

APPENDIX III

John of Melitene

The famous epitaph on Nikephoros Phokas by John of Melitene can be found in a number of Skylitzes manuscripts as well as in several other sources. Vasil'evskij was the first scholar to attribute this epitaph to John Geometres on stylistic grounds, and to assume that Geometres had been metropolitan of Melitene at a certain point in his life¹. Unfortunately, others soon followed his lead, with the result that most modern scholars confuse the two poets². However, as I explained in a recent paper³, John Geometres was never metropolitan of Melitene. In fact, he served in the military until 985 when he fell into disfavour with Basil II; he then became a monk at the Kyros monastery where he remained until his death (around the year 1000). True enough, there are some striking stylistic similarities between the epitaph and some of Geometres' poems⁴, but it cannot be ruled out that John of Melitene imitates John Geometres, nor that the stylistic affinities between the two are in fact characteristic of late tenth-century poetry in general.

If we study the manuscript tradition carefully, there is little doubt that the epitaph was already ascribed to John of Melitene in the archetype from which all manuscripts derive. There are two modern editions of the epitaph: Mercati 1921a: 255–256 and Thurn 1973: 282–283. Thurn basically follows the Bonn and Paris editions of Kedrenos (which are based on the unreliable readings of ms. C). Mercati's edition is much better. He relies not only on the Kedrenos / Skylitzes tradition, but also presents the readings of other manuscripts. Since the manuscripts often present divergent readings, an editor has to make choices. I think that Mercati made a fundamental mistake by preferring the readings of ARR¹. Mercati writes the following to justify his choice: "A chi la preferenza? Siamo stati perplessi nella scelta: infine abbiamo adottato il testo

¹ V.G. VASIL'EVSKIJ, *Russko-vizantijskie otryvki. Žurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvěščenija* 184 (1876) 162–178. Repr. in: idem, *Trudy. St. Petersburg 1909 (Vaduz 1968²)*, II, 107–124, esp. pp. 112–115.

² See, for instance, MERCATI 1921a: 253, SCHEIDWEILER 1952: 307–309 and HÖRANDNER 1970: 110.

³ See LAUXTERMANN 1998d: 365–367.

⁴ See the critical apparatus to Mercati's edition: MERCATI 1921a. But see also M.V. BIBIKOV, *Joan Militinskij i Joan Geometur*, in: *Bulgarsko Srednovekovie. Sbornik I. Dujčev. Sofia 1980*, 65–66.

di ARR¹, perchè ci è parso che esso rivesta un carattere meno personale, e quindi sia più adatto per un' epigrafe, rispetto all' ὄς δοζῶ di CMOO¹ nel v. 5. Però se ὄς δοζῶ doveva trovarsi in origine nella poesia, come lascierebbe supporre il parallelo ἐν δοζοῦν del v. 6, sarebbe forse ARR¹ il rimaneggiamento della poesia fatto dall' autore o da altri al momento d' essere incisa, per meglio adattarla allo stile epigrafico?"⁵. However, as I explained on pp. 233–236, the epitaph on Nikephoros Phokas was never intended to be inscribed on his tomb, but instead circulated as a political pamphlet in 988–989. The divergent readings of ARR¹ should indeed be viewed as a "rimaneggiamento" by someone trying to turn the fictitious epitaph into a genuine verse inscription. The text as presented by ARR¹ is stylistically, grammatically and metrically superior to that of the other manuscripts; most probably though ARR¹ do not offer the text of the poet himself, but that of a clever emendator. Since texts usually get worse each time they are copied, it is quite understandable why Mercati based his edition on the readings of ARR¹. But at least some of the oddities and ramshackle constructions we find in the other manuscripts containing the text of the epitaph, go back to the archetype of the manuscript tradition and presumably to the poet himself.

As I cannot explain the above without going into great detail, I will re-edit the epitaph. For my edition I use Mercati's and Thurn's critical apparatus as well as some supplementary information found in other publications⁶.

The epitaph can be found in the following manuscripts: A = Vindob. Hist. gr. 35 (s. XII), fol. 106^r; C = Par. Coisl. gr. 136 (s. XII), fol. 101^v; M = Matrit. Vitr. 26-2 (s. XII), fol. 157^r (in the margin of the page); N = Marc. XI 22 (s. XIV), fol. 87^v; O¹ = Vat. Ottob. gr. 361 (s. XV), fol. 168^v; R = Vat. Reg. gr. 166 (s. XV?)⁷, fol. 212^r; R¹ = Vat. Reg. gr. 86 (s. XV–XVI), fol. 122^r; O = Vat. Ottob. gr. 309 (s. XVI), fol. 168^{rs}.

