die einzelnen Tage stehen jeweils auf gleicher Höhe. Es ergibt sich also ein gleichmäßiges Raster, und das hat auch der Schreiber ausgenutzt und sich die Marmorplatte durch ein Gitter aus dünn eingeritzten Hilfslinien gegliedert: jeweils ein senkrechter Strich zwischen den Monatskolumnen, und ein waagerechter für jeden Tag. Die Buchstaben stehen auf diesen waagerechten Strichen; bei einigen (P, Y, Φ) reichen die verlängerten Hasten unter diese Linie. Vor jedem Tag gibt es ein Steckerloch.

So unbedenklich man der Rekonstruktion des Kalenders also zwölf Kolumnen für die zwölf Monate zugrunde legen kann, so unsicher muss bleiben: mit welchem Monat das Kalendarium begann;¹¹ ob beim Februar auf das Schaltjahr Rücksicht genommen wurde;¹² ob die zwölf Monate nebeneinander angeordnet waren; und ob sie auf einer einzigen Platte geschrieben waren oder, weniger wahrscheinlich, auf zwei oder drei kleineren.

Der Aufbau war mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit der folgende: oben standen für alle Monate die Kalenden; dann wurde herabgezählt: 3 Tage bzw. (für März, Mai, Juli, Oktober) 5 Tage bis zu den Nonen; von den Nonen für alle Monate jeweils 7 Tage bis zu den Iden; und dann 18 bzw. 17 Tage bis zu dem Tag vor den Kalenden (*prid. Kal.*, hier mit $\alpha' = 1$ bezeichnet). Die einzelnen Monate haben so 30 bzw. 31 Tage. Da die Kolumnen nicht angeglichen wurden, sondern alle Tageszeilen vielmehr jeweils die gleiche Höhe

⁹ Zu der Kalenderplatte gehört ferner noch ein kleines unbeschriftetes Fragment; s. BILIAS 2024, Fig. 11.

¹⁰ Im Folgenden verwendete Abkürzungen: *a.d.* = *ante diem*; *prid.* = *pridie*; *Kal.* = *Kalendas*; *Id.* = *Idus*; *Non.* = *Nonas*.

¹¹ Philipp Pilhofer weist darauf hin, dass Heiligenkalender, so auch das *Synaxarion* von Konstantinopel, üblicherweise mit dem September beginnen.

¹² Im römischen Kalender wurde in Schaltjahren nach dem 24. Februar ein Tag eingeschoben: *a.d. VI Kal. Mart.* = 24 Febr. – *a.d. bis VI Kal. Mart.* = 25 Febr. – *a.d. V Kal. Mart.* = 26 Febr. – Fragment j, wenn richtig bestimmt, würde zeigen, dass im Kalender von Sikyon kein Schalttag vorgesehen war.

haben, ergibt sich unten ein „flatternder“ Rand. Das ist für die Zuordnung der einzelnen Fragmente nicht ohne Bedeutung.

4. Der Inschriftträger

Die Inschrift hat Zeilenritzlinien im Abstand von 1,9 cm; die Kolumne mit 30 Zeilen für 30 Tage wäre dann 57 cm hoch; hinzu kommt am Schluss jeweils ein kleiner freier Raum (*vacat*), am Anfang wahrscheinlich der Monatsname, was auf eine Höhe von mindestens 70 cm führt. Die horizontalen Abstände der Steckerlöcher sind dagegen nicht ganz einheitlich. Sie schwanken zwischen 10,5 und 11,5 cm. Bei 12 Kolumnen (für die 12 Monate) ergibt das mindestens 1,4 m. Die Platte war demnach mit etwa $0,7 \times 1,4$ m mittelgroß und dabei nur 2,5 cm dick; sie konnte also nicht alleine stehen, sondern war in eine Wand eingelassen. Einen Rahmen darf man sich vielleicht hinzudenken.

5. Die Namen

Den Schlüssel zum Verständnis der Namen bietet das jüngst wiedergefundene Fragment g, wo Z. 7 der Name Κοδρᾶτος zu lesen ist. Dem Hlg. Quadratus ist eine Basilika am nördlichen Rand des spät-antiken Korinth geweiht. Dieser erlitt den Märtyrertod am 10. März zusammen mit seinen fünf Gefährten Anectus, Paulus, Dionysius, Cyprianus und Crescens. Genau diese beiden Informationen, den Tag des Martyriums und die Zahl der Gefährten, zeigt der scheinbar kryptische Eintrag: 6 – *Quadratus* 5, der bedeutet: 6. Tag (vor den Iden des März) – (Tag) des Quadratus (und seiner) 5 (Gefährten).

Es ergibt sich daraus, dass hinter dem Steckerloch und der Zahl (Tagesangabe) ein Heiligenname im Genetiv steht (Tag des ...), und damit, dass es sich um einen Heiligenkalender handelt. Unter anderem solche Kalender bildeten das chronologische Gerüst für die mittelalterliche Kompilation von *Synaxaria*, Kurzviten von Heiligen, vergleichbar den *Martyrologia* der Westkirche. Solche *Synaxaria* hat es sehr viele gegeben, das wichtigste und einflussreichste wurde für die Kirche von Konstantinopel, offenbar im Auftrag Kaiser Konstantins VII. (905–959), zusammengestellt. Seiner Edition¹³ des *Synaxarion ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* aus dem Jahre 1909 hat Hippolyte Delehaye in großem Umfang auch andere Überlieferungen (*synaxaria*

¹³ *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae, e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi adiectis synaxariis selectis* (Brüssel 1902).

selecta) beigegeben, die zeigen, wie unterschiedlich im Jahr die Gedenktage der jeweiligen Heiligen in den einzelnen Regionen fielen.

Zur Bestimmung der Gedenktage für die Heiligen in den Fragmenten aus Sikyon, zur Bestimmung des Platzes dieser Fragmente im römischen Kalender, war es methodisch geboten, die Informationen zu den einzelnen Heiligen aus den verschiedenen Synaxaria heranzuziehen. Merkwürdiger Weise ergab sich dabei nur selten eine völlige Übereinstimmung bei Tag und Heiligennamen; Quadratus am 10. [März] ist eher die Ausnahme. Und am überraschendsten: zwei Heilige finden sich im *Synaxarion* von Konstantinopel überhaupt nicht.

6. Die einzelnen Fragmente

Fragment *g* (etwa 17 × 16 cm):

[O]	ζ'	Γορδίου	
[O]	ς'	Κοδράτου ε'	○
[O]	ε'	<i>vacat</i>	
[O]	δ'	Πιονίου	
[O]	γ'	Βικτω[ρ- -]	
[O]	α'	<i>vacat</i>	

Das im Jahre 2022 wiedergefundene Fragment enthält eine Kolumne mit den heruntergezählten Tagen 7–1; von der rechts anschließenden Kolumne ist nur ein Steckerloch erhalten.

Wie oben bemerkt, bietet das Fragment den Schlüssel zum Verständnis der gesamten Inschrift mit dem Namen des Quadratus und der Zahl 5 (für die fünf Gefährten). Nach dem *Synaxarion*¹⁴ erlitt er den Märtyrertod am 10. März, das ist *ante diem VI. Idus Martii*, und genau diese Zahl ς' steht neben dem Namen.

Bestätigt wird der Monat (März) durch den folgenden Eintrag Πιονίου. Der Hl. Pionios erlitt sein Martyrium in Smyrna am 11. März,¹⁵ der Kalender gibt einen Tag später.

Die Gedenktage der beiden anderen Heiligen sind dagegen nicht für den März überliefert: Gordios, in Kaisareia hingerichtet, wird am 3. oder 4. Januar

¹⁴ *Synax.* p. 523, 13; erhalten ist der monumentale marmorne Türbalken der Basilika mit der Inschrift der [ἀγί]ε Κοδράτε, μνήσθ[ητι] τῷ δούλου σο[υ], „Heiliger Quadratus, gedenke deines Dieners“ aus dem 5./6. Jh. (ICG 2787).

¹⁵ *Synax.* p. 529, 11.

geehrt,¹⁶ und das Martyrium sowohl des Victor¹⁷ als auch das des Victorinus wird in der korinthischen Kirche gegenwärtig am 31. Januar begangen. Nun hat tatsächlich für Victor eines der im Jahre 2022 neu gefundenen Fragmente (h) den Gedenktag am 31. Tag eines Monats erbracht (mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit ist es der 31. März), weswegen hier im Fr. g vielleicht eher Βικτω[ρίνου] zu ergänzen ist. Das Datum (13. März) passt allerdings in keinem Fall zur Überlieferung.

Es ergibt sich für Fragment g:

MÄRZ			APRIL
<i>a.d. VII Id. Mart.</i>	9. März	Gordios	
<i>a.d. VI Id. Mart.</i>	10. März	Quadratus und 5 Gefährten	<i>a.d. IV Id. Apr.</i> 10. April
<i>a.d. V Id. Mart.</i>	11. März	kein Name	
<i>a.d. IV Id. Mart.</i>	12. März	Pionios	
<i>a.d. III Id. Mart.</i>	13. März	Victo- – (Victor oder Victorinus)	
<i>prid. Id. Mart.</i>	14. März	kein Name	

Fragment d (8,5 × 11,5 cm):

-----	○	-----
○ α' Ἀνδρέου ἀπο(στόλου)	○	-----
<i>vacat</i>	○	-----

Fragment d stammt vom unteren Teil der Kalenderplatte. Es zeigt die Reste von zwei Kolumnen. Die linke ist um eine Stelle kürzer als die rechte. Von dieser sieht man zwar nur noch drei Steckerlöcher, aber die Anordnung beweist, dass dieser folgende Monat einen Tag länger war und 31 Tage hatte.

Zu lesen ist der Name Andreas und die Abkürzung ΑΠ mit darübergestelltem O. Damit ist dieser Andreas als der ἀπόστολος erwiesen, und ihm gehört der letzte Tag eines der vier Monate zu je 30 Tagen (April, Juni, September, November), und in der Tat: sein Gedenktag ist der 30. November.¹⁸ Damit steht nun auch für die rechte Kolumne der Monat fest, die Tage vom 29.–31. Dezember, und man muss sehr bedauern, dass der Bruch des Steines uns die dazugehörigen Einträge genommen hat.

Es ergibt sich für Fragment d:

¹⁶ *Synax.* p. 367, 2.

¹⁷ *Synax.* p. 435, 22 gibt den 13. März.

¹⁸ *Synax.* p. 265, 12.

NOVEMBER

prid. Kal. Decemb. 30. Nov. Apostel Andreas
vacat

DEZEMBER

a.d. IV Id. Apr. 29. Dez.
a.d. III Kal. Ian. 30. Dez.
prid. Kal. Ian. 31. Dez.

Fragment *f* (10,5 × 11,5 cm):

○	ζ'	<i>vacat</i>	○
○	ς'	Ἀφρας	○
○	ε'	Ἀντωνίνου	○
○	δ'	Λαυρεντίου	○

Fr. *f* bietet zwei Monate; von dem zweiten nur noch die Reste von vier Löchern für die Stifte. In der linken Kolumne stehen in der Reihenfolge: Afra, Antoninus und Laurentius. Letzterer passt mit dem Datum seines Martyriums, dem 10. August, wie es im *Synaxarion* verzeichnet ist,¹⁹ und unter dem Vortag, dem 9. August, ist auch der Tod des Antoninus in Alexandria genannt.²⁰ Dagegen fehlt die Heilige Afra, die als Märtyrerin von Augsburg eine der großen Heiligen der Westkirche war; immerhin erscheint sie unter dem 7. August im sog. Martyrologium Hieronymianum,²¹ während der Kalender von Sikyon sie unter dem 8. August nennt.

Es ergibt sich für Fragment *f*:

AUGUST

a.d. VII Id. Aug. 7. Aug. kein Name
a.d. VI Id. Aug. 8. Aug. Afra
a.d. V Id. Aug. 9. Aug. Antoninus
a.d. IV Id. Aug. 10. Aug. Laurentius

SEPTEMBER

a.d. VII Id. Sept. 7. Sept.
a.d. VI Id. Sept. 8. Sept.
a.d. V Id. Sept. 9. Sept.
a.d. IV Id. Sept. 10. Sept.

Fragment *e* (7 × 9,5 cm):

[○ Κα]λ(άνδαις) *vacat*
[○ πρ(ὸ) δ'] Νω(νών) Ἀφφιανοῦ I- - - -
[○ γ' Θ]εοδοσίας
- - - - -

¹⁹ *Synax.* p. 881, 8.

²⁰ *Synax.* p. 881, 6.

²¹ H. DELEHAYE, *Commentarius perpetuus in Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (Brüssel 1931) 259.

Fr. e, auf dem die Datumszahlen links weggebrochen sind, zeigt Reste der Sigle für *Nonae* (N mit darübergesetztem ω); davor den Rest der Sigle für *Kalendae* (ΚΑΛ^s), deren Ergänzung auch dadurch gesichert ist, dass der Name Affianos um eine Stelle nach rechts verschoben ist. Das Fragment stammt demnach vom Anfang einer Kolumne, und folgerichtig gehört zu Affianos – eine Nebenform zu Amphianos – der 4. Tag (oder in den Monaten März, Mai, Juli und Oktober der 6. Tag) vor den Nonen, *a.d. IV Non.*, das ist der 2. Tag des Monats; und in der Tat: Ἀμφιανός aus Caesarea erlitt am 2. April in Palästina den Tod,²² und am folgenden 3. April im Jahre 307 wurde in Caesarea die Märtyrerin Theodosia aus Tyrus hingerichtet.²³

Amphianus wird am 2. April nicht allein geehrt: das Gedenken gilt τῶν ἁγίων ἐν Χριστῷ μαρτύρων Ἀμφιανοῦ καὶ Αἰδεσίου τῶν ἀνταδέλφων, also ihm und seinem leiblichen Bruder Aidesios. K. Biliias weist sehr überzeugend darauf hin, das die bisher nicht interpretierte Haste nach Ἀφφιανοῦ zu κ[αὶ Αἰδεσίου] oder κ[αὶ ἀδελφοῦ] gehören könnte.²⁴

Damit ergibt sich für Fragment e:

	APRIL	
<i>Kal. Apr.</i>	1. April	<i>kein Name</i>
<i>a.d. IV Non. Apr.</i>	2. April	Amphianos u[nd Aidesios?]
<i>a.d. III Non. Apr.</i>	3. April	Theodosia

Fragmente *ab* (11,5 × 12 cm, und 10,5 × 10,5 cm):

[Ο ε' -----]	Ο γ' -----
[Ο δ' ----]ανοῦ	Ο α' <i>vacat</i>
[Ο γ' Δ]ημητ[ρί]ου	Ο Νώ(ναις) Μ-----
Ο α' Ἀντίπα	Ο πρ(ὸ) [η' Ἰδ(ῶν) -----]
Ο Νώ(ναις) Χρηστοφόρ[ου]	Ο ζ' -----]
Ο πρ(ὸ) η' Ἰδ(ῶν) <i>vacat</i>	
Ο ζ' Ἐπιμάχου	
Ο ς' Γλυκερίας	

Das bislang größte erhaltene Stück des Steckkalenders hat Sebastian Prignitz durch Anpassung zweier Fragmente *ab* gewonnen. Es überliefert die griechischen Abkürzungen für die römischen *Nonae* (wie in Fr. e) und die *Idus* (ἸΔ^s). Demnach gehört es in die Mitte zweier Monate, und die Differenz

²² *Synax.* p. 579, 13.

²³ *Synax.* p. 584, 46.

²⁴ BILIAS 2024, 70.

von zwei Zeilen bei der Anordnung der *Nonae* in der linken im Vergleich zur rechten Spalte macht klar, dass der linke Monat der März, Mai, Juli oder Oktober sein muß, der rechte dann entsprechend der April, Juni, August oder November. Mit Blick auf die Namen spricht vieles für das Monatspaar Mai/Juni, da vier der Namen – Demetrios, Christophoros, Epimachos, Glykeria – im *Synaxarion* in dieser Reihenfolge unter dem Mai genannt sind, wenn auch zu verschiedenen Tagen: Demetrios und vier Gefährten am 6. Mai²⁵ (an diesem Platz steht im Kalendarium Antipas; Antipas wiederum ist dem *Synaxarion* unbekannt bis auf einen gleichnamigen Bischof von Pergamon unter dem 11. oder 12. April²⁶); weiter Christophoros am 9. Mai²⁷ und der römische Märtyrer Epimachos am 10. Mai²⁸ (also mit zwei bzw. einem Tag Abweichung zum Kalendarium); Glykerias Gedenktag ist entweder der 12. oder der 13. Mai.²⁹ Für den 4. Mai sind zwei Namen von Märtyrerbischöfen (ιερομάρτυρες) überliefert, die passen würden: [Σιλβ]ανοῦ und [Ὀλβι]ανοῦ.³⁰

Die rechte Spalte enthält in Resten den 3.–7. Tag des folgenden Monats. Eine vage Vermutung zu den Nonen, wo von dem Namen des Heiligen nur ein *My* erhalten ist: das *Synaxarion* verzeichnet unter dem 5. Juni das Gedenken an den Tod des Marcianus und seiner neun Gefährten in Ägypten,³¹ allerdings für die Tage vom 4.–6. Juni noch zahlreiche weitere Märtyrer, deren Namen mit M beginnen.

Damit ergibt sich für Fragment e:

	MAI		JUNI
<i>a.d. V Non. Maii</i>	3. Mai – – – –	<i>a.d. III Non. Iun.</i>	3. Jun.
<i>a.d. IV Non. Maii</i>	4. Mai [Olbi/Silv]anus	<i>prid. Non. Iun.</i>	4. Jun.
<i>a.d. III Non. Maii</i>	5. Mai Demetrios	<i>Non. Iun.</i>	5. Jun. M – –
<i>prid. Non. Maii</i>	6. Mai Antipas	<i>a.d. VIII Id. Iun.</i>	6. Jun.
<i>Non. Maii</i>	7. Mai Christophorus	<i>a.d. VII Id. Iun.</i>	7. Jun.
<i>a.d. VIII Id. Maii</i>	8. Mai kein Name		
<i>a.d. VII Id. Maii</i>	9. Mai Epimachos		
<i>a.d. VI Id. Maii</i>	10. Mai Glykeria		
	– – – – –		

²⁵ *Synax.* p. 662, 8.

²⁶ *Synax.* p. 595, 33 und p. 597, 46.

²⁷ *Synax.* p. 667, 25.

²⁸ *Synax.* p. 673, 53.

²⁹ *Synax.* p. 676, 47 und p. 679, 7.

³⁰ *Synax.* p. 657, 19 und p. 657, 32.

³¹ *Synax.* p. 732, 1, also: M[αρκιανοῦ θ'].

Fragment *h* (12 × 17 cm):

[Ο	ς'	Τρυφέν[ης]		
[Ο	ε'	Ματρώνης	Ο	δ' -----
[Ο	δ'	Θεοδωρήτου	Ο	γ' Βαρ-----
[Ο	γ'	Ἀκακίου	Ο	α' Δι[οδώρου]
[Ο	α'	Βίκτορος		<i>vacat</i>
		<i>vacat</i>		

Das größere der im Jahre 2022 gefundenen Fragmente bietet zwei Kolonnen und stammt von deren Ende; denn unten ist jeweils freier Raum, und danach steht links ein Monat zu 31 und rechts ein Monat zu 30 Tagen fest. In Frage kommen März/April, Mai/Juni und August/September. Oktober/November scheidet aus, weil Fr. *a* bereits den Schluss des Novembers bildet. Die Entscheidung für März/April wird durch die Abfolge Matrona, Theodoretos und Akakios gegeben, deren Gedenktage in den März fallen, wenn auch wiederum nicht exakt auf die Tage des Kalendariums.

Für die bekannte Hlg. Matrona in Thessaloniki überliefert das *Synaxarion* von Konstantinopel den 27. März, mehrere andere den 28. März (das wäre genau der Tag des Kalenders von Sikyon).³² Für Theodoretos und Akakios stehen jeweils mehrere Kandidaten und damit mehrere Gedenktage zur Auswahl. Akakios dürfte wohl der Bischof von Antiochia sein, der unter Kaiser Decius (249–251) sein Martyrium erlitt; Gedenktag ist der 31. März. Gelegentlich wird er mit dem gleichnamigen Bischof von Melitene vermischt, Teilnehmer am Konzil von Ephesus im Jahre 431, für den neben dem 17. April in anderen *Synaxaria* auch der 27., 29., 30. und 31. März angegeben wird.³³ Schließlich der Fall des Theodoretos: Für den 28. März überliefert eine Pariser Handschrift den Namen Θεοδωρήτου ἐπισκόπου Κύρρου.³⁴ Es handelt sich demnach um den bekannten Bischof von Kyrrhos und Kirchenhistoriker (gestorben um 460), dessen theologische Schriften später auf dem Zweiten Konzil von Konstantinopel im Jahre 553 verdammt worden sind. Das ergäbe einen willkommenen *terminus ante quem* für die Inschrift – wenn es sich wirklich um diesen Theodoretos handelt und nicht um einen anderen. Doch daran bestehen Zweifel. Denn die Kanonisierung der beiden Bischöfe aus dem mittleren 5. Jh. gehört sicher erst in spätere Zeit, als die Inschrift schon geschrieben war.

³² *Synax.* p. 563, 2, und p. 565, 34. Vgl. BILIAS 2024, 265.

³³ *Synax.* p. 564, 22, p. 568, 52, p. 572, 53, p. 576, 16. BILIAS 2024, 266.

³⁴ *Synax.* p. 568, 36.

Mit dem Monat März ist allerdings für die übrigen genannten Heiligen nichts gewonnen: weder für Thryphaina (Märtyrerin von Kyzikos; Gedenktage gewöhnlich 31. Januar oder 11./12. April)³⁵ noch für Viktor, über den bereits oben zu Fr. g gehandelt wurde.

Für die rechte Kolumne ist nun der Monat April zu prüfen, also die Tage vom 28. bis zum 30. April. An diesem letzten Tag des Monats ist vom Namen des Heiligen nur ΔΙ- erhalten, und das *Synaxarion* gibt genau für diesen Tag die Verehrung Διοδώρου καὶ Ῥοδοπιανοῦ an, eine durchaus mögliche Ergänzung.³⁶ Der Name davor bietet größte Probleme: erhalten ist ΒΑΡ-, und danach ist der Stein schräg weggebrochen, so dass von jedem anderen Buchstaben außer Α, Δ und Λ irgendwelche Spuren zu sehen sein müssten. Aber keiner der eher seltenen Namen wie Βαράχιος, Βαρδάνιος, Βαρδάτης, Βαρλαάμ kommt mit seinem Gedenktag auf den 29. April.

Damit ergibt sich für Fragment h:

	MÄRZ		APRIL
<i>a.d. VI Kal. Apr.</i>	27. März Tryphaina		
<i>a.d. V Kal. Apr.</i>	28. März Matrone	<i>a.d. IV Kal. Mai.</i>	28. April – – –
<i>a.d. IV Kal. Apr.</i>	29. März Theodoretos	<i>a.d. III Kal. Mai.</i>	29. April Bar –
<i>a.d. III Kal. Apr.</i>	30. März Akakios	<i>prid. Kal. Mai.</i>	30. April Di[o-
<i>prid. Kal. Apr.</i>	31. März Victor		doros]

Fragment i (5,5 × 13,5 cm):

 ○ γ' vacat?
 ○ α' Οὐάπου
 vacat

Das kleinere der beiden 2022 gefundenen Fragmente gehört an den Schluß einer Monatskolumne. Die Ziffer bestimmt den Tag als *pridie Kalendas*, als Monatsletzten. Für den Heiligen mit dem römischen Namen Varus, Soldat in Ägypten und dort zum Christen bekehrt, sind der 19. und der 25. Oktober als Gedenktage bezeugt,³⁷ und mit Annahme einer Verschiebung um sechs Tage mag es berechtigt sein, das Fragment dem Monat Oktober zuzuweisen.

³⁵ *Synax.* p. 436, 5, p. 597, 48, p. 598, 16.

³⁶ *Synax.* p. 641, 56. BILIAS 2024, 264 ergänzt beide Namen.

³⁷ *Synax.* p. 149, 19, und p. 161, 47.

Damit ergibt sich für Fragment i:

	OKTOBER
<i>a.d. III Kal. Nov.</i>	30. Okt. - - - - -
<i>prid. Kal. Nov.</i>	31. Okt. Varus. <i>vacat</i>

Fragment j (7 × 10 cm):

[○ ι' - - - - -]	○ ζ' - - - - -
[○ θ' Βαβ]ύλα	○ ς' - - - - -
[○ η' - - -] <i>vacat</i>	○ ε' - - - - -
- - - - -	[○] δ' - - - - -

Das kleinste der neuen Fragmente von 2022 enthält in der rechten Kolumne die Zahlen von 7 bis 4, gehört also entweder vor die Iden oder die Kalenden; im Falle eines 31tägigen Monats also zum 9.–12. oder zum 26.–29. Tag; bei den 30tägigen Monaten bzw. beim Februar verschiebt sich das entsprechend um einen bzw. um drei Tage nach vorn. Die linke Kolumne zeigt unten eine Tagesspalte ohne Namen und am Tag davor die Reste von drei Buchstaben: –ρλα oder –υλα oder –φλα;³⁸ sie bilden den Schluß eines männlichen Eigennamens auf –λας. Bilius ergänzt hier sehr ansprechend Βαβ]ύλα. Des Hlg. Babylos wurde in der Ostkirche u. a. am 24. Januar gedacht.³⁹ Die Überlieferung kennt zwei Heilige namens Babylos, einen Bischof von Antiochia, der mit seinen Söhnen, bzw. einen Lehrer, der in Sizilien zusammen mit seinen Schülern Timotheos und Agapios getötet wurde.⁴⁰ Nach dem *Synaxarion* von Konstantinopel ist beider Gedenktag allerdings der 4. September.⁴¹

Wenn der 24. Januar zutrifft (*a.d. IX Kal. Febr.*), entspricht ihm in der rechten Kolumne der 24. Februar; und in der Tat steht dort richtig das Zahlzeichen ς' für den 6. Tag vor den Kalenden (*a.d. VI Kal. Mart.*). Die Zahlen 7–4 bezeichnen also den 23.–26. Februar.

³⁸ Diese drei Buchstaben weisen eine verlängerte Haste auf und reichen unter die eingeritzte Zeilenlinie.

³⁹ *Synax.* p. 420, 42.

⁴⁰ Die Ergänzung des Namens [Βαβ]ύλα mit seinen sechs Buchstaben ist vielleicht zu kurz. Darf man vielleicht [μαθητῶν Βαβ]ύλα erwägen?

⁴¹ *Synax.* p. 11, 9–25, wo die μνήμη Βαβύλα und ἐτέρου Βαβύλα beschrieben sind.

Damit ergibt sich für Fragment j:

	JANUAR		FEBRUAR
			<i>a.d. VII Kal. Mart.</i> 23.Febr. ---
<i>a.d. IX Kal. Febr.</i>	24. Jan. Babylas		<i>a.d. VI Kal. Mart.</i> 24.Febr. ---
<i>a.d.VIII Kal. Febr.</i>	25. Jan. kein Name		<i>a.d. V Kal. Mart.</i> 25.Febr. ---
	----		<i>a.d. IV Kal. Mart.</i> 26.Febr. ---

Fragment c (7,5 × 6,5 cm):

 [Ο δ' -----]
 Ο γ' Ι-----
 Ο α' Κο-----
 Ο Ἰδ(οῖς) *vacat*
 [Ο] πρ(ὸ) ιη' [Καλ(αυδῶν) --- -]

Von Fr. c sind nur die Datumszahlen und ein Heiliger namens Ko- erhalten; an den Iden selbst war offenbar keiner genannt. Der folgende 18. Tag vor den Kalenden fällt in den Monaten Februar, April, Juni, September und November auf den 14., im Januar, August und Dezember auf den 15. Eine Anpassung zu einem der erhaltenen Fragmente hat sich nicht finden lassen.

7. Das Calendarium Sanctorum ecclesiae Sicyoniae

Die Bestimmung der Heiligen und ihrer Gedenktage hat für die zehn erhaltenen Fragmente (mit Ausnahme von Fr. c) folgende Daten ergeben:

Fr. j	24.–25. Januar und 23.–26. Februar
Fr. g	9.–14. März
Fr. h	27.–31. März und 28.–30. April
Fr. e	1.–3. April
Frr. ab	4.–10. Mai und 3.–6. Juni.
Fr. f	7.–10. August [und 7.–10. September]
Fr. i	30.–31. Oktober
Fr. d	30. November [und 29.–31. Dezember]

Das sind 40 mehr oder weniger vollständig erhaltene Tage von insgesamt 365, also nur etwas über 10 %, aber genügend, um die exzeptionelle Bedeutung des Kalenders von Sikyon zu erkennen. Von den Namen sind 22 vollständig,

4 teilweise, 7 überhaupt nicht erhalten; 7 Tage haben keinen Namenseintrag.⁴²

Das Kalendarium ist wohl in einem Zug niedergeschrieben worden; jedenfalls ist den erhaltenen Fragmenten kein deutliches Anzeichen für eine sukzessive Beschriftung oder für Nachträge von anderer Hand zu entnehmen. Die Heiligen selbst sind meist, soweit bekannt, Märtyrer aus den bekannten großen Christenverfolgungen des 3. und 4. Jh. n. Chr. Nach den Buchstabenformen muss der Kalender in das 5. Jh. gehören⁴³ – ein gutes Jahrhundert war also Zeit für die Kanonisierung, die Aufstellung eines Heiligenregisters, die Auffüllung des gesamten Jahres mit regional und überregional bekannten und anerkannten Märtyrern. Wegen Andreas darf man auch die Nennung der anderen Apostel vermuten. Unklar ist, ob neben den Heiligen auch feste Daten aus dem Leben Jesu wie zum Beispiel die Geburt (25. Dez.)⁴⁴ aufgeschrieben worden sind.

Der ursprüngliche Anbringungsort der Steintafel ist unbekannt. Der Fundort der Fragmente – nahe eines paganen Tempels, wo sich auch Reste eines Mosaikfußbodens und ein Block mit einem eingemeißelten Kreuz fanden – deutet darauf hin, dass dieses Gebäude schon in früher Zeit in eine christliche Kirche umgewandelt worden war.⁴⁵ Auftraggeber, Anlass und Intention des Kalendariums könnten in einer Stifterinschrift oder in einer Überschrift gestanden haben, von der nichts erhalten ist. Wegen der Nennung des Quadratus und wegen der zahlreichen Abweichungen (bei Namen und bei Daten) von den mittelalterlichen *Synaxaria* der byzantinischen Ostkirche handelt es sich bei den Fragmenten aus Sikyon um eine sehr frühe lokale Variante. Bemerkenswert ist, dass eine scharfe Trennung zwischen Ost- und Westkirche noch nicht erfolgt ist. Afra, die Märtyrerin von Augsburg, oder Epimachos und Laurentius als Märtyrer von Rom sind natürlich stärker, im Falle der Afra sogar fast ausnahmslos mit der Westkirche verbunden.

Vielleicht wurde nicht ohne Bedacht die Form eines Steckkalenders gewählt und in einen christlichen Kontext transferiert. Für einen immerwährenden Kalender hätte die datumsmäßige Zusammenstellung der Memorientage genügt. Ein *Parapegma* aber kann mehr. Darf man bei dem Kalendarium von Sikyon vermuten, dass die Stecker zusätzlich durch Farben oder Beischriften

⁴² Der Kalender war also noch nicht vollständig ausgefüllt. Sieben Leerstellen bei 40 erhaltenen Einträgen würden bei 365 Tagen auf etwa 60 bis 65 fehlende Namen führen; was wiederum bedeutet, dass 300 Namen ihren Platz im Kalender hatten.

⁴³ Eine Identifizierung mit Zeitgenossen des 5. Jh., wie im Falle von Akakios und Theodoretos theoretisch möglich, ist daher von vornherein wenig wahrscheinlich.

⁴⁴ *Synax.* p. 343, 6 listet für den 25. Dezember keinen Heiligen auf, sondern nur τὸ μέγα μυστήριον der Christgeburt.

⁴⁵ BILIAS 2024, 277–278 mit Fundplan Fig. 10.

die beweglichen christlichen Feste: Ostern, Pfingsten usw., angezeigt haben? Das wäre in der Tat eine bemerkenswerte *interpretatio Christiana* des Prinzips der *Parapegmata*, wie es vor etwas mehr als einhundert Jahren durch den Fund der beiden oben erwähnten Steine aus Milet erstmals geklärt werden konnte.

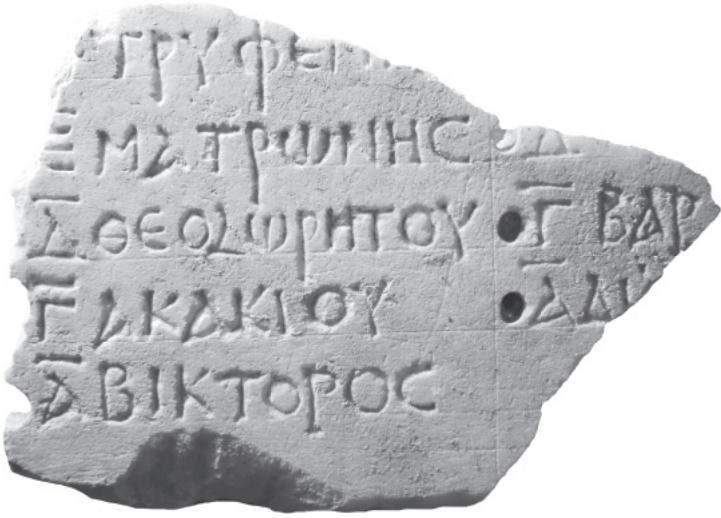


Fig. 36a: ICG 2884 Fragment h, Sikyon, Peloponnes, Griechenland, 5. Jh. n. Chr.
(Photo: K. Bilias; BBAW, Archiv der Inscriptiones Graecae)

12. Maria auf Ikaria. Ein christliches Pseudo-Orakel auf dem Weg durch die Ägäis

Klaus Hallof

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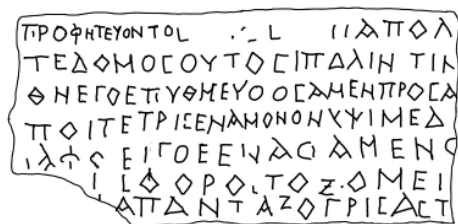


Fig. 37: ICG 4828, Ikaria, Ägäis, Griechenland, 5.–6. Jh. n. Chr. (Photo: A. P. Matthaiou; BBAW, Archiv der Inscriptiones Graecae; Zeichnung: Klaus Hallof)

- προφητεύοντος – – – – Ἀπολ[λ– – –]ς τινάς· τίνος ἔσ-
 τε δόμος οὗτος ἰ πάλιν τίν[– – – – – ἔ]στε; χρησμός ἐδό-
 θη· ἐγὼ <δ>ἐ πυθμεύο, ὅσα μὲν πρὸς ἀ[ρετὴν κα]ὶ κόσμον<ν> ὥρῳρεν
 ποῖτε, τρισένα μόνον ὑψιμέδ[οντα Θεό]ν, οὗ λόγος
 5 ἄφ[θ]ειτο<ς> ἐν ἀδαῇ ἐν[κυος] ἔστε, ὅσπερ γὰρ
 [πυ]ριφόρο(ν) τόξο(ν) μέσ[ον δι]αδραμῇ κόσ-
 [μο]ν ἅπαντα, ζογρίσας π[ροσά]ξι δῶρον τῷ πατρί·
 αὐτῆς ἔστε δόμος· Μαρία δὲ τοῦν]ομα αὐτῆς.

Orthographisches: ω ~ ο: ἐγὼ statt ἐγὼ, ὅσπερ = ὥσπερ, ὥρῳρεν = ὄρῳρεν, πυθμεύο = πυθμεύω, δῶρον = δῶρον, τῷ = τῷ, ζογρίσας = ζωγρήσας; ε ~ αι: ἔστε = ἔσται; ι ~ η, ει: ἰ = ἦ, ἄφθειτος = ἄφθιτος, προσάξι = προσάξει, ποῖτε = ποιεῖτε, διαδραμῇ = διαδραμεῖ. – Eine weitere Textvariante steckt vielleicht in Z. 3, wo κόσμον überliefert ist, was Matthaiou nach dem Text der christlichen Autoren (s. u.) emendiert (ἀ[ρετὴν κα]ὶ κόσμον<ν>), Feissel dagegen mit anderer Ergänzung (ἀ[ρετὴ]ν κόσμου) beibehält. Unterstrichen sind die Buchstaben auf dem heute verlorenen, nur durch alte Abkatsche und Abschriften bekannten linken Teils der Platte.

Als Apollon – – eine Weissagung machte – – – (auf die Frage): „Wessen wird dieses Haus sein und wiederum – – – wird es sein?“, wurde (ihnen) das Orakel gegeben: „Ich aber sage voraus – alles was der Tugend und dem Schmuck ziemt, das tut! – den dreieinigen einzigen Gott in der Höhe, dessen unverfälschtes Wort in einer reinen (Jungfrau) schwanger sein wird; (das) wird wie ein feuriger Pfeil mitten durch die ganze Welt laufen und, sie unterwerfend, zum Geschenk darbringen dem Vater. Ihr wird das Haus sein. Ihr Name aber ist: Maria.“

1. Entdeckungsgeschichte

Im Jahre 1895 bereiste der bayerische Gymnasiallehrer Ludwig Büchner (1858–1927) im Auftrag der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften die Dodekanes, um auf den Inseln Samos, Leros, Patmos und Ikaria die antiken Inschriften aufzunehmen. Sein Notizbuch, mit gewissen bajuwarischem Humor als „Duodez-Skizzenbuch“ bezeichnet, enthält unter dem Datum Okt(ober) 1895 und der Nummer 149 die Zeichnung einer spätantiken Inschrift im Besitz des Aristoteles Pamphiles, Einwohner im kleinen Dorf Agios Kirykos auf der Insel Ikaria. Die Abschrift ist ziemlich ungenügend, aber eins hat Büchner für die Nachwelt getan: er hat einen Papierabdruck, einen Abklatsch angefertigt, und der ist jetzt das einzige Zeugnis und steht *loco originalis*. Denn die Platte mit der linken Hälfte der Inschrift ist, nachdem der Münchener Epigraphiker Albert Rehm (1871–1949) sie im Jahre 1924 nochmals untersucht hat, verlorengegangen.

Dafür haben die griechischen Epigraphiker Angelos P. Matthaiou und Georgios K. Papadopoulos, als sie einhundert Jahre später im Auftrag der nunmehr Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in den Jahren 1995 bis 2002 mehrfach auf der Suche nach Inschriften die Insel Ikaria aufsuchten, im Museum von Kampos¹ die damals noch unedierte rechte Hälfte gefunden. Sie erkannten außerdem richtig, dass beide Stücke so miteinander verbunden werden können, dass zwischen ihnen jeweils nur 4–7 Buchstaben fehlen.² Diese glückliche Verbindung hat es schließlich Denis Feissel (Paris) erlaubt, die Inschrift als ein aus der literarischen Überlieferung bekanntes Orakel zu identifizieren. Damit war es möglich, den Text auch dort wiederzugewinnen, wo die Buchstaben durch Verwitterung mehrdeutig geworden oder nahezu ganz verloschen sind. Die Erstedition im Corpus³ hat, wie man sieht, eine mehr als hundertjährige Geschichte.

¹ In der Nähe des antiken Ortes Oine (Oinoë).

² Bei dieser Gelegenheit stellte sich heraus, dass auch Büchner bei einem späteren Besuch der Insel im Jahre 1900 die rechte Hälfte gesehen und abgeschrieben hat. Nur hat er diesmal keinen Abklatsch genommen, der die Zusammenfügung der beiden Fragmente erlaubt hätte.

³ IG XII 6,2,1265 mit Foto des rechten Teils Tab. LVIII (SEG 53,904; vgl. D. FEISSEL, *BE* 2004, 520). Paralleledition durch MATTHAIΟΥ und PAPADOPOULOS, *Ἐπιγραφές Ἰκαρίας* (Athen 2003) 61–65 mit Foto. – Die Inschrift wurde erneut behandelt von DELIGIANNAKIS 2015 (dazu D. FEISSEL, *BE* 2016, 590).

