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Kevin W. Wilkinson, *New Epigrams of Palladas: A Fragmentary Papyrus Codex (P.CtYBR inv. 4000)*. *American Studies in Papyrology*, 52. Durham, NC: American Society of Papyrologists, 2012. Pp. xi, 214; 12 p. of plates. ISBN 9780979975851. \$50.00.

Reviewed by Rodney Ast, University of Heidelberg (ast@uni-heidelberg.de)

Occasionally enough publicity surrounds a new papyrus that its publication is awaited with some anticipation. This is true of the fragmentary codex with Greek epigrams that Yale University acquired in 1996. The codex arrived at the Beinecke Library, its original provenance undocumented, in loose fragments from what appears to have been six bifolia, originally containing around 60 epigrams. The Beinecke Library's decision some years back to make images of the codex publicly available prior to publication gave us a first glimpse at the verses. K.W. Wilkinson has now published an edition of the epigrams that includes a diplomatic transcription, facing text, paleographical notes, commentary, and standard papyrological indices.¹ A set of plates concludes the book.

The codex is written in an informal, semi-cursive script. The meter is elegiac and the pentameters are normally indented (or the hexameters are in *ekthesis*, depending on one's point of view). Individual epigrams are introduced with brief titles, 22 of which survive at least in fragmentary form. Establishing the text of this papyrus cannot have been an easy task: writing is badly abraded in places and no leaf is complete. Wilkinson has thus done a good job of giving us a fairly reliable edition. The text was not his only concern, however, and much of the introductory matter addresses two central points: authorship (who might have authored the epigrams and whether the codex contains verses of only one poet) and the date of composition. Wilkinson puts forth a reasonable case for seeing one poet at work. Extant titles introducing individual epigrams make no mention of authors, but rather describe only the content of the epigrams (e.g. "on a certain Hermopolite accused of adultery," "on Nilus of Hermopolis"). That the codex contains the poetry of Palladas of Alexandria is also plausible. Wilkinson goes to great lengths to support this claim, but alone the two places where verses overlap with epigrams preserved in the Greek Anthology, one of which the Palatine corrector ascribed to Palladas and the other F. Jacobs attributed to the same poet, make the attribution to the Alexandrian credible. The many thematic similarities to Palladas' known poetry further support this view. The burden of proof now lies with anyone who does not believe that some or all of the verses are by Palladas.

Putting an author's name on fragments of anonymous literature preserved on papyrus

affords broader cultural context and gives us room to entertain previous assumptions about an author. Wilkinson concerns himself much with assumptions about Palladas, particularly regarding the poet's dates. He believes that the codex shows Palladas living significantly earlier than previously believed, from the 250s or 260s until at least the early 330s, as opposed to what had become the accepted dates of ca. 319-400 (pp. 55ff.). The reasons for the earlier dating are numerous and based largely on circumstantial evidence (just as, for that matter, the later dates had been as well). For example, Wilkinson would like the poorly preserved and significantly restored epigram at the bottom of p. 11 of the codex to refer to Diocletian and Galerius and their Sarmatian campaigns.² He argues that these verses were composed shortly after Galerius' *dies imperii* on May 1, 305 (p. 55). His view of the epigram entails an unusual interpretation of the terms *πρυτανεία* and *πρυτανεύω*, which he translates as "imperial campaign" and "imperial campaigning," respectively. Similarly, in the commentary he argues that *πρύτανις* means "emperor." A more natural way to understand the expressions, however, is as "city council presidency" (*πρυτανεία*), "to serve as city council president" (*πρυτανεύειν*) and "city council president" (*πρύτανις*). Wilkinson is not entirely convincing in defending his interpretation against the usual meaning of these terms, and another passage of the codex seems to undermine the idea that we are dealing with imperial campaigning. Words beginning with *πρυταν-* are, as Wilkinson points out on p. 162, clustered in epigrams over 3 pages of the codex, from page 11, where the epigram about the Sarmatian appears, to page 13. Only on page 13, lines 30f., do we get a clear sense of the word's register: οὐ δύνασαι κλέπ[τειν ca. 8].. σὺ πρυτανε[ύων] | ἔκλεπτες πιθαν[οῖς δάκρυσι] τῆς πόλεως ("you are not able to steal as you stole from the city during your time as head of the council and while shedding specious tears.") These lines echo an epigram ascribed to Palladas, *AG* 11.283, in which a foreigner from Chalcis is said to steal from the city while crying cunning tears (which city is not stated, nor is the person described as *prytanis*). It seems quite possible that on page 11 a municipal politician is the target, perhaps an arrogant and overachieving foreigner from a family involved in city government. If we grant that Wilkinson has supplemented and restored the epigram correctly (line 32 should be read with particular caution), we might summarize the verses thus: a Sarmatian (i.e. northern barbarian) who served as council president twice like his father could never lay claim to the title *Sarmaticus IV*. In other words, he could never be considered a great political figure. Besides retaining the usual meaning of *πρυτανεία*, this reading preserves the local character that permeates the entire codex. While the last line presumes some understanding of imperial titulature, it says little if anything about the date of the epigram.