R and R¹ offer exactly the same readings as A, with only one difference in v. 5: βαρβάρους καὶ θηρίους, whereas A has βαρβαρικῶς θηρίους. The three mss.

⁵ MERCATI 1921a: 255.

⁶ For the readings of N, see MERCATI 1923. See also HÖRANDNER 1970: 109–113. For the text of v. 23 in M, see ŠEVČENKO 1969–70: 190, n. 11.

⁷ Mercati dates R to the fifteenth century, but the lemma attached to the epitaph in R [also found in O and in Hierosolym. 441 (see following footnote)] cannot have been written before 1543. According to the lemmatist, the tomb of Nikephoros II Phokas (he means: Nikephoros III Botaneiates) was to be found in the Peribleptos monastery, "which nowadays is called Sulumanastir and which the Armenians -alas!- are allowed to inhabit by God's dispensation". The Peribleptos monastery became the site of the Armenian patriarchate in 1543.

⁸ Ms. Hierosolym. Patr. 441 (s. XVII–XVIII), fol 155^r, also contains the epitaph on Phokas: see MERCATI 1921a: 254, n. 4 and MERCATI 1923: 257. To judge from the lemma and the incipit, the text in this ms. seems to be similar to that of O.

belong to the same branch of the manuscript tradition.

C and O usually offer the same readings, apart from some evident scribal errors, such as v. 10 τύπτε C (all other mss. τάπτε), v. 10 πεζός O (all other mss. πεζούς), and so on.

M and O¹ nearly always have the same text, with the following exceptions: v. 6 ὄν O¹ (all other mss. ἔν), v. 13 σφίγγουσιν O¹ (all other mss. σφύζουσιν) and v. 22 O¹ μόνον (like N), whereas M has μόνου (and the other mss. μόνην).

N is very interesting. Most often it offers the same text as MO¹, but on two occasions it has the same variant readings as ARR¹. The first one is v. 10 λογγηφόρους (τοξοκράτας MO¹CO). The second one is v. 5 ὡς δοκῶ, καὶ βαρβάροις (ὡς δοκῶ, καὶ θηρίοις MO¹CO; βαρβάροις καὶ θηρίοις RR¹ and βαρβαρικοῖς θηρίοις A). As Mercati already suggested, ARR¹ appear to present an emendated version of the original text; but since N, a ms. which belongs to another branch of the manuscript tradition, has some of the variants of ARR¹, it would seem that the archetype of the manuscript tradition already contained these alternative readings, probably as supralinear glosses: λογγηφόρους as a legitimate variant of τοξοκράτας and βαρβάροις as an explanation of θηρίοις.

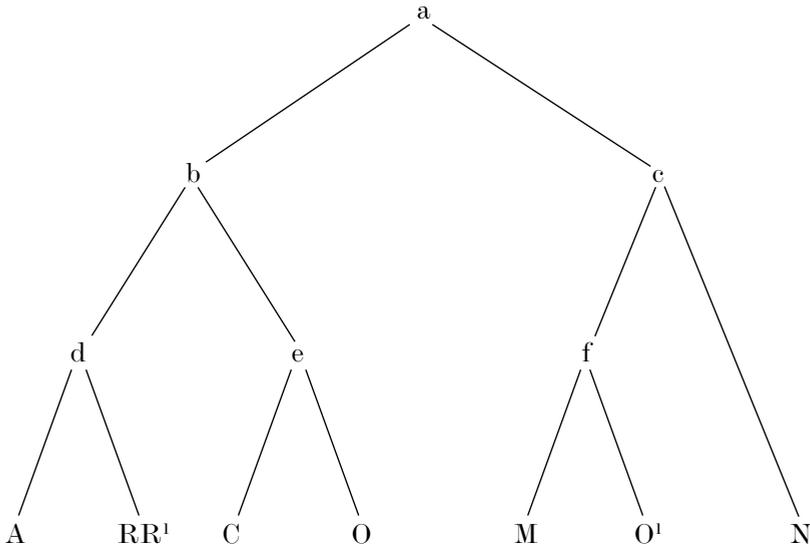
The text variants of v. 23 are of great relevance: ἴσως πτοήσει ταῦτα καὶ τρέψει μόνη MO¹, τρέψει τάχει N; ἴσως σκορπίσει ταῦτα καὶ τρέψει μόνος O, ἴσως σκορπίσει ταύτη καὶ τρέψει μόνη C. The text of MO¹ and N is not brilliant but it is satisfactory. The text of CO is obviously incorrect, for the second iambic foot is unprosodic (σκορπίσει) in CO and the fourth foot is equally unprosodic (ταύτη) in C. In ARR¹ v. 23 reads as follows: φωνὴ γὰρ εἰς φόβητρον αὐτοῖς ἀρκέσει. Although the text offered by ARR¹ is clearly superior to that of the other mss. from a purely stylistic viewpoint, it looks as if the diligent emendator of ARR¹ turned something bad into something good. The question is, why did he feel the urge to change the text of v. 23? What is the error he felt he needed to correct? Whereas the text of MO¹N is flawless, the text of CO is not. This is why I suspect that the exemplar used by the emendator of ARR¹ presented v. 23 in the unprosodic version of CO. If this supposition is correct, it follows that the (emendated) source of ARR¹ and the source of CO belong to the same branch of the manuscript tradition.