2. Die literarische Überlieferung

Was auf diese Weise gewonnen wurde, ist ein veritables Fake. Es gibt sich als ein Orakel des griechischen Gottes Apollon, das das Erscheinen der Gottesmutter Maria prophezeit. Diese abgefahrene Geschichte wurde offenbar gern geglaubt, mehrfach kolportiert, erweitert und verschieden verortet. Sie steht in einer Sammlung von Beispielen, die beweisen sollten, dass schon vor Christi Geburt die Weisheit des einen Gottes sich den Heiden geoffenbart habe und dass vor allem in Orakelsprüchen Elemente des christlichen Glaubens zu finden seien, wenn man nur richtig sucht. Derartige Sammlungen nannten sich *θεοσοφίαι*, „Gottesweisheiten“.⁴ Sie sind uns nur in Exzerpten überliefert, das umfangreichste in einer Tübinger Handschrift.⁵ Dankenswerter Weise gibt der Exzerpist ziemlich genau an, was die Absicht seiner Vorlage war, nämlich zu zeigen, dass auch die Weisheit der Griechen keine andere Herkunft hat als die unsterbliche göttliche Weisheit, und zu beweisen, dass *θεολογίαι* (Orakelsprüche) mit der Heiligen Schrift durchaus übereinstimmen. Die Vorlage nennt zudem den Kaiser Zenon (474–491) und erwartet das Weltende im 500. Jahr nach der Menschwerdung Christi, was sie auf das Ende des 5. Jh. datiert. Das Exzerpt wiederum ist ein späteres Produkt wohl des beginnenden 7. Jhs.

Unser Orakel steht am Ende der Sammlung (§§ 53–54). Üblicherweise sollte es in Hexametern gefasst sein, wie die meisten antiken Orakel und entsprechend auch die anderen Orakel der *Theosophia Tubingensis*. Dieses ist es nicht. Eingeleitet wird es durch einen Text, der es chronologisch und geographisch verortet:

(53) In der Zeit des Kaisers Leon (457–474) sollte der alte Götzentempel der Stadt Kyzikos durch die Bürger zu einem Gebetshaus unserer hochberühmten Herrin und Gottesmutter umgestaltet werden. Dabei wurde an der Seite des Tempels ein Orakel gefunden, das auf einem großen Stein eigemeißelt war. Dasselbe wurde auch in Athen gefunden, am linken Teil des Tempels zum Tor hin, genau dem anderen gleich. Als die Bürger Apollon wie folgt befragt hatten: „Weissage uns, Prophet, Titan, Phoibos Apollon, wessen wird das Haus hier sein?“ beschied dieser folgendes:

(54) „Was der Tugend und dem Schmuck ziemt, das tut. Ich aber verkünde den dreieinen Gott in der Höhe, dessen unverfälschtes Wort in einer reinen Jungfrau schwanger wird; das wird wie ein feuriger Pfeil mitten durch die ganze Welt laufen und, sie unterwerfend, sie dem Vater zum Geschenk darbringen. Ihr wird das Haus hier sein, ihr Name aber ist: Maria.“

In dieser Fassung gibt es bereits eine Athener und eine Kyzikener Tradition der Weissagung, die der Verfasser recht plakativ durch die Annahme zweier

⁴ K. V. FRITZ, „Theosophia“, *RE V A 2* (1934) 2248–2253.

⁵ Aus dem Jahre 1580. Vgl. ERBSE 1941; ders., *Theosophia Tybingensis* (Leipzig 1996).

identischer Exemplare der Inschrift vereinigt hat. Es fehlt der mythologische Kontext, wie ihn spätere Autoren beibringen.

Etwa siebenzig Jahre früher hatte bereits Theodoret, Bischof von Ankara (gestorben nach 438), von der Geschichte Gebrauch gemacht. In einer Predigt über die heilige Gottesmutter Maria und die heilige Christgeburt,⁶ die in einer Pariser Handschrift des 10. Jhs. erhalten ist (cod. Paris graec. 1171, fol. 96–107), sucht er nachzuweisen, dass von der göttlichen Mutterschaft Marias schon bei den Propheten, bei heidnischen Orakeln und bei Vergil die Rede war. „Beachte, mein Lieber,“ schreibt er (§ 14), „dass auch in Griechenland und beim Barbaren die Wahrheit unseres Glaubens vorhergesagt ward zum Verderb aller, die ihn verachten. Man sagt, dass einst, als eine schwere Pest Griechenland heimsuchte und das Land verdarb, die Einwohner mit reichen Gebeten und Opfern ihre falschen Götter zu besänftigen suchten.“ Als das erfolglos blieb, habe man „den nicht unweisen Entschluss“ gefasst, sich an den ἄγνωστος θεός, den „unbekannten Gott“ zu wenden⁷. „Was haben sie also gemacht? Sie haben sich an den Gott gewandt, den sie zuvor vergebens mit Opfern geehrt hatten, um ein Orakel über die Errichtung eines Altars für den Unbekannten Gott zu erhalten. So sind sie, die Athener, immer begierig, etwas Neues zu sagen oder zu hören. Der Altar ist der in der Apostelgeschichte genannte. Die Frage lautete wie folgt: ‚Weissage uns, Prophet, Titan, Phoibos Apollon, wessen wird das Haus hier sein?‘ Der aber, durch eine geheime Macht dazu getrieben, vermochte nicht zu schweigen, und hat in seinem Orakel treulich das wiedergegeben, was er von den Propheten der Wahrheit gehört hatte, nämlich das Folgende: [es folgt das Orakel, wie oben]. Das aber, das steht bei den Athenern eingeschlagen auf Marmortafeln zu unvergesslicher Erinnerung.“ Und damit geht die Predigt von den Athenern weiter zu Vergil, dem „Lehrer der Römer“.

Wie leicht zu erkennen, wird in der Predigt das Orakel mit der berühmten Pesterzählung bei Thukydides einerseits, der ebenso bekannten Rede des Apostels Paulus auf dem Areopag (Apg 17,23) andererseits ziemlich ruppig zusammengeklöppelt. Das wäre die Athener Tradition der Geschichte,⁸ und die bekommt eine noch weitere Verbreitung in einer Sammlung betitelt: προφητεῖαι τῶν ἑπτὰ σοφῶν, „Prophetien der Sieben Weisen“, wo sie einem dieser sagenhaften Philosophen der Antike in den Mund gelegt wird.⁹ In

⁶ M. JUGIE, „Homélie Mariales Byzantines. Textes grecs éditée et traduits en Latin“, in: PO 19 (Paris 1926) 318–335 (nur die lateinische Übersetzung in PG 77, 1418–1432).

⁷ Vgl. J. BÖRSTINGHAUS, „Unbekannte Götter“, in: P. PILHOFER, *Die frühen Christen und ihre Welt*. Greifswalder Aufsätze 1996–2001 (Tübingen 2002) 23–43.

⁸ Vgl. C. MANGO, „The Conversion of the Parthenon into a Church: The Tübingen Theosophy“, *DCAH* 18 (1995) 201–203.

⁹ ERBSE 1941, 61–102; der rekonstruierte Text 213 f.

einer älteren Fassung geht die erste Frage an Apollon und dieser antwortet. In einer wiederum erweiterten Fassung, die unter anderem in einer dem Bischof Athanasius von Alexandria (gest. 373) zugeschriebenen Abhandlung über den Athener Tempel¹⁰ erhalten ist, wird dieser Apollon selbst zu einem „gottbewegten Weisen“, der in Athen einen Tempel mit Altar für den „Unbekannten Gott“ gründet und dann von den Sieben die bekannte Frage vorgelegt bekommt, „Prophezeie uns doch, was ist und wessen ist dieses Gebäude da vor dir?“¹¹ Es folgt die bekannte Antwort, und daran schließen sich die dezidiert christlichen Interpretationen der übrigen Weisen an.¹² Man sieht das Bemühen, möglichst viele Motive aus den verschiedenen Rahmengeschichten miteinander zu verknüpfen, auch unter Inkaufnahme recht dürftiger oder gar unlogischer Übergänge.

Im Zusammenhang mit der kyzikenischen Tradition des Orakels stellt die Weltchronik (*Chronographia*) des Johannes Malalas (6. Jh.) eine erstaunliche historische Dimension her, indem er es, für einen Chronisten in der Tat sehr verlockend, mit einem Ereignis der Vorgeschichte (der Argonautenfahrt) und einem solchen der Zeitgeschichte verknüpft:¹³

Zu dieser Zeit ... lebten auch Herakles und die Argonauten, ... die bei der Fahrt durch den Hellespont von Kyzikos, dem König des Hellespont, mit Krieg überzogen wurden. Es kam zu einer Seeschlacht, in der sie den König Kyzikos töteten. Und als sie nachts (aus dem Hellespont) hinausgesegelt waren, eroberten sie Kyzikos, die wichtigste Stadt des hellespontischen Gebietes. Von den Einwohnern und den führenden Männern der Stadt unterrichtet, dass es Kyzikos selbst war, den sie getötet hatten, erfasste sie höchste Schmerz, weil er eigentlich mit ihnen verwandt war und sein Geschlecht aus ihrer Gegend stammte. Sie baten um Vergebung für diese doppelte Unkenntnis, und um ihre Schuld zu sühnen, gründeten sie nach ihrem Sieg einen Tempel in der Stadt Kyzikos. Die Argonauten gingen also zu dem Orakel an den Pythischen Quellen, vollzogen die Opfer und befragten Apollon mit den Worten: „Weissage uns, Prophet, Titan, Phoibos Apollon, wessen wird das Haus hier sein, und was wird es sein?“ Und von der Pythia wurde ihnen das folgende Orakel gegeben: [*hier folgt der bekannte Text*]. Und die Heroen schrieben das Orakel auf einen Stein bzw. auf Marmor mit ehernen Buchstaben, setzten diesen in den oberen Rahmen der Tür des Tempels ein und nannten diesen das Haus der Göttermutter Rhea. Dieses Gebäude wurde nach sehr langer Zeit, unter Kaiser Zeno, eine Kirche der heiligen Gottesmutter Maria.

¹⁰ Ps.-Athanasius, *Comm. templ. Ath.* (PG 28, 1427A–1432A unter *spuria*); vgl. ERBSE 1941, 65.

¹¹ τίς ἐστι τίνας τε εἴη μετὰ σὲ δόμος οὗτος.

¹² Z. B. bemerken Thukydides bzw. Menander: „Scheue Gott und erkenne (ihn). Suche nicht, wer (er) ist und wie er ist. Ob er ist, ob er nicht ist, als Seienden scheue und erkenne ihn. Es frevelt, wer Gott mit dem Verstand begreifen will.“

¹³ Io. Mal. *Chron.* 6.77–78 (PG 97, 157C–160A).

Und dieselbe Geschichte gibt es in kürzerer Fassung des Orakels und mit etwas anderen Akzenten in einem dem Geschichtsschreiber Johannes von Antiochia (7. Jh.) zugeschriebenen Fragment:¹⁴

In derselben Zeit, in der der Flötenbläser Marsyas lebte, geschahen auch die Taten von Iason und den Argonauten, die in Kyzikos anlandeten und nach ihrer gastlichen Aufnahme aus Unkenntnis handgemein wurden mit dem König Kyzikos und ihn töteten. Voller Trauer erbauten sie einen Tempel zu seinem Gedächtnis, und von da aus gingen sie zu den sogenannten Pythischen Quellen, opferten und befragten Apollon, wessen das Heiligtum sein soll, das sie dort errichtet hatten. Und es ward ihnen ein Orakel folgenden Inhalts zuteil: ‚Eine reine Jungfrau wird schwanger werden. Der aus ihr hervorgeht, wird die ganze Welt unterwerfen und dem Vater zum Geschenk darbringen. Ihr wird dieser Tempel sein. Ihr Name aber ist: Maria.‘ Die Argonauten aber glaubten, dass von Rhea die Rede war, und nannten ihn (Tempel) der Rhea. Dieses Gebäude wurde unter Kaiser Zeno zur Kirche unserer Herrin und Gottesmutter Maria.

Hinter diesen einzelnen und miteinander kombinierten Einkleidungen, denen man noch ein späteres Zitat des Orakels bei dem Geschichtsschreiber des 11. Jhs. Georgios Kedrenos hinzufügen könnte,¹⁵ ist das Orakel selbst (sieht man von der Verkürzung bei Johannes von Antiochia ab) relativ einheitlich überliefert:

Frage:

προφήτευσον ἡμῖν προφήτα, Τῖτὰν Φοῖβε Ἀπολλων, τίνος ἂν εἴῃ δόμος οὗτος;
Varianten: Τῖτὰν Φοῖβε ~ Φοῖβε Τῖτὰν || τίνος ἂν εἴῃ ~ τί ἔσται <ῃ> τίνος ἔσται δ.
οὗτος

Antwort:

ὅσα μὲν πρὸς ἀρετὴν καὶ κόσμον ὀρωρεν, ποιεῖτε· ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐφετμεύω τρὶς ἓνα ὑψιμέδοντα Θεόν, οὗ λόγος ἀφθιτος ἐν ἀδαεῖ κόρη ἔγκυμος ἔσται, ὥσπερ τόξον πυρφόρον μέσον διαδραμὼν ἅπαντα κόσμος ζωγρήσας, Πατρὶ προσάξει δῶρον· οὗτος ἔσται δόμος· Μαρία δὲ τοῦνομα αὐτῆς.

Varianten: ἐγὼ γὰρ ~ ἐγὼ δὲ || ἐφετμεύω τρὶς ~ ἐφετμέω τρεῖν ~ ἐπεθνεύω τρὶς || ἀδαεῖ ~ ἀδαῖ || ἔγκυος ~ ἔγκυμος

3. Das Orakel auf Stein

Seit der Veröffentlichung des Corpus der Inschriften von Samos und Ikaria im Jahre 2003 ist klar, dass es tatsächlich auch eine epigraphische Tradition

¹⁴ Io. Ant. Fr. 15 (FGrHist 4 p. 548), ein Exzerpt in cod. Paris. gr. 1630. Neue Fragmentensammlungen von S. MARIEV, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta quae supersunt* (Berlin / New York 2008); und U. ROBERTO, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta ex Historia Chronica* (Berlin 2005).

¹⁵ PG 121, 244A.

dieses Orakels gegeben hat. Das kommt scheinbar nicht überraschend, da die Authentizität der Wahrsagung ja teilweise dezidiert mit einer Inschrift begründet wurde, die man hat sehen können. Aber spätestens mit dem Hinweis des Malalas, dass dies ein Original aus der Zeit der Argonauten sei, verrät sich die Fälschung. Und trotzdem hat es der Text auf Stein geschafft. Dass es sich dabei um nichts Archaisches handelt, sondern um ein zeitgenössisches Produkt (nach den Buchstabenformen aus dem 5. oder 6. Jh. n. Chr.), war zu erwarten. Überraschend ist vor allem der Fundort der Inschrift: nicht Athen und auch nicht Kyzikos, sondern die kleine Insel Ikaria¹⁶ westlich von Samos, die weder ein geschichtlicher noch ein archäologischer Hotspot ist. Auch die epigraphische Ausbeute ist mit ca. 70 Texten aus einem Jahrtausend recht mager. Aber auffallend ist die große Zahl von ungewöhnlich formulierten christlichen Inschriften aus der Umgebung der Kirche der Heiligen Irini im heutigen Dorf Kambos, die im 9./10. Jh. auf den Fundamenten einer frühchristlichen Basilika erbaut wurde (IG XII 6,2,1263–1272). Die meisten sind auf 16–18 cm dicken Platten aus weißem Marmor geschrieben; das Orakel auf einer etwas dünneren Platte (7,5 cm stark), die zusätzlich auf der Oberseite eine weitere zweizeilige Inschrift aufweist.¹⁷

Die Aufgabe, den Text des Orakels nach den Handschriften mit den Resten der Inschrift in Übereinstimmung zu bringen, erweist sich freilich als doch nicht so glatt durchführbar wie gedacht. Selbst wenn man die der zeitgenössischen Orthographie geschuldeten Formen (s. o.) als unerheblich beiseitelässt, bleiben drei größere Differenzen:

1. Nicht nur stehen die Worte ἐγὼ δὲ πυθμεύω an der falschen Stelle, sondern wurde das seltene Wort ἐφετμεύω (von: ἐφετμή, die [von den Göttern] ausgesandte Mahnung, Weisung) durch das noch seltenere πυθμεύω (von: πυθμήν, Grund, Boden; etwa „als letzten Grund sehen“) ersetzt.

2. Die Rahmengeschichte wird zu einem Halbsatz verkürzt (προφητεύοντος ... Ἀπόλλωνος „als Apollon der Verkünder von Orakeln war“), der aber, weil ohne Parallele, nicht sicher ergänzt werden kann.¹⁸

3. Die Frage selbst ist zweigliedrig geworden. An τίνοος ἔσται δόμος οὗτος, „wessen ist dieses Haus hier“, wird mit ἢ πάλιν, „oder wiederum,

¹⁶ Ikaria-Literatur: J. MELAS, *Ἱστορία τῆς νήσου Ἰκαρίας*, 2 Bde. (1955–1957); A. J. PAPA-LAS, *Ancient Icaria* (Wauconda 1992) (SEG 42,779). Die historischen Zeugnisse sind IG XII 6,2, pp. 572 f., 578 f., 601–604 gesammelt; die Inschriften IG XII 6,1217–1292.

¹⁷ Der Anfang dieser Inschrift müsste auf der Oberseite des heute verlorenen linken Fragments gestanden haben. Davon berichten aber Büchner und Rehm nichts. Möglicherweise war die obere Kante zu stark bestoßen gewesen, oder der Stein war vermauert.

¹⁸ Vielleicht etwas wie: προφητεύοντος [Φοίβου] Ἀπόλλωνος πρός τινας, „als Phoebus Apollon eine Weissagung machte gewissen (Leuten auf die Frage),“ usw.

oder umgekehrt“ eine zweite Frage angeschlossen,¹⁹ die durch den Bruch des Steines zerstört ist.

In dieser entmantelten Form wurde das Orakel universell dort einsetzbar, wo die Umwandlung eines antiken Tempels zu einem christlichen Gotteshaus manifest und einer historischen Deutung würdig war. Dies ist offenbar der Fall bei dem alten Tempel der Artemis Tauropolis auf Ikaria gewesen, der in frühchristlicher Zeit zu einer großen, der Gottesmutter Maria geweihten Basilika umgebaut wurde, auf deren Trümmer man später die mittelalterliche Kirche der Agia Irini errichtete, die voller Spolien steckt.²⁰

Auf Ikaria freilich erwartete das Orakel, wie bereits bemerkt, noch eine Erweiterung. Die Platten mit dem Text müssen so aufgestellt gewesen sein, dass auch die schmale Oberseite sichtbar war. Auf diese schrieb man ungefähr zeitgleich eine zweizeilige Inschrift, von der nur der Schluss auf der rechten Platte erhalten ist.

-----σι καὶ μὰ τὸν ἀρχάγγελον καὶ τ--
-----ἀγαθὴ ἡμὸν βασιλὶς καὶ δέσποινα.

Auch hier ist Maria präsent, Z. 2 in Anlehnung an Formeln der Marienverehrung als „unsere gute Königin und Herrscherin“ gepriesen. Die Anrufung Z. 1 „-- -- und bei dem Erzengel und --“ ist dagegen singulär.

¹⁹ Bei Malalas wird als zweite Frage εἰ τί δὲ ἔσται; „oder was wird [das Haus] sein?“ gestellt. Das passt aber nicht zu dem, was die Inschrift Z. 2 hat: τίν[---]στε. Vielleicht ist wegen πάλιν an eine einfache Wiederholung zu denken: ἢ πάλιν τίν[ος οὗτος ἐ]στε.

²⁰ Vgl. das Foto bei DELIGIANNAKIS 2015, 265 Abb. 2.

13. The Clerical Career of the Presbyter Daniel at Philippi

Julien Ogereau

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*Fig. 38: ICG 3389, Philippi, Macedonia, Greece, 5th–6th c. AD (photo: P. ASIMAKOPOULOU-ATZAKA, *Σύνταγμα των Παλαιοχριστιανικών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων της Ελλάδος*, vol. 3, *Μακεδονία-Θράκη*, Pt. 2, *Τα ψηφιδωτά δάπεδα της Μακεδονίας και της Θράκης (εκτός Θεσσαλονίκης)* (Thessaloniki 2017) 286–8 (no. I, 1.34), pl. 171)*

- + Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ βασιλέ-
 ως ἡ πόλις ἐμὲ ἠνέγκατο : ἥτις ἀπεπέμ-
 ψατο ἐν τῇ Φιλίππου : τοῦ τῶν Μα-
 κεδόνων : ἥς ἡ προκαθημένη πανκῆ-
 5 ρυκτος ἐκλήσ(ια) καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀποστολικοῖς
 δεσμ(οῖς) ἐν Χ(ριστ)ῷ καυχωμένη : ἐν τοῖς κόλ-
 ποις : δεξαμένη με : + : διὰ τε θίων δογμάτων
 καὶ πατρικῶν αὐτῆς συγκροτήσεων
 ὁρατῶς καὶ νοητῶς γνησίως ἀνε-
 10 θρέψατο : ὧν : Ἰάκωβος μὲν : ὁ ἀοίδημος
 ἐν μνήμαις : τῇ τῶν ἀναγνωστῶν αὐ-
 τῆς χώρας μὲ ἐνκατέταξεν : + : Δημ(ή)τριος δὲ
 ὁ διὰ βίου σώφρωνος Θ(εο)ν καὶ βασιλέας : θε-
 ραπεύσας · ἐν τῷ τῶν διακόνων συλ-
 15 λόγῳ ἐπανήγαγεν : + : ὁ δὲ τούτων : δι-
 ἄδοχος : καὶ τῶν εὐαγγελικῶν παραγ-
 γελμάτων · βέβαιος φύλαξ : Βισάλτιος
 + ὁ ἐκ Θ(εο)ῦ · δοθεὶς ἡμεῖν ποιμὴν : τῆς τε πατρί-
 δος : καὶ τῆς πόλεω[ς θερ]μὸς προστάτης
 20 καὶ κηδεμὼν : ἐν [τῇ τῶν πρ]εσβυτέρων
 καθέδρῳ ἰδρύ[σατο : ὅ¹]ν ὄνομα δέ μοι
 Δανιήλ : ὅς : τό[δε καλὸν σῆ]μα ζῶν : *hedera*
 ἐαυτῷ κατεσκ[εύασα] καὶ τῇ ἐμῇ γνησίᾳ
 συμβίῳ · καὶ ἐν Χ(ριστ)ῷ ἀδελφῇ *hedera*
 25 Ἀσπιλίᾳ · τῇ σεμνοτάτῃ + *hedera*

¹ See A. Chaniotis's restoration in SEG 67.405. C. Bakirtzis (in ASIMAKOPOULOU-ATZAKA's edition) proposes ἰδρυ[σάμενον] but, as P. PASCHIDIS (BE 2019, no. 285) rightly points out, an active verb would be preferable (cf. ἀνε||θρέψατο ll. 9–10, ἐνκατέταξεν l. 12, and ἐπανήγαγεν l. 15).

The city of Emperor Constantine
 brought me forth (and) sent me away
 to the (city) of Philip, (the king) of the Macedonians,
 whose presiding church is renowned everywhere
 and proud of her apostolic bonds in Christ.
 Receiving me in her bosom,
 she brought (me) up nobly through divine ordinances
 and her ancestral support in a visible and intellectual way.
 The notoriously remembered Iakobos
 appointed me among the *lectores* ("readers"),
 while Demetrios, who was prudent throughout his life
 in serving God and emperors,
 led me into the assembly of deacons.
 And their successor and firm guardian
 of evangelical precepts, Bisaltios,
 our God-given shepherd and fervent(?) patron
 and protector of our fatherland and city
 (seated me?) in the chair of presbyters.
 My name is Daniel, who
 prepared this (fine?) tomb in my lifetime for myself and my lawful
 wife and sister in Christ,
 the reverent Aspilía.

Place of discovery: found in a cemeterial church or chapel located in the eastern necropolis of Philippi, in the village of Krinides, some twenty meters southeast of the *extra muros* basilica.² Now displayed at the archaeological museum of Philippi.

Description: mid- to late fifth-century, or early sixth-century,³ colourful funerary mosaic inscription laid over the burial chamber of a presbyter named Daniel (and of his reverent wife Aspilía). The inscription measures 2.86 m long by 2.04 m and features black letters over a white background enclosed between two Greek crosses at the beginning and the end.⁴ At the bottom, two birds stand on either side of what looks like a vase containing a large round fruit.

² On the archaeological context, see ASIMAKOPOULOU-ATZAKA 2017, 113–4, 286 (note 1409), 288; P. PILHOFER, *Philippi, vol. 1: Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* (Tübingen 1995) 26. The exact floor plan of the basilica cannot be determined based on the available archaeological data. Only the marble-floored presbyterium and the eastern part could be excavated, as the western part lies underneath a modern road and a public square.

³ ASIMAKOPOULOU-ATZAKA (2017, 288) dates the building to the mid- or to the second half of 5th c. AD, and the mosaic to the mid-6th c. AD. If the Demetrios mentioned l. 12 is indeed the same bishop as that known by Procopius in the early 530s AD (see below), then Daniel would have officiated in the first half of the sixth century.

⁴ ASIMAKOPOULOU-ATZAKA 2017, 287 (with note 1411).

This inscription is exceptional in several respects and is rich in information about the history of the Philippian church in late antiquity.⁵ Firstly, it is extremely well preserved, and thus mostly intelligible, except between lines 19 and 23 where a few missing letters leave a slight ambiguity over a few words (i. e., [θερ]μός l. 19, and ἰδρυ[– –]ν l. 21). Secondly, it is the second Christian funerary mosaic of this kind discovered at Philippi,⁶ and one of the most imposing Christian funerary monuments ever unearthed in the region.⁷

Thirdly, it provides a detailed record of the deceased's *cursus clericalis* ("clerical career") in the church of Philippi, which, in the sixth century, still took pride in its "apostolic ties in Christ" (ἐκκλησία ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀποστολικοῖς | δεσμοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ καυχωμένη, ll. 5–6). Thereby, it offers some unusual insight into clerics' progression through the various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy under the supervision of the bishops.

Fourthly, it gives us additional evidence about the structure and composition of the church at Philippi. Besides the presbyter Daniel himself, it names at least two bishops that were hitherto unknown, thereby supplementing the list of already identified bishops,⁸ and testifies to the presence of several (conterminous) readers (χώρα τῶν ἀναγνωστῶν, ll. 11–12)

⁵ Editions: ASIMAKOPOULOU-ATZAKA 2017, 286–8 (no. I, 1.34), with pls. 170–1 (text by C. Bakirtzis); SEG 67.405. Cf. BE 2019, no. 285; OGEREAU 2024, 124–5.

⁶ Another funerary mosaic for either a bishop or a presbyter named Andrew was found in the nave of a basilica located 300 metres south of the basilica *extra muros*, in the eastern necropolis. See ICG 3290 (4th–5th c. AD): Ἀνδρέαν ὡς νέκυν οὐ[?]τος ἔχει τάφος· ἀλλὰ κ[?] αὐπτεῖν κί[?]νου ἔχεφροσ[?]νῃν οὐδὲ χρ[?]όνος δύναται[?]ται· πάντα γὰρ ||¹⁰ ἐξετέλεσεν ἐ[?]πάζια μύστιδος ἀρχῆς τερπόμενος θεσμοῖς· αἱ [?]π' εὐσεβί[?]ης τοῦνεκεν | ὅς μιν ἔτευξε | καὶ ἔλαβεν οὐ[?]ρανίων γὰρ ἄξι[?]ος ἦν σκηπτ[?]²⁰ρῶν ἐγγυθι να[?]ιεταίν. "This tomb contains the deceased Andrew, whose prudence time cannot conceal. For he has fulfilled everything (in a manner) worthy of (his) authority as a mystagogue, always delighting in the divine ordinances piously. Therefore, he who created him also took (him), for he was worthy of dwelling near the heavenly scepters." The allusion to Andrew's "mystagogical authority" (μύστιδος ἀρχῆς, ll. 11–12) and to his pious execution of all his duties (τερπόμενος θεσμοῖς· αἱ [?]π' εὐσεβίς, ll. 12–15) suggests that he was a prominent cleric, possibly a bishop, who was in charge of initiating young catechumens and/or performing sacraments. Cf. C. PENNAS, "Early Christian Burials at Philippi", *ByzF* 21 (1995) 223–7 (pl. XI.19); ASIMAKOPOULOU-ATZAKA 2017, 110–3, 283–6 (no. I, 1.33), with pls. 156–166; OGEREAU 2024, 124–5.

⁷ By comparison, the funerary mosaic of the above-mentioned Andrew (ICG 3290; 4th–5th c. AD; cf. note 6) measures 1.80 × 0.80 m, the marble slab of the tribune Andrew that was placed over tomb Δ in the basilica *extra muros* measures 2.00 × 1.09 m (ICG 3268; 5th c. AD), and the marble plate of the presbyters Faustinus and Donatos found over tomb B in the basilica *extra muros* measures 1.40 × 1.13 m (ICG 3256; mid-4th c. AD). See also the bilingual epitaph for the lector ("reader") Euphrosynos buried in an episcopal(?) residence in the fortified settlement (*quadriburgium*) discovered at Louloudies Kitros, which is made of two plates measuring, respectively, 1.04 × 0.76 m (A) and 1.08 × 0.75 m (B) (ICG 3696; 5th c. AD).

⁸ The best attempt at reconstructing a chronology of the bishops of Philippi remains that of LEMERLE (1945, 268–80), who improved the list given by S. VAILHÉ in "Les évêques

and of an assembly of deacons (σύλλογος τῶν διακόνων, ll. 14–15). While this is hardly surprising given the size of the local Christian community with its seven or eight churches (at least)⁹ – and indeed all of these offices are attested epigraphically at Philippi and throughout Macedonia¹⁰ – it is particularly unusual to have all four mentioned in a single epitaph.

Originating from the “city of Emperor Constantine” (Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ βασιλέως ἢ πόλις, ll. 1–2), that is Constantinople, the young(?) Daniel was sent to that of “Philip, (the king) of the Macedonians” (ἐν τῇ Φιλίππου: τοῦ τῶν Μακεδόνων, ll. 3–4), that is Philippi, which is here no longer acknowledged as a Roman colony founded in 42 BC (and reinstated as an Augustan colony in 30 BC), but commemorated as a Greek city founded by king Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great’s father.¹¹ The age at which Daniel was commissioned to serve the Philippians is not given, but one suspects he might have been fairly young since, he explains in the following lines, the church “received him in her bosom” (κόλποις: δεξαμένη με, ll. 6–7) and “brought him up through the divine ordinances” (διὰ τε θίων δογμάτων ... ἀνε||θρέψατο, ll. 7–10). What is further noteworthy here is the claim that Daniel was educated nobly or genuinely (γενήσιως, l. 9) through the church’s “patriarchal (or ancestral) support” (διὰ ... πατρικῶν αὐτῆς συγκροτήσεων, l. 8), which evokes the teachings of the Church Fathers, in “a visible and intellectual way” (ὁρατῶς καὶ νοητῶς, l. 9). In other words, the Philippian church took care both of his physical needs and sustenance (ὁρατῶς) and developed his intellectual faculties (νοητῶς), so that he may become one of her ministers.

As a result of his spiritual training and theological education, Daniel was appointed among the readers (τῇ τῶν ἀναγνωστῶν αὐτῆς χώρᾳ μὲ

de Philippes”, *Échos d’Orient* 3.5 (1900) 262–72. See also F. PAPAZOGLU, *Les villes de Macédoine à l’époque romaine* (Athens 1988) 413.

⁹ For overviews of the Christian monuments of Philippi, see K. HATTERSLEY-SMITH, *Byzantine Public Architecture between the Fourth and Early Eleventh Centuries AD, with special Reference to the Towns of Byzantine Macedonia* (Thessaloniki 1996) 67–87; J.-P. SODINI, “L’architecture religieuse de Philippes, entre Rome, Thessalonique et Constantinople”, *CRAI* 158.4 (2014) 1509–41; M. SÈVE, “De la naissance à la mort d’une ville: Philippes en Macédoine (IV^e siècle av. J.-C.–VII^e siècle ap. J.-C.)”, *Histoire urbaine* 1 (2000) 197–202.

¹⁰ For examples of *lectores* (“readers”) from Philippi, see ICG 3246 (5th–6th c. AD), 3263 (5th–6th c. AD). For presbyters, see ICG 3254 (AD 379), 3256 (mid-4th c. AD), 3257 (4th–5th c. AD), 3258 (4th–5th c. AD), 3259 (4th–5th c. AD), 3260 (4th–5th c. AD). Only one or two bishops are attested at Philippi: the famous Porphyrios who dedicated the basilica of Paul (ICG 3247; mid-4th c. AD), and possibly the above-mentioned Andrew (ICG 3290; cf. note 6). No other deacon is known from Philippi apart from the two deaconesses Posidonia (ICG 3262; 4th–5th c. AD) and Agathe (ICG 3381; 5th c. AD).

¹¹ On the significance of this commemorative shift, see C. BRÉLAZ, “The Authority of Paul’s Memory and Early Christian Identity at Philippi”, in: C. BREYTENBACH / J. M. OGE-REAU (eds.), *Identity and Authority in Emerging Christianities* (Leiden 2018) 262–3.

ἐνκατέταξεν, ll. 11–12), one of the lowest clerical ranks, by a revered bishop named James (Iakobos). Climbing the ecclesiastical ladder, he was then promoted (after an undetermined period of time) to the rank of deacon, having skipped, it seems, the level of sub-deacon, an office that is attested throughout Macedonia and in an unpublished inscription from Philippi.¹² This time, he was appointed by Demetrios, a bishop who was renowned for being prudent in his service to God and emperors during his entire life (ὁ διὰ βίου σώφρωνος Θεοῦ καὶ βασιλέας : θε|ραπεύσας, ll. 13–14), and who might be the same Demetrios who was sent by Justinian I on an embassy to Rome with Bishop Hypatios from Ephesus around AD 533.¹³ Finally, James and Demetrios's successor (διάδοχος, l. 15), Bishop Bisaltios, established Daniel in the chair of the presbyters (ἐν [τῇ τῶν πρ]εσβυτέρων || καθεδρᾷ, ll. 20–21).

One will note here how the characterization of each bishop increases in length as the epitaph progresses, with that of Bisaltios running over six lines. A firm guardian of the precepts of the gospel (τῶν εὐαγγελικῶν παρα|γελμάτων · βέβαιος φύλαξ, ll. 16–17), Bisaltios shepherded his community as a God-given pastor (ὁ ἐκ Θεοῦ · δοθεὶς ἡμῖν ποιμήν, l. 18). Yet, as became common of bishops in late antiquity, he also assumed a prominent civic role and was effectively considered as the fervent(?) patron and protector of the city and of the fatherland of the Philippians (τῆς τε πατρίδος : καὶ τῆς πόλεως | θερ|μὸς προστάτης || καὶ κηδεμών, ll. 18–20).

Daniel's epitaph concludes with a thoughtful word for the person who shared his tomb, namely, his lawful wife Aspilia who is presented here as his reverent sister in Christ (τῇ ἐμῇ γνησίᾳ | συμβίῳ · καὶ ἐν Χ(ριστ)ῷ ἀδελφῇ || Ἀσπιλία · τῇ σεμνοτάτῃ, ll. 23–25).¹⁴ Overall, the mosaic stands out from other Christian funerary monuments from the region, surpassing them in size and majesty, which suggests that Daniel came from a prominent or wealthy Constantinopolitan family. Apart from the above-mentioned Bishop(?) Andrew, whose funerary mosaic is more modest,¹⁵ no other bishop, nor any other presbyter, seems to have been commemorated with such grand display (as far as the Philippian evidence goes). Yet, this is not to say that bishops were not honoured at their just measure at Philippi – the epigraphic evidence simply has not survived. The prominent place James, Demetrios, and Bisaltios take between lines 10 and 21 demonstrates quite the contrary.

¹² See, e.g., ICG 3160 (6th c. AD), 3161 (5th–6th c. AD), 3622 (5th–6th c. AD), 3637 (5th–6th c. AD), 3650 (5th c. AD), 3693 (4th–6th c. AD).

¹³ Proc. Caes., *De bell.* 3.5. Cf. LEMERLE 1945, 271; A. MENTZOS, "Ο ἐπίσκοπος Δημήτριος καὶ ἡ οικοδομική του δραστηριότητα στους Φιλίππους", *Egnatia* 1 (1989) 195–204.

¹⁴ The name Ἀσπιλία, which derives from the adjective ἄσπιλος ("stainless, without blemish"), is little attested but (fittingly) born by two other Christian virgins in Macedonia. See ICG 3027 (5th–6th c. AD) and 3029–3030 (5th–6th c. AD).

¹⁵ Remarkably, this may well be the only epitaph for a bishop at Philippi.

14. The Protocols of Honour at Ephesus: Justinian and Bishop Hypatios

James R. Harrison

In the highly competitive and honour-driven society of Graeco-Roman antiquity, it should be no surprise that the early church inevitably became entangled in contests for honorific precedence. Ecclesial rivalry in Asia Minor overrode the Pauline injunctions to honour people ahead of oneself (Rom 12:9b) and to prioritise the honouring of the weak in the Body of Christ over the strong (1 Cor 12:22–24.26b). In our study of two sixth-century AD inscriptions from Ephesus, it will be argued that ICG 4646 (*I.Ephesos* 1a.45), the most recent editorial revision being NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*, ASI/08/09, does not textually bear the interpretative weight claimed for the restored text by its original editors. By contrast, ICG 4652 (*I.Ephesos* 7.2.4135; NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*, ASI/08/07) marks a striking new social innovation in antiquity. Both texts underscore the ironic outworking of honour and dishonour among the Ephesian churches in late antiquity as they struggled to integrate the social inversion demanded by the gospel of Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:26–28; 2 Cor 6:8a: “through honour and dishonour”; 13:4a; Phil 2:5–8; cf. Mark 9:34–35; 10:41–45 *et par.*; John 13:1–17) and its consequences for living in a status and honour-obsessed culture.

1. The Emperor Justinian and Inter-city Ecclesiastical Rivalries over Honour

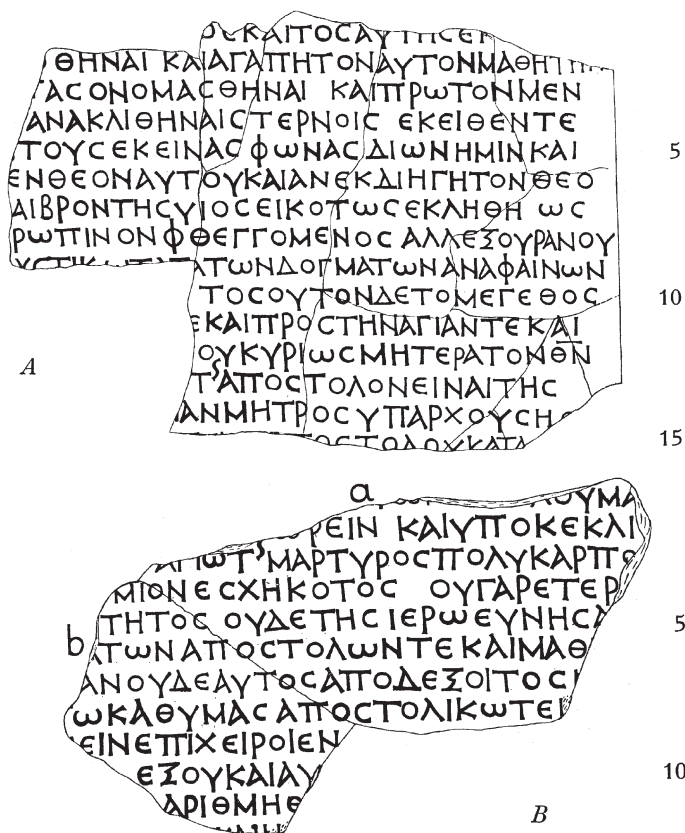


Fig. 39: ICG 4646, 6th c. AD, Church of Mary in Ephesus? (drawing: J. KEIL, "Johannes von Ephesos und Polykarpos von Smyrna", in: M. ABRAHAMIC / V. HOFFILLER (eds.), *Strena Buliciana: Commentationes gratulatoriae*. Francisco Bulie (Zagreb 1924) 369–370)

This large Ephesian inscription (6th c. AD) is possibly an imperial letter and (arguably) was originally located in the Church of St Mary.¹ The inscription consists of several fragments of two large pieces of blue marble penetrated with white veins, each of which is translated below. Two fragments of Letter B were found by Josef Keil in 1904 and 1907 in the vicinity of the Church of St Mary (i. e. the narthex and the atrium), whereas ten fragments of Letter A were found in 1911 at the Ephesian harbour thermal baths (north side) and were reassembled by Rudolf Heberdey. See NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*, 345–46. In addition to the two large fragments above (Letters A and B), three small non-conjoining fragments have also been discovered, which are not included in our rendering of the Greek text above because of their unintelligibility arising from their broken state. For the Greek of III/1–3, see NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*, 346. Given the unlikelihood of a letter in praise of St John being located at the public baths, the original site of the two letters was most probably in the Church of St Mary. Undoubtedly, the marble slab of Letter A had been relocated from its original location to the harbour baths for a construction project later in Byzantine (?) times. Dimensions of inscription, Letter A: height, 45 cm; width, 65 cm; thickness, 6–4.5 cm. Letter B: height, 33.5 cm; width, 58 cm; thickness, 3.3–5.75 cm. Current location of inscription: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

¹ *I.Ephesos* 1a 45/ICG 4646 (6th c. AD: Church of St Mary in Ephesus). A1–14 and B1–8, above, are translated by E. RIZOS / P. NOWAKOWSKI (<http://csa.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E00708>). B9–11 is translated by J. R. HARRISON, lines 9–11 being having been omitted in the English translation of E. RIZOS / P. NOWAKOWSKI. For editions, see KEIL 1924; GRÉGOIRE 1924; SEG 4.517 (ed. W. CRÖNERT); *I.Ephesos* 1a.45 (ed. H. WANKEL); M. AMELOTTI / L. MIGLIARDI ZINGALE, *Le costituzioni giustinianee nei papiri e nelle epigrafi* (Milan 1985) 125–7, no. 15; NOWAKOWSKI 2018, 345–50, ASI/08/09.

