

BOOK REVIEW

New Epigrams of Palladas: A Fragmentary Papyrus Codex (P.CtYBR inv. 4000). By KEVIN W. WILKINSON. Durham, NC: The American Society of Papyrologists, 2012. Pp. xi + 214 + 12 plates. Hardcover, \$50.00. ISBN 978-0-9799758-5-1.

The papyrus codex labeled as P.CtYBR inv. 4000 arrived from a private collection to the Beinecke Library at Yale University in 1996 as a group of unsorted fragments, including portions of several other unrelated texts. It took more than fifteen years for the editio princeps to be published, a span of time for which the poorly preserved status of the papyrus fully accounts. Seeing the final result has made the wait worthwhile.

After a preface and a list of abbreviations, this beautifully produced book offers an Introduction, dealing with codicological reconstruction (R. G. Babcock), paleography (R. Duttonhöfer), metrics (A. Watanabe), orthography, contents of the codex, authorship and date, and historical notes (K.W. Wilkinson). A diplomatic transcription, paleographical notes, text, and a commentary follow. The volume concludes with a bibliography, indexes, and photographic plates of the papyrus.

The codicological reconstruction, based on comparisons with materials classified by E. Turner in his *Typology of the Early Codex* (1977), hypothesizes an original single-quire codex, of which five bifolia, and the possible remnants of the single sheet of a sixth bifolium, survive. Dimensions of the codex, paleography, and internal evidence all point to a date from 280 to 340 AD.

The papyrus contains epigrams in elegiac couplets. Calculations based on the hypothetical number of inscribed lines per page, the average length of the poems, and the consistent presence of titles, imply that there must have been roughly 96 poems in the six bifolia, with a total of 864 inscribed lines. Portions of about 60 epigrams, none of which is preserved in its entirety, survive. For some of the poems the content is beyond recovery. For others, reconstruction involves a great deal of conjecture and speculation. In spite of such a textual situation, the Yale papyrus is a very important acquisition, greatly improving our knowledge of history, ancient poetry books, epigram, and its transmission.

A question of primary importance regards the authorship of the poems. Two of the epigrams in the papyrus were already known: they are AP 9.379, ἀδελφόν in P (Palatinus gr. 23) and Pl (Venet. Marcianus gr. 481, the autograph of Maximus Planudes), but assigned to Palladas by C (the corrector of P), and AP 9.127, anonymous in our Byzantine sources. The absence of ascriptions makes it unlikely that the book is a multi-author collection: if a single author is to be assumed, Palladas is thus a possible candidate. Throughout the book, Wilkinson tries to prove this working hypothesis, for which he had already paved the way in a series of earlier articles.

The most obvious difficulty for the ascription of the new epigrams to Palladas is that the poet, according to the traditional scholarly dates, lived either between the middle of the fourth century and the middle of the fifth, or in the period 320–400, i.e. several decades after the Yale papyrus was written. In these articles¹, Wilkinson had already tried to show that the known poetry of Palladas could be read against the background of the age of Constantine. Without the papyrus, his hypotheses would probably have been easily dismissed as unnecessary conjecture. Given the existence of the papyrus, one feels that further explanation is needed in order to accept the setting of several of the known poems of Palladas in the new historical framework. In fact, while some of Wilkinson's arguments are convincing—the new chronology would fully account for the Latin versions of some of Palladas' epigrams found in Ausonius and the *Epigrammata Bobiensia*—others are more problematic. The expression ὃν θεὸς φιλεῖ in AP 10.90.2, 10.91.1 and 5 would refer to Constantine through an allusion to the adjective θεοφιλῆς, applied to him as to any other Christian emperor, but the traditional explanation—that it is a punning allusion to Theophilus patriarch of Alexandria (385–412 AD) — is more natural. AP 11.292, the famous four-line invective against Themistius, prefect of Constantinople in 384 AD, is, it is claimed, following a convoluted line of thought, a later reworking of an original distich by Palladas.