Then there is the problem of vv. 14–15: ληλατοῦσι πᾶν ἔθνος τὴν σὴν πόλιν, / οὗς ἐπτόει πρὶν καὶ γεγραμμένος τύπος MO¹NCO. As the syntax of πᾶν ἔθνος ... οὗς is obviously incorrect (unless we interpret it as a harsh *constructio ad sensum*), verse 14 was “emendated” by AR¹ into ἐχθοῖ ληλατοῦσι σὴν, μάκαρ, πόλιν⁹. This is an excellent example of how the emendator of ARR¹ operated.

⁹ R presents a scribal error: instead of the two verses 13–14 as presented in the version of AR¹, it has only one verse: Σκυθῶν ἔθνη σφύζουσι σὴν, μάκαρ, πόλιν.

Faced with an ungrammatical construction in his exemplar, he shuffled the words around, changed πᾶν ἔθνος into ἐχθροί and added the word μάκαρ to fill up the verse. The version of ARR¹ often seems to offer better readings than the other mss., but all these superior readings are in fact mere conjectural emendations. Since the words πᾶν ἔθνος are obviously incorrect, we have to assume that the source from which all manuscripts ultimately derive, the archetype, already presented a scribal error. As I find the emendation proposed by Stadtmüller: πανσθενῶς¹⁰, not only elegant but also convincing, I have adopted it in the following edition.

This brings us to the following stemma:



- ὁὗς ἀνδράσι πρὶν καὶ τομώτερος ξίφους,
 πάρεργον οὗτος καὶ γυναικὸς καὶ ξίφους·
 ὃς τῷ κράτει πρὶν γῆς ὅλης εἶχε κράτος,
 ὥσπερ μικρὸς γῆς μικρὸν ᾤκησεν μέρος·
 5 τὸν πρὶν σεβαστόν, ὡς δοκῶ, καὶ θηρίοις
 ἀνεῖλεν ἢ σύγκοιτος, ἐν δοκοῦν μέλος.
 ὁ μηδὲ νυξὶ μικρὸν ὑπνώττειν θέλων
 ἐν τῷ τάφῳ νῦν μακρὸν ὑπνώττει χρόνον.
 θέαμα πικρόν· ἀλλ' ἀνάστα νῦν, ἀναξ,
 10 καὶ τάττε πεζοῦς, ἱππότας, τοξοκράτας,
 τὸ σὸν στρατεύμα, τὰς φάλαγγας, τοὺς λόχους.
 ὀρμᾶ καθ' ἡμῶν Ῥωσικὴ πανοπλία·

¹⁰ See T. PREGER, *Inscriptiones Graecae Metricae*. Leipzig 1891, 23.

- Σκυθῶν ἔθνη σφύζουσιν εἰς φονουργίαν·
 ληηλατοῦσι πανσθενῶς τὴν σὴν πόλιν,
 15 οὓς ἐπτόει πρὶν καὶ γεγραμμένος τύπος
 πρὸ τῶν πυλῶν σὸς ἐν πόλει Βυζαντίου.
 ναί, μὴ παρόψει ταῦτα· ῥῆψον τὸν λίθον
 τὸν σὲ κρατοῦντα, καὶ λίθοις τὰ θηρία
 20 τὰ τῶν ἔθνῶν διώκε· δὸς δὲ καὶ πέτρας
 στηριγμὸν ἡμῖν, ἀρραγεστάτην βάσιν.
 εἰ δ' οὐ προκύψαι τοῦ τάφου μικρὸν θέλεις,
 κἄν ῥῆξον ἐκ γῆς ἔθνεσιν φωνὴν μόνην·
 ἴσως πτοήσει ταῦτα καὶ τρέψει μόνη.
 εἰ δ' οὐδὲ τοῦτο, τῷ τάφῳ τῷ σῷ δέχου
 25 σύμπαντας ἡμᾶς· καὶ νεκρὸς γὰρ ἀρκέσεις
 σφύζειν τὰ πλήθη τῶν ὄλων χριστωνύμων,
 ὃ πλὴν γυναικὸς τᾶλλα δ' αὖ Νικηφόρος.