A [--]

- 1 []ως καὶ τοσαύτης ἐκ [.....]
 ἄξι]ωθῆναι καὶ ἀγαπητὸν αὐτὸν μαθητὴν
 [ὑπὲρ πάν]τας ὀνομασθῆναι, καὶ πρῶτον μὲν
 4 [τοῖς K(υρίο)υ] ἀνακληθῆναι στέρνοις, ἐκεῖθέν τε
 [ἔκλειν.]τους ἐκείνας φωνάς, δι' ὧν ἡμῖν καὶ
 [δοὺς τὴν] ἔνθεον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεκδιήγητον θεο-
 [λογίαν κ]αὶ βροντῆς υἱὸς εἰκότως ἐκλήθη ὡς
 8 [οὐκ ἀνθ]ρώπινον φθεγγόμενος ἀλλ' ἐξ οὐρανοῦ
 [ἡμῖν τὰ μ]υστικώτατα τῶν δογμάτων ἀναφαίνων,
 [c.14 letters] τοσοῦτον δὲ τὸ μέγεθος
 [ὥστ]ε καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀγίαν τε καὶ
 12 [ἀειπάρθενον (?) αὐ]τοῦ κυρίως μητέρα τὸν θ(εὸ)ν
 [ἀγιώ]τ(ατον) ἀπόστολον εἶναι τῆς
 []αν μητρὸς ὑπαρχούσης
 [ἀ]γί(ου ἀ)ποστόλου κατὰ[....]

B [--]

- []ω.[....]λου μα[]
 []ωρειν καὶ ὑποκκλη[σθαι]
 [] ἀγίωτ(άτου) μάρτυρος Πολυκάρο[υ τοιοῦτο]
 4 [προνό]μιον ἐσχηκότος· οὐ γὰρ ἕτερ[α τούτῳ τῆς]
 [ἀγίο]τητος οὐδὲ τῆς ἱερω<σ>ύνης δι[ιδασκαλία]
 [ἢ παρ]ᾶ τῶν ἀποστόλων τε καὶ μαθητῶν τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ],
 [οὐδὲ] ἂν αὐτὸς ἀποδέξοιτο, Σμ[υρναίους]
 8 [εἰ τ]ῷ καθ' ὑμᾶς ἀποστολικῷ τεμ[ένει (?)]
 []ειν ἐπιχειροῖεν []
 [] ἐξ οὗ καὶ αὐ[]
 [] ἀριθμηθ[]
 12 []αικ[]

- A [--]
 and that he was deemed worthy of such [-- --]
 and he was called the most beloved disciple
 [above all others], and firstly,
- 4 he was to repose on the chest [of the Lord], and thence
 [he received] those words, through which
 [he gave] to us his divine and indescribable theo-
 logy, and for this reason he was justly called the Son of Thunder,
- 8 because he spoke [nothing] of human provenance, but from Heaven
 did he reveal for [us] the most occult of teachings.
 Such was the greatness of [-- --]
 that God, addressing his holy
- 12 and [forever Virgin (?)] real mother,
 [-- -- the most holy] Apostle was [her son (?) -- --]
 mother being present [-- --]
 of the holy Apostle [-- --]
- B [--]
 [-- -- of the great martyr (?) -- --]
 to be inclined (?)
 [-- --] of the most holy martyr Polycarp who had
- 4 [such privilege]; and he did not receive any [teachings]
 on holiness and priesthood other than [from]
 the Apostles and Disciples [of God (?)].
 And he himself would not approve that if the citizens of Smyrna
 would have attempted to [-- --] for your apostolic [sanctuary -- --]
 [-- --] to encompass [-- --]
- 10 [-- --] from whom also [-- --]
 [-- --] to have number[ed]? [-- --]
 [...]

J. Keil has conjectured that the inscription represents a letter in which a positional dispute between Ephesus, the city of St John, and Smyrna, the city of Polycarp, is commented upon in a letter by the emperor Justinian (527–65 AD).² What the precise contours of the ecclesiastical dispute were cannot be definitively determined from the epigraphic evidence: but, as we shall see, it has been argued that it involves a claim to superior ecclesial status on the part of the churches at Smyrna over against those at Ephesus. But, notably, in Justinian's reply (or that of his proconsul), the "diplomatic" honour given to each ecclesiastical figure is delicately balanced so that no unintentional offence is given to either city as far as the highly respected status of John and Polycarp. Notwithstanding, the superiority and precedence of the apostle John – and therefore of Ephesus – is clearly indicated. Indeed, the rebuilding of Ephesus had gathered pace under the reign of Theodosius I, with the result that

by the end of the fifth-century, Ephesus would boast a major basilica over the tomb of John, the cemetery-church complex later associated with the Seven Sleepers, a Church of Mary, where the bishop's seat was located, and the *martyrium* of Timothy, mentioned in the *Acts Tim* and located above the city on Mt. Pion.³

Letter A was found in the vicinity of the Church of St Mary. Given the Johannine content of the letter, one would have perhaps expected it to have been found in the Basilica of St John. But its Marian location would have been an honorific coup for the Church of St Mary and indirectly points to the rivalry, noted by Foss,⁴ between the Church of St Mary and the Basilica of John at Ephesus.

However, before we touch on New Testament intertextual echoes found in Letter A of our inscription, a brief comparison of Nowakowski's new restoration (*Saints*, ASI/08/09) with aspects of Hermann Wankel's previous reading of *I.Ephesos* 1a.45 is warranted here. *I.Ephesos* 1a.45 renders the Greek of Part A 4–10 as follows:

... καὶ πρῶτον μὲν

- 4 [τοῖς τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ] ἀνακλιθῆναι στέρνοις, ἐκεῖθ' ἐν τε
[σχεῖν τὰς ἀρρή]τους ἐκείνας φωνάς, δι' ὧν ἡμῖν καὶ
6 [φήνας τό τε] ἔνθεον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεκδιήγητον θεο–

² D. FEISSEL has demonstrated uncertainty over the Justinian authorship of the text in several publications from 1995–2010, initially suggesting as author another emperor entirely or a bishop, but returning recently to an acknowledgement of the likelihood of an imperial letter (most probably Justinian). For FEISSEL's arguments and various publications, see NOWAKOWSKI 2018, 349.

³ C. W. CONCANNON, "In the Great City of the Ephesians: Contestations over Apostolic Memory and Ecclesial Power in the Acts of Timothy", *J ECS* 24.3 (2016) [419–46] 445.

⁴ Foss 1979, 92 note 95.

[λόγος τε καὶ] βροντῆς υἱὸς εἰκότως ἐκλήθη ὡς
 8 [οὐδὲν ἀνθ]ρώπινον φθεγγόμενος, ἀλλ' ἐξ οὐρανοῦ
 [ἡμῖν τὰ μ]υστικώτατα τῶν δογμάτων ἀναφαίνων
 10 [τε καὶ ἀποκαλύπτων·]

... and (he) first

4 reclined at the bosom of God, from whence
 he received those unutterable words, through which
 6 having shown to us his divine and ineffable (nature)
 he was suitably called “theologian” and “son of thunder”
 8 he utters nothing human, but from heaven
 makes known and reveals to us the mysteries of
 10 his teachings.

Nowakowski has made several significant restorations to Wankel’s edition in lines A.4–10, ensuring a leaner Greek text overall, but not without an element of overreach in one instance:

- In line 4 John reclines on the chest of “the Lord” (Κ(υρίο)υ), as opposed to the bosom “of God” (θεο)ῦ, sharpening the reference Christologically;
- In line 5 the phrase [τὰς ἀρρή]τους ἐκείνας is reduced to τους ἐκείνας φωνάς, eliminating the nuance of inexpressible revelation;
- In lines 6–7 θεο[λόγος] is replaced by θεο[λογίαν]: but the change, although viable in terms of letter spaces, is questionable. Nowakowski opts for the less likely “theology”, as opposed to the ubiquitous “theologian” employed in the Ephesian inscriptions as a descriptor for the apostle John;
- In line 10 the implication of apocalyptic revelation in the restoration [ἀποκαλύπτων] is rejected as speculative, given the presence of c. 14 letters in the lacuna.

What is especially apparent in Letter A, though not unexpectedly, are the intertextual echoes of the New Testament portrait of John the apostle.⁵ He is the one nicknamed by Christ, along with his brother James, the “son of thunder” (A.7: βροντῆς υἱὸς; cf. Mark 3:17); he is identified as the “beloved disciple” in church tradition (A.2: ἀγαπητὸν αὐτὸν μαθητὴν; cf. Irenaeus, *Her.* 3.1.1; Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.31; 5.24; 6.25.9), though in the Gospel of John he is a shadowy and anonymous figure who is not explicitly named (John 13:21–30; 18:15–18; 19:26–27; 21:7.20); he reclined at the breast of Christ at the Last Supper (A.4: τοῖς Κ(υρίο)υ ἀνακλιθῆναι στέρνοις; John 13:23);

⁵ For the definition of “intertextual echoes” in ancient texts and their methodological discernment, whether they be from the Old Testament or New Testament (as proposed in this instance), see R. B. HAYES, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco 2014); id., *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven 1989).

and, from the cross, he entrusted Mary into the care of John, or, as the case may be, the anonymous beloved disciple (A.11–15; cf. John 19:26–27). At a subtler level of allusion to the Gospel of John, the apostle John, like Jesus, is also from heaven (A.8: ἐξ οὐρανοῦ; cf. John 3:13b [ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: “the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man”], 27, 31a, c [ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ: “the one from heaven”]), in contrast to John the Baptist and Polycarp who come from the earth (3:31b; cf. B.4–6).

Other intertextual echoes are less direct in terms of the Johannine literature but are still appropriate for the context in which they were originally used and are now relocated. The “mystery” which John expounds (A.9: [τὰ μυστικώτατα] is regularly referred to in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (μυστήριον: 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19). The “unutterable words” in *I.Ephesos* 1a.45 (A.5: [τὰς ἀρρή]τους ἐκείνας φωνάς) not only recall the unutterable revelation that the apostle Paul received in his ascent to the third Heaven (2 Cor 12:4: ἄρρητα ῥήματα [“inexpressible words”]), but, more importantly for our context, it “is a commonplace of the secret rites of the mystery cults”, a resonance that is appropriate for John the apocalyptic seer of Revelation in an imperial context (Rev 11:15, 19; cf. 1:10, 12, 15 etc.).⁶ Last, the reference to John as a *theologos* in ICG 4646 (“theologian”), while not an intertextual echo of the New Testament, is nevertheless used of John elsewhere in Ephesian votive prayers (ICG 4654, 4564, 4565, 4582), as well as for the official who wrote the paeans in the imperial cult (*I.Ephesos* 2.242, 472, 3.661, 5.1935). In sum, the plethora of intertextual echoes of the New Testament in ICG 4646 establish the apostolicity of John who, extraordinarily, is accorded a quasi-divine status as far as his revelation from God (“he utters nothing human,” “his divine and ineffable [nature]”). Moreover, as Nowakowski correctly notes regarding A.10–15, “John is also presented as the new son of Mary, the true mother (κυρίως μήτηρ) of Jesus, i. e. in a way a substitute of Jesus.”⁷ Thus the superiority of John in Letter A is clearly established over Polycarp in Letter B.

In Letter B, we face serious difficulties regarding the legitimacy of the first editors’ reconstruction of the original Greek text, and, consequently, with its interpretation. The editors (KEIL, note. 1 above; GRÉGOIRE 1924; SEG 4.517 [W. Crönert]) adopt a maximalist restoration of the document. They filled out interpretatively the gaps (lacunae) in the epigraphic text, indicated by the brackets in the translation of Rizos and Nowakowski above, with what

⁶ See A. BRENT, “John as Theologos: The Imperial Mysteries and the Apocalypse”, *JSNT* 75 (1999) [87–102] 88–9.

⁷ NOWAKOWSKI 2018, 350. The last lines of B.7–8, Nowakowski speculates (*ibid.*, 350), “refer to some unjustified perturbations in the ecclesiastic hierarchy.” Note that Nowakowski’s restoration in line 8 to “apostolic [sanctuary – –]” (ἀποστολικῶ τεμ[ένει (?)]) replaces the *I.Ephesos* 1a.45 restoration of “apostolic Timothy” [... (ἀποστολικῶ Τει[μοθέω –]).

they thought the original text might have said. However, it must be strongly emphasised that there is no warrant in the original Greek document for their insertions. P.R. Coleman-Norton translates the text thus from *SEG* 4.517, cited in Greek and English translation below, basing his text upon the original rendering of Keil and Grégoire. The italics in the English translation indicate the insertions of Keil and Grégoire in the lacunae of the text:

B.

-- ω . . . λουμα -- | -- ωρειν καὶ ὑποκεκλι[μένου ἄρχειν ἄτε
 τῆς τοῦ ἁ]γοιωτ(άτου) μάρτυρος Πολυκάρπο[υ ἐπισκο|πῆς τὸ
 5 προνό]μιον ἐσχηκότος-οὐ γὰρ ἕτερος τοῦτ' πε|ρὶ τῆς οὐσί-
 ούς τῆς ἱερ(σ)ύνης ἅ[ν ἀμιλλῇ|θείῃ, ἀλλ]ὰ
 τῶν ἀποστόλων τε καὶ μαθ[ητῶν κυριω|τέραν δόξ]αν οὐδὲ αὐτοὺς
 ἀποδέξοιτο, Σ[μυρναῖοί τε, | εἴ τινες τ]ῷ καθ' ὑμᾶς ἀποστο-
 λικῷ Τει[μοθέῳ αὐτὴν | περιβάλ]λιν ἐπιχειροῖεν, [οὐδαμῶς
 10 ἂν γνώμην συγκαταθεῖντο]-ἐξ οὗ καὶ αὐ[τὸς κέφαλος γενέ-
 σθαι καὶ ἐν | ἀρχιεπισκόποις] ἀριθμηθ[ῆναι ὁ Σμυρναῖον
 θρόνος | ἡξιώθη -- -] Κ Λ Ι Ι --

... when Most Holy martyr Polycarp held the privilege of the episcopate, no other man could contend with this one in holiness or priesthood ("sanctity"). But he himself would not have accepted the exceptional glory both of the apostles and of the disciples, *and if anyone should attempt to invest your apostolic Timothy with it, the Smyrneans never would have assented to the proposition. Wherefore the Smyrneans' See has been deemed worthy both to be autocephalous and to be counted among the archbishops ...*⁸

On the basis of these expansions of the lacunae, Keil and Grégoire argue that the document represents a new episode in the long quarrel concerning precedence between Smyrna and Ephesus.⁹ This rivalry had been already

⁸ P.R. COLEMAN-NORTON, *Roman State and Christian Church: A Collection of Legal Documents to A.D. 535 A.D.*, Volume 3 (London 1966) 1054 § 577.

⁹ Such inter-city rivalries were well known in antiquity and continued well into the Christian period, involving heated disputes over status, precedence, and *neokoroi*. One such case was the rivalry between Tarsus and Seleucia ad Calycadnum. In the work of Anonymous of Seleucia, traditional inter-city rivalries are "Christianised". After describing the beauty and power of Seleucia (*VMTh* 1.27.28–39), the work concedes that the patron of Tarsus, the apostle Paul, is greater than Seleucia's Thecla (*VMTh* 1.27.40–49). Note the telling conclusion: "In only one point she [Seleukeia] is inferior in this close competition and has to bow down a little and let her [Tarsus] take first place: This is the home and city of the great Paul (τοῦ μεγάλου Παύλου), without whom we would not have the holy Virgin (τὴν ἁγίαν παρθένον)." For discussion, see P. PILHOFER, *Das frühe Christentum im kilikisch-isaurischen Bergland: die Christen der Kalykadnos-Region in den ersten fünf Jahrhunderten*

noted by Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 34) in the late first century AD. It had again erupted in the reign of Antoninus Pius (140–144 AD). Then Antoninus excused the Smyrneans for forgetting the titles of Ephesus (“First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia”) in an official letter to the city, but the emperor insisted that the Smyrneans must register appropriate epistolary honour to the Ephesians, provided that the Ephesians use the prescribed formulae for Smyrna in their own letters to the Smyrneans.¹⁰ If the original editors are correct, Letter B, written by Justinian or the proconsul of Asia, represents the imperial decision to reject the Smyrnan claim (or perhaps the petition made) to the higher rank of Metropolis of Asia, a claim which had been vaunted in the epigraphy of Ephesus from the time of Hadrian onwards (“First and greatest metropolis of Asia, and twice *neokoros* of (the) city of the Ephesians” [*IG* II² 3297]; cf. thrice *neokoros* and metropolis, Caracalla, *I.Ephesos* 2.297, 300; 3.647, 6.2054; 7.1.3001).¹¹ Smyrna wanted its own bishop appointed as head of the Metropolis. The Fourth General Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, however, made the bishop of Smyrna independent of the Metropolis of Ephesus (P.R. Coleman-Norton translation: “deemed worthy both to be autocephalous and to be counted among the archbishops”), but the resolution still fell far short of their expectations.¹² This was not merely an imperial compromise, as Grégoire rightly notes, because the Smyrneans still had to wait until the ninth century AD to achieve the prestigious rank of Metropolis.¹³

However, when the inscription was re-edited by Hermann Wankel in *I.Ephesos* 1a.45 in 1979, the additions of Keil, Grégoire, and *SEG* 4.517 to the lacunae had all been removed, reflecting only what was certain in terms of the Greek and secure as far as its restorations. If we take seriously what is visible on the stone and only what is only viably restored in Letter B, as opposed to interpretative insertions that went beyond the lapidary evidence, then our understanding of the document becomes much more minimalist. Therefore Nowakowski’s translation of the inscription (*Saints*, ASI/08/09), the most recent edition, is rendered above.

(Berlin/Boston 2018) 216–7, including the Greek text and German translation (217 note 66). I am indebted to Professor Philipp Pilhofer for this reference.

¹⁰ *I.Ephesos* 5.1489 (cf. 5.1489A). Writing to the Ephesians, Antoninus says: “I approved the way the Pergamenes in their epistle to you employed the titles which I permitted your city to use, I think that the Smyrneans have omitted them accidentally in the decree concerning the joint sacrifice and that in the future they will comply willingly, if, that is, you too appear in your letters to them to be mentioning their city in the manner that is becoming and has been decided.”

¹¹ See B. BURRELL, *Neokoroi: Greek Cities and Roman Emperors* (Leiden 2004) [59–85] 66–75.

¹² GRÉGOIRE 1924, 715; FOSS 1979, 6.

¹³ GRÉGOIRE 1924, 715.

The exalted status assigned the Apostle John in Letter A, therefore, stands in sharp contrast to the minimalist portrait of Polycarp in Letter B. Polycarp, to be sure, is lauded as the most holy martyr (B.4), but he is subordinate to the Apostles and disciples, signified by Polycarp's acceptance of their teachings on holiness and priesthood (B.5–7). In sum, John the Apostle of Ephesus is exalted over Polycarp of Smyrna, the latter being “expected to revere his teacher.”¹⁴ Thus the current subordinate status of Smyrna remains in relation to Ephesus. Other than these basic contrasts, we can say little else in the absence of any further textual evidence on the stone itself. Keil and Grégoire could still be correct, of course. But without decisive external evidence for their restorations – normally acquired from parallel texts found at other sites of the city or in other Eastern Mediterranean cities where the expansions of the text were available – we cannot endorse the suggestions Keil and Grégoire as “proven.” Instead, we must be satisfied with the boundaries of our ignorance, realising the danger of what Ernst Badian has memorably called the “history of square brackets.”¹⁵

¹⁴ NOWAKOWSKI 2018, 350.

¹⁵ E. BADIAN, “History from Square Brackets”, *ZPE* 79 (1989) 59–70. By this graphic phrase, Badian was underscoring the danger of building major historical arguments on speculative restorations of the Greek text for which there is no evidence due to the brokenness of the original text. We must recognise as well that many inscriptions have been relocated from their original site to a new location (e.g. used in a building elsewhere). Therefore, reconstructing the original epigraphic context can be difficult or, indeed, impossible.

2. Bishop Hypatios and the Burial of the Poor

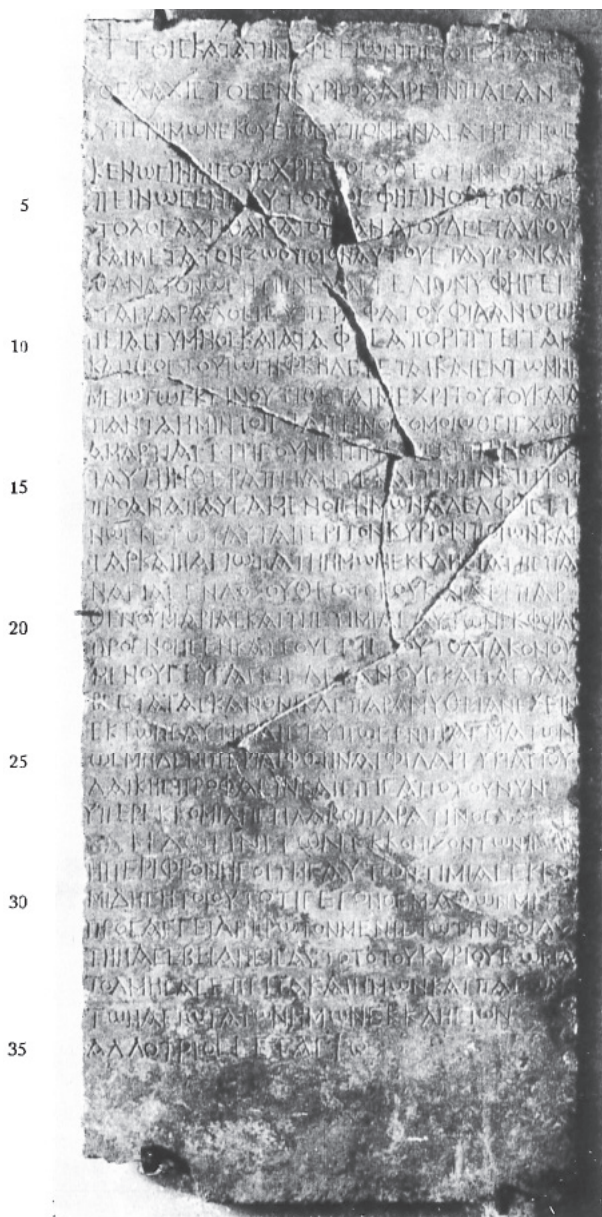


Fig. 40: ICG 4652, 1st half of 6th c. AD (photo: J. KEIL / E. REISCH / F. KNOLL, *Forschungen in Ephesos*, vol. 4/1: *Die Marienkirche in Ephesos* (Wien 1932) no. 35)

✠

- ✠ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἐφεσίων πιστοῖς Ὑπάτιος
 ὁ ἐλάχιστος ἐν Κυρίῳ χαίρειν. πᾶσαν
 ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐκουσίως ὑπομείνας ἀτρέπτως
 κένωσιν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν “ἐτα-
 5 πείνωσεν ἐ[α]υτόν,” ὥς φησιν ὁ θεὸς ἀπόσ-
 τολος, “ἄχρι θανάτου,” [θ]ανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ,
 καὶ μετὰ τὸν ζωοποιὸν αὐτοῦ σταυρὸν καὶ
 θάνατον, ὡς ἡ τῶν εὐαγγελίων ὑφηγεῖ-
 ται παράδοσις, ὑπὲρ ἀφάτου φιλανθρω-
 10 πείας γυμνὸς καὶ ἄταφος ἀποριπτεῖται
 καὶ πρὸς τοῦ Ἰωσήφ κηδεύεται καὶ ἐν τῷ μνη-
 μείῳ τῷ ἐκείνου τίθεται μέχρι τούτου κατὰ
 πάντα ἡμῖν τοῖς ταπεινοῖς ὁμοιωθεὶς “χωρὶς
 15 ἁμαρτίας.” εἴ τις οὖν ἐπιμελησείῃ τὴν ὁσίαν
 ταύτην θεραπείαν τε καὶ τιμὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς
 προαναπαυσασμένοις ἡμῶν ἀδελφοῖς, γι-
 νωσκέτω ταῦτα περὶ τὸν Κύριον ποιῶν· καὶ
 γὰρ καὶ ἡ ἀγιωτάτη ἡμῶν ἐκκλησία τῆς πα-
 ναγίας ἐνδόξου θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρ-
 20 θένου <✠> Μαρίας καὶ τῆς τιμίας αὐτῶν ἐκφορᾶς
 προενόησεν καὶ τοὺς εἰς τοῦτο διακονου-
 μένους εὐαγεῖς δεκανοὺς καὶ τὰς εὐλα-
 βεστάτας κανονικὰς παραμύθειαν ἔχειν
 ἐκ τῶν ἑαυτῆς διετύπωσεν πραγμάτων,
 25 ὡς μηδενὶ περιληφθῆναι φιλαργυρίας Ἰου-
 δαϊκῆς πρόφασιν· καὶ εἴ τις ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν
 ὑπὲρ ἐκκομιδῆς τι λάβοι παρὰ τινος {λαβοι}
 {πα} ἢ δῶ τινι τῶν ἐκκομιζόντων {περι}
 ἢ περιφρονήσοι τῆς αὐτῶν τιμίας ἐκκο-
 30 μιδῆς ἢ τοιοῦτό τι γεγονὸς μαθὼν μὴ
 προσαγγεῖλῃ, πρῶτον μὲν ἴστω τὴν τοιαύ-
 την ἀσέβειαν εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ τοῦ κυρίου σῶμα
 τολμήσας, ἔπειτα καὶ ἡμῶν καὶ πασῶν
 τῶν ἀγιωτάτων ἡμῶν ἐκκλησιῶν
 35 ἀλλότριος ἔσται ✠.

- To the faithful in Ephesus from Hypatios
 the least in the Lord greetings.
 For us willingly Jesus Christ, our God,
 having endured with indifference *kenosis*
 5 “humbled himself”, as the divine apostle says,
 “until death”, death by crucifixion,
 and after his life-giving crucifixion
 and death, as the tradition of the gospels
 shows, out of unutterable kindness
 10 naked and unburied he was rejected
 but he was tended by Joseph and placed in
 his tomb being as far as this
 like us wretches in all things “apart
 from sin.” If anyone were to attend to this holy
 15 service and honour on
 our deceased brothers, let him
 know that he does these things with regard to the Lord.
 For our most holy church of the all-holy,
 honoured god-begetting and ever-virgin
 20 Mary has provided for their honoured burial,
 and has arranged that the pure
dekanoi who serve in this and the most
 pious *kanonikai* should have compensation
 from its revenue,
 25 so that a pretext of Jewish covetousness
 may remain to no one. And if anyone from now on
 for the sake of burial should take anything from anyone
 or give (anything) to anyone of those who bury,
 or should he despise their honoured burial
 30 or having learned that some such thing occurred he should not
 notify (the matter), first let him know that he has
 dared such impiety against the body of the Lord;
 then to us and to all
 our most holy churches
 35 he will be a stranger.

The pastoral "letter" above from bishop Hypatios to his Ephesian community was discovered in the narthex of the episcopal church of the virgin Mary.¹⁶ This inscription, inscribed on a blue marble plaque and broken into 14 small fragments, is nevertheless perfectly preserved. It belongs to a dossier of inscriptions that touch on legal and pastoral issues involving the churches of the virgin Mary and St John. Dimensions of inscription: height, 2.19 cm; width, 0.94 cm; thickness, 0.045 cm; letter height: 0.035 cm. Current location of inscription: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

In the letter above, bishop Hypatios pastorally employs two biblical texts (Phil 2:5–8; Mark 15:43–46 [et par.: Matt 27:57; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38]), dealing with the death and burial of Christ, to establish the importance of free burial, especially for the poor.¹⁷ The letter not only gives us considerable insight into the theological teaching of the Ephesian church and its exegetical handing of the New Testament Scriptures in a pastoral context, but also it highlights the rhetorical skill with which Hypatios constructed his arguments. Furthermore, as will be noted later, the socially transformative nature of the text is striking. The church provided the burial of the poor irrespective of the fact that, due to their total destitution or marginal impoverishment, they did not belong to the professional associations, in which the fees-membership contributed to the payment of burial costs for members. Notably, in this regard, Tertullian tells us that the Carthaginian church collected dues from their congregation to pay in advance for the burial costs for the poor (Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.5–6).

The depth of theology aired need not be extensively commented on. Hypatios enunciates a *kenotic* theology of Christ's incarnation and cruciform self-abandonment for others and combines this with an ecclesiology of the holiness of the Ephesian church, whose identity is defined by the God-begetting and holy virgin Mary. From this theological base, he establishes the

¹⁶ Editions: R. HEBERDEY, "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Grabungen in Ephesus 1904," *JÖAI* 8 (1905) *Beiblatt*, coll. 61–80; KEIL / REISCH / KNOLL 1932 no. 35; *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4135; NOWAKOWSKI 2018, ASI/08/07.

¹⁷ The sixth-century bishop of Ephesus, Hypatios (d. 536 AD), was an advisor of Justinian I from AD 531–536. He played an important ecclesial role in c. AD 531 by persuading the heretical Monophysite leaders to accept the Christological formula of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) at a meeting called in Constantinople, as well as by providing doctrinal advice to Pope John II in AD 533–534 and at the Council of Constantinople in 536. Previously, in the 530's, Hypatios "had presided over his see at the time when the construction of the Basilica of St John was begun", a building project perhaps instigated by Hypatios' personal persuasion of the emperor (Foss 1979, 41). Hypatios' work, *Various Questions*, is highly fragmentary, but its extant remnants include his defence of ecclesiastical icons. For a translation of the latter text and its discussion, see P. J. ALEXANDER, "Hypatios of Ephesus: A Note on Image Worship in the Sixth Century", *HTR* 45 (1952) 177–84; D. S. GERO, "Hypatios of Ephesus on the Cult of Images", in: J. NEUSNER (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, vol. 2 (Leiden 1975) 208–16.

consequences for ecclesial praxis, through the *dekanoi* and *kanonikai* setting up a ministry for the provision of honoured burial for the deceased.

Who, then, are the *dekanoi* and *kanonikai*? NOWAKOWSKI (*Saints*, ASI/08/07) translates each phrase in lines 22–23 as respectively “the charitable brotherhood members” (τοὺς εὐαγεῖς δεκανούς) and “the most pious religious women” (τὰς εὐλαβεστάτας κανονικάς: cf. Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, 2015, s.v. κανονική, “nuns”). In the understanding of NOWAKOWSKI (*Saints*, ASI/08/07, 342), these members of “two bodies of lay people served in burials,” one the charitable brotherhood mentioned above, the other “probably religious/non-monastic virgins or the so-called widows.” Both groups, as NOWAKOWSKI (*Saints*, ASI/08/07, 342) argues, “were institutionally attached to the Ephesian church of Mary receiving a regular salary from it”, with the result that they were not to be paid for their services. We know that in fifth and sixth century Aphrodisias the clerical position of *dekanos* referred to a funeral director who organised the funeral procession and supervised the appropriate personnel to administer it. An Aphrodisian Christian inscription (5th–6th c. AD) highlights the clerical position of the *dekanoi*, but there is no mention of the role of the *kanonikai*:

✠ [τόπος?]	[Burial place?]
Τρύφωνος	of Tryphon,
ἀρχιδεκά- νου ✠.	head funeral director. ¹⁸

However, as Sarah E. Bond observes, in the case of Ephesus

Hypatius warns that those who overcharge for funerals will be fined, in effect commenting on the corruption in Constantinople and Ephesus. As a powerful diplomat and religious figure in the East, Hypatius was following Justinian and his predecessors in attempting to rid the funeral trade of corruption. It appears that Ephesus, like

¹⁸ C. ROUECHÉ, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, no. 188, ll. 1–4, cited in S. E. BOND, *Criers, Impresarios, and Sextons: Disreputable Occupations in the Roman World* (Chapel Hill 2011) 183. For non-ecclesial ἀρχιδέκανοι, see (a) SEG 16.813, 814 (Arabia: neither inscription is Christian); (b) *ILykaonien* 236, MAMA 8.46 (Lycaonia): each inscription is from Lycaonia, but neither has Christian identifiers; (c) in a list of Jews belonging to “the decany of the students of the law”, note “Samuel *archid(ekanos)*? (= ‘president of the decania’) proselyte” (Aphrodisias: SEG 36.970). Importantly, BOND (2011, 175–6) writes: “There is strong evidence that many churches in the East – like the church in Rome – had already begun to co-opt pallbearers and funeral directors for use in providing burials for clergy, and perhaps congregants.” So, in terms of the δεκανός in the Greek East, see the tomb of “the most blessed grave-digger (τω μακαριωτ(άτω) δεκανῶ) Georgios” (accompanied by one ✠, ICG 2647). Additionally, see ICG 2783 (Corinth, accompanied by two ✠); ICG 4638 (Selymbria in Thrace, accompanied by a single ✠); ICG 4640 (Korykos in Cilicia and Isauria, accompanied by a single cross ✠).

Constantinople, gave a dispensation to the *dekanoi* and *kanonikai* within the city in order that they provide burials.¹⁹

We might speculate, therefore, that the *kanonikai* specialised pastorally in areas of mortuary practice necessitating the unique skills of females: e.g. the deaths of female religious personnel; the deaths of young single and married women or widows; the unexpected deaths of young children or babies; ministering to families where the sole remaining male member has died (e.g. the death of a husband to a recently married bride), etc.²⁰

However, while there were precedents for the Ephesian mortuary practices at Constantinople, there is no hint elsewhere of the type of theological reflection evinced by Hypatios on this occasion. Although our text lacks several of the tell-tale indications of an ancient epistle (other than the salutation), more reflecting an ecclesiastical ruling or edict,²¹ we must not exclude the possibility that the text may be a summary of a homiletic exhortation to Ephesian ecclesiastical leaders. In this regard, what needs to be better appreciated is the rhetorical construction of Hypatios' arguments. First, in Hypatios' exploration of the self-humiliation of Christ's death on a cross, repeated twice for rhetorical emphasis, the bishop underscores that Christ's death was made "willingly" (ἐκουσίως: Mark 10:45; John 10:17–18; 2 Cor 5:18–19; 8:9; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2; Heb 10:10) and, equally as important, it was an expression of unutterable φιλάνθρωπία ("kindness"). On this occasion Hypatios does not choose the standard word for Christ's "love" (ἀγάπη), but rather, somewhat unexpectedly, the word φιλάνθρωπία (also, "benevolence", "love for mankind") is chosen, only employed once in the New Testament for God's soteriological love of mankind (Titus 3:4: ἡ φιλάνθρωπία ["the love of men"]); cf. "kindly", φιλάνθρωπως: Acts 27:3; "not the usual kindness", οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν φιλάνθρωπιαν: Acts 28:2). The word φιλάνθρωπία, described by Philo as "that noble virtue" (*Spec. Laws* 1.221), had become the standard designation for the benefactions of the Hellenistic kings. In its Ephesian context, the word was used for the benefactions (φιλάνθρωπων) offered as incentives in the war against Mithridates in AD 87/86 (*I.Ephesos* 1a. 8 l. 41: "all are honoured and share the same benefactions"); (b) was employed by the proconsul

¹⁹ On the funerary precedents in Constantinople for what Hypatios proposes at Ephesus, see BOND 2011, 173–8.

²⁰ On *κανονική*, see the tomb of "Pancharia the very small religious woman" (ICG 3262, Philippi, accompanied by five +); "Aure(lia) Pola the religious woman, having conducted herself well in the most holy church of God" (ICG 243, Laodicea Combusta in Lycaonia); "tomb of (the) religious women" (IGLS 3.2.1130, Syrian Antioch, accompanied by five +). Last, regarding the Lord's holy monastery at Bostra (Arabia), there is mention of a religious woman there (IGLS 3.1.9283, accompanied by a single +).

²¹ I am indebted to Dr Julien Ogereau for this observation.

Paullus Fabius Persicus in AD 44 for the “first and universally acceptable favours” of Claudius (πᾶσιν ἡδίστοις φιλανθρώποις: *I.Ephesos* 1a.18 ll. 15–16); (c) described the kindness ([ἀντ]υερβλήτω [τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ]) of the Roman proconsul and proprætor in publicly recognising in AD 104 the bequest of the Ephesian benefactor, Vibius Salutaris, to the city (*I.Ephesos* 1a.27 ll. 78–79: “with kindness not to be undone”); (d) denoted the honours and kindnesses (τειμίων τε καὶ φιλανθρώπ[ων]) rendered by the *gerousia* of Ephesus to the house of Germanicus Caesar (*JÖAI* 62 [1993] 115, Nr. 5: “concerning both your (acts) of honour and kindness”).²² From the outset of his letter, then, the bishop has depicted the death of Christ as a voluntary benefaction on behalf of mankind and an expression of God’s soteriological love, with a view to preparing his audience for his subsequent exhortation of them to provide funerals voluntarily as a benefit for those for whom Christ has died.

Second, the graphic realism with which Hypatios depicted the physical death of Christ enables his auditors to have compassion for those who have died in poverty. The crucified Christ, rejected by humankind, was naked, dishonoured, and unburied until Joseph of Arimathea intervened and provided him a tomb. Moreover, his entire life was one of enduring his vicissitudes with “indifference” (ἀτρέπτως). In choosing this rare word, Hypatios is not saying that Christ endured by adopting a Stoic indifference to his sufferings. Rather ἀτρέπτος, as the LSJ indicates,²³ refers to the fact that Christ had acquired an indifference to ill-repute (Plutarch, *Alc.* 13). In other words, Christ’s entire life was one of rejection, of being deemed as dishonourable by humanity, and, in response, he met this contempt with the steely resolve of his love for the lost.

The experience of Christ while he was alive and at his death poses the question about how the dishonoured and unburied deceased should be treated, especially if they belonged to the poor and destitute at the base of the social pyramid. The language of “honour”, used twice by Hypatios, jumps out from the text – they should be given an honoured burial *gratis*. To fail in this regard is to demonstrate impiety towards the Body of Christ, Hypatios concludes, and the impious perpetrators of such a dishonour should be excluded from the church as a stranger. The language of ἀσέβεια (“impiety”) in the imperial Ephesian inscriptions is just as harsh, though it is confined to those who might desecrate idols.²⁴ Moreover, the exclusion from Ephesian civic life, by

²² For further discussion of the Graeco-Roman and Jewish context of φιλανθρωπία in Titus 3:4, see C. SPICQ, *Saint Paul: Les épîtres pastorales* (Paris 1947) 275–6; B. WITHERINGTON III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians. Volume 1: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John* (Downers Grove 2006) 156–8.

²³ LSJ, ἀτρέπτος, ον. The meaning, “without hesitation”, for ἀτρέπτως does not fit the context in the letter of Hypatios.

²⁴ *I.Ephesos* 1a.27 l. 217 (AD 104): “... the one who does any of these things, let him be liable for sacrilege and impiety (ἀσεβεία).”

means of an imprecation of a curse against the miscreant charged with sacrilege and impiety,²⁵ was just as swift.

The social force of the Ephesian honouring of the poor in antiquity is profound when one remembers that the very existence of the poor was erased from the historical record as a “non-event” at death. At Rome, Martial tells us, city-dwellers would have frequently seen the *vespillones* (“corpse-bearers”) carrying the body of an anonymous pauper “like a thousand that the pauper’s pyre receives” (Martial, *Epigr.* 8.75). The poor suffered what Pliny the Younger called “the injustice of oblivion” (*Ep.* 3.5.4). The situation would have been no different at Ephesus. In this inscription we see an important and innovative social policy towards the poor launched by the Ephesian church, irrespective of whether the poor were members of an Ephesian association and therefore, as members, could reasonably expect burial as part of their membership fees. Free burial in the Ephesian Body of Christ, however, was not just for paying “insiders.” Notwithstanding the pioneering social innovation of the Church of Mary, Hypatios, as an Ephesian believer, still shared the ethnic prejudices of his age. This is seen in his rhetorical resort to the racial stereotype of “Jewish covetousness”,²⁶ overlooking in the process Paul’s radical “Magna Carta” for God’s new society which reconciled Jew and Gentile in unity (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:11–22).