In a similar vein, not all the evidence collected in the preface in order to prove Palladas' authorship of the new poems is equally convincing or relevant. Wilkinson notes, for instance, that direct apostrophes are more common in scoptic epigrams after Ammianus than before, and that Palladas has several in his epigrams. Thus, the argument runs as follows: since in the Yale papyrus there are at least two examples of direct address, Palladas is, once again, a likely candidate for

¹ See especially "Palladas and the Age of Constantine," *JRS* 99 (2009) 36–60; "Palladas and the Foundation of Constantinople," *JRS* 100 (2010) 179–194.

the authorship of the codex. It is, however, debatable how much importance we ought to attach to this fact, given the length of the papyrus. In addition, and more importantly, second person address can be found in many scoptic authors, and if the technique became more common after Ammianus than before, all that can be stated is that some of the poems in the papyrus display a typical feature of later scoptic epigrammatists.

One should also note that supplements are made with an eye to Palladas' known epigrams. A certain degree of circularity is thus involved: hypotheses made on the basis of Palladas' known poetry serve the purpose of corroborating the hypothesis of a Palladan authorship (see, e.g., page 13, l. 31, where ἐκλεπτες πιθαν[οῖς δάκρυσι] τῆς πόλεως is written on the basis of the similarity with Palladas AP 11.283.3-6, but given the very fragmentary nature of the lines, different supplements, such as, e.g., ἐκλεπτες πιθαν[ῶς χρήματα] τῆς πόλεως, "you stole persuasively goods from the city", or the like, would also be possible, or p. 9, l. 33, where van Minnen's supplement εἵνεκα ν[αύ]λω[ν] instead of Wilkinson's εἵνεκα ν[ικ]ῆς would dramatically affect the whole reconstruction of the poem, as Wilkinson himself admits, and make it much less "Palladan").

As far as style is concerned, one should bear in mind as a general principle that epigram is a very formulaic genre that repeatedly uses stock phrases and idioms. Any conjecture regarding authorship made on stylistic grounds is thus slippery by its very nature, and this is all the more true for a poet as famous as Palladas, whose name was often attached to epigrams of uncertain authorship, as many of the poems of doubtful ascriptions in our Byzantine sources testify. Content and subject matter are also problematic issues: imitation is intrinsic to the epigrammatic art of variation. What can be recovered of page 5, lines 26–28, for instance, seems to conform to epigrams by Ammianus (see the parallels quoted by Wilkinson), although Palladas (and many others) could have used a similar technique.

In addition, the new poems are so poorly preserved, and many readings so uncertain, that the reconstruction of the content of several of them is highly hypothetical. Therefore, any conclusion based on these materials is doomed to be hardly definitive. This is not to say that Palladas' authorship is to be discounted: he probably is a possibility, and Wilkinson succeeds in showing what points of contact can be detected between his "old" poetry and the "new" one.

Nevertheless, more caution would have been welcome. It is somewhat misleading to state from the very title that the new epigrams belong to Palladas (a

question mark would have been in order), and there is certainly too much confidence in the statement “Unless there is future evidence to the contrary [...], the epigrams in the Yale codex should be ascribed to Palladas of Alexandria” (57). All in all, the most compelling piece of evidence for the ascription to the Alexandrian poet is an epigram of dubious authorship in P. We know very little about the Greek epigrammatic production of the third to fourth centuries ad: the Yale codex clearly shows that in those days epigrams were still composed, although most of them did not survive. The attribution of the poems to a well-known and prolific author is certainly reasonable and “safe”, but the more intriguing possibility that we are dealing with a different epigrammatist should not be excluded.

Putting the question of authorship aside, the new codex is a fascinating discovery, and broadens our knowledge of epigram. As regards the subgenres, the poems are mostly epideictic or scoptic, i.e. similar to items contained in books 9 and 11 of the Greek Anthology.² In particular, most of the poems seem political in content, which is significant, since they diverge in this from scoptic poetry of the first to second century AD, when, due to specific historical circumstances, political satire was not in order anymore.³

References to Egyptian places, such as Hermopolis, Alexandria, or the small village of Skinepois, in the Lycopolite, appear. The local color attached to the collection, together with its topicality, might explain why the poems did not reach us through the Byzantine collections: the epigrams, aimed at a contemporary Egyptian audience, soon lost their appeal, and were not copied anymore. Much as the new Posidippus served as an important reminder of how Meleager’s choice affects our perception of Hellenistic epigram, the Yale papyrus bears its methodological warnings. Our judgments and reconstruction of the history of the genre is based on materials whose survival is the result of the personal choices of editors and anthologists.