The fact that the city of Hermopolis is described in one epigram as *σεμνοτάτη* and in another as *λαμπροτάτη* suggests to Wilkinson that these poems were recorded at the end of the 3rd or very beginning of the 4th century. He believes that the epithets reflect a change observed in documentary papyri from Hermopolis during this period, when *λαμπροτάτη* gradually joined and then replaced the civic title *μεγάλη ἀρχαία καὶ σεμνοτάτη καὶ λαμπροτάτη* (54). (Contrary to the impression that Wilkinson gives, *σεμνοτάτη* does not appear in extant documentary sources as the sole title of the city; it always accompanies other epithets). Studies of civic titles in documentary papyri have shown that usage can differ in texts written outside the city in question, where understanding of local practice may not have been current.³ It might be the case of

course that Palladas was living in Hermopolis. The city features in several epigrams in the Yale papyrus, but the poet's possible relationship to the place is never explored in depth. And even if he did live there, can we suppose that he cared enough for official titulature to conform his poetry to it? All of this raises a broader methodological question about the value of documentary practice for our understanding of literature. There is a delicate balance to be struck between recovering historical context and overcharging literary language with concrete historical meaning.

Another argument for the poet's dates is based on epigrams purported to be by Palladas and preserved in the MS tradition. These verses concern the poet's dissatisfaction with his career and personal life. Interesting is Wilkinson's discussion of *AG* 11.378, in which the speaker complains about his marriage and profession as a grammarian, stating that he escaped his career with difficulty but that he could not get out of his marriage because of his contractual obligation and Roman law (p. 56). Wilkinson ties this law to Constantine's edict against unilateral divorce in AD 331, which Julian repealed sometime during his reign in 361 to 363. He argues that since the poet refers explicitly to the law, the poem must have been written between these years. He favors a date closer to the proclamation of the edict, because he believes that topical references of this sort likely come from around the time of the event to which they refer. Thus we have an autobiographical piece from the 330s. This poem Wilkinson then relates to *AG* 10.97, also believed to be autobiographical. In it the poet says that after living "a pound of years" engaged in toilsome grammar he is being sent to Hades as a counselor of the dead. "A pound of years" has been interpreted elsewhere to mean 72 years, corresponding to the 72 *solidi* constituting a gold pound.⁴ Because the poet probably wrote this around the time that he penned his other complaint (i.e. *AG* 11.378), so Wilkinson argues, Palladas must have been in his 70s in the 330s. A quick subtraction gives us a date of birth around the late 250s. Now, it will be for the reader to decide if he or she thinks these arguments all hold up. One might question, for example, whether the verses should be considered autobiographical. Even if they should, why would the common theme necessarily imply close composition dates? Can one not spend a lifetime complaining about his or her career?

A final argument adduced for the poet's dates rests on the date of the papyrus itself. Paleographical considerations are said to require composition of the codex between 280 and 340. This is a very small window of time for a script that is paralleled in papyri from the second half of the 4th century as well; see, for example, P.Cair. Goodsp. 15 (AD 362), P.Lips. 1.62 (AD 385), P.Lips. 1.37 (5 May 389), all from Hermopolis.⁵ We therefore cannot be that certain about the date of the papyrus. This of course does not say anything about when Palladas was active: a later date for the codex does not preclude an earlier date for Palladas.