3. Conclusion

The pious preference in ecclesial status assigned to the apostle of Ephesus, John, over against the martyr of Smyrna, Polycarp, represents (ironically) a telling example of the early Christian cultural carry-over of the honour-driven hierarchical values of seating precedence for the Ephesian elites (*SEG* 34.1688a–d; *I.Ephesos* 6.2086a–b), expressed in this instance by competitive intercity rivalry. By contrast, bishop Hypatios’ extension of free burial to all and sundry understood much better the humiliation of the crucified Christ and its relevance for a radical social reordering at Ephesus.

²⁵ *I.Ephesos* 1a.26 ll. 22–23 (time of Commodus): the gerousia “voted that he should be liable to (the charge of) impiety and sacrilege (ἀσεβεία).”

²⁶ On Jews as lovers of money, see *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* 29 Firmus, Saturninus, Proclus, Bonosus, 9.6–7: “Their only god is money, and this the Christians, the Jews and, in fact, all nations adore.” On anti-Semitism in antiquity, see J. G. GAGER, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford/New York 1985); P. SCHÄFER, *Judeophobia: Attitudes towards the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass./London 1977).

15. Heavenly Laughter in a Funerary Poem¹

Georgios Deligiannakis and Philipp Pilhofer



Fig. 41: ICG 4711 – The late antique epigram, probably from Egypt, late 5th c. AD
(Archäologische Studiensammlung der Universität Greifswald Inv. 506;
photo: Heinrich Schliemann-Institut, Universität Rostock)

¹ This article is the summary of DELIGIANNAKIS / PILHOFER 2025. Many aspects are discussed in detail there, giving a comprehensive bibliography. Yet the reader should note nn. 34 and 43 as they add comparative epigraphical evidence that was not mentioned in the previous publication.



Fig. 42: ICG 4711 – The incised cross on the other side of the stone (Archäologische Studiensammlung der Universität Greifswald Inv. 506; photo: Heinrich Schliemann-Institut, Universität Rostock)

The stone came to Greifswald about 1900; it was purchased by the German philologist Wilhelm Weißbrodt.² This object was the only Greek inscription available at the University of Greifswald, where it was used by the Austrian Josef Keil to instruct young epigraphers how to create paper squeezes.³ When the Institut für Altertumskunde in Greifswald was closed in 2006, its archaeological collection was loaned to the Heinrich Schliemann-Institut of the University of Rostock, where it is kept to this day.

The stone is made of yellowish limestone, its dimensions are H 44.5 cm, W 40 cm, D 5.5 cm; letters: H 0.012–0.007 m. On the one side, it shows an engraved, symmetrical, cross with slightly concave arms within a circle and a laurel wreath. It shows remains of red paint. On the other side, it bears an inscription in two columns. A red painted vertical groove separates the two inscribed columns and corresponds to the central axis of the cross, which is engraved on the other side of the slab. The first column of the inscribed text consists of 23 partly preserved lines of a funerary poem in dactylic hexameters with one hexameter per line. Only some initial letters are preserved from the last 12 rows of the second column (not given here). The material of the stone combined with the information about the acquisition by Weißbrodt lead Keil to the conclusion that the stone most probably originated in Egypt. The inscription has been dated – based on content, language, style and letter form – to the fifth century by Keil, De Martino and Agosti.⁴ Probably the stone functioned as part of a funerary monument that cannot have been part of the liturgical furnishings of a church.

² Archäologische Studiensammlung der Universität Greifswald Inv.Gr 506. For Weißbrodt and Braunsberg cf. B.10. PILHOFER, “Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates”, 179.

³ KEIL 1961, 131.

⁴ KEIL 1961, 132; DE MARTINO 1997, 415; AGOSTI 2013, 245.

(Column A)

- [.....]μον φ[ιλ - - - - -]
 [.....]ὑποδ[ρη]στῆρα παννυψ[ί]στου βασιλῆος]
 [ἔργμασιν οὐ]δ' ἐτέεσσι γεραιό[ν - - - -]
 [.....]νίης ἀριδείκετον ὄ[- - -]
 5 [.....]σοφίην, συμφράδμονα κα[ὶ - - -]
 [.....]ἐμ]οὶ ποθέοντι φιλαίτατον αἰὲν [ἐταῖρον],
 [σώματο]ς ἀπλακίης ἀλλότριον, ᾧ ἐπιχαί[ρει]
 [φαιδρῶς] μειδιῶν ἀγαθὸς Θεός - εἰ καὶ ἀχεύ[ων],
 [λυπη]ρῆς στοναχῆς ἀποπαύομαι, ὡς ἐδιδάχ[θην].
 10 [Ὡς γὰρ] ὑποδρηστῆρες ἀειζῶοιο Θεοῖο
 [θλιβό]μενοι γελῶντες ἔτι ζῶουσι θανόντες
 [καὶ γοε]ρῶν καμάτων ἀντάξια δῶρα λαχόντες
 [ἤδη κὰκ] κεφαλᾶς στεφάνους φορέοντες ἐτοίμους
 [τῶν μογ]ερῶν λήθοντο πόνων, παύσαντο δὲ δίσψης
 15 [εὖνως μ]ειδιῶντα Θεοῦ Θεὸν υἱὸν ἰδόντες·
 [θυμοῦ δ' ἐξ] αὐχέντος ἐπεγγελόντες ἀνίη
 [λυπηρῇ κα]τὰ γαῖαν ἐπὶ χρόνον αἰνὰ παθόντες
 [χῶρον ἀν' οὐ]ράνιον πανακήρατον ἔλλαχον εὖχος·
 [ὡς σὺ καμῶ]ν ἐπὶ βαιὸν ἀκήρατον ἥρπασες εὖχος·
 20 [οὐ μὴν γὰρ τ]έθνηκας, ὅτ' ἔπλεο πιστὸς ὁπάων
 [τῆς Ἀγίας Τ]ριάδος ζωαρκέος οἴος ἐτύχθης
 [δοῦλος ἐὼν ἄκμ]ητος ἀνηνάμενος χθονὸς ἔργα
 [καὶ πιστοὺς ἐδίδα]ξας ἀπηνέα δαίμονα φεύγειν.

Editorial notes:¹ 1. 20 [οὐ μὴν γὰρ τ]έθνηκας Keil: [οὐ γάρ πω τ]έθνηκας Valerio (cf. *Od.* I 196 = XI 461) [in AGOSTI 2013]; 1. 21 [τῆς Ἀγίας Τ]ριάδος Keil: [ἀχράντου Τ]ριάδος vel [τῆς ἱερῆς Τ]ριάδος; Agosti [2013] (cf. Greg. Naz. PA 8.82.2): [σεμνοτάτης Τ]ριάδος.

¹ Editions and translations: KEIL 1961, 130–2, pl. 69; DE MARTINO 1997, 413–23 (Italian translation; commentary); AGOSTI 2013, 242–3 (Italian translation); DELIGIANNAKIS / PILHOFER 2025 (text and English translation).

My beloved? ...

... a servant of the most-high sovereign, mature
in works rather than years ...

... illustrious ...

5 ... wisdom, adviser ...

... and [helper] to me. I constantly miss my dearest companion,
a man alien to the sin of the body, at whom
the good God joyfully smiles and rejoices. – Even if I mourn,
I cease my painful lament, as I was taught.

10 [For] the servants of the immortal God,

laughing in their distress, live on after they die.

Having received gifts of value equal to their lamentable pains

and wearing crowns prepared for their heads,

they have already forgotten their grievous afflictions and have satisfied
their thirst

15 having seen God the son of God smiling kindly.

With a proud soul despising their

[grievous] pain, although they had suffered horribly on earth
for a while, they have obtained immaculate glory in Heaven.

[You, too, in the same way], having suffered for a while, achieved
immaculate glory.

20 [In fact,] you are not dead, having been a faithful follower

of the Holy Trinity who gives life. Such a tireless

servant you proved to be, having rejected the works of the earth

[of this world]

and having taught the faithful to flee the cruel Devil.

1. Why *this* Inscription?

Concepts about the meaning of life and the afterlife, first expressed in classical antiquity and early Christianity, have remained with us to this day. A Jesus Christ welcoming the beloved ones in heaven is certainly one of them. The stories of the early Christian martyrs who laughed at death and their executioners have inspired later stories celebrating the self-denial and sacrifice of medieval saints, national martyrs and fighters for freedom, for democracy, for a more just world. Those who admired and were inspired by their heroism often imagined them as fearless and serene, sometimes even smiling, and maintaining their courage in the face of their executioners. The presence of the verbs γελάω/γελῶ ('laugh') and μειδιάω/μειδῶ ('smile') pertaining to the Christian martyrs and Jesus makes this late antique funerary epigram here exceptional: neither a smiling Christ nor laughing martyrs are attested elsewhere in Christian epigraphy. Moreover, it is the only instance in Christian literature in which both Christ and the martyrs are described specifically as laughing or smiling when they meet, probably in heaven.

2. Interpreting the Inscription's Text

The text makes clear that the deceased, whose name was probably mentioned in the lost section of the inscription, was young and a devout Christian. The narrator's faith in Christian teachings, evidenced in l. 9, and his belief that the virtuous life of the deceased ensures him equal status with the privileged position of Christian martyrs in Heaven are the main consoling devices of the poem. Based only on what the text says, despite the extensive comparison of the deceased's lot with that of the martyrs, he could not have died a martyr.⁵ There is ample parallel epigraphical material to show that imitating the lives of the martyrs and that of Christ was thought to be enough to lead to communion with Christ and the saints in Heaven without the need for martyrdom. According to Christian teaching, martyrs, prophets, saints, and ascetics ascend to Heaven and meet Christ there immediately after death.⁶ However, this belief in the martyr's direct access to Heaven came to be extended to other believers too, who had led an exceptionally virtuous life. Some lay people too were often described in epitaphs as having received a

⁵ Also KEIL 1961, 132.

⁶ This belief is based on Rev 6:9–11 and 20:4, which is then elaborated on by Tert. *Mart.* 2.4; Cypr. *Carth. Ep.* 31.3; Dion. Al. in Eus. *Caes. HE* 6.42.5. Cf. A. STUIBER, *Refrigerium Interim. Die Vorstellung vom Zwischenzustand und die frühchristliche Grabeskunst* (Bonn 1957) 74–81.

martyr's crown as a reward and enjoying a privileged afterlife in the company of God.⁷

Keil, de Martino and others accept that the voice of the epigram should be the father of the deceased.⁸ However, apart from its strong consolatory tone and the young age of the departed, we cannot find any compelling evidence in the epigram itself for this view. The words *συμφράδμων* ('adviser') in line 5 and perhaps *[ἐταῖρον]* ('companion') in line 6 point to a bond of close companionship between the two men. From a number of phrases at the beginning and the end of the poem ("soldier of the Holy Trinity"; "having rejected the works of the earth [of this world]"; and, especially, the paradigmatic tone of the phrase "and having taught the faithful to flee the cruel Devil") one can infer that the deceased was not merely a virtuous and celibate Christian, but possibly a member of the clergy.

The first section of the text, which is not very well preserved, concludes with the 'speaker's' statement that he finds it difficult to contain his emotions but that Christian teaching eases the pain of loss and death: the dead will follow the fate of the martyrs in securing a place in Heaven. Yet, the significance of this inscription lies mainly in the presence of the verbs *γελᾶω/γελώω* and *μειδιᾶω/μειδιώω*, which occur no less than four times in the text (ll. 8, 11, 15 and 16).⁹ The smile God bestows on the dead man in l. 8 is associated with chastity. The eulogy of the deceased is then structured through a series of antitheses describing the state of the martyrs before and after death: even in their distress they laugh, though dead they live on, though tortured they wear victory wreaths.¹⁰ They mock their earthly sufferings and enjoy eternal glory in Heaven. Their thirst is quenched in Heaven once they see Christ smiling at them. God smiles again at the martyrs in l. 15, while they laugh in l. 11 and laugh at their earthly suffering in l. 16.

⁷ P. GEMEINHARDT, "Eschatological Motifs and Patterns of Thought in Christian Hagiography", in: H. MARLOW et al. (eds.), *Eschatology in Antiquity. Forms and Functions* (Abingdon / New York 2021) 491–7; cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 108.31 (for Paula). In epigraphy: DRESKEN-WEILAND 2012, 103–5, 150–3, 214–6; I. KAJANTO, "The Hereafter in Ancient Christian Epigraphy and Poetry", *Arctos* 12 (1978) [27–53] 31–2, 37, 48, 53; *PA* VII, 613; *PA* VII, 673; *SEG* 53.962 (Crete).

⁸ KEIL 1961, 131–2; DE MARTINO 1997, 420; *SEG* 47.2148; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2007, 297.

⁹ While there's a nuanced variety of words in Greek (esp. *γελᾶω* vs. *μειδιᾶω*), in Latin *subrideo* means smiling, but often also *rideo* is used to imply that.

¹⁰ Christian martyrdom is often seen as an *agon*: The martyrs as (godly) garlanded winners. Cf. *ICG* 372, l. 1f.: τὸν ... οὐρανόυ Γενέτοϋ κύδιμον ἀθλοφόρον. See also *ICG* 539, 817, 2381 and, regarding a female martyr, 4283.

3. The Element of Laughter in a Funerary Context: Polytheistic and Christian

In its conceptions of the afterlife the Graeco-Roman world is characterized by pluralism. Having said that, the traditional understanding of the afterlife in Greek and Roman antiquity is that of a miserable existence in Hades. Hades is described as a dark abode, where laughter has no place. Hades himself is called ἀμείδης ('unsmiling') and δακρυχαρής ('delighting in tears').¹¹ Less frequently, on tombstones, one encounters total denial of any form of existence after death, expressed in nihilistic, solemn or even humorous ways.¹²

The other major belief about the afterlife among polytheists is that after death souls leave the body and, on account of their virtues, achievements, youth, or prior initiation into the mysteries, live an eternal blissful existence in variously described domains, among the gods, the blessed, the heroes, or other initiates (i.e. the Elysian Fields, the Isles of the Blessed, Mount Olympus, or among the stars). These VIP lounges are described as pleasant, but normally lack any clear reference to laughter.

As regards premortal, earthly laughter, in a significant number of funerary inscriptions there is a perception of death as the end of laughter and joy, hence the frequent exhortations to the living to enjoy life while it lasts. For example, on the tombstone of the *agonothetes* Capella in Prusias in Bithynia, we read the following:

Play and laugh as long as you live, for when you come here, there is nothing to see but night and silence. Here, there is no hum of the itinerant porter (or teacher), no one sees anyone here jumping about, and while Daphnos holds my body as an eternal abode, my good soul has entered the heavens.¹³

The separation between the dead body and a surviving immaterial entity appears frequently in metrical inscriptions and continues – with the appropriate adaptations – in Christian contexts as well.¹⁴ The same applies to the concept of the soul's ascent after death to a blissful heavenly domain and the idea of death as sleep.

The social and eschatological movement that was Christianity nonetheless reduced the multiplicity of ideas about the afterlife associated with the pagan world, introducing others that were less diverse and contradictory and more

¹¹ *IG Napoli* II 95, l. 2, 5; *I.Mylasa* 278*5, ll. 9–10; *IG XII,6* 2, 740, l. 11 (Samos); *PA* 7, 439; *PA* 7, 58–9. For more examples, including Christian ones, see HALLIWELL 2008, 370 note 89.

¹² A. WYPUSTEK, "Laughing in the Face of Death: a Survey of Unconventional Hellenistic and Greek-Roman Funerary Verse-Inscriptions", *Klio* 103.1 (2021) 160–87.

¹³ *I.Prusias* 72, ll. 9–13; *Steinepigramme* II 09/08/04 (3rd c. AD).

¹⁴ MERKT 2012, 53–5. DRESKEN-WEILAND 2012, 102–5.

rigorously dogmatic, moralistic and soteriological.¹⁵ The authoritative and paradigmatic force of the Scriptures as interpreted by the Church Fathers – i.e. the antigelastical attitude they claimed that Jesus took – cemented the Christian attitudes toward laughter and the meaning of worldly life as a whole and, apparently, loomed large in the performative language of Christian funerary inscriptions:¹⁶ Jesus said to his disciples (Luke 6:21.25) “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.” and “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep”, referring to the Second Coming, when the faithful would face the Lord (Matt 17:2; Rev 22:4; 1 Cor 13:12). Addressing the Christian community of Corinth, Paul (1 Cor. 15:29.32) is also clear: “Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? [...] What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’.” For Basil, as for most Church Fathers, Jesus never laughed. Basil therefore notes: “Since our master condemns those who laugh in this life, it is patent that for the believer there is never a right time for laughter.”¹⁷ John Chrysostom admonishes his congregation in similar words:

Yet hear how he dismisses all kinds of jesting. Now is a time of war and fighting, of watch and guard, of arming and arraying ourselves. The time of laughter can have no place here (οὐδένα τόπον ἐνταῦθα ὁ τοῦ γέλωτος ἀνέχοι καιρός); for that is of the world. Hear what Christ says: ‘The world shall rejoice, but you shall be sorrowful’ (John 16:20). Christ was crucified for your ills, and do you laugh? He was buffeted and endured such great sufferings because of your calamity and the tempest that had overtaken you; and you indulge yourself? And how will you not then rather provoke Him?¹⁸ And “let us mourn, my beloved, let us mourn now, so that we may really laugh, so that we may truly rejoice in the time of pure joy.”¹⁹ Having said that, Christian authors see the smile much more positively.²⁰

As a result of the general disapprobation of laughter and of the pagan views of life after death by the early Church, the notion of *carpe diem*, the theme of laughter, and a pessimistic view of the afterlife no longer have a place on Christian tombstones.

¹⁵ MERKT 2012, 20–5.

¹⁶ HALLIWELL 2008, 471–519; BACONSKY 1996.

¹⁷ Basil. *Ascet. magn.* 31 (PG 31.1104).

¹⁸ *In Ep. Eph.* 17 (PG 62.119).

¹⁹ *In Ep. Hebr.* 15.4 (PG 63.123–4).

²⁰ Basil. *Ascet. magn.* 17. Cf. *Sir.* 21:20 (‘a fool raises his voice in laughter, but a shrewd man will barely and quietly smile’); Clem. Al. *Paed.* 2.5; Io. Chr. *In Ep. Hebr.* 15.4 (PG 63.122). See HALLIWELL 2008, 483–519. For the desert fathers’ attitude towards laughter cf. BACONSKY 1996, 125–80.

Since a hedonistic approach to earthly life is generally condemned, eulogies of the happy life the deceased had lived are muted lest they make the deceased appear immoral and sinful in the eyes of the Christian community. In the very few cases in which references to the good life appear in epitaphs of first-generation Christians, they are tempered by soteriological expectations of salvation for the righteous.²¹ Similarly, the idea of death as the definitive end of existence ceases to find a place in funerary inscriptions, being contrary to the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. Moreover, mourning and pessimism about the afterlife are moderated thanks to eschatological hope.²² Joy shifts from earth to heaven, from the ephemeral embodied present to the incorporeal eternal future.

That said, this attitude, especially outside of ecclesiastical circles, should not be seen as mirroring late antique society as a whole: literary evidence and material culture bear witness to traditional attitudes vis-à-vis the hedonistic life and worldly delights that remained impervious to the new Christian moral standards.²³ As regards the corpus of Christian funerary epigraphy, however, belief in a blissful afterlife in communion with God and/or the saints as the reward for an exemplary life, or simply as something to hope for, becomes the most common feature.²⁴

4. The Smiling Martyrs

In our inscription the deceased is clearly identified with the Christian martyrs, who laugh at their extreme sufferings. These laughing martyrs echo numerous accounts in martyrs' (and apostles') *acta* and *passiones* in which, unlike Jesus, the martyr smiles in joy before death or during torture as s/he feels close to the end of their earthly torments, from which they feel detached,²⁵ and anticipates their imminent admission into the company of God and those who live with Him in Paradise. In contrast to the prescribed antigelastic conduct of the worldly and ascetic-minded Christian, the martyr's smile serves as

²¹ B.9. CHRISTIAN, "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes".

²² Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Musik und Gesang in den Kulturen der heidnischen Antike und christlichen Frühzeit* (Münster 1973) 218–231.

²³ PA VII, 603 (Julianus, prefect of Egypt); VII 602 (Agathias); X 87 (Palladas). John Chrysostom's need repeatedly to caution his audiences against laughter and other worldly pleasures evinces that those admonitions fell largely flat, as even he himself admits.

²⁴ MERKT 2012, 50; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2007, 289, 294, 297. Also, PA VII, 613.

²⁵ For that matter, see S. COBB, *Divine Deliverance. Pain and Painlessness in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (Oakland 2017).

an ideal of prodigious Christian faith and is filled with strong eschatological symbolism. We cite below a few examples of such texts.²⁶

In the Acts of the apostle Andrew (late 2nd c.) we are told that Andrew was smiling (μειδιών) while hanging on a cross. One of the bystanders asks him: “Why do you smile (Τί μειδιᾷς), Andrew, servant of God? Your laughter (ὁ γέλως σου) makes us mourn and weep, because we are being deprived of you.’ He answered him: ‘Should I not laugh (Οὐ μὴ γελάσω), my child?’” Andrew then gives a speech explaining his laughter, addressing the whole crowd: “What benefit is there for you who gain yourselves external goods but do not gain your very selves? [...] Flee from everything merely temporal. Even now speed away with me. [...] I am leaving to prepare routes there for those who align themselves with me and are equipped with a pure faith and love for him”²⁷.

In the Martyrdom of Karpos, Papylos and Agathonike (late 2nd/early 3rd c.) we read that, while Karpos was being nailed down to be burnt in the amphitheatre of Pergamum, he appeared to be smiling (προσεμειδίασεν). The bystanders were amazed and asked him “What’s made you laugh (Τί ἐστὶν ὅτι ἐγέλασας;)?” And Karpos said to them: “I saw the glory of the Lord and I rejoiced and moreover I am now freed from you and have no share of your sins.”

In the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas (3rd/4th c.) we read: “The day of their victory dawned, and they marched from the prison to the amphitheater, joyously (*hilaris*), as if going to heaven, their faces radiant (*vultu decori*); and if by chance they trembled, it was from joy and not from fear.”²⁸ – “The joy of the martyrdom, their hope in the promises, their love for Christ, and the Spirit of the Father” comforted the martyrs of Lyon (late 2nd c.) and made them advance towards death “joyously, with majesty and great beauty mingled on their countenances”, as if taking part in a wedding feast, leaving behind only “joy, peace, harmony and love” to their loved ones.²⁹

This theme could be extended to dialogues with an opponent, basically illustrating who has the last laugh. The Martyrdom of Pionios and his Companions (late 3rd c.) is a case in point. The apologia of Pionios and his companions takes place before the assembled crowd in the Roman forum of

²⁶ The sources are abundant: In the hagiographical writings available on TLG there are nearly 500 instances of μειδιάω or derivatives thereof. On the smile of the martyr in martyrologies in general, see LANFRANCHI 2022.

²⁷ *Acts Andr.* 55–58 (CChr.SA 6, 519,6–7 ; 523,1–2 ; 525,21–22 ; 527,3–4 ed. PRIEUR; translation D. R. MACDONALD, *The Acts of Andrew and The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* [Atlanta / Georgia 1990] 417–425).

²⁸ *Pass. Perp. Fel.* 18.1 (translation HEFFERNAN 2012, 119 l. 5–6, 133).

²⁹ *Fr. ep. mart. Lugdun.* 1.34–35 and 2.7 (TU 172 62, l. 14–18 and 76, l. 11 ed. SEELIGER / WISCHMEYER; translation MUSURILLO, 73 and 85).

Smyrna on the day of the Jewish Passover. At the exhortation of the priest of the imperial cult to renounce his faith Pionios will begin his apologia, the text tells us, with a joyful face. Further on, when Polemon the imperial priest asks Pionios to sacrifice, Pionios says: “Would that I were able to persuade you to become Christians”. The others around Polemon burst into loud laughter (μέγα ἀναγελάσαντες) and said: “You have not such power that we should be burnt alive.” “It is far worse”, Pionios answered them, “to burn after death.” The Christian Sabina, who was also present, smiles (μειδιώσης) at Pionios’s words and the priest and his people said to her: “Are you laughing?” And she said: “If God so wills, I do. You see, we are Christians. Those who believe in Christ will laugh unhesitatingly in everlasting joy (Γεῆξ; ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· Ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς θέλῃ, ναί· χριστιανοὶ γὰρ ἔσμεν· ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν πιστεύουσιν ἀδιστακτως γελάσουσιν ἐν χαρᾷ αἰδίῳ),” echoing Christ’s words in Luke.³⁰

Being sardonic or joking was also part of the martyr’s performative repertoire, if this served catechetical purposes. In the final hour of their martyrdom when their flesh was being burned on a pyre, a smiling Saint Lawrence in Rome and three martyrs in Phrygia – Makedonios, Theodoulos, and Tatianos – would give more or less the same answer to their torturer: “You have roasted one part; turn over the other and eat”³¹.

One can thus argue that the martyrs’ laughter, as well as the series of antitheses in the Rostock text regarding the martyrs’ posthumous lot go back to numerous martyrological accounts. These texts were pivotal in forming the Christian identity, notions of the ideal behaviour of community members, perceptions of the afterlife, and Christian art. In these texts and our inscription, the martyrs’ smile in the face of death or during torture expresses joy, as they know they are approaching the end of their earthly toil and because they are certain that they will soon meet their Lord in Paradise.³² It also denotes moral superiority over, and defiance of, their torturers and the passions of the body. The use of the verb ἐπεγγελάω (laugh at, exalt over)

³⁰ M. Pion. 7.3–5 (TU 172 144, l. 26–146. l. 4 ed. SEELIGER / WISCHMEYER; translation MUSURILLO, 145–7).

³¹ Ambr. *De off.* 1.41.207; Prud. *Perist.* 11.401–8. For a more elaborated dialogue between Decius and Laurence see *Passio Polochronii* 27–28: Laurence answers “smiling and was consoled” (FC 96,2 326 l. 13–16 ed. SEELIGER / WISCHMEYER: “ridens confortabatur”); translation M. LAPIDGE, *The Roman Martyrs. Introduction, Translations, and Commentary* (Oxford 2018) 341–3. Socr. Const. *HE* 3.15.6. On martyrs’ jokes, see LANFRANCHI 2022, 89–91.

³² W. AMELING, “Das Jenseits der Märtyrer” in: id. (ed.), *Topographie des Jenseits. Studien zur Geschichte des Todes in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (Stuttgart 2011) [69–81] 74. Cf. M. HINTERBERGER, “Messages of the Soul: Tears, Smiles, Laughter and Emotions Expressed by them in Byzantine Literature”, in: M. ALEXIOU / D. CAIRNS (eds.), *Greek Laughter and Tears. Antiquity and After* (Edinburgh 2017) [125–45] 143–4, on saints dying with a smile on their lips.

in l.16 of the Rostock poem precisely manifests the martyrs' superiority over the travails of the carnal existence.³³ Just as here, in a Christian epitaph from Vienne in Gaul the word *ridens* is used to express the contempt of the deceased Celsa for adversity in life: "[Celsa] repudiated worldly things and subjected her flesh to the cross, and fearing prosperity, she always laughed at adversity (*semper aduersa ridens*)." Celsa's epitaph is exactly dated to the year 518.³⁴

5. Jesus's Smile

In the Rostock inscription, God/Jesus is presented as smiling in lines 8 and 15. The aversion to laughter among Christian authorities was primarily founded on the observation that Jesus never appeared laughing or smiling in the Gospels, as well as on His beatitude in Luke's version, as mentioned above. While the Gospels deal with Jesus's life on earth, the smile associated with him here surely occurs in heaven. However, even though this appears to be entirely consistent with the eternal rejoicing enjoyed in Paradise, this motif is uncommon in Christian texts. That being said, a smiling Jesus does appear in a few apocryphal apostolic romances and apocalypses.

Jesus appears to laugh in a group of fourth-century apocryphal texts, mainly from Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt.³⁵ Jesus laughs ironically at his disciples, who do not understand the true meaning of his teaching: in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (late 2nd/early 3rd c.), Peter recounts an apocalyptic vision in which, while the docetic Christ is arrested and crucified, the true Saviour, "glad and laughing", watches the crucifixion scene from above and reveals himself to him.³⁶ The *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (late 2nd/early 3rd c.) presents a variation on the same episode: Simon of Cyrene takes the place of Jesus on the cross, here again Jesus, sitting in heaven and watching the scene, laughs haughtily at the ignorance of his disciples.³⁷ In these texts, Jesus'

³³ The verb ἐπεγέλαω does not seem to appear in the late antique hagiographica, at least not applied to the martyrs (TLG).

³⁴ F. DESCOMBES, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures à la Renaissance carolingienne*. XV Vienne du Nord (Paris 1985), 351–6, no. 82, l. 5–9

³⁵ On the laughter-motif in these texts: G.G. STROUMSA, "Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered" in: id. (ed.), *The Crucible of Religion in Late Antiquity. Selected Essays* (Tübingen 2021) 91–108 (revised version of "Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered" in: *J ECS* 12 (2004) 267–288).

³⁶ *Apoc. Petri*, NHC VII,3: 81.11, 17; 82.6; 83.1–4. Cf. *Apoc. Io.*, CG, II, 13.19; 22.11; 26.25.

³⁷ *Treat. Seth*, NHC VII,2, 55,30–56,19. Also *Iren. Adv. haer.* 1.24.4; *Epiphan. Panar.* 24.3 (as the Gnostic Basilides' doctrine). *Gospel of Judas* 21, 24, 31, 42 (ed. KASSER/MEYER/WURST).

laughter is derisive and echoes the way that laughter often functions in the Old Testament where the god JHWH is also shown laughing.³⁸ Setting aside these cases where Jesus laughs in derision or happiness, what appears to be more relevant to His smile in our example is a series of apocryphal accounts of Christ's epiphanies to his apostles.

One of John's sermons to the brethren in the apocryphal *Acts of John* (late 2nd/early 3rd c.) is relevant to our subject here: "Let him [Jesus] rejoice along with us, because we behave well; let him be glad because we live in purity. Let him be refreshed because our behaviour is sober. Let him be unconcerned because we are temperate, let him be pleased because we live in fellowship, let him laugh because we show self-control, and let him be delighted because we love him!"³⁹ The juxtaposition here of chastity with Jesus's smile is striking, as it could be seen roughly to correspond to the first lines of the Rostock poem. In the same text, a beautiful celestial youth appearing in a vision, and identified with Christ, greets John with a smile and commands him to resurrect the Christian Drusiana.⁴⁰

In the context of the imminent death of one of His servants, a vision of a smiling Christ proclaiming a blessed afterlife can be found in the *vita* of St Ambrose of Milan by Paulinus of Milan (written ca. 422). There we read that: "In the same place in which he [Ambrose] was lying, as we have learned from a report of St. Bassianus, bishop of the church at Lodi, for he himself had heard it from St. Ambrose, when he was praying with this St. Bassianus, he observed that the Lord Jesus had approached him and was smiling upon him. And not many days later he was taken away from us."⁴¹

Though not a standard feature of his epiphanies, in the above examples Jesus's smile is revealed as a friendly, encouraging, and reassuring gesture. Similarly, in pagan epic poetry a smile often expresses affable kindness, which, whenever gods meet mortals, is combined with a sense of superiority.⁴²

Paradise, a place of joy, is often associated with dancing, and sometimes even with dancing saints.⁴³ A few descriptions of the martyrs arriving in Paradise and their first contact with God suggest that the kind of smiling

³⁸ On laughing in the Old Testament cf. HALLIWELL 2008, 479, 517, note 110.

³⁹ *Act. Io.* 107.9 (CChr.SA 1, 297,9 ed. JUNOD / KAESTLI) has the main phrase as "γελάτω [μειδιάτω] σωφρονούντων ὑμῶν" (translation based on J. K. ELLIOTT / J. KEITH (eds.), *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford 1993) p. 335, par. 107.

⁴⁰ *Act. Io.* 73.3 (CChr.SA 1, 267,3 ed. JUNOD / KAESTLI).

⁴¹ Translation J.A. LACY, "Life of St. Ambrose by Paulinus", in: R.J. DEFERRARI (ed.), *Early Christian Biographies* (Washington, D.C. 2001) [25–66] 61 (47).

⁴² For more examples and discussion, see HALLIWELL 2008, 53, 55.

⁴³ For example in the grave epigram for Attia, the philosopher, from Nikaia (ICG 4651 = *Steinepigramme* II 09/05/15, line 5 to 9): ὤδε σε / καὶ παράδεισος ἔχει ψυχὴν / τε ἅγιος

attested here can be understood in the framework of Christ's welcoming newcomers to Paradise. A vision from the *passio* of the martyrs Marian and James suffices: the future martyr Marian, after being tortured, experiences a vision that brings him to a tribunal in the heavenly court where the martyr Cyprian welcomes him with a smile (*arrisit*) and asks him to sit with him.⁴⁴ The cordial welcome to Heaven and meeting with God he experienced is described in a vision attributed to Perpetua in her third-century *passio*: "And I saw an enormous garden and a white-haired man sitting in the middle of it dressed in shepherd's clothes, a big man, milking sheep. And standing around were many thousands dressed in white. And he raised his head, looked at me, and said: 'You are welcome here, child.' And he called me, and from the cheese that he had milked he gave me as it were a mouthful."⁴⁵ In another vision from the same text, Saturus and Perpetua gave God the kiss of peace, and He stroked their faces with his hand as if welcoming them.⁴⁶

Jesus's smile should be interpreted as affectionate and reassuring, as sometimes reported of the smiles of the pagan gods. It may also underline Jesus's major quality as a loving Father-God.

6. Conclusions

While the Rostock poem displays many eschatological ideas that can be found in other related texts (e.g. Christian mourning, the lot of the martyrs and the reward for the truly faithful, a description of Paradise), it contains as part of its genre some original and idiosyncratic elements. It declares that the deceased is equal in virtue to the crowned and laughing martyrs and along with them is finally able to see the face of God, who meets him with a welcoming smile. The deceased too laughs contemptuously at his earthly sufferings and, in his capacity as one of the blessed, he meets Jesus in Paradise. The theme of smiling martyrs is attested several times in martyrological *acta*. By contrast, the motif of God/Jesus smiling that appears twice in the text, does not stem from any standard textual tradition. A smiling Jesus appears in a few apocryphal apostolic narratives and in visionary literature; in most cases, the smile is meant as a friendly and reassuring gesture.⁴⁷ Jesus's smile can be here associated with the moment of his friendly encounter with the

νοῦς / καὶ χορὸς ἔνθα / ἀγίων σὺν ἀγαλλομένοισι / [π]ροφήταις ("Thus, paradise receives also your soul and holy mind (?), a place where the saints dance with exulting prophets").

⁴⁴ Musurillo *Acts*, 203.6.

⁴⁵ *Pass. Perp. Fel.* 4.9 (107, l. 10–12 ed. HEFFERNAN 2012; translation 127).

⁴⁶ *Pass. Perp. Fel.* 12.5 (115, l. 3–5 ed. HEFFERNAN 2012; translation 131).

⁴⁷ *In Ep. Hebr.* 15.4 (PG 63.122).

newly admitted martyrs in Paradise. Therefore, on one level, Jesus's smile can be understood as an amicable, welcoming nod to his elect upon their arrival and, on another, as a visual manifestation of His spiritual happiness and as a metonymy of Paradise's eternal joy. Believing that the beloved departed was enjoying all the pleasures of Paradise, including seeing Christ face to face smiling at him, would no doubt have offered solace to the living. Perhaps, one might suppose, the poet even sought to put a bitter smile on the faces of the passer-by, who shared the basic beliefs about the Christian afterlife and knew the stories of the martyrs and the saints.

C. Essays

Plurality and Transformation

The Epigram Selection in the Light of Two Paradigms for Conceptualizing the “Early Church” and “Ancient Christianity”

Andreas Merkt

Because the judicious commentaries on the individual inscriptions and the excellent introduction have already largely demonstrated the heuristic value of the individual epigrams, I would like to examine the inscriptions in their entirety from two perspectives in order to avoid redundancy. My aim is to confront this anthology, in the form of a sparsely footnoted essay, with two paradigms that currently dominate the view of the early church and ancient Christianity.

Firstly, this involves the plurality paradigm, which has dominated scholarly discourse in the USA regarding ancient Christianity since the English translation of the second edition of Walter Bauer’s *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im frühen Christentum* (*Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*) in 1971 and, since the 1990s, has increasingly influenced the European discourse on ancient Christianity, culminating in the talk of many “Christianities”.¹ Secondly, I draw on the transformation paradigm that was developed in the Berlin collaborative research centre “Transformations of Antiquity” (2006–2017).²

1. Plurality – Is it Still Responsible to Speak of “Ancient Christianity” or the “Early Church”?

The titles of recent textbooks as well as the names of some professorships testify to the fact that, within the major Christian churches, the view of church history has changed fundamentally. Whereas in the past the term “church history” – sometimes also referred to as “history of the church and its dogma”

¹ Cf. C. MARKSCHIES, *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen: Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie* (Tübingen 2007) [337–383] 339–369.

² BÖHME et al. 2011.

among Protestants – was common and unquestioned, today most colleagues prefer to speak of the “history of Christianity”.

In fact, ever since the introduction of the discipline, people have been arguing about what exactly its object of study should be.³ To name just two examples that are as well-known as they are extreme: The Lutheran church historian (and later systematic theologian) Gerhard Ebeling defined it as the “history of the interpretation of Holy Scripture”⁴. However, he was just as heavily criticized for this definition as his Catholic colleague Hubert Jedin, who defined the discipline’s object of study as the “growth in space and time of the church founded by Christ”.⁵

Victor Conzemius contrasted such dogmatically and denominationally determined views of the object of study with the demand for a de-theologization (*Enttheologisierung*). Like individual theologians of the Enlightenment long before him, he called in 1975 for a “non-theological” church history, and indeed in the interest of theology, as only a non-theologically determined church history could provide truly theologically inspiring results.⁶ To be sure, only a few years later, Elisabeth Ann Clark was able to describe, at least for the USA, the current status and perspective of historical theology in the words: “less theology, more history”⁷.

This de-theologisation was accompanied by a redefinition of the object of study. Albrecht Beutel postulated in 1997 that the object should no longer be the church (whatever is meant by this) or the traditional denominations, but rather every (historical) “claim to Christianness” (“Inanspruchnahme des Christlichen”)⁸. This definition, which emphasizes the diversity and

³ W. KINZIG / V. LEPPIN / G. WARTENBERG (ed.), *Historiographie und Theologie: Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte im Spannungsfeld von geschichtswissenschaftlicher Methode und theologischem Anspruch* (Leipzig 2004); B. JASPERT (ed.), *Kirchengeschichte als Wissenschaft* (Münster 2012); K. FITSCHEN / W. KINZIG / A. KOHLE / V. LEPPIN (ed.), *Kirchengeschichte und Religionswissenschaft: Methoden und Fallstudien* (Leipzig 2018) 49–91; C. KAMPMANN et al. (ed.), *Kirchengeschichte: Historisches Spezialgebiet und/oder theologische Disziplin* (Leipzig 2020).

⁴ G. EBELING, *Kirchengeschichte als Geschichte der Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift* (Tübingen 1947).

⁵ H. JEDIN, “Einleitung in die Kirchengeschichte”, in: idem (ed.), *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte: Von der Urgemeinde zur frühchristlichen Großkirche* (Freiburg / Basel / Vienna 1999) (reprint of the special edition of 1985) [1–55] 2.

⁶ V. CONZEMIUS, “Kirchengeschichte als ‚nichttheologische‘ Disziplin: Thesen zu einer wissenschaftstheoretischen Standortbestimmung”, *TThQ* 166 (1975) 187–197.

⁷ E. A. CLARK, *Women in the Early Church*, 2nd ed. (Wilmington 1987) 16.

⁸ A. BEUTEL, “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Kirchengeschichte: Begriff und Funktion einer theologischen Kerndisziplin”, *ZThK* 94 (1997) [84–110] 88, reprinted in: idem, *Protestantische Konkretionen: Studien zur Kirchengeschichte* (Tübingen 1998) 1–27. Cf. M. WRIEDT, “Einheit in der Vielfalt: Die weltweite Inanspruchnahme des Christlichen als Gegenstand der theologisch verantworteten Geschichtsschreibung”, *ET-Studies* 6 (2015) 197–213.

heterogeneity of Christianity, has been widely accepted and is also used as the basis for more recent textbooks.⁹

For pragmatic reasons, the multifaceted claims to Christianness are usually subsumed under the unifying term “Christianity,” despite the fact that the plurality of the phenomena designated by this term has largely been recognized. However, as Cilliers Breytenbach and Christiane Zimmermann emphasize in the introduction, it is precisely this diversity that inscriptions are able to illustrate better than the majority of surviving literary texts. The diversity of Roman imperial and late antique Christianity illustrated by the epigrams presented in this volume is evident in several respects.