1 ὁ ταῖς μάχαις πρὶν ARR¹, τὸν ἀνδράσι ... τομώτερον C; 2 πάρεργον ὧδε N, ὄφθη ARR¹; 3 ὃς τὸ κράτος γῆς πρὶν ὅλης εἶχε κράτει N; 4 ὡς τις ARR¹, μικρὸν γῆς MO¹N, ὤκησε MCOO¹N, οἰκεῖ νῦν ARR¹; 5 ὡς δοκῶ, βαρβάρους N; τὸν πρὶν δὲ φρικτὸν βαρβάρους καὶ θηρίοις RR¹; βαρβαρικοῖς θηρίοις A; 6 σύζυγος N, μέρος N, ὄν δοκοῦν O¹; 10 τύπτε C, πεζὸς O, λογηφόρους ARR¹N; 12 ὄργᾶ MO¹N; 13 σφίγγουσιν O¹, φονουργίας CO; 14 πανσθενῶς Stadtmüller, πᾶν ἔθνος MCOO¹N, ἐχθοῖ ληηλατοῦσι σὴν, μάκαρ, πόλιν AR¹; 13–14 Σκυθῶν ἔθνη σφύζουσιν σὴν, μάκαρ, πόλιν R; 15 ἐπτόει νῦν MO¹; 16 Βυζαντίων MO¹, Βυζαντίδος N; 17 καὶ μὴν O, παρόψη O¹; 20 ἀρραγεστέραν MO¹, ἀρραγῆ στερεάν N; 22 ῥῆψον MO¹, εἰς ἔθνη ARR¹, μόνου M, μόνον O¹N; 23 τρέψει τάχει N, ἴσως σκορπίσει ταῦτα καὶ τρέψει μόνος O, ἴσως σκορπίσει ταῦτη καὶ τρέψει μόνη C, φωνὴ γὰρ εἰς φόβητρον αὐτοῖς ἀρκέσει ARR¹; 25 ὁ νεκρὸς C; 26 τὸ πλήθος N; 27 τὰ δ' ἄλλα C, τᾶλλα γοῦν Νικηφόρε ARR¹.

We may now turn to the ascription of the epitaph to John of Melitene. Almost all the manuscripts of branch **b** attribute the epitaph to him: AR¹CO. AR¹C are interpolated Skylitzes manuscripts. They introduce the epitaph as follows: ἐν δὲ τῇ σωρῷ αὐτοῦ ὁ Μελιτηνῆς μητροπολίτης Ἰωάννης ταῦτα ἐπέγραφε. The lemma of O and R reads: “this text is to be found [these iambic verses were found: R] on the tomb [σωρῷ O, λάρνακι R] of emperor Nikephoros Phokas (who was buried in the Peribleptos monastery, etc.)”; the first part of the lemma attached to the poem in OR derives its information from the interpolated passage in AR¹C. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that hyparchetype **b** from which AR¹CO are derived, was an interpolated Skylitzes manuscript¹¹.

¹¹ Hyparchetype **b** is probably identical to hyparchetype φ of Thurn's stemma of the Skylitzes mss.: see THURN 1973: XXXV.

As for the second branch of the manuscript tradition, hyparchetype **c**, things are a bit more complicated. The lemmata of M and O¹ do not mention the author. In N, however, the epitaph follows after a poem attributed to a certain Meles: τοῦ Μέλητος (see the following section), which appears to be a misreading of the original lemma: (Ἰωάννου) τοῦ Μελιτηνῆς¹². Though M and O¹ are Skylitzes manuscripts, it is hardly likely that hyparchetype **c** has anything to do with the text tradition of Skylitzes' *Chronicle*. M and O¹ do not have the introductory phrase that we find in AR¹C. Moreover, in M the epitaph is not written in the main text as in AR¹C, but in the margin. Below, on p. 314, I shall argue that the scribe of M acquired the epitaph and a few other poems from an anthology which no longer exists. It is very likely that N and O¹ obtained the epitaph from the same anthology used by the scribe of M.