It is thus all the more fascinating to note that one of the two epigrams that found their way in the Greek Anthology, AP 9.127, seems to be part of a longer poem: anthologists not only selected the epigrams which best fit their tastes, but

² The discussion of the nature of “epideictic” epigrams (30) would have profited from an engagement with L. Rossi, “Composition and Reception in AP 9.1-583: *aphegheseis*, *epideixeis* and *progymnasmata*”, in M.A. Harder-R.F. Regtuit-G.C. Wakker (eds.), *Hellenistic Epigrams*, Leuven-Paris-Dudley (Mass.) 2002, 151–174.

³ See J. Blomqvist, “The Development of the Satirical Epigram in the Hellenistic Period”, in M.A. Harder-R.F. Regtuit-G.C. Wakker (eds.), *Genre in Hellenistic Poetry*, Groningen 1998, 45–60, not mentioned by Wilkinson.

also excerpted them for reasons related to size or content (or both). In other words, the final lines of a topical poem might have been selected to appear in an anthology because of their generalizing flavor, and thus might have become a different poem. As a result, the boundaries between anthologist and author become blurred.

The arrangement of the poems contributes to our understanding of how books of epigrams were organized. The main criterion seems to be thematic; other organizing principles, all well highlighted by Wilkinson, are geography and vocabulary. The careful arrangement of the poems within the collection makes it likely that the author himself is responsible for it, although Wilkinson is right to exclude that it is an autograph: some of the titles are perfunctory, and several errors which are difficult to explain as authorial slips occur. Thus Wilkinson concludes that an editor, very close in time to the author, might have excerpted sequences of an original book. But since the length of the codex is consistent with that of an entire poetry book, a simpler alternative might be that a scribe introduced titles (and errors) while copying a complete original book.

The section on metrics is very concise—the poorly preserved status of the papyrus would have made it difficult to offer a more extensive treatment—but some inaccuracies might have been avoided: particularly unfortunate is n. 153 (39), listing epigrams where the main caesura is postponed until the fourth foot: “9.222.1 (Strato)” stands for 12.222.1, and “9.146.7 (Lucian)” is certainly an error as well, since 9.146 is an anonymous epigram composed of only two lines. In addition, some attention could have been paid to the possible non-observance of several metric “laws”, such as Hilberg’s (see e.g. p. 3, l. 16), Tiedke-Meyer’s (p. 4, l. 21 and p. 8, l. 7), Meyer’s First (p. 4, l. 31), Naeke’s (p. 11, l. 32), Meyer’s First and Second (p. 4, l. 29 and p. 17, l. 4), Hermann’s Bridge (p. 4, l. 29).

As previously mentioned, the attempt to reconstruct the content of numerous poems involves a great deal of speculation. Wilkinson is very clever at recovering possible meanings from scant remains, but some of his hypotheses are particularly brave (e.g. the alleged reference to the destruction of the Alexandrian Museum at 9, lines 25-29; the interpretation of ναῦτας, at 9, l. 32, as a sarcastic code-word for the Romans, which also entails a new interpretation of Palladas AP 11.386, less convincing than the one offered by A. Cameron, “Palladas and the Nikai”, *JHS* 84, 1964, 58—59; the suggestion that Pluto, at p. 10, l. 27, might be identified with a Roman imperial authority). Nevertheless, although there is certainly space for disagreement, the reader is generally put in the position of discerning the

different grades of probability, and thus to form his/her own opinion on the issues discussed.

All in all, the new codex is an important discovery, and presented to the scholarly community in a careful and intelligent edition, accompanied by clear, informative and often illuminating insights into the manuscript and the texts. Much debate on the papyrus is to be expected, but Wilkinson has offered an excellent starting point, and for this we are all greatly indebted to him.

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