1.1 Plurality

1.1.1 Regional Diversity

The spatial dimension of this diversity is particularly striking. It concerns iconographic and linguistic forms of expression, but also rites and customs.

As Cilliers Breytenbach points out, the depiction of a cross with two feet found on the gravestone from Çukurcavak in Lycaonia is typical of gravestones from the area around Lystra and Konya (B.1).¹⁰ This form of depicting the cross is not found elsewhere. And even in this region, this distinctive motif disappears after the third century. This example thus also demonstrates the need to differentiate not only regionally but also chronologically when describing ancient Christianity.

The inscriptions in the village of Ag. Kirikos on the island of Ikaria west of Samos stand out, as Klaus Hallof notes, due to their unusual wording (B.12). The will of Philomenes attests to the special custom of a regular offering on a Friday for the city of Tanagra (B.9). And the invocation of a personal angel by Aurelius Zotikos Lykidas in Eumeneia confirms, as Stephen Mitchell emphasizes in his commentary, what other sources, especially the Synod of Laodicea and Theodoret, also suggest: since the time of the Letter to the Colossians, the Christians in Phrygia and Pisidia not only had a reputation for being particularly fond of invoking angels, but they apparently actually did so (B.3). However, the fragment of the pseudo-oracle from the Aegean island of Ikaria, which Klaus Hallof quotes at the end of his commentary, shows that angels, in this case an archangel, were also a natural part of religious life

⁹ HEYDEN / SALLMANN 2023, 11, 15, 23. GEMEINHARDT 2022, 2; W.-D. HAUSCHILD / H. DRECOLL, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, Bd. 1: Alte Kirche und Mittelalter*, 5th ed. (Gütersloh 2016) 115 f.

¹⁰ The numbers in brackets refer to the 15 sections of the central 2nd part of this book.

in other regions, albeit not as excessively and probably rarely as personalized as in western Central Anatolia (B.12).

Using the *parapegma* from Sikyon, Klaus Hallof demonstrates that not even the calendar of saints was uniform across all regions in the fifth century, namely at a time that was characterized by centralist attempts at homogenization: his comparative research has brought to light “only rare similarities in the names of days and saints” (B.11). In particular, the veneration of local saints played an important role in the “identity formation” of local churches, as Philipp Pilhofer emphasizes with regard to the aqueduct in Zenonopolis named after the holy martyr Socrates (B.10).

The reference to “apostolic bonds”, which the presbyter Daniel claims for Philippi, demonstrates the special function that the tracing back of a local church tradition to one or more apostles had, as Julien Ogereau rightly points out (B.13). The assertion of apostolic origins served not only to strengthen local church identity, but also to legitimize ecclesiastical independence. In fact, the insistence on regional peculiarities sometimes went hand in hand with a striving for independence. Daniela Summa refers to the efforts of the church of Cyprus to break away from Antioch, in which Barnabas and an autograph of the Gospel of Matthew played a central role (B.7 and 8). Behind the two Justinian inscriptions, too, there probably lies the desire for autarky of a local church, in this case Smyrna vis-à-vis Ephesus. However, James R. Harrison rightly argues against Keil and Grégoire that the two letters cited in the inscriptions emphasize the subordination of Smyrna through the argument of apostolicity: Ephesus can trace itself back to an apostle, precisely one as eminent as John, while Smyrna can only boast one apostolic disciple, namely Polycarp (B.14).

1.1.2 Diversity in Religious Doctrine and Practice

The aforementioned example of the regional cult of angels, which was classified as heretical by the bishops at the Synod of Laodicea, points to a further dimension of the plurality of ancient Christianity: alongside the doctrines and practices approved by the church superiors, there existed a multitude of alternative, sometimes complementary, sometimes rival ideas and forms of expression.

The depiction of a human-shaped cross (or, if you like, a cross-shaped human being) presented by Cilliers Breytenbach (B.1) must have caused some Christians to frown even at the time the tombstone was created around AD 200. In fact, it never became part of the standard repertoire of ecclesiastical iconography, as we find it mainly on church walls and in sarcophagus reliefs. Breytenbach hints at the reason for this when he associates this image with several scenes in extra-canonical writings. In fact, the motif is reminiscent of

parabiblical depictions of a cross acting as a person. In particular, the circular framing, which is reminiscent of a globe, could also evoke the image of the cosmic Christ stretching his arms to the ends of the earth. Influential authors such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Origen ascribed such ideas and writings to “heretical” groups as early as the time of the tombstone’s creation.

The criticism of parabiblical literature labelled as “apocryphal” was occasionally combined with the struggle against paraclerical authorities. The inscriptions presented by Stephen Mitchell seem to ascribe such a status to the mysterious Roubes (B.3). Holy men also played a central role in ascetic movements and communities, such as Eugenius, who appears in the second inscription presented by Christiane Zimmermann as the leader of the saccophores (B.5). Some of these communities represented socially revolutionary ideas on poverty and slavery, as can also be found in the extracanonical acts of the apostles that were popular among them. For these groups in particular, these and other inscriptions from the vicinity of Ladik complement what Basil of Caesarea, Amphilochius of Iconium, and Epiphanius of Salamis report about them and what can be inferred from those extracanonical acts of the apostles.¹¹

In view of the random nature of the tradition and the perspectival nature of the sources, it is of course possible that some special customs that are attributed to certain regions in the sources (such as the worship of angels) or are attested exclusively for one region (such as the offering of gifts on Fridays) were also practiced elsewhere. At any rate, these cases also illustrate the plurality of the lived religion of ancient Christians.

1.1.3 Diversity of Christian Lifestyles and Offices

Finally, this selection of inscriptions also sheds light on the diversity of Christian lifestyles and offices.

The prominent position of a bishop could be emphasized by the design of his tomb, as in the case of Cyprus (B.7), or that of the tomb and inscription of Bishop Eugenius (B.5). A loyal presbyter like Daniel regarded his bishop as a “guardian of the preaching of the gospel”, as a “shepherd appointed by God” and as a “leader and protector of the fatherland and the city” (B.13). On the one hand, he mentions the traditional dual function of the bishop: the pastoral office and the guardian or supervisory office. On the other hand, the latter designation reflects the assumption of political functions by the bishop. For from the Constantinian period onwards, bishops not only took care of

¹¹ In addition to Calder’s publications from the 1920s, see also the inscriptions in P. THONEMANN, “Amphilochius of Iconium and Lycaonian Asceticism”, *JRS* 101 (2011) 185–205; FILIPPINI 2015, 139–185.

the construction, furnishing, and renovation of churches, as in the case of the aforementioned Eugenius (B.5), but also extended their involvement to “secular” buildings, as Bishop Firminianus had done for the aqueduct in Zenonopolis (B.10).

With Daniel, the epigraphic florilegium of this volume also presents a presbyter (B.13). He looks back on a customary career in ministry. For him, serving as a lector was his entry into the clerical career and the diaconate was the preliminary stage to the presbyterate. Like the aforementioned Bishop Eugenius (B.5), Daniel was married – as were most presbyters of the time. He mentions his pious wife Aspilia. Not only did he live with her in a lawful marriage, but she was also, as he emphasizes, a “sister in Christ”. He does not mention children. The fact that he took care of his own burial place suggests that the marriage remained childless. Did this couple perhaps live a sexually abstinent life? And do we have here a testimony to what was called “abstinent celibacy,” as distinguished from “unmarried celibacy”? Did the couple decide from their ordination onwards to abstain from sexual intercourse? And does this also apply to Bishop Eugenius, married to a senator’s daughter, who neither mentions children in his inscription nor provides for the burial of his wife in the same grave (B.5)? Such questions must, of course, remain unanswered and thus belong to the realm of speculation. Nonetheless, the inscriptions of a presbyter and a bishop who were married but apparently lived childless lives point to the plurality of not only Christian, but especially clerical lifestyles.

The second inscription annotated by Christiane Zimmermann, on the other hand, presents us with a couple of a different kind (B.5). Here, two unmarried men were buried in the same grave. Are Severus and Eugenius simply predecessor and successor as leaders of the ascetic community of the saccophores? But if succession alone was the reason for the common burial place, why were they not joined by other successors? *ICG* 123 and 292 also refer to tombs in which exactly two clerics, not more, were buried. Does the formulation that Severus left Eugenius behind (κατέλιψεν) possibly suggest more? Did the two, like the other clerics buried in pairs, perhaps form a special cohabitation? The cohabitation of two men is already attested for the Egyptian monastic cells of the fourth century. A formal ceremony was also developed for such a marriage-like living arrangement, a ceremony through which the pair of brothers received the church’s blessing – a rite which, as Claudia Rapp has shown, remained controversial in Byzantium.¹²

¹² C. RAPP, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual* (Oxford 2014); J. BOSWELL, *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York 1994).

Be that as it may: at the very least, the inscription also provides evidence of a special office for the ascetic community of saccophores. Is the *πανεπίσκοπος*, as Filippini suspects, a “‘supervisore generale’, che probabilmente coordinava le varie cellule del movimento”¹³ that is, a supra-regional supervisory office, a kind of abbot-general based in Laodikeia Katakekaumene?

In any case, this inscription, like that of the Virgin Palladion (B.6), fits in with the multitude of evidence that, taken as a whole, shows that asceticism was not just one of many Christian ways of life. Rather, it shaped the late antique world to such an extent that one has often and rightly referred to an “ascetic revolution”¹⁴.

In addition to the clerical figures and offices mentioned, the anthology also presents several “laymen”, and thus not only the extraordinary case of the high-ranking politician Eugenius, who was tortured under Maximinus Daia and later ordained a bishop (B.5). Other laymen also set religious accents with their gravestones: Aquilia, together with her friend Julianus, sees her husband and two daughters with God, for they were always pious, generous to the poor, and also hospitable (B.4). And Philomenes gives instructions on how future owners of his property should honour the dead and the Trinity through memorial services, caring for the poor, and taking care of graves (B.9). These cases also remind us of a limit to the representativeness of late antique inscriptions: only wealthy citizens were at all in a position to finance expressive monuments, just as only educated people were inclined to provide them with inscriptions based on classical models.

Finally, semi-clerical functions also appear in the inscription of Hypatios of Ephesus: mortuary workers in church service, and religious women who also assumed funeral functions (B.14).

1.2 *Consensus and Coherence*

This collection thus appears to be suitable for further contributing to the liquefaction and dynamization of our image of ancient Christianity – and thus to the deconstruction of the object of a classical history of the church or of Christianity. Beutel’s definition of the object of church history initially seems to correspond to this tendency. This is because the various “claims to Christianness” prove to be so diverse that they cannot be reduced to a common denominator apart from the reference to Christ, meaning that the word Christian is ultimately semantically emptied. This is why church historians, especially in the German-speaking world, such as Katharina Heyden

¹³ FILIPPINI 2015, 141.

¹⁴ Cf. MERKT 2024, 545–572, with the references in notes 67–101 on pp. 782–4.

and Martin Sallmann, emphasize that Albrecht Beutel's definition certainly takes into account the "normative claims of Christian traditions".¹⁵

Peter Gemeinhardt attempts to capture what is implied here by the word "traditions" by using the term institution, understood in a broad sense that differs from the concept of organization. Beginning with Beutel's definition, but going beyond it, he focuses on the "history of the *institutionalization* of Christianity".¹⁶ This brings the "permanence in change" (and probably also the coherence in diversity) into view.¹⁷

In fact, the plurality paradigm, in its legitimate concern to overcome the simplifications of the past, runs the risk of overplaying the considerable synchronic and diachronic similarities that unite the majority of historical claims to Christianness despite all their diversity. Even in the second half of the second century, these commonalities were not hidden from an outside observer such as the critic of Christianity Celsus. As much as he criticized the disunity of Christians, he nevertheless recognized a "great church", a widespread majority church that differed from the smaller, often regionally limited conventicles.¹⁸ The self-portrayal of contemporary authors of the great church corresponds to this external image. Irenaeus, for example, emphasizes the almost global spread and doctrinal agreement of the church to which he himself belongs and explains the worldwide coherence of this church through the constancy of the traditional authorities, the Holy Scriptures and the office of bishop.

Despite their diversity and individuality, these inscriptions also bear witness to overarching commonalities.

1.2.1 Offices

The offices of bishop, presbyter, and deacon found there are not a regional or temporary peculiarity, but rather characterized church organization everywhere since the late second century. This applies not only to the larger church, but also to institutionalized movements such as Montanism or peripheral churches such as the Novatians, Donatists, and Melitians, or the new religion of the light of the Persian Mani. Furthermore, the mention of the ecclesiastical burial services of the *dekanoi* and *kanonikai* in the inscription of Hypatios is part of a series of sources which, from the late second century onwards testify at first sporadically, then from the late fourth century onwards increasingly

¹⁵ HEYDEN / SALLMANN 2023, 22.

¹⁶ GEMEINHARDT 2022, 2.

¹⁷ Ibid. 3 and 63.

¹⁸ Orig. *C. Cels.* 5,59–61.

and finally under Justinian on a broad front, to the efforts to place the entire burial system in the hands of the church.¹⁹

1.2.2 The Apostolicity Argument

Similarly, since the second century, the apostolicity argument – namely the attribution of a church's foundation to one or more apostles – played a central role everywhere in legitimizing the respective local church, as attested by Daniel for the church of Philippi (B.13) and the Justinian inscriptions for Ephesus and Smyrna (B.14). Some deviant groups also sometimes referred to – often 'secret' – apostolic traditions. And ascetic movements in Asia Minor, including perhaps the saccophores, also attempted to legitimize themselves with the help of the apostles: by calling themselves "Apostolic," they claimed that they were making the true apostolic way of life a reality.²⁰

From the fourth century onwards, apostle literature together with the emerging veneration of the saints, as attested by the *parapegma*, gained in the greater church an importance that stabilized existing structures. This distinguishes it from the majority of early parabiblical literature. With motifs such as the speaking cross and the cosmic Christ, which are echoed in the human-shaped cross (B.1), parabiblical literature generally aimed to counteract the established narratives about Jesus and the apostles that eventually became the New Testament. These parabiblical writings were intended to have a subversive effect on the "great church" that was still developing at the time and they were understood as such by their advocates. In contrast, from the Constantinian period onwards, new parabiblical and hagiographical literature mostly supported the established churches, often with an interest in their regional demarcation with autocephalous claims. The commentaries on the inscriptions from Ephesus and Cyprus rightly point to such cases of the support or rejection of the autocephalous claim on the basis of the apostolicity argument.²¹

1.2.3 Formulas and Images

As the inscriptions in the Seven Sleepers Catacomb testify, the Christians of the "great church" developed a distinct and also supra-regionally uniform

¹⁹ Cf. A. MERKT, *Rund um den Tod: Wie der Tod christlich wurde* (Regensburg 2025).

²⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 16,5,7; *Epiph. Panar.* 61,1. D. WEISSER, *Quis maritus salvetur?* (Berlin / New York 2016) 198–200 lit.

²¹ Cf. P. C. DILLEY, "The Invention of Christian Tradition", *GRBS* 50 (2010) 586–615; T. NICKLAS, "Neutestamentlicher Kanon, christliche Apokryphen und antik-christliche 'Erinnerungskulturen'", in: idem, *The Canon and Beyond. Collected Essays on the History and Hermeneutics of Biblical and Parabiblical Traditions* (Tübingen 2024) 297–318.

language early on, which included biblically inspired formulas such as “in God” or “in Christ” (B.2).

The same applies to iconography, which develops characteristic standard motifs such as the devouring of the prophet Jonah by the sea monster, a development that admittedly was still in its infancy at the time when Çukurvak’s image of Jonah, atypical by later standards, was created (B.1).

1.2.4 Beliefs

The supra-regional consensus also affected numerous beliefs. Everywhere, for example, martyrs were ascribed special significance for the fate of ordinary believers. They were regarded as a model for the fact that those who were faithful to the life-giving Trinity, as the inscription from the Greifswald collection states, would not be dead but would live, would not suffer but would experience the fulfilment of their wishes (B.15). The fact that the dead enjoy the fellowship of the martyrs is a standard idea that can be found everywhere and was also reflected in the liturgy.

Inscriptions and literature also attest to the widespread belief in an intermediate state, often associated with the Jonah motif, as Cilliers Breytenbach rightly points out (B.1): between death and resurrection, the soul is in a state of waiting, ideally in God’s presence, as Aquillia imagines for her husband and daughters (B.4), and is also in the company of saints and angels until it is reunited with its body at the end, ideally for final bliss. The opposite case is hardly ever the subject of funerary inscriptions, but if so, it is at most in the form of a curse, as in the Testament of Philomenes, which promises merciless destruction and pitiless punishment to the desecrator of the grave (B.9).²²

1.3 Individuality, Plurality and Normativity

As Timo Christian makes clear, Philomenes in particular offers a vivid example of how a late antique Christian sought to reconcile his individual religiosity and regional customs with ecclesiastical norms: he shows his concern for belonging to the church when he emphasizes that although the offerings should be made on Friday, which was not a church-wide custom, they should be made in the highly sacred precinct of the Trinity; that although the meal was apparently only held for family members, something should also be given to the poor and one should also care for neighbouring graves; that although a fire should be lit at the graves, which was controversial, this should at least only be done at night, as conceded by the church authorities (B.9).

²² MERKT 2012, 13–70.

Individuality and regionality as well as the resulting plurality were therefore not fundamentally opposed to the orientation towards church norms and the endeavour for uniformity. The majority of claims to Christianity exhibit far-reaching similarities that justify speaking of ancient Christianity as *a single*, albeit plural, phenomenon. And this applies not only to the often normative theological, pastoral, and canonical literature, but also to the epigraphy, which is generally more representative of the range of Christianity. What's more, comparable forms of organization and institutions across regions, as also documented in inscriptions, even make it seem legitimate to continue to apply the term "church" to certain collective and organized claims to Christianness.

2. Allelopoietic Transformation: On the Relationship between "Antiquity" and "Christianity"

If the plurality paradigm primarily aims to deconstruct the unifying concepts of "ancient Christianity" and "early church" along with the homogenization and essentialization they imply, the keyword "transformation" is primarily directed against a monodirectional understanding of late antique cultural change, as is usually evoked by terms such as reception, absorption or adoption, but also by terms like influence and impact. In this understanding, which one tries to overcome, early Christianity and antiquity are generally understood as homogeneous blocks whose collision fundamentally changed either one or the other.

The term "Christianization of the Roman world" has often been used to focus one-sidedly on the transformation of antiquity under the influence of the Christian religion. This one-sidedness is shared by such opposing interpretations as Edward Gibbon's decadence model and the triumphalist depiction of traditional Catholic church historiography. Harnack's concept of Hellenization is also based on a monodirectional understanding of the cultural change of the imperial period, albeit in the opposite direction: it is about the transformation of Christianity through the "Greek spirit" (Harnack, *Lehrbuch I*, 20).²³

²³ In view of the deficits of various concepts of Hellenization, Christoph Marksches has proposed a new conception using the transformation paradigm, which focuses primarily on the transformation of the education system: C. MARKSCHIES, *Hellenisierung des Christentums: Sinn und Unsinn einer historischen Deutungskategorie* (Leipzig 2012) esp. 117–123, also GEMEINHARDT 2022, 110, who criticizes the narrow focus on Alexandrian educational institutions and relates the concept of Hellenization to education in general and the entire and diverse development of a "scientific" theology.

In contrast to such traditional monodirectional concepts, the notion of allelopoietic transformation emphasizes both the constructed nature of concepts such as antiquity and Christianity as well as the reciprocity of events. Alfred Loisy had to illustrate the absurdity of Harnack's program of historically determining the pure essence of Christianity by way of the image of an onion, in the peeling of which one removes layer after layer without ever reaching an unhistorical core. It is now an academic truism that unhistorical Christianity, a pure gospel, or *the church* do not exist. These are concepts, not realities.

The same applies to "antiquity". Already Novalis stated, "One is very much mistaken if one believes that antiquity exists." "Only now is antiquity beginning to emerge. It arises under the eyes and the soul of the artist. The remnants of antiquity are only the specific stimuli for the formation of antiquity".²⁴ Hartmut Böhme, taking up Novalis' insight, speaks of allelopoiesis: Transformations generate "dynamics of cultural production by which that which precedes the transformation, what it reflexively refers to, and what is generated and specified only in the course of the transformation is always also changed"²⁵. Or, as Lutz Bergemann puts it: In the "act of appropriation – of transformation –, not only is the receiving culture modified, but in particular the culture of reference is also constructed".²⁶

The inscriptions collected in this volume bear witness to such allelopoietic dynamics, in which and through which "antiquity" and "Christianity" are actually created in the first place, so that these two dimensions emerge anew in a variety of ways in changing relationships.

2.1 From God to Prophet: A Pagan Deity as the Bearer of Revelation

The oracle of Apollo is a prime example of how the Christian adoption and absorption of an element of ancient culture constructs it in a new way (B.12). Superficially, the point here is to legitimize the transformation of a temple into a church through an authority of the ancient cultic world.

At the same time, however, the god Apollo, the god of light and purity, the arts and prophecy, is transformed into a "prophet" of the virgin birth. A word is chosen for his actions that echoes the name with which he was invoked

²⁴ NOVALIS, *Frg. über Goethe* (1798/99) quoted in H. BÖHME, "Einladung zur Transformation", in: BÖHME et al. 2011 [7–38] 12 f. (spelling updated).

²⁵ Ibid. 7. Cf. C. MARKSCHIES, "Antiquity and Christianity or: The Unavoidability of False Questions", in: D. BRAKKE / A.-C. JACOBSEN / J. ULRICH (ed.), *Beyond Reception: Mutual Influences between Antique Religion, Judaism, and Early Christianity* (Frankfurt am Main 2006) 17–34.

²⁶ L. BERGEMANN, "Transformation: Ein Konzept zur Erforschung kulturellen Wandels", in: BÖHME et al. 2011, 39.

in the cult, Πύθιος. At the same time, he introduces his proclamation in a Christ-like manner with an “But I”. By applying the biblical designation of prophet to him, the traditional Hellenic culture with its oracular system is given a quality of revelation that is equivalent to that of the Old Testament.

Guy Stroumsa has, not wrongly, chosen the image of the double helix for this double legitimization from Jewish tradition and Hellenic culture: the heritage that characterizes ancient Christianity resides in two intertwined strands connected by bridges: the tradition of Israel and the culture of Greece.²⁷ Just as the tradition of Israel was recreated in the form of its Christian reception as the “Old Testament”, antiquity was also recreated via ancient Christianity. Among other things, it was given a new dignity as a bearer of revelation.

2.2 Artistic Language

The adoption of ancient cultural material is also evident in formal terms. This selection of epigrams contains several examples of Homeric language. In his commentary on the Testament of Philomenes, Timo Christian rightly emphasizes that traditional education and Christian confession are evidently not contradictory here (B.9).

The same applies to the inscription of the saccophore leader Eugenius, written in elegiac distichs, which, in Christiane Zimmermann’s words, can be seen as evidence of a “poetic semantics of office” (B.5, note 33). It can be seen that the Christian epigraphers and poets dealt even more freely with the already quite free genre of the epigram than their non-Christian colleagues.²⁸

2.3 Asceticism

In praise of the virgin Palladian, not only is Greek artistic language used, but the terms ἀρετή, παρθενίη, and ἄχραντος also address a theme that

²⁷ G. G. STROUMSA, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tübingen 1999) 27–43.

²⁸ On this aspect of Christian freedom in general, see: T. FUHRER, “Hypertexts and Auxiliary Texts: New Genres in Late Antiquity?”, in: T. D. PAPANGHELIS / S. J. HARRISON / S. FRANGOULIDIS (ed.), *Generic Interfaces in Latin Literature: Encounters, Interactions and Transformations* (Berlin / Boston 2013) [79–91] 80. Specifically on inscriptions: M. CITRONI, “What is an Epigram? Defining a Genre”, in: C. HENRIKSÉN (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epigram* (Hoboken 2019) 21–42; L. MORGAN, “The Meters of Epigram: Elegy and Its Rivals”, in: *ibid.* 127–144; see also: K. POLLMANN, *The Baptized Muse: Early Christian Poetry as Cultural Authority* (Oxford 2017); eadem, “Establishing Authority in Christian Poetry of Latin Late Antiquity”, *Hermes* 141 (2013) 310–330. Specifically on inscriptions: T. CHRISTIAN, *Gebildete Steine: Zur Rezeption literarischer Techniken in den Versinschriften seit dem Hellenismus* (Göttingen / Bristol 2015) 290–2.

illustrates particularly well the complexity of the allelopoietic transformation that characterizes the cultural change of the imperial period: asceticism. Ulrich Huttner refers above all to Christian models. In fact, these concepts fit into a Christian tradition of the ideal of virginity that had already existed for centuries in Palladion's time. However, the oracular text that Huttner mentions, which ascribes these qualities to the goddess Artemis, also appears interesting. If this text really dates from the high imperial period, the question arises as to whether it was not only the image of Artemis that influenced the image of the Virgin Mary, but also, conversely, whether the rising veneration of the Virgin Mary left its mark on the image of Artemis.

While there were also virgins in the pre-Christian world and virginity was propagated primarily as an ideal for (still) unmarried women, and in this respect the Christian call for sexual abstinence alone did not represent a cultural break, the *saccophores* are part of a development that must be regarded as an innovation in the ancient world.

While asceticism remained an elitist ideal largely restricted to educated individuals and was generally practiced by individuals rather than communities among the Pythagoreans, Platonists, Stoics, and Cynics, from the fourth century onwards an ascetic mass movement emerged that was supported by people from all walks of life. The ascetic lifestyle, which had previously been mainly supported by individuals, was now institutionalized in communities with clear structures whose leaders increasingly exerted influence on politics and society.

If you want to categorize this phenomenon, the old simplifications fall short. It cannot simply be dismissed as part of the Hellenization of Christianity, even though Platonic or Gnostic ideas certainly emerge here, even though people sometimes had difficulty associating Jesus in particular with the ideal of virginity and even though the Greek novel in the form of extra-canonical acts of the apostles became the medium of virginity propaganda. For Christian asceticism, as the protagonists of the ascetic revolution show, finds points of reference in the Gospels and the letters of the Apostle Paul.²⁹

On the other hand, the ascetic revolution cannot be understood simply as an aspect of the Christianization of the ancient world, for it fits into broader trends of concern for the self and social revolution with which it is intertwined in many ways. In other words, here again we encounter the phenomenon of allelopoietic transformation.

²⁹ MERKT 2024, 545–573, with references in notes 67–104 on pp. 782–4.

2.4 Poverty and Honour: A New Social Model?

Despite all the hardships they entailed, the ascetic movements evidently offered more than just attractive ways of life. They could also be understood as the realization of an alternative model of society, as the inscription by Bishop Hypatios of Ephesus suggests. In his commentary, James R. Harrison emphasizes the “Christian cultural carry-over of the honour-driven hierarchical values” of ancient society and points to their theological justification in the humiliation of the crucified Christ, as provided by Hypatios in his inscription (B.14).

Peter Brown long ago pointed out the social consequences of the idea of God’s self-humiliation in Jesus. People from opposite ends of the social spectrum suddenly saw themselves bound together into one body by mysterious bonds.³⁰

This is exactly what Hypatios argues: burial is “a sacred service and an honour” for which no money should be charged. To prevent anyone from trying to make a profit from this, the church offers the service of men (*deka-noi*) and women (*kanonikai*) free of charge and pays them for it. As Harrison mentions, this practice of financing the burial of the poor out of the church coffers has been attested since the late second century.

This also transformed the classic system of euergetism: There, the focus was on the honour of the benefactor. The deeds of kindness were therefore primarily aimed at fellow citizens, who in turn had to honour the benefactor. Christian euergetism was now about honouring the poor and needy. This could sometimes be done by high-ranking members of urban society not only by making donations or inviting people to banquets, but also by anonymously going to the church’s relief organizations, hidden in hoods, to personally care for the elderly, sick, and other people in need.

The will of Philomenes provides an indication of the Christianized form of euergetism: future owners of the burial plot are obliged to give alms to the poor (B.9). Aquillia’s inscription for her husband and two daughters also emphasizes the care of the poor. Among the merits with which she justifies her confidence in a blessed afterlife, she lists, in the first place, caring for the poor. This is, as Markus Öhler rightly points out, “typically Christian”, while the other behaviours, such as honouring friends and showing affection for family and hospitality, correspond to the demands of classical Graeco-Roman

³⁰ P. BROWN, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover [NH]/London 2002) 97.

ethics (B.4). Indeed, with the poor, Christians have introduced a new social category of ethical relevance.³¹

But even in this case, it would be one-sided to speak only of the Christianization of a widespread practice. For Christians, too, are likely to have had not only their otherworldly salvation in mind, but also their earthly reputation, especially when they expressed themselves in inscriptions.³² We can assume this for the commitment of Bishop Firminianus of Zenonopolis to the water supply, in which Philipp Pilhofer rightly recognizes a transformation of the cultural practice of Greek *euergetism* (B.10). And this even applies to the funerary inscription that uses verses of elegiac distichs to express the memory of a senior ascetic who throughout his life dressed in “sacks” – namely, simple clothing – and probably proclaimed the indifference to all worldly honours. The ascetic who renounced honours is honoured with the classic reputational marker of a poetic epitaph (B.5).

The ideal of the anonymity of good deeds and the renunciation of honour, as demanded by Jesus, the Epistle of James, or the Syrian Didascalia, came into tension with a social reality in which bishops assumed political responsibility and an ascetic leader received the designation *πανεπίσκοπος*, which was an honorary title of the goddess Isis. The transformation of the concepts of poverty and honour and the social realities associated with them also unfolded their dynamics “*allelopoietically*”.

The epigram selection in this volume thus also proves the appropriateness of the transformation paradigm for the cultural change of the imperial period. “Antiquity” and “Christianity” were created again and again in an infinitely diverse manner and in manifold interactions. And they still are today.³³

³¹ MERKT 2024, 444–6, with references in notes 110–117 on p. 775, especially H. RHEE (ed.), *Wealth and Poverty in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis 2017).

³² Probably already in pre-Constantinian times: H. LEPPIN, “Frühchristliche Gräber und soziale Anerkennung”, *ZThK* 131 (2024) 19–47.

³³ Travis Niles is gratefully acknowledged for translating the original German essay into English.

Christian Inscriptions from the Perspective of Ancient History*

Hartmut Leppin

1. Introduction

Combinatorial source analysis is a key challenge for any ancient historian. While modern historians are often faced with the task of selecting the appropriate corpus from an unmanageable wealth of sources and in consequence have to limit themselves to one genre, such as documents, in ancient history one typically has to deal with a small number of sources that come from very different genres and whose statements have to be combined. Literary sources are usually prevalent. However, these mainly convey the perspective of certain elites and are filtered by the manuscript tradition: Someone, for reasons we often do not know, decided to copy them, which was a costly and laborious undertaking. Within the Christian tradition, social factors played a lesser role, but the idea that a text was heretical could lead to it not being handed down. The result is a very one-sided picture.

Knowledge of inscriptions, on the other hand, is usually the result of chance. In some regions they have simply been left standing, in some places they have been reused as stones for a new building, and in others, they are discovered by chance or during excavations. This alone increases the likelihood that they will open up new perspectives for researchers, especially on what ancient people did not consider worthy of being passed down because it no longer seemed interesting or threatening, because it seemed self-evident or insignificant. As a result, inscriptions reflect a broad spectrum of areas of life and often refer to social practices that are not attested elsewhere.

At first glance, inscriptions give the impression of immediacy. Ancient people seem to speak to us through them. They provide information about their age, their activities, their family relationships, their thoughts, in an undisguised form, it seems. But this first impression is deceptive. The creation of an inscription was also time-consuming and costly: The text had to be designed, the material procured, and the craftsman, be it a stonemason or

* I would like to thank Ben Böhne and Alina Hock for helpful suggestions.

a mosaicist, had to be commissioned. Anyone who decided to erect an inscription did so because they wanted to convey something to their environment and their posterity. It is crucial for a historically appropriate interpretation of inscriptions to take into account the respective historical, social, religious, or social contexts and the corresponding social practices; there are often no explicit statements about this in the sources, so that they must be inferred from comparison with other inscriptions. This is because practices involve routinized ways of acting that were oriented towards the expectations of contemporaries and from which deviations were possible, but which require a special interpretation.¹ Unlike literary sources, inscriptions are often serial sources, but seriality is also a methodological challenge.

The epigraphic practices or, the epigraphic habit,² is part of the cultural context and is of interest in itself. Certain epigraphic practices, in particular the use of inscriptions that were not bound to buildings, or the practice of carving resolutions of popular assemblies or careers and honours in stone, played a prominent role among the Greeks and Romans in an intercultural comparison and were adopted in the provinces, albeit in a very uneven manner.³ Depending on the genre, the practices are in turn linked to other practices, such as the representation of elites. Thus, inscriptions are on the one hand the result of practices, on the other hand they speak of practices and thus provide an insight into areas that are often hidden in literary sources.⁴

Anyone who commissioned an inscription was engaging in a form of social representation. He or she wanted something to become and remain visible, at least within the framework in which the inscription could achieve visibility. He or she showed the intended audience how they wanted to be seen. The view of the potential audience is therefore an essential context for an appropriate interpretation of the inscriptions. This was of course very different in a public place than in a private context. The intended audience does not necessarily depend on the type of inscription: Funerary inscriptions could be placed just as easily on the arterial road of a city for all to see as in a private

¹ For some thoughts on praxeology A. RECKWITZ, "Toward a Theory of Social Practices. A Development in Culturalist Theorizing", *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(2) (2002) 243–263.

² Fundamental to the term: R. MACMULLEN, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire", *The American Journal of Philology* 103(3) (1982) 233–246. For a modern discussion: R. R. BENEFIEL / C. M. KEESLING, *Inscriptions and the epigraphic habit: the Epigraphic Cultures of Greece, Rome, and Beyond* (Leiden 2024).

³ J. P. BODEL, *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions, Approaching the Ancient World* (London 2001).

⁴ This article deals solely with stone inscriptions, in keeping with the selection in this volume. However, inscriptions could also be placed on perishable materials such as wood or on metal.

burial area that was only accessible to relatives. It can also be informative to investigate whether there were other inscriptions, works of art, or buildings nearby that could add something to the interpretation of the inscriptions. The analysis of the situation of the find is therefore of considerable importance – insofar as it is possible, as thorough excavation reports are not available for all inscriptions.

The message of an inscription is co-determined by its bearer: Inscription and monument are inseparable. The inscription can be linked to a pictorial representation, a relief, or a statue, and must be interpreted in its context. Even if statues belonging to the monument have since disappeared, it is important to realize that they were originally there. Monuments also include certain symbols: Many Christian inscriptions can only be identified as such by the symbols employed, such as some inscriptions on the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers in Ephesus (B.2). The inscription for Mithios and Paul from Lycaonia (B.1) also demonstrates the importance of a sculptural representation: There, the text is short. It names the deceased, who were uncles of the patron whose name has only been preserved in fragments, and it briefly mentions the motif of the mighty fish and Jonah. However, an anthropomorphic figure in the shape of a cross with fish and a depiction of the mighty fish devouring Jonah are clearly recognizable in a wreath. Together with the text, the sculptural representation thus also conveys a biblical interpretation, as the story of Jonah was related to the resurrection of Jesus.

Modern editions of inscriptions, including the present volume, take into account the close connection between inscription and monument by documenting it in the description and with photographs; older editions, on the other hand, focus solely on the texts and thus convey a one-sided impression of the inscription as a whole. References to the monument are then often found in the editors' explanatory notes, which are indispensable for the scholarly treatment of inscriptions, even if they are sometimes written in Latin and are therefore linguistically difficult to access.

2. Genres of Inscriptions and their Christianization

Christians appropriated certain areas of the epigraphic habit without fundamentally changing it. It has therefore been rightly emphasized that, strictly speaking, we cannot speak of a Christian epigraphy, but only of the epigraphs of Christians.⁵ I would go as far as saying epigraphy of Christians rather than Christian epigraphy.

⁵ Thus, C. CARLETTI, "Origin of Christians' Epigraphy: An Integration between Different

The different genres of inscriptions were appropriated by Christians to varying degrees; this development alone is of historical interest and an important expression of Christianization processes.⁶ For if you follow it, you can see the areas in which Christians achieved visibility. The Constantinian period marked an important turning point, as Christian inscriptions began to spread into public spaces, albeit only gradually.

There were also so-called formulas for the text of the inscriptions, certain rules according to which they were formulated; these were created by convention and were changeable. A grave inscription usually included the name of the deceased, often with information on parents, origin, profession, or age at death. In addition, there was usually the name of the surviving relatives who had placed the inscription, and often the reason why this person had done so, or a reference to the nature of the close relationship with the deceased. The exact date of death appears relatively often in Christian grave inscriptions.⁷ Because of its repetitive nature, the formulas are particularly informative for practices of remembrance.

As the present volume reflects, funerary inscriptions are prevalent among the ancient inscriptions, both Christian ones and those that cannot be identified as Christian.⁸ However, if one decided to present oneself as a Christian in death, it was a great challenge to find formulations that were suitable for Christian inscriptions. This can be seen, for example, in the relatively early inscriptions (2nd quarter of the 3rd century, according to a recent dating) from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers in Ephesus (B.2). Here, those who wrote the inscription experimented with different formulations.

Although there was an early spatial concentration of Christian graves (B.2), specifically Christian cemeteries only emerged gradually,⁹ with the result that Christian inscriptions could be found alongside non-Christian ones, even in

Sources", in: A. DESTRO / M. PESCE (eds.), *Texts, Practices, and Groups. Multidisciplinary approaches to the history of Jesus' followers in the first two centuries; First Annual Meeting of Bertinoro (2–5 October 2014)* (Turnhout 2017) [695–716] 697, 715 despite the title of his contribution.

⁶ S. DESTEPHEN, "La christianisation de l'Asie Mineure jusqu'à Constantin: le témoignage de l'épigraphie", in: H. INGLEBERT / B. BEAUJARD (eds.), *Le problème de la christianisation du monde antique* (Paris 2010) 159–194.

⁷ See, for example, for Corinth and the surrounding area K. HALLOF, "Ein christlicher Steckkalender aus Sikyon (IG IV 2, 1825)", *EC* 7 (2) (2016) [237–246] 237.

⁸ I avoid the use of words such as pagan or gentile. For it is by no means certain that texts that cannot be attributed to Christians did not originate from Christians. Strictly speaking, in the following I should always speak of "identifiable as Christian" and "not identifiable as Christian", which I avoid so that the text does not become too unwieldy.

⁹ E. REBILLARD, *Transformations of Religious Practices in Late Antiquity* (Farnham 2013); see also V. FIOCCHI NICOLAI / H. VON HESBERG / S. RISTOW, "Katakombe (Hypogaeum)", *RAC* 20 (2004) 342–422.

late antiquity.¹⁰ The “socialization” of inscriptions is emerging as an ancient historical research topic for the future.¹¹ This also raises questions about the extent to which people separated themselves from one another for religious reasons, but also about where burials were possible at all.

It would be an anachronistic misunderstanding to assume that funerary inscriptions had to be determined by ideas about religion and the afterlife.¹² Inscriptions that are classified as non-Christian in this article are those that are not characterized by Christian symbols or language. They may well originate from Christians who did not attach any importance to being recognizable as Christians in the grave, or did not dare to do so.

Christian inscriptions were also part of practices of social representation: the size of a grave or the place where it was placed allowed conclusions to be drawn to a certain extent about the wealth and reputation of the family of the buried. An inscription listing public functions attested to the importance of the buried person. This is precisely why long lists of offices held, the so-called *cursus honorum* (in the singular *cursus honorum*), were found on many Roman gravestones. In late antiquity, inscriptions that presented the deceased to the public can also be found in funerary contexts, such as a funerary inscription on a mosaic from Philippi that traces the career path of the priest Daniel, who was first a lector and then a deacon (B.13). Whereas the classical *cursus inscriptions* primarily mention the emperors as those who promoted a career, here it was bishops who promoted the clergyman and whose qualities the buried man praises. The fact that self-confident representation takes precedence here over practices of humility is again revealing of the consciousness of Christian elites.

A large number of inscriptions dedicated to ancient gods have survived from antiquity. Christians did not adopt this custom.¹³ However, inscriptions in churches could take on the corresponding functions.

In many public places in the ancient world, inscriptions were found that recorded the decisions of public committees, honours, but also the achievements of builders and made them visible from afar. These had an

¹⁰ J. RÜPKE, “Geteilte und umstrittene Geschichten: Der Chronograph von 354 und die Katakomben der Via Latina”, in: H. LEPPIN (ed.), *Antike Mythologie in christlichen Kontexten der Spätantike* (Berlin 2015) 221–238.