As hyparchetype **b** (ARR¹CO) and hyparchetype **c** (MO¹N) attribute the epitaph to John of Melitene, undoubtedly it was already ascribed to him in the archetype (**a**). In other words, John of Melitene is the author of the poem. The manuscript evidence leaves no other conclusion. Although John of Melitene is not known to us from other Byzantine sources¹³, there is no reason to question his earthly existence, or to supplement the name of John Geometres instead.

* *
*
*

For the eight poems in N (Marc. XI 22 (s. XIV), fol. 87^v), see Hörandner 1970: 109–116, who proves that these eight poems have nothing to do with the rest of the manuscript (the corpus of Manganeios Prodromos). He identifies N 2–5 as Mauropous 10 and 12–14, and suggests that N 1 and 6–8 were written by one and the same author.

N 1, a satirical epitaph on John Tzimiskes, bears the title τοῦ Μέλητος (= τοῦ Μελιτηνῆς). N 6–8 are entitled τοῦ αὐτοῦ, that is, τοῦ μητροπολίτου Εὐχαΐτων, to whom N 2–5 are attributed. However, nos. 6–8 were not written by Mauropous¹⁴. N 8 is the epitaph on Nikephoros Phokas by John of Melitene. And N 6–7 cannot be found in Mauropous' collection of poems. N 6 is an epigram on the Deposition from the Cross; it is also found in three other

¹² See S.G. MERCATI, *BZ* 25 (1925) 45–46 (repr. MERCATI 1970: I, 314) and HÖRANDNER 1970: 112.

¹³ Except for Vat. Reg. gr. 166, where the sixth-century inscription found in the church of Sts. Sergios and Bakchos is attributed to John of Melitene; see SP. LAMBROS, *NE* 12 (1915) 370–371.

¹⁴ See KARPOZILOS 1982: 76.

manuscripts, but without an ascription. N 7 is an epigram on St. Jacob the Persian and is found nowhere else. Since N 8 is a poem by John of Melitene, it is reasonable to assume that the lemma τοῦ αὐτοῦ of N 6–8 refers to N 1 and not to N 2–5. What probably happened, is that the scribe read N 1 & 6–8 and N 2–5 in his exemplar, copied first N 1, then N 2–5 and finally N 6–8, but did not change the lemma τοῦ αὐτοῦ. The phenomenon of negligently copied headings is truly ubiquitous in Byzantine manuscripts (see, for instance, the numerous false ascriptions in the Palatine manuscript of the Greek Anthology¹⁵).

N 1 is a satirical epitaph on John Tzimiskes (also found in Laur. XXXI 37 (s. XV), fol. 167^v and Salamanca 2722, fol. 11^v, dating from the twelfth century¹⁶). Tzimiskes is called a “dwarfish ape” who has murdered a “sleeping lion”. The poet bluntly accuses Tzimiskes of having annihilated the cities by killing Nikephoros Phokas: ἔκτεινας ἄνδρα καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰς πόλεις. That seems a bit unfair. Tzimiskes was in fact an excellent general and his short reign boasted numerous victories over the Arabs and the Slavs. When Tzimiskes died in 976, the Byzantine empire had not only expanded, but had also consolidated its borders and regained its former glory. The poet also wishes Tzimiskes a pleasant stay in hell, for he seized the throne by unjust means, and now he is going to pay for it. Φεῦ πικρῶν βουλευμάτων!, as the poet exclaims at the end.

The epitaph on Tzimiskes, like the epitaph on Phokas, bears some stylistic similarities to the poems of John Geometres¹⁷. We may conclude, therefore, that John of Melitene was familiar with the poetry of his famous contemporary and intentionally imitated his style. It is interesting to note, however, that John Geometres and John of Melitene portray Tzimiskes from an entirely different angle. In his epitaph on Tzimiskes (Cr. 267, 23) Geometres portrays him as a truly tragic figure: a noble and valiant warrior who committed a hideous crime, regretted it sorely ever after and felt terribly ashamed of what he had done; basically a righteous man, who had blood on his hands, but who was torn apart by pangs of remorse. The epitaph by John of Melitene, on the contrary, shows unrelenting hatred towards Tzimiskes vented in very unpleasant language. This alone is proof enough that the two poets cannot be one and the same person.

¹⁵ See A.S.F. Gow, *The Greek Anthology: Sources and Ascriptions*. London 1958.

¹⁶ Salamanca, University Library 2722 (olim Madrid, Palácio Real 43) contains a Catena on Isaiah. The manuscript dates from the eleventh century, but fol. 11 was written by a twelfth-century hand. For the various poems on fol. 11, see ŠEVČENKO 1978: 117. Incidentally, the second text Ševčenko publishes on p. 127, is not an unedited ninth-century poem (as he avers), but a poem by Christopher Mitylenaios (no. 29).