The content of the verses is tantalizing. Themes covered include the Pythagorean diet, old age, poverty, adultery, and local politics. References to Hermopolis, Lycopolis, Skinepois (a town in the Lycopolite Nome), and the goddess Triphis (Egyptian Reptyt), whose cult was located at Athribe (Greek Tripheion) near Panopolis, situate the poetry in the Thebaid in Upper Egypt, a cultural and literary hub in Late Antiquity.⁶ Absence of papyri from Alexandria may skew our picture of Roman Egypt in favor of Middle and Upper Egypt, but it seems worth pointing out that here we have an Alexandrian

poet, and what does he write about? Upper Egypt! Palladas is thus firmly rooted in the rich literary tradition of the Thebaid during this period.⁷

From an outsider's perspective the poetry can seem topical, and it is probably because of this topicality, as Wilkinson argues, that later anthologists excerpted the verses. A nice example of the process of excerpting is found on page 12 of the codex, the last two couplets of which are preserved as *AG* 9.127. Provided a title has not fallen out, the epigram in the Yale papyrus was at least 14 lines long, significantly longer than *AG* 9.127. The greater length corresponds to an interesting phenomenon that Wilkinson identifies: verses in the codex tend to be longer than those found in Byzantine anthologies, something that he reasonably attributes to later anthologists' preference for brevity and to the practice of excerpting (p. 26f.). What this codex demonstrates is that longer epigrams were not that uncommon.

Where verses overlap with epigrams found in the MS tradition, the Yale papyrus offers a few variant readings. At page 12, line 29, we get ὄξος instead of ὄξύ of *AG* 9.127.2, a reading proposed already by H. van Herwerden in 1886. The codex has in line 30 οὐτω ἀπαντλήσας, against inferior readings in *AP* and *APL*, and line 31 opens with τῆς ζωῆς ὁ γέρον rather than γῆρας ὁ πρεσβύτης of the *Anthology*. The most significant variant is found on page 21, which corresponds to *AG* 9.379, where the papyrus preserves οἷς ("sheep") as opposed to ὕς ("pig") in *AG* thereby vindicating A. Nauck, who proposed this precise emendation back in 1880.

Typos and other infelicities are relatively few. On p. 126, note to line 25, however, the translation of *AG* 9.148.4 should be something like "now life is more ridiculous than all things" and on p. 136 read *lex Julia de adulteriis*. As for the text of the epigrams, not every reading will find universal acceptance, but Wilkinson is careful to identify and explain difficult passages. One reading that is somewhat troublesome is κούκλαι on page 3, line 15: if this word has been deciphered correctly (the letter transcribed as the second *kappa* looks more like *beta*), it can hardly be object of φο[ρεῖ]ς despite what is argued in the commentary *ad loc*.

The layout chosen for the book is unconventional. In an attempt to represent the fragmentary nature of extant codex pages, the publisher has left a large amount of white space (see especially pages 112 and 113). Furthermore, the apparatus, where letterforms are described in detail, has an unusual layout. It begins below the diplomatic transcription, carrying over to the bottom of the text on the facing page and, where necessary, being continued at the back of the book. Perhaps closer type and a smaller font would have allowed the entire apparatus for any given page to be placed below the transcription and text, which in turn would have eliminated much of the extra white space.

Notes:

^{1.} The volume is presented as a single-author work, even though sections of the introduction are the contributions of other scholars. R.G. Babcock is responsible for section A. Codicological Reconstruction; R. Duttonhöfer authors B. Paleography; A.

Watanabe contributes E. Metrics.

[2.](#) He first presented this text and interpretation in "The Sarmatian and the Indians. A New Satirical Epigram on the Victory Titles of Galerius," *ZPE* 183 (2012), 39-52.

[3.](#) Cf., e.g., D. Hagedorn's discussion of the name and civic titles of Oxyrhynchus, "Ὁξυρύγχων πόλις und Ὁξυρυγγιτῶν πόλις," *ZPE* 12 (1973), 286-7.

[4.](#) See p. 44 with fn. 182.

[5.](#) Images of these papyri are available at Papyri.info [Goodspeed 15](#), [P.Lips.1 62](#), and [P.Lips. 1 37](#)

[6.](#) See A. Cameron's classic treatment of this literary movement in "Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt," *Historia* 14 (1965), 470-509.

[7.](#) For a nice survey of this tradition see L. Miguélez Caveró, *Poems in Context: Greek Poetry in the Egyptian Thebaid 200-600 A.D* (Berlin 2008).

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