¹¹ U. EHMIG, *Vergesellschaftete Schriften: Beiträge zum Internationalen Workshop der Arbeitsgruppe II am SFB 933* (Wiesbaden 2019).

¹² LEPPIN 2024, 19–47.

¹³ W. SPICKERMANN, “Das Ende der Weiheinschriftenkultur in den beiden Germanien”, in: L. CLEMENS / H. MERTEN / C. SCHÄFER (eds.), *Frühchristliche Grabinschriften im Westen des Römischen Reiches: Beiträge zur Internationalen Konferenz “Frühchristliche Grabinschriften im Westen des Römischen Reiches”, Trier, June 13–15, 2013* (Trier 2015) 75–86.

informational value (for which an archive would have sufficed), but also signalled a claim to power. When Christian inscriptions took up more public space, this was not initially associated with the deliberate destruction of non-Christian inscriptions, so that ancient observers saw Christian and non-Christian inscriptions side by side. Unlike the decision-making bodies of ancient cities, ecclesiastical institutions rarely carved their decisions in stone. It is a rare case that, just as letters from ancient rulers who made certain regulations were immortalized on stone, a letter from Hypatios of Ephesus, which made free burials possible through the support of ecclesiastical officials, was also recorded epigraphically (B.14). The text shows the reality of caring for the poor in late antique churches, but also contains an anti-Jewish twist. This makes the bishop's attitude widely visible.

Honorary and architectural inscriptions in particular were essential for the representation of social elites, right up to the emperor. Here, too, the location of an inscription is highly significant, as the visibility of an inscription depended on it. The erection of architectural and honorific inscriptions shows that Christians had arrived among the elites and were following the forms of representation that were widespread there, and as with the indication of career on funerary inscriptions, the question arises as to how this is compatible with ideals of humility.

Inscriptions could also be used for completely different purposes, for example as calendars. An example from Sikyon (B.11) shows how attempts were made to link Christian dates with a traditional calendar so that the new Christian rhythmising of time could be understood and experienced. This was another way in which Christianity gained visibility in the public sphere.

Most of the inscriptions were written in prose, but there are also epigrams, which often offer special interpretative opportunities due to their (relative) length and wealth of allusions. Inscriptions in the form of poems are sometimes found on tombs, sometimes in honorary epigraphs, but also in other genres. The decision for or against a poetic form of language therefore did not depend on the genre of the inscription, but on other factors.

This tradition was continued by Christians: in line with tradition, some Christian stone epigrams contain mythological references, but these are not to be seen as indications of a connection to paganism.¹⁴ A fitting example is one of several inscriptions by Eustolios of Kourion, who does not shy away from classical references and compares himself to Phoibos (B.8). Even an ascetic could be honoured with verses, as in the case of Eugenios (B.5).

¹⁴ See A. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN, "Introduction", 5.4.

The inscriptions that seem to speak directly to us thus represent certain cultural codes. At the same time, they reflect a broad spectrum of practices and can thus be used as sources for a wide variety of questions, which can only be adequately pursued if one is aware of the respective *epigraphic habit*.

3. Perspectives from Ancient History: The Contribution of Inscriptions and Methodological Pitfalls

Sources do not speak for themselves, but rather begin to speak through the questions we ask of them. Some of the questions for which inscriptions seem to have particular potential will be outlined below.¹⁵ In doing so, I will primarily address the methodological problems of their evaluation.

Despite the importance of the inscriptions and their apparent directness, they are texts whose authors were aware of certain expectations of their surroundings and reacted to them, although these expectations are rarely made explicit by the sources¹⁶ and must be inferred primarily from the inscriptions themselves. In many cases, it remains unclear who was responsible for the text of an inscription. In the case of a funerary inscription, did the buried person take care of the text during his lifetime, as is attested for Marcus Iulius Eugenius of Laodicea (B.5) and Daniel of Philippi (B.13)? Or were they the ones who set the inscriptions? Or did they use professional help?

It is also fundamentally important to trace the spread of the practice as such. It represents an essential element of the Hellenization and Romanization of the Mediterranean world, which intertwined in the Roman imperial period, as the Romans liked to use Greek as a language of communication.¹⁷ Those who set up funerary inscriptions in the manner of the Greeks and Romans, for example, adopted a practice that was central to the cultures of the latter. Significantly, there are no funerary inscriptions in the areas of Germania or Britain that were not under Roman rule.

It should come as no surprise that Christians also appropriated the epigraphic habit, seeing that they were part of the culture and familiar with inscriptions through their socialization. It was also not mandatory for them

¹⁵ See also A. BREYTENBACH / ZIMMERMANN, "Introduction", 5.

¹⁶ Cf. after all P. KRUSCHWITZ, "Epigraphy: the Art of Being Nosy? Some Thoughts on Plutarch, *De curiositate* 11 (=Moralia 520d-f) and Related Texts", *Chiron* 52 (2022) 181–199. It is precisely in his criticism that Plutarch presupposes that inscriptions were studied carefully in their time.

¹⁷ Both terms are much discussed; I understand them as *cluster concepts* that can encompass a variety of practices and dispositions. This also means that the adoption of a practice does not necessarily have to be accompanied by a change in mentality.

to identify themselves as Christians; perhaps they simply continued what had been handed down in the family. However, when Christians identify themselves *as* Christians, this no longer fits in the first decades of Christian history, a time of the expectation of the imminent return of Christ, because the inscriptions signified the decision for a medium of permanence. This may be one reason among others, which I will come to later, why no explicitly Christian inscriptions are reliably attested before the end of the second century.

Even if the growing number of inscriptions is an indication of Christianization processes, it is difficult to draw direct conclusions about the spread of Christianity from the spread of Christian inscriptions, especially *ex negativo*. Of course, the presence of Christian inscriptions testifies to the presence of Christians. But at best, only cautious conclusions can be drawn about their numerical proportion. As mentioned, the decision to place an inscription, and a Christian one at that, could be based on many factors: family or cultural practices could play a role, as could a desire for recognition or social pressure. However, in view of the threat to Christians from pogroms and persecution, there were good reasons not to make their proximity to Christianity visible. Therefore, the absence of inscriptions in a given area does not mean that there lived no Christians.

Setting an inscription was also associated with the decision to use a particular language. For the Christians, the obvious choice was Greek, which was initially their most important language of communication. From the late second century, Latin was added, followed by Syriac, a standardized variant of Aramaic in Edessa, and Coptic in Egypt. Hebrew, which played a certain role among Jews, was not used by Christians on their inscriptions. The use of certain languages is an indication of their cultural prestige – the prestige of Syriac and Coptic increased in late antiquity; both languages were increasingly becoming literary languages, as the sources also prove. However, the choice of language does not provide information about which language those for whom or by whom an inscription was made used in their everyday lives – the diversity of languages in Asia Minor was probably greater than suggested by the almost exclusively Graecophone epigraphic evidence, whether Christian or non-Christian. This is supported by isolated references in the literary sources, not least in the account of the miracle of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles (2:9–11).

Caution should also be exercised when attempting, based on the quality of the language, to draw conclusions about the expressive ability of those who made an inscription. Incorrect or clumsy inscriptions show that the people concerned did not have access to the practices of high culture. However, the use of a poetic language does not mean that one of the people responsible for

setting the inscription had mastered this level of language. Such verses could also be commissioned. However, they demonstrate a claim to education that is remarkable among Christians and is very densely documented in literary sources.¹⁸

A language based on classical education by no means indicates a pagan orientation, as the dossier of Eustolios shows. For here, Homeric phrases speak of an explicitly Christian architectural structure (B.8). The complexity of the relationship to classical traditions is shown by the epic verses of the epitaph of Philomenes, who was laid to rest far away from his family (B.9). This inscription, which certainly recommends a God-fearing life, also stands in the tradition of non-Christian inscriptions in terms of content, in that the buried person commands those who come after him to protect his burial place. If the new owner disobeys the orders, he is threatened with severe punishment. Many contemporaneous Christians would not have regarded such grave curses as Christian, but the tomb of Philomenes is not an isolated case. A light burning at the tomb at night was also reminiscent of traditional practices, but for many Christians like Philomenes and those around him, it was compatible with a commitment to Christianity. Furthermore, he told the future owner of the land to offer bread and wine in a church for his relatives. These gifts are reminiscent of non-Christian funeral banquets, but are also part of the Eucharist and should not be brought to the grave by Philomenes' friends in the faith. This also shows that inscriptions help us to see a broad spectrum of what could be considered Christian and that the distinction between Christian and pagan had to be constantly renegotiated among contemporaries, whereas preconceived modern notions do not do justice to the phenomenon's complexity.

The extent to which ancient patterns of competition lived on can be seen, for example, in the rivalry for supremacy within the church, which is reminiscent of the rivalry between cities (B.14). The unusual example of Aurelius Zotikos Lykidas, who is not afraid to continue a dispute with his brother on the gravestone and at least indirectly refer to the Christian God, leads us into the conflicts of everyday life (B.2). Here, too, it would be anachronistic to measure him against allegedly timeless Christian norms.

If verse inscriptions in particular provide evidence of cultural similarities between Christians and those they characterized as pagans, a given classical tradition could also be used polemically, in the sense of an aggressive opposition. A striking example of this is a forged oracle of Apollo that

¹⁸ From the wealth of literature: P. GEMEINHARDT (ed.), *Was ist Bildung in der Vor-moderne?* (Tübingen 2019).

refers to the Virgin Mary (B.12). It is part of a rich literary tradition of pseudo-inscriptions that is only rarely visible in actual inscriptions.

Especially in comparison to literary sources, inscriptions are highly significant for registering local and regional characteristics. These can be linguistic peculiarities, peculiarities of onomastics, but also specific official titles, in both political and ecclesiastical areas. The practices of inscription setting can differ locally, and the role of women can become visible in different ways. All of this was subject to historical change. Over time, especially since the time of Constantine the Great, names that can be identified as Christian increasingly appeared.¹⁹ In many cases, regional characteristics can be recognized particularly well if archaeological evidence is also consulted. In this way, the cross with splayed feet (B.1) can be assigned to the region of Lystra. Literary sources, on the other hand, are often more oriented towards supra-regional cultural expectations, but not so much so in Christianity, where the *vitae* of saints in particular can have more local references. Papyri, the vast majority of which were found in Egypt, frequently provide further information on regional *specifica*, especially from Egypt.

A wider circle of people set inscriptions than is tangible in literary sources. Even slaves appear in this role, and women are more visible epigraphically, even as office holders.²⁰ Inscriptions thus make voices audible that would otherwise be silenced. The extent to which the content of such inscriptions differed from those of the hegemonic groups remains an important research topic.

Many literary sources, including *vitae* of saints, contrast Christians and pagans in a polarizing way. Personal, trusting contacts between Christians and non-Christians can be documented by inscriptions, for example when an inscription names a Christian but also offers content that is difficult to reconcile with Christian teachings. This is shown by the unusual connection between Roubes (Ruben), who is identified as a Christian, and the lawyer Gaius, who is not assigned to any religion (B.3).²¹ In a world in which the texts of Christian elites, as they have come down to us, often focused more on demarcation, such observations are remarkable. Christians were also able to work with ambiguities, some of which only become apparent with a precise knowledge of the literary tradition.

¹⁹ T. CORSTEN, "Die Rolle der Onomastik für die Erforschung des frühen Christentums: Ein einführender Überblick", in: T. CORSTEN / M. ÖHLER / J. VERHEYDEN (eds.), *Epigraphik und Neues Testament* (Tübingen 2016) 45–59.

²⁰ For example ZIMMERMANN C. 2015b, 445–487.

²¹ My own interpretation of the inscription differs from that presented in the volume and tends more strongly to emphasize the ideological differences between the interred, see LEPPIN 2024, 38–41.

Christian inscriptions often provide vivid information about beliefs and hopes for the afterlife. The inscription for Palladion, for example, speaks with intense images of her flight to God (B.6). A funerary poem from Egypt emphasizes Christian cheerfulness in God, which is particularly evident in death and is even expressed in laughter, which some Christian authorities disapproved of (B.15).

Several inscriptions also reveal Christian ideas in other ways that go beyond the brief confession to Christianity. When Hypatios makes his arrangements for the burial of the poor, he is not stingy with biblical allusions (B.14). Particular attention should be paid to views that are not found in the surviving theological texts, or only marginally or even solely as the subject of polemic, and which reflect minority positions. For example, there was a group of Christians who rejected the consumption of wine, and this is mainly documented in inscriptions.²² One could also invoke angels through inscriptions, a practice that was later forbidden (B.3). The ascetic group of saccophores, who were possibly associated with the Novatians, is in turn visible in inscriptions because a Eugenios from Laodicea, in all probability not the bishop of the same name, played a leading role among them (B.5).

At first glance, it would make sense to try to extract the mental worlds of Christian individuals from the inscriptions. Since they are often written in the first person, the gesture is that of ego-documents, but these are not ego-documents that, like diaries, claim to express a distinct individuality. Inscriptions have a public character, they typically follow established practices and seek to meet expectations, to the extent that people who do not belong to the elite in particular adopt their values, at least in their appearance.²³

The inscriptions should therefore be interpreted as reactions to expectations rather than as sources for individual attitudes. Thus, the fact that the values communicated in the inscriptions often appear stereotypical is particularly revealing for the analysis of collective values. The funerary inscription for Regulus and his daughters Olympion and Aquilina, for example, shows how values could be formulated in such a way that they were acceptable for Christians and non-Christians; of course, Christians lived in a religiously mixed world with shared values such as wisdom and caring for friends and family. Or to take another example, the Greek word for piety (*eusebeia*), which always included virtuous behaviour, also had positive connotations for Christians. Caring for the socially disadvantaged, as mentioned

²² MAMA VII 96 = SEG VI 345 = ICG 240; cf. G.A.M. ROUWHORST, "Oblation II", *RAC* 26 (2015) [47–74] 54.

²³ Fundamental G. ALFÖLDY, *Die Rolle des Einzelnen in der Gesellschaft des Römischen Kaiserreiches: Erwartungen und Wertmaßstäbe* (Heidelberg 1980).

here, was also appropriate for non-Christians, but played a special role for Christians and did not refer to poorer citizens, but to the poor in a general sense. The woman and mother also appear here as donors alongside two men (B.4). Christian and non-Christian values could also intertwine. The fact that Palladion's virginity was praised might have been foreign to non-Christians, but they could easily understand the praise of her external and, above all, internal beauty (B.6). Once again, we see that the point of the matter is not usually radical changes to the value system, but rather an expansion of what could be considered praiseworthy.

Christian elites, who naturally play a major role in the literary sources, also become more visible through inscriptions. Particularly in the case of inscription genres that were especially associated with the social representation of elites, namely honorific and architectural inscriptions, the question of the relationship to established genres arises. How did Christians deal with the expectations of forms of social representation? Honorary inscriptions were extremely important in non-Christian antiquity – they also occur in late antiquity, especially for governors.²⁴ Achievements of the bishops, the new Christian elite, which in late antiquity became ever more closely associated with the old elites, could take up a great deal of space without being directly praised with an honorific inscription, as in the case of Daniel of Philippi, who served several bishops as a lower cleric (B.13).

One revealing case of social representation is Marcus Iulius Eugenius, who commissioned a magnificent inscription for his building (B.5). He does not fail to mention that he came from the local elites and had married a senator's daughter – class consciousness was evidently compatible with professing the faith. Eugenius' inscription vividly illustrates the contrasts experienced by Christians in the early fourth century: from service to the emperor to persecution to a long-standing leadership position in local society. However, this did not change their orientation toward the traditional values of the elite. The bishop openly admits that the inscription on his sarcophagus is also about fame.

Christian inscriptions on buildings were common and Christian references in them were very prominent, including references to Christian calendars. Of course, Christian emperors and empresses continued to play a major role as donors of buildings. However, new additions were bishops²⁵ such as the

²⁴ M. HORSTER, "Ehrungen spätantiker Statthalter", *Antiquité Tardive* 6 (1) (1998) 37–59; much material at: <http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk/>.

²⁵ Fundamental is the work of R. HAENSCH, "Bescheidenheit ist eine Zier: Der Gebrauch der Demutsformel, *δοῦλος θεοῦ* in den Kirchenbauinschriften der spätantiken Patriarchate Antiochia und Jerusalem", in: A. B. KUHN (ed.), *Social status and prestige in the Graeco-Roman world* (Stuttgart 2015) 315–339.

aforementioned Eugenius, who gives a detailed description in a funerary inscription and thus provides valuable information about what was involved in building a church (B.5). The Cypriot bishop Spyridon founded a basilica for holy bishops in Tremithus and attests to this with an inscription that appears on a mosaic and also mentions the mosaic's artist. This was also about the importance of Cyprus as an episcopal see that claimed independence from Antioch (B.7).

In the tradition of *euergetism*, Christians were not only concerned with specifically Christian buildings, but also with baths whose use was viewed disapprovingly by other Christians. This is the case, for example, with Eustolios of Kourion on Cyprus, who presents himself as an *euergetes* in the classical manner (B.8). The assumption of traditional functions as an *euergetes* is also evident in the case of the bishop of the remote Isaurian town of Zenonopolis Firminianus, who boasts of having repaired an aqueduct. Remarkably, this had previously been named after a martyr. Such *euergetic* practices by bishops are also attested elsewhere. They demonstrate the increasing importance of bishops as key figures in ancient cities. They replaced traditional elites who were no longer able or willing to shoulder the burden of *euergetism*.

One difficult question is the extent to which confessional affiliation is expressed in inscriptions. Some isolated examples can be found, particularly from the sixth century, but more often, the wording is perhaps too general for assigning the church building to a particular confession.²⁶

The presence of Christian inscriptions, especially from the pre-Constantinian period, also sheds light on the density of state control in the Roman Empire – another important question in ancient history. It is unlikely that followers of a religion that was not constantly persecuted, but which was nonetheless constantly exposed to the risk of persecution, immortalized their faith on stone, but this did indeed take place. The fact that early Christian funerary inscriptions appear in remote rural regions such as Phrygia is certainly no coincidence, as control by imperial elites was less intense here. It would be revealing if Christian inscriptions were found that had been deliberately destroyed.

²⁶ See for example C. BEGASS, "Der christologische Streit im Spiegel der Inschriften", J. ALIQUOT / S. DESTEPHEN / A. LANIADO / C. SALIOU (ed.), *Mélanges Denis Feissel* (Paris 2024) 49–66; W. KHOURY / B. RIBA, "Peut-on discerner des modèles reliés à des communautés ecclésiales ou linguistiques en Syrie du Nord? (IVe–Xe siècles)", in: F. BRIQUEL-CHATONNET (ed.), *Les églises en monde syriaque* (Paris 2013) 107–130.

4. Blind Spots

As I have tried to make clear, the analysis of inscriptions broadens perspectives and allows deeper insights to be gained in different areas of ancient historical research. New finds, which are often treated as sensations, are part of what makes epigraphy a popular subject,²⁷ but often do truly broaden the horizon. Epigraphy thus conveys an impression of the Christian diversity that was possible, but also makes it easier to determine the role of Christians in ancient society and to see the history of Christianity as part of a more general history. However, blind spots remain, as already indicated in the discussion of the methodological problems of analysing inscriptions.

The fact that knowledge of the inscriptions is due to the coincidence of tradition does not mean that the inscriptions that are known are a representative selection, as certain places have left behind hardly any inscriptions due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, severe destruction in wars, but also because new structures were built on top of them. Thus, in relation to the size and importance of the city, Constantinople is poor in inscriptions. By contrast, landscapes such as Phrygia that were less prominent in antiquity and less disturbed by later developments offer a great deal of material.

Even if inscriptions, especially the masses of surviving funerary inscriptions, appear to be serial sources, they do not provide a representative picture of ancient society, however important the socio-historical data they provide may be. I have already mentioned that the absence of inscriptions does not mean that there were no Christians in the places in question. The fear of persecution alone may have prevented Christians from placing inscriptions, but the desire not to appear vain, which was often articulated among early Christians, may also have stood in the way of this. The less well-off people, who could not afford a stone inscription, were excluded from the practice of inscribing anyway. Even the more affluent could decide against commissioning an inscription for a variety of reasons. Not all wealthy people necessarily documented themselves epigraphically. After all, it was not just a question of economic circumstances, but at least as much one of cultural practices.

The practices that accompanied the setting of an inscription are largely unknown. Was this associated with a ritual? Graves were regularly visited by Christians and non-Christians, and then certain religious acts took place during such a visit. What role did the inscriptions play? Who could read

²⁷ See, for example, the discovery of an early Latin Christian inscription published in 2024 <http://archaeologisches-museum-frankfurt.de/index.php/de/>.

them? Were they read aloud? There are at best only isolated references to all these things, such that we can only make assumptions about the integration of the inscriptions into everyday life and religious rituals.

Despite all the limitations: Ancient history and the history of Christianity have moved closer together in recent times, not least due to their shared interest in epigraphic sources. Interdisciplinary cooperation has proven its worth in the *ECAM* series, for example. However, it would make sense if the history of Christianity and general history were still more closely integrated. Christians did not only live as Christians in the ancient cities, but also embraced many other roles. Even if authors such as Tertullian wished otherwise, there were many social contexts in which Christians did not place their Christianity in the foreground. In late antiquity, life was much more permeated by Christianity, but here too it is important to define the changing boundaries of the religious field more precisely. Compared to literary sources, which are usually driven by a religious agenda and perpetuate distinctions widely used in the classical historiographical tradition, inscriptions have the advantage that they refer to social practices that only partially appear in literature, but which had a high visibility in everyday life, that they make broader groups visible, and refer to practices and thoughts that have been lost in the tradition. However, they can only be made to speak through a combinatorial interpretation, primarily with literary and archaeological sources.

Inscribing in Early and Late Antique Christianity

Sylvain Destephen

1. Introduction

Despite its Jewish origins and Hebrew and Aramaic roots, Christianity developed in a deeply Hellenized environment. Following Alexander's conquest, the entire eastern Mediterranean had become an area where Greek was the *lingua franca* for intellectual, administrative and commercial purpose. As a result, the new religion was disseminated in Greek and the texts that made up the New Testament were written down in this language. It might be considered, perhaps somewhat provocatively, that Christianity was the last religion of the Hellenic world, since its language, vocabulary and concepts were largely borrowed from Greek culture. The spread of Christianity was encouraged not only by the linguistic and cultural unity of the Near East but also by the political unity of the Mediterranean under Rome rule. The birth of Christianity coincided with the Augustan Principate, and the security provided by the Romans on roads and seas facilitated the expansion of the new religion. It should also be noted that the model of the city, disseminated by the Greeks and encouraged by the Romans, propelled the epigraphic habit, particularly among the upper class.

Inscribing texts on steles and monuments was a common cultural practice, particularly in the urban context where Christianity took root and developed.¹ As the ancient city was a political, social and religious community, inhabitants were bound by collective practices that maintained cohesion and integrated new members, in particular by performing collective acts of cult. Ancient religion was conceived within a communitarian framework, whether in a domestic, local, professional or civic environment. Everyone was free to practice the religion of their choice as long as it did not contradict the civic cults. Despite their great diversity, traditional religions were ritualistic and

¹ E. ARENS, *Asia Menor en tiempos de Pablo, Lucas y Juan. Aspectos sociales y económicos para la comprensión del Nuevo Testamento* (Córdoba 1995); E.J. SCHNABEL, *Urchristliche Mission* (Wuppertal 2002) 1011–1024, 1043–1076 and 1146–1193 (in Asia Minor); W.A. MEEKS, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven 2003) 55–73.

often hereditary, without being mutually exclusive. These characteristics conflicted with Christianity, which had no familial or ethnic dimensions and affirmed an uncompromising monotheism. Due to its singular character, Christianity could be considered a sectarian and anti-social religion by Roman authorities and municipal elites as well.²

However, Christians celebrated harmless religious ceremonies, as Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia-Pontus around 112, confirmed in a famous letter to Emperor Trajan.³ Nonetheless, refusing to take part in civic worship or imperial cult could legally be interpreted as social hostility and political opposition. For these reasons, Christianity had no public dimension until Emperor Constantine granted it legal recognition. It is hardly surprising that Christianity did not take any monumental dimension until the fourth and fifth centuries.⁴ Prior to this period, Christian worship took place in private homes where rooms were devoted to worship, as it can be seen in the *domus ecclesiae* of Dura Europos in Syria and Meggido in Palestine, both dating from the third century.⁵ Pre-Constantinian Christianity's modesty to express itself in monuments does not mean that the new religion was absent from the public space of cities, but caution had to be taken, as it becomes clear from the graffiti drawn in the basement of the basilica at Smyrna in Asia Minor. Dating from the second century, making them the earliest epigraphic evidence of Christianity, they consisted of elliptical or isophephic formulae that could be understood only by Christians.⁶

In Smyrna, as in the whole Roman East, Christianity took the characteristics of its urban, civic and Greek-speaking environment. Despite the denials of its adversaries, followers of the new religion retained the customs of the

² J. RIVES, "The Persecution of Christians and Ideas of Community in the Roman Empire", in: G.A. CECCONI / C. GABRIELLI (eds.), *Politiche religiose nel mondo antico e tardoantico. Poteri e indirizzi, forme del controllo, idee e prassi di tolleranza* (Bari 2011) 199–216.

³ Plin. Min. Ep. 10.96. Cf. T. MAYER-MALY, "Der rechtsgeschichtliche Gehalt der 'Christenbriefe' von Plinius und Trajan", *SDHI* 22 (1956) 311–328; D. FISHWICK, "Pliny and the Christians. The Rites *ad imaginem principis*", *AJAH* 9 (1984) 123–130; J. CORKE-WEBSTER, "Trouble in Pontus: The Pliny–Trajan Correspondence on the Christians Reconsidered", *TAPA* 147 (2017) 371–411.

⁴ L.M. WHITE, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, 2 vols (Valley Forge 1990–1997); G.F. SNYDER, *Ante pacem. Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*, 2nd ed. (Macon 2003); E. ADAMS, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (London 2013).

⁵ M. PEPPARD, *The World's Oldest Church, Bible, Art and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* (Yale/London 2016); Y. TEPPER/L. DI SEGNI, *A Christian Prayer Hall of the Third Century CE at Kefar Othnay (Legio): Excavations at the Megiddo Prison* 2005 (Jerusalem 2006); R. ROUKEMA, "Une église ancienne à Meguido", *RHPR* 86 (2006) 389–395.

⁶ R.S. BAGNALL et al., *Graffiti from the Basilica in the Agora of Smyrna* (New York 2016) 45–7.

Greek city, particularly when it came to engraving texts commemorating the dead and expressing their beliefs. Before and after Constantine, even though the production of inscriptions declined after the third century, epigraphic expressions of Christianity took the form of epitaphs written for and by individuals who affirmed their religious affiliation, first cautiously, then more confidently.⁷ With the exception of Egyptian papyri, inscriptions are the oldest and most widespread documents attesting to the expansion of Christianity in Antiquity. This is a proof of the social conformism among Christians. Although funerary epigraphy represented the bulk of Christian and pagan inscriptions, other forms of inscriptions developed once Christianity was legalized by Constantine. The institutionalization and structuration of Christian communities led to a proliferation of inscriptions in public spaces mentioning members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. However, the more monumental and visible testimonies provided by clerics should not obscure the fact that the majority of Christian inscriptions were made for lay people expressing their faith in Jesus and the Resurrection.

2. Funerary Inscriptions

Graffiti of the basilica of Smyrna were discreet and encrypted because Smyrna was one of the greatest cities of western Asia Minor, where social and religious structures made evangelization difficult and dangerous. One should not forget that the oldest account of a Christian martyr outside the New Testament is the execution of bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, and this event coincided with the graffiti in the basilica of Smyrna.⁸ The greater the influence of traditional cults, the more discreet Christians were and they avoided displaying their faith, which could provoke aggressive reactions. On the other hand, in inner Asia Minor, some members of the local elite adopted Christianity in the second and third centuries, and they indicated it on funerary inscriptions without any restraint.⁹ Unsurprisingly, it was in central Anatolia, where Christianity was more present and better tolerated, that most of the Christian epitaphs dating from before Constantine can be found.

⁷ S. MITCHELL, "The Christian Epigraphy of Asia Minor in Late Antiquity", in: K. BOLLE / C. MACHADO / C. WITSCHER (eds.), *The Epigraphic Cultures of Late Antiquity* (Stuttgart 2017) 271–286.

⁸ O. ZWIERLEIN, *Die Urfassungen der Martyria Polycarpi et Pionii und das Corpus Polycarpianum*, 2 vols (Berlin 2014).

⁹ S. DESTEPHEN, "Civic Participation and Christianity in Asia Minor: the Epigraphic Evidence", in: N. BELAYCHE / A.-V. PONT (eds.), *Participations civiques des juifs et des chrétiens dans l'Orient romain (I^{er}-IV^e siècles)* (Geneva 2022) 141–172.

Evidence is concentrated in Lycaonia and Phrygia, where evangelization was early and conversion easy.¹⁰ In these regions, inscriptions prove that the Christians were fully integrated into their environment, even though they remained cautious. For instance, some epitaphs have a discreetly Christian iconography, symbolized by a fish associated with a cross, as in the case of a remarkable second-century inscription found in Lycaonia.¹¹ Conversely, in the case of Ephesus, the strong influence of paganism probably explains why members of the local community chose anonymity or isolation, as in the case of the redated epitaphs in the Cave of the Seven Sleepers.¹²

In the Anatolian region of Phrygia, where epigraphic production reached its peak in the second and third centuries, early Christian inscriptions are even more numerous than in Lycaonia.¹³ Epitaphs, also written in Greek, attest to the numerical growth and social advancement of converts to Christianity. While its opponents considered it to be a religion of ignoramuses, women and slaves, epitaphs of Phrygia show that Christianity gained adherents in all categories, even if there was a slight tendency for Christians towards epigraphic uniformization.¹⁴ For example, a Christian lawyer of Phrygian Eumeneia, who was particularly gifted at versification, is known by his epitaph.¹⁵ The existence of funerary inscriptions made by and for Christians proves that they belonged to the middle or upper classes of Graeco-Roman society, since the vast majority of individuals could not afford a tombstone. Using epitaphs to indicate their religion was also unique to Christians, since the funerary inscriptions of followers of traditional cults did not have any particular religious aspect.¹⁶ Consequently, while using an inscription to commemorate the dead is ordinary, mentioning one's religion was quite unusual, and almost exclusively Christian.

On the other hand, the choice to use poetic language in a funerary context demonstrated a personal or family attachment to an elitist culture. The

¹⁰ C. BREYTENBACH / C. ZIMMERMANN, *Early Christianity in Lycaonia and Adjacent Areas: From Paul to Amphilocheus of Iconium* (Leiden 2018); S. MITCHELL, *The Christians of Phrygia from Rome to the Turkish Conquest* (Leiden 2023).

¹¹ B.I. BREYTENBACH, "The resurrected Jesus, Jonah, and the big fish".

¹² B.2. TREBILCO, "Epitaphs from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers". Cf. N. ZIMMERMANN, "Das Sieben-Schläfer-Zömeterium in Ephesos: Neue Forschungen zu Baugeschichte und Ausstattung eines ungewöhnlichen Bestattungskomplexes", *JÖAI* 80 (2011) 365–407.

¹³ N. CARLESS UNWIN, "The Epigraphic Curve in Phrygia and its Borderland", in: K. NAWOTKA (ed.), *Epigraphic Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean in Antiquity* (London / New York 2021) 144–165.

¹⁴ B.2. TREBILCO, "Epitaphs from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers".

¹⁵ B.3. MITCHELL, "The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel".

¹⁶ S. MITCHELL, "Epigraphic Display and the Emergence of Christian Identity in the Epigraphy of Rural Asia Minor", in: W. ECK / P. FUNKE (eds.), *Öffentlichkeit, Monument, Text* (Berlin / Boston 2014) 275–297.

iconographic and textual self-representation of Christians after death could express a desire for social distinction despite adherence to egalitarian beliefs in the afterlife.¹⁷ Epigrams inscribed on funerary monuments attested to a powerful link with classical literary models, particularly the *Iliad*. This association between poetry and epitaphs was long-established in the Greek world.¹⁸ It is not necessary to assume that the deceased or his family themselves always composed the versified text that made their tombstone eloquent and elegant. Just like sculptors, minters and stone-cutters, there were itinerant poets in Asia Minor who hired out their services and composed honorary or funerary epigrams of varying degrees of beauty. These mercenary versifiers did not hesitate to make slight alterations to their text to adapt it to the demands of their clients, inserting details directly linked to the personality or position of the deceased.¹⁹ Unsurprisingly, Homeric language was also used early on by Christians to commemorate their dead with particular distinction.

The use of versification may seem astonishingly coquettish and mundane, contradicting Christian values. Nevertheless, social and funerary customs were so powerful that they ignored religious differences. The importance of poetic language in Greek and Latin epigraphy became even more pronounced in Late Antiquity. The legalization of Christianity by the Roman authorities in the fourth century came at a time when funerary epigrams were in vogue as a symbol of belonging to an educated elite firmly devoted to the *paideia*.²⁰ Although the monumental corpus of epigrams edited by Reinhold Merkelbach and Josef Stauber indicates a concentration of versified inscriptions in the main urban centres of Asia Minor, mainly in Asia and Bithynia,²¹ even in isolated regions such as Paphlagonia, the fashion for metrical epitaphs had spread among local notables, including Christians. One family, for example,

¹⁷ H. LEPPIN, "Frühchristliche Gräber und soziale Anerkennung", *ZThK* 121 (2024) 19–47.

¹⁸ U. ECKER, *Grabmal und Epigramm. Studien zur frühgriechischen Sepulkraldichtung* (Stuttgart 1990).

¹⁹ P. THONEMANN, "Poets of the Axylon", *Chiron* 44 (2014) 191–225; C. ZIMMERMANN, "Faith and Verse: Gregory of Nazianzus and Early Christian Village Poetry", in: S. MITCHELL / P. PILHOFFER (eds.), *Early Christianity in Asia Minor and Cyprus: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (Leiden / Boston 2019) 126–147.

²⁰ G. AGOSTI, "Saxa loquuntur? Epigrammi epigrafici e diffusione della *paideia* nell'Oriente tardoantico", *AnTard* 18 (2010) 163–180; G. AGOSTI, "Greek Metrical Inscriptions, Classical Paideia and Identity in Late Antiquity", in: M.-P. DE HOZ / J. L. GARCÍA ALONSO / L. A. GUICHARD ROMERO (eds.), *Greek Paideia and Local Tradition in the Graeco-Roman East* (Leuven / Paris / Bristol 2020) 217–231.

²¹ R. MERKELBACH / J. STAUBER, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*, 1. Die Westküste Kleinasien von Knidos bis Ilion, 2. Die Nordküste Kleinasien (Marmarameer und Pontos), 3. Der "Ferne Osten" und das Landesinnere bis zum Taurus, 4. Die Südküste Kleinasien, Syrien und Palaestina (Stuttgart / Leipzig 1998–2002).

took care to use pseudo-hexameters to commemorate a father and his two daughters while emphasizing their deep piety towards God.²²

Versified inscriptions materialized and displayed Christians' adherence to Greek literature, and this cultural inclination was not seen as contradictory to their faith. On the contrary, Homeric poetry enjoyed a sort of second youth even in remote regions of Galatia, where a couple belonging to the ruling class expressed grief at the untimely death of their daughter.²³ The exaltation of the virginity of the young deceased was also an expression of the new value placed on a life consecrated to God, considered superior to marriage and motherhood. In the metrical epitaphs of late antique Christians, literary tradition, social hierarchy and religious beliefs found a harmonious combination. Classical tradition was reformulated to express a new message that heralded the triumph of Christianity.²⁴

3. Ecclesiastical Inscriptions

The hierarchical structure of Christian communities seems to have appeared very early as Jesus entrusted the mission of propagating the religion to the apostles and the role of instructor and overseer was given by the apostles to their own disciples. From the middle of the second century onwards, bishops' rule over their own communities became or was intended to become exclusive, and the affirmation of a 'monarchical' episcopate was evident across the Roman world: episcopal authority began to be ascertained in a more exclusive manner.²⁵ At the same time, bishops began to meet in assemblies, called synods in the East or councils in the West, to take joint decisions on matters of faith and discipline. The authority of each bishop depended on his grasp over his own community. The collective power of episcopal assemblies rested not only on apostolic succession, which legitimized the participants, but also on the concertation and concentration of individual authority. However, the structure of the first Christian communities does not seem to have been based on a strong hierarchy, as it can be assumed from Pliny the Younger's letter to Trajan, which mentioned neither a bishop nor a priest, just

²² B.4. ÖHLER, "Himmlischer Lohn für tugendhaftes Leben".

²³ B.6. HUTTNER, "Grabinschrift der Palladion".

²⁴ G. AGOSTI, "Metrical Inscriptions in Late Antiquity: What Difference Did Christianity Make?", in: F. HADJITTOFI / A. LEFTERATOU (eds.), *The Genres of Late Antique Christian Poetry: Between Modulations and Transpositions* (Berlin / Boston 2020) 39–58.

²⁵ A. HANDL, "Viktor I. (189?-199?) von Rom und die Entstehung des 'monarchischen' Episkopats in Rom", *SacEr* 55 (2016) 7–56.

two women who probably acted as deaconesses.²⁶ The bishop's figure began to emerge in early Christian inscriptions from the third century in central Asia Minor, particularly in Phrygia.²⁷ Apart from bishops, few other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy are mentioned in these inscriptions, apart from some priests. Clearly, the structure of many Christian communities must still have been rudimentary, with a limited number of clerics, before the official recognition of Christianity by the Roman authorities with the so-called Edict of Milan promulgated in 313.

The legalization of the new religion allowed its members to organize themselves in broad daylight, while at the same time clerics received judicial and tax privileges. Added to this were the generous donations lavished by the imperial power to some major episcopal sees. Christianity became official at the same time as it was institutionalized and monumentalized. Benefiting from imperial recognition, Christian communities very soon made their presence conspicuous in the urban context of cities, as many architectural complexes reveal. The private houses previously used as places of worship were replaced by larger, visible religious buildings. In the city of Laodicea Combusta, in the Anatolian province of Pisidia, the local bishop, a contemporary to the emperor Constantine, mentioned on his epitaph the extensive construction and embellishment work carried out on the cathedral. Unfortunately, the remains of it have not been found yet. Despite his autobiographical concern to recall his distinguished social origins and career within the provincial administration, the bishop wanted above all to show his role as a builder.²⁸ This bishop was both exceptional and exemplary, as epigraphic evidence of church construction is rare during Constantine's reign, but it does attest to the ability of bishops to gather resources from their communities to launch ambitious building projects.²⁹

²⁶ Plin. Min. Ep. 10.96.8: *Quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministras dicebantur, quid esset ueri, et per tormenta quærere. Nihil aliud inueni quam superstitionem prauam et immodicam.* ("This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths", trans. RADICE).

²⁷ E.g. W.H. BUCKLER / W.M. CALDER / C.W.M. COX, "Asia Minor, 1924. III. Monuments from Central Phrygia", *JRS* 16 (1926) [53–94], 58, no. 177, fig. 9; *ibid.*, 73–4, no. 200, pl. IX; L. DUCHESNE, "L'épithaphe d'Abercius", *MEFR* 15 (1895) 155–182; A. KÖRTE, *Inscriptiones Bureschianae* (Greifswald 1902) 31, no. 55; E. GIBSON, "Montanist Epitaphs at Uşak", *GRBS* 16 (1975) 435–6, no. 2, pl. 4.

²⁸ B.5. ZIMMERMANN, "Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?". Cf. J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, "Ein wichtiges Zeugnis zum frühen Kirchenbau in Kleinasien", *JAC* 48–49 (2005–2006) 67–76.