¹⁷ See HÖRANDNER 1970: 112–113.

Since there can be no doubt that N 1 and 8 were written by John of Melitene, it is reasonable to assume that N 6–7 should be attributed to him as well. This makes John of Melitene the author of at least four poems. There are two other poems which can be ascribed to him with some degree of probability.

* *
*
*
*

The illuminated Skylitzes manuscript in Madrid, Vitr. 26–2 (M), copied in Palermo in the mid-twelfth century, contains eleven historical poems: M 1–11. These poems were written by the main scribe in the margin of the manuscript next to relevant miniatures after these had already been executed. The hotly debated issue whether the miniatures are original works of art from a Sicilian atelier¹⁸ or go back to a Constantinopolitan illuminated exemplar¹⁹, does not affect the problem of the poems' provenance. As the poems were only copied after the miniatures had been executed, the problem of the miniatures' origin is of no relevance. The question is, did the Palermitan scribe of M find the poems in the exemplar of Skylitzes he was copying or did he obtain these poems from a different source? Since at least one of the poems is a direct commentary on the miniature next to it (see below), it is beyond any doubt that the poem was composed by the scribe of the Madrid manuscript himself (for the miniatures, whatever their origin, were first and the poems were only added later). And if the scribe added this poem as his own contribution, it is reasonable to conjecture that he is also responsible for adding the other poems to the *Chronicle* of Skylitzes. In other words, the scribe of M did not find these poems in the Skylitzes exemplar he was copying, but got them from another source, probably some sort of anthology. That is also the opinion of Ševčenko who writes that the poems "were entered into our manuscript out of antiquarian interest, in the same city (sc. Palermo) where our very Madrid Skylitzes was being produced"²⁰.

M presents the following poems in the margin of the manuscript: (M 1–3) monodies on Leo VI, (M 4) a monody on Constantine VII by Symeon the Metaphrast, (M 5) a satirical poem on Theophano, (M 6) the epitaph to Nikephoros Phokas, (M 7–9) other epitaphs to Phokas, (M 10) a poem on Tzimiskes

¹⁸ See I. ŠEVČENKO, in: *Byzanz und der Westen. Studien zur Kunst des europäischen Mittelalters*. Vienna 1984, 117–130.

¹⁹ See N. OIKONOMIDES, in: *Εὐφροσύνη. Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Μανόλη Χατζιδάκη*. Athens 1992, II, 422–434.

²⁰ ŠEVČENKO (see footnote 18), 128. See also OIKONOMIDES (footnote above), 426–427.

and (M 11) an epitaph to a certain Bardas²¹. Despite their subject, not all these poems date from the tenth century. In M 10 John Tzimiskes is urged to fight the enemies, to abandon his “evil companion” and to fear God’s retribution. The enemies he is supposed to fight are probably Svjatoslav and the Rus’. Tzimiskes’ evil companion is, of course, Theophano, who was removed from the palace at the instigation of patriarch Polyeuktos. As is well-known, patriarch Polyeuktos assented to crown Tzimiskes only if he agreed to end his amorous liaison with Theophano. The obscure passage about God’s vengeance (vv. 6–8) probably refers to the same conflict with Polyeuktos, which ended when Tzimiskes publicly acknowledged the authority of the Church. The poem would seem to date, therefore, from January 970 when Tzimiskes was crowned emperor. This is also borne out by the miniature next to it showing the coronation of Tzimiskes. However, the second verse: (δεξιὰ) ἦν ἔχρανας αἵματι δικαίου πάλαι, firmly contradicts such a date. Even if we leave a margin for poetic licence, πάλαι cannot refer to an event that took place only a month earlier. The poem must have been written much later. It is reasonable to assume that it was written by the scribe / illuminator of M as a sort of caption neatly explaining the meaning of the miniature²². The scribe acquired all the references to historical events from the main text of Skylitzes’ *Chronicle* itself. Similarly, M 5 seems to comment upon the scene depicted in the miniature next to it. There we see Theophano secretly letting Tzimiskes and his accomplices into the palace. The poet addresses her directly and asks: “What pleasure did you have at the time of the murder?”. The answer, of course, is none, because she was deceived in thinking that she would benefit from the murder, and the liaison with Tzimiskes only caused her trouble. M 7–9 are too fragmentary to decide whether they are authentic tenth-century poems or the work of the twelfth-century scribe of M²³. The first verse of M 8: ὁ πλὴν γυναικὸς τᾶλλα δὲ Νικη[φόρος], repeats the last verse of the epitaph on Nikephoros Phokas. Since Byzantine poets often repeat themselves, John of Melitene may have been the author of M 8; but it is equally feasible that the scribe of M borrowed a phrase that appealed to him.

²¹ Ed. ŠEVČENKO 1969–70: 194 (no. 1), 196–197 (no. 2), 201–203 (no. 3), 210–212 (no. 4), 189 (no. 5), 190 (no. 10) and 191 (no. 11). On p. 190 he publishes some lines of nos. 7–9, as far as he was able to decipher the manuscript. For some comments on the epitaph of Phokas (no. 6), see pp. 189–190, n. 11.

²² It is worth noticing that Byzantine poetry flourished in Palermo around 1150: see B. LAVAGNINI, *Parnassos* 25 (1983) 146–154.

²³ According to C. DE BOOR, *BZ* 14 (1905) 415, the various manuscripts that derive from M contain the poems as well. Since the text of the poems is sometimes almost illegible in M, it would be interesting to know what these copies have to offer.

M 1–4 ultimately originate from the archives of the Byzantine palace administration, for they are public monodies performed by the demes at the funerals of Leo VI and Constantine VII. The source of M 4 must have been a late tenth-century manuscript, for “whoever wrote the title of Poem IV knew that Symeon (the Metaphrast) was magister and stratiotikos “now”, and was thus aware of the latest moves on the bureaucratic and aulic ladder”²⁴. M 1–3, 6 and 11, however, do not bear such detailed lemmata and probably come from other sources. All things are possible, but it seems hardly likely that the Palermitan scribe of M thumbed through an infinite number of manuscripts to find a few appropriate tenth-century poems. It is more reasonable to assume that M 4, M 1–3, M 6 and M 11 (and possibly M 7–9), were to be found in an anthology of Byzantine poems. This anthology is the source from which three of the manuscripts of the epitaph of Nikephoros Phokas, MO¹N (hyparchetype c), acquired the poem. Since N contains three poems by John Mauropous (N 2–5), the anthology cannot have been compiled before the late eleventh century.

M 11 is an epitaph on a certain Bardas who served in the military and died on the island of Crete from some disease; his corpse was brought home by his wife to be buried in a sarcophagus in a richly decorated arcosolium. The scribe of M supposed that this Bardas was the famous rebel Bardas Phokas who died at the battle of Abydos in 989, but that is of course impossible. The place of death, the cause of death and the fact that the Bardas of the epitaph left behind young orphans, whereas Bardas Phokas was ageing when he died – all this proves that the scribe of M did not make a very lucky guess. Bardas probably died during the Cretan expedition of 961, or afterwards when the island had been recaptured from the Arabs. The epitaph is vaguely reminiscent of Cr. 329, 1, a poem in which Geometres relates how he brought the corpse of his beloved father back to Constantinople, performed the funeral rites and buried him in an arcosolium. The style also resembles that of Geometres. If the epitaph were to be found close to other poems by Geometres, it would certainly have been reasonable to ascribe it to him. But M does not contain poems by Geometres. It has three monodies dating from 912 (M 1–3), a monody by Symeon the Metaphrast (M 4), two poems by the twelfth-century scribe (M 5 and 10), three poems that cannot be dated nor ascribed to a known author (M 7–9) and the epitaph on Phokas by John of Melitene (M 6). I would, therefore, suggest that the epitaph on Bardas be attributed to John of Melitene, a poet who, as we have seen, regularly imitates the style of Geometres.

* *
*
*

²⁴ ŠEVČENKO 1969–70: 192.

Athous Dion. 264 (s. XVII), fol. 337^v, contains the following poems: (A 1) στίχοι ἀρχαῖοι τοῦ Μελιτην^ν εἰς τὴν σταύρωσιν, (A 2) τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους μ', (A 3) τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν ὀσιομάρτυρα Μαρίαν, (A 4) τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Βαρβάραν, (A 5) τοῦ Γεωμέτρου εἰς προσμονάριον ἐκκλησίας; and (A 6) τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐρωτήσαντος τίς ἀνέγνω etc. On fols. 337^v–340^r two epigrams follow by Philes, one epigram by Xanthopoulos, and then a long sequence of poems by Philes²⁵.