²⁹ R. HAENSCH, "Le financement de la construction des églises pendant l'Antiquité tardive et l'évergétisme antique", *AnTard* 14 (2006) 47–58; R. HAENSCH, "Der Kirchenbau in der Dioecesis Asiana. Ein Vergleich mit dem Kirchenbau in den Patriarchaten Antiocheia und Jerusalem und dem in Italien", in: W. AMELING (ed.), *Die Christianisierung*

Thanks to the decisive support provided by emperors, bishops became prominent figures in late antique cities.³⁰ The progressive conversion of almost the entire population of the Roman world strengthened the position of bishops in their relations to municipal notables. At city level, the bishop was now the only person capable of launching major architectural programs. Episcopal involvement in public spaces extended beyond the religious buildings that had gradually Christianized the appearance of cities. Without replacing the municipal authorities, bishops intervened in the upkeep of his city's monumental heritage. A remarkable example of this comes from an inscription from Zenonopolis in Isauria at the end of the fifth century. In this isolated, mountainous region, which had long been subject to rampant banditry, the bishop of this modest town decided to restore the aqueduct. The inscription not only celebrated and commemorated the bishop's benevolent action towards his community, but also indicated that the municipal aqueduct now bore the name of a saint.³¹ The memory of the saints served to legitimize the Christian community itself and strengthen bishops' authority. Bishops also encouraged the cult of the saints by directing the piety and generosity of brethren towards their cathedral. However, there were dissident groups, labelled heretics by civil and religious authorities, who retained epigraphic visibility until the end of the fourth century, as in the case of the city of Laodicea Combusta, before repression silenced them and made them invisible.³²

Imperial power backed only the Church labelled as orthodox and systematized its organization throughout the Roman world. However, the standardization of the Church was tempered by the local traditions that constituted a sacred history. The diffusion of the cult of martyrs was encouraged by episcopal authorities insofar as it sanctified their own communities and increased their authority. However, a bishop's choice to encourage piety towards local saints did not contradict his desire to increase the sanctity of his episcopal see by acquiring relics of saints from other places. Despite his concern to promote his bishopric in the 360–370s, bishop Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia

Kleinasiens in der Spätantike (Bonn 2017) 331–392; R. HAENSCH, “Zwei unterschiedliche epigraphische Praktiken: Kirchenbauinschriften in Italien und im Nahen Osten”, in: K. BOLLE / C. MACHADO / C. WITSCHER (eds.), *The Epigraphic Cultures of Late Antiquity* (Stuttgart 2017) 535–554.

³⁰ R. HAENSCH, “Die Rolle der Bischöfe im 4. Jahrhundert: Neue Anforderungen und neue Antworten”, *Chiron* 37 (2007) 153–181.

³¹ B.10. PILHOFFER, “Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates”.

³² B.5. ZIMMERMANN, “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?”. Cf. W.M. CALDER, “The Epigraphy of the Anatolian Heresies”, in: W.H. BUCKLER / W.M. CALDER (eds.), *Anatolian Studies Presented to Sir William Mitchell Ramsay* (Manchester 1923) 59–91; A.R.R. SHEPPARD, “Jews, Christians and Heretics in Acmonia and Eumeneia”, *AnSt* 29 (1979) 169–180.

considered the martyrs to be citizens of the world since they were venerated by all Christians.³³ Clearly, the cult of martyrs had both a topical and a universal dimension: every local church had to have relics placed under its altar, and the veneration of the martyrs was shared by all Christians. Some saints enjoyed extraordinary success in Late Antiquity, to the point where they lost any local dimension, even though they may have retained a particular favour in their region of origin, such as Menas in Egypt, Demetrius in Thessalonica, Thecla in Isauria and John the Evangelist in Ephesus.³⁴

The case of John is interesting for two reasons: first, his status of apostle and evangelist radically distinguished him from ordinary martyrs; second, his tomb had been preserved in Ephesus and had become such an important place of pilgrimage in Late Antiquity that in the sixth century the emperor Justinian had a magnificent basilica built on the site of his tomb. Besides the emperor's particular devotion to John, his status as tutelary saint of the Christian community of Ephesus was used by a bishop of Ephesus contemporary to Justinian to assert its pre-eminence over neighbouring episcopal sees.³⁵ The preservation of a fragmentary letter from Justinian addressed to Ephesus and inscribed by decision of the bishop reveals a use of the holy memory and apostolic foundation to promote his own community. The bishop managed to convince the emperor to support the pre-eminence of Ephesus against the claims of the bishopric of Smyrna, whose foundation dated back to the martyr Polycarp, a disciple of John.³⁶ The epigraphic display of the imperial letter was meant to prove the anteriority and superiority of Ephesus over Smyrna. It should be pointed out that if the bishop of Ephesus took advantage of Justinian's devotion to John to defend the prerogatives of his see, there were actually other places of worship dedicated to other saints in his own city. The two general councils held in Ephesus in 431 and 451 met in a vast basilica dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was the nerve centre of the

³³ Bas., *Homilia in SS. In mart. Sebast.* 2 (PG 31, 509B).

³⁴ A. M. ORSELLI, "Tradizioni di culto di san Giovanni apostolo tra Efeso, Costantinopoli e Ravenna", in: L. PADOVESE (ed.), *Atti dell'VIII Simposio di Efeso su s. Giovanni Apostolo* (Rome 2001) 187–200; J.-M. SPIESER, "Le culte de saint Démétrius à Thessalonique", in: J.-P. CAILLET et al. (eds.), *Des dieux civiques aux saints patrons* (Paris 2015) 275–291; P. PILHOFER, *Das frühe Christentum im kilikisch-isaurischen Bergland. Die Christen der Kalykadnos-Region in den ersten fünf Jahrhunderten* (Berlin / Boston 2018) 205–229; E. HAUSTEIN-BARTSCH, "Vom jugendlichen Märtyrer zum älteren Kriegerheiligen – der heilige Menas von Ägypten", in: L. BEREZHNYA (ed.), *Die Militarisierung der Heiligen in Vormoderne und Moderne* (Berlin 2020) 59–82.

³⁵ B.14. HARRISON, "The Protocols of Honour at Ephesus: Justinian and Bishop Hypatios". Cf. S. DESTEPHEN, "La chute d'Hypatios, archevêque d'Éphèse (519–540/541)", *Revue des études byzantines* 67 (2009) 131–149.

³⁶ *I.Ephesos* 1a.45.

Christian community in Ephesus before Justinian built a new basilica dedicated to John.³⁷

The prominence of the apostle John was therefore late and somewhat instrumental. In fact, the bishop of Ephesus was concerned to have an inscription made mainly to commemorate and preserve the emperor's response, which was favourable to his city and unfavourable to Smyrna. Apart from the case of Ephesus, epigraphic evidence of the cult of the saints is widespread throughout Asia Minor, proof of a clear success, even if these inscriptions represent only a small part of the totality of the saints venerated in this region during Late Antiquity.³⁸ For example, Christian literary sources from Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages attest to the presence in Ephesus of a whole series of places of worship dedicated to other saints, including some martyrs and bishops, who are not known from any inscriptions.³⁹ The veneration of local bishops was obviously the result of a desire on the part of their successors to sanctify their predecessors in order to legitimize the authority of their successors. Attestation of the cult of holy bishops also demonstrated the early control exercised by the bishops over the establishment and closure of the sacred canopy of Ephesus and, more broadly, of any city.

The cult of the holy bishops was even more important in Cyprus.⁴⁰ Since the first council of Ephesus in 431, the Church of the island had enjoyed the privilege of autocephaly *vis-à-vis* the patriarchate of Antioch, whose incumbent was then in conflict with the bishops Cyril of Alexandria and Memnon of Ephesus, who dominated the council. This juridical autonomy of the Church, granted in special circumstances, was threatened some fifty years later by a patriarch of Antioch, who received the support from the emperor in Constantinople. In this time of uncertainty, the relics of Barnabas, who supposedly evangelized the island, were discovered. According to a hagiographic text, the miraculous discovery of Barnabas' body, with the Gospel of Matthew placed on his chest and written by his own hand, offered the Church of Cyprus the opportunity to prove an apostolic origin as old and venerable as

³⁷ N. D. KARYDIS, "The Development of the Church of St Mary at Ephesos from late Antiquity to the Dark Ages", *AnSt* 69 (2019) 175–194. Cf. R. HARREITHER, "Die Synoden von Ephesos", *MCA* 8 (2002) 78–94.

³⁸ NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints*.

³⁹ Eus. Caes., *HE* 3.31.3, 5.24.2–3; *ACO* I 1.5.14, I. 19–21; *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. DELEHAYE, col. 664, I. 18–29. Cf. T. GEORGES, "Die ephesischen Christen in nachneutestamentlicher Zeit. Erwägungen zur christentumsgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Stadt Ephesos und ihrer Darstellung bei Euseb von Cäsarea", in: Id. (ed.), *Ephesos. Die antike Metropole im Spannungsfeld von Religion und Bildung* (Tübingen 2017) 321–336.

⁴⁰ G. DELIGIANNAKIS, "From Aphrodite(s) to Saintly Bishops in Late Antique Cyprus", in: C. BREYTENBACH / J. OGÉREAU (eds.), *Authority and Identity in Emerging Christianity* (Leiden 2018) 326–346.

that of the Church of Antioch, in order to nullify the claims of the patriarch over the island. To convince the emperor of the validity of his arguments, the metropolitan bishop of Cyprus presented the relics of Barnabas and gave the copy of the Gospel found in his tomb. The emperor ordered a basilica to be built on the site of Barnabas' tomb.⁴¹ The defence of the autocephaly of the Church of Cyprus also took on an epigraphic dimension, as revealed by a versified inscription from Tremithus displayed in honour of the holy bishop Spyridon on the mosaic floor of the cathedral by a homonymous successor.⁴²

While the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy 'epigraphically' occupied public spaces and places of worship, intermediate and lower clerics were mainly attested by funerary inscriptions. Metrical epitaphs were apparently more popular with the upper levels of the Church, as it was the case in Asia Minor and adjacent regions of the Aegean Sea. Funerary inscriptions reveal that clerics, unlike bishops, were most often mentioned in a family context. Some did not hesitate to mention their social and cultural heritage and their profession as craftsmen or merchants, although this kind of information tended to diminish after the fourth century.⁴³ Possibly at the beginning of the following century, a priest from Philippi in Macedonia, who originated from a wealthy family in Constantinople, recounted on the mosaic pavement of a funerary chapel the various phases of his ecclesiastical career under three successive bishops.⁴⁴ It has to be said that this type of funerary inscription is quite exceptional for its biographical richness and almost autobiographical character. During the fifth and sixth centuries, while the Church had become a pervasive institution throughout the Mediterranean, epigraphic evidence of the clergy had become more formal and simpler, although it was still very present in late antique necropolises.⁴⁵

4. Lay People Inscriptions

Although clerics are over-represented among Christian inscriptions, the predominance of funerary inscriptions and the simplification of the texts inscribed on tombstones are characteristics that clerics shared with lay people.

⁴¹ Al. Mon. *Laud. Barnab.* (ed. VAN DEUN). Cf. E. CRONNIER, *Les inventions de reliques dans l'Empire romain d'Orient (IV^e–VI^e s.)* (Turnhout 2015) 104–114.

⁴² B.7. SUMMA, "The Mosaic Inscription of Bishop Spyridon in Tremithus".

⁴³ W. ECK, "Handelstätigkeit christlicher Kleriker in der Spätantike", *MHA* 4 (1980) 127–137; HÜBNER 2005, 245–258.

⁴⁴ B.13. J. OGÉREAU, "The Clerical Career of the Presbyter Daniel at Philippi".

⁴⁵ For the necropolises of Korykos and Korasion in Cilicia, see HÜBNER 2005, 96–105, and more broadly J.C. CUBAS DÍAZ, *Das Sepulkralwesen im Rauhen Kilikien am Ende der Antike. Funerärarchäologie und Grabepigraphik einer spätantiken Landschaft* (Bonn 2021).

Christian epitaphs were original in that they alluded, discreetly or obviously, to the religion of the dead and the living as well. Although in the western part of the Roman Empire many pagan funerary inscriptions were dedicated to the divinities of the underworld by the traditional and widespread formula *dis manibus sacrum*, in the Greek-speaking part of it, the equivalent formula, θεοῖς καταχθονίοις, was much rarer. Consequently, in the Roman East, most pagan epitaphs never indicated the religion of the deceased. The will to assert a religious identity was characteristic of Christians from the time of their very conversion, and this difference appeared on the earliest Christian epitaphs.

The funerary landscape of Late Antiquity was considerably simplified compared to the Early Roman Empire, although some epitaphs continued to be characterized by particular ornaments, poetic language and biblical quotations. The quality of the sculptural decoration is an indication of funerary expenditure, but the beautiful early Christian stelae figuring doors or porticoes found in Phrygia and Lycaonia disappeared after the fourth century.⁴⁶ The plain decoration and poor language of a great many epitaphs resulted from the standardization of both the religious beliefs and funerary practices of Christians. However, this form of epigraphic levelling was not complete among believers, especially the laity. The attachment to classical education and Homeric language survived longer within the imperial aristocracy and local nobility than among the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Clearly, clerics were ubiquitous in public space and participated not only in the construction of places of worship but also in public buildings and infrastructures, as in the case of the aqueduct of Zenonopolis renovated by a local bishop.⁴⁷ Consequently, traditional euergetism, which had a private origin and civic dimension, began to decline in the face of the rise of Christian euergetism, which had a religious and ecclesiastical nature.

Yet, a form of Christian euergetism performed by lay people existed throughout the fourth century until the beginning of the following century. Members of the local notability financed constructions, restoration work and charitable acts from their personal fortune. Traditional euergetism and Christian euergetism were normally distinguished by motivations and destinations: while the first was fueled by aristocratic competition and extolled

⁴⁶ T. LOCHMANN, *Studien zur kaiserzeitlichen Grab- und Votivreliefs aus Phrygien* (Basel 2003); U. KELP, "Grave Monuments and Local Identities in Roman Phrygia", in: P. THONEMANN (ed.), *Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society* (Cambridge 2013) 70–94. Cf. S. DESTEPHEN, "The Funerary Epigraphic Landscape of Late Antique Asia Minor", in: S. ARDELEANU / J. CUBAS DÍAZ (eds.), *Funerary Landscapes of the Late Antique oecumene. Contextualizing Epigraphic and Archaeological Evidence of Mortuary Practices* (Heidelberg 2023) 233–247.

⁴⁷ B.10. PILHOFER, "Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates".

members of a civic community, the second displayed charity and helped modest people. Traditional euergetism was ostentatious as the rich wanted to justify their social pre-eminence by giving a part of their wealth, while Christian euergetism manifested personal piety in search of individual redemption.⁴⁸

Limits between both euergetisms sometimes tended to blur when rich Christians wanted not only to help the weakest, but to make it publicly known. Local notability had public baths rebuilt, as for example in Ephesus at the end of the fourth century probably, or in Kourion, on the island of Cyprus, at the beginning of the fifth century. In the first case, the benefactress was rewarded with a statue and an epigram was inscribed on the base beginning with a cross and praising two traditional qualities of a classical euergete, φιλοτιμία (love of glory and prodigality) and μεγαλοψυχία (magnificence and magnanimity).⁴⁹ In the second case, the Christian notable restored, rather than built, a thermal complex and an annex that he offered to his city badly hit by an earthquake at the end of the fourth century. A series of epigrams on mosaics showed all the users of these baths the literate culture, personal piety and munificence of the euergete, halfway between ostentatious generosity and pious charity.⁵⁰

The quest for distinction, even in a Christian Empire, was characteristic of the wealthy and educated elite. The long funerary epigram composed for and probably by a leading citizen of Tanagra, in Thessaly, expressed in forty Homeric hexameters the deceased's attachment to classical culture, personal piety, and concern for certain funeral rites and charitable actions. The epitaph also expressed a strong fear of seeing his tomb violated or reused.⁵¹ To ward off this threat, the epigram ends with an astonishing list of curses. There was traditionally a mention of a fine to be paid to the city treasury by anyone who had usurped a tomb and some epitaphs mentioned that a copy of the deceased's will had been deposited in the municipal archives to

⁴⁸ P. VEYNE, *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris 1995) 57; R. KLEIN, *Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike. Studien zu politischen, sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Fragen* (Tübingen 2008) 50 and 78.

⁴⁹ *I.Ephesos* 2.453. Cf. S. BUSCH, *Versus balnearum. Die antike Dichtung über Bäder und Baden im römischen Reich* (Munich 1999) 185–7; G.M. ROGERS, "The Constructions of Women at Ephesos", *ZPE* 90 (1992) 222–223; J. PICKETT, "Temples, Churches, Cisterns and Pipes: Water in Late Antique Ephesus," in: G. WIPLINGER (ed.), *De aquaeductu atque aqua urbium Lyciae Pamphyliae Pisidiae: The Legacy of Sextus Julius Frontinus* (Leuven/Paris/Bristol 2016) 299 and 302; M. ZYTKA, *A Cultural History of Bathing in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium* (London/New York 2019) 24.

⁵⁰ B.8. SUMMA, "The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex 'of Eustolios'".

⁵¹ B.9. CHRISTIAN, "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes".

confirm his possession of the tomb.⁵² From the fourth century onwards, the reference to municipal institutions disappeared in favor of formulas of curses uttered against the desecrator whose body deserved to receive no burial and to be devoured by dogs. The absence of burial was a terrible threat that was waved against his worst enemies and it should be noted that the curses uttered against the usurper of the tomb did not possess any Christian dimension. The devouring of the corpse by dogs seemed more terrible than eternal punishment. Despite the ritual prescriptions provided at the beginning, this epitaph showed the prevalence of ancestral fears.

However, there is no doubt about the religious affiliation of the deceased. The persistence of a social behavior inherited from paganism was precisely what the ecclesiastical authorities targeted and tried to eradicate through a ceaseless effort of preaching and instruction. Controlled by the bishops, clerics formed a body of collective control over lay people. The degree of standardization of religious beliefs and practices was consequently higher on the side of the clergy than the laity, as is apparent from the earlier formulaic nature of the epitaphs of the clergy compared to the epitaphs of the laity. In the middle of the fifth century, epitaphs of individuals could still reveal a divergent interpretation of the orthodox version. A versified funerary inscription of Egyptian origin evoked Jesus and martyrs smiling or laughing at earthly death, and asserted that mere mortals ascended to heaven like authentic martyrs.⁵³

To convince individuals of the truth of Christianity and affirm its triumph, ecclesiastical authorities multiplied places of worship and marked spaces with symbols of the new religion. The cross became omnipresent in the space inhabited by the living and the dead as well, and spread over the walls of public and private buildings.⁵⁴ Through words and images, persuasion and constraint, clerics led the laity towards salvation by Christianizing their daily life and environment. Inscriptions participated in this display of Christianity to the point of reorganizing the topography of urban centers according to places of worship. Christian basilicas became buildings that polarized the

⁵² STRUBBE, *Arai epitymbioi*; T. RITTI, "Iura sepulcrorum a Hierapolis di Frigia nel quadro dell'epigrafia sepolcrale microasiatica. Iscrizione edite e inedite", in: *Libitina e dintorni. Libitina e i luci sepolcrali, le leges libitinariae campane, iura sepulcrorum: vecchie e nuove iscrizioni* (Rome 2004) 539–548; K. HARTE-UIBOPUU, "Tote soll man ruhen lassen ... Verbote und Strafen zur Sicherung von Gräbern am Beispiel der Inschriften von Ephesos", in: J. FISCHER (ed.), *Der Beitrag Kleinasien zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Vienna 2014) 157–180.

⁵³ B.15. DELIGIANNAKIS / PILHOFFER, "Heavenly Laughter in a Funerary Poem".

⁵⁴ S. DESTEPHEN, "The Process of 'Byzantinization' in Late Antique Epigraphy", in: M. LAUXTERMANN / I. TOTH (eds.), *Inscribing Texts in Byzantium: Continuities and Transformations* (London / New York 2020) 23–4.

attention of inhabitants and attracted crowds of believers. The conversion of the Roman world, omnipresent in space, became total with the Christianization of time. Liturgical celebrations and martyrs' festivals, performed by clerics, now rhythmized life of the lay people. An exceptional example of the construction of Christian time is provided by a fragmentary calendar dated to the fifth century and discovered in Sicyon, on the Gulf of Corinth.⁵⁵ It mentions the martyrs celebrated each day by the Christian community. Some saints had a regional or local dimension, but their juxtaposition showed that Christians were united by faith and protected by holy figures. The present was now Christianized, the future now seemed reassuring and even the past was reworked by the production of false oracles announcing the coming of the Virgin.⁵⁶

5. Conclusion

Christianity rapidly adopted an epigraphic expression because it appeared in a Greek-speaking environment that had a long tradition of inscribing texts on stones. Yet, it is important to note that Christians were careful to inscribe texts only in areas where inhabitants had adopted this cultural and social practice. Unlike Egypt, where epigraphic practice was limited during the Roman era and Christian inscriptions were few, in Asia Minor the production of inscriptions was very important and the evidence of Christianity is both numerous and early. However, the geographical distribution of Christian inscriptions before Constantine is not a reflection of the spread of Christianity. Large and old Christian communities could have a discreet or hidden expression due to a heavy, even hostile pagan context. In contrast, in central Anatolia, where part of the local elites had converted as early as the second and third centuries, one finds more early Christian inscriptions than in any part of the Greek-speaking world. Following the pattern of pagan epigraphy, Christian inscriptions were overwhelmingly epitaphs, and this imbalance in inscribed documents continued throughout Late Antiquity, even after Constantine's conversion to Christianity.

A new epigraphic habit, starting with the legalization of Christianity, appeared with the irruption of the Church in the public space. This religious affirmation, promoted by the State, took the form of construction of uncountable Christian basilicas and a display of ecclesiastical authorities. Already attested on early Christian inscriptions, clerics, in particular bishops, were

⁵⁵ B.11. HALLOF, "Puzzeln für Heilige".

⁵⁶ B.12. HALLOF, "Maria auf Ikaria".

even more present on the inscriptions of the post-Constantinian period. Mobilizing personal fortune and resources of their community, they intervened in a personal or collective capacity to build, embellish or enlarge places of worship. Their action aimed above all to convert, educate and guide the laity by showing inscribed texts that Christianized space as well as time. The inscriptions of ecclesiastical authorities were omnipresent, even if most of them have now disappeared forever, because they symbolized the complete conversion of Greek civilization to Christianity. Christian inscriptions, whether private or public, materialized the historical turning point when the Roman Empire converted to Christianity. The Christianization of Greek epigraphy reflected as much the absorption of Greek culture by Christians as its re-interpretation to express values of the new religion before the epigraphic production began to dwindle and decline after the second half of the sixth century.

Observations on the Language and Literary Style of Some Significant Christian Inscriptions

Heinz-Günther Nesselrath

Although the inscriptions discussed in this volume were primarily chosen for the considerable interest of their content, they are also remarkable and revealing documents for the development of the Greek language in Roman Imperial and Late Antique times and for the educational standards and the rhetorical and poetical skills of their authors, as the following pages hope to show.

1. Introductory Remarks on the Development of the Greek Language during Later Antiquity

Since late Hellenistic times, an interesting divergence took shape in the development of Greek language and literary culture. On the one hand, literary culture (predominantly represented by Greek Rhetoric) more and more looked back five to six hundred years to the great Athenian orators of the fifth and fourth centuries BC; leading intellectuals like Dionysius of Halicarnassus advocated modelling one's speeches after Lysias, Demosthenes and others, and this "classicistic turn" was then strengthened and underpinned by what might be called an "Atticistic turn", i.e. an effort to write in an Attic dialect as close to that of the fifth and fourth centuries BC as possible. On the other hand, in sounds and pronunciation the Greek language moved more and more away from its status in the so-called "classical times":¹ vowels that originally were long lost their quantity so that *omega* now sounded like *omicron* and *eta* like *iota*. Already in Hellenistic times, *epsilon-iota* had become indistinguishable from *iota* (and the same happened to *upsilon* and *omicron-iota*), and *alpha-iota* from *epsilon*. Greek thus moved into a state of "diglossia", in which written language – especially texts dominated by the above-mentioned trends of Classicism and Atticism – and spoken word

¹ See the outline of these developments in R. BROWNING, "Von der Koine zu den Anfängen des modernen Griechisch," in: H.-G. NESSELRATH (ed.), *Einleitung in die griechische Philologie*, Stuttgart / Leipzig 1997, [156–168] 157–162.

became two rather different things. Writing texts in the “correct” way, which was conservative and oriented towards the “classical” past, depended on an education that was not available in equal measure in all places and milieus, and even people who had had a thorough education were not immune to influences by contemporary spoken language. All this is reflected in the inscriptions discussed in this volume, as the following survey will show.

2. A Look at the Prose Texts in this Collection (*ICG* 829; 1028; 371; 4708; 3389; 4646; 4652)²

The prose inscriptions in this collection exhibit the just-mentioned orthographic “mistakes” (caused by the influence of spoken language) in varying degrees. In the very short text of *ICG* 829 [see B.1 above] (produced in second century AD Lycaonia) we have two times *κέ* instead of *καί* and an obvious orthographical mistake (*μνήσμης* instead of *μνήμης*). The somewhat longer text of *ICG* 1028 [B.3] (from mid third-century AD Phrygia), too, presents several instances of the spelling *ε* instead of *αι* (l. 13 *ἐντέλλομε* instead of *-μαι*, l. 16 *τεθῆνε* instead of *τεθῆναι*, l. 18–19 *ἔστε* instead of *ἔσται*), while *δίδω* in l. 4 is a late secondary form of *δίδωμι*, attested by the grammarian Herodianus (2nd century AD) and frequently found in various versions of the Alexander Romance.

The spelling *κέ* is also found (besides the correct *καί*!) two times in the considerably longer text of *ICG* 371 [B.5] (written in Lycaonia about 340 AD), a detailed account of Marcus Iulius Eugenius, a Christian dignitary who had to endure some trying times during the persecution instigated by the emperor Maximinus in the early fourth century before becoming a bishop and builder of a new church as well as of his own funerary monument. There are also several more “deviant” spellings, which reflect the phonological development of the later Greek language: seven times we find confusion of *ει* and *ι* (l. 2 *τάξι*, l. 4 *ἐπιτει[μ]ίας*, l. 6 *Χρ[ε]ιστιανούς*, l. 9 *Χρειστιανῶν*, l. 10 *διατρείφας* and *πόλι*, l. 13 *ἐπιτειμίας*); the most glaring case of spelling according to pronunciation and not according to traditional writing is *ἐπιγρ<α>φῖνε* instead of *ἐπιγραφήναι* in l. 18. Stylistically, the whole text about the life and career of Eugenius consists of one long sentence elaborately structured by a series of participles (l. 2 *στρατευσ[ά]μενος* – l. 3 *γήμα[ς]* – l. 4 *στρατευσάμενον*³ – l. 7 *ὑπομείνας* – l. 8 *σπουδάσας* – l. 9 *φυλάσσων* – l. 10 *διατρείφας* – l. 12 *κατασταθ[ε]ίς* – l. 13 *διοι[κ]ήσας* – l. 14 *ἀνοικοδο[μ]ήσας* – l. 17 *κατασκευά[σας]*

² See B.1.3.5.10.13.14 in this volume.

³ This has to be corrected to *στρατευσάμενος*, as B.5. ZIMMERMANN, “Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?”, 106 correctly remarks.

λειψόμε]νός τε) and a concluding finite verb (l. 18 ἐποίησα), after which a relative clause concludes the whole structure (l. 18–19).

About 150 years later, Firminianus, another bishop (of Zenonopolis in Isauria), is commemorated (in *ICG* 4708 [B.10], which can be dated to 488 AD) for his rebuilding of an aqueduct that had probably been destroyed in the course of an internal conflict.⁴ Here, too, we repeatedly find an *iota* where *epsilon-iota* would be the “correct” spelling (l. 4 ὑπατίαν instead of -εῖαν, l. 6 ὑδρίῳ instead of -εῖῳ); moreover, we find a confusion of *omega* and *omicron* in l. 11, and we find an *epsilon* where *alpha-iota* would be “correct” (l. 8 τῆς πρεσβίης instead of ταῖς πρεσβείαις). The most serious case, however, is the “reverse confusion” of ε/αι in l. 7, where a correct εὔχεσθε has been replaced by εὔχεσθαι, thus suggesting an infinitive instead of an imperative. Possibly this misplaced infinitive was also influential in the placement of another wrong infinitive (διαφυλάττεσθαι) in l. 9 where a secondary clause starting with ὅπως should have got a predicate in the subjunctive (διαφυλάττηται) or future indicative (διαφυλαχθήσεται), if the rules of “classical” grammar had been obeyed. Thus, whoever wrote this text committed quite a few clear violations of this grammar, due to influences of spoken language.

Julien Ogereau [B.13] presents a more or less contemporary or slightly later funerary inscription from Philippi in Thessalia (*ICG* 3389), in which the speaker is the deceased himself, who – after looking back on his origins (in Constantinople) and his ecclesiastical career (in Philippi) – tells us that he erected this funerary monument (while still living) both for himself and his wife. The text is very carefully constructed. Both at the beginning and at the end we have a short primary clause: the beginning one informs about the speaker’s birthplace, the concluding one⁵ gives his name, after which a relative clause tells us about the erection of the monument. In between we have a “network” of “interlocking” relative clauses (the first of which depends on Κωνσταντίνου ... ἡ πόλις in l. 1–2), and this “network” reaches its climax in the enumeration (starting with ὧν in l. 10) of the three clerics who promoted the speaker’s ecclesiastical career. Each of them receives a honorific characterization which gets longer in each case: Iakobos (l. 10–11) gets four words (in eight syllables), Demetrios (l. 13–14) gets eight words (in 19 syllables), and

⁴ See B.10. PILHOFER, “Bischof Firminianus und der reparierte Aquädukt des Sokrates”, 187 f.

⁵ Because of a lacuna in l. 21, there is some uncertainty how this second primary clause began: OGEREAU, (B.13. “The Clerical Career of the Presbyter Daniel at Philippi”, 216), following Chaniotis, reads ὃν ὄνομα δέ μοι, but I find the ὃν puzzling (it is also not translated). The sentence might either simply start with ὄνομα δέ μοι (which, however, would leave the ἵν unaccounted for), or we might supplement ἔστιν ὄνομα δέ μοι (the space for ἔστιν might be found, if we read the word before as ἱδρυσε(ν) instead of ἱδρύσατο).

Bisaltios even gets two extended characterizations (l. 15–17 and 18–20), the first containing ten words (in 25 syllables), the second sixteen words (in 29 syllables). These characterizations, then, neatly exhibit the rhetorical device of “increasing terms” (“wachsende Glieder”), also known as the fourth of “Behaghel’s Laws”.⁶ Still, for all the artfulness displayed in this text, it also shows some “deviant” features because of the influence of contemporary spoken language: a confusion of *omikron* and *omega* (l. 3–4: Μακεδώνων instead of -όνων), of *iota* and *epsilon-iota* (l. 7 θίων instead of θείων; l. 18 ἡμεῖν instead of ἡμῖν), and of *eta* and *iota* (l. 10 ἀοίδημος instead of -ιμος). The most curious feature is that the author several times confuses the prepositions εἰς and ἐν, writing ἐν for εἰς in l. 3, 6 and 14. This phenomenon is found in no other of the inscriptions of this volume; it may actually be a kind of “hypercorrection”, because the preposition ἐν was to disappear from the later Greek language,⁷ and thus in another way demonstrates the efforts the author of this text made to demonstrate his command of “high” Greek.

James R. Harrison [B.14] presents prose fragments from inscriptions of the time of the Emperor Justinian (ICG 4646 and 4652; middle sixth century AD) found in Ephesus and representing some of the latest texts discussed in this volume. ICG 4646 is generally thought to come from a letter written by the emperor himself or one of his highest officials;⁸ therefore we may expect that its Greek conforms to the highest literary standards – and indeed none of the “mistakes” or confusions present in the prose texts discussed so far in this section are found here. ICG 4652, written by (or by the order of) the Ephesian bishop Hypatios at about the same time, confirms to a similarly high standard, showing only once a confusion of *iota* with *epsilon-iota* (l. 23 παραμύθειαν instead of παραμυθίαν). There are, however, two more features worthy of comment: in l. 14 we find an active form (ἐπιμελησείη) of the verb ἐπιμελέομαι, which “normally” has only mediopassive forms;⁹ in l. 27–31, we have alternating optative and subjunctive forms within a conditional clause (εἴ τις ... λάβοι ... ἢ δῶ ... περιφρονήσοι ... ἢ ... μὴ προσαγγείλῃ¹⁰). The

⁶ For Behaghel’s “Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder” see, e. g., K.-H. BEST, “Otto Behaghel (1854–1936)”, *Glottometrics* 14 (2007) [80–86] 82.

⁷ See CHRISTIDIS 2007, 628; HORROCKS 2010, 285.

⁸ See B.14. HARRISON, “The Protocols of Honour at Ephesus: Justinian and Bishop Hypatios”, 223 and 226.

⁹ Active forms of ἐπιμελέομαι seem to be a late phenomenon which is apparently not attested before Roman Imperial times: for ἐπιμελῆσαι (aor. Inf. Act.) cf. Phryn. *Praep. soph.* Fr. 358 ed. DE BORRIES, for ἐπιμελεῖν Iulian. *Laus Const.* 2 (or. 3) 34 p. 121c, for ἐπιμελοῦντι Ephr. Syr. *Sermo paraen.* 28 l. 18 ed. PHRANTZOLES, for ἐπιμελοῦντας Ps.-Io. Chrys. *De paen.* PG 60 p. 703.36.

¹⁰ HORROCKS 2010, 103 notes an “overlap” between subjunctive and optative forms already in Menander (*Epir.* 867–869); HORROCKS 2010, 138 and 141 also notes the consciously kept

just-mentioned ἐπιμελησείη in l. 14 is an optative form as well; so the author of this text very consciously demonstrates his attachment to “classical” high style.

3. Texts in “Classical Meters” (ICG 1031, 372, 4736; 4734; 4735; 4055; 4711)¹¹

A number of texts in this collection also cultivate “classical” meters to show their command of traditional paideia. ICG 1031 [B.3] is a noteworthy example of the mid-third century AD, a funeral epitaph written by a lawyer with the name Gaius in the Phrygian town Eumeneia and consisting of three parts: a poem of four and a half elegiac distichs; a second poem of seven elegiac distichs (all of them complete this time); and a poem of seven iambic trimeters (of which, unfortunately, only the first four, can be read in full, while of the last three only a few single words remain). Stephen Mitchell has rightly praised the “technically almost flawless” verses,¹² and there is indeed only little to criticize: in the first poem, in l. 8, the third syllable of the name Γάιος must be reckoned as a short one (to fit into the metre), but the sequence of three consonants (Γάιος πρ-) makes this difficult.¹³ In the second poem, in l. 24 (end of the sixth distich), -τὶ before ζοῆς is measured as a short syllable, but in all known instances of similar cases (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 12.240) the *zeta* acts as metrical lengthener.¹⁴ Mitchell has correctly characterized the language Gaius used: “He did not rely on Homer for epic colour, exotic vocabulary and an air of learning”, but composed “in everyday, largely prosaic language”.¹⁵

employment of the optative by deliberately atticizing writers to show that they are still in command of all features of classical language.

¹¹ See B.3.5.8.9.15 in this volume.

¹² B.3. MITCHELL, “The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel”, 79.

¹³ The placement of personal names within verses often causes difficulties (as we will also see in the case of ICG 372, l. 3 [B.5], and ICG 4055, l. 1 [B.9], see below 312 and 315). On this subject in general see R. KASSEL, “Quod versu dicere non est”, in: id., *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin / New York 1991) 131–7; in note 3 on p. 131, Kassel draws attention to the paper of F.D. ALLEN, “On Greek Versification in Inscriptions”, *Papers of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 4 (1885–1886) [35–203] 38 and 75–8.

¹⁴ This mistake is also pointed out by MITCHELL, B.3. “The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel”, 79 n. 19.

¹⁵ B.3. MITCHELL, “The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel”, 84. It may be noted that in l. 10 of the first poem (ICG 1031) the form τέκεσιν is found primarily in tragic, not epic poets, and that in l. 13–14 of the second poem (ICG 1028) the phrase ἐν πλούτῳ τυφωθεῖς has a biblical ring to it (commenting on a passage of the Septuagint, HORROCKS 2010, 108 remarks that “a particular feature of the ordinary Koine ... is the widespread use of ἐν [en] + dative as a semantically ‘empty’ means of strengthening the flagging dative”).

It is, perhaps, equally noteworthy that in all three of Gaius' poems (as far as they have been preserved) not a single spelling mistake (of the varieties which were noted above in the prose inscriptions and will also be noted below in other verse inscriptions) can be found.¹⁶ All in all, these texts are altogether remarkable for their content and the author's care in *rebus linguisticis*.¹⁷

ICG 372 [B.5], an inscription of about AD 370 found in Lycaonian Laodicea Combusta, exhibits three elegiac distichs (and the rests or traces of two more). The language of this funerary epigram honouring two bishops, Severus and his successor Eugenius, has already been thoroughly explored by Christiane Zimmermann;¹⁸ she has pointed out many linguistic and stylistic connections with the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus. Though she has called this text "one of the finest epigrams from Lycaonia",¹⁹ I may be permitted to point out also a few less felicitous features. Zimmermann²⁰ herself has recognized that the author put up with a metrical mistake when he placed the name of the honorand Severus at the beginning of l. 3: Severus's short first syllable thus stands in a place where in classical metrics only a long syllable is allowed. Secondly, the spelling κατέλιπεν (instead of "correct" -λειπεν) reflects the common confusion between *epsilon-iota* and *iota* which we have already encountered in the prose texts discussed above. And, thirdly, the phrase ποιμνῆς ... ἡνίοχον ("charioteer of the flock") in l. 6 is a rather curious mixture of two different semantic fields.²¹ Thus, the author of this epigram exhibits poetic qualities, but also limitations.

Regarding the three short poetic texts presented by ICG 4736; 4734 and 4735 [B.8], which belong to the "Complex of Eustolios" created in Cypriot Kourion at the beginning of the fifth century AD, Daniela Summa has fittingly stressed the "coexistence of Classical tradition and Early Christianity

¹⁶ This carefulness, too, was already noted by MITCHELL, B.3. "The Lawyer, the Preacher, and a Guardian Angel", 79: "There are no stone-cutting or spelling errors."

¹⁷ There is one passage in the second poem (ICG 1028) in which I would advocate a different understanding from that of Mitchell: he translates the fifth distich (l. 17–20) with "One man is great in his possessions – he does not have more. The same measure of land receives him for burial", regarding οὐ πλέον οὗτος / ταὐτὸ μέτρον γαίης πρὸς τάφον ἐκδέχεται as two distinct sentences. I would rather take them together (replacing the colon by a comma) and translate: "this man does not receive more, but only the same measure of earth for his burial." For the thought that every human being gets the same space allotted to him (or her) after death, cf. Luc. *Char.* 24 and *Nec.* 17.

¹⁸ See ZIMMERMANN C. 2019, 139–140 and B.5. ZIMMERMANN, "Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?", 115 f.

¹⁹ ZIMMERMANN C. 2019, 139.

²⁰ B.5. ZIMMERMANN, "Zwei Inschriften – eine Person?", 115.

²¹ There seems to be only one other poetic passage in which these two words are connected: in *Dion.* 27.195–196, Nonnos talks of the ποιμναι / ... πυρανγέος ἡνιοχῆος ("flocks ... of the fiery bright charioteer"), but here Helios is called "charioteer", because he actually drives his sun-chariot across the heaven, and not because he is the shepherd of his flocks.

within a civic context”;²² interestingly, all three (admittedly short) texts are free from the misspellings (caused by the phonological development of the Greek language) that we encountered in some of the inscriptions discussed above. In ICG 4736 (three elegiac distichs commemorating the rebuilding of the bathing complex by Eustolios) the “Homeric patina”²³ is perhaps less in evidence than some other features, which reflect more recent developments: in l. 1, we find the participle πέλοντας, which seems to have been used only by late poets;²⁴ in l. 3, the aorist ἐπελήσατο (instead of ἐπελάθετο, which does not fit into epic verse) occurs once in Quintus Smyrnaeus and three times in Nonnos – and nowhere else;²⁵ in l. 4, χαρισσάμενος is apparently found nowhere in literary poetry;²⁶ δίζετο (l. 5) is found first in the Hellenistic poet Bion and then rather frequently in Imperial Greek epics (Quintus, Nonnos, Gregory of Nazianzus, Orphic Argonautica, Colluthus). The picture in the three hexameters of ICG 4734 is similar: in l. 3, ζώσαντο is found in Hesiod (*Op.* 345) and Quintus of Smyrna (4.188), and the adjective πολύλλιτος is first attested in Callimachus²⁷ and other Hellenistic poetry²⁸ as well as Imperial Greek poetry.²⁹ Finally, the two hexameters of ICG 4735 (preserved only with substantial lacunae) add no surprises in their poetic language.³⁰

Possibly the most ambitious poetic text written in traditional hexameters that is presented in this collection is ICG 4055 [B.9], called the “testament” of Philomenes, consisting of forty hexameters written and inscribed on a stone in Boeotian Tanagra around the middle of the fifth century AD. This text exhibits two very remarkable – but also in a way contradictory – features: on the one hand it displays an impressively wide knowledge of the Greek epic

²² B.8. SUMMA, “The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex of ‘Eustolios’”, 139.

²³ Thus B.8. SUMMA, “The Epigraphic Dossier of the Complex of ‘Eustolios’”, 144. Certainly, a phrase like τὸ πάροιθε(ν) is already found in Homer, but later poets use it much more frequently, and the one who tops all others is Quintus of Smyrna (20 references out of a total of 107 in the electronic TLG).

²⁴ See Eudoc. *Mart.* 2.401, and several instances in Romanus Melodus.