Poem A 1 is an epigram on the Crucifixion. This epigram can also be found in Salamanca, University Library 2722 (s. XII), fol. 11^v and Vat. Urb. 120 (s. XIII ex.), fol. 2^v; it has recently been published by Maguire²⁶. Given the date of these two manuscripts the epigram must have been written before 1200 at the latest: στίχοι ἀρχαῖοι indeed, at least for a scribe working in the seventeenth century. In Dion. 264 the epigram (anonymous in the two other mss.) bears the following heading: τοῦ Μελιτην^ν, which Lambros in his *Catalogue* renders as τοῦ Μελιτινοῦ. I would suggest to read this lemma as (Ἰωάννου) τοῦ Μελιτηνῆς. This is also corroborated by the fact that Salamanca 2722, fol. 11^v, does not only contain A 1, but also N 1 (Marc. XI 22, fol. 87^v: see above, p. 311), the satirical epitaph on Tzimiskes, which was undoubtedly written by John of Melitene²⁷.

However, it is only fair to admit that Dion. 264 is not an entirely reliable source, for the lemmata of A 2 and A 3 are incorrect. A 3 is the famous epigram on St. Mary of Egypt by Geometres: Cr. 314, 16. A 2 is the equally famous epigram on the Forty Martyrs (S. 8), which is attributed to Mauropous in Par. Suppl. gr. 690, but which Sajdak and I ascribe to Geometres (see Appendix II, pp. 298–299).

Poems A 4–6 have not yet been published. A 4 is attributed to John of Melitene, A 5–6 to John Geometres. The literary quality of these verses is so poor that I hesitate to ascribe them to either of the two poets. If these satirical poems date from the tenth century, the καπνογένης mentioned in A 6 may be identified with Καπνογένειος ὁ Μαῖστωρ, a schoolmaster famous for his hair-splitting on orthography: ὁ τῶν λέξεων θηρατῆς καὶ τῶν τούτων ἀντιστοίχων ἀκριβῆς ὀρθογράφος²⁸. I am publishing the poems without any further comments and without emendations, though the manuscript contains some unmetrical or otherwise incorrect readings.

²⁵ STICKLER 1992: 213 does not mention the first two epigrams by Philes: (1) εἰς παναγιάριον. ἰδοὺ χρυσεὶ τράπεζα καὶ θεῖα ψίχα ψυχῇ, δράμε, τράφῃθι, κἄν ζῆς ὡς κύων; (2) ed. MILLER 1855–57: II, 34 (no. F 75). The epigram by Xanthopoulos is probably still unedited: [τῶ] μαρμάρῳ μάρτυρες ἐστηριγμένοι / μαμαρυγᾶς πέμπουσι ἀστραπηβόλους / ὡς μάργαροι γὰρ ὄστρακώθησαν τάχα. For the rest of the poems by Philes, see STICKLER 1992: 213.

²⁶ MAGUIRE 1996: 21, n. 49. See also HORANDNER 2000: 77.

²⁷ See ŠEVČENKO 1978: 117.

²⁸ Souda, ed. ADLER 1928–38: I, 229 (s.v. Ἀνώγεων). The family name Καπνογενεῖος/Καπνογενεῖς already existed in the ninth century: see Theophanes Cont. 208,12 and 250,9.

τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν Βαρβάραν

[x] βάρβαρος νοῦς ἴστορεῖ τὴν Βαρβάραν
 ἢ Βαρβάρα δὲ βαρβάρου μισεῖ τρόπους·
 οὐ Βάρβαρος γὰρ ἔστιν ἀλλὰ Βαρβάρα.

τοῦ Γεωμέτρου εἰς προσμονάριον ἐκκλησίας

δεῖ κηρὸν ἄπτειν· χεῖρας ἄπτειν οὐκ ἔχει·
 δεῖ σβεννύειν [x]· ἔπνευσεν ἀπρακτίας.

τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐρωτήσαντος τίς ἀνέγνω ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου τὴν
 πρώτην ἀνάγνωσιν καὶ τίς τὴν δευτέραν, καὶ μαθόντος ὡς τὴν πρώτην ὁ
 μάγειρος, τὴν δὲ δευτέραν ὁ καπνογένης

πρῶτος μάγειρος, δεύτερος καπνογένης·
 οὗ γὰρ μάγειρος, καὶ καπνὸς παραντίκα.

* *
 *

To conclude, six poems in total can be ascribed to John of Melitene: the epitaph to Phokas and the three epigrams in N (Marc. XI 22) with absolute certainty; and the epitaph to Bardas in M (Matrit. Vitr. 26-2) and the epigram on the Crucifixion in A (Dion. 264) in all likelihood. John of Melitene lived in the second half of the tenth century. The epitaph to Bardas dates from 961 at the earliest, the satirical epitaph to Tzimiskes probably from 976 and the fictitious epitaph to Nikephoros Phokas from 988–989. The other three epigrams cannot be dated.