²⁵ It should be added that the closely related form ἐπελήσαο is found two times in Gregory of Nazianzus and once also in Quintus.

²⁶ The electronic TLG lists two instances (one each for χαρισσάμενος and -η) in epigrams found in the collection of COUGNY (*Epigrammatum Anthologia* vol. 3, *Epigr. Dedic.* 260.4 [p. 40] and *Epigr. Sepulcr.* 622.6 [p. 193]). The oldest attested form of the stem χαρισσ- is χαρίσασθαι in *Hymn. Hom. Apoll.* 321; the form ἐχαρίσσατο is found in Callim. (*Del.* 246) and the *Anthologia Palatina* (9.240.5, 799.3).

²⁷ Callim. *Apoll.* 80; *Del.* 360.

²⁸ Euphor. *Fr.* SH 428 col. 1, 12.

²⁹ Man. *Apotel.* 6.741; Nonn. *Par. Io.* 3.148, 16.97; Pampr. *Fr.* 3.156 (ed. HEITSCH); *Orph. Hymn.* 4.12; Eudoc. *Mart.* 2.462.

³⁰ The combination of θάλαμος and θνώδης (in l. 1) is found in Hom. (*Od.* 4.121), the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (244, 288), Ap. Rhod. (*Argo.* 3.839) and the *Orph. Argon.* (793); and the verbal form κομέουσιν (l. 2) can be found in epic poetry from Homer to Nonnos.

tradition from Homer until its own times. Timo Christian³¹ has already drawn attention to the fact that the author is not only very well-versed in Homeric language, but also in the language of more recent authors. There is in fact a number of poetic words and expressions that appear only in post-Homeric epic poetry.³² Christian has moreover pointed out the surprising fact that a number of words and expressions used in the inscription are reminiscent of the *Posthomeric* by the epic poet Quintus of Smyrna (who probably lived and worked in the latter third or earlier fourth century AD).³³ Christian³⁴ rightly asks whether this evidence is enough to prove that the author of this inscription was necessarily influenced by Quintus, and he answers correctly that it is not. In any case, however, this evidence shows that our author was very familiar with much more poems of the epic tradition than just Homer.

On the other side, however, it is also remarkable that for all his vast knowledge of the Greek literary tradition this author makes a number of spelling mistakes which in turn have led him to commit metrical errors as well: Christian³⁵ has already pointed out such errors in l. 10 (where the second syllable of ἀκτῖσιν is required to be short but is actually a long one) and 34 (where the form τέτυκται is spelled τέτυκτε and the short *epsilon* is really needed, because this word would otherwise not fit in the metre³⁶), but these

³¹ B.9. CHRISTIAN, "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes", 170–2.

³² Examples: in l. 7 we read γενετήρων – forms of γενετήρ are first found in Hellenistic epic poetry (CA *Epic. Alex. Adesp.* 3.10 [ed. POWELL]) and then become very frequent in Greek Imperial epics (Christian authors like Gregory of Nazianzus, Eudocia and Nonnos included; interestingly – in light of what will be said in the following sentences – Quintus of Smyrna does not use γενετήρ). The participle γεγώς (l. 8: γεγώτων) is first used in Greek Tragedy (mainly in Eur., e.g. *Med.* 490: παίδων γεγώτων), but then also in Imperial Greek epic poetry (Man. *Apotel.* 6.705; Quintus e.g. 1.502 and four more times). The phrase μέθυ λαρόν (here in l. 9) first appears in Apollonius of Rhodes (two times), then Oppianus (Cyn.), and also the Orphic Argonautica, Gregory of Nazianzus and Nonnos use it (each once); but its most frequent user is Quintus of Smyrna (four times). Forms of ψεκάς / ψεκάδες (here l. 13: ψεκάδεσσειν) seem to be first attested in Imperial Greek epic poetry (*Oracula Sibyllina*, Quintus of Smyrna, Gregory of Nazianzus; for the phrase χειμερίασι κατεβόμενω(ν) ψεκάδεσσειν created by our author, Quintus 10.418 provides a remarkable analogy: ὕδρηλῃσι κατεβόμεναι λιβάδεσσι). In l. 21, the word λυκάβανσει must be understood as λυκάβασι – this form is attested not before Gregory of Nazianzus (who has the expression ἐπερχομένοισιν ... λυκάβασι three times); its use in a sepulchral epigram (*Epigrammatum Anthologia* vol. 3 no. 505.1 [ed. COUGNY]) is probably later.

³³ There are even some more reminiscences of Quintus in the text than Christian (B.9. "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes", 171) has mentioned: Christian cites evidence from lines 15, 22 and 32; the phrase ἀν(ε)ρηγῇ ὑπ' ἀνάγκῃ (l. 33) is also found nowhere else but in Quintus (1.434, 12.230), and for the phrases μέθυ λαρόν (l. 9), δούλιον ἥμαρ (l. 33) and δαίμονος αἴσῃ (l. 34) Quintus is not the first user, but definitely the most frequent one.

³⁴ B.9. CHRISTIAN, "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes", 171.

³⁵ B.9. CHRISTIAN, "Das 'Testament' des Philomenes", 161.

³⁶ Interestingly, the form τέτυκται actually appears in the very position (within the verse) in which τέτυκτε appears in our inscription not only in Homer (*Il.* 15.207), but also in later

are not the only metrical mistakes in this text. Already the first syllable of the very first word of l. 1 (the name Φιλόμενης), which is naturally short, is placed here in the position of a required longum.³⁷ The next case is found in l. 5: here, the dative case of Τριάς is “wrongly” spelled Τριάδει (instead of -δι), thus suggesting that the third syllable is long (which it actually needs to be), which “naturally” it is not.³⁸ And in l. 39, the spelling τίσιε (instead of τίσειε) suggests that the second syllable is short (and a short syllable would indeed be needed here), but it is actually long and thus would not correctly fit in here. So we have five cases of metrical error in this text, and in three of them “deviant” spelling is used to “cover up” these mistakes; in six further cases³⁹ such “deviant” spelling does not cause metrical irregularities. It is in fact noteworthy that no other text with traditional metrics in this collection contains so many spelling deviations caused by the phonological development of the Greek language as this one – could one possible reason for this be that Tanagra was (probably for most of its existence during Antiquity) an educational backwater? That, however, would make it all the more surprising that the author knew so much about preceding Greek epic poetry.

A similar command of the preceding epic tradition is shown by ICG 4711 [B.15], the second longest poem in traditional verse in this collection, a funerary poem consisting of 23 hexameters written (and inscribed on stone) probably in Egypt in the fifth century AD, in which the author commemorates a deceased close associate (son? friend?). Unlike ICG 4055 [B.9], the spelling of the text is almost faultless,⁴⁰ and no metrical errors can be detected.⁴¹

epics (Theodotus Judaeus SH 761.4, Opp. Anaz. Hal. 1.419, 784, Man. Apotel. 3.212, Quint. 6.475, 7.285, 10.132, Anth. Pal. 6.353.1) – but in all these cases the third syllable (-ται, which is metrically long) is shortened by a following vowel. Possibly the author of our inscription knew of some of these cases (three of them are found in Quintus!) and therefore took it for granted that the syllable was “naturally” short.

³⁷ This is another case where the insertion of a name into a hexameter caused difficulties (for other cases see above, p. 311 with note 13): the name “Philomenes” starts with three short syllables in a row, something which effectively prevents it from being “correctly” put into a hexameter.

³⁸ Τριάδει is another case of three short syllables in a row that cannot be made to fit into a hexameter.

³⁹ All have already been noted by Christian, B.9. “Das ‘Testament’ des Philomenes”, 158: l. 28 ὑπεροπλήησι (for -ήησι), l. 32 ὑσμείναις (for -μίν-), l. 33 ἀνεηρῇ (for ἀνι-), l. 37 κύναις (for -ες) and δάσσοντε (-ται) and l. 38 ἴσεται (for εἴσ-).

⁴⁰ The single (slight) exception is ἀπλακίς in l. 7, which is probably meant to mean ἀμπλακίς, a word that is first found in Theognis, Pindar and Attic Tragedy and from Hellenistic times onwards also incorporated in hexameter poetry (Callimachus, Rhianus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Triphiodorus); it is very frequently used by Gregory of Nazianzus and in Nonnos’ Paraphrasis.

⁴¹ The proposed restoration of the beginning of l. 16 ([θυμοῦ δ’ ἐξ] αὐχέντος) produces a faulty hexameter, which is one syllable too long. In the edition of this text in SEG 24.1243

Regarding the style of this text, it is probably no coincidence that a considerable number of the words used in this text are found in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus and – even more – in Nonnos.⁴²

4. Texts in “Post-Classical” (?) Verse (ICG 4731; 4730; 4828; 4732)⁴³

The final section of this contribution will discuss four texts which may – from a point of view that looks at linguistic and poetic developments beyond Antiquity (and into Byzantine times) – be the most interesting ones in this collection, because they exhibit what might be called “post-classical” verse.

In ICG 4731 [B.4], a funerary commemoration of a father and his daughters by their relatives, which was written in Paphlagonian Laodicea Pontica in the late third or early fourth century AD, we find what has been called “pseudo-hexameters”,⁴⁴ i.e. phrases and word-groups that look like parts of hexameters. The text starts with the words τὸν πάσης σοφίης, which – especially with their non-Attic endings – sound like the first half of a Homeric hexameter until the penthemimeral caesura, and the next words (καὶ ἀρετῆς

we find [θυμοῦ ἔξ] αὐχέντος, which eliminates this problem, if θυμοῦ and ἔξ are read in synizesis (i.e. as two, and not three, long syllables). Still, it may be that the right supplement for the lacuna has not yet been found.

⁴² L. 5: συμφράδμων is found in Homer, Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, Naumachius (Imperial age), Triphiodorus and (three times) in Gregory of Nazianzus. L. 8: forms of μειδιῶν appear in Homer (two times), Theocritus, Apollonius Rhodius, Dionysius Periegetes, Oppian *Cyneg.*, Quintus (two times), Colluthus (two times), but most frequently in Nonnos (seven times in *Dion.*). L. 10: αἰζῶος is frequently found in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus and in Nonnos (both *Dion.* and *Par. Io.*); ὑποδρηστήρ (also l. 10, but it may already have been used in l. 2) is attested once in Homer (*Od.* 15.330), but then rather frequently in Late Antique Greek epic poetry (Triphiodorus, Gregory of Nazianzus, Eudocia, Colluthus), especially in Nonnos (14 times, both *Dion.* and *Par. Io.*). L. 16: αὐχέης is first found in Hellenistic poetry (Simmias, Rhianus), then in Roman Imperial epics (Opp. *Anaz. Hal.*), but its most frequent user is (again) Nonnos (18 times, both *Dion.* and *Par. Io.*); regarding the same line, forms similar to ἐπεγγελῶντες are found once in Oppian's *Halieutica* (2.303) and eight (!) times in Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*, but nowhere else. L. 18: πανακήρατος – the earliest attestation of which seems to be in the *Corpus Hermeticum* – is found (in poetry) only in Synesius and Nonnos' *Paraphrasis*; in the same line, εὖχος is frequent already in Homer, then found in Quintus, Eudocia and Nonnos, but in this position at the end of the verse it first (?) turns up in Oppian's *Halieutica* (5.618) and then in several poems by Gregory of Nazianzus (*Carm. dogm.* PG 37 p. 404.12, *Carm. mor.* PG 37 p. 744.10, *Carm. al.* PG 37 p. 1515.7). L. 21: ζῶαρκής is used by the *Oracula Sibyllina*, Gregory of Nazianzus and Nonnos (both *Dion.* and *Par. Io.*).

⁴³ See B.4.6.12.7 in this volume.

⁴⁴ Thus B.4. OEHLER, “Himmlicher Lohn für tugendhaftes Leben”, 99.

κεκοσμημένον⁴⁵ ἄνδρα) might be thought to complete this verse, but this would only be possible, if -κοσμ- could be counted as a short syllable, which, alas, it cannot. In the next lines, we get more word-groups which sound like parts of a hexameter.⁴⁶ As in some texts discussed before, there are also a few deviant spellings⁴⁷ reflecting phonological developments of the Greek language.

In the somewhat later ICG 4730 [B.6], a funerary inscription for a young girl set up by her parents in Galatian Tavium in the fourth or fifth century AD, more deviant spellings are found: simple *iota* for *epsilon-iota*,⁴⁸ but also *epsilon-iota* for simple *iota*,⁴⁹ *epsilon* for *alpha-iota*.⁵⁰ In some instances, a consonant is written only once, when it should have been written twice,⁵¹ and there are a few other misspellings as well.⁵² Apart from that, the metre and the poetic style – if we may call it that – of this text are quite intriguing. It looks (at least at first sight) as if the author tried to come as near to traditional hexameters as was possible for him. The first verse (lines 1–2) would in fact be an hexameter, if the word group φίλον τέκος was omitted.⁵³ The second verse (lines 2–3) can be read as an hexameter until (and including) διέλαμπεν (i.e. until the so-called bucolic diaeresis). If we correct the spelling mistakes in verse three (l. 4–5), we actually get a decent hexameter (with a pen-themimeral caesura and bucolic diaeresis): Χρυσὸς φαιδροτάτης ἐσβέννυτο

⁴⁵ The construction of κεκοσμημένον with genitive case (instead of dative) is curious – was this meant to be a poeticism?

⁴⁶ For the phrase γαί' ἀμφεκάλυψε cf. *Orac. Sib.* 1.82 (γαίη δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυψεν), *Anth. Pal.* 7.373.2 (ἀμφεκάλυψε κόνις). Already Homer (*Il.* 5.68) has θάνατος δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυψε (cf. 12.116: πρόσθεν γάρ μιν μοῖρα δυσώνυμος ἀμφεκάλυψεν, 16.350: θανάτου δέ μέλαν νέφος ἀμφεκάλυψεν). L. 6: for οὐνόματα cf. Hom. *Il.* 17.260 (οὐνόματ'), for τεκέων Hom. *Il.* 3.301; l. 7–8: the words Ὀλύμπι<ο>ν Ἀκυλῖνά τ[ε] superficially sound like the end of a hexameter (however, the name Ἀκυλῖνα would not fit in, because its first syllable would need to be long and the third short, which – as the circumflex accent indicates – is not the case); l. 10: εὐσεβίς is first attested in Empedokles *Fr.* 3.10 DK, then also in *Orac. Sib.* 4.152, 8.486. There are more words with “Ionic” endings as would be required in a hexameter (like the just-mentioned εὐσεβίς in l. 10, συγγενείην in l. 15 and φιλοξενίην in l. 16–17); for πᾶσι βροτοῖς in l. 16 cf. Hom. *Od.* 15.255 and *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 32.

⁴⁷ See in l. 18 ποθινόν (instead of -ει-); in l. 10 μμνημένος instead of (μεμν-) may simply be an orthographical mistake.

⁴⁸ L. 3 κάλλι (for -ει), l. 10 ἐπιγομέν<η> (for ἐπειγ-).

⁴⁹ L. 17 εἰδέσθαι (for ἰδ-), l. 19 χάρειν (for -ριν).

⁵⁰ L. φεδροτάτης (for φαί-), already noted by HUTTNER, B.6. “Grabinschrift der Palladion”, 120.

⁵¹ L. 4 ἐξβέννυτο should have been written ἐσβέννυτο; in l. 11 read πόλλ' (instead of πόλ'), in l. 16–17 read ἐσσομένοισιν (instead of ἐσσομ-).

⁵² HUTTNER B.6. “Grabinschrift der Palladion”, 120 has already noted that in l. 13 ἔ{υ} χουσιν must be corrected to ἔχουσιν; for misspelt ἐξβέννυτο see the preceding note.

⁵³ The phrase φίλον τέκος itself is frequently found in Homeric and later (also Christian) hexameter (in Quintus, Gregory of Nazianzus, Eudocia).

σῆς ὑπὸ μορφῆς. The next verse (lines 5–6) is one dactyl short, but apart from that sounds quite hexameter-like. Verse 5 (lines 6–7) also reads like an hexameter until the hephthemimeres caesura (Οὐχ ὁσίος διὰ ταῦτα τυχόν). Verse 6 (lines 7–8) could be transformed into a hexameter by just making one slight correction.⁵⁴ The next verse (lines 9–10), however, is hopeless – here the author obviously preferred content to metrically correct diction. The latter two thirds of verse 8 (lines 10–11) read like the last four metres of a hexameter (πρὸς θεὸν ἄμβροτον⁵⁵, ὃς πόλον ο<ι>κεῖ). In verse nine (lines 11–12) we would have to omit the first word (πόλ<λ>) and then read the ending -εα of ἄλγεα as one short syllable⁵⁶ to get yet another hexameter.⁵⁷ In the next verse (lines 13–14), however, we are as far away from a hexameter as in verse eight. Again, the latter two thirds of verse eleven (lines 14–15) sound like a.⁵⁸ In verse twelve (lines 16–17) – the last verse of the poem proper (there follows only the subscriptio naming the parents of the deceased girls as the dedicators of this monument) – we would have to correct three single letters to get a hexameter.⁵⁹ Looking back on this remarkable text, the question arises: was its author just incapable of producing “correct” hexameter verses, or was this never his real intention? It is difficult to tell, but it should at least not be ruled out that he (or she) did not care so much for traditional verse but intended to produce something new.

It may be questionable whether one should regard ICG 4828 [B.12] – an inscription of the fifth or sixth century AD from the island of Icaria recording a prophecy allegedly by the god Apollo that foretold that the temple where this inscription was found would one day be transformed into a church for

⁵⁴ Reading ἰκέλ' ἄνθεσιν: “Ὀρη δ' αὖτ' ἐν σοὶ ἰκέλ' [instead of εἰκέλη] ἄνθεσιν εἰαρινοῖσιν (ἰκέλη is already used by Homer).

⁵⁵ The phrase θεὸν ἄμβροτον is found in Homeric and later hexameter (Quintus, *Oracula Sibyllina*).

⁵⁶ This would be a bit out of the ordinary but not totally inconceivable: see the ending of Hom. *Il.* 24.7 (ἡδ' ὅποσα τόλπεισε σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ πάθεν ἄλγεα), where -εα is in fact treated as one syllable.

⁵⁷ We would then get: ἄλγεα λιποῦσα πατρί τε φί<λ>ω καὶ μητέρι κεδνῇ. The phrase πατρί φίλω is quite frequent in Homeric verse; for its combination with μητέρι κεδνῇ cf. Hom. *Od.* 10.8 (πατρί φίλω καὶ μητέρι κεδνῇ).

⁵⁸ The form ἐθέμεσθα is not Homeric, but found in Oppian (*Hal.* 5.564) and *Anth. Pal.* 7.333.4 (a funerary epigram). For the concluding word-group πατήρ τε τοῦ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ compare Hom. *Il.* 6.413, 429 et al. (πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ also appears two times in Gregory of Nazianzus) and 6.471 (πατήρ τε φίλος καὶ πότνια μήτηρ).

⁵⁹ Read ἀνθρώποισι instead of ἀνθρώποισιν, ἐσσομένοισιν instead of ἐσομένοισιν and ιδέσθαι instead of εἰδέσθαι: μνήμ' ἔμεν ἀνθρώποισι καὶ ἐσσομένοισιν ιδέσθαι. Interestingly, the phrase καὶ ἐσσομένοισιν ιδέσθαι is found only in Quintus of Smyrna (11.98; but cf. Ap. Rhod. *Argo.* 1.1062: σῆμα καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν ιδέσθαι, and 2.842: σῆμα δ' ἔπεστι καὶ ὀψιγόνοισιν ιδέσθαι).

the virgin Mary – as a poetic text at all. As Klaus Hallof⁶⁰ has remarked Apollonian oracles are usually in hexameter verse, but such verses are barely, if at all, detectable in this inscription.⁶¹ The inscription also contains a lot of spelling mistakes (proportionally more than any other inscription in this volume): *omicron* replaces *omega* four times (in l. 3, 5 and 7), *epsilon* replaces *alpha-iota* three times (in l. 2 and 5), simple *iota* is replaced by *epsilon-iota* (in l. 5), *epsilon-iota* once by *iota* (in l. 7)⁶² and once by *eta* (l. 6); and *eta* is once replaced by *iota*. With so many spelling confusions present, one may well wonder in what relation exactly this text stands to the other versions of this oracle that Hallof has discussed.⁶³ The spelling confusions in this inscription are in fact so numerous that it is hardly conceivable that it was based on a written text; it seems more probable that it was somehow derived from an oral version of the story that somehow happened to come to Icaria.

I reserve the last part of this discussion for ICG 4732 [B.7], a mosaic inscription found in Cypriote Tremithus / Tremithousa and belonging to the fourth or fifth century AD. It consists of five verses which Daniela Summa has characterized as “awkward iambic meter”.⁶⁴ A closer look reveals that line 1 may be regarded – if we look at the “traditional” quantities of the syllables – as a correct iambic trimeter,⁶⁵ and with a lot of good will we may assume that an iambic trimeter was aimed at in line 3 as well;⁶⁶ but the other three lines cannot (even with a yet greater degree of good will) be interpreted as this kind of verse: in line 4, a trimeter would be one syllable too short, and the

⁶⁰ B.12 HALLOF, “Maria auf Ikaria”, 209.

⁶¹ The last line could be read as a hexameter (with some irregularities), if the ample supplement can be accepted: [αὐτῆς ἔστε δόμος· Μαρία δὲ τοῦν]ομα αὐτῆς. In the word ἔστε, the supplement assumes a confusion of αἰ and ε, and only with this confusion an hexameter (though a rather inelegant one) could be restored at all. In other lines, fragments of hexameters can be made out: κόσμο<ν> ὥρῳρεν (read ὅρ-) in l. 3, ὑψιμέδ[οντα Θεό]ν in l. 4, λόγος ἀφ[θ]ειτο<ς> in l. 4–5, κόσ[μο]ν ἅπαντα in l. 6–7.

⁶² In ποῖτε, l. 4 the *epsilon-iota* of ποιεῖτε is simply omitted.

⁶³ B.12 HALLOF, “Maria auf Ikaria”, 209–12. The version of the *Tübingen Theosophy* (§ 53–4) is located at Cyzicus and chronologically situated in the times of the emperor Leo I. (457–474 AD). The version of John Malalas (about 491–578 AD), picked up by John of Antioch (probably 7th century AD), places the story of the oracle in the mythical times of the Argonauts; two versions of Ps.-Athanasius, *Comm. templ. Ath.*, connect it with the Seven Sages of Classical Greece, but the curious list of names given for these men (Titon/-an, Bias, Solon, Ch(e)ilon, Thucydides [!], Menander [!], Plato [!]) makes it probable that this text is rather late, too.

⁶⁴ B.7. SUMMA, “The Mosaic Inscription of Bishop Spyridon in Tremithus/Tremithousa”, 138.

⁶⁵ The first word should be written with a circumflex accent on its second syllable (ψηφῖδι), because in a hexameter of Hipponax (*Fr.* 128.3 West) this syllable is clearly long.

⁶⁶ This, however, works only, if we accept the *alpha-iota* in the second syllable of the name Καρταίριου and not restore Καρτερίου; we would also have to accept the first syllable in the word ἀγαθές (= -αῖς) as long (which is rather irregular).

extant eleven syllables are in a sequence that effectively precludes iambic rhythm. More interesting is the case of lines 2 and 5: here we have twelve syllables each that are not arranged in a correct “iambic” order (if we look at the “old” quantities of these syllables), but might be taken as a kind of fore-runner of the later Byzantine dodecasyllabic verse, as it was first described by Paul Maas in 1903;⁶⁷ this dodecasyllabus is mainly characterized by always having twelve syllables and by a “Binnenschluss” (internal stop marked by a word-end) after either the fifth or the seventh syllable. Both these characteristics are found in lines 1 (which could also still be regarded as a “traditional iambic trimeter”, see above), 2 and 5, but not in lines 3 and 4 (due to some corruption or mistake?). Some years ago Andreas Rhoby has shown that some late antique inscriptions already in the fifth or sixth centuries AD exhibit the characteristics of the dodecasyllabic verse while openly disregarding the ancient requirements for quantities of syllables within iambic metre.⁶⁸ *ICG* 4732 is a text that at least in the majority of its verses shows the same characteristics.

5. Concluding Remarks

As was already intimated at the beginning of this contribution, the inscriptions brought together in this volume exhibit a wide range of varying linguistic, stylistic and metrical competences; it makes in fact quite a difference if a text originates in a big urban centre (or even the capital itself, as is the case of *ICG* 4646 and 4652 [B.14]) or in small and remote places like the island of Icaria (as in *ICG* 4828 [B.12]) – on the other hand there is also the astonishing case of a poem showing great familiarity with the whole tradition of epic verse-writing from Homer to Late Antiquity, but originating in a backwater like Boeotian Tanagra. More interesting, however, may be the consideration that sometimes in those backwaters a development of new forms of verses is attested (as in *ICG* 4732 [B.7]) that later becomes dominant in Byzantium.

⁶⁷ MAAS 1903.

⁶⁸ A. RHOBY, “Vom jambischen Trimeter zum byzantinischen Zwölfsilber: Beobachtung zur Metrik des spätantiken und byzantinischen Epigramms”, *Wiener Studien* 124 (2011) [117–142] 138. Rhoby calls this phenomenon “Prosodielosigkeit” (already MAAS 1903, 284 note 1 called such verses “prosodielos”).

D. Supplements

Abbreviations

Throughout the book abbreviations for ancient non-Christian authors and works follow the *SAPERE Abkürzungen Gesamtverzeichnis*, abbreviations for biblical and related texts follow S. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*, 3rd ed. (Berlin/Boston 2014) and *The SBL Handbook of Style* (2nd ed., Atlanta 2014). All other abbreviations are listed below.

Inscriptions

BE	<i>Bulletin Épigraphique</i>
BEAN – MITFORD, <i>Rough Cilicia II</i>	G. E. BEAN/T. B. MITFORD, <i>Journeys in Rough Cilicia 1964–1968</i> (Vienna 1970)
BOFFO, <i>Iscrizioni Bibbia</i>	L. BOFFO, <i>Iscrizioni greche e latine per lo studio della bibbia</i> (Brescia 1994)
CIL	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin 1863 –)
CLAIRMONT, <i>Gravestone and Epigram</i>	C. W. CLAIRMONT, <i>Gravestone and Epigram. Greek Memorials from the Archaic and Classical Period</i> (Mainz 1970)
DUMONT-HOMOLLE, <i>Mélanges</i>	T. HOMOLLE (ed.), <i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'épigraphie par A. Dumont</i> (Paris 1892)
ETAM	<i>Ergänzungsbande zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris</i> , Vol. 1–29 (Vienna 1966–2018)
GUARDUCCI, <i>Epigrafia greca IV</i>	M. GUARDUCCI, <i>Epigrafia greca IV: epigrafi sacre pagane e cristiane</i> (Rome 1978)
I. Amathonte	P. AUPERT / S. KIROV, <i>Corpus des inscriptions d'Amathonte. La vie, la magie et la mort</i> (Athens, in print)
I. Anemurium Mosaic	J. RUSSELL, <i>The Mosaic Inscriptions of Anemurium</i> (Vienna 1987)
I. Ancyra	S. MITCHELL / D. FRENCH, <i>The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Ankara (Ancyra)</i> (Munich 2012–2019)
I. Beroia	L. GOUNAROPOULOU / M. B. HATZOPOULOS, <i>Ἐπιγραφές Κάτω Μακεδονίας (μεταξὺ τοῦ Βερμίου Ὄρους καὶ τοῦ Ἀξίου Ποταμοῦ)</i> , vol. 1, <i>Ἐπιγραφές Βεροίας</i> (Athens 1998)
ICG	C. BREYTENBACH / C. ZIMMERMANN, <i>Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae (ICG): A Digital Collection of Greek Early Christian Inscriptions from Asia Minor and Greece</i> , https://icg.uni-kiel.de
I. Chr. Asie Mineure	H. GRÉGOIRE, <i>Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure</i> (Paris 1922)
I. Chr. Bulgarien	V. BESEVLIEV, <i>Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien</i> (Berlin 1964)
I. Chr. Crete	A. C. BANDY, <i>The Greek Christian inscriptions of Crete</i> (Athens 1970)

<i>I.Chr. Égypte</i>	G. LEFEBVRE, <i>Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Égypte</i> (Kairo 1907)
<i>I.Chr. Macédoine</i>	D. FEISSEL, <i>Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du III^e au VI^e siècle</i> (Athens 1983)
<i>I.Chr. Peloponnes</i>	N. A. BEES, <i>Corpus der griechisch-christlichen Inschriften von Hellas – Inschriften von Peloponnes</i> , Vol. I: Isthmos – Korinthos (Athens 1941)
<i>I.Chr. România</i>	E. POPESCU, <i>Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România</i> (Bucharest 1976)
<i>ICilicie</i>	G. DAGRON / D. FEISSEL, <i>Inscriptions de Cilicie</i> (Paris 1987)
<i>I.Ephesos</i>	H. WANKEL et al., <i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos</i> (Bonn 1979–1984)
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (Berlin 1873–) http://telota.bbaw.de/ig/
<i>IG II/III² 5</i>	E. SIRONEN, <i>Inscriptiones Atticae aetatis quae est inter Herulorum incursionem et Imp. Mauricii tempora</i> (Berlin 2008)
<i>IG IV² 3</i>	E. SIRONEN, <i>Inscriptiones Corinthiae saeculorum IV. V. VI.</i> (Berlin 2016)
<i>IG VII² 3</i>	K. HALLOF / Y. KALLIONTZIS / A. CHARAMI, <i>Inscriptiones Megaridis, Oropiae, Boeotiae, ed. altera. Pars 3: Tanagra et ager Tanagraeus</i> (Berlin 2024)
<i>IG X 2.1</i>	C. EDSON, <i>Inscriptiones Thessalonicae et viciniae</i> (Berlin 1972)
<i>IG XII 3</i>	F. HILLER VON GAERTRINGEN, <i>Inscriptiones Symes Teutlussae Teli Nisyri Astypalaeae Anaphes Therae et Therasiae Pholegandri Meli Cimoli</i> (Berlin 1898)
<i>IG XII 6</i>	K. HALLOF, <i>Inscriptiones Chii et Sami cum Corassiis Icariaque</i> (Berlin 2000–)
<i>IG XV 2</i>	M. KANTIREA / D. SUMMA, <i>Inscriptiones Cypri alphabeticae</i> , Fasc. I: <i>Inscriptiones Cypri orientalis: Citium, Golgi, Tremithus, Idalium, Tamassus, Kafizin, Ledra</i> (Berlin / Boston 2020)
<i>IGLS</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> (Paris 1929–)
<i>IGR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes</i> (Paris 1906–1927)
<i>IG España Portugal</i>	M. P. DE HOZ, <i>Inscripciones griegas de España y Portugal</i> (Madrid 2014)
<i>IG Napoli</i>	E. MIRANDA, <i>Iscrizioni greche d'Italia. Napoli</i> , Vol. I–II (Rome 1990–1995)
<i>IK</i>	<i>Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien</i> (Bonn 1972–)
<i>I.Kato Maked. II</i>	L. GOUNAROPOULOU / P. PASCHIDIS / M. B. HATZOPOULOS, <i>Επιγραφές Κάτω Μακεδονίας (μεταξύ του Βερμίου όρους και του Άξιου ποταμού)</i> , Vol. 2, <i>Επιγραφές Αλώρου, Αιγέων, Μίεζας, Μαρινίας, Σκύδρας, Νεαπόλεως, Έδεσσας</i> (Athens 2015)
<i>I.Kourion</i>	T. B. MITFORD, <i>The Inscriptions of Kourion</i> (Philadelphia 1971)
<i>I.Mus. Konya</i>	B. H. MCLEAN, <i>Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Konya Archaeological Museum</i> (Ankara 2002)
<i>I.Mus. Varsovie</i>	A. ŁAJTAR / A. TWARDCKI, <i>Catalogue des inscriptions grecques du Musée National de Varsovie</i> (Warsaw 2003)
<i>I.Mus. Yozgat</i>	C. WALLNER, <i>Die Inschriften des Museums in Yozgat</i> (Vienna 2011)
<i>I.Mylasa</i>	W. BLÜMEL, <i>Die Inschriften von Mylasa, I. Inschriften der Stadt</i> (Bonn 1987); <i>II. Inschriften aus der Umgebung der Stadt</i> (Bonn 1988)

<i>I.North Galatia</i>	S. MITCHELL, <i>The Ankara District. The Inscriptions of North Galatia</i> (Oxford 1982)
<i>I.Philippi</i> ²	P. PILHOFFER, <i>Philippi</i> , Vol. 2: <i>Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi</i> , 2 nd rev. ed. (Tübingen 2009)
<i>I.Phyrgie Drew-Bear</i>	T. DREW-BEAR, <i>Nouvelles inscriptions de Phrygie</i> (Zutphen 1978)
<i>I.Prusias</i>	W. AMELING, <i>Die Inschriften von Prusias ad Hypium</i> (Bonn 1985)
<i>I.Side</i>	J. NOLLÉ, <i>Side im Altertum. Geschichte und Zeugnisse</i> (Bonn 1993–2001)
<i>I.Stratonikeia</i>	M. Ç. ŞAHİN, <i>Die Inschriften von Stratonikeia</i> , Vol. I–III (Bonn 1981–2010)
MAMA	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</i>
MAMA I	W. M. CALDER, <i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</i> (Manchester 1928)
MAMA III	J. KEIL / A. WILHELM, <i>Denkmäler aus dem rauhen Kilikien</i> (Manchester 1931)
MAMA IV	W. H. BUCKLER / W. M. CALDER / W. K. C. GUTHRIE, <i>Monuments and Documents from Eastern Asia and Western Galatia</i> (Manchester 1928)
MAMA VI	W. H. BUCKLER / W. M. CALDER, <i>Monuments and Documents from Phrygia and Caria</i> (Manchester 1939)
MAMA VII	W. M. CALDER, <i>Documents from Eastern Phrygia</i> (Manchester 1956)
MAMA VIII	W. M. CALDER / J. M. R. CORMACK, <i>Monuments from Lycaonia, the Pisidio-Phrygian borderland, Aphrodisias</i> (Manchester 1962)
MAMA XI	P. THONEMANN, <i>Monuments from Phrygia and Lycaonia</i> (London 2013) https://mama.csad.ox.ac.uk
NOWAKOWSKI, <i>Saints</i>	P. F. NOWAKOWSKI, <i>Inscribing the Saints in Late Antique Anatolia</i> (Warsaw 2018)
PETZL, <i>Beichtinschriften</i>	G. PETZL, <i>Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens</i> (Bonn 1994)
RAMSAY, <i>Phrygia</i> 1.2	W. RAMSAY, <i>The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia</i> (Oxford 1897)
RECAM	British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, <i>Regional Epigraphic Catalogues of Asia Minor</i> , Vol. 1–4 (London 1982–2002)
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> , https://scholarlyedition.s.brill.com/sego/
<i>Steinepigramme I–V</i>	R. MERKELBACH / J. STAUBER, <i>Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten I–V</i> (Munich 1998–2004)
STRUBBE, <i>Arai epitymbioi</i>	J. H. M. STRUBBE, <i>ΑΡΑΙ ΕΠΙΤΥΜΒΙΟΙ. Imprecations against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epitaphs of Asia Minor. A Catalogue</i> (Bonn 1997)
<i>Studia Pontica</i> III	J. G. C. ANDERSON / F. CUMONT / H. GRÉGOIRE, <i>Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines du Pont et de l'Arménie</i> (Bruxelles 1910)
TABBERNEE, <i>Montanist Inscriptions</i>	W. TABBERNEE, <i>Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia. Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism</i> (Macon 1997)
TAM	<i>Tituli Asiae Minoris</i> , Vol. I–V (Vienna 1901–2007)

Papyri

cod. Par. graec.
P.cair.masp.

Codex Parisinus Graecus
Papyrus Cairo Maspero

Others

- ECAM C. BREYTENBACH et al., *Early Christianity in Asia Minor* (Leiden 2013–)
- ECG C. BREYTENBACH et al., *Early Christianity in Greece* (Leiden 2023–)
- LGPN P.M. FRASER et al., *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (Oxford, 1987–)

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Concordance of Inscriptions (of B.)

The following concordance below relates the ICG numbers mentioned in part B. (Christian Inscriptions from Greece and Asia Minor) to the printed editions of the respective inscriptions. Where possible, care has been taken to ensure that the editions are easily accessible. On ICG numbers mentioned in part A. and C. see editions listed in ICG and the concordances in the ECAM- and ECG-series.

ICG	<i>Printed Edition</i>
52	<i>Steinepigramme</i> III 14/06/05
60	<i>Steinepigramme</i> III 14/02/99
81	<i>Steinepigramme</i> III 14/02/12
89	<i>The Journal of Hellenic Studies</i> 18 (1898) 119 no. 64
103	MAMA I 234
137	<i>Steinepigramme</i> III 14/10/01
154	MAMA VII 98
243	MAMA VII 79
319	<i>I.Mus. Konya</i> 183
321	<i>I.Mus. Konya</i> 181
371	MAMA I 170
372	MAMA I 171
402	<i>Steinepigramme</i> III 14/06/10
539	MAMA VIII 238
593	MAMA VII 580
747	MAMA VIII 63
748	MAMA VIII 64
749	MAMA VIII 65
753	MAMA VIII 88
754	MAMA VIII 89
755	MAMA VIII 90
758	<i>I.Mus. Konya</i> 214
762	<i>Steinepigramme</i> III 14/12/01
784	MAMA VIII 127
791	MAMA VIII 121
817	MAMA VIII 168
829	<i>I.Mus. Konya</i> 212
894	H. SWOBODA / J. KEIL / F. KNOLL, <i>Denkmäler aus Lykaonien</i> (1935) 98 no. 281
972	MAMA VI 234
1028	SEG 6.210
1033	<i>I.Phyrgie Drew-Bear</i> , 75–8 no. 8
1056	RAMSAY, <i>Phrygia</i> 1.2, 514 no. 353–354
1062	RAMSAY, <i>Phrygia</i> 1.2, 526 no. 371
1069	MAMA IV 354
1070	MAMA IV 355
1071	MAMA IV 356
1072	MAMA IV 357

- 1159 *Steinepigramme* III 16/31/13
 1267 *Steinepigramme* III 16/31/87
 1269 *Steinepigramme* III 16/31/88
 1270 *Steinepigramme* III 16/31/12
 1355 *Steinepigramme* III 16/32/03
 1363 TABBERNEE, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 490–96 no. 80
 1497 MAMA XI 207
 1498 MAMA XI 208
 1528 MAMA XI 334
 1571 RAMSAY, *Phrygia* 1.2, 476 no. 343
 1597 *Steinepigramme* III 16/07/01
 1689 *The Journal of Roman Studies* 17 (1927) 49–58
 1946 IG II/III² 5.13368
 2031 IG II/III² 5.13446
 2381 *Steinepigramme* III 15/02/10
 2523 *I.North Galatia* 527
 2647 IG IV² 3.1441 / *Corinth* VIII 3.556
 2783 IG IV² 3.1540
 2787 IG IV² 3.1267
 2884 IG IV² 3.1825 (frg. a–g) + EC 15 (2024) 259–279 (frg. h–j)
 3027 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 20; *I.Kato Maked.* II 306
 3029 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 22
 3030 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 22bis; *I.Kato Maked.* II 307
 3160 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 140; IG X 2,1.*790
 3161 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 141; IG X 2,1.*365
 3246 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 225
 3247 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 226
 3254 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 233
 3256 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 235
 3257 *I.Chr. Macédoine* 236
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 3290 *I.Philippi*² 125; SEG 34.669; 36.629
 3381 *I.Philippi*² 115
 3389 BE 2019 no. 285; SEG 67.405
 3622 *I.Beroia* 425; SEG 35.732
 3637 *I.Beroia* 426; SEG 48.774
 3650 SEG 48.724
 3693 IG X 2,1s.1514
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 4100 SEG 38.405
 4283 *I.Chr. Bulgarien* 225
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 4564 *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4314
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 4640 MAMA III 397
 4646 *I.Ephesos* 1a.45; NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints ASI*/08/09
 4651 *Steinepigramme* II 09/05/15
 4652 *I.Ephesos* 7.4135; NOWAKOWSKI, *Saints ASI*/08/07
 4654 *I.Ephesos* 4.1297
 4708 *I.Mus. Varsovie*, 95–99
 4709 MAMA III 106a
 4710 *I.Cilicie* 25
 4711 SEG 24.1243
 4730 SEG 67.987
 4731 *Studia Pontica* III 20
 4732 IG XV 2.374
 4733 *I.Kourion* 201
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 4748 *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4217.2
 4749 *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4210
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 4753 *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4205
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 4755 *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4219
 4756 *I.Ephesos* 7.2.4220
 4828 IG XII 6.2.1265
 4832 IG XII 3.1238

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